Ephemeral Cinema Spaces

Stories of Reinvention, Resistance and Community

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In Memoriam
Kat Lindner (1979-2019)

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Introduction

Abstract

Why write about film experiences in the context of pervasive crisis? Is the discussion about the death of cinema simply an attachment to a bad object? This chapter invites the reader to see non-theatrical and extramural forms of film exhibition as an experiment in embracing contingency, and a hopeful way to disinvest from hegemonic formations. Contextualizing the research project in relation to precarity and the neoliberal usurpation of the commons, the introduction opens up some of the key debates that will be expanded upon through the case studies in the book.

Key words: cruel optimism, precarity, contingency, pop-up cinema, non-theatrical exhibition

'In the present from which I am writing about the present, conventions of reciprocity that ground how to live and imagine life are becoming undone in ways that force the gestures of ordinary improvisation within daily life into a greater explicitness affectively and aesthetically' (Berlant 2011, 7)

This is an odd time to write about cinema. There are many other topics that are more urgent and vital, while cinema seems to retreat into a glamorous backdrop for the launch of video streaming services. In November 2019, Netflix took a long-term lease on New York's last single-screen cinema, which had closed earlier that year (BBC News 2019). As a fantasy of communal experience supplied by capitalism, this attachment to the theatrical venue was, at worst, a mercenary use of ersatz historicity for prestige marketing, or, more charitably, a form of what Lauren Berlant calls 'cruel optimism'. It is an investment in a conventional desire for a 'good life' to which that object called cinema would bring aesthetic pleasures and comforts, connection and togetherness. But the object itself is a cluster of things, some of which may actually get in the way of the 'good life' imagined in its proximity (Berlant 2011, 24–25). In the context of 'crisis ordinariness', of the attrition of that fantasy, writing about cinema demands a suspicion of the object.

This book tells stories where cinema is a provisional term, used for pragmatic reasons to refer to different kinds of emergent events. At its most basic, this book is concerned with film exhibition in places that are not dedicated cinemas. Throughout, I use terms like 'non-theatrical', 'ephemeral', 'alternative' and 'non-conventional'. The nuances between these words foreground degrees and aspects of separation from a set of normative conditions. At a moment of transformation in the history

of collective film experience, my research set out to explore the boundaries of cinema as a social practice. It sought to trace the persistence of cinema as an organizing idea and a meaningful category. But to do that would be to attempt to salvage and reconstitute an object that instead needs to be taken apart, wrenched open and pillaged. As Katherine Groo argues, 'we do not (or not always) need to recuperate objects and identities to do justice to them' (2019, 9).

I kept thinking of a film from my childhood, *The Snail's Strategy* (Cabrera, 1993), a morality tale of a ragtag group of slum tenants who are due to be evicted from an old house. Spurred on by an anarchist veteran and a trans woman, they work together through the night to sneak out all their meagre possessions, plus all the internal walls and fittings of the house. When the landlord comes, he finds only the empty shell behind the facade, while in the outskirts of the city the tenants are busy fashioning new homes out of the reclaimed materials. In the process of flitting, the tenants find each other and build unexpected solidarities. Meanwhile, the camera follows particular objects as they are winched out of the house. A piece of the wall with the miraculous image of the Virgin Mary is hoisted above the rooftops, a luminous frame surrounded by darkness, like a heavenly cinema screen. A bathtub is raised with great difficulty; finally, the anarchist's coffin, wrapped in the red-and-black. The symbolism of flight embraces the sacred, the sensual and the political, as they vacate the landlord's property. I wondered if something different can also be built out of the debris of an idea of cinema.

The trace of hope that holds this book together, then, is the hypothesis that, in the *practices* of making cinema happen, in the 'embodied processes of making solidarity itself' (Berlant 2011, 260), there might be some way out of the impasse. In the stories I tell, cinema is not an object but an act of assemblage, a tactical making and unmaking of old and new formations. I approached case studies of different kinds of exhibition practice in their particularity, without pre-determined categories other than a pragmatic geographical restriction to Scotland. These observations and conversations offer a snapshot of what it is like to work with cinema in the minor key at this juncture. These stories are contributions to the 'archive of the impasse', as Berlant calls for, to 'inquire into what thriving might entail amid a mounting sense of contingency' (Berlant 2011, 10). The flavour of that contingency, in the Scottish context of cultural labour, is that of project-based, precarious work, arts funding depleted by austerity, and speculative patterns in the use of urban space. These are local stories and they are messy, unfinished and often contradictory. Writing them up inevitably betrays their transience, as it brings them into dialectical relationship with theoretical debates on the located, embodied, and relational nature of cinemagoing.

This project started as an extension of my research on pre-1920 film exhibition and distribution. As Groo notes, 'early and silent film historians are drawn toward the tattered margins of the archives and the irregular objects of history' (Groo 2019, 17). The sites of exhibition that pre-dated purpose-built cinemas are as much of a challenge to the classical paradigm as 'postmodern forms of media consumption' (Hansen 1993, 210). The fairgrounds with their bioscope booths, the magic lantern lecturers, and the travelling music hall operators of the 1900s all put into perspective

the novelty of 'pop-up' exhibition. But to historicize is not to deny difference, particularly difference from a hierarchical system. As Sudhir Mahadevan argues in relation to India's itinerant showpeople, perhaps 'as an assemblage, we can think of ancillary exhibition practices as akin to Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of minor literature' (2010). If there is a *major formation* of cinema, these margins of history can harbour also the minor, 'an intimate perch form which to begin amputating the sites and signs of power' (Groo 2019, 101). The stories in this book speak of minor practices within the major, operating by substraction: Removing anything that is stable, 'placing everything in continuous variation' and then 'transposing everything in *minor*' (Deleuze 1997, 246). While treading carefully amongst these theories from literature and performance, I found in this *minoration* a hopeful way to think about what is at stake in non-theatrical and transient screening practices.

The book aims, firstly, to capture a trace of a moment and a place in cinema history, and the voices of some of the people who make it happen. Through fieldwork carried out in Scotland between 2015 and 2018, I gathered first-hand impressions of screenings, and used interviews and archival research to contextualize these experiences. While the specificity of the location is methodologically crucial, the analysis seeks to offer insights that are relevant beyond this time and place. Foregrounding the particularity of actually existing exhibition practice, I then sought to build and test frames of analysis that can do justice to its malleability and inventiveness. The book experiments with ways of talking about cinema as a dispersed but material phenomenon, a matter of temporary intensities and pacts amongst people. Studying film screenings offered a way to focus attention on ephemerality, and to understand the role of transient events in longer histories.

This project returns to early cinema for dialectical and genealogical reasons. Contemporary non-theatrical exhibition practices extend across a tangle of timelines stretching all the way back to the first two decades of film exhibition. Like many writers before, I am attracted to the volatility of that period, before the consolidation of a hierarchical industry with its own proprietary retail outlets. The parallels with a post-classical situation intrigued me, as I attended screenings in the same kinds of spaces that would have hosted the bioscope at the turn of the 20th century. Like those early attractions, these instantiations of cinema were self-consciously ephemeral. New festivals, series, and experiments were proliferating, and the only traces left were often just a handful of social media posts. Writing their brief histories is therefore an attempt to capture this crucial moment of transformation and to see it as part of longer histories of communal gathering around the moving image.

Historicizing these encounters with emergent forms of film exhibition is not an attempt to deny what is new about them. Contemporary practices are emerging in response to specific circumstances, and through technical and institutional affordances that were not available before. Moving images are abundant and ubiquitous, present as ambient media in everyday urban spaces, clamouring for attention from billboards, shop windows, and self-service checkouts, or waiting to be called up on the portable screen of a phone or laptop. Powerful barriers to access are still raised along lines of class, disability,

and geography, but these are easy to ignore for the privileged consumer who enjoys an expansion of choice and availability. On-demand access unbinds the consumer from the collective rhythms and spaces of media circulation. In doing so, it is part of a longer history of the decline of traditional publicness (cf. Putnam 2001). Within capitalist markets, audiovisual abundance is primarily addressed to the individual consumer. However, it contains the possibility of alternative uses, and it enables more democratic, decentred interventions in film culture. The stories in this book are full of unresolved contradictions.

A key tension I set out to explore was that between the ordinary and the extraordinary, or, in other words, of uniqueness in the realm of mechanical reproduction. In the framework of experiential marketing, the unusual and the one-off are ways of championing exclusivity of access and producing scarcity. Meanwhile, creative interventions in everyday spaces, while similarly transient, perform a mutually critical operation, denaturalizing the ordinary and demystifying the imaginative. Through this dialectical action, ephemeral exhibition spaces can be activated as sites of resistance, while also recognizing their connection to the current economic model. In that sense, this research connects these questions of ordinariness and spectacle with arguments about cinema as public sphere from a pragmatic point of view.

Film festivals, community screenings and independent cultural venues often argue that their activities can help abate increasing social atomization. Associational culture has long played a role in facilitating sociability, but the dissolution of both traditional and modern support networks has placed an unprecedented burden on voluntary organizations. It is unrealistic to expect from them a solution to the profound insecurities that cut through people's lives and shatter their life-worlds (Philo, Parr, and Söderström 2019, 151). This fantasy was most cynically deployed in British prime minister, David Cameron's idea of the 'big society'. After decades of hollowing out public services and dismantling workers' rights, intensified after the bank bailout of 2008, the idea of devolving responsibility for services like libraries and street-cleaning to volunteers was promoted to appeal to a supposed British love of amateurism. This apparently benign proposal serves to protect the establishment by obscuring some of the most nefarious effects of revanchist policies. On the other hand, collaborative, altruistic labour can be emancipatory, and thrive outside the purview of the state. There is much unpaid, underpaid and precarious work in the stories I have gathered, and thus even more contradictions.

The prevalence of these forms of labour is perhaps unsurprising given the transience of the workplaces. If the screening space is a temporary one, and the organizing structure is the one-off event, the work will most likely be tied to the event rather than to the venue. This detachment between people and place is distinctive of precarity, whether experienced as a loss or a liberation. In this context, it is worth asking whether a temporary configuration, a transient event, can have a reparative role in relation to the loss of public and semi-public spaces. This has been a startling observation in the housing context, where pop-up accommodation offers a meaningful improvement in people's quality of life, while potentially undermining the building of social homes in the longer term. In this

context, a temporary intervention may become a way 'of moving forward that seemingly sustains, rather than overhauls, neoliberal modes of producing urban life' (Harris, Nowicki, and Brickell 2019, 156). The underlying contradiction of temporary actions in this context is that they may offer glimpses of new solutions to the crisis, solutions that lie outside of neoliberalism, but they may also normalize the loss and the harm.

The structure of the book

The contributions that this work makes to thinking about space, ephemerality, and sociability around film screenings are grounded on a period of fieldwork during which I attended events around Scotland, and enriched by interviews with twenty exhibitors. The project, thus, has a strongly localized approach, where my own presence at events becomes the starting point for each investigation. Over the past four years, I attended events, befriended organizers, and sometimes participated as a volunteer. This is not a disinterested, neutral report, though it aims to be alive to the contradictions discussed above, and to situate individual action in the context of collective patterns. In order to do so, it first needs to build a critical vocabulary and a wider panorama of practice. This is what the first two chapters set out to do, first by tackling normative definitions of cinema and asking whether it makes sense to recognize cinema as a meaningful category of experience while moving beyond medium specificity. As a foundation for further discussions in the book, this chapter contrasts approaches to an ontology of cinema, and offers a framework for describing cinema as a contingent alignment of space and practice, both a physical configuration and a social protocol.

On the ground, the assemblages I provisionally call cinema can take many different forms, from theatrical exhibition to certain types of home viewing. The boundaries of my research are outlined in the second chapter, which unpacks the concepts of 'non-theatrical', 'ephemeral', and 'pop-up', in relation to scholarly and policy use. The chapter then lays out the composition of the fieldwork sample and the methodological approach, which is purposive and informed by a genealogical sense of multiple histories. Together with the statistical analysis of film programming, reading of existing sector reports, and interviews with some of the organizers and other agents involved in producing these screenings, the fieldwork completes a picture of non-theatrical exhibition as a pattern at a particular moment in Scotland. Distinct strands emerge in the dialogue between contemporary and historical practices. These continuities shape the thematic divisions of the rest of the book.

Each of the following chapters then concentrates in one of four constellations, each of them foregrounding one of the multiple functions of non-theatrical cinema. First, Chapter 3 explains how film exhibition works as a civic amenity, by examining the community cinema sector. This chapter goes back to the itinerant beginnings of film exhibition, considering specific examples of non-theatrical screening in the 16mm era in Scotland, as a vanguard of 'useful' cinema and a point of reference for contemporary phenomena. Focusing on exhibition activity in Scotland's rural areas, this

chapter challenges metropolitan perspectives on pop-up exhibition which have tended to frame it in the context of a saturated cultural market.

Chapter 4 retraces the histories of specialized and underground exhibition, centring on the role that non-theatrical cinema has played in the subcultural dynamics of Scotland's largest city. This chapter focuses on the spaces, practices, and programming of cine-clubs and film societies. Alternative, self-governed exhibition has a significant history in Scotland, with the Edinburgh Film Guild and Glasgow Film Society amongst the first such organizations in the world. As elsewhere, video availability and broader cultural changes have transformed cinephilia, foregrounding its experiential aspects over access to specific films. This chapter shows how enterprising cine-club exhibitors have taken a much more creative role, alongside specialized programming, by producing multi-medial and collaborative events in alternative spaces.

While cinephile exhibition still privileges film culture, an exclusive focus on this sector would overlook the even larger domain of 'useful' cinema. In Chapter 5, I discuss more instrumental forms of exhibition, which imply a closer relationship between the world of the film and the viewer's world. The screening space helps underline this proximity, and may offer opportunities to shift the experience of reception into action. In the chapter, I explain how 'useful' cinema expects active engagement from the audience, encouraging discussion by activating the incompleteness of film. Examples include 'interrupted' screenings, campaigning and educational initiatives.

As a contrast with this predominantly sober streak, Chapter 6 focuses on what I call eventful cinema. This includes forms of exhibition variously described as 'immersive' and 'experiential'. The chapter places these practices in relation to the showmanship tradition of early and classical eras, which already combined familiarity with novelty to create a sense of excitement. This chapter looks at how non-theatrical exhibitors exploit the temporary nature of their spaces in order to amplify a sense of uniqueness and opportunity. It explored site-specificity as the staging of resonances between film content and space, as well as live performance.

The last chapter does not follow a particular strand of practice, but rather observes the utopian elements threaded through all of them. It seeks to identify aspects of non-theatrical cinema as a social practice that express and build towards a transformative ideal. This is based on the destabilization of assumptions made possible by some forms of relocation. The material and social expectations associated with a cinema screening demand a reconfiguration of the temporary spaces in which cinema happens. This may be simply bringing chairs and shutting out sunlight, but it can also be the opening up of a private space, the transformation of a transit space into one for lingering, the presence of people who are not usually there, and a different code of behaviour, for instance. Through these transformations of lived spaces, a screening event can claim a (modest) political potential. This chapter is critical of the exaggerated promises of DIY and 'pop-up' projects, but it also shows that metropolitan critiques of this model are insufficient to account for many of the projects observed in

Scotland. Fundamentally, it centres the action of organizing screenings as such, as a direct engagement with publicness and sometimes a subtle way of reclaiming or imagining the commons.

As theatrical film viewing loses ground in its claim as the natural home of the movies, it becomes clear that the full-time, commercial, dedicated cinema is a historically contingent form that was always just one of many sites for the moving image. This is a liberating realization. Meanwhile, the acceleration of climate change demands a reconsideration of priorities. There may be a more urgent value in re-learning ways of working together and making space for one another. At its best, a film screening is a small trial run for decentralized, small-scale, collaborative, nurturing and imaginative forms of living. This book, I hope, offers to the reader some glimpses of that possible future.

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Chapter 1. Unstable constellations: Recognizing cinema out of place

Abstract: The transition to digital has exacerbated the fragility of existing definitions of cinema. This chapter lays out the working definitions that will be used throughout the rest of the book, offering a way beyond medium specificity that still recognizes cinema as a meaningful category. Taking elements from apparatus theory, in a materialist rather than metaphysical sense, the chapter describes cinema as a contingent alignment of space and practice, both a physical configuration and a social protocol. The chapter contrasts the perspectives of several authors, including Elsaesser, Gaudreault, Friedberg, Casetti, Bellour, and Gitelman, to arrive at ten elements that can be assembled flexibly into something recognizable as cinema. This lays the groundwork for the empirical case studies in the chapters that follow.

Keywords: Dispositif, apparatus theory, post-cinema, medium specificity, protocols.

I.

'Never thought I would bring sunglasses to the cinema', says someone behind me. We are in Glasgow's Winter Gardens, a large Victorian glasshouse at the back of the popular history museum. It is a Friday in the middle of May, the end of a warm week, which is always a novelty in the West of Scotland: everyone is still enchanted with the sun. But here people are impatient for it to go away, willing the Earth to turn just a bit faster. A large screen in a metal frame has been put up amongst the lush palms and trees that stand in unwitting homage to British imperialism. Beyond the glasshouse, Glasgow's oldest public space extends to the margin of the River Clyde, its bright lawns now abandoned by the couples, children and dogs who have gone home for tea or headed to a city centre pub. Inside, the café is open and the organizers have just announced everyone can get a free beer. The film was meant to have started half an hour ago, but the sun has not set. We sit with our pints on the conference chairs arranged looking south and listen to a panel discussion with one of the actors and the creator of the soundtrack. They measure their answers to avoid spoiling the film's plot and watch the slow progression of the sun towards the horizon on our right-hand side. The projection team stand by their crates and cables, knowing that even their top-quality equipment cannot compete with the sunshine pouring in.

Eventually, the sun disappears behind the west of the city and the film starts. A dark Belgian forest is the setting for *Couple in a Hole* (Geens, 2015), and its foliage joins our greenhouse plants, spilling beyond the hard frames of the screen. The surrounding open skies, the humidity, the spindly plant life thriving around us amplify the anguished mood of the film, its earthiness. The screen in the

greenhouse forges an alliance between the diegetic world and the spectator's embodied experience that can be described as immersive or atmospheric. And yet this almost failed, simply because it lacked darkness.

II.

Exterior, night. A street corner. Rain. A crowd huddles under the marquee of a department store. We are staring at a round breezeblock structure across the road, the most distinctive feature of the bland retail block that encases Argyle Street railway station. On the curved wall, a rectangle of light holds a space of familiar proportions: an approximation of the golden ratio. Some volunteers in fluorescent vests are herding people from the station, off the road and onto the safety of the wide pavement, while others hold umbrellas over the projector and speakers. A short animated film is shown, and then there is a flurry of unplugging and rolling cables so that the equipment can be carted off to the next location. Another department store marquee, this time in a busier pedestrian street. The projection on a shop front attracts the attention of some of the passers-by. These new audience members are neither particularly sober nor primed for the sort of experimental fare that has transformed their streets into an arthouse spectacle for urban tourists. There is a palpable distance between the cinephile crowd and these casual viewers, but for a moment they become part of the audience.

    The show continues to move – to a shabby dead-end street, an advertising hoarding above a beer garden, a couple of shipping containers at a building site, and a multi-storey carpark. With each move, the size and surface of the screen changes, and the audience ebbs and flows. People join and leave, but also people bring in or withdraw their attention, stepping aside to take a phone call or a picture, chatting, smoking, petting dogs. The last screening site is the back of a very old building, standing alone at the edge of a demolished block. There have been rumours that this survivor of many waves of Glasgow's reinvention will be knocked down soon, as the area gets consumed by private student housing. We are standing on the last un-regenerated bit of land on the edge of Strathclyde University's campus, between trendy glass-and-chrome university buildings and a fledging community garden, itself made to be temporary: a passing use of a space waiting for a property speculator. It is still raining.

III.

The first Saturday of September is mild and pleasant, a good day to sit outside and drink tea. Our host welcomes a handful of visitors into the garden, a small plot between his house and the railway tracks in suburban Glasgow. A young woman sits on the drystone wall, reading the list of DVDs the host has chosen for the screening. The films come from the travelling bookshop of anarchist materials that our host has run for over a decade, and which has now been retired from touring. He comes back with more tea and gives us updates about the garden, a permaculture demonstration planted with native and

non-native species, designed to support habitats for animals. He brings fresh figs from the greenhouse. I share the fruit with another visitor as we consider the list of films. A friend and her daughter emerge from the small, handmade shed in the corner of the garden, having finished watching their chosen films.

The event is part of Scalarama, a UK-wide season of DIY film screenings, and it is run under the banner of Radical Home Cinema, an initiative to help people organize public film events in their homes. One of the promoters comes around and checks with the host whether those who have registered to attend have turned up, so she can offer the available slots to two young women who have come to see the garden. The screening space is big enough for two folding chairs with the projector and a laptop on a shelf behind them. The walls of the shed are made of loose bits of wood to provide an optimal habitat for bees and wasps, which also makes it warm with the heat of the projector. Our hosts give us a couple of quick instructions and I put the DVD in the drive to start the screening. The young woman next to me is in charge of controlling the volume. She has to leave halfway through the film, so I finish watching a short documentary about a local pirate radio DJ on my own. When I come out of the shed, other friends have arrived, and I end up staying for a vegan dinner cooked by our host.

This book is about moments like these, which have little more in common than the presence of a film and an audience. What these situations share is what makes them recognizable and understandable to those taking part. This minimal and provisional recognition is what this book calls cinema. This is not a fixed category with borders to be drawn and policed, but a constellation of emergent patterns. These patterns are situated in relation to normative definitions of cinema as the *minor* is to the major: As a process of substraction and reassembly. Considering cinema from a minor position offers a critical opportunity to break it down into its constituent elements, and observe the shifting configurations and protocols in which they appear. Starting from classical versions of the cinematic dispositive, this chapter will untangle some of the strands needed to weave into patterns in later chapters. By engaging sceptically with ontological debates, it seeks a way to make visible the hybridity and incompleteness that make any categorical definition absurd and unnecessary, while explaining our ability to mean something by 'cinema'.

In the last two decades or so, definitions of cinema have been plunged into an ever more acute state of crisis by the weakening hold of medium specificity. The idea of 'post-cinema' has gained traction, particularly in those boundary areas of the art world that had previously been named 'expanded' or 'exploding' cinema, where the moving image has entered gallery spaces or become part of mixed-media installations (Connolly 2009; Koch, Pantenburg, and Rothöhler 2012; Lord and Marchessault 2007). As Erika Balsom argues, it would be historically short-sighted to see this instability as a new phenomenon, since 'the cinema's ontology has always been diverse and variable' (Balsom 2013, 14). However, digitization and convergence, with the destabilizing effect of meta-

media and re-mediation, have exacerbated anxieties about medium specificity. Immersed as we are in the rush of images, surrounded by screens and virtual realms, piecing together narratives across platforms, what sense does it have to speak of 'cinema'? What purpose does it serve to use the same word for three moments as different as the ones described above?

Current debates around post-cinema or the death of cinema are struggles between descriptivist and prescriptivist definitions of cinema. On the one hand, a search for ontological anchors has produced various lists of 'non-negotiable features'. In their introduction to *The State of Post-Cinema*, Malte Hagener, Vinzenz Hediger and Alena Strohmaier tackle this discourse of crisis, situating it in relation to 'cinema' as an art form distinguished by its indexical relationship to reality, and 'cinema' as a dispositive (Hagener, Hediger, and Strohmaier 2016, 4). Photographic indexicality seemed like an urgent matter during the transition to digital, but it has receded so far from production practice and audience expectations that it seems inadequate as a defining characteristic. Throughout this book, the vast majority of the moving images and sounds I write about were projected from digital files rather than celluloid. The three examples above include a narrative feature, a short animation, and a 40-minute documentary. These three digital video works have different relationships to indexicality and technical support; they pursue contrasting aesthetic strategies and address the spectator in particular ways. It would still be pedantic to deny that they are all instances of film, but the presence of a film is not enough to produce cinema.

In their work on the serial births and deaths of cinema, André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion hold on to an embattled sense of medium specificity, but they recognize it as porous and itself intermedial. In that sense, thinking about 'what people have called "cinema"' reveals the limits of the language of post-mediality (Gaudreault and Marion 2015, 3): To speak of post-cinema in the context of post-mediality is to confuse cinema for a medium, when the medium is only a component of a system that has its own historical inflections.

Those who lament the death of cinema often identify a different body: cinema as public, collective experience, in a dedicated space, perhaps using a certain technology. Socially valued forms of spectatorship, from mass popular audience 'innocence' to cinephile commitment, have been invoked as boundary conditions for cinematic experience (Sontag 1996). On the other hand, pragmatic or relativistic approaches are supported by the observation that 'there has never been an unified phenomenon called 'cinema' [but] a diversity of *dispositifs* through which moving pictures could be experienced' (Kessler and Lenk 2016, 307). By making the dispositive plural, it can be historicized, but this requires some revision of the theoretical roots of the concept.

Dispositif is one of the most productive and sometimes contentious words in film studies. The French word, used by Foucault in the *History of Sexuality* to mean a system of relations between heterogeneous elements, was introduced into film studies by Jean-Louis Baudry, notably in a 1974 article which describes the cinematographic *dispositif* as part of the 'basic cinematographic apparatus' (which also includes the means and processes of production of the film). Baudry describes the

projection room as a close relation of Plato's cave, which already expressed a 'desire which haunts the invention of cinema' (Baudry 1985, 697). The key power of this parallel thinking is to infer from the architectural similarities between cinema and cave a similarly subjected/enslaved viewer. In presence of 'the darkened room and the screen bordered in black like a letter of condolences', those in it 'find themselves chained, captured, or captivated' (Baudry 1974, 44). From Plato's allegory, Baudry moves on to Lacan's 'mirror stage' as a process of constitution of the subject through acceptance of an imaginary order. This idea, with different theoretical inflections, is at the basis of various versions of so-called apparatus theory, which claimed that the material basis of production and consumption of moving images (the camera, the projector) was aligned with a psychic apparatus, a mechanism that allowed the individual to fantasize a sense of self through their seamless positioning in the film's machinery of vision. Its conceptual moves are summarized by Thomas Elsaesser as,

> the enforcement of the laws of Renaissance perspective; the Cartesian mind-body split; the fixed geometrical arrangement of the three main elements: screen, projector, spectator; and finally, the metaphoric association of this arrangement with Freud's (or Lacan's) concept of misrecognition […], and philosophical analogy with Plato's parable of the cave (Elsaesser 2011, 34).

As Elsaesser goes on to argue, the political suspicion of 'illusion' implied in this analogy is a form of 'cinephobia'. It discounts the realness of the experience. There is, however, a material core to apparatus theory, which offers a useful starting point for a materialist definition.

Subject-positioning theory has been mostly superseded by more empirically-informed theories of spectatorship that recognize both the audience's agency and their already overdetermined positions in ideological systems that are much bigger than the cinematic apparatus, such as patriarchal and colonial domination. The ascendancy of cultural studies as a dominant influence within film studies privileged these historically and socially grounded accounts of spectatorship over both materialist and psychoanalytical ones. In more recent years, however, the rise of media archaeology has led to a resurgence of interest in material bases and object relations. In this context, the dispositif is ready to make a comeback.

The most productive understanding of the term moves away from the deterministic implications of 'apparatus', instead going back to a notion of dispositif as *arrangement*. This use is consistent with Foucault's use of the term as a 'system of relations' between 'a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions' (Foucault 1980, 194). This relational approach is a useful way to look at the question of what cinema has been, because it brings together a physical materiality and a sense of history and process. It is concrete without being natural. So, what is this arrangement that has been called cinema? Elsaesser offers an idea of 'tactical alliance' where 'a *dispositif* of sound and vision is predicated on three elements that work together without being tethered together': a site, an extension in time, and a mode of address (Elsaesser, 2011, pp. 38–39). This sense of unfixed convergences is also proposed by Miriam de Rosa and Vincenz Hediger, who propose cinema as one of many configurations of the moving image, amongst a 'living

multiplicity' of forms that defy obituaries (De Rosa and Hediger 2016, 17–18). It is this notion of configuration that allows us to retain the material base without giving in to essentialist impulses for definition.

Three elements, not tethered together: an arrangement of things in space (including tools and information carriers); an arrangement of activity in time; and a discursive practice that produces a public. Because the articulations of that system have never been singular or stable, there is no need to invoke a historical or conceptual break to accommodate changes in material supports or institutional contexts; as De Rosa argues, 'the ontological interpretation of post-cinema […] is based upon a sense of permanence and immobility which I now think is inherently extraneous to cinema' (De Rosa and Hediger 2016, 10). Furthermore, whatever has been 'stabilized' in the operations of major cinema is what is substracted by its minor forms. The new assemblages may not end up being recognizable as cinema at all.

While resisting its potential essentialism, I am interested in the notion of dispositif as a way to push back against the de-materializing effects of some post-cinema or post-media writing. After all, the problematic ideological extrapolations of apparatus theory were predicated on a material base; unfortunately, that material analysis was limited and ahistorical. Much richer historical descriptions of the material base of cinema as a dispositif (an arrangement, that is to say, a configuration) are available, and I now turn to some of these in order to tease out some terms of analysis. By proposing a number of characteristics that can be observed empirically, I explain the emergent heuristic behind the mapping of various configurations of moving image exhibition in further chapters.

1.1. Configurations

In order to disentangle the material characteristics that may underpin these emergent impressions of cinema, let us start with a hegemonic definition: cinema is 'a film projected in a movie theatre in the dark for the fixed duration of a screening that is to varying degrees collective' (Raymond Bellour quoted in Gaudreault and Marion 2015, 20). This has six salient elements: the content (a film), a visual technology (projection), an environmental condition (darkness), a socially demarcated, architecturally specific space (a movie theatre), an extension in time (the duration of a screening), and an expectation of co-presence with other spectators. This is, then, an understanding of cinema predicated on a mix of material and social features. Anne Friedberg offers a more abstracted but similar definition of the cinematic experience, requiring a 'dark room with projected luminous images' (darkness + projection), a single viewing opportunity (time), a framed image on a flat screen surface, and an immobile spectator in a non-interactive relationship with the image (Friedberg 1993, 133–134). The 'collective' is replaced in this version with the individual, which reflects the latter author's concern with spectatorship at a time of social atomization, but the space and technologies are equivalent.

Gabriele Pedullà gives a very similar account of six characteristics of the 'cinematic viewing model', including the strict separation of the auditorium, controlled darkness, and a large screen as some of the material underpinnings of a behavioural code, now in crisis (Pedullà 2012, 32–34). Francesco Casetti reflects on Tacita Dean's installation, *Film*, finding in it 'all the principal elements of cinema, those that characterize its material basis': a projector, a screen, a dark room, a bench, and 35mm film stock (Casetti 2015, 17). Across these disparate theoretical works, a core of material conditions starts to emerge. Superimposing these descriptions reveals five common *spatial* characteristics, from which the sprawling tangle of moving image practices I discuss in later chapters divert by substraction. Taking a probabilistic approach to this cinema ontology, a situation is more likely to be described as 'cinema' the more it involves these physical configurations:

1. *Separation* from the outside
2. *Projection* of moving images
3. Darkness
4. Screen – a framed image on a flat surface
5. A bench or space for an immobile spectator

There are many other elements invoked by different authors, and indeed in vernacular definitions. Pedullà, for instance, defines the spectator as silent as well as still. Perhaps out of respect to silent cinema none of the accounts list amplified sound as a requisite, but this may also be a product of film studies' long-standing visual bias. In contrast, I consider sound insulation a key part of the auditorium's separation, and the amplification of recorded sound as part of the process of projection. The conditions for a big screen image and amplified sound are governed by multiple technical standards that change and proliferate over time, without necessarily replacing each other fully. Over the course of my research I have watched films projected from 16mm and 35mm celluloid, a variety of video formats shown on large TVs, consumer-grade projectors, 4K digital projectors, and giant LED screens. Some of them have had digital surround sound, some a stereo soundtrack, some have no synchronized sound and instead open up a space for live sound creation, from the Wurlitzer organ to beatbox sampling. All these technologies of cinema can exist at the same time and they can all be part of an experience that is recognizable as cinema. This does not mean that the differences between them do not matter to the overall phenomenon.

There are, beyond this seemingly common-sense material basis, a few elements that do not overlap: Bellour's terms 'a movie theatre' and 'collective' ('communal' in Pedullà), and Friedberg's 'non-interactive' relationship to the image. 'Movie theatre' itself could be taken to mean a physical arrangement (four walls and roof, dark, rake, with seats, a screen, sound amplification, a box office) or a socially designated use of space, so it is ambiguous. Broadly speaking, this is the 'Plato's cave' model of cinematic spectatorship that underpinned apparatus theory. The theoretical model emerged precisely at the time when a specific historical configuration of the apparatus was in decline, and this formalization and essentialization may have been a defensive move. However, as Casetti goes on to

argue while reflecting on Tacita Dean's work, it produces the experience of an art installation, not of cinema. These material configurations, therefore, are only half of the story.

Against these first five dimensions of paradigmatic cinema experience, we can test the three screenings from the start of the chapter and find them lacking. They all feature projectors and moving images, but that is the extent of their compliance. The event at the Winter Gardens came closest to a classical situation but we were forced into self-consciousness through the lack of darkness. The mobile outdoor projection described in the second example runs under the title of *A wall is a screen*, while playing on the fact that a wall is *not* really a screen: It exploits the irregularities of the surface to bring this anomaly into the experience, and it does not offer an enclosed space nor a place for viewers to sit and watch. The third screening, taking place in a tiny garden shed, comes paradoxically closest to ticking all the boxes, but the enclosure of the space does not result in a forgetting of the location. The awareness of being in a garden, the intimacy of the enclosed space, and the interaction with other viewers and with the projector, all make this a very unusual assemblage of those elements.

This is then a question of recognition. Casetti's insistence in the survival of cinema as a form of experience moves away from technological definitions to point out that different material elements can be re-arranged into something recognizable, that is, a cinematic attentiveness. This move against apparatus theory is consistent with other revisions of it that come from cultural studies and new cinema history. This is the insistence that whatever power the cinematic experience can exert upon us does not come only – or at all – from an arrangement of physical elements that replicates a geometry of subjectivity. Instead, Casetti considers cinema as both a material base and a 'cultural form', the activation of a type of experience. He reaches the definition of 'a kind of central nucleus':

> At the cinema, we face screened moving images; these images surprise us and take hold of us; they lead us directly to living reality, forcing us to see it again in its fullness. Simultaneously, they feed our imagination, opening us up to the possible; they provide a knowledge and an awareness, and they make us live in unison with other spectators (Casetti 2015, 24–25)

This is an experience-centred definition of cinema, and it shares much with the accusations of absorption and illusionism that Elsaesser criticizes in Baudry. However, the last line there makes an important shift: *other spectators*. Co-presence or collectivity are mentioned in several of the accounts above as a distinguishing feature of cinema vis-à-vis other forms of moving image consumption, especially those that now constitute the majority of screen interactions. The cinema as a shared space may be imbued with a sense of the public or the communal, identified as a site of intimate encounters or external displays of cultural capital, felt as an arena of communion or distinction. In many of these accounts, however, a crucial aspect of this sociability is overlooked: the labour. The material and sensory definitions offered above are the consequence of decisions, practices and behaviours, that is, the result of collective labour, formal and informal, paid and unpaid, which allows cinema to crystallize as an emergent phenomenon. Cinema is something people do, as much as a place they go to. The social dimension of cinema is imbricated with its spatiality, but it draws attention to other

vectors; it forces us to think about time and process, and about the intersubjective agreements that allow it to happen. The 'imperfection' of non-theatrical exhibition is productive because it makes those 'supporting protocols' less transparent.

1.2.   Protocols

Protocols are 'a vast clutter of normative rules and default conditions, which gather and adhere like a nebulous array around a technological nucleus' (Gitelman 2006, 7). If the configuration of screen, sound, and spectator – the apparatus – gives us a core, cinema as a protocol cannot be defined simply as an alignment of these material elements. These make sense only when embedded in the cloud of social expectations that define what is happening as cinema, and that bring into existence the behaviours that sustain it. If these are 'normative' expectations around 'default' configurations, it follows that they are neither natural nor existing to the exclusion of all else.

Having described the material *configuration* of objects and conditions that clusters around the cinematic apparatus, moving on to a notion of protocol helps historicize it. The protocol draws attention to the production of these material conditions, and furthermore to the aspects of the dispositif (the arrangement) that are not tangible. If the notion of configuration draws attention to space, protocol conditions are time-based. Moving images are a time-based form, and the cinematic experience self-evidently unfolds over time. Alongside this sensory and narrative time, however, the activity of watching films also occupies and intersects with the everyday, with social time, and it is in these interactions that useful analytical differences emerge. The cinema protocol establishes temporal and spatial boundaries to the experience of the medium, which are different from those that one may establish for the same kind of object in another environment. Amongst the possible relationships, some normative characteristics of 'cinema' include:

1. Protected time
2. Public address
3. Division of labour
4. Behaviour codes
5. Discursive marking

Cinemagoing, like some spectator sports and other leisure pursuits, offers audiences a sense of appointment, the ability to disconnect from the everyday for a controlled and predictable amount of time. This sense of appointment also structures sociability around cinema times, as it enables local and global forms of synchronization (Acland 2003, 62). The temporality of normative cinema is connected to the way it addresses an imagined public, and thus it enables the emergence of a self-organized collective of strangers through shared attention (Warner 2002, 76). When people share a screening space, they enter into an empirical relationship with strangers, but also into an imagined one as part of a public. This imagined stranger-relationality is inscribed in how the event is framed and promoted. For instance, one of the ways in which Radical Home Cinema is different from watching films at home with friends, is that there are specific screening times and dates, which are published,

and for which people can sign up. This invokes the temporal protocol of the cinema screening in order to set controlled boundaries to the opening up of private space. However, the fragility of the protocol is also evident when the film finishes. As compared to a commercial cinema where protocol indicates that the auditorium is to be vacated as soon as the credits roll, the overlap between the film screening and the social visit protocols blur the temporal edges of the event. Just getting up and leaving is rude – in the cinema, the opposite would be true.

Like time, space is also demarcated through discourse and convention. A cinema setting often involves paying for access to a space made semi-public. However, the exchange of money is not a defining characteristic of cinema in itself, but one of the possible ways to organize access to spaces, and, importantly, to establish a division of labour. In the normative cinema situation, roles are clearly divided. There is the patron and the worker. Their interactions follow a simple script, and few deviations are expected. Amongst the staff, there is the front of house/projection booth divide, as well as the management/staff split. The audience are not supposed to do any work in the production of the show, and indeed their contributions would be unwelcome. This crosses over into a code of behaviour for the audience. There is no need to posit a single, overarching code of cinema etiquette to understand that there is always *some* form or forms of code being negotiated. When and how one should go in and get a seat; when and how one can talk, laugh, look at one's phone, or walk out; these are contextual and group-sensitive rules, but staff and customers may become disgruntled if they are broken.

Finally, cinema can be a performative word, a use of language that demarcates aspects of experience. The fact that something has been *named* as cinema communicates expectations and therefore informs the behaviour of those who take part. Just as documentary can claim a connection to reality even if the photographic index is broken, cinema as a *categorical intention* can operate across many breaks in concrete practice (Nannicelli and Turvey 2016, 38). The garden shed screening was part of a series called 'Radical Home Cinema', which sets up a different expectation than, for instance, 'home video'. In this case, naming this 'cinema' produces for the event the associations with publicness and protected time that adhere to the theatrical context. Its gesture challenges the privatizing underpinnings of 'parlour cinema', as discussed by Barbara Klinger, and it resignifies the phrase 'home cinema' by placing emphasis on the collectivity of 'cinema' rather than the isolationism of 'home' (Klinger 2006).

The discursive construction of something as cinema does not need to be verbal. Visual and aural cues that reference the classic theatrical experience are often used: images of velvet curtains and analogue projection equipment, or the fanfare of Pearl and Dean adverts or the Twentiethenlis Century Fox ident. There are established shorthand signifiers that can be drawn upon to label an event as cinema. In fact, these signifiers of the 'classic viewing situation' have acquired an even greater power, with obsolescence serving as an irritant that helps stabilize a system (Elsaesser 2011). Film festival livery and all the discursive scaffolding of such events serves to bring new films, and even new media

forms, into the fold of 'cinema'. But the most assured sign that something is promised to the audience as cinema is the presence of a *film*. People attend with a disposition and expectations shaped by previous encounters with the moving image, with its different genres and qualities. Therefore, the type of text placed at the centre of the event is part of its symbolic construction, rather than an independent variable. In other words, film is defined by cinema as much as cinema is defined by film. The presence of something that conforms more or less closely to expectations of a film is part of the broader protocol through which an event can be branded discursively as cinema.

Placing the film at the very end of this series of considerations is intended to help denaturalize the patterns observed. It moves attention towards assemblages rather than objects or categories. Reframing ontological discussions around this pragmatic focus, a combination of (spatial) configurations and (social) protocols will serve as the baseline against which the minoritarian exerts its substractions and reorderings. They can be summarized for analytical purposes, even though they do not describe historically-existing experiences or modes of practice (Table 1):

Table 1: Configurations and protocols

Configurations	Protocols
Separation from the outside	Protected time
Projection of moving images and sound	Public address
Darkness	Division of labour
Screen (a framed image on a flat surface)	Behaviour codes
A space for an immobile audience to sit	Discursive marking

If ever these ten conditions occurred at the same time, it was a rare occurrence. The closest example may have been Peter Kubelka's 'invisible cinema', a 'machine designed for film viewing', seeking to protect viewers from any distraction (Sitney 2005, 103). It was a 'dark cube', a direct relation of the 'white cube' gallery space that had such a crucial role in the establishment of modern art. Kubelka's idea of an absolutely black space where only the screen was visible, and where spectators were discouraged from any interaction, is connected to his interest (shared with a large sector of the film avant-garde) in the 'essence' of cinema, that which cannot be communicated in any other way. This modernist desire to enter into a pure, disinterested communion with the work of art still underpins modes of spectatorship associated with the arthouse.

The 'invisible cinema' was, however, a countercultural gesture. This modernist ideal of undivided attention remains a niche pursuit. Perhaps, as Hediger argues, channeling Latour's claim that 'we have never been modern', cinema has never existed as a pure, distinct and autonomous phenomenon, that is, as an art form in the modernist tradition (De Rosa and Hediger 2016, 10). The cinema as 'a black and silent room in which there are no noises or other sounds from the outside world' where people 'remain seated doing nothing else for two hours' (Kubelka, interviewed by Korossi 2013) is a historical anomaly, and minoritarian in its own way.

The diversity of exhibition sites throughout the history of moving pictures is already well known. Travelling cinema in fairgrounds across Europe, or trains in the Soviet Union, or Chautauquas in the United States are vivid examples (Kepley 1994; Loiperdinger 2008; Rossell 2000; Waller 1990). There are the various types of outdoor screens from the World Fairs to the drive-ins, and in many waves of advertising strategy from the sponsored show to the electronic billboard. Projectors have found their way into schools, hospitals and prisons; on boats and airplanes; at the battle front and in the religious mission. As Wasson and Acland write, '[m]ovies seem to appear everywhere […] they are integral to our experience of institutional and everyday life.'(2011, 2) As with the digital cinema transition, the digitally-enabled proliferation of public screens may be more a question of degree rather than a historical rupture.

In Scotland, fairgrounds, music halls and public halls were the key sites for early cinema, but not the only ones by any means. In the big houses of the landed estates, lairds organized Hogmanay (New Year) celebrations that often included a film show, provided by a traveling lantern lecturer, for the tenants' children (Vélez-Serna 2018, 23). Department stores and indoor markets attracted punters with the novelty of the cinematograph, and ice-skating rinks used it to entertain those waiting for their turn. After full-time commercial cinemas were built from 1908 onwards, travelling exhibition retreated to institutional and promotional contexts, while some local authorities invested in projectors for schools and conducted research on educational uses of screen media (Bohlmann 2016, 129–135). Throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century, nurtured by cinephile film societies and rural development programmes, non-theatrical exhibition thrived in diverse varieties from the didactic to the elitist, infiltrating civic spaces as well as private residences, hotels and stations, anywhere where at least some of the conditions of cinema could be conjured up.

This book approaches these lines of continuity with a genealogical intention, but not necessarily a linear one. Rather than attempting to trace every step in a continuous passage from an old form of media practice to a recent one, I aim to acknowledge that other histories have been possible and have often been forgotten about by the time a new version of the same idea comes around. These are discontinuous lineages that would not serve to establish a pedigree, which is par for the course in this hybrid history.

Even the notion of a 'permanent' or 'full-time' cinema is unstable. Dedicated cinema spaces, by virtue of being commercial enterprises in a capitalist economy, are exposed to considerable risk. One way to deal with this challenge has been the diversification of activities and income streams. Cinemas in Scotland have been sites for concerts, pageants, tombolas, and public information lectures. They have hosted political rallies and local council meetings, fundraising and enlisting for two world wars, and are also routinely hired for private functions. The screen itself is not a preserve of 'cinema': it has displayed Roll of Honour photographs and football results, while digital projection is now bringing livecast performances, video games and special television transmissions into cinema spaces. The permutations are so many that the arbitrariness of the ten features outlined in Table 1 may seem

unjustifiable. The variability and uniqueness of each encounter between audience and film is at risk of being underplayed. And yet, as Acland argues, 'it would be an equally grave mistake to assert that there is no connection or consistency between each of those viewing conditions. Indeed, a chief operation of the film apparatus has been to assure and promote this consistency' (Acland 2003, 47). Like the proverbial Greek ship, cinema may have had all its parts replaced over time, but there is a connection – in name, function, and social use.

1.3.   Conclusion

To speak of cinema is still to mean something. There are no essential, non-negotiable conditions, but there are clusters of elements that are activated by proximity; some overlap between these is necessary. There is a materiality to this clustering, but it is the product of historical agency, including both social arrangements and discourses that cannot be taken for granted. Cinema may be a concept in permanent crisis, but that does not stop it from working. Indeed, as Elsaesser insists, 'our media technologies tend to be culturally most productive, when *their disruptive and failure-prone dimensions* are taken into consideration in addition to their performativity' (Elsaesser 2011, 40). As Balsom puts it, citing Bellour, '"the historical and formal singularity of cinema" [as a hegemonic dispositif] has shattered into its aggregate parts, which are now free to enter into new constellations with elements once foreign to it' (Balsom 2013, 16). It is this fragmentary and composite existence that the following chapters document.

The examples above, and the many others included in later chapters, are understandable as cinema in an impure and partial sense, rather than as an independent category. The mode of experience they offer emerges at fleeting intersections between objects, spaces, bodies, ways of doing things and of talking about them. None of these aspects is sufficient on its own, but not all are necessary at the same time. They have tended to cluster together around the dedicated cinema theatre, but this contingent association has been proven to be unstable. The cinema is no longer (if it ever was) defined by a building. The next chapter examines where and how cinema appeared in Scotland during a period of fieldwork, and uses this as an empirical test for the theoretical categories outlined above.

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Chapter 2. Relocations: Mapping the non-theatrical field in Scotland

Abstract: This chapter explains the parameters of the empirical research that underpins the book's discussion of non-theatrical exhibition. It does so by first unpacking the concepts of 'non-theatrical', 'ephemeral', and 'pop-up', in relation to scholarly and policy use. These overlapping categories define situations where the cinema configurations and protocols outlined in Chapter 1 transform spaces. The chapter then lays out the composition of the fieldwork sample and the methodological approach, which is purposive and informed by a genealogical sense of multiple histories. Finally, the chapter points to the four strands of exhibition practice developed in the rest of the book.

Key words: non-theatrical exhibition, pop-up cinema, ephemeral cinema, fairground bioscope, Scotland

The conditions that framed the public life of the moving image in 2018 are radically different from those of a hundred, fifty, or even ten years earlier. However, if 'cinema' continues to exist as a meaningful concept, it does so by connecting to historical forms of collective experience, even as they shatter and recombine. Outside institutional spaces, this precarious continuity does not refer to a building or a commercial transaction, but to a core of sociability, an emergent form of sharing time and space. In this sense, stories of non-theatrical exhibition are not only picturesque examples sitting at the margins of institutional cinema, or preceding it as 'primitive' forms. Instead, they are moments of intensity where one can observe the emergence of temporary but intentional sociabilities. This ephemerality and multiplicity poses interesting questions of approach and method.

At the core of the research that produced this book is fieldwork conducted in Scotland over a two-year period, between 2015 and 2017, during which I attended nearly two hundred film screenings. I set out to observe and document the spaces, programming, physical set-up and presentation of each event, while reflecting on my own experience as a member of the audience, and establishing informal contacts with other people involved. I adopted some of the ethnographer's tools, capturing these observations in field notes of varying levels of detail, which, coupled with site photographs, ephemera, and archival research, inform the more distinct case studies throughout the book.

It is useful to situate the stories that populate the chapters below with the awareness that they represent a small proportion of the screening activity taking place in Scotland at the time. Wherever possible, I have referred to UK and international examples that resonate with my local observations, but any direct parallels would be unwarranted. Meanwhile, the taxonomies that have helped me make

sense of this complex landscape are drawn from scholarly and institutional sources, and drawn on pragmatic rather than ontological terms. In combination with the framework offered in the previous chapter, this taxonomy can be a useful tool to explore other contexts. This chapter then shifts away from analytical classification and towards a historical, or rather genealogical, approach. This is a way of respecting the hybridity of contemporary and past practices, without denying the possibility of change.

Understanding how funding organizations categorize exhibitors is a good way to survey exhibition activity, and thus the chapter starts by untangling institutional classifications as they have been used in Scotland. I then open up the terms used most often in academic writing about non-theatrical exhibition: ephemeral, pop-up, improvised, and interstitial cinema. Finally, I argue that tracing the long history of non-theatrical exhibition, even in an episodic manner, reveals the impure lineages that link past and present cinema. What emerges are four constellations of cinema experiences, characterized by the dominant functions assigned to the presence of cinema in a space. These roles unfold in the parallel histories of *cinema as civic amenity*, *cinema as cultural or subcultural consumption, cinema as an ancillary activity in support of other specialist interests*, and *exhibition as a creative practice*. This is a ground-up attempt to map a functional family tree for non-theatrical cinema. It originates from field observations, in specific circumstances that demand some explanation.

2.1. The fieldwork sample

The stories and examples I discuss are drawn from a corpus of 195 screenings I attended personally. This was not intended to constitute a representative sample; it was shaped by the opportunities available to one researcher living in Glasgow and working in Stirling, around thirty miles away in the central area of Scotland. With a limited budget and no car, most of the events I attended had to be accessible by public transport. Delimiting the scope to Scotland was therefore a pragmatic decision, rather than a claim to distinctiveness. However, Scotland's size and the density of activity in the region offer a manageable and interesting range. While Glasgow accounts for three-quarter of the events I attended, there was a deliberate effort to include observations from across the land, so the rest of the sample ranges from the southernmost community cinema on the Scottish mainland, to a public hall in Shetland. In total, I recorded 130 different locations at twenty-six towns (**Error! Reference source not found.**). Timing was crucial to the selection of these sites. For one thing, the concentration of film screening activity around the weekend and at certain times of the year meant that clashes were inevitable. In addition, events were often programmed with little advance notice, and being able to respond to the dynamics of the field was important.
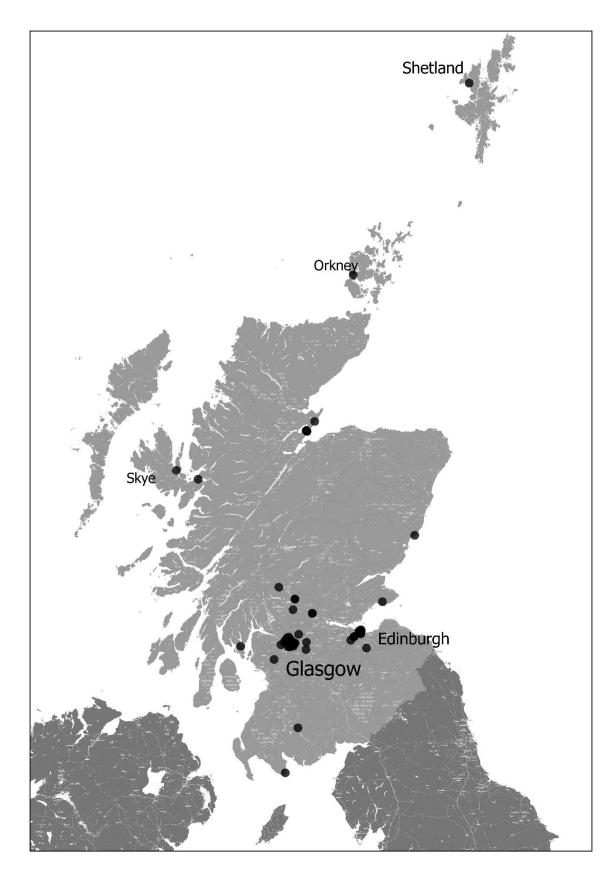
Figure 1: Locations of screenings attended in Scotland

The project aimed to let definitions emerge from the fieldwork rather than impose an analytical grid to fill with examples. The collection and analysis of observations thus progressed together. I continued visiting new sites, following opportunity and relevance, until I reached theoretical saturation. There is, therefore, no implication of typicality; the sample sought to capture the widest possible diversity of practices, rather than the most representative.

A better sense of typicality can be gained from the quantitative overviews provided by official entities. During the research period, there were two main agencies responsible for supporting film exhibition in Scotland, mainly by allocating funds from the National Lottery: Film Hub Scotland, which was the devolved regional administrator for exhibition-related funding from the British Film Institute; and Creative Scotland, the public arts support body, which also distributed funds from the Scottish Government.[1] Further support is channelled through independent but supported organizations such as Regional Screen Scotland, which manages targeted programmes for rural communities. At the time of writing, exhibitors in Scotland were also eligible for European Union funding programmes, though these tend to have much larger ambitions and are therefore not relevant for most independent projects.

These agencies have usually categorized the organizations they support on the basis of their type of venue, their dominant type of programming, and/or their funding model. These classifications are functional to each agency's objective. For instance, Regional Screen Scotland has a remit to support cinema exhibition outside the four main Scottish cities (Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen, which together are home to about 40% of the country's 5.3 million people). As part of their work, Regional Screen map provision and access to cinema using five categories: Multiplexes, Independent Cinemas (with four screens or fewer), Multi-Arts Venues, Community Cinemas, and Community Groups. The non-metropolitan focus of Regional Screen's activity thus results in a mixed taxonomy, capturing both types of venues and types of organizations. This complicates the comparability of the data.

The first three categories (Multiplexes, Independent Cinemas, and Multi-Arts Venues), which describe buildings, are fairly consistent across different diagnostics of the exhibition landscape, including the British Film Institute's Statistical Yearbooks. However, the last two of Regional Screen's categories differentiate between types of exhibition activity that may take place in the same sort of venue, namely, a multi-purpose space such as a village hall. The distinction made by Regional Screen between community cinemas and community groups is that the former are focused and constituted expressly to run screenings, whereas the latter use film as part of a broader remit. A more recent report, commissioned by Creative Scotland, differentiates instead between Community Cinemas and Film Societies on the basis that the latter are expected to have a membership structure, and it does not mention film exhibition by non-dedicated groups (Drew Wylie Projects 2016). This report brings in two new categories on top of the previous ones: Festivals and Mobile or touring cinemas. As the authors acknowledge, the categories outlined 'are sometimes difficult to disentangle' (Drew Wylie

Projects 2016, 19). A way to tease out the contradictions within these models is by separating space and practice.

First, it must be clear when the category is meant to describe the venue, and when it is used to classify the exhibitor. The desire or demand to map provision justifies a venue-based approach to cinema taxonomies in the examples above, where venues can be divided into dedicated and non-dedicated cinema spaces. Dedicated spaces include multiplexes, IMAX screens, or independent brick-and-mortar cinemas, but also, I argue, mobile cinemas such as the Screen Machine, which are in fact dedicated cinema spaces.[2] Non-dedicated cinema spaces recognized in the existing studies include multi-arts venues and multi-purpose venues. While arts centres and village halls do account for a significant proportion of non-theatrical exhibition, limiting the scope to these more institutional venues excludes a vast array of non-theatrical sites, in particular those with less frequent cinema uses. I thus propose to extend the spectrum of venue descriptions to include commercial premises such as cafés and shops, domestic spaces, and finally pop-up structures, including outdoor cinema screens. Table 2 shows how the fieldwork sample is distributed along these categories, and how it compares to the broader landscape of cinema venues.

Table 2: Venue taxonomy in Scotland

Venue taxonomy	From Wylie 2016 (Creative Scotland)	Venues in the sample	Events In the sample
Dedicated cinema spaces			
Multiplexes	36		
Independent cinemas	26		
Mobile cinemas	62 (counting separate locations for Screen Machine)	3 (separate locations of Screen Machine)	3
Non-dedicated spaces			
Multi-arts venues	47	27	56
Multi-purpose venues	(category is not used but community cinemas = 45 and film clubs/societies = 60)	45	52
Commercial premises	N/A	28	47
Domestic spaces	N/A	9	10
Pop-up structures	N/A	18	27
Total	345	132	195

The present study, however, needs to look beyond the focus on venues. A taxonomy that accounts for different types of exhibitor must be separate from that of fixed-site auditoria, allowing for people and groups to operate across spaces. Leaving aside exhibitors operating a full-time venue, we find

discussions of exhibition practice along these strands: Community cinemas, community groups, film societies, festivals, and touring operators without a venue (i.e. outside the cinema-on-wheels model). This focus on formally constituted groups is justified by the institutional focus of the reports cited, but it inevitably excludes other types of exhibitor that are less visible to policy bodies. These include private individuals, non-membership-based film clubs, and commercial promoters, such as non-cinema companies using cinema for advertising and PR purposes. As this sector is more disparate, comparing my opportunistic sample with this broader horizon was particularly challenging. The most complete data available was a spreadsheet compiled by film festival organizer Sean Welsh in the summer of 2017, to which he generously granted me access.

Table 3 refers to Welsh's data to classify events according to the type of exhibitor responsible for organizing, while also noting that many events involved a collaboration with another type of exhibition agent, most often a festival. The comparison suggests that the sample over-represents film clubs and community groups, and underrepresents film societies. The ambiguity in definitions, for instance between film society and community cinema, produces a large error margin. In contrast to the existing data, then, my sample includes a significant number of one-off screenings organized by individuals or non-cinema organizations, which are not documented by screen-focused datasets. The research thus helped document the more elusive forms of practice, those that exist on the margins of institutionality or outside the purview of cultural policy, and are often unaccounted for.

Table 3: Exhibitor taxonomy in Scotland

Exhibitor taxonomy	Events in the sample (+collaborations)	Separate exhibitors in the sample	Exhibitors in Sean Welsh's table
Venues (all kinds)	5	3	81
Community cinemas and film societies	12 (+4)	12	97
Film clubs	38	17	54
Festivals	74 (+59)	14	50
Non-profit non-cinema organizations (community groups not focused on cinema)	23 (+2)	21	5*
Touring exhibitors and commercial pop-ups	22	9	N/A
Individuals and academic projects	15	13	N/A
Other	6	6	26
Total	195	95	313

Other elements could contribute to ever more complex taxonomies of the cinema event. The architectural features and seating arrangement of the space are relevant and not identical with the

venue classification: for example, is it an auditorium with tiered seating, or a flat hall with cabaret-style tables? The geographical context (urban/suburban/rural) and relative remoteness also change the purpose and meaning of, for instance, a community cinema initiative. The way in which audiences relate to a space is informed by previous habituation to its uses as a site for consumption or co-production of their experience, prefiguring more or less active engagements. Funding models are widely divergent, from national arts funding to audience donations. All these vectors produce an endless multiplicity of combinations, overlaps and contradictions that can be brought into the analysis.

In academic and critical writing, however, three words dominate attempts to grapple with this shifting terrain: non-theatrical, ephemeral, and pop-up. These were not necessarily words used by the people organizing or promoting the events, and indeed were sometimes rejected. However, they offer tools for analysis and a vocabulary that gives nuance to impermanence. In the following chapters, these terms are used with different emphases, and their validity as analytical lenses is put to the test. They remain imperfect, contested categories.

2.2. Non-theatrical

If the three terms above (non-theatrical, ephemeral, pop-up) are hierarchically nested, 'non-theatrical' is the broader term. It has indeed been interpreted in such divergent ways as to require multiple clarifications.

Firstly, non-theatrical film can refer to a whole range of production genres not destined for commercial big-screen circulation, such as training videos and intra-company media; this is not the sense in which I am using the term, as this is not a book about films. Refocusing the lens on non-theatrical *exhibition* raises other issues. For the film industry, the term covers ancillary markets such as airlines, hotels and hospitals, which may want to license films that are then made available to passengers and guests. Again, this does not reflect my use of the term, since those are generally small-screen, private viewing situations, rather than the public events discussed here.

In her work on the non-theatrical as 'cinema's shadow', Barbara Klinger offers a less restricted and more multidimensional definition, referring to 'the presentation of a commercial title after its initial theatrical run in a medium other than 35mm and/or in a space distinct from cinema's official dedicated venue, the motion picture theater' (2007, 274). While challenging the implicit construction of the 'theatrical' as a fixed constant, Klinger's vision of non-theatrical exhibition as 'cinema in an unexpected place, unleashed from its customary domain' (2007, 274) recognizes it as an anchor point. Having said that, the binary suggested by the negative term obscures the interdependence and fluidity of both modes of exhibition. In this sense, Wasson and Acland's formulation of 'useful cinema' (a term that overlaps but is not coterminous with the non-theatrical) is illuminating. In their analysis, the 'mobility, hybridity, and malleability' of the non-theatrical sector are fundamental to an explanation of how movies became 'integral to our experience of institutional and everyday life' (Wasson and Acland 2011, 4). This attention to cinema's relationship with other institutions, such as those of

education and civic life, opens up a different way of thinking about cinema's own institutionality and therefore its publicness.

Klinger's work focuses on the home as a site of non-theatrical exhibition, incorporating the many cross-media mutations and adaptations through which 'Hollywood's empire extended further into private space' (2007, 275). The porousness of the border between public and private spheres of experience when it comes to film consumption is one of the key insights drawn from observing non-theatrical exhibition. This instability is explored elsewhere in this book, but, as a practice, home viewing is categorically different from other forms of non-theatrical exhibition, due to the types of organization, coordination and publicity involved in the latter. Examples of screenings in domestic spaces are discussed in Chapter 7, but only where they were situated as part of public events such as festivals and made available - in principle, at least - to strangers. Screenings within schools, universities, hospices, care homes, prisons, and other such institutions are a more ambiguous area. These institutional contexts have attracted the attention of historians, who have foregrounded the importance of these circuits in the emergence and consolidation of film culture. Cinema in the classroom has been studied in very different historical contexts, from the US (Orgeron, Orgeron, and Streible 2012) to Czechoslovakia (Česálková 2012) to Medellín, Colombia (Franco Díez 2013, 116) and Glasgow (Bohlmann 2019). Regarding prisons, Alison Griffiths' account of early 20th-century American penitentiaries and asylums places cinema as a stake in discussions about reform and punishment, as does Lacruz's research on Uruguay's political prisons during the dictatorship (Lacruz 2015; A. Griffiths 2016). Fewer contemporary studies exist, though interesting examples include work on children's hospitals (Omelczuk, Fresquet, and Medieros Santi 2015) and care homes (Salzberg et al. 2016). There is thus a vast area of non-theatrical exhibition that remains outside the scope of the present project.

2.3. Ephemeral

For that part of the non-theatrical sector embedded in bigger institutions, the term 'ephemeral' seems unhelpful. Most of the screenings take place in permanent buildings, and some screening programmes, such as film societies and festivals, have been running for decades. When I approached them with a participant information form that said 'ephemeral cinema' at the top, several of my interviewees objected to the implication of disposability. On the other hand, on a more philosophical level *all* cinema is ephemeral: its medium is time-based and its social existence is always a fleeting convergence of space, people and impressions. There is no single definition of ephemerality, as it would require first an agreement on the timescale against which it is measured. However, it is possible to distinguish between different modalities and rhythms in the transience of film exhibition. For the purposes of the discussions throughout the rest of the book, I define as ephemeral a temporary use of a multi-purpose permanent space, or a part- or full-time use of a temporary structure. To the extent that

non-theatrical exhibition seeks to become sustainable, it does so by pursuing regularity rather than permanence, so it remains recurrently ephemeral. Other forms of exhibition, meanwhile, foreground an intentional ephemerality, and make transience part of their appeal.

The social coding of a space can have a long and a short-term dimension. A purpose-built cinema is imbued with a social meaning that operates in the long term, producing expectations and behaviours coherent with 'cinema'. A different type of venue, such as a lecture theatre or a village hall, can acquire some of those associations only temporarily. When it does, the space may exist socially as an ephemeral cinema, but this definition will be overlaid on the longer-term use. If such a code-switch is enacted repeatedly, for instance by holding a weekly film club in a church hall or pub, the recurrence may start to erode or bleed into the longer-term meaning of the space, and even its material fabric. Recurrent or regular ephemeral cinema can thus have different consequences to one-off or 'extraordinary' ephemeral cinema. These differing approaches to temporality often respond to different needs and intentions. This intentionality – towards permanence or towards uniqueness – is an important vector when distinguishing between types of events, types of exhibitors and their motivations. On a practical level, then, when I talk about ephemerality I refer to an unfixed relationship between exhibitors (here defined as those who organize a film screening) and venues. This book fundamentally talks about cinema in borrowed, shared, or occupied spaces. Some exhibitors are more embedded in the venues they use than others, but they are still distinct entities with a degree of independence. Therefore, I have chosen to include in the analysis some exhibitors that occasionally use permanent cinema venues, as their presence in those spaces is still a temporary and ad-hoc one.

Any presence in a space transforms it, and when this occupation is done under the auspices of cinema different things may occur. Physical changes may be required, such as moving the seats or closing the blinds, and adapting the space for access and sensory needs of specific audience groups. Alongside this, behaviour expectations are negotiated, implicitly or explicitly, in order to make room for an experience recognizable as 'cinema' at this local level. This transformation thus involves a *relocation*, as defined by Francesco Casetti: 'the process by which the experience of a medium is reactivated and reproposed elsewhere than the place in which it was formed, with alternate devices and in new environment' (Casetti 2015, 28). So while some of the components of cinema as defined in the previous chapter, such as the screen, projector, or darkness, may reappear in this temporarily occupied space, the crucial movement is the ability of audiences to activate a 'cinematic attentiveness' and therefore to bring forth an experience of cinema that is recognizable as such. This recognition is always partial, unfixed, and relational, as part of a negotiated use of shared time and space.

2.4. Pop-up

The 'pop-up' may seem like the distillation of ephemerality. The current use of the term comes from architecture and it is mostly applied to low-budget constructions intended for temporary use of spaces

characterized as neglected or marginal. Its flexibility and speed made it a convenient strategy for 'austerity urbanism', while the promise of cultural value linked it to a longer history of urban renewal (Ferreri 2013; Bishop and Williams 2012). Temporary architecture has been a way for emerging designers to produce real work in the context of a financial crisis, and for planners and developers to draw attention to urban sites which they wish to valorize. As Shumi Bose argues, 'being temporary is key to producing value' in an 'experience economy' where the short life-span of the pop-up shop, restaurant, or cinema is amplified through social media. The ephemerality of the pop-up is then intentional and positively valued, but the term has come to be 'associated with commercial opportunism' and gentrification (Bose 2016, 66).

Over time, the term 'pop-up' has extended to temporary uses that do not involve construction of new structures, so 'pop-up cinema' is a term now applied more widely to the provision of a screen and projector. This extension allows non-theatrical exhibitors to benefit from the positive, trendy connotations of the term, but it is less useful for analysing the different relationships to space and ephemerality that characterize different practices. Here I retain the term 'pop-up' for new structures and outdoor screenings, that is, for purpose-built, dedicated temporary cinema spaces rather than temporary uses of other spaces. In that sense, paradoxically, pop-up cinemas, existing over days or weeks, are often less ephemeral than other forms of non-theatrical exhibition.

2.5. Improvised and insterstitial

In her study of rural film exhibition in the UK and Australia, Karina Aveyard introduces the category of 'improvised cinema' as a sub-set of 'grassroots cinema'. It is important to note that Aveyard's categories (a five-tier system) classify *cinemas*, understood as 'exhibition enterprises' but assumed to be based at one location, and it maps their 'core operational characteristics – screen capacity, management structure and commercial status' (Aveyard 2015, 7). In line with this, Aveyard defines improvised cinemas as small-time commercial operations, 'run by individuals in highly marginal circumstances where profitability is almost impossible to achieve' (2015, 109). This organizational mode is associated with 'makeshift' settings and isolated rural locations, and exemplified by the travelling exhibitors of the early twentieth century with their portable bioscopes. Aveyard includes both mobile exhibitors and 'makeshift operations in permanent locations' (2015, 117) in this category, using an example from the UK where a barn is used for monthly 16mm screenings organized by a cinephile couple. This approach thus focuses the non-theatricality of the exhibition practice at the level of organizational structure. It describes DIY exhibition, another term that will reappear in later chapters.

The marginality of some forms of exhibition, such as those described by Aveyard as 'improvised', contributes to the blurring of boundaries between private and public film-viewing contexts. Thinking about the kinds of audience behaviour that different contexts enable and encourage is another way to challenge the false dichotomy around the non-theatrical. In some cases, non-theatrical, community-led

film exhibition, as Miriam Ross argues, 'engages viewers in a public space that shares tendencies with the movie theatre, yet allows active input into the screened object in a manner that is often closer to home-viewing practice' (Ross 2013). Discussing examples from New Zealand and South America, Ross describes local, alternative practices as 'interstitial', using the collective, big screen viewing conditions of conventional cinema, but counteracting the disempowering aspects of the regimented theatrical situation by enabling greater audience interaction. Ad-hoc exhibition sites also often make the projection apparatus visible and susceptible to manipulation by the audience, involving spectators in the co-creation of the screening through the sort of media practices that have come to be linked with home viewing: pausing, rewinding, repeating.

While Ross focuses on audience practices, interstitiality can also be understood as a spatial variable. Ella Harris uses interstitiality as one of three 'key spatiotemporal imaginaries' mobilized by pop-up practices. Interstitiality here refers to the 'in-between' spaces and times that pop-ups occupy, filling the gaps in the urban fabric with consequences that may be critical but are more often consolatory (Harris 2015). Cinema's ability to dwell in the gaps and cracks of urban life makes it appealing as a relatively low-risk way to experiment with collective reclamations of space, but it may also serve to paper over those cracks, 'exacerbating rather than redressing urban social inequality' (Harvie 2013, 125). The tactical value of ephemerality cannot be taken for granted. Examining how temporary cinema spaces have existed and operated throughout history is a way to challenge over-optimistic claims, and to think more critically about longer-term trajectories. By historicizing the 'pop-up', I do not intend to claim that there is nothing new under the sun, but to offer a richer awareness of the patterns and expectations that shape film cultures.

2.6. Early ephemeral cinemas

The lineage that first comes to mind when thinking about pop-up events is that of the fairground. Film exhibition as a fairground attraction dates back to the early days of cinema in the UK, when showpeople adopted the new technological marvel as the latest in the series of optical illusions and shocking sensations that had included the phantasmagoria and the ghost show before. The fairground cinema was a fully mobile venue, with transportable equipment controlled by the exhibitor. Fairground caterers travelled along circuits determined by calendar customs and long-established traditions, visiting both large cities and smaller market towns (Vélez-Serna 2011). The bigger fairs could include many 'bioscopes', as the film shows were called, each showing a slightly different mix of amusing and exciting short films in large canvas tents with wooden forms (Toulmin 1994; Vélez-Serna 2018). In this noisy and crowded milieu, drumming up an audience to pay a penny to go into the darkened tent required a great deal of showmanship, with dancers, jugglers, boxers, and clowns all performing on the ornate frontages of the bioscope tents. These fold-away fronts also often included the great attraction of a steam-powered mechanical organ, with animated figurines making plenty of noise (Toulmin 2003, 62). The short film show inside the tent would thus be animated by all this

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hullaballoo. This attractions-based liveness is one of the key characteristics of this mode of exhibition, and it is found nowadays in popular, commercial forms of non-theatrical exhibition, such as Secret Cinema with its elaborate set designs and role-playing, or the fandom-inspired cosplay of horror festivals (Atkinson and Kennedy 2016; 2018).

The fair itself is defined by its short time-frame, lasting between a day and two weeks (Toulmin 2003). Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, the centrality of calendar customs as a determinant in annual patterns of leisure was weakened by urbanization and industrialization, which favoured more regular (and regulated) forms of fun (T. Griffiths 2010). The exceptionalism of the annual fair encouraged carnivalesque attitudes that did not sit well with more sober ideologies. It is interesting that precisely this relaxation of social norms has become a cornerstone of cultural policy and promotion through the 'festivalization' of cinema provision. While no longer tied to calendar customs, festivals are recurring exceptional events that produce a social pact, a time-out-of-time (Bazin 1955; Bennett and Woodward 2014). The contemporary film festival is, however, a very different beast, a product of contradictions and hybridities – and in most cases a fixed-site, brick-and-mortar cinema affair rather than an ephemeral city. It is in the overlap between the festival and the non-theatrical where the fairground lineage becomes most visible: where the ballyhoo takes centre stage, as in some of the special events in Glasgow Film Festival discussed in Chapter 6.

Showmanship practices are embedded in some examples of contemporary non-theatrical entertainment as spectacle, driving commercial appeal, or as liveness, reframing audience engagement and enhancing the uniqueness of the event. When the live mediation of film exhibition is foregrounded, the consequence is to emphasize the extraordinary rather than the reproducible. 'Experiential' and 'immersive' screenings have been used to add value to otherwise mundane programming, with techniques closely related to promenade theatre (Atkinson and Kennedy 2016). In the context of overwhelming access to moving images, it has become a truism for exhibitors that the viewing experience ought to offer something special and distinctive in order to attract the audience. From a marketing perspective, the unrepeatability of live and site-specific events works to drive up the scarcity and perceived value of the experience.

At the same time, liveness and site-specificity are critical positions in relation to film, as they embrace contingency over reproduction, and thus create zones of experiment and risk. This may take very different forms, from a discussion panel framing the films to a projection in a wave research tank where the water dances in sync with the sea on screen. There is extra labour creating added value in these screenings, but the motivation is not necessarily commercial. Rather, liveness offers a space for creative expression, for crafting connections to place and community, and to disrupt habits. This has been studied most comprehensibly in relation to film projection as an art form (Balsom 2013; Connolly 2009). While video and film installation in gallery contexts are beyond the boundaries of this study, the notion of site-specificity and the pursuit of curation and exhibition as a creative practice

will be revisited in Chapter 6, as they are inseparable from contemporary non-theatrical screen practice.

While fairground bioscopes set a precedent for the 'pop-up' as a temporary structure, other types of early exhibition thrived by occupying existing spaces. The music hall offered an ideal first home as the modular format of the entertainment allowed for the inclusion of the bioscope as a novelty act. However, the music hall audience alone would not have sufficed to make cinema into the popular art of the twentieth century. It was instead cinema's ability to occupy other public spaces that brought it into contact with a mass audience, in the cities as in the smaller towns and villages. Civic spaces have become a focus of attention for early cinema scholars, who have documented the presence of moving pictures in opera houses, parks, and meeting halls in the US, inns in provincial Sweden, a rural School of Arts in New South Wales, and so on (Jernudd 2012; Thissen 2012; Bowles 2007; Allen 2006; Gomery 1992; Waller 1989). In the UK, the public hall's role in introducing and legitimizing cinema has proven key to understanding the emergence of the film trade (Burrows 2010; Toulmin 2010; Brown 2004). Scotland, which had a pre-existing abundance of civic spaces in urban and rural areas, was well placed to adopt this trend. Many of those early borrowed venues still exist, and cinema continues to be one of their uses.

Trevor Griffiths (2012, 31) has argued that, in Scotland, the cinematograph's 'pervasive presence' in halls, churches, schools, and private homes demonstrates its social reach. Exhibitors operating in public halls in the first few years of the twentieth century ranged from for-profit entrepreneurs with a nationwide network of venues, such as TJ West, to municipal councils reinvesting Common Good funds, such as the Kirkintilloch Municipal Cinema (Bohlmann 2018). After the spread of purpose-built cinemas in the 1910s and 1920s, mobile cinema retreated to more remote or less densely populate areas, such as the Highlands and Islands, which were served for decades by mobile cinema services of the kind found in other rural areas across the world (Goode 2013). The reappearance of mobile cinema of different kinds often comes decades after the closure of small-town cinemas. Historical contexts are too different to speak of a return, but there is an interesting echo of the past in contemporary public hall practices, as the next chapter will explore.

2.7. Conclusion

As in the rest of the world, non-theatrical exhibition has taken many forms in Scotland. This chapter has shown that different taxonomies are possible and have been deployed at times, whether by focusing on the venues they occupy, their regularity, their type of content, their administrative and funding structures, or their relationships to liveness. Defined negatively or by substraction in relation to the commercial cinema venue, non-theatrical exhibition has sometimes been ephemeral or interstitial. The adoption of 'pop-up' more recently revalorizes these practices by emphasizing novelty, but in doing so risks obscuring the long histories of extramural exhibition that predate it.

Nowadays, public hall exhibition in the UK is dominated by the community cinema sector, which in itself is organized and funded in various ways, but is increasingly grouped under the umbrella term of volunteer-led cinema. As part of a 'second wave' of community-led cinema, this strand has moved away from its origins in the film society movement (Aveyard 2016, 198). Meanwhile, the more content-driven, curatorial side of public hall exhibition extends into cine-club culture. While cine-clubs and other forms of alternative or counter-cultural exhibition may seem very distant from the perceived middlebrow aspirations of the film society movement, they occupy an analogous position as minor exhibition practices, and mobilize similar energies of specialized knowledge, fan production, and ambitious curatorship. While cine-clubs and community cinemas are the most visible part of the sector, a huge part of non-theatrical exhibition is carried out by people and organizations who do not define themselves as film exhibitors. This is the hardest type of screening to track, because it is publicized within different contexts and frames. This form of exhibition is closer to Wasson and Acland's notion of 'useful cinema', and it includes campaigning screenings, films shown in the context of other events, and marketing gimmicks. Finally, the fairground tradition of showmanship, liveness and uniqueness has found an interesting crossover with art-world practices of site-specificity to open up *exhibition as a creative practice*, at varying scales from the intimate to the spectacular.

Community cinema, cinephilia, useful cinema, and experiential cinema signpost the themes of each of the following chapters. These are affinities rather than categories, a matter of emphasis where my analysis overlaps with existing classifications and concepts. Through qualitative observations and historical research, I trace shorter and longer trajectories in exhibition practice.

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[1] The administrative landscape had been in flux for a considerable time, and in 2018 a new body, Screen Scotland, was formed to take over support for the screen sector previously provided by Creative Scotland.

[2] The Screen Machine is a mobile cinema scheme managed by Regional Screen Scotland, and mainly funded by Creative Scotland and Highlands and Islands Enterprise with some private sponsorship. Two articulated lorries, modelled on the French Cinemobiles, tour the Scottish Highlands and Islands screening new releases and some specialised titles. While the Screen Machine may seem as a prime example of a pop-up space (it literally pops open), in fact it pushes the boundaries of the taxonomy as it decouples auditorium and site. From a distribution and licensing perspective, the Screen Machine is considered a theatrical screen and operated as a venue. See https://www.screenmachine.co.uk/ (Last accessed 17 February 2020).

Chapter 3. A desire for the civic: Community cinemas and volunteer work

Abstract: This chapter explains how film exhibition works as a civic amenity, by examining the community cinema sector. Going back to the itinerant beginnings of film exhibition, this chapter considers specific examples of non-theatrical screening in the 16mm era in Scotland, as a vanguard of 'useful' cinema and a point of reference for contemporary phenomena. Focusing on exhibition activity in Scotland's rural areas, this chapter foregrounds the village hall or public hall as a screening space, and discusses the organizational models that tend to produce it. The focus on provision and access to first-run films challenges metropolitan perspectives on pop-up exhibition which have tended to frame it in the context of a saturated cultural market.

In towns and villages around the UK, groups of volunteers organize regular screenings in civic spaces. The viewing conditions may be very similar to those that exist elsewhere: a hall, stackable chairs, a video projector. However, the British form of 'community cinema' is distinctive, and shaped by historical forces over many decades. It depends on a culture of volunteering, access to the village hall as a specific type of civic space, and institutional structures in funding and film distribution that have accommodated this mode of practice. This chapter traces some of these constituent stories to understand why volunteer-led cinema exists and how it works. It starts by exploring the emergence of ideas of social value in relation to cinema exhibition, and their expression in contemporary policy. Case studies, situated in rural places with no permanent cinema provision, capture different types of volunteer-led, non-profit exhibition. Even when commercial operators are contracted to deliver part of the service, the presence of cinema is understood in relation to the remit of the venues it occupies. With the village hall as its most representative space, community cinema becomes part of the range of services and events available for a community. Participation, access to culture, and social interaction are foregrounded as benefits from collective cinemagoing.

The history of community cinema links back to the tradition of the film society movement. These links are maintained in the institutional framework for this type of exhibition in the UK. For instance, both film societies and community cinemas can join the British Federation of Film Societies, established in the 1930s and now trading as Cinema for All. While there is some overlap and fluidity, here I will make a distinction between community cinemas and film societies, based on their relative

emphasis on leisure and sociability as opposed to access to specialized film content. There is a formal distinction in terms of membership structure, as film societies operate season-long subscriptions while community cinemas do not usually expect audience members to join the organization, but these distinctions are fairly fluid in practice. Contrasting the film society movement and contemporary forms of volunteer-led cinema as two 'waves', Karina Aveyard has argued that video availability has nurtured a resurgence since the 1990s. This second wave is in general more orientated towards the provision of leisure and less bound up with the aspirational or 'improving' ideas of the film society movement (Aveyard 2016a, 198). In Scotland, the distinction between these 'waves' is not necessarily chronological, and these approaches coexist, but there is a different emphasis: from *film* to *community* as the key term.

At the end of 2015, Regional Screen Scotland, the organization that supports the development of exhibition infrastructure in underserved areas, conducted an audience research survey on twelve independent venues with the support of the Social Value Lab. The stated intention was to find out 'what it mean[s] to a community to have a cinema at its heart'. The report, entitled *Your Cinema, Your Community*, showed that audiences across the twelve sites reported intrinsic, instrumental, and functional effects resulting from their attendance to local cinemas, framed both in terms of individual wellbeing and social capital.[1] However, out of the twelve venues surveyed only five are full-time, while the rest are multi-purpose venues. Can a community have a part-time heart? Since the data are aggregated and the quotes have been anonymized, it would be misleading to assume that the benefits from cinema accrue in the same way to permanent and to multi-purpose venues. This chapter opens up that distinction in order to explore more specifically the arguments for cinema exhibition in non-dedicated spaces as a social good.

3.1. Social value

One of the insights foregrounded by the Social Value Lab study was that, while the people consulted tended to have other options to consume film, such as DVD, VOD, or travelling to a multiplex cinema, they valued the collective experience, and the opportunities to meet and talk to people around the screening. This priority of experiential factors over access to film texts as cultural goods is a fault line that appears across discourses of public support for cinema. Agencies focused on the promotion of films, like the British Film Institute, understand the value of a diverse exhibition landscape in terms of the dissemination and access to content that is more broadly representative of society. When the BFI launched its 'Neighbourhood Cinema Fund' in 2014, its stated aims were to grow audiences and expand 'access to British and specialised film'.[2] On the other hand, agencies focused on community development more generally tend to foreground the idea of cinema as a 'third place' (after the home and the workplace) for the sort of informal sociability that maintains social ties. As the introduction to the Voluntary Arts Scotland project 'Grow Your Own Cinema' puts it, community cinema is about 'sitting in a communal space and experiencing life through the medium of film'.[3] There is no

emphasis here on the type of film, but rather on the space and the difference it can make to the community more broadly.

'Third places', in Ray Oldenburg's definition, are public settings that allow the pursuit of 'pure' sociability, mainly through talk; his examples include taverns, pubs and cafes where locals congregate without necessarily consuming much. This primacy of talk is at odds with the institutional protocols of cinema spectatorship, and yet it is mentioned by audiences as an important part of the appeal. A successful 'third place', furthermore, is unremarkable to its participants and 'beneficial only to the degree that it is well-integrated into daily life' (Oldenburg & Brissett, 1982, p. 270). What does this mean for non-permanent spaces, which *cannot* become part of the everyday? As I will argue, these two aspects of third-place sociability can only be partially realized by non-theatrical cinema through a compromise between eventfulness and regularity. Key to this compromise is another type of formation, namely that of associational culture, which may develop as an intensification of links made at a 'third place' (Oldenburg, 1999, p. xix). This type of more involved participatory activity has garnered renewed academic interest since the publication of Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone*, which focused on its decline in the United States (Putnam 2001). This revaluation of voluntary committees and interest groups provides another angle from which to consider community-led forms of non-theatrical exhibition. Community cinema is not only a type of cinemagoing experience, but a social practice, a form of labour and civic engagement. Hence, it produces different types of value depending on how people choose to get involved.

Admittedly, *Your Cinema, Your Community* was partial, drawing on a sample of nearly 3000 respondents who attend their local independent venue. While the report was described as exploratory, it fed into a broader agenda of foregrounding 'social value' as a measurable goal for cinema activity. Soon afterwards, it was cited as evidence in the development of a 'social value tool kit' that invites exhibitors to establish indicators such as '% of audience members reporting a strong emotional response to films' or the amount of money spent with local businesses.[4] In putting forward the disputed language of quantifiable outputs and outcomes, the report aims to equip exhibitors to argue their case in terms that are intelligible to those making decisions about funding for these precarious activities (Lee, Oakley, and Naylor 2011). This strategy is not ideologically neutral, but it is also part of a long tradition of framing film exhibition as a socially and/or economically valuable activity at a local level.

The reasons why cinema has been deemed worthy of public support and, in many cases, subsidy, have changed in response to the vast transformations in lifestyles and perceptions of public life over the last hundred years. In the first few decades of film exhibition, cinemagoing was praised as an alternative to less wholesome working-class pastimes such as drinking, gambling, or vaudeville (Burton 2000; Condon 2013). As a letter-writer to a provincial newspaper argued in 1912, 'anything that attracts young people to a decent entertainment, and so prevents their hanging about the streets or lounging in public houses, must so far count for good'.[5] While some sectors attacked cinema as an

overstimulating, shallow entertainment, others saw it as a pacifier and even potentially an instrument of uplift; as the same correspondent also claimed, 'I never went to a picture show yet but what I saw [sic] something elevating. Foreign countries, beautiful scenery, nature's secrets and wonders are all elevating to me'.[6] As a crowd-gathering strategy, it was deployed in the early 20th century by Temperance and religious organizations, which had the advantage of having their own spaces ideally suited for projection. Cinema was, for some, a lesser evil, but for others it held the promise of democratizing access to knowledge and enjoyment.

As commercial cinema became institutionalized, the uplift element embedded itself in the more respectable genres, such as historical dramas and literary adaptations, but also opened up alternative paths of its own (Keil and Stamp 2004; Kember 2009). With the development of smaller-gauge formats and separate distribution circuits in the 1920s and 1930s, non-theatrical exhibition became more directly associated with these new directions. On the one hand, the proliferation of non-theatrical film genres such as educational, scientific, and propaganda films mobilized the medium's ability to engage audiences and convey information. On the other hand, the emerging concept of film appreciation started to nurture the skills of critical reception as part of a repertoire of cultural competences (Macdonald 2012). Both ideas value film as a catalyst for learning and opinion formation, while the latter is also linked to broader ideas of cultural legitimacy. It is film, rather than cinema, that is at the centre of this valorization.

That is not to say, however, that the pleasures of cinemagoing and the importance of the cinema space were not recognized. The construction of movie palaces with palm courts and fountains, tearooms and dancefloors signalled this awareness, and the modernity of the picture palace became, for towns all over the world, a source of local pride. The neighbourhood or village cinema was a local landmark, and cinema management manuals of the first half of the 20th century advised exhibitors to build strong relationships with the community. This included, on occasion, allowing for non-commercial uses of the space. In the UK, this was first done systematically during the First World War, when cinemas were used for recruitment, fundraising, information, and troops entertainment (Archibald and Velez-Serna 2014; Hammond 2006). In the UK, this collaboration in government work was part of an effort to avoid further regulation and taxation by demonstrating the usefulness of the cinema trade in an instrumental sense. This need for legitimation was thus as practical as it was ideological.

Meanwhile, discourses of artistic value brought cinema into the sphere of cultural consumption. Film as art was underrepresented in commercial programmes, and access to international masterpieces became an aspiration for elite audiences (Selfe 2007). Again, this was about films rather than viewing practices. Cinemagoing dropped rapidly after the introduction of television in most markets, suggesting that the preference for collective experience was weak and out of step with the extension of bourgeois individuality into working-class lives (Hanson 2007). Given the choice, people stayed at home. At this point, logically, new arguments about the value of cinema emerged from the (moribund)

trade, some passionate audiences, and new cultural mediators with a vested interest in generating social impact.

Since the 1970s, cinema has become increasingly involved with the new paradigms of cultural value, in particular around notions and discourses such as creative industries, heritage, place-making, and regeneration. The rise of the night-time economy has shored up the perception of cinemagoing as a pull factor that draws people towards certain areas of the city or town, and generates more spending, so that cinema can be shown to have a positive economic impact and a more intangible social benefit (Hanson 2013; Hubbard 2003). Cultural provision is now seen as crucial not only to people's wellbeing, but also to the development and maintenance of skilled workforces. A renewed emphasis on heritage and locality has turned the attention back into the old cinema buildings and halls as previously disregarded community assets. In these cases, cinema is valued for its ability to bring people into a space.

3.2. Public hall cinema

The term 'community cinema' was first used in the 1920s to refer to municipal exhibition, a practice that had existed since before the First World War. In Scotland, as elsewhere, local councils had adopted the moving image very early on as part of a repertoire of subsidized entertainment embedded within ideologies of improvement and rational recreation. Glasgow had been promoting weekly affordable musical events since 1890 (Freer 1929, 88–89), and these had started to include films as soon as this became practicable. The city's Saturday Evening concerts lasted for over seventy years and attracted prestigious artists, while offering variety entertainment to working class audiences in a respectable environment (King 1979, 12; Maloney 2003, 192). The inclusion of cinema in this context thus signalled its acceptance by public officials and an emergent view of entertainment provision as a public remit.

While these initiatives were informed by priorities and ideologies specific to their historical conjuncture, they also displayed recurring traits. Firstly, their value was seen to reside in the provision of a social experience rather than in their promotion of screen culture or access to specific films, with the exception of thematic screenings such as those for health or agricultural instruction. The motivation, therefore, was predominantly contextual, rather than textual. That is not to say that programming was indifferent, but that the prime purpose remained the creation of a shared time and space. Enthusiasm for cinema expressed a desire for particular forms of social interaction, organized around a civic idea and a civic space, the public hall. These priorities continue to inform contemporary practice, and, remarkably, the public hall retains its centrality as a venue.

In 2016, a report on film exhibition provision commissioned by Creative Scotland found that 60 per cent of the surveyed organizations used multi-purpose venues, including community halls (Drew Wylie Projects 2016, 41). This proportion is higher in rural areas, where village halls play an important role, hosting a wide range of community events such as wedding receptions, exercise

classes, council meetings, charity bazaars, live music, teenage discos, nursery care, day centres for the elderly, and so on. The forms of collective experience offered by public halls, like other non-theatrical venues, stand in dialogue with theatrical and commercial exhibition, and with the other uses of the space. The practical implications of sharing a space changes the context of experience, replicating or challenging the assumed standard of theatrical exhibition to different degrees. In multi-use spaces with a civic vocation, such as public halls and community centres, cinema's presence needs to be framed and justified through its ability to serve a social function which is coherent with that of the venue.

While most countries have some version of the village or neighbourhood hall, their history in Britain grounds them in an aspirational idea of rural life. In its 1928 booklet about village halls, the National Council for Social Service (hereafter NCSS) in England explained that '[e]very village needs a centre for its social life – a hall where social functions can be held, where people can meet together after work, and where musical, dramatic and educational activities can be pursued.' (1928, 1). The NCSS defined a village hall as such through its management structure, as it ought to be governed by a committee representing diverse community interests (1928, 7). This is still typical today, although other arrangements exist, and in Scotland the term 'public hall' is more common, which includes similar venues in city neighbourhoods and suburbs. Jeremy Burchardt's research (1999, 202) suggests that not many village halls, as per the NCSS's definition, existed in England before the First World War, but many villages acquired them between the wars. In contrast, Scotland had a wealth of congregational spaces by the end of the nineteenth century, but only a fraction of these could be described as 'village halls' with a volunteer committee in charge. Halls were built for various reasons, without a strict separation of commercial and civic uses. In small towns, the function of the village hall was defined in relation to the other gathering spaces, namely the church and the pub. In larger towns and cities, there was often a competitive market with halls operating commercially as rooms for hire. Any of those spaces could, and did, get used to show films to an audience. This exhibition activity has been more or less closely connected to the core functions of the space and with its management.

The construction of assembly spaces accelerated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, in step with urbanization, industrialization, and the sharper divisions between work and leisure required by these new conditions (Griffiths 2010). The funding and ownership of hall construction reflected trends in associational culture, with Masonic, Temperance, Orange, and Drill halls erected with the specific aim to host these groups' meetings and activities (Maver 2006). Access to these forms of sociability was restricted, and fully public halls aimed to address this. While this was far from straightforward, Burchardt argues that the sense of community investment and control still had a democratizing effect (1999, 206–210).

This sense of ownership was directly expressed in the notion of municipal cinema, first established in some Nordic countries. Norway in particular developed a unique pattern of municipal cinema

monopolies from 1913 onwards. This was intended to capture revenues that could subsidize other arts, but Labour politicians in the UK also argued that municipal cinemas could offer a morally superior programme, since 'private competition was precisely the reason that most people associated cinemas with profit-seeking sensationalism' (Solum 2016, 186). A similar argument was made in Scotland and trialled in the towns of Kirkintilloch and Clydebank under fairly radical Independent Labour Party councils between 1914 and the mid-1920s (Bohlmann 2018). In Kirkintilloch, in the outskirts of Glasgow, a town hall cinema was set up as part of the Common Good fund, a unique feature of Scottish local government that provides for community ownership and re-investment. The premise was that, instead of giving their money to a private cinema entrepreneur, the citizens could patronize their own venue and benefit from relatively low prices (Bohlmann 2018, 95–96). However, while the Norwegian public service approach led to the construction of cinemas owned by the municipalities, and the development of a distribution system entirely dedicated to this network, in Scotland municipal cinemas remained temporary uses of existing municipal buildings, and dependent on commercial distributors.

A more straightforward means for local governments and other civic and voluntary organizations to make a small return on the popularity of cinemagoing was to hire out their spaces to commercial exhibitors. This entrepreneurial variety of public hall cinema surfaced at different points in the twentieth century – first as a transition point between travelling showmanship and permanent cinemas before 1910, then as a more marginal strategy for rural exhibitors operating small circuits, which would visit the same sequence of places every week or fortnight. The landscape shifted with the arrival of 16mm, and in particular with its extensive use during the Second World War. By 1946, the proliferation of 16mm exhibition of various kinds was a central preoccupation of the cinema trade. The trade journal *Kinematograph Weekly* started a 'sub-standard' (16mm) section in May 1946, which from the beginning grappled with the definitions of non-theatrical and specialized exhibition, and carried adverts for a growing number of film libraries offering material for hire. The 16mm field was hugely diverse, ranging from amateur cinephiles offering screenings to their local clubs, to the large shows organized by the churches or education departments. This worldwide trend, which brought 16mm projection to parks and piazzas, huts, barges, ocean liners, and all sorts of other spaces, was in Scotland mainly housed in the village halls.

A typical example of a small-scale operation gives an idea of the place that cinema occupied in village life. The Moving Image Archive of the National Library of Scotland has an oral history recording of John Macdonald, a 16mm operator who toured the Scottish Highlands in the 1940s. Macdonald had been a wireless operator with the Royal Air Force during the war, and found that his technical skills were in demand upon his return. He visited half a dozen places on a regular basis, by request of townspeople. Operating in village halls required a good knowledge of local conditions: 'Friday was always a bad night because there was always dances in every local hall […] the cinema paid in places like Tallenbridge or Kincraig where there was no temptation for pubs', he recalled.[7] He

travelled with his own screen, projector, and gramophone, but, unlike previous touring exhibitors, Macdonald no longer needed a generator: Conditions for exhibitors had improved with the gradual expansion of electricity to Highland villages. By 1946, when the Highlands and Islands Film Guild started providing a regular travelling cinema service in that area, the use of halls for film shows was well accommodated, and indeed expected.

As Ian Goode has shown, the Highlands and Islands Film Guild scheme had its roots in the Evacuee Film Scheme (screening to children lodging away from home) and the Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA), which linked an interest in the welfare value of recreation with a Griersonian belief in visual education (Goode 2013). However, the main aim of the Highlands and Islands' mobile cinema was to help sustain communities and stem depopulation. In this sense, the utility of cinema was not confined to what it could teach; it was seen as a public amenity. This way of thinking resonates with contemporary forms of community exhibition.

There are, however, significant differences between the past and present of village hall cinema. First, whereas the typical pre-1960s village hall cinema was either a commercial operation run by small-time showpeople, or a provision run by public servants with the essential support of local people, in 2018 most such screenings are run exclusively by volunteers. Second, relationships with municipal authorities and hall committees tend to be arms-length, but less mercenary than a simple hire of the hall, with modest amounts of subsidy often available to support cinema provision at a local level, as well as regional and national funding sources. Third, while local relevance has always been a favoured showmanship strategy, the audience's direct participation in programming (rather than just in setting up the space) has become more practicable and valued by exhibitors and policymakers. This is, in part, a reflection of a less paternalistic view of cultural provision, and a corollary of the blurring of boundaries between exhibitor and audience produced by volunteer-led exhibition. It must also be acknowledged, though, that these audiences are smaller, more self-selecting, and more likely to be implicitly aligned with the normative values of rational recreation, so that their participation does not destabilize the established premises of social value.

3.3. Community cinema

The typical public hall cinema in Scotland, and indeed in most rural areas of the UK, is now a community cinema. This is a catch-all definition that includes many groups calling themselves film societies or clubs, and yet that name denotes a different type of practice. Community cinemas are defined by Aveyard as having 'cooperative management structures, dependence on a volunteer workforce and not-for-profit financial status' (Aveyard 2016b, 198). In Scotland, these volunteer groups usually organize themselves as a limited company, community interest company, or charity, with a board or committee. They are funded in a variety of ways, screen once or twice a month, and their programmes range from silents to new releases, all independently curated and most often screened digitally from a DVD or bluRay. While cineclubs and film societies can be found, in very

recognizable forms, all around the world, community cinemas are forged more specifically by British geography, demography, and patterns of cultural participation. They are also framed by institutional relations that merit some attention, before complicating this normative picture through particular cases.

After its brief currency in the 1920s, the term 'community cinema' returned to use in the UK in the late 1970s, as the commercial cinema provision approached rock bottom in the aftermath of home video and changes in leisure patterns. The BFI was in the midst of one of several crises precipitated by its perceived centralism, particularly regarding its role in programming and supplying prints to the network of Regional Film Theatres formed so optimistically after the *Outside London* report of 1965 (Selfe 2012). Ten years later, the Redcliffe report (1976) argued that the BFI should look beyond its Regional Film Theatres network and support local authorities to develop cinema provision. Implicit in this was a critique of the BFI's programming priorities, which had been inherited from the film society movement and reproduced some aspects of its elitism. Meanwhile, independent film and video activity was flourishing in more modest settings, with the support of job creation schemes, regeneration initiatives and other sources of funding that saw a very different role for collective film viewing.

For example, in 1978 Dorset Community Council, in southwest England, published *Reels on Wheels*, a report on their pilot mobile cinema scheme for rural areas. Alongside their own experience in Dorset, the booklet references two Scottish projects: One run by Monklands District Council through a job creation scheme, and Cinema Sgire, established by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council) to provide cinema screenings in the islands of North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist, Berneray, Eriskay, Barra, Vatersay, and Harris, all in the Hebrides off the West Coast of mainland Scotland. As well as providing regular film screenings, Cinema Sgire and the Monklands project also offered video making facilities and training. This was in keeping with a growing interest in participatory arts and community filmmaking in working class communities, and was significantly different in its political framing from the film society movement as it was at the time.

As Karina Aveyard has argued, the model of 'volunteer-led, non-commercial exhibition' that has been dominant in the UK can be traced back to the London Film Society of 1925. However, there has been a historical divergence between film societies and other types of volunteer exhibition characterized by 'a more open and less prescribed approach' (Aveyard 2016b, 197–198). This divide has been reflected in the changing role of the British Federation of Film Societies (BFFS), which was incorporated in 1978 but had been carrying out its work since the 1930s. The BFFS started out with a complicated relationship with the British Film Institute, which at some points funded the Federation and at others brought some of its functions in-house. By 1995, the Federation was struggling with a severely reduced BFI grant and dwindling membership, but retained its stated objective 'to advance the education of the public in film as an art and as a medium for information, education, and social enlightenment'.[8] The charitable mission of the organization was thus formulated in terms not

dissimilar to those of 'film appreciation' that had motivated the beginnings of the movement (Hagener 2007; Macdonald 2016).

Around 2007, the language and priorities of the sector had changed to the extent that the BFFS broadened its remit and announced a new trading name, 'Cinema for All', with the mission 'to support, sustain and develop the community cinema movement in the UK, and to deliver public value to community cinema audiences throughout the UK'.[9] Since then, 'community cinema' has been the raison d'être for the Federation, and this expansion – along with the growth of volunteer-led exhibition itself – has allowed them to double their membership. This change in terminology is not articulated explicitly; instead, throughout Cinema for All documents there is an elision between 'community cinema' and 'film societies'. The articles of association, as of 2014, selectively used part of the old articles (written with *film societies* in mind) to define Community Cinema as 'any organization properly constituted whose principal objects are to advance the access to film as an art and as a medium for information, education and social enlightenment, to promote the study of film generally, and whose primary purpose is not to seek profit from the exhibition of film'. A Film Society is, in comparison, 'a membership-based society or club properly constituted', with the same objects as above, implying that film societies are a sub-set of community cinemas defined by their structure rather than their aims.[10] In practice, there are community cinemas with membership schemes, and film societies that do not have them. Either way, in order to join Cinema for All an organization is required to be non-political and non-profit-making, according to the Articles of Association. Although there is no overt policing of political positions (of the kind that was exerted in the 1930s to keep out Soviet-interest film clubs), these principles do favour a liberal-centrist consensus, anchored in volunteer labour.

Exhibitors are, in any case, under no obligation to join Cinema for All; therefore, the Federation tends to represent the more institutional part of the sector. In July 2019, membership (across all categories) stood at 1256 organizations, of which 199 were in Scotland.[11] Community cinemas outnumbered film societies by a proportion of about three to two, and the proportion was increasing; new entrants tend to adopt the name 'community cinema' while groups with a longer history may retain 'film society'.[12] This re-branding is not replicated in other parts of the world where film societies or film clubs remain dominant within national federations.[13] This is in part because the changing nomenclature for volunteer-led exhibition in the UK reflects changes in policy discourse, from 'film appreciation' or 'specialized exhibition' towards social value. The distinction then is historical rather than necessarily practical. However, the reference to historical trajectories does correspond with different programming tendencies.

Analysing programming patterns provides a useful proxy for the diverse priorities of volunteer exhibitors. In order to look at their activity beyond the rhetoric of funding applications, I created a database with 1356 screenings between the beginning of September 2016 and June 2017. I gathered these data manually from brochures, websites, and Facebook pages. At these 1356 screenings, 494

different feature films were shown; these films were mostly between two months and three years old, with a median age of 218 days or just over seven months (**Error! Reference source not found.**). Thinking about the particularities of film society versus community cinema exhibition, the differences in how that range is embraced are interesting: Community cinemas tended to have films that were on average 25% newer than those programmed by film societies. It would be possible to analyse this sample in many different ways, but looking at release dates provides a quantifiable measure of the diversity of programming. This measure reveals the importance of community cinemas as a new second-run and repertory circuit.
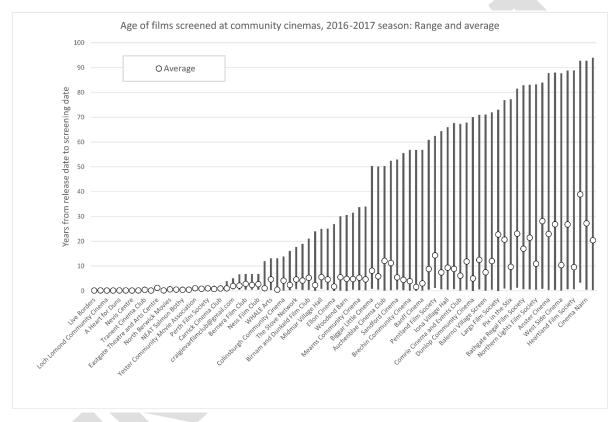

Figure 2: Release dates of films programmed by community cinemas

It would be counterproductive to see this as a binary between mainstream and specialized programming (or lowbrow/highbrow, even). As the case studies below show, community cinemas often operate at the frontline of broadening audience horizons, balancing ambitious programming with financial sustainability and care for particular audiences. Some exceptional exhibitors (such as Cromarty Film Society, in a small historic Highland port, or West Side Cinema in the Orkney Islands' Mainland) straddle cultural divides with particular gusto, the sign of a very involved and skilled programmer or programming committee. The sample studied includes silents, classics, and many foreign-language films. For example, Inverness Film Society in the Highlands, and its counterpart in Largs on the Clyde coast, as well as film clubs in even smaller villages towns like Corrie on the isle of

Arran, screened films by Buster Keaton, Powell and Pressburger, Krzysztof Kieślowski, and Margarethe von Trotta, to name some examples. They also showed recent foreign titles like Oscar nominee *Embrace of the Serpent* (Guerra, 2017) or Palm D'or winner *Dheepan* (Audiard, 2015), which would not be out of place in the programme of a BFI-funded Regional Film Theatre or a university film club. However, for most of the sample, the screenings were of English-language films released within the previous year.

This preference for new releases is related to an appeal to a family audience, and it is made possible by the emergence of regional intermediaries who can obtain licenses for these films. With the ever-improving quality of mobile projection equipment, community cinema is increasingly able to approximate mainstream exhibition as a remedy for the lack of permanent or affordable cinemas in an area. The next-to-first-run community cinema is a new development. It positions the expansion of community cinema as a less specialized activity, giving access to cinema for audiences that have been insufficiently served by commercial exhibition, but in distancing itself from the bespoke programming of a more cinephile volunteer base it could undermine its role as a vector of diversity in screen content. It is worth remembering that the emphasis on new releases has been used by the Hollywood industry in the past before to push costly forms of standardization and drive independents out of business. The mainstreaming of non-theatrical exhibition is full of contradictions, and some of them play out in the examples below.

3.4. Case studies

In the programming season 2016-2017 my research identified eighty volunteer-led, regular exhibitors, which I defined as those showing at least six films throughout the year, operating across Scotland. This number rises to nearly 140 if less regular venues are included, but it does not fully match the membership of Cinema for All; some member organizations may be dormant and some exhibitors are not affiliated, while others may have escaped my search due to a lack of online presence. In total, almost five hundred different film titles were shown during this period, a testimony to the diversity of the sector. I visited fifteen of the eighty community cinemas, all located outside the major cities in different regions of Scotland. Most of these examples shared some key features: the venues were similar; the committee structure well entrenched; and the technical delivery of the screening achieved comparable standards. These similarities, however, conceal a diversity of trajectories and motivations.

The use of public halls, while seemingly a uniform characteristic, is in fact governed through a variety of mechanisms and relationships. One of the first places I visited was the village of Temple, Midlothian, some fifteen miles south from Edinburgh. The rows of stone cottages, surrounded by agricultural land and the River Esk, have listed status and are home to around a hundred people. The community cinema operates in the Village Hall, a single-storey structure built in 1844 as a church and school room, and used throughout the twentieth century for occasional civic events like limelight lectures, bazaars and dances. While nearby mining villages all had touring or permanent cinemas,

Temple remained cut off. By the end of the 20th century the hall was at risk, until it was purchased from the Church by the community, constituted as the Temple Village Hall Association, and refurbished. With the closure of the primary school in 2007 the village lost its main functioning social hub and, in the words of local resident Coline Hyslop, it was important to 'have a focal point at the village hall' in order 'to keep the community going' (Gyford 2010). Fortuitously, in summer 2009, a film crew arrived in Temple to shoot *The Wicker Tree*, a sequel to cult classic *The Wicker Man* (1973). This spurred a local resident, Iain Hyslop, to start a film project involving the whole community, which led to the need for a screening site. A small committee started a film club in 2010 and, with grants from various funders, the renamed Moorflix Community Cinema started to operate once a month and take mobile equipment to other halls in the area. This generated a small income for the Hall Committee for upkeep.[14]

At the Isle of Whithorn (not actually an island, but a picturesque harbour town), Scotland's most southerly cinema operated under the name Machars Movies. Established in 2009, the cinema worked in partnership with the local regeneration company, Isle Futures, which in turn aimed to establish the town as a Centre of Excellence for regeneration.[15] The hall is a functional, modern building, very different from the carved stone old church at Temple. Outside, fishing boats with colourful buoys lolled about in the rising tide as people came in for a fish and chips supper in the hall's spacious tearoom. A larger than usual audience had turned up for a screening of *Cinema Paradiso* as a memorial to one of the founders of the film club. The town was once known as a smugglers' haven but is now popular as a retirement or second home location, so the number of relatively well-off incomers from England has grown and includes several of the hall committee members. The committee led the campaign to refurbish the derelict hall in 2014, knew most of the audience members by name, and ran the projector and the little bar at the back. On the night of my visit, I was given the job of tearing off tickets as people came in, carrying cushions and blankets, prepared to make themselves comfortable.

In St John's Town of Dalry, a small and fairly remote village with a population of around 400 people, the hall is owned by the town and managed by committee. It is a striking building dating from 1859 and refurbished in 2007, with a clock tower at the front and cherry blossoms surrounding the bright red doors. The cinema emerged from a consultation by the committee as they were trying to generate more activity for the hall, and this was one of the top suggestions, with the promoters of the cinema formed as a sub-committee. The equipment and technical support were provided by Driftwood Cinema, a Social Enterprise organization offering a mobile cinema service for other rural communities in the Dumfries and Galloway area, a sparsely populated region in the southwest of Scotland. While the volunteers were dragging out the chairs and setting up a table with refreshments and samples of local chocolate, Matt Kitson, the Driftwood Cinema operator, was busy building the metal frame screen in front of the list of war dead that adorns the far end of the hall. One of the

organizers went around the village knocking on neighbours' doors to remind them of the screening, and checked with the pub that they would be open later.

[INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE]

In all these cases, the cinema provision is closely related to the need of maintaining and promoting the use of the hall, but the way this has come about is organic, through coincidences and personal contacts. Given the size of the communities, it tends to be the same core of volunteers sustaining the cinemas and the halls. However, in some places like Colinsburgh (in Fife, on the East Coast), or at the Isle of Whithorn, the cinema hires the hall from its committee, thus maintaining a formal distinction. This separation enables the cinema to apply for its own funds and pursue its own priorities. At the same time, the separation may also make a cinema more vulnerable, as in the case of Tain Cinema, where a rise in the hire price for the hall prompted a change of venue, initially to a Scout hall and then to its current location several miles away from its original spot. Negotiating cinema use in a space that has multiple user groups is particularly challenging when some of the other users also have their own imperatives.

While the hall's multiple uses can present challenges, they are also essential to the experience of community cinema. For instance, the halls at Isle of Whithorn, Balintore, and Dunlop all had café spaces where meals or refreshments are sold. At Dalry, there is a pub next to the hall which is licensed to cater for functions. Ensuring these services are available for the times of the screenings is not always straightforward, unless cinema promoters can guarantee some amount of trade; at the same time, audience members often expect these services to be offered. Institutional approaches to the economy of leisure have emphasized the ability of out-of-home entertainment activities to encourage local spending. This is only partially possible in the rural locations described, as there is limited retail activity. The cinema event itself offers modest opportunities for the sale of local products, such as chocolates, jam, and crafts. At Colinsburgh, it was possible to go home with some potted plants or old issues of *Sight and Sound*. Rather than replicating the pressurized retail environment of a multiplex with its outlandish mark-ups, these consumption goods are offered coyly and with small margins, suggesting an ethos of neighbourly support in the long tradition of village bazaars that have always been a key use of the hall.

Rather than profit, the motivation behind all the home baking and kettle-boiling at these events is hospitality. On a cold night, a cup of tea and a slice of cake help the audience feel welcome. Children are often keen to help run the tuck shop, and for grown-ups there is sometimes a glass of wine, or explicit permission to bring your own bottle. All this is relevant to the experience of cinema in these places, and to its ability to fulfil a social role. Tea and cake are the ultimate markers of the community cinema's distinction from commercial exhibition. In part this is a necessity in a small-town or rural context, where no other food outlets are open in the evening and disposable incomes are often low. As

Anne Chaurand of Dalry Town Hall Cinema told me, 'In this part of the world you have to serve some sort of refreshment'. People may have travelled far and be in need of a cup of tea. Something as simple as that also serves to extend the time for interaction at the edges of the screening. Sharing food creates interstitial moments, a subtle, informal framework for people to exchange a few words, break the ice, and become socialized into the group. Setting up, welcoming guests, and clearing the hall are volunteer activities that bring people together: there is no better place to find out about a community than on washing-up duty in the hall kitchen. As Ian Goode argues in relation to the Highlands and Orkney, cinema exhibition in many areas would not be possible without the practical help of the community (Goode 2011, 19). When people help transport equipment and films, and transform the hall into a makeshift cinema space, their experience changes:

> The sense of expectation, not only of going to see a film at the cinema but taking part of its construction, clearly contrasts with the more distant and discrete experience offered by the permanent environment of a purpose-built cinema (Ian Goode 2013, 271)

Of course, beyond the logistics of stacking chairs and Victoria sponges, village hall cinema organizers deal with the specific issues of choosing, obtaining, and showing films. Questions of taste are inescapable. All the volunteer organizers I interviewed expressed clear preferences for some films or others, but also explained that these had to be negotiated with their responsibility to a broader audience. Some exhibitors have extensive skills in programming, such as Mark Jenkins at the West Side Cinema in Stromness, who has worked with Edinburgh Film Festival for many years and is also a film editor. This allows him to exert a confident curatorial stance based on personal satisfaction rather than a need to please the public, who by now trust and appreciate his ambitious programming. On the other hand, newer committees are more timid because they are 'desperate not to lose money', as one of the interviewees put it. A cinephile who traced her passion back to the intellectual culture of the Parisian cine-clubs where she had spent her younger years, this organizer said she would put this aside when trying to programme for 'a good family night out' that worked better in her venue:

> [It's] a bit frustrating, because here's this film club, to me it doesn't show the kind of film club films that I would like to see. However, because it's budding, we've only just started - this is a trial run of four films, so it's important to get this established, and then I think put a challenging film, and then people might come out of the woodwork, the odd cinephiles. And I know, I've spoken to somebody who is likeminded about this, and for her cinema is an artform, and it's not the bums on seats experience. You have to do a bit of both, but, you know, this is not Paris.

While the stated motivations may differ, therefore, the challenges encountered by many community exhibitors are similar. For example, maintaining up-to-date equipment and operating at a competent technical standard is a common concern. The modes of operation I encountered have been made possible by the digital transition, which has been funded in various ways. Many cinemas obtained their first digital projection kit through the BFI Neighbourhood Cinema Equipment Fund or Cinema for All. In order to be eligible for these funds, groups had to satisfy various requirements. For the BFI, for instance, they were asked to demonstrate how the project would address 'under-

representation of disability, gender, race, age, and sexual orientation', as well as ensuring 'that people from lower socio-economic groups are better represented' (the careful avoidance of the word 'class' is worth noting here). They were also asked to demonstrate the project filled a 'gap in provision' and had a 'strong focus on specialised film', which disadvantaged those groups oriented towards more popular programming.[16] For community provision-oriented groups it was more feasible to attract funding from local or regional agencies. In one of the sites, for instance, the committee was trying to secure support from European Union rural development funds to purchase equipment, while at another one their upgrade was financed by a regional hydroelectric generation enterprise. The funding landscape is complex and negotiating application processes demands time and skill. This poses significant obstacles to access for disadvantaged groups, and tends to reproduce existing reserves of cultural capital.

Sustaining volunteer involvement can be a significant challenge for the continuity of these types of exhibitors, but, while most of them seek stability, this may also discourage the diversification of committees, making it seem 'cliquey'. Committees are usually dominated by individuals who may be particularly knowledgeable about film, but also may be simply 'people in the community who want to get things going', as one interviewee described it.

The motivations of committee members and volunteers thus also reflect that dual appeal of cinema between film culture and civic vocation. While this has often resulted in a division of labour within the committee, where the most cinephile members are responsible for selecting films, other groups are being more proactive in seeking to establish shared understandings of purpose and vision. This is part of the effort to make this collaborative work sustainable and rewarding, as one committee member recognized:

> I've been on committees in the past and been burned out, you do things for ten years… And it's also really weird because not everybody thanks you. I can understand that. […] We have to get the values of the committee, are we all looking at the same thing. If we're stuck on decision we go back to those values.

This awareness reflects the familiarity of many exhibitors with the sort of skills involved in committee participation and civic organizing. This in turn reflects the professional backgrounds and length of experience (read: age) of those more likely to be involved. The fact that the established ways of running community cinemas reward the skills that come with a middle-class habitus is a concrete obstacle to a more diverse sector. It also has the consequence of making committees more attached to formal legitimacy and process, and less likely to take risks and break rules. Therefore, the professionalism of this voluntary sector is at the root of one of its major headaches, namely film licensing. This is more challenging the more ambitious the programming is. The craft of putting together a balanced season, of pushing gently the boundaries of audience taste, and sharing a particular passion or fandom is an important motivator for some of the exhibitors I have interviewed. However, the individual selection of films goes against the grain of the mainstream cinema industry, which rewards conglomeration.

Community cinemas are programmed annually or in two seasons. Once a list of films and dates has been drafted, a copy and a screening license must be obtained for each film. In the case of many independent films it may be easy to get the DVD but extremely difficult to find out who can actually license a public screening. This often involves tracking down defunct production companies, contacting members of the film crew, or speaking to exhibitors that have shown the film recently. At the time of writing, database initiatives were under development which promised to help people find rights holders. However, there was still much uncertainty, and the unexpectedly drawn-out, bureaucratic process was likely to put volunteers off or to result in changes to the intended programme. While dealing with distributors and paying for film hire was an inevitable part of the process of showing a 16mm film, nowadays most community exhibitors are able to obtain their own discs, downloads or streams. This makes the difficulty in obtaining screening rights even more frustrating.

In the case of recent, more mainstream films, the main obstacle is generally the price of the licence. Films can be hired on a commercial basis with a minimum guarantee and a box office percentage, or, more often for community cinemas, on a flat-fee basis. In either case, costs are often prohibitive, especially for exhibitors with smaller audiences (Drew Wylie Projects 2016, 57–58). Historically there have been two types of response to this challenge, which I summarize as confederation and intermediation.

The main example of confederation are booking schemes, which use the power of collective bargaining. The best known in the UK non-theatrical sector is the booking scheme offered by Cinema for All (formerly the British Federation of Film Societies). Under the scheme, members of the Federation can hire DVD and Blu-Ray copies of over 800 selected films for a flat rate.[17] This is a continuation of a long-running initiative that was among the founding objectives of the Federation. One of the four aims mentioned in its draft constitution was 'to act as a medium for the co-operative renting of films', as at that point 'the provincial and Scottish film societies were […] dependent of the London Film Society for bringing films into the country'.[18] (More precisely, the whole sector depended on the labour of a handful of women such as Olwen Vaughan and Elsie Cohen who were doing all the work of finding, importing, and handling films). The centralized booking scheme established in 1935 by Scottish film societies provided a blueprint for the establishment of the BFI's Central Booking Agency.

Now run by Cinema for All, the booking scheme is one of the key attractions of membership and used by most members, but its relatively limited catalogue means that exhibitors must also look elsewhere for other titles. The two main commercial options for community cinemas are Filmbank and Motion Picture Licensing Company (MPLC), both recommended on the UK government's official advice page for cinemas.[19] These are intermediary agencies linked to the Hollywood studios. Filmbank was set up in 1986 by Columbia-Cannon-Warner as a subsidiary to distribute 16mm and video to non-commercial sites (McFarling 1986). MPLC was set up in 1993 and specializes in small-

screen exhibition in public or commercial spaces, but it does also license single titles for screenings. It is thus important to note that these companies are in the business of licensing rather than distribution. Their main purpose is not to circulate the films, but to extract rent on behalf of the copyright owners. In a situation where it is easy to get hold of a film but difficult to figure out who holds the screening rights, Filmbank and MPLC offer an easier route. They have websites where exhibitors can search a catalogue and apply for screening licenses at a flat rate (after having set up an account with a deposit). For Filmbank, a single title license starts at £91 for an early release title and £83 for one available on home release for audiences under 200. These kinds of prices are high enough to be a challenge for smaller communities, and non-theatrical exhibitors in rural locations feel at a disadvantage in comparison to commercial cinemas, who pay at different rates based on case-by-case negotiations of box office percentage. One exhibitor had been canvassing sector organizations to promote a change, and in our interview explained his proposal to negotiate for 35% of box office instead of a flat fee:

> It's historic, when they used to send up 35mm prints, 16mm prints, there was a lot of stuff done that warranted that minimum guarantee. Now, most community cinemas I think are buying their own copies, all they're doing is sending a contract through. Sometimes they don't even do that - they just send an invoice. There's nothing to be done. There's a lot of communities I know that can't afford to run a cinema. So they're either going to do it illegally – lost revenue straight away - or they're not going to do it at all. And I think 35% of something is better than 35% of nothing. […] Sometimes we show films up in Papay Westray, a community of 80 people. If they're getting 20 people in […] that's 25% of the community. […] They can't charge £5 there, they have to charge £3 and £1 for kids. They can't make that money. […] I think there'd be much more community cinemas opening up if they could just drop that minimum guarantee. Not for everyone, but for communities that can give them the data and say, these are our numbers. It's not because we're not good at what we're doing.

Furthermore, these commercial distributors often impose restrictive conditions, such as forbidding the sale of tickets on the door (for membership-only screenings), forbidding public advertising of the title of the film, and charging for any alteration to the license. The programmer at a community cinema, for instance, recalled an incident where the hall was double-booked, so they tried to move the screening to the day before, only to be told they had to pay an additional £60 and were not allowed to advertise the film. In this case, they decided to find a different film instead. The distributors' restrictive policies are often met with ingenious stratagems, such as hinting at the film without naming it, offering 'mystery screenings' where the audience can choose from a selection of films, and keeping the screenings free and unticketed while accepting donations. The civic character and institutional embeddedness of community cinemas mean that their organizers are invested in legitimacy, and unlikely to challenge the ideology and enforcement of intellectual property.

An option that has emerged more recently is that of touring operators, like Driftwood and Indy Cinema Group, mentioned above. These service providers, of which there are a small number in Scotland, not only supply projection equipment, but are also able to give programming advice and negotiate better deals with distributors. The main mobile operators in Scotland at the time of writing

were very different: Driftwood, which operates in Dumfries and Galloway, is run as a social enterprise by Matt Kitson, who had acquired experience as a travelling exhibitor in England. North East Arts Touring, which covers Aberdeenshire, started out in 1985 serving volunteer promoters of live theatre and dance, and is a registered charity. Indy Cinema Group is a community interest company founded by Ian Brown, who has substantial experience of the theatrical sector after working for Cineworld, and it has emerged as the leading of pop-up and non-theatrical screening services for festivals and events, as well as supporting fixed-site venues.

The relationships of these operators with the exhibition venues vary, from provision of the full mobile cinema kit to simple support with programming, but obtaining films and film licenses is always part of the deal. While operating at different scales, these touring providers operate following a 'hub and spokes' model in which local event organizing is managed by volunteer groups 'who may otherwise lack the film knowledge, technical skills and equipment necessary to run a regular screening programme'.[20] By combining the roles of distribution and exhibition, touring operators can be a catalyst for the expansion of non-theatrical activity. As Kitson argued, it is not only the technical knowledge that can be helpful; not all committees have people with experience of funding applications, and thus a touring organization may be better placed to apply for grants to bring cinema provision to several communities. In his case, start-up costs were subsidized by an entrepreneurship grant, which also offered an opportunity to network with people in the events industry, leading to commercial opportunities, while his existing involvement in a community council facilitated contacts with other local councils in the region.

Indy Cinema Group define themselves as 'a complete cinema solution', meaning that they also provide equipment and projection services, but while other operators offer comparable set-ups, Indy's main appeal has been based on an up-to-date film catalogue. According to its CEO, the company started out by contacting existing film groups in 'towns of a certain population', offering them exclusive access to films before they were out on home video. This has attracted some groups but not others: generally, film societies have been less interested, since they can obtain a good range of repertory films on DVD. Instead, their business has mainly come from exhibitors seeking to attract particular audiences, which he described as,

> families with young children and people let's say 50+ that now don't want to go all the way into the city, they'd like to do something in their own town, and it really becomes more of a social shared experience. So that's the two demographics that really benefit and really work well with our model.

Family films, in particular, are key to the financial sustainability of the venues served by Indy. In order to cover the cost of hiring the equipment and the film, while keeping ticket prices low, venues need to attract 140 patrons a day. As Brown says, that is easily achievable with a children's film because they 'bring in the numbers', and they subsidize more adventurous programming. This explains why, in the sample of screenings I analysed, two out of the three films screened by the largest number of venues were Disney's *Moana* (Clements and Musker, 2016), shown 27 times, and Pixar's

Finding Dory (Stanton, 2016) with 25. Nine out of the ten films screened most often by Indy Cinema Group that year had a universal age certificate, and the other one was *Bridget Jones' Baby* (Maguire, 2016). This family-friendly, blockbuster strategy must contend with an additional factor. In general, non-theatrical licenses are only available two or three months after release. This is not a major problem for most film societies that function on a repertory or second-run basis. However, for blockbusters and family films, time is of the essence, and the size of the Indy circuit is what gives them leverage to negotiate earlier access and lower percentages with distributors. There is thus an incentive for community cinemas to programme the new releases obtained by Indy, which help them broaden their audience and remain viable. This may replace the diversity of repertory programming, or it may help subsidize it, depending on whether the priorities of the organization tend towards film curatorship or towards cinema as civic amenity. As Brown explained,

> We've got some venues that rely on us to programme completely and are happy for us
> to do that, but these are normally people who aren't necessarily doing this voluntary
> work because they're passionate about film, they are passionate about doing
> something for the community. And they're quite happy for us to handle the
> programming. We have other venues where we are presenting them with all the
> upcoming films and they're doing all their research; it then becomes a fluid
> conversation about what film will work, and ultimately it's venues' choice.

The distinction made by Brown can be mapped onto the historical trends this chapter has outlined. In the UK, the community cinema sector is institutionally imbricated with the film society movement, and therefore retains a connection to the ideas of film appreciation as well as some of its organizational structures, notoriously a preference for board or committee governance and formal constitution. It can be a vehicle for the development and expression of curatorial skills, as well as a place for hospitality and care. The appreciation of film as art and the enjoyment of cinema as a social event are never entirely separate priorities, but they are given different weight by exhibitors. These differences reflect local contexts, personal backgrounds, funding trends, and other historical contingencies that produce distinct approaches to programming and ways to articulate the value of volunteer activity.

3.5. Conclusion

Community cinemas, by their own assessment, offer affordable access to a broader range of films on the big screen, which was identified as one of the key benefits by Cinema for All's annual survey of such organizations. Alongside these cinematic pleasures, however, 'making use of local facilities' and 'bringing together different sections of the community' also ranked highly.[21] The Social Value Lab's case studies also quoted audience views celebrating venue 'atmosphere' and the 'sense of community'.[22] This is produced not just in the experience of watching a film, but through the interstitial moments and activities that surround this in civic space. Setting up the chairs, lowering the blinds, pushing tables and sports equipment to a corner are all constitutive moments of the non-theatrical cinema experience in village halls. The histories of the buildings, and their patterns of

ownership and control, are invoked in decisions around programming and regularity of screenings. Unexpected events and circumstances can end up contributing a great deal to the distinctive character of an exhibition venue. At the same time, the functions inscribed in buildings and property relations, their permanence, and their decay, have their own inertia. But perhaps sometimes the cinema event, as ephemeral and untraceable as it is, can be used as a tool to shift that trajectory – making the hall inhabited, relevant, and sustainable.

The foregrounding of social functions and the use of multi-purpose spaces aligns community cinema with the lineage of public hall and municipal exhibition of the first decades of the 20th century, as well as with later forms of non-profit-motivated cinema such as rural mobile services. However, the sporadic nature of community exhibition is both a limiting factor and an advantage for community cinemas as sites of encounter. On the one hand, they cannot achieve the drop-in permanent availability that enables genuine 'third places' to become ingrained in everyday life. On the other hand, temporality enhances the eventfulness of the film screening, and therefore focuses attendance, effectively serving to bring people together even if the catchment is more limited.

Good intentions notwithstanding, it would be disingenuous to claim that everyone feels welcome in the village hall or the community cinema. The perception of happy harmony and togetherness often expresses the social homogeneity of organizers and audiences. At the same time, compared to the 'light sociability' and economic barriers for commercial cinemagoing, the spaces and practices of community cinema, with its forms of hospitality and co-production, can offer a more involved experience and potentially a stronger social value. However, the screening event is only the tip of the iceberg of film exhibition. Processes of organizing, planning, programming, interfacing with institutions, seeking funds, and promoting these events are much more constant and may extend over decades. This associational aspect of community exhibition is a key aspect of its survival, and it continues to be rooted in personal commitments to local groups as much as a love of film. The committee is the strongest form of sociability that happens around a cinema, and therefore a good deal of the social benefits of these forms of exhibition accrue to the volunteers who organize it. This is not surprising considering the tendency for social capital to reproduce itself. It is therefore often individuals with a fairly privileged *habitus* arriving into a place, who find in their involvement with exhibition a way to deploy and develop existing skills while building new social networks.

This social dynamic has developed more clearly in smaller towns and villages, where leisure activities and spaces are limited. It is thus interesting to compare it to other forms of network sociability, namely those of cinephilia and 'scenes'. The film club as a site of expertise and creativity, as well as a multiplier of cultural capital, is the topic of the next chapter.

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Chapter 4. Film clubs and subcultural cinephile spaces

Abstract: This chapter focuses on cine-clubs and film societies as forms of independent exhibition practice founded on cinephilia and offering alternative currencies of cultural value. The discussion of historical trajectories within subcultural exhibition is grounded in examples from Glasgow ranging from the 1920s to the present. This long-term view of cinephile presence in Scotland's largest city is contextualized in relation to urban transformation and the music and visual art scenes. The chapter considers institutional support, venues, and intermediality in these forms of non-theatrical programming and screening.

Key words: Cine-club, cinephilia, film society, scenes, cultural policy, intermediality

There is a tendency in academic and policy writing to focus on the social benefits of cultural activity, as I have done in the previous chapter for the case of community cinemas. This carries the risk of forgetting that many people love films, not just 'cinema' in general, and they are involved in specialist cultural negotiations that are poorly represented by ideas of civic commitment (Ramsden, Milling, and Simpson 2017). Cinephilia involves 'a serious approach towards film', which, as Melanie Selfe has argued, has involved a 'deliberate privileging of the film text over the more environmental, social and potentially consumerist aspects of the experience' (Selfe 2007, 28). That is not to say that venues, audiences, and presentation are irrelevant, but that the ostensive function of the screening is, plainly, to watch a film. The centring of the film text and of a 'serious approach' seem to focus on individual spectatorship, but they ultimately produce a different type of communal space. Compared to the aspirational tradition of the film societies, cult cinephilia appears very different on the surface. It celebrates camp, elevates devalued genres, and can be much more concerned with staging and performance. Despite these distinctions, this chapter considers film societies and film clubs as specialized forms of non-theatrical exhibition that materialize subcultural interconnections. Focusing on two examples in Glasgow, I explore the place of cinephile exhibition in the dynamics of a medium-sized city with a vibrant alternative ecosystem, while testing an approach to cinephile practices that recognizes both their specificity and their embeddedness in this environment. A closer observation of one venue serves as a touchstone.

Cinephilia is an evocative word, meaning, for Thomas Elsaesser, 'more than a passion for going to the movies, and only a little less than an entire attitude towards life' (Elsaesser 2005, 27). Elsaesser observes a historical watershed between two moments of cinephilia: one in which rituals of

collective worship in the cinema or the cine-club tried to stave off the disappearance of the loved object, and one in which technology permits possession and repetition at home. On the ground, however, the generational distinction is less clear-cut, and the two impulses overlap. While technological change produces a 'before and after' (home video and the Internet), the cinephilia of ritual has not disappeared. Just as television destroyed habitual cinemagoing but 'enhanced the opportunities for film fetishism and ritual screening' (Hoberman and Rosenbaum 1991, 30), the greater availability of once-scarce films has foregrounded the role of collective, co-present viewing, and rewarded forms of presentation that make the most of the uniqueness of the event. Film clubs, led by cinephiles intent on finding and sharing fragments from alternative canons, are on the frontline of these struggles between abundance and rarity.

In juxtaposition with the previous chapter's discussion of community exhibition, organized efforts by cinephiles to put on screenings and run film clubs can be understood as a different expression of the associational drive. The previous chapter talked about people getting involved in cinema provision out of a desire to participate in community building, suggesting that the associational aspect of their activities could exist separately from the aesthetic content of the cinema experience. Cinephilia, on the other hand, is not indiscriminate and therefore cinephile-led exhibition does not make the same claims for inclusion that community cinemas often make. The forms of collectivity that occur around film clubs, unlike those of community cinemas, are inseparable from questions of aesthetics, judgement, and cultural value. The rewards and motivations for the hard work of cinephile exhibition can then be understood in relation to ways of allocating cultural value at different scales. For our purposes, the concepts of film cultures and scenes provide the most useful starting points.

4.1. Film cultures

In his introduction to a volume on *The Emergence of Film Culture*, which focuses on inter-war Europe, Malte Hagener presents a tension between cosmopolitan and national ways of framing cinema during this era, which challenges the Anglo-centrism of existing accounts, in particular of those efforts to historicize the discipline of film studies. However, the use of 'film culture' in the singular suggests an imagined unity that refers to the construction and circulation of *knowledge* about cinema and the consolidation of its institutions, with 1930s Europe as the touchstone and the avant-garde of the preceding decade as catalyst (Hagener 2014, 9). The 'film culture' to which the book refers is one that is 'taken seriously', discursively as well as institutionally, with academic recognition as proof (p. 1).

The title of Janet Harbord's *Film Cultures* promises a more pluralist approach, linked to the production of difference across the cultural field. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's relational theories of taste and cultural consumption, Harbord presents film 'as a practice embedded in spatial and

psychological contexts of social hierarchy and distinction' (Harbord 2002, 2). Nevertheless, the book remains anchored in the institutions, focusing its delineation of film cultures as taste cultures on three types of permanent spaces: the multiplex, the arthouse cinema and the art gallery. As Selfe has argued, however, an identification of cinema cultures with fixed sites is less productive for the types of itinerant practices characteristic of film societies. The models of appreciation and the auditorium cultures that emerged around film societies were mobile, and they were transported by audience members to different spaces (Selfe 2007, 28). In fact, a disavowal of the importance of space and sociability was typical of the attitudes of 'art-cinema patrons [who] choose to engage with the concept of serious and authored artistic value, prizing the film above all other aspects of the experience' (Selfe 2007, 75).

Across the UK, as Selfe has shown, the establishment of commercial 'continental' cinemas in the post-war years capitalized on the growth of an audience for foreign and unorthodox films. This market had been nurtured by the film societies, but as full-time competitors vied for access to prints and audiences, volunteer organizations became side-lined and struggled to maintain attractive programming (Selfe 2007, 86). Meanwhile, other forms of cinephilia were emerging, with new audiences moving away from the 'film appreciation' canon. The most visible facet of that 'other' cinephilia is cult cinema. Cult is a slippery term, as it is used to categorize films but also viewing practices that are always on the move. Jamie Sexton points to 'excess and marginality' as the aesthetic markers of cult film, and these characteristics extend to the practices of exhibition and reception that have developed around it (Cineaste 2008). In order for this sense of outsiderdom to be maintained, cult cinema needs to move outwards as the mainstream expands. It is therefore involved in a dynamic of distinction (Alvin 2007). At these edges, however, cult cinema encounters and draws energy from other subcultural spheres, most notoriously popular music, visual and performance arts, and certain forms of writing. Cult cinema practices are thus able to stand outside the boundaries of normative film cultures by occupying the interstitial spaces of local alternative arts communities.

In *Midnight Movies*, Jonathan Rosenbaum situates film cultism historically starting with the Paris cine-clubs in the 1920s, established and frequented by avant-garde artists (Hoberman and Rosenbaum 1991, 23–24). These examples were not only characterized by the contrarian reception of non-canonical films, but also by the intensity of their spaces and of the social interactions they enabled. From the start, there was a tension between the modernist desire for medium specificity, which sought out dedicated spaces with optimal viewing conditions, and the expansiveness of cinema as a combinatory and promiscuous art form that could share spaces with many others. The purist tradition found perhaps its best realization in the Anthology Film Archives' 'Invisible Cinema' in 1970 (Sitney 2005). On the other end, the subcultural reclamation of devalued genres, notably 'exploitation' films, embraced the 'carnivalesque ballyhoo' that had accompanied their commercial exhibition (Schaefer 1999, 4). This blend of high and low, camp and abstraction, fetishism and hedonism was epitomized by the legendary spaces of the American Underground of the 1950s and 60s:

> The venues for the Underground were illegitimate: late night screenings in rundown
> movie houses, lofts, psychedelic clubs, porn cinemas, bookshops, warehouse parties
> and rock gigs. The Underground projector would stand amongst the intoxicated
> audience casting its ray through a fug of dope smoke. (Reekie 2007, 142)

This version of the cinematic underground, its haunts and hang-outs, like the 1920s cine-clubs, produced intense and localized flashpoints that brought together people practising many different art forms. This is also true of the cultural ferment that has sustained film clubs around the world. In 1970s Colombia, the Cine Club de Cali distinguished itself from the commercial and educational mainstream circuits, and from the more earnestly political or arthouse-orientated alternative exhibitors in this provincial capital, by forming 'links between the different types of urban cultures' expressed by rock and salsa music (Arias Osorio 2014). Celebrated examples of underground 'microcinema' in the US, such as Craig Baldwin's The Other Cinema in San Francisco, incorporated 'performances, […] vinyl records, slideshows, and shadow puppetry' (De Ville 2015, 111). In Manila, alternative exhibition spaces 'foster the social connections and identities integral for creative productions operating within limited means and with limited audiences [and] give geographic coherence to the city's self-designated "artistic communities"' (Trice 2009, 147). A thread of cosmopolitan, anachronistic imagination runs through these very different contexts, but the mise-en-scène of each film club is of its place and time, making claims to a place-based authenticity and depending on small numbers of individuals.

In a city like Glasgow, the largest in Scotland and third in the UK with nearly a million inhabitants, the non-theatrical locations, multi-medial creativity, and cooperative strategies of film clubs connect them to a cultural ecosystem. These acts of cinema can then be understood as nodes in and between scenes and communities, intersections between people involved in various other cultural endeavours. Independent music and visual arts are the main cultural fields that overlap with film exhibition practices, and both are tightly packed. In her foundational book on Glasgow's art and music scenes, *Social Sculpture,* Sarah Lowndes paints a vibrant picture of a constellation of artists, activists, writers, musicians, DJs, and other assorted creative malcontents making something happen in a post-industrial city (Lowndes 2010). Living on unemployment benefits or student grants, Glasgow's artists in the 1980s and 90s favoured self-organization and independence with a critical edge, and were never entirely separate from the city's popular traditions of music and protest. A similar process is traced by Robert Anderson in his thesis on the city's independent music scene. Indie music from Glasgow garnered international recognition (and a UNESCO accolade), nurtured by a grassroots network of places for live performance and socializing, and by all the non-commercial activities that sustained a sense of scene (Anderson 2015, 11).

In both Lowndes' and Anderson's accounts, the importance of unprofitable and voluntary activities is acknowledged, while recognizing that they create and sustain value in other ways: they are sites of social production. What is produced here is part of what Hardt and Negri call the 'social forms of the common', the 'shared knowledges, languages, relationships, and circuits of cooperation'

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which may be captured and privatized, or managed socially (Hardt and Negri 2017, xvi). Glasgow seems to prefer self-governance to enclosure. A sense of camaraderie and a collaborative ethos is evoked, often in contradistinction to the more competitive London milieu. As Anderson argues, the stylistic diversity of the indie scene contributed to this openness, so that 'trust and reciprocity' are considered local features (Anderson 2015, 264–265). While some visual artists, like Douglas Gordon and Malcolm Campbell, and some indie bands like Franz Ferdinand and Belle and Sebastian have gone on to achieve commercial success, the impression of a friendly, collegiate scene not driven by entrepreneurial ambition is still dominant. These local rules of authenticity also apply to film exhibition. Hence, the motivation for what is often a loss-making venture is a generous one stemming from cinephile sensibility, but it is also a move in this game of overlapping scenes.

4.2. Alternative exhibition in Glasgow

There had been a film society in Glasgow since November 1929, modelled on the Film Society of London and obtaining its programmes from there. While this survived into the 1970s, several smaller membership organizations existed for shorter spans throughout the middle decades of the 20th century. These included left-leaning groups, like the West of Scotland Workers' Film Society in the 1930s, the Glasgow Trades Council Film Society in the 1940s, Clydeside Film Society and Dawn Cine Group in the 1950s. These usually operated in commercial cinemas which were closed to the public on Sundays. The University of Glasgow also operated a society from the 1950s, initially in the screening room of the Scottish Film Council, and later in a lecture theatre.

In 1974, the Cosmo cinema, which had been showing European and art films since the 1930s, was reopened as a Regional Film Theatre supported by the British Film Institute. By this point, a city centre once bustling with luxurious cinemas had been reduced to a handful of decaying venues with dubious reputations. After the sharp decline in cinemagoing since the 1950s, cinema buildings all over British towns and cities had languished, often turning to cheaper films to make ends meet. Repertory, exploitation, and pornography were all tried, separately or in combination, by the remaining venues, in an effort to appeal to large niche audiences and young people. In the centre of Glasgow, three silent-era cinemas had made this transition by the 1960s, eventually becoming part of the Classic chain. By the late 1970s, two of them were hosting midnight screenings of X certificate films on a regular basis. By the middle of the 1980s, however, they had all closed (Louden 1983, 4; Peter 1996, 24–25, 39). This, along with the disappearance of 16mm distribution companies, created a vacuum in the provision of repertory titles in Glasgow.

At that time, Glasgow was in the throes of economic depression exacerbated by the social violence of Thatcher's government (Damer 1990). Deprivation and unemployment were high, housing and infrastructure were crumbling, endemic substance abuse ripped through communities, and street violence reached exceptional levels for a European city. At the same time, however, the cultural vitality of the city was bubbling underneath. A new generation of visual artists, writers, performers,

and musicians, who were either excluded or dissatisfied by existing exhibition and performance spaces, railed against the lack of cultural infrastructure, opening their own artist-run spaces like Transmission Gallery (Transmission: Committee for the Visual Arts 2001). Their autonomous efforts to create new contexts of work and display were as important as, and essential to, the emergence of an internationally visible and recognized art scene, retrospectively dubbed 'the Glasgow miracle' (Lowndes 2010). But while the strength of the movement resided in their self-organized collective action, it did not remain entirely disconnected from the policy-driven support that was starting to flow from the local administration. At a time when the 'creative industries' discourse was gaining ground as a framework to generate policy responses to entrenched problems of inequality and expropriation, some of the artists' demands found favour with public funders. The following decade was marked by Glasgow's tenure as European City of Culture in 1990, a venture that mobilized large amounts of money in an effort to rebrand the city and attract investment (Garcia 2005). The political manipulations of the 1990 programme have long been a topic of discussion for social historians (Gray and Porter 2015; Mooney 2004). While this is not the place for a more detailed analysis, it is worth noting is that, amongst the hundreds of events in the programme, film was scarcely represented.

The agency responsible for public support of the sector, the Scottish Film Council, focused its inadequately funded efforts on the regional film theatres, including the Glasgow Film Theatre (GFT), a flagship arthouse venue which received the lion's share of the budget. There was, therefore, no organized support for alternative exhibition beyond that institutionally sanctioned sphere (Moraes 2015). Instead, cult and underground film exhibition, deprived of its original venues, survived through symbiotic relationships in the interstices of these new fragile ecosystems. The best way to understand how this happened at that particular conjuncture is to dissect the story of one particular film club which operated in the 1990s.

4.3. Glasgow film clubs

Fleapit Film Club started on May 1st, 1997, with a 16mm screening of Russ Meyer's *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* (1970). Earlier that day, Labour had won the General Election after three decades of Conservative rule. Scottish bands were riding the Britpop wave, albeit less mercenarily than Tony Blair, and Glasgow-based artist Douglas Gordon had been awarded the Turner Prize, with work that often used and denaturalized repertory films as video installations. Fleapit was a cinephile initiative with roots in cult cinema: Neil McDonald and Emma Taylor, the two organizers, were part of the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* scene, and members of Doctor Scott's Extra Forks, a fan group that performed at screenings of the film.

Taylor and McDonald had professional connections with the film and video sector, as a house manager for the GFT and a BBC library assistant, respectively. These connections were helpful for contacts and logistics; McDonald recalls printing the posters at work and receiving the films at the BBC mailroom. Taylor had tried unsuccessfully to persuade the GFT to programme cult films. The

other cinemas in town were all part of large circuits and did not cater for specialist interests – with the exception of porn theatres, which tended to operate as members' clubs. It was one of these venues which provided a first home for Fleapit. As Neil McDonald recalls,

> [we] went to see our friend Bronwyn's band play at a pub/club called Divally's, which was situated behind the St Enoch Centre - this was a private members' only pub/club which had a bar with scantily clad waitresses serving drink at the bar - whilst in the back they had a little cinema with about 6 rows of cinema seats - facing a stage area with a pull-down screen. It seems that during the day they screened porn films for a 'discerning' audience and at night were happy to rent the area out for such like as bands to play in - hence Emma going along in the first place.   As soon as Emma saw the area at the back she thought it'd be a great venue to screen *Rocky Horror…*[1]

Divally's had recently started to be used as a live music venue. The previous summer, 'anarcho arthouse punks'[2] Swelling Meg ran a weekly residency to promote their new record, having chosen Divally's as an enticingly strange venue. John Williamson managed Swelling Meg at the time, and in conversation remembered the place as fairly run-down, not very busy, and 'really, really grubby'. The cinema was downstairs from the bar, and the video player was controlled from the box office so that the tape could be changed to innocuous cartoons in case of inspection. Swelling Meg's events on Sunday evenings adopted a cabaret format, incorporating performance art, dance, and films as well as live music, under the direction of band member and dramaturg Cora Bissett. In its first season, Fleapit ran fortnightly on a Thursday. The third screening was *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, with performances by Dr. Scott's Extra Forks and an encouragement to dress up and engage in the ritual audience participation that had already crystallized around the film, including rice-throwing and water pistols.[3]

While the seediness of the venue added a frisson to these playful subversions, the audience was careful to distinguish itself from the 'odd customers' of the go-go bar. Like the porn cinema, the film club operated as a membership organization, having registered with the British Federation of Film Societies. The ability to show films that had not received a BBFC (British Board of Film Classification) certificate had been a motivation for film society activity since its inception, but the boundaries between film society and exploitation or pornography have also been intensely policed by cinephiles (Selfe 2013). Although Fleapit included several notorious exploitation titles, journalist Kevin McCardle, writing for the local broadsheet, was anxious to clarify that the lack of BBFC certificates 'doesn't mean a job lot of Swedish filth for the brown-mac brigade'. To emphasize the distance between Fleapit and the usual fare that would have been screened at Divally's, he cited a 16mm print of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Hooper, 1974) as Fleapit's 'biggest coup', shown in Glasgow 'long before it received an uncertificated revival in London'.[4] Underlining the exclusivity of the screening via the scarcity of the print itself is typical of cult marketing. As Schaefer explains, 'in comparison to the mainstream motion picture industry, relatively few prints of an exploitation film were released at any given time' (Schaefer 1999, 6). Here, the circulation of the print challenges

centre-periphery assumptions. Glasgow could get the film before London; subcultural circuits did not have to follow those of conventional distribution.

Fleapit was well promoted. Apart from eye-catching posters, flyers were distributed in the city-centre bars and pubs that functioned as subcultural meeting-points, such as the 13th Note, King Tut's, and the Arches. These were also all places where Fleapit went on to screen after leaving Divally's. The club was featured in the local press, receiving coverage in listings magazine *The List* as well as the two main broadsheet dailies, *The Scotsman* and the Glasgow *Herald*. This mainstream attention seems surprising for a self-proclaimed cult film society, but the by-lines of these articles are by people directly involved in the organization – one of them dressing up as an usherette, the other one designing the posters. Fleapit was thus able to mobilize some resources from four major forces in Scottish cultural life – the national broadcaster, the two major newspapers, and Glasgow's arthouse cinema – through personal and informal access rather than institutional collaboration. As this was an entirely voluntary enterprise, there was no expectation of personal gain or institutional prestige.

Fleapit's second year featured more concerted collaborations. Rather than work-related connections, these came about through Fleapit organizers' position in Glasgow's independent music scene. The strength of this scene in the 1990s was closely connected to a growing number of venues prepared to book local bands. King Tut's Wah Wah Hut had been reopened by DF Concerts in 1990, borrowing a name from a New York performance art club, and soon became a tour favourite of rock and indie bands (Galloway 2015). The 13th Note, on the other side of the city centre, is a bar with a small, intimate gig space in the basement, which under Craig Tannock's management became 'the centre of Glasgow's independent musical universe' for a while (Cooper 2015, 166). The Arches were a series of cavernous railway arches under Glasgow Central station, brought back from dereliction for a major event as part of the City of Culture year of 1990, and run as a theatre/performance space and café/bar/club from 1991 (Jack 2015). Fleapit usherette Deirdre had a connection with this venue through her monthly easy-listening night Casino Royale, where she was 'known for her spectacular kitsch-toting'.[5] Three bands performed at a Fleapit benefit night at city centre bar Nice'n'Sleazy in February 1998;[6] in April, Fleapit teamed up with the Glasgow Early and Silent Cinema Club to show *Un Chien Andalou* (Buñuel, 1929) with a live score. Later that year, sponsorship from a major lager brand supported a pair of screenings, followed by clubnights with themed DJ sets, as part of a dance culture festival at the Arches. That Fleapit screened in all these spaces, and collaborated with festivals, DJs, promoters, and bands, showed the closeness of the networks of alternative or subcultural activity in the city. Fleapit's screenings at live music venues and clubs fed off, but also nurtured, interconnected music scenes.

The main consequence of Fleapit's higher profile was their involvement with the Ten Day Weekend programme. Ten Day Weekend was an initiative of the aforementioned Glasgow-based music promoter and band manager John Williamson, who had organized it with support from the City Council since 1995. Initially, Ten Day Weekend used the Glasgow Film Theatre as a film venue,

programming music films that had not been released in the UK or had not been seen widely enough. By 1998, the concept of the Ten Day Weekend had shifted away from a more industry-oriented approach to one more grounded in grassroots and independent music scenes. That year, Shelagh Stewart organized a week-long season of punk films, for which a less formal setting would be appropriate. Two of the screenings were run by Fleapit, at King Tut's and the Arches. The latter was the UK premiere of riot grrl film *Mary Jane's Not a Virgin Anymore* (1998), introduced by its director Sarah Jacobson. Getting to hang out with 'the queen of American underground film' was a highlight of the Fleapit year, mentioned in their report to the British Federation of Film Societies. It was also a thrill for Williamson, who had found out about Jacobson's work through the Beastie Boys' *Grand Royal* magazine, a sought-after and influential publication amongst Glasgow's musicians and artists.[7] The 1998 Ten Day Weekend is an example of the informal sociability that held together Glasgow scenes and connected them to the world.

In 1999 Fleapit returned with an important change: the screenings were now from video tape. This was a money-saving strategy, as audiences were usually too small to cover costs, and the club intended to return to 16mm as soon as financially possible. At that point, membership stood at 200, but according to McDonald attendance was often in the single digits, the biggest crowd being at a screening of *Shaft* (Parks, 1971) which brought over 50 people to the Arches. McDonald describes the audience as young and culturally savvy people who would often be found at bars and gigs: 'it was that small world Glasgow syndrome where everybody seemed to know everybody and would be seen at the usual places'.[8] John Williamson had a similar experience of promoting bands and music venues, including the 13th Note, which he founded in partnership with Craig Tannock, and where Fleapit held screenings during its last year: 'For any given thing that you put on there's probably 50 people that you need to reach, so the problem is where do you find them'.[9] This sensitivity to interconnected but distinct niches was crucial to the success of a small venue.

As Williamson makes explicit, 'there were all these intersecting and overlapping scenes', and therefore advertising in record shops was not always the best strategy; for some bands, which included some of the very active crowd of visual artists, it was better to flyer around the studios and galleries. As well as socially contiguous, the cultural hubs of these scenes were often spatially adjacent. The key place for contemporary artists, for instance, was Transmission Gallery, which was (and still is) only a few meters away from the second location of the 13th Note on King Street. Transmission is an artist-run gallery, established in 1983 'by art school graduates who were dissatisfied with the lack of exhibition spaces' (Transmission, 2001). During the 1990s it became a central meeting point for a loose network of visual and performance artists that were emerging as a new vanguard with conceptual works, video installations, print and new media, alongside radical takes on traditional techniques.[10] Band gigs were sometimes arranged in the gallery, or became part of the art work themselves, as in the exhibition Something Aaah! Nothing, in 1998, where bands transformed the gallery into a gig venue (Transmission, 2001). Transmission was not very far from

Divally's, emphasizing the tight spatiality of the scene. The same bands played at both spaces, and it is perhaps not surprising that Fleapit also used Transmission as a venue. Their first screening in the gallery was Michael Snow's *Wavelength* – not an exploitation film, by any definition. Fleapit's ability to move across scenes and genres reflects the hybridity of the scenes themselves, which produced highly experimental artists with a strong interest in the popular, and challenged high/lowbrow divides. By using gig venues, nightclubs, and galleries promiscuously, film clubs like Fleapit can act as a connective layer. Without the need to establish a permanent, bricks-and-mortar abode, Fleapit was part of the infrastructure that sustained the particularly cohesive networks of creative practitioners in Glasgow.

Twenty years later, most of the venues used by Fleapit still exist, with the exception of Divally's, which converted its back-room cinema into a lap-dancing club in 2000 after a protracted legal dispute with the City Council, and the Arches, which closed in 2015.[11] Glasgow Film Theatre continues to be the only full-time arthouse cinema in the city. New generations of artists tread a path from Glasgow School of Art, on the North West corner of the city centre, to Transmission Gallery in the South East. Indie bands play most nights in the basements of the 13th Note, King Tut's, or Nice'n'Sleazy's. *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* is still screened every so often, by one or other of the various film clubs that often come and go before leaving much trace. Between 2014 and 2017, such city-centre film clubs with a cult sensibility included The Incredibly Strange Film Night (at Nice'n'Sleazy's), Lightshow Film Club, Something Weird Film Club, Sonder Cinema, Pity Party Film Club, and Burnt Church Film Club. By far the most firmly established of the Glasgow film clubs during this period, however, was Matchbox Cineclub. Its story echoes that of Fleapit through its connection to the music scene and the ambitious, multi-media scale of their events, but their practices and priorities reflect the changed environment in which they operate. The challenges of the new cinephilia play out alongside older dynamics of authenticity and subcultural networking.

Matchbox Cineclub was started in 2008 by Tommy McCormick, who had been involved in organizing screenings of the Future Shorts programmes since 2006. Film studies graduate Sean Welsh had been a part of the local music scene, playing in bands, DJing and promoting gigs and clubnights. In 2011 he had started blogging for Glasgow Film Festival, and for his own blog, which 'has a tendency towards cult cinema, but generally has a pretty wide remit'.[12] This developed into a zine, *Physical Impossibility*, which features guest writers and illustrators contributing to a different theme each issue. Meanwhile, McCormick worked at a direct marketing agency and set up 'Paradise & Moriarty Explorers Club', a tour guiding group organizing themed trips and site visits. Named after Jack Kerouac characters and offering a mix of urban exploration and storytelling, this tour group connects to some of the same subcultural values of authenticity and exclusivity, while making inroads towards institutional legitimacy: urban exploration without the break-ins. Matchbox's insistence in 'doing things properly', particularly by paying license fees for films, is another expression of that attitude.

McCormick and Welsh's personal trajectories encapsulate the types of opportunities available to motivated, young white Scottish men just out of university but without the sort of resources or connections that would support an exclusive cinephile dedication. Event promotion, bootlegging, and writing are all key skills in the indie music scene that proved transferable to film exhibition. Knowledge of venues and contacts with managers, visual artists and musicians can be mobilized in the production of events. At the same time, there are skills that are specific to cinema exhibition, most crucially those of sourcing and licensing films. Welsh was seeking to gain experience as a programmer with a view of finding work in that area, and undertaking this particularly challenging type of curatorship alongside his writing could be seen as strategic in that sense.

Matchbox's first batch of screenings took place in the basement of a pub, Nice'n'Sleazy's, which is associated with the local indie music scene and is a venue for live gigs and clubnights (Anderson 2015, 193). There were other similar film clubs operating in the space, also relying on simple set-up with no entrance fee – and no film licenses. After a few screenings in this venue, and more sporadic events outside Glasgow, the club moved to the Old Hairdressers, one of Craig Tannock's family of bars, in January 2015. This move gave them a monthly slot with no venue hire costs, which allowed the club to pursue their goal to use regularity to build up a loyal audience, one that ideally 'respected [their] curation so much that they would come along for just a good film no matter what it was'.[13] It did not quite pan out, as they found that 'there are people who will come to each film, but not necessarily enough people – cult cinephiles that will come every month to fill a room to cover all your costs'. In Welsh's analysis, the eclectic programme made it difficult to secure a consistent audience. Operating in a post-scarcity context, where most film titles are a few clicks away, creates new challenges for a cult film programmer without a predictable fan base.

Matchbox's programming policy resists identification even with the already nebulous category of 'cult'. In their blog, they promise to screen 'all our favourite cinematic orphans, outcasts and outliers […] weird movies, cult movies, lost and banned movies, even films that have simply slipped through the cracks and deserve another look.'[14] These have included 3D exploitation western *Comin' at Ya* (Baldi, 1981), forgotten Scottish self-referential satire *Long Shot* (Hatton, 1978), Turkish exploitation documentary *Remake, Remix, Rip-off* (Kaya, 2014), Colombian vampire social commentary *Pura Sangre* (Ospina, 1980), and the postmodern Canadian 'sitcom noir' *Crime Wave* (Paizs, 1985). This commitment to fairly unknown films, and the frequent changes of venue, make Matchbox more dependent on their own recognizable brand. Here, Matchbox have used the opportunities provided by non-theatrical exhibition to emphasize a visual identity through pre-screening slideshows and video idents. They have also established a tradition of playing a reel of related clips, including VHS trailers and vintage advertising, as added value for the audience. This goes back to Matchbox's earliest residence at a pub in Leith (near Edinburgh), for which Welsh remembers creating carefully crafted reels that mimicked late-night off-TV videotaping, While the amount of effort that went into that was unsustainable, the pre-feature reel remains an important part

of Matchbox's showmanship. Before their 2015 screening of horror film *Hausu* (Obayashi, 1977), for instance, the reel included old Japanese TV adverts, digitized from tape and untranslated. For *Double Take in Outer Space* (Mangan, 2016), the reel includes excerpts and trailers from other films using similar techniques of détournement through dubbing. In other cases, a greeting from the director or even a short research presentation have been used to frame the event. In all these aspects, Matchbox demonstrates subcultural competence as well as showmanship flair and authenticity, appealing to a cult audience but also building a potentially marketable reputation.

Another way in which the events are framed and communicated is through collaboration. For instance, *Double Take* was programmed as part of Glasgow Comedy Festival, a mystery movie was shown in the Fantom Cinema series of Glasgow International art festival, and panel discussions have been arranged around the main themes of Glasgow Film Festival. Furthermore, Matchbox also collaborates with other film clubs, such as VHS Trash Fest, Video Namaste, and Something Weird Film Club. As well as springing from genuine shared interests, these are opportunities to reach new audiences. The case of Something Weird, a newer film club lead by Rachel Wilson, is particularly interesting in relation to the gender of cult and cinephile audiences. While the types of films screened by both clubs are comparable, and they have used the same venues, the Matchbox audience tends to be male, white, mid-30s, while Something Weird screenings have attracted a much greater proportion of young women. Welsh attributes this to the importance of personal networks, rather than to any explicit gendering of the advertising or identity of the club.

In 2016, Matchbox moved its monthly residence to the Centre for Contemporary Arts. In this space, they occupy a regular monthly slot at the small cinema auditorium, for which they only need to cover the projectionist's time. Cost and comfort, plus the accessibility and footfall of the CCA, which is a popular arts venue and social meeting spot, make it a convenient site. However, the set-up of the cinema space, with fixed raked seating and a projection booth, precludes any further intervention. Since the screening requires the services of the venue's projectionist, timings are also less flexible. In other words, the experience is closer to that of a traditional film society operating in a permanent cinema venue, than that of an underground film club. This allows the organizers to concentrate on their core interests in discovering, sourcing, and programming films, but it sacrifices (or displaces) the interactions that happen in more informal spaces. The cine-clubs' transhumance underpins their symbiotic relationships with other aspects of cultural life in the city, and their use of multi-purpose spaces enables experimentation with different ways of staging cinema experiences.

4.4. Producing spaces of cinephilia

The pub is a common venue for pop-up cinema in the UK. This is hardly surprising, considering, on the one hand, the abundance of pubs, and on the other, the very long history of entertainment in these spaces. As historians of music hall have documented, the back rooms of pubs offered the first indoor performance spaces that led to Victorian forms of popular stage shows, as well as being a

traditional site to play and enjoy music (Maloney 2003). Cinema in pubs was not, however, a common occurrence in the 20th century, given the difficulties of installing projection equipment and the restriction in the audience that would result from operating in licensed premises, not to mention the early association between cinema and Temperance highlighted in the previous chapter. The access restrictions, both physical and social, that apply to pub spaces make them generally unsuitable for broad-appeal or family orientated film exhibition, but have advantages for niche and cinephile strands. In that sense, it is important to recognize that pubs are not interchangeable; they have very particular identities and communities linked to their historical trajectories.

An example of how the local histories of the pub trade shape opportunities for film exhibition is that of the Old Hairdressers, a city-centre bar which during the years of my fieldwork was a key site for alternative moving image culture. The Old Hairdressers is one of the venues established and owned by Craig Tannock, the promoter mentioned before in relation to the 13th Note. Since that first venture, Tannock has become a key figure in venue ownership in Glasgow, controlling five pubs and clubs with live performance spaces. Importantly, as Anderson points out,

> Although all these venues operate on a commercial basis, Tannock's business ethos is consistent with the elements of patronage and social support that pervades the development of Glasgow's popular music scene (Anderson 2015, 238)

The Old Hairdressers is a bar of the kind found in most cities of the world: mismatched furniture, stripped walls, indie music, beer, stacks of fliers and a plaster board covered in small gig posters. Set back in a cobbled lane, around the corner from Glasgow Central railway station, it is both easy and difficult to find. It is directly in front of Stereo, a bar and vegan restaurant with a downstairs venue and a late license, which is well known for live music and club nights. The lane, running between a tartan-decked souvenir shop and a Tesco Metro supermarket, is lined with large rubbish bins that distract from some interesting architecture towering above, namely the white tiles and brick arches of the Daily Record building, designed by famous local architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh.

[INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE]

Described by the Scottish cultural listings magazine as 'the most exciting venue in Scotland, offering everything from hardcore punk and free jazz, to experimental theatre and cult cinema', the Old Hairdressers does not really look the part.[15] Its main problem, which prevents several festivals from programming in the space, is the lack of wheelchair access. Even for those able to climb stairs, the space is awkwardly designed, with a tiny bar under the stairs and barely enough space for a pair of DJ decks amongst the tables in the noisy ground floor.[16] Events take place two storeys up, in a plain rectangular room reached via industrial-looking, metal-plate stairs. The industrial feel continues inside, with metal racks carrying wires and exposed ventilation pipes as the main decorative feature against a patched-up ceiling. While this may sound like an ironic 'loft' aesthetic, the peeling plaster and upturned beer crates dispel that impression. Large wooden boxes, painted in primary colours,

double as all kinds of furniture, stacked in different configurations. A heavy beige curtain hangs on one end of the room, and a makeshift bar can be set up opposite. There is no stage – and until 2018, no screen.

The space is a blank slate, 'a quasi-white cube', in Sean Welsh's words, ready to change identities daily from gallery to classroom to nightclub to cinema to gig venue. In our interview he praised the management, in the hands of visual artist Rob Churm, for being accommodating: 'you can make what you want, they'll leave you alone.' This is not always the case with pub basements or back rooms, as managers may be reluctant to risk damage to their premises, or time in the space is limited as other things are programmed before or after. A sympathetic management and dedicated access to the upstairs venue are thus key advantages of the Old Hairdressers, allowing Matchbox to be inventive:

> It's just depending on how much effort you want to put in. You can have bands playing, decorate the whole room, you can have the screen at one end of the room or this end of the room, multiple screens, you can project onto a screen and onto a wall, there's so much flexibility. Also in terms of when you get to set up, because you can come in the afternoon and go until their license stops, which is one in the morning, so huge amount of flexibility.[17]

In his blog, Welsh wrote an account of the practical process of setting up a screening at the Old Hairdressers in September 2015. He describes the pre-production, which included commissioning a poster, creating a 30-minute trailer reel, and setting up an event page in ticketing website EventBrite. The physical set-up is detailed in several steps. The first job is transporting and building the screen, which at the time they leased from the CCA. Given that it is possible to project directly on the walls, the decision to use a portable screen is an aesthetic choice ('the proper screen is much, much cooler') that can be understood in relation to the idea of 'doing things properly'.[18] It is particularly important for subtitled films which need clearer sightlines, but is by no means the easy option. In our interview, Welsh recalled that, the first time they he had to set up the screen, 'I almost had a nervous breakdown building that screen, because it's a two-man job, minimum… two-person job, rather. It was just a lot of work, and it would take up half a day setting up that room.'

The blog narrative continues with the building of a stack of wooden blocks for the projector ('DIY cinema at its best/worst'), arranging the chairs and tables, placing lamps and picture frames on the tables, and placing signage around the venue. This requires the work of at least four people on the night, plus the support of the venue staff who have set up the sound system and serve at the bar. A permanent cinema space, by contrast, has fixed that labour into its architecture, allowing exhibitors to concentrate on the on-screen content.

While producing a cinema space as a new configuration each time requires work, it also offers the possibility of manipulating the format to encourage preferred behaviours or viewing conditions. For instance, Matchbox, like Fleapit, have sometimes opted to organize seating 'cabaret-style', which permits more movement during the film and encourages people to buy drinks. This is only partially possible at the Old Hairdressers because it reduces the capacity to unsustainable numbers, especially

when the organizers are reluctant to charge more than £3 for people to sit on uncomfortable chairs and church pews. There is an implicit correspondence between ticket prices, venue aesthetics, and audience expectations which exhibitors are keen to maintain. The price of the ticket (less than a third of a multiplex admission), the unassuming aspect of the space, and the manner of the organizers all help communicate a structure of feeling, a complicity which is best demonstrated by the audience's reaction to a technical breakdown. For instance, during the screening of *Hausu* in 2015, the projector switched off after 10 minutes and the organizers had to go across town to borrow a replacement. The wait would have been unacceptable in a commercial theatrical setting, but here it was simply more time to get a drink and chat to others; nobody claimed their money back or protested, but instead offered to help. As Miriam Ross has argued, the visibility of the apparatus in DIY spaces contributes to a sense of co-production and shared responsibility for the experience (Ross 2013).

The creative possibilities of ad-hoc cinema spaces are exploited in more spectacular fashion by immersive or 'live' cinema. The site-specificity of pop-up screenings connects them to the other activities with which they share space. In the case of the Old Hairdressers, these range from live music to poetry, exhibitions and performance art, all within a DIY sphere outside the mainstream. This creates possibilities – and expectations – for enhancing the 'eventfulness' of film screenings, and adds another layer of complexity to the definition of where cinema starts and ends. For instance, at the Matchbox screening of punk film *DOA: A Rite of Passage*, in September 2016, the audience were encouraged to 'treat it like a gig', explicitly authorizing movement around the space during the film, as well as during the actual gig that followed. For this event, still projections on the two side walls reproduced the look of legendary New York punk venue CBGB, forging a connection between distant subcultural scenes. The three local live acts were described as 'three bands who, in the spirit of Punk, and in the spirit of Matchbox, are outsiders and refuse to be pigeonholed'.[19] This discourse of outsiderdom as a connecting characteristic is entirely consistent with the dynamics of distinction that characterize subcultural practices.

4.5. Negotiating abundance and obsolescence

The early history of film societies shows that a key motivation for volunteer involvement was a desire to have access to films that were not available on regular commercial distribution or that were subject to censorship. As Jasmine Nadua Trice argues in relation to both classical and new cinephilia, 'loving movies involves not only the chosen task of criticism, but also the required work of securing the critical object' (2015, 612). Film societies thus offered a correction to the market's failure to supply a niche good. To this day, the global circulation of films is far from frictionless, but this context of scarcity has certainly shifted. In the 1970s, the possibility of on-demand, individual access to the vast repository of world cinema promised by home video was seen as a threat to the film society movement, given that it offered easier, more convenient solutions to the problem of access to films. As Peter Seward wrote in *Film*, the organ of the British Federation of Film Societies, 'Utopia will be

here, and with total video availability, from Pabst to porno, Film Societies will no longer be required.' (1975) And indeed there was a decline in film society activity, just as there was for film attendance in general, which reached its lowest point in the UK in 1984.

Video technology broke the link between watching and projecting. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, cinephiles – especially in the global North – had access to a growing catalogue of mainstream and obscure films on video tape and disc, which they could watch at their leisure. On the other hand, *projecting* from video was costly and complicated, more so than 16mm had been. As 16mm distributors struggled to stay in business, the increased personal access to films made possible by video came at the expense of collective exhibition. However, as Seward knew well despite his flippant prediction, home video did not fulfil the same needs as a film society, and since video projectors became more widely available, this trend has been reversed. Availability does, however, change the landscape in significant ways. All exhibitors have to grapple with the challenge of attracting audiences to a single event that may cost more than a personal copy of the film would. While commercial cinemas are still fighting tooth and nail to maintain their exclusive access to new releases (i.e. to create artificial scarcity), film clubs, which are often dedicated to repertory titles, do not have that option, at least not a priori. Their appeals to audiences cannot therefore rely on newness, but exclusivity can be construed in other ways.

As Will Straw argues, '[d]ifferent cultural spaces are marked by the sort of temporalities to be found within them', as cultural commodities circulate in different markets, undergoing changes in 'the markers of their distinctiveness and the bases of their value' (Straw 1991, 374). Straw's description of 'alternative-rock culture' highlights its refusal of obsolescence, developing a distinct temporality of genealogical connoisseurship. A similar resistant temporality is characteristic of alternative programming, where the cult status of films is often an 'accidental consequence of their fractured reception trajectories' through lack of distribution, censorship, suppression, or failure (Mathijs and Sexton 2011, 7). The subcultural appeal of a particular film is thus dependent on a historical narrative, and that story is part of the promotional and framing strategies of screenings. Provenance returns as a marker of authenticity, so that unlikely or tortuous distribution stories are woven into a rescue narrative, as found in some examples from Matchbox's publicity:

> Matchbox are screening the long out-of-circulation LONG SHOT from a 35mm print straight from the BFI Archives. LONG SHOT has never been on video, DVD, Blu Ray or VOD'[20] (*Long Shot,* Hatton, 1978, screened in July 2016)
>
> After its initial release the independent cult classic soon dropped out of the radar and into obscurity, never to be screened again until recently.[21] (*The Name of the Game is Kill*, Solomon, 1968, screened in July 2017)
>
> Denney's film will likely never see a physical release. Rescued from obscurity when a 35mm print was found and restored, this is an extremely rare screening, from the recent 2K scan DCP, and a Scottish premiere.[22] (*The Astrologer,* Denney, 1975, screened in June 2018)

Matchbox Cineclub emphasize the rarity of the content and the value added by contextual

strategies. While any cinephile exhibitor will need to display some depth of specialist knowledge in

order to curate a programme, Matchbox have been more explicit about their against-the-grain engagement with film distribution. By contesting the regimented temporalities of institutional distribution, they prove that total availability is a myth, and that its impact is to produce a reductive, flattened version of media history. The normative chain of film release, from theatrical to video on demand, relegates most independent films to obscurity or disappearance, beyond a canon of 'cult classics' that are better known, recognizable to audiences, and screened by other film clubs in the city. The decision to show hard-to-find films is thus motivated by a critical engagement with film culture more generally, but it is also defined locally by distinction from other exhibitors.

> We quickly discovered we didn't want to show *The Warriors* every month, *The Room* or whatever you can find the license pretty easily. We didn't want to go to [non-theatrical distributors] Park Circus or Filmbank, look at a menu of films and pick from them. That's not a criticism of anyone else who does that, there's some amazing films there, but the films that we actively wanted to screen were off the beaten track, and so quite often it was really difficult to find a license for them.[23]

Choosing to screen obscure films not only makes the task of sourcing them more difficult, but also creates a challenge in reaching audiences, particularly, as Welsh puts it, 'people who are just people, and who don't have a special interest in film'. As mentioned above, building a trustworthy brand and moving towards a more regular screening pattern are two of the strategies used by Matchbox to address that gap between specialist curation and less specialized audiences. These forms of brand positioning function in relation to transnational spheres of 'cult' and cinephile culture, articulated into local understandings and conjunctures of alternative arts communities. Brand markers such as the choice of venue, poster design, collaborators, and the wording of social media messages need to be readable for those intended as readers, those in the relevant local networks.

The resistant temporality of alternative scenes also applies to technologies and ways of watching. The revival of VHS is an example, best demonstrated in Scotland by VHS Trash Fest, and by Matchbox Cineclub's logo (part matchbox, part video tape) and membership cards (modelled on Blockbuster Video ones). This foregrounding of video shows the generational difference with Fleapit's evocation of historical cinemagoing. In May 2017, Fleapit returned for a 20th anniversary screening, in a pub basement not far from its original location. The staging of this celebration included one of the organizers' friends dressed as a 1960s ice-cream girl, with a beehive hairdo and white gloves, and a film-melting-in-the-gate digital effect applied mid-way through the digital projection of the feature film. During the intermission, vintage adverts for traditional cinema refreshments were screened, while the 'ice-cream girl' sold raffle tickets for terrible DVDs.[24] The screening used current means to mobilize nostalgic affects. It was advertised via Facebook (rather than fliers or posters), using a YouTube video made up of scratched leader reel and an old-fashioned voiceover. Given that, in the late 1990s, Fleapit was already retro, the ersatz historicity of the 20th anniversary screening was apt, and it appealed to the original audience while claiming a place in the local memory of alternative exhibition.

4.6. Conclusion

The search for the exceptions to 'total video availability' requires complex skills and expertise. These include not only a thorough knowledge of at least some strands of world cinema, but also a knowledge of intellectual property, the ability and time to track down rights holders, and the confidence to negotiate deals mostly via email. Creating conditions of reception that enhance the appeal of film club attendance is also challenging work, whether it simply involves moving chairs around, or expands into ambitious staging and performance. All this labour is almost always unpaid and carried out by one or two people, who often risk, and often lose, their own money paying screening fees and venue hires. Film clubs therefore seem to exist outside utilitarian rationality. The rewards for this labour, other than the aesthetic pleasure or entertainment value of the film itself, may be more usefully understood as subcultural capital. These rewards are thus produced and allocated locally by the dynamics of scenes.

Framing this cultural labour in terms of subcultural capital focuses attention on the logics of conversion into other forms of capital, which mediate transitions between the fringe and the mainstream. By committing themselves to programming hard-to-find titles, and dealing with their labyrinthine licensing processes, independent exhibitors like Welsh are doing high-level curatorial work from outside the institution. Demonstrating this expertise through DIY events can potentially open doors, but paid positions for programmers and film curators are very scarce, especially in a small city and a small nation under austerity.[25] More often than not, the hard-won success of a DIY programme will lead to more opportunities for precariously funded project work, rather than employment with a local cultural entity. For instance, in 2016 Welsh extended his role in Glasgow's film culture by co-running Document International Human Rights Film Festival. In spite of its long trajectory, the festival is still subject to chronic underfunding of staff roles due to its event-based, application-dependent funding. While the festival almost doubled the amount of funding secured from the national arts funding body during Welsh's tenure, it was hardly a sustainable job. While continuing Matchbox activities and starting new programming initiatives, Welsh's involvement with the Scalarama film season grew year on year. First as a coordinator for Glasgow and then for Scotland, Welsh encouraged and supported the creation of new film clubs and managed a collaborative programme as well as funding. The intensity of work across all these activities have brought Welsh some recognition and trust from institutional bodies, but not necessarily any more secure funding. While Welsh may be exceptional in the extent of his commitment, for many cinephile exhibitors such risky entrepreneurialism becomes unsustainable in the long run, and their projects often leave little trace. Welsh explains this by analogy to independent music:

> There's all this energy. It's like when you're in a band. An unsigned band, writes three albums worth of material, plays a bunch of times, never gets signed, never gets recorded, all that energy just disappears.[26]

The voluntary nature of DIY exhibition should not obscure its role as a productive process, as labour, and thus as an input of vital energy into a system. That energy may dissipate, as Welsh suggests, or it may also be harnessed and extracted by those in a position to do so, as I am doing in writing this chapter. In the context of current research on the precarious cultural work which shows that the use of unremunerated labour creates patterns of exclusion, the role of DIY exhibition as a potential pathway into a very small institutional space should give us pause (Brook, O'Brien, and Taylor 2018). A more critical approach to cinephile exhibition could show how value is produced by film clubs through personal networks and spatial embeddedness in local and global subcultural fields. Access to these networks and spaces, and particularly to their overlaps with institutional ones, is not universal, nor does it claim to be: cinephilia, cult, and other subcultures are defined through distinction. Local rules apply; in the case of Glasgow, those have tended to foreground a collegiate ethos and underplay entrepreneurial ambition, giving an impression of a friendly town where people rarely make money, but may be able to access resources and opportunities through networking. Given the small size of the city, and the small size of Scotland as the scale for access to arts funding, this dependence on informal networks and goodwill is both organic and precarious.

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[1] Neill McDonald, email correspondence, May 2017

[2] 'Jah Wobble/Swelling Meg, CCA, Glasgow', *Herald* (Glasgow), 29 September 1997.

[3] 'Fleapit Film Club Progress Report July 1998' [for the British Federation of Film Societies], typescript, private collection.

[4] Kevin McCardle, 'Fleapit has a real buzz', *Herald* (Glasgow), 15 July 1999.

[5] Emma Taylor, 'Fleapit Film Club Press Release' [n.d. 1998], typescript, private collection.

[6] Deirdre Molloy, 'Movies for basket cases', *The Scotsman* 12 February 1998; 'Fleapit Film Club Progress Report July 1998', typescript, private collection.

[7] See for instance Ross Sinclair's contribution to the *New Art in Scotland* catalogue in 1994 (Sinclair 1994)

[8] Neil Macdonald, email interview, 2017

[9] John Williamson, interview with the author, August 2017.

[10] Artists in this group included Douglas Gordon, Christine Borland, Ross Sinclair, Ann Vance, Euan Sutherland, and Malcolm Dickson.

[11] Vivienne Nicoll, 'Women's fury over strip club'. *Evening Times* (Glasgow), 29 November 2000.

[12] 'Physical Impossibility', *Central Station,* http://web.archive.org/web/20160902131241/http://thisiscentralstation.com/featured-zines/physical-impossibility/. Last accessed 24 April 2018.

[13] Sean Welsh, interview with the author, May 2017.

[14] Sean Welsh, 'Matchbox Cineclub', *Physical Impossibility* blog, n.d. https://physicalimpossibility.com/matchbox-cineclub/. Last accessed 24 April 2018.

[15] 'The Hot 100', *The List* 1 November 2017. Issue 746, p. 31.

[16] The bar was reorganized in 2018 so serving space is less cramped.

[17] Sean Welsh, interview with the author, May 2017.

[18] Sean Welsh, 'Disreputable Trash', *Physical Impossibility* blog, 19 September 2015, https://physicalimpossibility.com/2015/09/19/disreputable-trash/. Last accessed 24 April 2018.

[19] *DOA: A Rite of Passage* Facebook Event page https://www.facebook.com/events/312829595723518/. Last accessed 20 February 2020.

[20] *Long Shot* Facebook event page, https://www.facebook.com/events/907851452657897/. Last accessed 20 February 2020.

[21] *The Name of the Game is Kill* Facebook event page, https://www.facebook.com/events/410705532633208/. Last accessed 20 February 2020.

[22] *The Astrologer* Facebook event page, https://www.facebook.com/events/185075642139230/. Last accessed 20 February 2020.

[23] Sean Welsh, interview with the author, May 2017.

[24] An audience member pointed out that the raffle was not quite the same as those of twenty years ago, where the prizes were meat products and you could win enough for a full grill.

[25] Sean Welsh, interview with the author, May 2017.

[26] Sean Welsh, interview with the author, May 2017

Chapter 5. On the ground: Participatory screenings in everyday spaces

Abstract: Film is not always the dominant element in the social situations it enters. This chapter discusses instrumental forms of exhibition, which energize the overlaps between the film's discourse and the viewer's world. The screening space helps underline this proximity, and may offer opportunities to shift the experience of reception into action. In the chapter, I explain how 'useful' cinema expects active engagement from the audience, encouraging discussion by activating the incompleteness of film. Examples include 'interrupted' screenings, film discussions, and the use of documentary film as a campaigning tool.

> [T]he technology of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition. By replicating the work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to reach the recipient in his or her own situation, it actualizes that which is reproduced.
> - Walter Benjamin, 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction' (1936)

Film was the touchstone for Benjamin's reflection on reproducibility, both 'the most powerful agent' of this double process of disenchantment, and 'the most serviceable vehicle' of a new function for art. Through mass reproduction, art lost its singularity and hence its cult value. Displacement and recontextualization were integral to this shattering of the aura, because they eliminated the distance that separated the work of art from the viewers. Technological reproduction, whether it is a lithograph of the Mona Lisa or a pirate DVD of *Casablanca*, can 'place the copy of the original in situations which the original itself cannot attain', enabling 'the original to meet the recipient halfway' (Benjamin 1935). The assemblages that conjure up cinema in its minor forms, in transient and borrowed spaces, also shift the boundary of the encounter with an audience. Instead of waiting for audiences to come to the movie theatre, a cinema situation emerges around them, where they are. This changes the power balance between the text and the viewer, and between the screen and its context. In the process, these interventions may become 'useful', that is to say, concerned with changing the world. The examples discussed in this chapter demonstrate how screenings in educational and activist spaces offer a demystified cinema experience, which aims to empower audiences by reducing the distance between film and the everyday.

Benjamin was writing less than a decade after Dziga Vertov's experiments with mobile cinemas, which sought to heighten the viewer's awareness of the conditions of reception and therefore promote a reflexive dialogue between the screen and the lived reality of the spectator (Pratt and San Juan 2014, 145). For Vertov, the mobile cinema was a counterpoint to the 'cinema church'. Non-

theatrical exhibition, like the modernist aesthetics of the film, was supposed to counter cinema's reactionary tendencies by disenchanting it. By extension, these reactionary, religious tendencies would include cinephilia, with its rituals, hierarchies, and gatekeeping. Cult film's social dynamics, however countercultural, still mirror the art world. Indeed, they show the same tendency that Benjamin criticized in early film critics 'to attribute elements of cult to film – with a striking lack of discretion' by annexing it to 'art'. Both the fetishism of stars and spectacle in mainstream cinema, and the cult appreciation of films, deny Benjamin's utopian vision for a new social function of art under the sign of technological reproducibility, one that 'instead of being founded on ritual […] is based on a different practice: politics.' (Benjamin 1935).

The idea of challenging mystification by reducing distance resonates with the concept of 'useful cinema', as defined by Haidee Wasson and Charles Acland. They identify commercial exhibition as a ritualized spectacle, alongside which an 'other cinema' has existed, which they name 'useful cinema'. It is 'defined by film's ability to transform unlikely spaces, convey ideas, convince individuals, and produce subjects in the service of public and private aims' (Wasson and Acland 2011, 2). In exhibition practice, useful cinema stands in contrast to the commodified experience of the cinema theatre, but also to the ritualistic dimension of cinephile film clubs. It has been an opportunistic cinema, a utilitarian one. More than anything, useful cinema is a form of practice in which film 'meets the recipients halfway', by entering their physical and discursive spaces.

The examples in this chapter are of organizations whose main activity is not film exhibition, using spaces that are not cinemas, with aims that exceed those of entertainment or aesthetic contemplation. In their own self-effacing ways, each of the events mentioned materializes an anti-ritual cinema assemblage. Issue-based or place-based programming, where curation is explicitly subordinate to external categories, is an 'impure' way of thinking about film, where exhibitors have to negotiate the power struggles between world, screen, and audience. Depending on these balances of power, these forms of instrumentalized exhibition have taken different forms. This chapter follows two historical lineages. The first one takes us back to early traditions of visual instruction and 'rational recreation' in the figure of the lantern lecturer, while a second one points to the parallel history of political exhibition. The cases below connect to these traditions, but also show that contemporary practices in the UK are shaped by more democratic ideas of cultural participation, social knowledge, and civil discussion within a liberal public sphere. Their compass veers towards the affirmative rather than the oppositional or alternative, but by prefiguring collective organizing, these anti-ritual cinema forms sometimes offer glimpses of a more radical way.

A good place to start thinking about this cinema that comes out to meet audiences where they are, is by looking at audience groups excluded from the commercial cinema auditorium: those who cannot get to the cinema. Given the boundaries of my fieldwork, which encompassed only exhibition events open to the public, I am bracketing away the very significant fields of cinema in hospitals, care homes, and prisons, as well as the extensive history of classroom exhibition, but a brief overview

brings to the surface the multiple forms of use that these institutional spaces have entrusted to the projected moving image, and starts to outline paths of mutual influence.

Cinema has had a presence in hospitals since the First World War. In this context, researchers have observed that cinema can enable intense aesthetic and emotional experiences and perhaps 'an exercise in otherness', a humanizing variation on routine (Omelczuk, Fresquet, and Medieros Santi 2015), or a familiar and comforting moment of leisure. Hospitalized audiences may seek the immersive, concentrated experience made possible by the protocols of cinema, while they may also benefit from the flexibility of its configurations, which adapt to their needs. Similar benefits have been reported in relation to screenings in care homes for the elderly, especially for people living with dementia. These screenings are interesting because they show the exclusionary aspects of normative cinema configurations in dedicated cinema spaces, and create room for other ways of engaging with film. For instance, the auditorium may not be completely dark, and making noise or moving around is explicitly accepted.

Prisons are another non-cinema context in which films have long had a presence. As Alison Griffiths has argued, the 'homegrown affair' of cinema in prisons created a 'new type of social space', where spectators had little agency or choice (Griffiths 2016, 133, 143). While the dominant form of utility for prison cinema is that of entertainment as a component of welfare and recovery, its proponents have also claimed it can have a moralizing function, as a way to justify it when confronted with the more punitive views that reject any form of leisure for inmates. As Victoria Knight has shown, the increasing presence of television in prisons since the 1990s has reframed that debate (Knight 2016). Since the advent of video, moving image activities in prisons often involve technical skills training to enable participants to use it as a form of self-expression. The vocational and expressive dimension of these projects places them more comfortably within discourses of rehabilitation and skills development rather than entertainment.

The educational motivation is obviously more prevalent in the classroom. Cinema in schools has been studied extensively, with a focus on the spread of 16mm equipment from the 1930s onwards, particularly in the US and Canada, a perspective well represented in the collected chapters of *Useful Cinema* (Wasson & Acland, 2011). Scotland had been a pioneering site for educational exhibition, with the establishment of the Scottish Educational Film Library and the acquisition of 35mm projectors by schools early on. Beyond the classroom, the educational potential of film was applied to industrial training, epidemiology, agriculture, and many other fields (Druick 2012; Levine 2004; MacKenzie 2014). This instrumentalization of cinema, and particularly of documentary, made it 'palatable to a well-educated international elite' concerned with modern nation building (Druick 2008, 67). The audiences associated the documentary with other 'discourses of sobriety', including science, policy, and education, all of which serve as 'vehicles of action and intervention, power and knowledge, desire and will, directed toward the world' (Nichols 2017, 26–27). This outward direction is a key feature of useful cinema.

Issue-based programming positions films in relation to ordinary experience, seeking to open up the film object to the viewer's world and vice-versa. In the events discussed in this chapter, the times and spaces marked as cinematic are continuous with the audience's life world, rather than outside it. As Pratt and San Juan argue, the 'worldliness' of documentary, on which its promise of shaping public discourse depends, is an understanding rooted in the 'existing conditions of everyday life' where film meets audiences (Pratt and San Juan 2014). While this mode of reception is not intrinsically restricted to documentary, it foregrounds the indexicality of film. This way of looking at film has a history that predates the medium itself.

In Western Europe, a key strand of this lineage is the magic lantern. Emerging side by side with the phantasmagoria, magic lantern lecturing was the 'sober' relative of the more spectacular and carnivalesque projection practices, but the boundary was never watertight (Brooker 2007; Rossell 1998). Even those magic lantern shows with an educational, moralizing, or catechizing intent relied on visual attractions and narrative flair to keep audience interest, appealing to the negotiated position of 'rational entertainment'. In the late 19th century, the use of photographic plates enhanced the factual credentials of the lantern, and during the age of imperial expansion made it a staple of travel lecturing (Withers 1994). Requiring specialized equipment, technical skill, thematic expertise, and refined elocution, the lantern show was characteristically peripatetic. While some lecture theatres had lantern facilities in the same way that a university nowadays will have video projectors mainly used for slide shows, the general public was more likely to encounter lantern shows at a local hall. In many cases, it was the same halls and the same lantern lecturers that first introduced cinema to these audiences.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the village hall has been a key site of civic and cultural life in Scotland. In the 1890s, commercial lantern operators like Lizars of Glasgow and William Walker of Aberdeen offered their services to village hall committees and civic groups (Vélez-Serna 2018, 20–22). An example from Peterhead, in the North East coast of Scotland, is worth quoting at length, as it offers a reminder of the intermediality and liveness that characterized these forms, but also of the material synergies that connected different aspects of rational entertainment. In this case, photographic lantern slides and topical films are joined by a live demonstration of sound recording technology, as well as musical and oratory performances, all in the interests of raising funds for the town's Carnegie library:

> Messrs. Walker & Co, Bridge Street, Aberdeen, gave two exhibitions of the cinematograph and phonograph on Wednesday afternoon and evening in the Public Hall, under the auspices of the Public Library Committee. Dr. Traill presided, and spoke of the benefits derived from the library, and hence the reason of getting up this entertainment for providing new funds for new books. The hall was crowded. The cinematograph exhibition was greatly enjoyed, especially the views of the Diamond Jubilee celebration and Lord Provost Mearns's garden party. Mr Beveridge, as lecturer, gave a very interesting description of Nansen's "Farthest North," which was illustrated by some splendid photographs and charts. The phonograph, being new to this quarter, was greatly appreciated, this remarkable instrument repeating the chairman's opening remarks. Songs were contributed by Miss Blake and Mr Brown,

while Miss L Sinclair (pianoforte) and J. B. Sinclair (violin) played appropriate selections during the evening.[1]

As Jennifer Horne has written, Carnegie libraries tended to prioritize access and used films initially to entice new patrons and to 'claim cultural relevance' (Horne 2011, 164). While this very early Aberdeen show did not take place in the library, its content was an extension of the library's purpose, with its eclectic but respectable mix of technology and arts, local and national news, and the central role of the illustrated lecture.

Based on the model of the lantern lecture, cinematograph lecturing was used by groups across the political spectrum. Themed shows were often arranged for Sunday schools or Temperance soirees, which constituted an important market for some early British filmmakers (Burton 2000; King 1979, 28–29). Wholesale Co-operatives and municipal councils were soon promoting their activities through film (Lebas 2011). Films promoted army recruitment, preached patriotism during the Boer war, and furnished parishioners with vivid images of sin and punishment projected in church halls. More radically, before the First World War French anarchists had started to use film as a way to punctuate and enliven illustrated talks on topics like teetotalism, birth control and anti-militarism, linking moving pictures to broader horizons of adult education and People's Universities (Marinone 2009). In Britain, the Labour movement had had an interest in cinema from very early on, but struggled to find a sustainable model for political exhibition. Municipal cinemas were established by Independent Labour Party councils in a handful of Scottish towns, but their focus was on entertainment as a public amenity and a revenue generator for the Common Good fund, rather than a tool of agitation (Bohlmann 2016). In the 1920s, workers' film societies offered a way to screen political films outside censorship restrictions, but while they relied on access to 35mm equipment and prints, their audience was confined to bourgeois cinemas in the main cities (Macpherson and Willemen 1980, 132–134).

The development of substandard film gauges such as 28mm and 16mm reinvigorated non-theatrical exhibition and distribution. The efforts of the Workers' Film Societies, for instance, were taken up by leftist film distributors such as Kino, a company that had emerged from street agit-prop actions and which made 16mm prints of mainly Soviet films available for the use of local organizations (Macpherson and Willemen 1980, 145–146). By the late 1930s, Kino's Communist origins had been blended into popular front politics which 'moderated' class-struggle films with entertainment. As Stephen Jones has argued, through informal channels like Kino and the Unity Theatre, '[c]ultural links were established between the Communist and Labour Socialist traditions' in the context of popular front politics (Jones 1987, 181). Glasgow Labour took over the local Kino group in 1939, after it had produced two significant films, *Hell Unlimited* (1936) and *May Day 1938: Challenge to Fascism*. This alliance was not restricted to the main cities, as demonstrated by Kino's first show in Shetland, a hundred miles off the north coast of Scotland. Organized by the Labour Party in Lerwick Town Hall, the screening in 1939 included three Spanish newsreels as well as *Battleship Potemkin*.[2] Offering a 'unique opportunity of seeing famous films not otherwise available', this show

made virtue out of the restricted circulation of the films that interested audiences in this remote part of Scotland would have read about. It would have been an important social event for Labour activists on the island, as well as a cultural highlight. The Spanish newsreels, by then two or three years old, were no longer news, but could instead be reframed as having historical and political value that transcended their original function. Such repurposing of films in the context of community organizing represents a key function of non-theatrical exhibition, where old films get a new lease of life beyond the normative timelines of commercial distribution.

5.1.   Archive film and local audiences

This ability of thematic exhibition to bring older content to new relevance, beyond the consecrating practices of repertory cinema, has been exploited successfully in the more recent flourishing of archive programming. In Scotland, a lead practitioner in this field is Shona Thomson, whose company A Kind of Seeing has pioneered and developed approaches to the archive that prioritize local engagement. Thomson has produced live cinema events such as *Following the Fleet*, a tour taking John Grierson's 1926 documentary, *Drifters*, to the coastal towns historically associated with herring fishing as depicted in the film, for which beatbox musician Jason Singh created a new live score. More frequently, Thomson has curated themed and local programmes of short films, or extracts from films, found in the National Library of Scotland's Moving Image Archive or in the National Film Archive. These site-specific programmes are screened in a framework that seeks to encourage people to talk about them, with Thomson acting as both curator and facilitator (and often also projectionist and producer). Events are advertised as 'films and a blether', the Scots word for 'informal discussion'.

When I asked her about her programming process, Thomson explained it was 'led by audience':

A lot of my projects happen because either I've come up with an idea about where I can screen something or somebody comes to me and says, 'what about you doing this?', in which case I'm very much working for a client, as it were. So they're looking to connect with a certain audience […] it's about who is going to come along, and also what might they not have seen before. I think that's one of the beauties of archive. […] I always very much work on the basis that the audience bring their own knowledge with them, I believe strongly in that, that it's not a passive experience.

All exhibitors think about audiences, but the localized and collaborative form of programming at play here is characteristic of non-theatrical screenings. Although Thomson does use permanent cinema spaces for some of her events, most of the places in tours like *Made by the Sea* (seaside towns) and *Made on our Land* (rural market towns) do not have a cinema. This mandates a longer process of communication with those in charge of the venue, who tend to be volunteers in a village hall committee. While there may be more technical challenges, the flexibility of the set-up can be an advantage when compared to the rigid DCP projection systems in full-time cinemas. Most importantly, local organizers become co-creators of the event. They may suggest local guests to take

part in discussion, or organize a raffle, or find a musician to play a tin fiddle from the local history museum, as happened in Orkney's West Side Cinema.

The 'blether' is the core of the event, and by inviting people well known in the community, or with particular expertise about its history, Thomson starts to diffuse the authority vested on the 'lantern lecturer'. This acknowledgement of her outsider position serves to counter the view of the touring exhibitor as an institutionally privileged stranger coming into geographically or socio-economically marginalized communities with an agenda. As Thomson explained,

> I kinda go with this naivety: 'I don't know about this place, tell me about it'. I think that's really important, that I'm not going in saying, 'let me tell you about where you live', because that's not what it's about. I know about the films.

This effort to centre local and collective knowledge rather than the exhibitor's expertise shows how much the expectations around popular education have shifted since the days of Temperance lecturing. The mistrust of claims for cultural authority is perfectly reasonable in communities that have been subject to marginalization, misrepresentation, and dispossession, and where professionals and experts have been the agents of paternalistic moralising, cosmetic regeneration, and cuts to benefits and services. The discussion of archive films sets up a less instrumental framework for engagement with local history, often within living memory. While Thomson and the partner venues set the parameters of this encounter by choosing the films, inviting guests for the discussion, and setting up the space, the oscillation between nostalgia and critique that surfaces at any event is unpredictable. Thomson's self-effacing interventions as explainer of the event (setting out expectations before and during the screening), and as facilitator of the discussion, seek to enable and embrace this variability, encouraging but not forcing participation.

In February 2017, A Kind of Seeing organized a series of archive screenings in local libraries as part of the Scottish Libraries and Information Council's pilot project in developing cinema capacity for their venues. Supported in part by the national arts funding agency, Creative Scotland, Film in Libraries set up twelve pilot film clubs, all working with different audiences identified by local librarians as most likely to benefit from this approach. While the project was set up in the context of film education, its objectives were not confined to film appreciation, and instead sought to address social isolation and other endemic issues. It comes at a time when UK libraries have acquired ever more diverse social functions, not just because online access has changed reading habits but, importantly, because public sector austerity has reduced other forms of provision (McCahill, Birdi, and Jones 2018). At its most basic, a library is, as novelist Zadie Smith puts it, 'an indoor public space in which you do not have to buy anything in order to stay' (Smith 2012). In this protected space, a film programme can provide a way to combat loneliness for older adults in rural communities, a means to develop 'soft skills' for young people in challenging urban environments, and a way to engage children with reading, as project manager, Louise Donoghue, explained. While addressing these immediate issues, the library's negation of the market has a greater critical power, as it allows people to experience 'a different kind of social reality (of the three dimensional kind), which by its

very existence teaches a system of values beyond the fiscal' (Smith 2012). The free screenings could then help consolidate and protect the public function of the library, and be part of its utopian dimension.

The Film in Libraries project sought to address different needs and audience groups in each location, and so the programming was very diverse. A Kind of Seeing presented curated archive film events at four libraries. One of these was Wester Hailes, a 'new town' to the south of Edinburgh, built from the end of the 1960s as a planned residential community.[3] Wester Hailes was the last large housing estate built by a local authority in the UK (Matthews 2012a, 151). The library is embedded in the brutalist core of the town, between the hulking mass of a commercial multiplex and a row of shops. The screening at Wester Hailes was accompanied by a photograph exhibition, displaying several collections of local pictures and documents that charted everyday life, people and events in the town. These collections are held by the library and available on request, but the screening provided an opportunity to make more library visitors aware of their existence or sensitive to their value. At the same time, by connecting to the local history society, it brought the library's emerging cinema activities to the attention of that core audience.

The screening took place in a large learning space in the library, equipped with professional projection kit funded through the Film in Libraries project. The programme included a 1938 Films of Scotland Committee short about industrial development, *Wealth of a Nation* (Donald Alexander, 1938), and a colour film of the last day of Edinburgh's trams (Brian Winpenny, 1956). The tram film is part of a nostalgic genre of farewells to public transport, but took on special value amidst a costly and controversial plan to reinstate a tram system for the city. This was followed by three extracts from local films, two of them related to the work of Wester Hailes Arts for Leisure and Education (WHALE Arts), a community arts centre established in 1992.[4] Coming out of a community arts movement with radical roots in Scotland, and nurtured locally by the regional council, WHALE was part of an urban regeneration effort during the 1990s (the Wester Hailes Partnership) which was largely seen as unsuccessful in terms of removing stigma from these marginalized neighbourhoods (Matthews 2012b, 249). However, the archive films showed how the physical environment had changed, and how community arts continued to flourish, hence pointing to local understandings of regeneration. During the discussion, a person involved in one of the films spoke from the audience and ended up at the front, sharing their memories of that production and recalling the cultural and counter-cultural activities that took place with minimal budgets and inventive means. Other audience members commented on the changing landscape, locating long-gone landmarks and people. Discussion around the films thus created a site for community arts workers and local residents to think about the changes in their communities spatially, in a geography of power (Rose 1997, 5).

Screened locally, archive films enable critical engagements with history. They are also popular with audiences; Donoghue told me that for one of Shona Thomson's programmes 'we had a waiting list, and we had to put on an extra screening for the local history society because they couldn't

get in.' This popularity makes them favoured by civil servants and arts bodies. The BFI's strategic goal to broaden the audiences for archive films justifies their investment in touring models of programming designed around broad topics, such as 'town', 'land', or 'sea'. Their launch of an interactive map display for their digitized material emphasized this locality and encouraged people to discover films of their local area.[5] The map packages archive films into bite-sized chunks for individual online consumption, and fits well in a nostalgia-tinted view of local history. Local discussions of archive film, however, can challenge the priorities and assumptions of archival institutions, finding value in minor cinematic forms like local topicals, amateur films, home movies and community video. The imperfect and unfinished form of these kinds of films made them particularly open to a demystified and anti-ritual reception.

A more overtly political take on this 'useful' reactivation of the archive is that of 'militant curation', as proposed by the Radical Film Archive (RFA), an initiative that maintains and disseminates an open-source collection of politically engaged films. The RFA echoes what Richard Porton calls 'the tradition of decentralized anarchist pedagogy', founded on the idea that 'pedagogy can be anti-hierarchical while fusing pleasure with instruction and edification' (Porton 2009, ii). Due to the initial cost and difficulty of access to technology for those outside the establishment, there are few examples of an overtly anarchist film production, so the reappropriation of existing material for anarchist purposes becomes a useful strategy. The archive, started in 2016 and managed by activist Michael Dunn, is a collection of video files, of any genre, period, or origin, that can be used by individuals and groups as tools for learning about radical history and direct action. The files are copied and shared freely, mainly during informal events that take place alongside festivals or exhibitions sympathetic to the Archive's anarchist ethos. Behind this offline file-sharing hub is a deeper reflection on the role of the archive and the curator, and on the 'decadence' of theorizing about history in the midst of ongoing catastrophe. While Dunn had started out as a mostly passive collector and distributor, in later years a more active role started to take shape, allowing him to use his knowledge of the archive's content to make recommendations and organize collaborative events. Dunn sees the goal of militant curation as 'getting ideas to the places where they are most useful' – again a grounded, site-specific approach to programming that centres the audience's interests.

While a fully-fledged praxis of 'militant curation' remains a long-term goal due to the unfunded, voluntary nature of the project, some of Dunn's initial experiments give an idea of how this would work. In May 2016, the Radical Film Archive presented a screening at the Laurieston arches, a set of railway arches which had been recently put under the control of WAVEparticle, an arts organization commissioned by the local housing association to develop an art strategy for this area following the demolition of several high-rise housing estates. Their 'Open Spaces' initiative gave access to 'stalled spaces' such as these railway arches and the nearby ruins of Caledonian Road church for cultural activities.[6] As they had been used the previous week for a similar event, a screen and projector were temporarily in place. Printed license notices for the event had been attached to the

metal bars across the entrance, explaining that due to the derelict condition of the space, visitors entered at their own risk. This official permission dilutes a little of the 'radical' appeal of the event, but also makes it more accessible. Outside, the sun was shining and the daffodils were in bloom, bright yellow against the deep green of a patch of grass between new roads and the railway.

In the far end of the tunnel, Dunn sat at a makeshift desk next to the screen, with his laptop. On the event page, a 'clip show with a difference' was promised, introducing the archive as '[a] way for people to research and represent struggles using the work of those that came before'.[7] The subject reframed the media narrative of the 'migrant crisis' in relation to climate change, foregrounding stories of those displaced by rising sea levels or resource wars. Earlier that day, there had been a large demonstration at the Immigration Detention Centre nearest to Glasgow, Dungavel, where hundreds of people are detained indefinitely upon being denied asylum or falling foul of 'hostile environment' anti-immigrant policies. The majority of the very small audience at the screening had been at the demonstration earlier, and many knew one another from years of activism in Glasgow. Peter McCaughey, director of WAVEparticle and therefore the caretaker of the space, gave us a short tour of the space and explained they had just installed mains electricity to avoid depending on a generator. We sat on pallets and ramshackle office chairs, and shared snacks.

The screening consisted of several clips from different genres and variable quality. After the last clip, Dunn joined the rest of the audience to encourage discussion. First to speak was a well-known housing rights activist from Easterhouse, a working-class neighbourhood on the outskirts of the city, who recounted her experience of community organizing. The link with the migration/climate theme is not immediately obvious, but a sense of recognition between people struggling to survive and thrive in adverse circumstances underpinned the dialogue. A younger woman listened to this historical account of local activism and related her own struggle to secure safer and healthier living conditions for her child. The exchange between the two women, inspired by the films but not 'about' the films, turned into a genuine moment of shared knowledge between generations of activists. Dunn then recommended some local films from the collection which could relate to the current struggles of the two women, and help those younger or more recently arrived to understand the city's activist history.

[INSERT FIGURE 5 HERE]

The Radical Film Archive reappeared months later with an event at Transmission Gallery, an artist-run space in Glasgow city centre. Artists Amelia Bywater and Justin Stephens had transformed the gallery into a temporary cinema, building a screen and basic seating out of MDF. Several events were programmed during November-December 2016; for the rest of the time, visitors could select tapes from the gallery's archive, or interact with the Radical Film Archive's own installation, the Pig Gnome. This was a metre-tall ceramic figure of an anthropomorphic pig in a police uniform.

Embedded in the sculpture was a memory drive containing videos about police oppression. As the handout explained, 'In the belly of the beast, lie five films. We make no claims of being objective but of having perspective'. Visitors could press a button to project one of the titles on the big screen, or copy it to their own drive. The pig provided a silent commentary and a talking point, giving material presence to ideas of curation and interactivity.

In the Radical Film Archive screenings, thematic programming is a force of demystification, as it is the subject and the audience, rather than the film, that command the production of meaning. The integrity of the film does not need to be respected, and its commodity status is complicated by the explicit processes of presentation, file-sharing and discussion. The screening spaces, while interesting, are relatively neutral in these two examples. But in issue-based programming the site of exhibition can also contribute to the achievement of the screening's purpose, in more or less practical ways. The exhibition venue is often the most obvious element of collaborative programming: screenings take place in the host organization's spaces. It is thus important to think about the different material contributions that a non-theatrical, special-interest space can make towards the aims of an issue-based screening event.

5.2. Spaces for action

In 2017, resistance against fracking (hydraulic fracturing for fossil fuel extraction) was a priority for environmental activists around the world. As Scotland was about to make a decision on the banning of fracking, the Broad Alliance of Communities against Unconventional Oil and Gas Extraction organized a tour of the Australian film *The Bentley Effect*, which deals with community action in New South Wales that stopped a planned fracking operation in 2014. In collaboration with Friends of the Earth and Take One Action film festival, screenings in mining towns were organized by local campaigning groups, followed by discussions with Ian Gaillard, one of the Australian activists featured in the film.

In the outskirts of Glasgow, Kirkintilloch Against Fracking hosted a screening in the local Miners Welfare Institute. The Institute, with its austere 1930s frontage, is a relic of a different time in attitudes to resource extraction and social cohesion. It is now somewhat forlorn-looking but still widely used, with a bar and function rooms for weddings and discos. The room where the screening takes place has a dancefloor and a bar, but is otherwise plain and functional. A small, mainly older audience listened with interest to the introduction by a very young activist from the local campaigning group. He mentioned watching *Gasland* (Josh Fox, 2010) as the start of his activism, thus making a claim about the ability of film to mobilize. This was echoed by a scene early in *The Bentley Effect* in which the Australian community are watching *Gasland* in a village hall, and relating their own politicization to this screening. This mirroring offers a viewing position that is not of identification or empathy, but solidarity, a recognition of a common pattern of experience that links the struggles and offers hope: if they started their path watching a film in a hall like this, and ended up stopping the

destruction of their land, it may be worth trying. The film models the use of documentary film as an organizing tool. In the US, a follow-up study found that the effectiveness of anti-fracking mobilization around the film depended on activists being present at the screening, which was likely given their involvement in organizing (Vasi et al. 2015, 940). This suggests that, compared to a theatrical or broadcast release, community-based exhibition reaches a smaller audience but is more likely to lead to action.

Even in less evocative surroundings, the use of a working space can make it easier to relate an international film to what is happening locally. Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equality Council is a registered charity that works with local authorities on human rights and anti-discrimination issues. One of its projects, funded by the Scottish Government Climate Challenge Fund, works with communities to reduce their carbon footprint.[8] They support energy saving and community gardens, and run cycle repair and food growing workshops in ELREC's headquarters in Edinburgh, as well as the occasional film screening. During the screening of permaculture documentary *Inhabit* (Costa Boutsirakis, US, 2015), their small townhouse front room was crowded, three rows of office chairs and all the floor space occupied by a mixed crowd munching on vegan snacks from the nearby organic shop. Covered in posters and fliers for various local events and initiatives, and with a Permaculture Classroom library in a corner, the venue is a working space. Once people had managed to find a place to sit, the organizers explained where they first saw the film, mentioning that it has already been screened in Edinburgh, and suggested a donation that will go to the filmmakers as no screening fees have been paid. This already positioned the film 'closer' to the audience, as it can be streamed on Vimeo by anyone, and it played down claims of discovery or uniqueness. The organizers then explained the connection between the film and the organization, inviting participants to borrow books from the Permaculture library for free, and to stay for the discussion afterwards.

The film, which showcases an array of permaculture projects in the United States, was being streamed from Vimeo on a laptop, with minor WiFi glitches that caused a flutter of concern. Within a few minutes of the end of the film, the room was abuzz with conversation. The organizers introduced people to one another on the basis of known interests and projects, while others were picking up the books and leafing through them. The organizers then facilitated a structured discussion by requesting we form a circle, talk to the person next to us and then to two more people. At the time when the event was due to finish, a member of the audience spoke to invite people to get involved in an urban agriculture project in the outskirts of the city, relating the film's topics concretely to a local volunteering opportunity. The organizers asked us to leave thinking about one idea we could implement. This structured approach to facilitation and practical activism is implemented by other organizations on the same wavelength, such as the film festival Take One Action, which gives out bespoke note-paper to attendees asking them to write down concrete actions that they could take to tackle the issue raised by the film. The forms of discussion encouraged here deploy well-honed strategies of group facilitation intended to resist some of the hierarchical inertia of public speaking, by

making space for those less likely to speak, and scale up and down from the one-to-one to the circle. These deliberate techniques reflect decades of activist organizing and emancipatory pedagogy around the world, and they make spaces like this very different from the less structured 'Q&A' or open discussions that are more likely to reproduce power imbalances.

5.3. Pop-up cinema as a site for public discussion

Creating a space for discussion is a key element of all these events. While their strategies are very different, in their privileging of talk there is a call back to classic notions of the public sphere. The use of non-hierarchical communication tactics that aim to disrupt entrenched power dynamics is an acknowledgement of the poverty of the idealized, bourgeois notion of the public sphere, where status differentials are meant to be bracketed off in the interests of rational debate. As Nancy Fraser has argued, the liberal view of the public sphere perpetuates the illusion that democracy is possible without equality, and it ignores that 'where societal inequality persists, deliberative processes in public spheres will tend to operate to the advantage of dominant groups' (Fraser 1992, 123). The organizations and screening events may or may not function as convergence sites for 'subaltern counterpublics', but in engaging overtly with the politics of discourse and knowledge production they challenge the liberal public sphere as a 'free market' model of idea formation. The instability of the screening site creates an opportunity to reset the rules of engagement, both with the film and between the participants.

In their discussion of activist film distribution, Pratt and San Juan draw attention to the importance of the exhibition space in the creation of a 'public sphere'-style discussion. A screening is a complex social situation where entrenched power dynamics may reassert themselves, disrupting the potential for open dialogue. Therefore, interactions have to be carefully staged; the right lighting, seating, and moderators can all have a decisive impact and help transform a cinema space into a public arena (Pratt and San Juan 2014, 156-157).

The revolutionary potential that Benjamin identified in the mass address of the film is negotiated in each of these live interactions. Reactionary strategies of non-theatrical exhibition foreground the control of the conditions of reception, such as the circulation via clubs and societies where audience response can be monitored. Liberal strategies, like those discussed above, emphasize institutional partnerships and facilitated participation, stopping short of a wholesale critique of the spectatorial position. But throughout the history of cinema there have been more radical approaches to the political mobilization of cinema audiences through non-conventional exhibition strategies. One of the most influential is that proposed by Pino Solanas and Octavio Getino in their 1969 manifesto 'Toward a Third Cinema' ('Hacia un tercer cine'), which calls for an exhibition situation where the film is subordinate to the space and the audience members as active participants – what they call the 'film-act'.

Solanas and Getino's Third Cinema manifesto is undermined by some simplistic ideas about the relationship between capital (specifically 'US financial capital') and ideology, where the spectator of bourgeois cinema occupies a totally passive role as a consumer. Since then, such ideas have been complicated by more nuanced notions of hegemony and negotiated readings. However, what the Third Cinema manifesto offers to a political cinematic practice is the idea of the film-act, founded on the filmmakers' direct experience of carrying on clandestine screenings of their film, *The Hour of the Furnaces* (1968). Solanas and Getino realized that, beyond the ideological message they may carry, films first of all 'offer an effective pretext for gathering an audience' (1970). Showing films in people's houses, in universities and workplaces, was an important strategy for Third Cinema, also encouraged in Chile during Allende's government. As discussed before, by situating this encounter in the audience's landscape of the everyday, the auratic distance with the film is broached, and a space opens for people's own knowledge and desire. If this proximity is also an implication, the situation becomes even more charged. This complicity in the production of the space is homologous to that found in DIY cinephile exhibition, but it is shaped into a political rather than subcultural experience of collectivity.

When people come together to watch a film under these conditions, Solanas and Getino argue, something special happens: 'This cinema of the masses […] provokes with each showing […] a liberated space, a decolonized territory' (1970). The production of this utopian space, catalysed by the presence of cinema but rejecting its bourgeois existence, supposes a lack of reverence for the film object. As they explain, 'The film-act means an unfinished, open-ended cinema; essentially, a cinema of knowledge.' For it to be 'open-ended', the status of the film as a complete work must be disrupted. Solanas and Getino did this with *Hour of the Furnaces* by screening it in sections interspersed with interventions by facilitators. This praxis of the 'film act' was one of the most influential ideas from Third Cinema that circulated amongst radical filmmakers across the world. In the UK, the rise of a politicized independent sector in the early 1980s was accompanied by deep reflection on the new relationships that needed to be established with the spectators, and on the necessity of reaching beyond the traditionally elite audiences of avant-garde media or arthouse cinema. Groups like Cinema Action, according to Sylvia Harvey, were now concerned with 'the provision of a social space that allows the audience its own time for the discussion of the film, for the formulation and expression of responses and criticisms that can then be 'fed back' to the film-maker or the film programmer' (1979, 98). In these spaces, films entered 'a process of social circulation' entailing public rather than private consumption:

> This completion of the circle of communication, the creation of conditions of
> reception that encourage and acknowledge the creative and critical role of the
> audience involves, among other things, a rethinking of the design of the exhibition
> space. Firstly, thought must be given to the size of this space. Banished from both the
> 500-seater cinemas and the 'family space' of television viewing, independent cinema
> has found itself operating in the gap between the two, in a new and promising terrain.
> To those non-cinema spaces to which it has had access for some time (clubs, halls,

> classrooms, community centres), independent cinema has added the design of more formal exhibition spaces that are the right sort of size to facilitate useful and comfortable public discussion. Secondly, thought has been given to the organization of relationships within this exhibition space […] in a way that better facilitates discussion, and has led some of the newer cinemas either to remove rows of seats at the front of the cinema so that chairs can be placed in a circle at the front, or to use only moveable and not fixed seats. (Harvey 1979, 98)

The importance of being able to rearrange the seating was highlighted by many organizations.

Evidently, this is one of the advantages of non-theatrical exhibition vis-a-vis conventional cinemas with their predetermined frontality. A deliberate disruption of the screening is another strategy derived from Third Cinema. During the Radical Film Network Festival in Glasgow in 2016, Elena Boschi organized an 'interrupted screening', a concept she has developed and theorized at various events. Conceived as a critique of hierarchical screening practices that diminish radical films' ability to generate action, Boschi advocates for breaking up the film to enable audiences to talk about it 'within, not after the screening'.[9] In this case, the film was a feature documentary about social movements in Brazil and their resistance to the displacement and dispossession caused by the World Cup in 2014. At the breaks, participants were invited to discuss a couple of suggested questions from a worksheet with the people seating nearby. While the small but diverse local audience struggled to connect to the seemingly 'exotic' subject matter, there was an effort to work in our small groups to answer each question. The type of discussion that took place was reminiscent of a university seminar, and therefore still privileging hegemonic ways of speaking. However, the interruptions did allow for greater depth of understanding and reflection, rejecting the mechanical velocity of linear film and producing a different, social timeframe for collective learning.

Inspired by this, during Document Human Rights Film Festival in October 2017, I helped facilitate an interrupted screening of *Battle of Chile* (Guzmán, 1975-1979). Over the almost six hours of projection, we paused the film every twenty to thirty minutes, with a longer break between the film sections. The facilitators proposed questions for the audience to discuss in small groups during these breaks, but found themselves often engaging in a two-way exchange of question and answer that continued to position them as authorities. The space itself, a university cinema with fixed seating, reinforced this frontality, and ensured that only the facilitators had access to the video controls to start and stop the projection. This made them responsible for the timing and different energies necessitated by the additional stopping points, which in some cases were an opportunity to take stock and check comprehension of the complex historical narrative, and in others came after particularly traumatic moments of the film. At these profoundly serious points of the film, the ancillary materials that had been prepared for the intervals felt out of place, as did the attempts to focus discussion on medium-specific aspects (*Battle of Chile* as verité documentary) versus politics and human suffering. Ultimately, the best of the discussion took place around the snacks and coffee brought in for the longer intervals, and at the pub afterwards.

The emotional intensity of watching *Battle of Chile* challenges the supposed rationalism of 'discourses of sobriety' and their contribution to hegemonic forms of debate and interaction. But discussion is not the only way in which a collective political awareness can be nurtured. The gestures of sharing food and sharing space, the consideration shown to other people, are already ways of building solidarities. Making, dancing, and singing together are also powerful. It is perhaps no surprise that good examples of these strategies come from feminist perspectives, which may be less inclined to accept the absolute value of the masculinist public sphere built around the idea of rational debate.

In May 2018, a documentary double-bill was screened at Fourwalls, an apartment block in Glasgow which started life as a women-only housing cooperative and retains some of that affiliation, though its formal constitution has changed. The event was coordinated by exhibition collective Cinema Up as part of their ongoing series Radical Home Cinema (discussed at length in Chapter 7), and programmed within the Radical Film Network '1968-2018' film season, which was a loose constellation of events by various organizations. While Cinema Up offered logistical support and motivation, the programming and hospitality was by the building's residents. They chose to screen two documentaries relating to the women's peace camps in Seneca County, New York, and Greenham Common, Berkshire, which had a protagonic role in building communities of resistance against nuclear weapons and militarism in the 1980s. The two films were screened in two different parts of the residential building, encouraging the audience to linger and to learn about the history of the place. Again playing from online streams, the old films did not make a claim for uniqueness, but a strong call on resonance and recognition amongst the mostly-female audience, which included several people with direct experience of these or similar protest camps. As well as a table laden with food and drink, and a friendly Staffordshire terrier, the local organizers provided photocopied song sheets for many of the protest songs included in both films. Between the two screenings, sitting in the sun in the back yard, they taught us the words and melodies, pausing to explain context and expressions to the many non-native speakers present. Watching the Greenham Common film, we were able to join in in the neverending loop of "You can't kill the spirit / It is like a mountain…" Hearing each other sing along with the women in the films was a moving experience. We cheered when they outwitted the cops, we winced at the barbed wire and recognized the difficulties of their meetings. At the end, we clapped enthusiastically. Paradoxically, it was the ritual power of singing together that shorted the circuit of past and present. There was not much discussion, and yet there had been learning, solidarity, and consciousness-raising.

5.4. Conclusion

The examples discussed in this chapter go from the institutional to the radical, but they have something in common: the screening events are not presented as an escape from the social world, nor as a social good in itself, but as a means towards action. In some cases, they do this by activating the

visible resonances between the exhibition space and the text, such as in screenings of local archive films. In other cases, they approach programming in a functional rather than cinephile manner. Some of those involved in creating these screenings are as passionate about film as the film club programmers of the previous chapter, and just as knowledgeable, but they refer to a different framework for the value of their activities.

In some cases, gathering people and disseminating information are in themselves forms of direct action. In other cases, cinema is framed in relation to 'discourses of sobriety', establishing a serious relationship with the rest of the world. In this context, cinema can be a site of learning and a contribution to discussion. Therefore, the live discursive interaction that takes place around the film is crucial to achieving its outward goals. Non-theatrical spaces break with the assumption of a quiet, immobile audience, and sometimes this difference is manifest in the way the space is organized and the way time is managed during the screening. Some of these participatory desires appear in a very different form in other forms of interactive and site-specific event, as the following chapter will discuss.

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Chapter 6. Crafting the extraordinary: site-specificity and liveness

Abstract: 'Experiential' forms of exhibition use liveness and site-specificity as strategies to valorize the eventfulness of an engagement with film. This chapter explores different practices and intentions of eventful cinema. It first examines liveness as a power struggle between exhibitor and text, which needs to be understood in relation to the showmanship tradition of early and classical eras. It then tdiscusses site-specific screenings, considering different ways to modulate the encounter between environment and film projection, from the diegetically immersive to the distracted and relaxed. Finally, it returns to intermediality as a creative opportunity generated by non-theatrical exhibition.

> There are two art forms, says Valéry, which envelope man in man: in the medium of stone in architecture, in the medium of air in music. Both art forms fill our space with synthetic truths.
> - Peter Sloterdijk, Architecture as an Art of Immersion (2006)

Mechanical reproduction is at the heart of cinema's dual commodity status (as text and event), and therefore of its grapple with abundance and scarcity. Something that can be endlessly reproduced is likely to lose value as a commodity. From a commercial point of view, as the commodity status of the film itself is threatened, the value of the screening as a unique event rises in compensation. In the previous chapter, I argued that in the spaces of everyday life, critical possibilities can open to destabilize the aura (that is, the commodity status) of the film, to strip away the apparent coherence of spectacle and make visible the social process of its production and reception, thus making it available to other forms of knowledge. But re-location can also serve to recuperate the commodity, by adding value to it or restricting its reproducibility. It can also be the catalyst for new creative strategies with their own distinctive character.

This chapter moves away from functional and remedial vectors of non-theatrical exhibition, which are predicated on a desire to create *access*, and instead looks at strategies that seek to craft the extraordinary, to produce uniqueness in opposition to the reproducibility of the medium. This is achieved through a focus on the *event* as commodity, and on *eventfulness* as a vector of uniqueness. While eventfulness is an inherent feature of cinematic time and of the social ritual of cinemagoing, it can be foregrounded and intensified. This chapter focuses on two strategies for the production of eventfulness: site-specificity and liveness. The choice and use of non-theatrical venues is both an

attraction in itself and a condition for the kinds of live performance and audience participation that add further distinctiveness to the event.

From the very start, cinema entrepreneurs have deployed different strategies to counteract the devaluing effect of mass reproduction. Joe Kember has argued that the continued presence of live performance alongside films in the early period helped neutralize the alienating effect of the mechanical apparatus, constructing new models of intimacy to bridge the gap between performer and audience (Kember 2009, 44–83). The live mediation that helped 'naturalize' early cinema was phased out gradually through technical and industrial innovations such as intertitles and narrative integration, which dispensed with the need for a narrator (Musser 1983; Sopocy 1996). Purpose-built cinema venues were then optimized as efficient machines to transform the input *film* into the product *show*. The overt intermediality of early cinema was gradually subsumed into the varied attractions of the feature film, and this allowed its contingent circulation to be remapped as a hierarchical distribution system. Hence, the struggle over liveness is one about power and control of the industry as much as it is about reception and pleasure.

From the studio distributors' perspective, controlling the circulation of the film has been the key means of maintaining its value. In mainstream circulation, tightly planned release schedules and run-clearance systems aimed to balance scarcity and availability in ways that could maximize revenue (Lobato 2012, 11–12; Wasko 2003, 105–8). There was a material dimension of this control through the circulation of film prints, which would deteriorate as they passed from one sector of the market to the next (Burrows 2004). With digital distribution, this physical dimension of scarcity is much less relevant, but the tiered release windows still operate to protect the primacy of first-run cinemas. The industry foregrounds the value of newness and the role of the cinema theatre as a site for the consumption of new releases that are not available elsewhere. Given that 'day-and-date' simultaneous release on various platforms is possible, and the preferred option for new distribution giants Netflix and Amazon, this construction of exclusivity through artificial scarcity seems to be on the back foot.[1]

Another way the industry generates a sense of occasion is through marketing. By flooding the audience's attention with teasers, trailers, billboards, cast interviews, and tie-ins, and by promoting a fear of 'spoilers', studios can generate awareness of film release dates and encourage cinema attendance during the crucial opening weekend (Acland 2003, 242). Alongside these top-down, big-budget strategies, which are concerned with consistent branding and product control, more local and unruly promotional practices exist. Since the beginnings of the studio system, publicity and exploitation have drawn on the skills of local cinema managers and exhibitors (Staiger 1990, 10). Stunt advertising or 'ballyhoo' was a way to do this, chiefly through 'the staging of live cinematic events in the locale of movie theatres' (Atkinson 2014, 18). This served to publicize the products of the film industry, but also to sell something more intangible – the promise of an experience, which could be of laughter, pleasure, fright, romance, or whatever emotion, but certainly one that was more intense than humdrum life. This meant puncturing the everyday familiarity of cinemagoing with

something new and unmissable. This tension between the reproducibility of the film, and the live uniqueness of the experience, has often played in favour of ephemeral forms of exhibition.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the first form of pop-up cinema was the fairground bioscope, which also used music and performance to attract an audience. But even as the film exhibition industry sought to distance itself from the unabashed showmanship of the fairground travellers, their ability to catch the passer-by's eye, ear, and pennies was appropriated into the settled cinema industry, which had taken over by the end of the First World War. The trade press celebrated enterprising cinema managers who came up with clever campaigns, and stunt advertising or 'ballyhoo' was often praised (when done tastefully). Fairground showmanship particularly informed the 'exploitation' roadshow throughout the middle of the 20th century (Schaefer 1999, 122). As Patrice Lyczba explains, US exhibitors in the 1920s tried everything from loud 'conversations' in public spaces to street parades in their competitive efforts to draw an audience (Lyczba 2016). While the beginning of the classical era was a golden age for ever more over-the-top publicity, these practices continued through the century. They typically pushed the boundaries of social acceptability, like the manager of the New Victoria Cinema in Edinburgh who paid a local woman, Dorothy Kent, to take a milk bath in the foyer during the fancy-dress premiere of *Cleopatra* (Mankiewicz, 1963). The episode was anticipated and reported in the press, picturing Ms Kent with several crates of milk bottles. Press coverage was necessary to amplify the restricted impact of live performance.

Lyczba argues that the 'performance-based epiphenomena' of ballyhoo 'pry everyday spaces wide-open with their outpouring of fictional characters and situations' (Lyczba 2016). In her work on 'extended' cinema, Sarah Atkinson starts to engage with the continuum of cinema's penetration into reality, with narrative as 'the organizing logic and the connective tissue for their understanding and interpretation within fictional discourses' (Atkinson 2014, 19). This opens up a vast area of instability between film and world, one final has been the object of sustained scholarly attention and which continues to develop at great speed. Crossmedia, transmedia, and convergent storytelling using digital or analogue paratexts enable audiences to engage with hyperdiegetic texts (Hills 2002, 104). Because hyperdiegesis has been associated with the sprawling fictional universes of cult media, academics have focused their research on creators' and fans' practices. However, ballyhoo is an example of how publicists and exhibitors use the ramifications of hyperdiegetic texts. The porosity of the boundary between this world and the one inhabited by the audience, or, in Johnson's words, the 'closer proximity between the spaces of consumption, narrative and labor' (2007, 61), is a feature of exhibition practices often described as 'experiential' or 'immersive'. In such screenings, site-specificity and live performance work to produce a sense of eventfulness by foregrounding the ephemeral versus the repeatable.

6.1. An unrepeatable experience

Poised as it is 'between the everyday and the extraordinary' (Allen 2011), the eventfulness of cinema is both inherent and deliberately produced. There are no two identical screenings even if the film is ostensibly the same. Focusing on the differences between audience experiences has been a way to decentre the text and to develop the critical potential of contextual, grounded approaches to cinema as social activity. It is also a way to redistribute agency and authorship. However, not all forms of distinctiveness are created equal. From an instrumental perspective, cinema promoters can use exclusivity as a marketing category aimed at enhancing value by restricting reproducibility. They can do this by curtailing the availability of the films in distribution, or by foregrounding less reproducible aspects of the cinema experience. In other words, they can seek to create or preserve scarcity, in a market context in which abundance (of moving image content) is the norm.

The notion of 'experiential' cinema belies this intention. There is no cinema without experience, so why would a type of exhibition practice be labelled 'experiential'? The need to brand this shows the influence of the 'experience economy' as a way to frame a supposed change in consumption patterns amongst the relatively affluent (Alston 2016). So 'experiential' denotes a more memorable, less repeatable night out at the movies, one in which moviegoing figures as only one amongst a host of more or less staged or curated 'experiences' that appeal to the senses. 'Liveness' is a means of intensifying the added value of embodied presence. 'Live cinema', as a description of exhibition practice rather than reception, denotes a performance element connected to the film.

In their pioneering work on this topic, Atkinson and Kennedy outline three categories of experiential or live cinema, according to different relationships to the film text and the spectator's position. They make a distinction between 'enhanced', 'augmented', and 'participatory' cinema. 'Enhanced' screenings may offer an interesting venue, food and drink, or special comfort, but without a direct relationship to the film. In 'augmented' screenings, the additional attractions are connected to the film text, for instance through the use of a relevant venue, a live score, or multi-sensory tie-ins like smell cards or themed food. Their third category, 'participatory', gives the spectator a performative role in the production of the event (Atkinson and Kennedy 2016). All these extracinematic components of a live or experiential film show would seem to conspire against traditional notions of immersion, which assume a relatively muted embodiment as the spectator travels mentally to the diegetic space. However, the break with normative spectatorship is not necessarily intended to produce a more self-aware or critical stance, as in the interrupted screenings discussed in Chapter 5. In its more commercial version, experiential cinema tends to work either to enhance the sensory pleasures available, or to reproduce elements of the narrative world in order to attract and direct audience participation.

6.2. Enhanced cinema: the pleasures of space

In their taxonomy of live cinema, Atkinson and Kennedy give outdoor screenings as an example of 'enhanced' cinema, as in most of them 'the physical experience is enhanced but this is not relative to the story of the film' (Atkinson & Kennedy, 2016, p. 141). It is important to note that this sense of 'enhancement' assumes a baseline, namely the theatrical experience, and therefore can only be experienced as such in relation to that. In many parts of the world, at different points in time, outdoor exhibition has been the standard, and carries little special sense of occasion. Examples include drive-in cinemas, open-air amphitheatres, and many kinds of what Andrea Kelley has called 'bedsheet cinema', including the screens hung between trees in the town square as remembered by my parents (Kelley 2019). In the UK, outdoor screenings have been less common, probably due to the weather and the availability of indoor meeting spaces discussed in Chapter 3. Outdoor projection has been the province of activists, artists, and the occasional local council (Lebas 1995). In the last few years, however, several commercial outdoor cinema companies have emerged, offering more or less spectacular events at prices that are often above theatrical tickets.

The appeal of the exhibition space as such has always been a vector of cinema marketing, best exemplified by the rise of the 'cinema palaces' in the 1920s or the VIP lounges of the current century. While the 'cathedrals of the movies' offered a glimpse of ersatz luxury and glamour available to a mass audience, contemporary trends favour physical comfort and relative privacy. But as multiplexes have become more standardized and non-descript, the novelty value of other spaces has risen (Armatage 2008; Macnab 2016). From a commercial point of view, outdoor exhibition offers the opportunity to draw a large audience and to diversify income by bringing in food carts, bars, and other entertainments. The proliferation – or rather, the gentrification – of mobile food outfits thus matches well with this cinema trend. While cumulative know-how and technology have reduced risks, outdoor exhibition still entails aspects outside the organizers' control. These include noise and light pollution, dissatisfied neighbours, and competing uses of public space. In Scotland, by far the greatest risk is bad weather, compounded by the long daylight hours in summer which make outdoor projection impractical. Since 2015, the Bandstand Cinema Club have used LED screens to show repertory features in Kelvingrove Park, one of Glasgow's main open spaces, occupying an amphitheatre with an attractive 1924 bandstand which was restored by a community project. The stage is used for concerts throughout summer weekends, requiring the erection of hoardings around the space and establishing an expectation of commercial entertainment that includes fast food carts and a bar. The fencing off and policing of the space, as well as the use of large-screen video rather than projection, serves to control some of the variables, but still in 2017 audiences were left disappointed when gale-force winds and rain forced the organizers to cancel screenings at the last minute (Lennon 2017).

On a good night, however, the synchrony of environment and text can be thrilling. As the opening sequence of *Labyrinth* (Jim Henson, 1986) unfolded in a green park, the lush trees behind the

screen seemed a natural extension. The owls in the soundtrack joined the choir of birdsong coming from the river meadow, intensifying with the sunset. The film was being shown on two huge LED screens, which allowed the screening to start before darkness, even if it meant a slightly less sharp image with letterboxing and lower contrast. However, the use of an amplification system meant for live music gave strong, rumbling bass and an enveloping sound, although it took the technical team a few attempts to get it to start correctly. Their visible intervention (a volume bar came up on the screen) was taken patiently, because people were entertained: Everyone was in groups or couples, chatting through the film and circulating between the food area and the amphitheatre. The open space suggested a more informal occasion, where conversation was permitted and spectatorship could be discontinuous and distracted, a reception mode also noted by Linda Levitt in her study of similar screenings in Los Angeles (Levitt 2016, 28). The change in the configuration prompted a loosening of the protocol. Meanwhile, the commercial lucre and the licensing of the space were closely guarded. Strict bag searches at the entrance prevented people from bringing in their own food and drink, and no-smoking signs were displayed around the space. People were compliant, concerned mainly with protecting the social dynamics of their night out.

Later that year, the Botanic Gardens in Glasgow hosted a season of Bill Forsyth films, sponsored by Visit West End, the trading name of the local Business Improvement District. This initiative is typical of the use of cinema in business-led 'placemaking' efforts, and coherent with the bohemian mid-market characterization of the area, close to the University of Glasgow campus and other cultural amenities. While the Botanic Gardens are not far from Kelvingrove Park, they are associated with open-air Shakespeare and orchid shows rather than amusement fairs and barbecues. The programme of classic films by a Scottish auteur made sense in this context. Perhaps it was due to the sentimental realism that the films appeal to, and their associations with a self-deprecating, dour take on Scottishness, or perhaps it was simply the lower ticket price, but a sort of stoicism was more visible on the rainy August afternoon in 2017 when I went to watch *Comfort and Joy* (Forsyth, 1984). People brought umbrellas and plastic ponchos, and resigned themselves to being otherwise damp and cold. A member of event staff, standing in the rain trying to protect the equipment, quipped: 'only in Glasgow you need brollies [umbrellas] for the lamps'. Meanwhile, the hired technical providers struggled to get the sound to work, and patience was wearing thin after ten minutes of false starts. 'I can't wait to go back to England and tell everyone', said a sarcastic tourist who had been brought along by friends. They decided to leave after half an hour, as the rain was not abating. But a surprising number of viewers did stay for the whole film. In a consumption culture driven by convenience and comfort, outdoor screenings seem to swim against the tide. Their popularity speaks of a countervailing desire for a more memorable experience that makes for a good story to tell, and where the novelty of the venue is a prime attractor.

As well as utilizing well-known public spaces, experiential cinema sometimes offers audiences the opportunity to explore a previously inaccessible venue. Some of the most celebrated

examples of pop-up exhibition have used derelict structures or gaps in the urban fabric, making physical adjustments to allow for safer access. The winners of the 2016 Turner Prize, London architects' collective Assemble, became known for this sort of intervention, designing temporary constructions inviting community engagement. Amongst their early projects are two pieces of ephemeral architecture that used cinema as a way to bring people into reclaimed spaces: The Cineroleum (2010) used reclaimed materials to transform a petrol station into a cinema, described as 'an improvisation on the rich iconography and decadent interiors of the golden age picture palace'.[2] Folly for a Flyover (2011) turned the space under a motorway and besides a canal into a performance and cinema space, building a temporary structure again out of reclaimed materials. The railway arches mentioned in the previous chapter, along with other similar 'stalled spaces' initiatives that will be addressed below, are predicated on this *temporary* access to a site. This makes the event appealing by increasing its eventfulness, that is, its ephemerality. Meanwhile, the film screening provides a backbone format that makes the event understandable from the outside, imaginable, legitimate, even fundable, making it possible for organizers to obtain permissions. While this concern with official authorization for public exhibition is not the norm around the world, it tends to loom large in the mind of UK exhibitors, and may help explain the prevalence of well-established locations. I must also consider the possibility that this observation is an artefact of my fieldwork, since I would be unlikely to even hear about the more underground forms of unauthorized exhibition.

'Guerrilla' screenings have legendary status in the lore of alternative exhibition. Apart from creating spaces free from censorship and other forms of regulation, the 'hit-and-run' approach shares its attraction with other deviant uses of the city, like Parkour or urban exploration. Moving projection events like those run by German collective *A Wall is a Screen* (whose Glasgow event is described in Chapter 1) serve to generate a path and a reason for a group walk around urban space, allowing the audience to add 'a new layer of stories to the city' (Brunow 2018). They can also allow hidden layers to surface, as in the kino-cine-bomber project, which retraced the path of an underground river and imagined its future re-emergence (Lashua and Baker 2018). Like a political demonstration, a SlutWalk or a Critical Mass bike ride, this presence in public space is a way to assert a right to it. The feeling of empowerment adds to the pleasure and thrill of the experience, while the sanctioned framework of a 'cultural' film screening protects participants from police harassment and justifies small, fleeting incursions against private property. Pop-up cinema can thus offer an experience of transgression which minimizes risk; this is both a democratizing challenge to the macho heroics of 'guerrilla' notions, and a way to use social capital that protects privileged positions (Mott and Roberts 2014).

Pop-up exhibition claims for cinema a space not usually dedicated to it. It is often assumed that this is an empty, derelict space, and yet in urban life this notion of the derelict is socially situated. What is 'derelict' and in need of regeneration for some, is an open playground or an ordinary workplace for others. This is an issue when site-specific exhibition brings viewers to spaces where they are not usually found. In most cases, this entails a temporary displacement of the habitual users

of the space. This displacement can take the form of hospitality, or it can take the form of occupation. A guerrilla screening initiative like *A Wall is a Screen* uses tactical occupation but creates an unbounded cinema space: anyone can join the crowd, and the sounds and textures of the street mingle with the film. In contrast, a large commercial set-up like the Bandstand fences off public space, charges for access and enacts security controls. McKinnie has argued that the economic logics of site-specific theatre (or at least the most visible, London-based forms of it) mobilize a monopolistic force, and 'produce their value by appropriating and trading self-consciously on the non-replicable qualities of places' (McKinnie 2012, 23). They then realize that value through rent-seeking, as 'they offer participants in the event the opportunity to purchase a unique parcel of time and space for a limited time' (McKinnie 2012, 24). While this is always the case when buying a cinema ticket, it becomes more problematic when this exclusivity has been carved out of the public space of a park or street corner.

The contentious nature of these uses of space is much easier to forget when the reasons for the pairing of a particular film with a particular place can be justified. While the connections between diegetic universe and screening space in 'enhanced' exhibition are serendipitous, other examples of outdoor exhibition are more contextually motivated and therefore more site-specific. But the relationship can also be constructed outwards, starting with the film and transforming the space to approximate it. Connecting ballyhoo, transmedia web campaigns, alternative reality games, and live cinema, Atkinson suggests that these practices all seek to restore a sense of liveness 'through the recreation of the film's milieu in both virtual and real spaces, which are embedded with a performative dimension for the audience to engage within' (Atkinson 2014, 47). The overlapping practices of site-specific programming and the re-staging of diegetic elements produce new, ever more intense forms of eventfulness, encompassing Atkinson and Kennedy's categories of 'augmented' and 'participatory' cinema.

6.3. Site-specific programming

In the broadest sense, all embodied experience is site-specific. However, the term, as it came to be used in visual arts and theatre, denotes a relationship between the work and the space where the latter is an integral and inseparable part of the former. In contrast to the 'neutral' spaces of the white-cube gallery or black-box theatre, which are intended to showcase an unchanging, standalone piece of art, site-specific works cannot be moved without somehow breaking them. This is not only a function of the materiality of the work, as in murals or installations, but also of its responsive relationship to the space. In theatre, according to Pearson and Shanks: 'Site-specific performances are conceived for, mounted within and conditioned by the particulars of found spaces, existing social situations or locations' (Pearson and Shanks 2001, 23). This begs the question (after Lefebvre) of whether there is such a thing as a 'found space' or an 'existing' site, one that is not at the same time produced by the engagement with it.

With the exception of site-specific artists' moving image work, films are generally not made to be screened at a particular site. The premise of their reproducibility assumes that screening conditions will seek to preserve their textual integrity regardless of context. However, choosing to screen a film somewhere – especially in a non-theatrical, unconventional location – creates a juxtaposition that has meaning-making potential. Such site-specific choice is what Lesley-Ann Dickson has termed 'spatio-textual programming'. In her work on Glasgow Film Festival, Dickson discussed this as a programming strategy 'that celebrates a connection between the "spatial conditions" of the exhibition site and the "narrative images" on-screen' (2018, 93). It mostly consists of repertory content presented in spaces 'that share some synergy' with the narrative or aesthetic, and therefore this strategy 'deliberately draws attention away from the screen out towards the material characteristics of the exhibition space' (Dickson 2018, 94). When this approach is introduced in the process of curating and producing a film festival, there are clear curatorial effects, given that some films are more amenable to this treatment. As Dickson argues, festival programmers will consider what she calls 'experiential value' as one of the reasons for selecting a film.

> Experiential value is taken to encompass the combined features and conditions of film/event presentation at film festivals: the film's availability within its territorial context, its prospective paratextual elements, the meanings of its exhibition venue outside of festival time, its ability to be localized and the various rhetorical categories relatable to its exhibition ('scarcity', 'discovery', 'limitedness', 'hand-picked', and 'first-timeness') (Dickson 2018, 88).

Dickson invites us to recognize the specific constructions of experiential exhibition through which 'creative and innovative practices of festival exhibition […] serve to purposely construct eventfulness and festivity' (2018, 84). As well as those films that have exclusive premieres at the festival, and those framed in the context of retrospectives or sub-festivals, Dickson finds that about 29 per cent of the 880 screenings she categorized during three years of Glasgow Film Festival could be described as 'beyond the film' events, a broad category that encompasses enhanced, augmented, and participatory screenings, with a tendency to focus on 'repertory films from the canon, genre-based texts, and cult films/TV.' Around these films, a Special Events strand has developed at many festivals, including Glasgow and Edinburgh, which strongly emphasizes a value-added approach to exhibition. It is interesting that this has developed in the already-eventified context of the film festival, but standing aside from regular practices of festival programming. Even though the two festivals are very different, Glasgow being an audience-oriented festival and Edinburgh part of the international circuit, their events strands are similar: Neither new releases nor part of curated retrospectives, the bulk of the screenings consist of 'augmented' screenings of popular repertory films. The reasons for these programming choices can be mercenary. Often a new digital print has been made available, or there is some round-number anniversary that can be manipulated into some level of media coverage, and the distributors cooperate in the promotion. In other cases, an interesting venue has been found and the festival producers want to work with it – in which case they will try to come up with a suitable film.

Previous examples discussed by Dickson include *The Warriors* in an underground station, *Jaws* in a historic ship, and *The Passion of Jeanne of Arc* in the Cathedral (2018, 89). These show rather literal but generic spatio-textual links, where a diegetic space is matched to an exhibition space of the same type (a station, a boat, a church). The novelty and appeal of out-of-the-ordinary exhibition spaces is here intensified through their sensory connection to the screen content. As Lavinia Brydon and Olu Jenzen write about two pop-up screenings on piers in the South of England, the outdoor setting allowed for a layering of sensations, where an immersive mode of attention was 'aided by the sea views that extended well beyond the frame, filling the audience's peripheral vision' (2018, 56), and by the sounds, smells, breeze, and even the gentle rocking of the pier by the incoming tide.

Like the birdsong mixing into the start of *Labyrinth*, or the way in which the greenery of the Winter Gardens seemed to transform into the dark, humid Belgian forest for the screening of *Couple in a Hole* that opens the first chapter of this book, this sense of continuity beyond the frame is a captivating sensory attraction. At the same time, it is not a dissolution of the frame and it does not ask the viewer to forget the illusion. The very artificiality of the match can be part of the fun. Glasgow Film Festival programmes an annual event at the Grand Ole Opry, a country-and-western themed venue in Glasgow where the walls are painted with a mural of a desert landscape, and a Confederate flag hangs over the stage. During the 2017 screening of *Thelma and Louise* (Scott, 1991), the horizon in some scenes of the film almost matched that on the walls, as if reaching out to reclaim the space we were sitting in as just out of frame. The American South exaggerated through clichés in this former cinema building in Scotland is as much of a fantasy as that inhabited by the film's characters, but in their overlapping they reinforce one another and create a sort of hyperreal simulacrum that rewards the viewer's presence in the space.

This sense of embodiment calls forth a definition of immersion that is different from that of classical cinema or semiotic suture, where the reduction of bodily self-awareness is implied. Instead, as Elsaesser has argued, a notion of cinema not as window or mirror but as portal better accounts for the contradictory pleasures of reflexivity, where the spectator is invited to explore limits of the self without shattering their imaginary involvement (Elsaesser 2015). There are intense embodied pleasures in the coherence between exhibition space and film space. In its simplest form, this synergy can amplify the sensory experiences of the film. For example, horror has a long trajectory of benefitting from multi-sensory augmentation, from shaking seats to noxious smells, but simply using gloomy locations is enough to intensify the unease. In 2017, the Southside Film Festival programmed *It Follows* (David Robert Mitchell, 2014) in an empty swimming pool. As the film reached its pool-based, bone-chilling climax, shivers ran down my spine as the temperature dropped and the shadows deepened in every corner. The old tiles bounced the audience's yelps and their nervous laughter in return. The wooden benches were cold and uncomfortable, but perfect for a tense film. Instead of soothing the audience into an incongruous relaxation, the setting for the screening drew us closer to the narrative, however far-fetched it may be.

In such scenarios, the appeal of coherence trumps physical comfort, to rather extreme extents. In 2017, Glasgow Film Festival held a screening of John Carpenter's *The Thing* (1982) in an indoor ski slope at temperatures of -5C. The audience were provided with blankets and hand-warmers, but after two hours of sitting still on deck chairs on the slope, some amount of discomfort was inevitable. Even using a digital projector in such conditions is a significant challenge, with fan heaters needed to keep the components from seizing up. However, pulling off a logistically difficult event like this is a PR coup for the festival and for the technical team, while enduring the viewing experience is a conversation point for audience members.

This synergistic approach to site-specificity works to add attraction value to institutional cinema experiences by intensifying their sensations and enhancing their uniqueness, but it leaves out an important dimension of site-specificity. When the term was coined in the visual arts, it denoted a rejection of institutional spaces, avowedly connected to a critical engagement with the relations of production and circulation they facilitate. In the art world, site-specificity emerged in the context of a resistance to the commoditization and commercialization of originality and authorship (Kwon 1997, 105). Installations, performances, and graffiti all posed obstacles to ownership and exchange; they could not be framed and brought to the auction house, or stored in a museum vault, in the same way that traditional painting or sculpture could.

This political dimension does not translate directly to cinema, because the commodity relations pertaining to it are different: the spectator pays for time in the venue, rather than for ownership of the film. The film is but an *intermediate* good; it is the screening that is the commodity (Bakker 2008, 320). The question is then whether site-specific exhibition exacerbates or challenges the commodification of the cinema event. In the previous chapter, I argued that localised, contextual forms of exhibition open up and destabilize the meaning of the film text, turning it outwards and making it relevant to external interests. In other contexts, however, this unmooring of textual integrity can go in a different direction. Instead of decentring the film as the source of meaning, what some forms of site-specific exhibition do is to extend its textual influence into the space. The event continues to be highly staged and controlled, but audiences are asked to contribute to its production. The authorship of the event becomes decentralized rather than concentrated on the film. The lasso demonstration and line dancing that preceded the screening of *Thelma and Louise* were as much part of the experience as the film itself, and the participation of the audience implicated them in the production of the event. But they did not challenge the centrality and unity of the feature film itself as spectacle; if anything, they ritualize its consumption and co-opt other spaces into their imaginary geography.

6.4. Expanded and expansionist cinema

As the previous chapters have argued, creating a cinema space requires material and behavioural changes, implemented in negotiation with the existing conditions. As with any such social production

of space, this is an unfolding process, and one shaped by power. When this encounter involves not only the configurations and protocols of cinema in general, but a re-staging of the narrative universes of particular films, new tensions emerge.

In the introduction to a work on site-specific theatre, Joanne Tompkins takes stock of existing approaches to the relationship between 'site' and 'performance', recognizing that it may be one of friction as well as mutuality (Tompkins 2012, 3). In theatre, this relationship has been formulated as host/ghost, involving two sets of architectures: that which is at the site (host) and that which is brought in (ghost). In the theatre context, the use of video and projection is one of the elements that may disrupt this duality. It is then possible to reverse this argument and think about how the introduction of theatre into the cinema event demands a renewed attention to how imaginary spaces extend into the audience's world.

The ludic aspects of Glasgow Film Festival special events are undoubtedly influenced by the success of Secret Cinema, a London-based organization that has become the key reference point for ever more ambitious literalizations of popular films. With their combination of elaborate stages or interesting sites, promenade theatre, pre-event world-setting and controlled audience participation, Secret Cinema lead the way in a highly innovative and multi-medial type of experience design, one where the film figures as an exploding social referent that justifies the rest of the event. These events rely on paratexts and liveness, and tap into fan culture, including non-cinema fandoms. According to Atkinson, '[c]ontingent upon filmic and cinematic literacies, these experiences depend upon an assumption that familiarity will promote feelings of nostalgia, based on what Raymond Williams identified as residual culture' (Atkinson 2014, 47). The emphasis is on spectacle and celebration, often mediated through the intensification of nostalgic pleasures and the repetition of well-known films.

While Secret Cinema started out as a fairly 'underground' operation, it has now become a premium release window for films like *Prometheus* and *The Grand Budapest Hotel.* Initially, the screenings took place in secret locations, revealed to attendees only after buying the ticket. This invoked the thrills of rave culture and urban exploration, but minimized their risks and recuperated them for a commercial operation. As the productions grew more ambitious, the appeal of the space itself gave way to its adaptability as a set for a kind of participatory theatre based on a shared commitment to the film world. Audience members are given roles and tasks in accordance to diegetic clues, and are trusted to know the film well enough to recognize the staged references and act appropriately. This sort of participatory expectation is well known in fan and cult communities, such as those that attend screenings of *The Room* (Tommy Wiseau, 2003), where the shared reading produced by audience interaction differs from the assumed dominant meaning encoded by the filmmaker (McCulloch 2011, 205). By codifying it and managing it more closely, live cinema practices have mainstreamed niche practices, and restricted the audience's individual and collective creativity. The relationships between diegetic space and exhibition space mobilized at this end of the live cinema spectrum go beyond the 'found' symmetries of mood or theme, and instead actively

reshape space in the service of a ritualized entrance into a fictional universe. The porosity of the boundary between worlds allows the hyperdiegesis to expand and swallow up real-world resources.

Ella Harris has argued that pop-up cinema can prompt the emergence of new engagements with urban space, by bringing 'cinematic ways of seeing' out into the world. Through her ethnographic observations of site-specific, live, and immersive screenings, including Secret Cinema and two examples of canal boat-based projects, Harris discovers processes of deterritorialization and re-territorialization that 'destabilise and remake' both the film world and the site of exhibition. This is a 'reciprocal invasion' that makes urban space pliable, rewritable (most often as a site of consumption that can be inserted into a gentrifying trajectory), and generates a 'perceptual continuum' that gives material form to the virtual 'out-of-field' dimension of Deleuzian cinematic space-time (Harris 2016). This expansionist impulse can be an issue when it runs up against (or rather, when it is seen to reinforce) the realities of differential access to this type of fantasy. The spectacular nature of Secret Cinema and its steep ticket prices have made it a flashpoint for discussions of gentrification, pointing to an entitled relationship to urban space as a playground (Balfron Social Club 2016). Similar critiques have been directed at many other temporary uses of urban space conforming to a familiar pattern: white, young, relatively privileged entrepreneurs setting up a 'pop-up' shop/café/gallery in a part of the city seen as in need of regeneration, where that 'regeneration' implies the displacement of existing communities. Whatever the intentions, the type of organized, safe playfulness of the 'pop-up' is bound up with privilege, and always at risk of being co-opted.

The Secret Cinema model has been widely copied, although rarely at such a big scale or with such detailed control over staging and participation. Glasgow Film Festival now regularly stages events at non-theatrical 'secret' locations. These included, in 2016, their screening of *Con Air* (Simon West, 1997) in an old plane engine factory, and in 2017 *The Lost Boys* (Joel Schumacher, 1987) at an amusement park. As people gathered outside the festival's core venue to board buses with an unknown destination, speculating about where they may be going was one of the social pleasures shared by the friendship groups and dating couples that constituted the bulk of the audience. Props were provided on the bus: For *Con Air*, a disposable orange jumpsuit, and plastic fangs for *Lost Boys* fans, who were mostly already sporting fashionable or trashy 80s looks. Dressing up is a key component of ritual, especially when everybody has a cameraphone and wants to share their night out on social media. The thrill of discovering the location was followed by another round of photography on arrival. Since the amusement park used for *Lost Boys*, M&Ds, is well known to people in Glasgow, excitement about it peaked earlier, as soon as the bus turned for the motorway exit. At the *Con Air* location, which in its current existence as a go-kart track is much newer, the sight of a plane cockpit sticking out of the front wall prompted plenty of group photos, but prolonged rather than resolved the intrigue. Some minimal explanation was given about the history of the building, but since there was no other sign of planes apart from the bizarre cockpit, the resonance was weaker.

At these two events, as well as regular festival volunteers and staff, there were also actors playing out little scripts or interacting with the audience. For *Lost Boys*, 'wanted' posters featuring these actors prompted audience members to interact with them. However, these interventions were fairly minimal and the expectations of audience commitment to their structured participation were much lower than they seem to be for the larger Secret Cinema events. Rather than a fully-fleshed immersive experience, what these two events offered first and foremost was exclusive access to a playground, shared mainly with other young white adults in fancy dress, and selling beer and hot dogs. A similar, but more participatory example was offered by Edinburgh International Film Festival with their screening of *Scott Pilgrim vs The World* (Edgar Wright, 2010), billed as a special event connected with a director retrospective. Hosted in the Students' Union building, the after-screening party featured live bands, comics-style mural drawing, video games, a dress-up photobooth and a zine-making workshop, creating in effect a themed activity playground built in a web of intertextual references. As well as aesthetic elements copied from the film's look, such as cartoon lightning bolts and band posters, and activities that feature in the movie, such as an indie rock gig and playing video games, other references were more oblique. The live mural drawing and the zine-making workshop, for instance, affirmed the film's grounding in comic-book and DIY subcultures, without referring directly to the film's diegesis. Understanding the presence of these activities in a film-centred event thus demands a broader, culturally-situated idea of cinema as an intertextual medium, with many possible points of contact, especially for fans.

At events like these, the film's presence was diffused across direct and indirect references and displacements. Given decentred engagement with the film world, the transition to and from the formal screening event is often jarring. Atkinson and Kennedy have observed that, in Secret Cinema events, the film-viewing part of the evening is often anticlimactic, something that stopped the more sociable fun of a night out:

> the very presence of the cinema screen on-site calls to attention the mediation of the spectacle, and underlines the ultimate position of the audience member as spectator as opposed to participant, and as such a sense of 'total immersion' (Machon: 2013) can never be achieved. Secret Cinema, and other immersive events are not frameless experiences – in the way that Punch Drunk and other immersive theatre experiences can. (Atkinson and Kennedy 2016)

At the *Lost Boys* event, people had to be convinced to stop going on the fairground rides and instead go to the screening. I found it more appealing to wander around the empty amusement arcades, enjoying the colourful blinking of the slot machines, than to go and watch two hours of 1980s clichés. The screen had been artfully set up in a marquee used for weddings, which added to the sense of ritual. Most of the audience were, by this point, at least mildly drunk, and ready to shout dialogue back at the screen. The audience's place then went from an immersive one (exploring the space, interacting with characters) to a participatory one. As Atkinson and Kennedy suggest, the configurations of cinema, in this case the formal seating and screen, resist a fully immersive form of experience.

There is a problem of terminology here, as immersion is now a broadly defined term that has strayed away from its classical formulation as 'plunging into an artificial world through the dissolution of spatial boundaries between the viewer and the image' (Elsaesser 2015, 251). Conventional film studies, with its Brechtian influence, has argued that, when viewers get sucked into the story world and distracted from their real conditions of existence, cinema acts as a conciliatory and therefore reactionary force. Elsaesser refers to immersion as a 'delegation of agency', where the viewer gives in to the narrative (Elsaesser 2015, 251). This would seem to be at odds with the interactive and participatory role of the audience in what has come to be called 'immersive' cinema. To further muddy the waters, in their introduction to an edited collection on 'live cinema', Atkinson and Kennedy place participation and immersion on opposite poles of a continuum, with individual virtual reality media occupying the immersive extreme (Atkinson and Kennedy 2018). Evidently, as Atkinson and Kennedy acknowledge, overlaps and hybridities are possible across different positions on the spectrum.

Conventional understandings of audience positioning would cast immersion as passive and participation as active, and reclaim a critical role for the latter. However, this polarity demands more nuance. Participation is often subordinated to immersion, when the demands of the narrative universe require a commitment to the 'illusio', a willingness to perform according to predetermined scripts. At the same time, the abundance of paratextual 'distractions' in so-called immersive screenings derail any notions of disembodied spectatorship. Watching the film ends up being secondary, yet the film text dominates the space and the social scripts available in it. Rather than the critical awareness that non-theatrical space brings to functional cinema, this is an appropriative – one might say colonial – relationship to space, where the diegesis expands outwards.

6.5. Liveness

Liveness is a staple of the experience economy because it offers a guarantee of uniqueness against the over-abundance of reproducible media content. As Philip Auslander argues in relation to the rise of interactive and promenade theatre in the 1990s, 'the ostensible evanescence and nonrepeatibility of the live experience ironically become selling points to promote a product that must be fundamentally the same in each of its instantiations' (2008, 52). The romantic associations of liveness critiqued by Auslander, such as magic, energy, and authenticity, serve marketing teams well. Like Kember argued in relation to early cinema, for Auslander '[l]ive performance […] has become the means by which mediatized representations are naturalized, according to a simple logic that appeals to our nostalgia for what we assumed was the im-mediate' (2008, 43). Live performance, therefore, can be accused of being both a deceivingly recuperative trick (making us forget about the rise of the machines, perhaps), or a disingenuous marketing ploy.

The emergence of 'Live Cinema' as an industry term, supported in the UK by the Live Cinema Association, has been hindered by the ambiguity of the term, which is sometimes also used in

relation to simulcast screenings of live theatre, opera, or concerts – an area now confusingly named 'Event' cinema and which has its own association. Industry concerns about terminology have nothing to do with the concept of liveness or the ontology of cinema, but simply with the ability to communicate with consumers, 'informing them that live cinema is a unique brand proposition' (Live Cinema Ltd. 2016, 17). Branding, in this case, creates differentiation and manages audience expectations, as well as helping justify increased ticket prices. Live cinema is not necessarily non-theatrical but, like site-specificity, it produces scarcity in a market in which consumers are supposed to have instant access to everything everywhere all the time. It is important that the events in question are ephemeral and not easily scalable, so that the audience can be convinced that their experiences are unique. Most of the time, these audiences are courted and placated, engaged and reassured, allowing them to enjoy the thrills of riskless discovery.

In the Live Cinema Network's 2016 survey of audiences at 'augmented' events, 100% of the people polled claimed to be 'frequent cultural events attendees'. This modality thus seems to engage a different constituency than, for instance, the rural audiences served by community cinemas. Especially in the main cities and the large festivals, this is an audience saturated with options and empowered with consumer choice. In choosing augmented forms of non-theatrical exhibition, they make a choice of distinction, in the Bourdieusian sense. The commercial motivation for ever more inventive ways to capture overstretched attentions seems to be to capture premium customers, those who already have many entertainment options. Interesting tropes of controlled playfulness, connected to gaming, also inform the sector's ideology of 'fun' (Atkinson and Kennedy 2015). Thinking back to Benjamin's celebration of the democratizing force of mechanical reproduction, reintroducing liveness is arguably a reactionary move.

While the extravagance of Secret Cinema events, and their takeover of working-class locations, would support this pessimistic view, there are also many other forms of live cinema. In Scotland, these tend to be less spectacular and more experimental. The intermingling of live performance with the protocols of minor cinema assemblages has produced some rich, layered experiences, where artists working across media are allowed to take risks, to reach new audiences and to challenge boundaries. Nowhere is this more visible than in the intersection with music.

The alliance between live music and the moving image has been there throughout history, from the nickelodeon piano to the background projections at an arena gig, from the travelling troupe at the pavilion to the symphonic renditions of popular scores in a concert hall. The plight of millions of cinema musicians was one of the most brutal aspects of the transition to sound on film (Griffiths 2018, 178–179). After that point, cinema spaces were no longer designed to accommodate live performance to the same extent, or not at all. The next labour upheaval, the de-skilling of projection and the transition to centralized digital systems, has further complicated the use of permanent cinema spaces for shows that include any form of live performance. Paradoxically, this has placed older cinemas at the forefront of live cinema creativity. The main example in Scotland is the Bo'ness

Hippodrome, built in 1912 and home to an annual festival of silent cinema since 2011. The festival has established a very successful programme of new score commissions that are first performed during the festival and then toured. In Glasgow, the Britannia Panopticon Music Hall has its own resident ensemble, Gladstone's Bag, to play along to their screenings of slapstick comedies, and the Pollokshields Burgh Hall, which houses one of Scotland's only surviving Wurlitzer organs, teams up with the Southside Film Festival for afternoon screenings of silent classics by Buster Keaton and Laurel and Hardy.

The Wurlitzer organ offers nostalgic pleasures, but it would be far too simplistic to reject these live score screenings as a cynical marketing ploy. These are grassroots events, sustained by communities of tremendously skilled enthusiasts. They are not identified with the 'alternative' sensibilities of DIY, but in their self-directed approach to cinema history they are as askew to mainstream exhibition as any other independent exhibitor. A different type of cinephilia finds expression in these groups and their events on the margins of local cinema culture. It does not conform with received ideas of the subcultural underground, but it does embody a resistance to the rigid flow of cinema commodities through the market, and to the strict separation of producer and consumer enshrined in univocal codes of intellectual property.

A different form of liveness is also proposed by Shona Thomson in her pioneering work with archive film. In Chapter 5, I discussed her work with communities to programme and contextualize local archive film. Alongside this participatory kind of liveness, Thomson is also a pioneer of ambitious and complex forms of live cinema. In 2017, she organized a tour of *Drifters* (Grierson, 1926) accompanied by beatboxer Jason Singh. The project, called *Following the Fleet*, took them along the Eastern coast of the UK, with stops at the major herring fishing ports along the way. Each night of the tour offered a new context and configuration for the screening of Grierson's powerful documentary. In Leith, the port city neighbouring Edinburgh, the event took place in an intriguing Victorian building, originally a Turkish baths that became a cinema during the 1920s but has been a church since 1936. A montage of archive footage of the neighbourhood was accompanied by a local migrant women's choir, who in their multilingual harmonies re-situated the images as a place-based, rather than navel-gazing, form of historical memory. Behind me, a woman used the opportunity to explain to her friend, a recently arrived refugee, some of the less familiar details about the local films. Then Singh's otherworldly use of looped vocal sounds carried in the crashing waves, the weight of the fishing net, the shimmery tangle of those fish that turned out to be mackerel rather than herring. It was truly a one-off event, a unique thrown-togetherness of trajectories and temporalities between the archive and the sampler, the singers and the old cinema in a port town.

The ability of cinema to simply gather a crowd and provide a point for encounter, which runs through all the chapters in this book, reappears here in an explicitly creative and playful sense. For a final example, take the screenings organized by Pollywood cinema as part of the Pollokshields Playhouse project in the Southside of Glasgow. The Playhouse was a temporary use of a vacant lot

across from the Tramway, an important contemporary arts venue. A group of designers and volunteers used reclaimed pallets to build passageways and huts and host community events throughout the year: a prime example of 'pop-up' architecture of the kind so often denigrated in critical discourse against gentrification. For the opening night, Pollywood built a screen and projected the successful Indian food-themed romance *The Lunchbox* (Ritesh Batra, 2014). Before the screening, there was a Bollywood dance performance by a local dance group, and freshly-made curry was served by another local entrepreneur. The neighbourhood has a relatively large Indian and Pakistani diasporic population. The audience for the first part of the evening was fairly diverse at first sight, but most of those who stayed for the film were young white families. Without further empirical research, I would not venture an explanation for this, but note the importance of live performers in attracting audience groups that may not be so keen on outdoor cinema.

For a later screening of Brazilian animation feature *Boy and the World* (Alê Abreu, 2014), a samba ensemble was brought in; and for a cycling-themed film, a BMX demonstration and a bike ride bookended the event. Event organizer Neill Patton remembered how 'we got the kids to cycle from the Square Park to the Playhouse and blocked the roads and stopped all the traffic, and then had kids watching guys doing BMX tricks in the Playhouse on the stage. [That was] more interesting for me than showing the film at night, and it's almost like using film as a way to riff off, to do something that you wouldn't normally do in the community'.[3] Placing film as a catalyst for improvisation, rather than a fixed, reverential object around which things need to be organized, helps break down hierarchies. In this way, 'screened presence comes to co-create, rather than obliterate place, and how that happens in different locations is precisely what makes different places unique' (Krajina 2015, 178–179). Creating eventfulness is then also a way to destabilize entrenched habits, to make strange, and to incite wonder. Sitting outside on a mild evening, watching the sun go down behind the spires and glinting off the golden tops of the Sikh Gurdwara, while children chased one another around piles of rubble or helped gather wood for a firepit, it was difficult to be cynical about the easy, embodied pleasures of cinema. It was also impossible to disentangle the threads of experience that led back to the screen, from those that spiralled away from it.

[INSERT FIGURE 6 HERE]

6.6. Conclusion

Site-specific screenings are a form of happening, as they enact some familiar gestures in unfamiliar or unexpected spaces. These gestures may refer more or less closely to protocols such as the boundedness of the event or the centrality of the film. They may produce temporary configurations that transform a physical environment, but these are held in tension with the desire to blur the boundaries between film and world in one or other direction. While the previous chapter showed how

participatory screenings breached this distance through strategies of demystification, which seem to reinforce the moving image's belonging into the ordinary, eventfulness in the examples above promises the extraordinary.

Whatever the stated goals of cinema's intervention in other spaces, site-specificity is a vector for the production of distinctiveness, and as such it can be instrumentalized for the policing of exclusivity in the market. A critical, anti-capitalist impulse informed the emergence of site-specificity as a category in the Western art world in the late 20th century, but this is not a given. The power balance between site and cinema can make its implementations monopolistic, and the centrality of the film can make its live presentation appropriative and centripetal. The commercialization of previously marginal practices (non-theatrical exhibition, fan/cult expression), and the centring of previously ancillary promotional practices (ballyhoo as core experience, served up by dedicated producers) mark a different trajectory from the strategies of site-specificity used in issue-based DIY exhibition. Where the functional relationship between the venues for 'useful' cinema and the films places cinema as a contribution to the world's struggles, eventified screenings of fiction films cast the world around them in the light of the film.

Some of the examples presented in this chapter use site-specific and live cinema within the boundaries of respect for the hegemonic position of the film text, and the celebration of popular film culture. Their rituals are worshipful. However, live cinema also mobilizes a more decentralized creativity, one that is more familiar to scholars of fandom and convergence. This distributed production is not necessarily critical or progressive, but it opens different possibilities. Following the example of Secret Cinema, the commercial viability of ambitious live cinema spectacles has been achieved by adopting bourgeois aesthetics: nostalgia, novelty, lack of dissonance, comfort, and the ability to make cultural consumption visible to others through the sanctioned patterns of social media discourse.

A more radical interpretation of eventfulness can see it as an articulation of historical contingency. By reclaiming the intermedial authorship that characterized early cinema, site-specific exhibition can be a catalyst for creativity. Here, instead of being an input to debate (as in useful cinema), or an exclusive, eventified commodity, film is a springboard, a cultural reference point that can be stretched in unexpected directions. Refusing a hierarchy of meaning-production, or a fixed idea of what a public event should look like, site-specific exhibition can be an experiment in communal imagination.

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[1] There is also a difference of opinion between distributors and exhibitors. While distributors support the idea of shorter windows as giving them more flexibility, the UK Cinema Association has been clear in its opposition: 'the sector strongly believe that a wholesale move to an unacceptably short (or even no) window would put hundreds of cinemas up and down the country at risk, along with the jobs and local services they support, leading to less rather than more film choices for the public'. UK Cinema Association. [n.d.] 'Release Windows'. https://www.cinemauk.org.uk/key-issues/release-windows/. Last accessed 17 February 2020.

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[3] Neill Patton, interview with the author, January 2018

Chapter 7. Against enclosure: DIY exhibition as prefigurative action

Abstract: This chapter considers the presence of utopian imaginations and forms of action in the practice of organizing film screenings. It argues that there are aspects of non-theatrical cinema as a collaborative practice that build towards a broader transformation of social relations. Through the temporary reconfiguration of private spaces as public, or their reclamation for play and pleasure rather than commerce, a screening can create a brief prefigurative interlude, where it is possible to glimpse the possibility of a different world. While being critical of the exaggerated promises of DIY and 'pop-up' projects, this chapter centres the action of organizing screenings as such, as a direct engagement with publicness and sometimes a subtle way of reclaiming or imagining the commons.

'[T]rue luxury could only be communal luxury'

(Ross 2015, 140)

What is the point of cinemagoing at a time of climate crisis, rising fascism, and peak inequality? In these desperate times, this use of resources, of time, space and labour, may seem extravagant. In the UK, only about 15% of cinema seats are occupied, and that only during opening hours.[1] While more and more films are released every year, audiences and profits are increasingly concentrated in a handful of big-budget blockbusters (Follows 2017). VIP lounges with hyperreal screens compete for a handful of viewers, meticulously selected as a target market. Cinemagoing is a wasteful, unsustainable, and unnecessary practice. Its demise cannot come too soon.

Outside these institutional trappings, however, the practice of gathering around the moving image finds other purposes. Cinema as a constellation of small gestures can join the effort to let 'beauty flourish in spaces shared in common and not just in special privatized preserves', by becoming 'fully integrated into everyday life and not just the endpoint of special excursions'? (Ross 2015, 61) Transforming a space into a temporary cinema, even fleetingly, requires both a physical change and a social convention. Since these have to be created anew, cinema in an unexpected site offers an opportunity to disrupt entrenched patterns of social use. In pop-up cinema, the cinema space is not pre-existent; it must be produced, and it can thus be re-imagined and re-configured. For many exhibitors, consciously or not, this presents an opportunity to try out more just and equal ways of being together. It can be as simple as arranging the seats differently to encourage discussion, providing subtitles and audio descriptions, or removing barriers to access; it can also be realized in the

form that labour takes, as freely given rather than alienated. These decisions express in microcosm a desire for a more just world, and are the first step towards creating it.

In the previous chapters, I have described examples of exhibition situations where the screening creates a framework for people to get together as a community, share some cake and get acquainted with each other's laughter. Screenings can make room for subcultures to bond and splinter, to cross genre boundaries and take risks alongside willing audiences. They can be a site of informal learning and inclusive discussion, where participation is catered for and nurtured. They can be sites of artistic experimentation, rife with multi-sensory, multimedial innovation and sensory joy. In all these variants, however prosaic or otherworldly they may appear, there is a utopian kernel. These spaces may be just a temporary reprieve from alienated existence, but they enact the yearning for a different social relation. This does not need to be articulated explicitly, or even consciously realized, to constitute a prefigurative moment.

This final chapter identifies some interesting and promising elements of pop-up exhibition practice as observed in my fieldwork, looking for their potential to challenge the reactionary aspects of cinema as an institution. Focusing on the work of independent exhibitors organizing around Scalarama and Radical Film Festivals, I discuss the emergence and ongoing negotiation of decentralized collaboration in exhibition and distribution practice. I also return to examples from previous chapters to consider potential directions of travel and identify emergent organizational strategies that may resist both depletion and assimilation.

7.1. Tactical urbanism

Pop-up cinema in its contemporary usage is often associated with a broader trend for temporary uses of space, described by some of its practitioners as 'Tactical Urbanism'. Oli Mould points out that the use of 'tactical' here has drifted away from de Certeau's idea of an intervention from below, an action intended to disrupt hegemonic strategies or at least to enable other ways of living amongst them. Instead, governmental institutions and private investors now deploy pop-up spaces in a way consistent with neoliberal urban policies, such as the 'creative city' and its attendant processes of culture-led gentrification. As Mould argues,

> The packaging of a variety of activities (from guerrilla gardening to pop-up retail outlets to yarn-bombing) into a narrative that is pushed forward into urban policy is, in effect, creating a logic that politically neutralises the interventionist and subversive characteristics of said activities (Mould 2014, 532–533)

One of the forms of this institutionalization of tactical urbanism is that of 'stalled spaces' initiatives. Temporary transformations of private or reclaimed space are realized with the permission of landowners and local councils, which see 'meanwhile use' as a value-enhancing strategy. In the introduction to their 'stalled spaces' programme, Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Housing Association frame it as a response to 'poor environmental conditions that have become more prevalent due to the economic downturn' (Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Housing Association

2012). By funding 'value-added' projects in unused but privately owned sites, the initiative aimed to foster community involvement in activities such as urban farming and beekeeping as well as recreation or public art. In brokering relationships between landowners and potential users of the space, the Council thus helped mobilize public, participatory art projects in the interests of the private sector. As artist Annie Crabtree points out, power remains with the landowner (Crabtree 2016).

This conciliatory stance is typical of tactical urbanism in its liberal form. By and large, pop-up cinema in this context exists as a clearly bounded event, with a beginning and an end. Any oppositional menace is foreclosed by this promise of return to the status quo. Precariousness does not bring liberation. However, temporal boundaries do encourage some forms of experiment, of playfulness, and an intensity of experience that may exceed the neoliberal frame. A pop-up space can be a test case, a proof of concept, and a confidence-building exercise. It can be a termite practice, in Manny Farber's formulation: one that by its very existence challenges '[t]he idea of art as an expensive hulk of well-regulated area' (Farber 1962).

The Pollokshields Playhouse, mentioned in the previous chapter, is a successful example of Glasgow's Stalled Spaces programme. The takeover of a brownfield plot across from Tramway, one of Glasgow's foremost contemporary art venues, allowed the neighbourhood community council to avoid embarrassment while hosting the Turner Prize exhibitions in 2015. The Council leased the ground, owned by private housing developers, for one year, and helped fund a small group of artists and community organizers, led by architect Lee Ivett and artist Rachel O'Neill, both of whom had previous experience of pop-up architecture (Taylor 2015). Ivett works under the name Baxendale Studio Ltd. Baxendale's projects often involve using volunteer labour to build structures out of reclaimed materials, such as wooden pallets and shipping containers. [2] Their interventions in relatively deprived parts of Glasgow have been accused of being at best patronizing, and at worse complicit in the displacement of lower-income residents through gentrification (Findlay 2018). This is a common thread in criticism of participatory arts, amply rehearsed when the multi-disciplinary collective, Assemble, won the Turner Prize in 2015 with Granby Four Streets, a housing regeneration project in Liverpool.

At the Pollokshields Playhouse, the lofty discussions of participatory arts and agile design took a back seat to the practical challenges of building an outdoor cinema out of pallets. The physical viability of the idea had to be tested: How to build a stage and screen, where to set up the projector and mixer, how to deal with potentially inclement weather. The cinema was only one of the many activities that took place in the space. The little cluster of pallet constructions surrounded by mounds of rubble was a playground for children, a place to hold small fairs and craft markets, for local organizations to set up stalls, and a meeting place for various groups. The coordinators arranged events that involved the local schools, dance clubs, cycling clubs, temples and shops. The whole project was an experiment in collaborative methods, even though there was a hierarchy reflected in the allocation of (small) salaries from institutional support. Throughout the year, the Playhouse

provided a focal point for local community activity, in contradistinction to the prestigious arts venue next to it, which tends to attract more visitors from outwith the neighbourhood. Community use of the Playhouse space was linked to specific functions and connections. There is, arguably, still a problematic binary between organizers and 'communities', but direct engagement in the co-production of events based on existing groups and resources is more inclusive than a bland 'everyone welcome'.

As an example of tactical urbanism, the Playhouse required a programme of events. Architectural and curatorial practices had to work in tandem: the screen was only built once the screenings were proposed, and the stage in front of it was a decision connected to the desire to involve live performances alongside the films. The cinema events felt like celebrations of this new-found space, snapshots of collective activity and pleasure that could hold meaning as community memories. By linking the screenings with eye-catching live performances, the Playhouse enhanced the eventfulness of the occasions, without restricting it to the film event itself. As discussed before in relation to the Kelvingrove Bandstand, outdoor exhibition tends towards more relaxed behaviour norms, and this is a key attraction for audiences that include people with a range of needs and preferences. At the Playhouse screenings, children alternated between being captivated by the film and trying to climb the screen frame; people ate hot, spicy food (which would not be polite in an enclosed space), moved between the seating bleachers and the bonfire, admired the sunset over their tenements, and offered each other hot drinks or a corner of a blanket against the falling night. The film set-up created an opportunity for those acts of sharing space, but it did not fully determine them. Because the film was subsumed into a more multi-layered event with local live performers, the publicness produced can be more inclusive. This suggests that not all public screenings are public in the same way. Their publicness reflects its own production, as a top-down concession or a bottom-up intervention.

7.2. Publicness and commoning

Publicness as a protocol associated to film exhibition cannot be taken for granted, or at least cannot be assumed to always take the same form. The modern experience granted to early and classical cinema audiences existed as much through the production of spaces, buildings, and situations, as with the aesthetic or narrative thrills of the medium. Therefore, the displacement of cinemagoing in favour of private viewing is, according to Miriam Hansen, 'not merely a matter of technological and institutional adjustment but a palpable, seismic shift in the cinema's relation to publicness or *Offenlichkeit*, as the unstable matrix through which individual and social experience is articulated and organized' (Hansen 1991, 22). By drawing on recognizable configurations, a screen can evoke and modulate publicness. A space of transit or a shop window can be transformed into a 'space of vision', because 'a screen functions as a spatial enunciator, in the sense that it appropriates the space in which it finds itself' (Casetti 2015, 133). As Maeve Connolly argues in relation to artists' moving image

exhibition, the ghostly evocation of the public in contemporary works is not singular; publicness is *staged* in the relationship between the work and its exhibition site (2009, 50–51). Screening is thus a deliberate and transformative intervention that can have different valences.

By pushing at the boundaries of private and public space in a way that makes an intimate experience possible in a shared space, ephemeral cinema configurations can be implicated in forms of *commoning.* This is a movement to reject the enclosure of resources, the artificial scarcity produced by economic imperatives. The resources needed to get together and watch a film are not scarce, but they are often locked away, like the empty auditoria at the multiplex. In *Cinema Makers* (2019), Mikael Arnal and Agnès Salson gather many examples across Europe of buildings that have been taken over by collectives and cooperatives, and reopened as multi-use venues with a DIY ethos. The Piccolo America, in Rome, started as an (illegal) occupation of a derelict cinema; the Novi Bioskop Zvezda in Belgrade has a similar origin, and aims to become a cultural centre run and programmed in a non-hierarchical manner. A squatted hotel in Athens operated as a self-managed housing cooperative for refugees, with cinema screenings on the rooftop (Gutiérrez Sánchez 2017). Cinema Usera in Madrid is a DIY outdoor screen built by activists and residents, and run collaboratively as a neighbourhood cultural centre (Volont 2019). Alongside these radical examples, there are numerous cases of industrial buildings and warehouses purchased through crowdfunding campaigns and transformed by volunteer builders into community venues. The Star and Shadow Cinema, in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, is one such venue, built and run by volunteers, 'an urban commons covered in solar panels, vibrating with grassroots energy', and standing its ground in 'a neoliberal, Brexit-worn, austerity riddled, Northern city centre' (Wallers 2019). The creation of these spaces under the sign of cinema can then be a form of direct action, bringing into being new social relations that do not need to replicate those of capital.

Reclaiming spaces for common use is what allows the emergence of new public spheres. The projection of moving images can thus become part of the toolkit of squatting and occupation as a tactic for social movements. Whether used for entertainment, information, fundraising, and propaganda, temporary screens often appear within larger interventions in urban space A historically significant example is Tahrir Cinema, in Egypt's Tahrir Square during the 2011 protests, where activists screened crowd-sourced videos showing the images of popular revolt that were not being broadcast by the official channels. Here, according to Mollerup and Gaber, 'revolutionary street screenings enable particular paths to knowledge because they make media engage with and take place within quotidian spaces that the revolution aims to liberate and transform' (2015, 1906). This politicization of outdoor exhibition makes clear that the publicness of the city square and the street cannot be taken for granted. This publicness needs to be actualized, produced and reproduced – or it risks being lost to revanchist urbanism and land-grabbing.

Pop-up cinema is an opportunity to see publicness as a process rather than a static condition of space. This processual view is present in Negt and Kluge's notion of the 'proletarian public sphere',

so effectively deployed by Miriam Hansen to understand early cinema and its parallels with post-classical exhibition practices. The proletarian public sphere is imbricated in the universe of labour under capitalism: it is produced through labour and, in that sense, stands among the experience of alienation. For that very reason, it has a radical potential. As Hansen explains,

> Negt and Kluge locate that utopian possibility in the very process of (alienated) production, in the 'historical organization of labor power'. For, while constituted in the process of separation (e.g., primitive accumulation and division of labor), labor power contains and reproduces capacities and energies that exceed its realization in/as a commodity: resistance to separation, *Eigensinn* (stubbornness, self-will), self-regniation, fantasy, memory, curiosity, cooperation, feelings, and skills in excess of capitalist valorization. Whether and how those energies can become effective depends on the organization of the public sphere (Hansen 1993, 204).

By bringing it into the realm of production, the concept of the proletarian public sphere is useful to see the utopian possibilities of the mass-produced, ersatz outputs of the consciousness industries. If this utopian notion of publicness is fundamental, and if its effectiveness is in part predicated on the work it takes to produce it, then it is important to understand how that labour is organized.

For Hansen, the 'incompleteness' of early film as commodity left a margin for proletarian re-appropriation. The liveness of exhibition could, in the right conditions, make cinema a site for the emergence of a social horizon of experience that negates the fragmentation of experience, that is, a resistance to alienation and 'a catalyst for new forms of community and solidarity' (Hansen 1993, 208). In contexts like Tahrir Square, alternative or oppositional publics may prefigure this proletarian public sphere. Breaking down the division of labour enshrined in bourgeois exhibition is a first step: As the Egyptian activists remembered, 'electricity from a nearby lamppost, deftly rewired by an electrician in the crowd, made the screenings possible', and the videos screened were mostly made by the people in the crowd (Mollerup and Gaber 2015). This co-production – in solidarity, in mutual aid – holds a radical potential: that of cinema as a site of disalienated work.

7.3. DIY and disalienated work

The commoditized publicness of commercial cinema spaces is produced and maintained through labour. By definition, the waged work of those who build, furnish, clean, and staff the multiplex is alienated labour: they do not own the building nor distribute the profits. The customers, meanwhile, purchase their ration of publicness in which to spend surplus time and money, but are not invested in its maintenance. In contrast, the publicness co-produced in an open space like the Playhouse can be disalienated. There is no monetary relation: no tickets, no wages and no profits. It does not mean that it is always easy or pleasurable work, or that it is emancipatory in and of itself. In his article about the construction of the Star and Shadow Cinema, Christo Wallers recognizes that, despite best intentions, the labour was unevenly distributed and caused intense stress for those who took up responsibility. The pressure was 'internalized by too few individuals […] resulting in a dangerous form of hidden self-exploitation and burn out that rarely gets discussed in DIY projects' (Wallers 2019). The

contradictions of prefigurative non-hierarchical organizing within a hierarchical social system cannot be overlooked; money still needs to be raised, authorities placated, and livelihoods sustained. A lot of relational labour needs to be invested alongside hard physical work. But whatever its very real limitations, collectivizing the work around the film screening does offer a different kind of investment in its publicness. This is already present in village halls, where the work of stacking chairs and washing dishes after the show is part and parcel of the event's sociability, and in the good will of every audience that waited for a cable to be replaced or a file to be downloaded.

Few places offer such a direct example of a disalienated cinema space as the Cinemor77 yurt. This is a pop-up cinema in a literal sense: thick canvas wrapped around a wooden frame in the traditional Mongolian shape, and then furnished with projection equipment and cushions. The idea was conceived in 2016 by community worker Neill Patton, who was already organizing pop-up screenings, including those at the Playhouse, and his friend Gary Thomson, who had moved back to Scotland after many years working in oil fields and was living in an intentional community where he had learned to build yurts. They shared a love of music festivals, 'that thing of being somewhere totally, totally different from the rest of the world', and came up with the idea of the yurt cinema as something they could take to festivals.[3] Around that idea, a shifting cast of characters has converged. Apart from Neill and Gary, there is Kim who teaches forest school, Gee who is a teacher, Jen who works with community projects, Debbie who runs workshops with children, Georgia who improvises to a 1950s film, and various friends, volunteers and artists. A call for submissions of shorts allows the programmers to gather new work, mainly by local filmmakers who are then invited to attend their screenings. Participatory screening events for children have become a feature, and live music to silent films has also been performed. This is thus an expertly-curated programme build through friendship and professional networks.[4]

Cinemor's first outing was at Doune the Rabbit Hole, a medium-sized, family-friendly festival in Stirlingshire, in 2016. Work was intense: when not operating the projector, Gary and Jen were calling people in for the next screening, or making sure the rain did not get into the audience's footwear laid out by the entrance. In between films, the yurt was still busy: it was a dry, cosy space, a much-appreciated refuge from the rain which was almost constant throughout the weekend. The yurt is a cinema, but it is first of all a yurt: a shelter, where toddlers can nap and festivalgoers can catch their breath or feed some visual input into their psychedelic experience. An elsewhere within the experiential bubble of the music festival, the yurt creates its own heterotopia. Furthermore, for the organizers, travelling with the yurt becomes a temporary lifestyle, a situation in which, as De Ville explains in relation to domestic microcinemas, 'the organizers' public and private lives, work and leisure time, were inextricably fused' (2015, 249). This wholeness is the seed of resistance to alienated labour.

In June 2017, I was invited to help build the yurt in the Victoria Allotments, a block of green space tucked behind rows of tenements in a multicultural residential area of Glasgow. The yurt was a

venue for the Southside Film Festival, an independent event organized by producer Karen O'Hare and a team of local collaborators and volunteers, some of whom were there to help with the build. The allotments were all in bloom, the sky a rare blue above the Victorian tenements that encircle the green space. Half a dozen friends and volunteers were there to help, while a few of their children ran around. I noticed how the work of assembling the yurt became an opportunity for conversation and bonding, the transmission of knowledge and the appreciation of the sensory context.

The trellis that makes the sides of the yurt is the first part to go up, followed by the top of the roof, a ring to which the poles will be connected. Gary stood in the middle and explained how to affix the poles to it with silky white ropes. As we do this, pole by pole, I chatted to Chris, a very experienced filmmaker and festival programmer who was there simply as a local resident and friend. He mentioned a Mongolian song that he once taped off the radio, where a woman sings about all the different parts of a yurt and the order in which they are put up. Gary and Neill joked that they have their own yurt songs, with punning titles like 'Everybody Yurts'. Once the structure is completed, the heavy cover needs to be pulled over the top and carefully unfurled. As we tied the canvas sides to the frame, we talked about the wonder that it is to watch a circus big top go up: the moment in which all the circus performers – all perfectly eccentric – pull the ropes all at once reminded Chris of the surreal circus scenes in a Jodorowski film.

As Gary and Neill added thicker pieces of fabric between the rafters and the top to serve as a blackout, children kept coming in and out, speaking different languages and eating ice lollies. Chris went to get a handsaw from his allotment shed to make new pegs for the front awning, talking about the pleasures of tending to his vegetables, about the blackbird that sings every night, about the sunflowers he was yet to plant. After laying down the carpet, Gary and Neill brought in the screen and projector, placing them with consideration to the position of the door and the arc of the sun. Once the generator was started, the yurt was ready for a birthday party that evening, and a series of festival screenings over the weekend. The audience was a mix of local kids and parents, and young hipsters drawn in by the twee potential of watching *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012) in an unusual site.
[INSERT FIGURE 7 HERE]

While it can function as a festival venue with a predetermined programme, the reality of operating the yurt is also an experiment in live, flexible programming, open to chance encounters and opportunities. Neill recalled how a pair of Scottish animators who were attending Electric Fields music festival approached them with all their short films on a USB drive, so they ran an impromptu screening after midnight to a packed-out audience. Local filmmakers turned up with their own films in the islands of Tiree and Bute, and 'at Belladrum one of the lighting guys came with a film he'd made in the 80s for this German psychedelic band'. According to Patton, these spontaneous contributions were possible because of the visibly non-hierarchical organization of the space:

> It's interesting, programming, because you just make connections, people give you stuff you would never have. And it's another side of film, because film is so top-down […] Everybody is on the floor with their shoes off, you take away a lot of the barriers that would normally be there, that formality of, is my stuff really good enough to be shown here? And you're also sat right next to the projectionist, he's fumbling around the wires trying to make things work. The workings are there, people can see what you're doing…[5]

An exhibition space where the projectionist is also the programmer and promoter is a space where showtimes can be flexible and audience requests accommodated. Have all the kids gone to the swimming pool at the time scheduled for a children's film? No matter: it can be shown later. If the fancy dress parade clashes with the shorts programme, the screening can be moved. The volume can be adjusted as the noise levels outside rise and fall. This was crucial at music festivals, where film soundtracks can sometimes mingle with the bands playing outside, creating interesting sensory moments, but can also be swamped into incomprehension. In such cases, recognizing that the film screening may not be the highest priority takes both humility and flexibility.

These qualities are often lacking in the institutional frameworks of exhibition licensing and permissions. Cinemor's flexibility is limited by the more rigid framework of film trade reporting, particularly when they choose to programme films in mainstream distribution. For the commercial feature films, Cinemor has to report precise audience numbers to Filmbank, and they do not have the freedom to repeat a screening or change the date. Dealing directly with the filmmakers is a way to overcome such restrictions, and also asserts the legitimacy of the space and of the programmers as cultural intermediaries (de Ville 2015: 248). This in turn increases the likelihood of obtaining external funding for the project, such as the Creative Scotland support that enabled Cinemor to subsidize the costs of their festival tour, and increases the social capital of the project, motivating collaborations such as those established with Pollokshields Playhouse, the Southside Film Festival, and the Festival of Lights, all local initiatives driven by personal networks.

7.4. Home cinema

The defining private site in the bourgeois imaginary is the home, and therefore turning a home into a temporary cinema is a way to push against the hegemonic separation of public and private. Because the publicness of cinema relocated to domestic spaces is not assumed, but produced, it can take different forms. It can be more or less permanent and extensive; more or less controlled or spontaneous. During the period of my fieldwork, two Glasgow-based cinema activists started a series of domestic screenings under the name Radical Home Cinema (hereafter RHC). RHC uses some of the recognizable configurations and protocols of cinema to produce, by association, an experience of publicness in a domestic space. The hosts are also curators, as they choose the films and sometimes theme the screenings accordingly. People sign up to attend each screening, and are then given the precise address. Publicness is thus tightly bounded, not open to passers-by but requiring some previous engagement and allowing hosts to potentially veto attendees, though at the point of writing

this option had not been used. Even within these margins, the proposal is still a challenge to the taken-for-granted privacy of people's homes.

The first instalment of Radical Home Cinema took place in the context of the Radical Film Network film festival, in May 2016. Amparo Fortuny and María Suárez, who had recently moved to Glasgow, had the simple idea of finding people who would host a screening in their own homes, of a film of their own choosing. The screenings would be run under the umbrella name of Cinema Up Collective, an organization that was born with this project. Cinema Up takes charge of coordinating various guests, helping them secure permission to screen the films, setting up social media event pages and coordinating with the broader festivals to include the RHC screenings in festival brochures. After their first successful run, RHC featured again as part of Scalarama in September 2016 and 2017, and in the Open House Festival in 2017.

Amparo and María, who met in Glasgow when friends insisted on introducing each of them to 'the other Spanish activist', are clear about the intent of their project in relation to their political activity:

> María: Rather than saying that we do cine-activism, we say we are creating cinematic experiences that use cinema as a transformative weapon, sometimes simply by showing stories that hadn't been heard before.[6]

Amparo was fresh from an experience of distributing her own documentary about the fight for reproductive rights in Spain, which was shown as a simultaneous online screening in over 200 non-theatrical locations. Her interest in alternative distribution, and on the special relationship to the audience that it enables, was one of the inspirations for Radical Home Cinema. But even before that, there is a radicalism in the way that each screening is organized, since it requires a voluntary and individual production of publicness by the host and the Cinema Up volunteers.

At a time when social perceptions of privacy are being reshaped by techno-culture expectations of total visibility and measurability, the agency implied in the act of sharing one's private space can be a way to reaffirm the importance of consent. This happened in one case, where the host had recently been involved in a controversy over a Lottery-funded arts project deemed indulgent or insensitive to the social history of the city. Online critics had exposed the artist's address and posted pictures of their flat, which made them reluctant to go through with a previous agreement to host a screening. Amparo and María arranged the screening so that the attendees did not know the host's identity, and the meeting place was outside. The initial apprehension on the part of the host gradually turned to a perplexed acceptance of a house full of strangers, and then to farce as the whole audience helped search for the remote control. After such a prelude, camaraderie was tangible, and a sense of trust seemed to be reaffirmed. The parameters of hosting a screening provided a relatively safe way to reconnect with a community that could have been hostile.

Most of the people who have hosted screenings for Radical Home Cinema are part of the artistic and cultural milieu of the city. Given that there is no funding to pay for a screening fee, hosts are encouraged instead to seek permission directly from filmmakers, who may be captivated by the

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premise and happy to connect with a small group of enthusiastic viewers even if no money changes hands. This practical strategy of contacting directors has the further advantage of making them so intrigued by the proposal that many have decided to accompany their films, stay with the hosts, and meet their audiences in the intimacy of a living room. For filmmakers the visit can prove productive and inspiring. The material constraints and the approaches adopted to organizing, that is, the way these screenings are produced, can thus have a positive impact on the type of publicness that is created. It is one of mutuality, horizontal power relations, trust and adaptability. Publicness here is an emergent property rather than a design, and so many viewers and hosts do not know what to expect.

> Amparo: I would classify the kind of viewers we have in two types: the viewer who comes for the film, who would go to the ends of the Earth to watch it, and the viewer who comes because they're into this odd idea, something they have never done before, going to someone's home and be invited in. They want to see it because they think it's something alternative, and it is a different way to experience cinema.[7]

This account of curiosity and, to an extent, novelty-seeking as a motivation for attendance emphasizes the fact that the context of Radical Home Cinema is abundance, not scarcity. The choice of venues is not due to the lack of alternatives; people's homes are not offered as a temporary replacement in lieu of a proper cinema. Instead, the rediscovery of living rooms around the city is a recognition of resources that already exist in a community, and which can be activated collectively. These resources include not only the domestic space itself, but also equipment, knowledge, skills, and social connections, which can all be mobilized outside a cash economy. In a parallel development, these sorts of assets – living space, tools, skills – have come to be the focus of the so-called 'sharing economy', which can be more properly described as an intensification of rentier capitalism. In this other timeline, it would be possible to imagine an AirBnB for home cinema, where punters could buy tickets to other people's living rooms. By framing itself as 'radical' from the outset, RHC rejected this transactional proposition. What remains is the radical act of inviting a stranger into the home: a nexus of trust and hospitality, mediated through the recognizable codes of cinemagoing.

[INSERT FIGURE 8 HERE]

Hospitality is a special form of generosity. In Chapter 4 I discussed the impulse to share a film you love with others, an expansive cinephilia that undermines the accumulation of cultural capital as a mark of distinction. The generosity of RHC hosts goes beyond this symbolic sharing, and it is very concrete. At every home screening I attended, hosts laid out a buffet for attendees, treating us to everything from herbal tea to vegan burritos, popcorn to pintxos, beer and baklava. Food and film prove once again to be ideal companions in the production of convivial spaces, but the profound resonances of shared sustenance run deeper than that. The cinema space as a lived experiment in hospitality is empowering for hosts and guests. It starts to chip away at the learned fear of the stranger by offering a relatively controlled framework for the invitation. The mediation of Cinema Up as

official organizers, and the widely-understood parameters of the feature film, help set a common expectation of how long the event will take and what it will involve, allowing for a more openly consensual, temporary social contract.

This playful establishment of short-lived utopias is a trope of the celebratory discourse of pop-up urbanism. But even when the longed-for effect does not materialize fully, the praxis of the attempt holds its own prefigurative interest. In other words, even if cinema fails to change the world, working together to show films to one another can be a means for people to experience collaboration and solidarity in small but concrete ways. DIY exhibition of the kind proposed by RHC, without official interference or distributor contracts but plenty of hospitality, warmth, conversation, and last-minute panics, can reclaim the act of showing films to one another, and watching together, away from the cash nexus. Reflecting on the audience's involvement in home cinema events, María ventured that 'it takes away a lot of the glamour, which has worn out over the years anyway, or it's a different glamour […] It is an odd experience'.[8] This demystification is connected to the breakdown of the division of labour implicit in hegemonic exhibition practice, where some people are working and some people are 'at leisure'. This blurring of boundaries is characteristic of DIY spheres, and important in a production-based definition of publicness.

7.5. Networks

The interconnectedness that sustains non-profit cinema initiatives is woven in concentric layers. There are the intimate networks of home, family and friends who come together to organize a screening, and the local networks of makers and organizers that converge around specific projects. While these are crucial in the production of each event, involvement in non-theatrical exhibition also connects people to broader formal and informal networks, through the circulation of films, sector organizations, festivals, and one-off partnerships. In her work on the US and Canada, Donna De Ville uses Angela McRobbie's description of 'network sociality' to characterize microcinema scenes in North America. This describes the contemporary shape of independent entrepreneurialism, dependent as it is on social capital and fluid bonds. What is striking about the dynamics I observed amongst Scottish independent exhibitors was the prevalence of collaboration rather than competition or monopoly as a horizon, even when this was more complicated in practice.

A key site where this commitment to collaboration was foregrounded was Scalarama, an annual DIY programming season which has taken place every September since 2012. Scalarama is hard to define, but as of 2018 it was part film festival, part loose crowd of people who are interested in showing films. During the month of September, these independent exhibitors (some of whom work in permanent venues, some of whom are long-term cine-club programmers, and some of whom are new to this) coordinate a calendar of screenings in different cities, supporting and promoting each other. There is a website with all the listings, and special deals with distributors are available. It is a simple idea, but it is infused with a utopian tone, made visible through manifestos and critical writing,

as well as the selection of films. The 2013 promise was to be 'the UK's widest and most inclusive film event... ever!'[9], and the commitment to more diverse programming includes, for instance, the '58% pledge' to programme films made by women.

Scalarama's utopian streak, although made possible by the Internet and affordable digital projection, is nevertheless rooted in cinema history. The project started as an initiative of two London-based event promoters, Phil Foxwood and Michael Pierce, who programmed the Ritzy theatre and later operated under the name Cinema Nation. In 2012, they organized the first season, 'Scala Beyond', in homage to the eclectic slate of London's Scala cinema of the 1970s and 1980s. Over the years, the initiative has expanded in a federated way, and transformed into a banner to bring together people who were putting on film screenings across the UK, with some international participants.

The diversity of exhibition sites is a feature of Scalarama. In 2012, the Scala Beyond manifesto urged people to 'fill the land with cinemas'.[10] In the same year, Foxwood and Pierce ran a workshop in partnership with the Independent Cinema Office, called 'I want to start a pop-up cinema'. Promotional material foreground the most photogenic of these novel cinema spaces. Of more than six hundred exhibition sites used over the first five years of Scalarama, the most memorable tend to be those that were used only once. These include a variety of bars and cafes, some parks, libraries, comic shops, record shops, video game arcades, canal boats, and several community centres and village halls.

However, it would be misleading to describe Scalarama as a festival of pop-ups. All of the top 10 venues by number of Scalarama screenings are either independent cinemas, arts centres, or 'small cinemas'. One of the aspects that make Scalarama interesting and productive for participants is that it brings together the institutional and DIY exhibition spheres, creating access routes into the industry for those operating at the margins. It allows those putting on their first ever screening in a local pub to chat on the same level to programmers at established cultural venues. The participation of different types of exhibitors has material benefits, such as options for venue sharing that may reduce costs, access to borrowed equipment, and mutual promotion, as well as programming ideas. Scalarama's championing of collaborative entrepreneurialism is not oppositional, but it shows an alternative to a cinema sector that has been notoriously competitive and monopolistic. However, a more critical examination of the relationships between DIY practices and cultural institutions shows the limits of a liberal approach to cultural democracy.

Scalarama's claim for inclusivity is premised on the adoption of a 'fringe' model, like that of the Edinburgh festival in the sense of having no curation and consisting of a collection of self-reliant, self-funded events.[11] The claim for inclusivity has remained a key element, and this ambition is premised on a DIY ethos (the 2016 programme proclaimed: 'Scalarama is by everyone, for everyone, everywhere, with DIY in its veins!'). However, the notion that DIY equals inclusivity has been challenged extensively from within DIY scenes, because access to opportunity is not the same as fair participation, if it does not challenge the structural barriers. The collective authors of Glasgow zine

Communal Leisure pointed out in their first issue that 'DIY' has often reproduced various forms of oppression and exclusion, and needs to be reassessed through 'critiques of the structures that deny people access to artistic production and enjoyment' (2016). Theatre collective GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN similarly contested the escapist or ameliorationist politics of DIY, calling it 'a temporary fix for a deep structural problem' (Daniels 2013, 60–61). Like the Edinburgh Fringe, the decentralized model of Scalarama has a double edge.

On the one hand, it rewards entrepreneurialism as an accommodation to the precarious conditions of cultural work; it offers low-cost solutions to market failures, and opportunities for mobility into the industry. DIY can allow capital to exploit deep-seated subcultural valorizations of authenticity and the pervading myth of arts work as a labour of love. In this version, pop-up cinemas can be one of the 'artwashing' strategies deployed as part of developer-led gentrification, and they can enable local councils to claim a cultural impact with minimal investment, while permanent facilities such as libraries and community centres have their funding slashed, and decently-paid culture sector jobs disappear in favour of precarious or unpaid labour. In this scenario, DIY cinema cannot contribute to more inclusive access in the long run.

On the other hand, the practice of organizing autonomously but in collaboration has a longer-term potential. It puts into practice, as an experiment, a different way of thinking about how cinema can function. In its programming policy, Scalarama demonstrates a model of federated decision-making that nurtures autonomy and cooperation. This is not an entirely flat structure, since there are named regional and national coordinators, who have sometimes received a small honorarium for their efforts, but these coordinators function as connecting nodes rather than hierarchically superior agents in the network. The Cinema Nation founders have acted as national coordinators of the season and in previous years have taken the initiative in negotiating with exhibitors and raising funds. However, local coordinators are expected to emerge autonomously and communicate with each other.[12] This happens online and through local and national meetings, in a flexible and informal way.

The problem that Scalarama shares with most other similar organizations is that institutions are notoriously bad at dealing with non-hierarchical structures; funding bodies want someone to 'be in charge' and take the blame if something goes wrong. Compromises need to be made all the time – especially as Scalarama (through Cinema Nation) received funding from the British Film Institute for two years, during which participation grew substantially. When this funding came to an end in 2016, an attempt to move towards more independent, less institutional forms of support through online crowdfunding was unsuccessful. This meant that the umbrella organization was limited in its ability to offer material support to people trying to organize events, which in turn limited the participation of those less able to work for free or have access to equipment.

This ambivalence over institutional support and its bureaucratic demands touches a nerve for many exhibitors involved in Scalarama. As the manifesto-style promotion of the events often suggests, the desire to change cinema is for many an expression of a desire to change the world.

Organizing in an autonomous way is therefore a strong part of their ethos. Being part of a network offers some practical advantages, described by Edinburgh Scalarama coordinator as 'knowledge sharing about licences, venues and equipment' (Dunn 2018). But there is also a vaguer, more utopian commitment to, and practice of, collaboration and openness rather than competition. This can be framed in such a way that it accommodates to current institutional discourse, but it can also be a way to exist beyond it. This utopian desire runs through the initiative.

In January 2017, Cinema Nation organized a gathering of exhibitors involved in Scalarama. Most of them were working in film exhibition on a freelance basis and seeking opportunities for paid employment in the sector, so Scalarama offered an opportunity to acquire direct curatorial experience. This could be understood in the context of a cultural sector in which discourses of 'passion' or 'love' serve to conceal (self-)exploitation, as they need to be demonstrated by working for free (Gill and Pratt 2008; Loist 2011; Weeks 2018). However, in Scalarama these potential rewards are secondary to a genuine desire to collaborate and to forgo the competitive pressures that define local scenes.

This event/network model has also been adopted by the Radical Film Network in its broader conception. Originally, this was a conventional research network supported through a grant from the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council. The legacy of older activist and artist organizations, in particular the Independent Filmmakers' Association (IFA), was a strong influence within a group that wanted to challenge the exclusionary tendencies of academic networks (Presence 2019). At the time of writing, the RFN included 133 organizations – and many more individuals – across 23 countries.[13] The concrete existence of the network is its directory and mailing list, plus an ad-calendar of events; there is no ongoing funding or physical base. In that mutable existence, the Network has materialized sometimes as a conference, sometimes as a film festival, or a mix of both, depending on the resources and backgrounds of local organizers. In 2016, a group of filmmakers, activists, and academics (of which I was part) organized a meeting of the network at Glasgow. The collaboration was pitched as a 'single-purpose vehicle', a temporary alignment of diverse groups and individuals focused on a weekend. A total of thirty-five screenings, all free of charge, took place in various spaces around the city, including a ruined church, an art gallery, a trade union centre, a mental health support centre and a few private living rooms (Archibald 2017). Running in the mornings throughout the weekend, an 'unconference' provided a space for discussion and workshops on themes decided on the day.

One of the topics for discussion was the sustainability of the Network. Some participants proposed a more formal structure that would be able to attract funding, while others argued that this would detract from its independence. The relationship between the one-off event and the Radical Film Network as a wider organization remained unresolved.[14] Like Scalarama, the tangible, ongoing existence of the RFN is mediated through online platforms as much as live events. The festivals themselves rely on online tools for organizing, promoting, and evaluating events, and in this technological adoption there are some tensions. A dependence on Google (for email, collecting and sharing information) and Facebook (for event promotion and communication with audiences) was felt

as a necessary compromise, which would help reach more mainstream audiences and break down some access barriers. Meanwhile, the Unconference website was set up as a standalone site using a WordPress plug-in, linking to a pay-what-you-can registration page. The contradictions of 'radical' organizing thus had very concrete forms.

The resistance to establishing a normative definition of 'radical' complicated matters further. A 'non-hierarchical decision-making' workshop was held for all those involved in the organizing group, and specific strategies taken forward into the events. Behind this effort to take a conscious approach to decision-making was also a nervousness around control and accountability. Like in Scalarama, the non-curatorial principle for film screenings depended on their DIY nature: Whoever was prepared to put on a screening had the autonomy to decide what they wanted to screen, and the other network members were invited to collaborate. The main role of the organizing committee was to facilitate these contacts and to seek to expand the network, by reaching out to other organizations. Therefore, the organizing committee was not supposed to censor or define what was appropriate for inclusion. Pragmatic hierarchies still emerged or were agreed upon, such as a paid role for a coordinator, Fran Higson, who approached the role with some apprehension and much care. In the final evaluation meeting, Higson spoke of the risk of 'letting the centre become the centre', while others pointed to the mirror risk of falling back on the claim of decentralization as a way to avoid conflict, which may leave issues unresolved or individuals unsupported. While this is a much broader conversation about the ethics of non-hierarchical organizing, it is interesting to note that the temporary nature of the project was seen to prevent the accumulation of power.

Scalarama and the Radical Film Network events are, therefore, examples of a shift towards devolution in the provision of film culture in Britain. While the relationship with funding bodies is not straightforward for a non-hierarchical network, the fact is that the national arts funding council, Creative Scotland, funded the Radical Film Network festival, and so did the British Film Institute. Since the establishment of the Film Audience Network, in 2012, the BFI has devolved the administration of exhibition funds to regional Film Hubs. This rhetoric of a less centralized film culture, where diversity in programming is enabled through autonomy rather than intervention, is thus not confined to the margins of the system. The notion of a 'creative ecology' and a 'modular' future for film exhibition was discussed by Creative Scotland's Screen Leadership Group in the run-up to the launch of their new screen strategy.

The BFI's 2017-2022 strategy document highlights the role of partnership, and positions the funding for exhibition and distribution as 'accessible and responsive', while the Film Hubs are to become 'more strategic'.[15] There is considerable variation between the way regional Hubs have pursued the allocation of funds, but it is worth saying that amounts tend to be very modest. The Film Audience Network Fund, which supports eight regional hubs, receives around £3m a year in Lottery funds, to be distributed amongst hundreds of projects and events throughout the UK. Within such constraints, visible concessions to cultural democracy need to be understood in the context of

austerity. By funding projects which are mostly delivered through voluntary labour, funding bodies can lay claim to a vibrant, diverse film culture at minimal cost. For the people involved in the sector, the fluidity of temporary associations and project-based funding is mostly coherent with their broader experience of freelance working and precarity, which has become entrenched and normalized.

Festivals provide a privileged window to observe competing trends towards professionalization and instability, and they are also an arena where resistance is gaining ground. During the 2018 RFN event in Glasgow, PhD student Alexandra Colta organized a session with festival organizers and programmers to discuss their labour conditions.[16] This followed on from an initiative started at the Berlinale for a network of film festival workers. At the Glasgow meeting, one of the points raised was that the growth mentality embedded in many funding programmes was detrimental to working conditions and even to the mental health of festival workers. In order to obtain repeat funding from an arts council it is often a requirement to promise to do more. This compounds the chronical underfunding of festivals, particularly small ones, which rely on voluntary or underpaid work. While festival organizers are driven, passionate, and keen to take on challenges, there is also an emerging idea that it may be better to simply 'do less'. Precarity breeds isolation, but collaborative work offers other ways to manage expectations, avoid duplication and increase audiences per screening.

In the UK, there are strong incentives for independent exhibitors to formalize their activities. Funders and distributors reward formalization, and the organizations that support independent exhibitors often focus their efforts in enabling them to comply with legal requirements. The contradictions of sustaining a minor practice within majoritarian structures are again present in these incentives. For instance, Scalarama helps exhibitors get discounted screening fees for repertory titles, hence contributing to the assimilation of previously unauthorized and non-monetized screenings into institutional distribution markets. This compliance allows established venues to ensure that no illegal exhibition is taking place, so exhibitors may move their activities into these more convenient spaces. The venues and funders see this collaboration as a strategic response to gaps and inefficiencies in the market, such as under-used facilities and un-distributed films. Meanwhile, exhibitors may see their under-remunerated work as a gateway into an opaque sector.

At the same time, there is a risk that the habit of doing things through the regular routes might stifle the resourcefulness of DIY. Restricting analysis to those forms of cinema that are accounted for within state systems – taxed and regulated – is to overlook a vast universe of production and consumption practices (Lobato 2012, 42–44). This includes not only the many kinds of morally justifiable copyright infringement, but also the stimulus to show more local films or to establish relationships with filmmakers directly. This effort to legalize DIY activity has the parallel effect of holding up the legitimacy of the distribution system itself, with its rent-seeking tendencies. The legitimation of DIY still leaves many other potential exhibitors outside it, and it may in fact marginalize them even further, because it relies on systems of credit (economic, but also in terms of

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cultural and social capital) that are not equally available. As one of the exhibitors explained about their free screenings,

> Of course all of this is a-legal, because we'd be supposed to pay screening fees and a cinema license, which we don't do […]. The worst that could happen is that they tell us to stop, but then again, if we ask for permission and they say no, we can't continue, so we'd rather give it a try. We don't think we're taking viewers away from any cinema.[17]

This ethos seems to be relatively rare in the UK, where there is a strong permissions-first attitude. But for many alternative or oppositional forms of exhibition, there is little precedent and therefore little comprehension from authorities and institutions. Often, the conditions that would need to be met for official authorization are unreachable and would prevent the screening from happening at all. Therefore, a measure of discretion, and sometimes rebellion, is necessary for some operations. In the summer of 2016, the Golden Trailer Collective travelled from Edinburgh to Belgrade with a welfare van to offer support to people trying to make their way north and living in refugee camps. In their mobile foot care clinic they tended to the injuries caused by long journeys and longer stints of rough sleeping; the van offered a place of respite where people could charge their phones and play music. This hospitality was a defiance to rabidly xenophobic and racist policies that crystallized around the so-called refugee crisis. From the Italian border town of Ventimiglia, the collective reported that the mayor had

> re-implemented a staggeringly ludicrous ordinance forbidding the 'unauthorised' sharing of food and drink with migrants. This week two volunteers delivering food were arrested under this ordinance. In a minor act of civil disobedience we have even been serving tea and biscuits during the films, smuggling a tea urn past the police.[18]

In a world where serving tea and sharing a film can be criminalized, the radical kindness of this simple activity is profoundly counterhegemonic. The fleeting publicness created in a refugee camp is produced oppositionally, and not through the means of alienated labour and separation. It is different from one produced within commercial relations, and it is vital to the future relevance of cinema.

7.6. Conclusion

Scalarama and the Radical Film Network are examples of hybrid ways of organizing, pursuing utopian visions in the context of precarious entrepreneurialism as the dominant mode in the cultural sector. This negotiation is marked by contradictions, but in their fragmented, ephemeral exhibition practices, and in the revalorization of the viewing context, there is a space that opens for imagining something different. Their flexible approach offers a way to start ferreting away the good things about cinema, hollowing out its monopolistic, exclusionary edifice. Grassroots initiatives like Radical Home Cinema and the Radical Film Archive are riskier efforts to use protocols of film exhibition selectively to make new commons.

Many of those involved in independent and DIY film exhibition are critical of capitalism and of dominant politics. Their involvement is often framed in relation to their activism, as a

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counterhegemonic practice. Showing films with a political intent is part of it, as discussed in Chapter 4 in relation to 'useful cinema'. Using the practice of organizing screenings as direct action to reclaim a space is another type of intervention. Furthermore, as a social activity, organizing pop-up cinema screenings opens up a rehearsal space for non-hierarchical organizing, and for the development of prefigurative social relations at a small scale. This means that when people get together to put on a film screening or festival, their interactions can demonstrate how collective activity may exist outwith capitalism. By substracting the constants of commercial cinema as a major form – its fixed venues, labour hierarchies, and profit motive – these minor forms can help people reclaim the commons for public life, and in these struggles over publicness 'what is at stake is the very possibility of making connections' (Hansen 1991, 36). As well as a site for aesthetic experience, for learning and pleasure, the shared spaces defined by the protocols of cinema can also be sites of solidarity and encounter.

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[3] Neill Patton, interview with the author, January 2018

[4] Disclosure: I have been part of Cinemor77's volunteer board of directors since 2018.

[5] Neill Patton, interview with the author, January 2018

[6] 'Más que decir que estamos haciendo cine-activismo, es que estamos creando experiencias cinemáticas usando el cine como un arma de transformación. A veces simplemente mostrando historias que simplemente no están ahí.' Interview with the author, May 2017 [author's translation]

[7] 'Yo clasificaría el tipo de espectador que tenemos como en dos: el espectador que va por la película, que iría al fin del mundo a verla, y el espectador que va porque le gusta mucho esta idea tan rara, que nunca he hecho en mi vida, de ir a casa de alguien y que me abran la casa de alguien y yo quiero verlo, porque me parece algo alternativo, y es una manera diferente de experimentar, que es un poco lo que tratamos, que la gente experimente de manera diferente el cine.' Interview with the author, May 2017 [author's translation]

[8] 'Yo creo que le quita mucho glamour, que ya se ha quitado mucho con los años, pero es un glamour diferente, […] es una experiencia muy rara.' Interview with the author, May 2017 [author's translation]

[9] *Scalarama* Kickstarter video, 2013. https://youtu.be/XLa049TEuTU. Last accessed 17 February 2020.

[10] Scala Beyond manifesto, 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-c-pVT9TAn4. Last accessed 17 February 2020.

[11] Critiques of this model, which forces artists to take on substantial risks, and can enable various forms of exploitation, from extortionate rents to underpaid and overworked labour, have emerged from the performing arts. See for instance the *Fringe Whistleblower* blog: http://fringewhistleblower.tumblr.com/. Last accessed 17 February 2020.

[12] When talking about his vision for Scalarama as an organization, incidentally, Pierce referred to Frederic Laloux's 2014 book *Reinventing Organizations*, which gives examples of structures that promote self-management through a sense of purpose.

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[15] British Film Institute. 2017. *BFI2022: Supporting UK Film*, p. 13. https://www.bfi.org.uk/2022/. Last accessed 17 February 2020.

[16] Scottish Trade Unions Congress. 2018. 'Labour of Love – Film festivals speak out on working conditions'. https://scottishtuc.blog/2018/05/04/labour-of-love-film-festivals-speak-out-on-working-conditions/. Last accessed 17 February 2020.

[17] 'Por supuesto esto es bastante alegal, porque tendríamos que pagar cuotas por proyección, por el *cinema licence*, que no se hace […] Si nos pillaran, lo peor que podría pasar es que nos pidan que paremos, y si preguntamos y nos dicen que no, igual no podemos seguir, así que preferimos intentar. Porque nosotros no creemos que le vayamos a quitar espectadores a un cine'. Interview with the author, May 2017 [author's translation]

[18] Golden Foot Collective, Facebook post, 24 March 2017
https://www.facebook.com/goldenfootcollective/videos/343853096010968/. Last accessed 17 February 2020.

Coda

Abstract: This brief chapter offers a final reflection on the future of film exhibition as a social practice, and returns to the ambiguous value of the ephemeral as a site of precarity but also of possibility and freedom.
Key words: ephemeral cinema, pop-up cinema, precarity.

This project set out to investigate the proliferating forms of non-theatrical film exhibition that I saw blooming around me. It was an open-ended exploration of present events, seeking ways to match the spontaneity that characterized them. The method was simple: Attending as many events as I could, observing, sometimes taking part, sometimes asking questions. But behind the ephemerality of each film screening there was a tangled thread connecting it to the long histories of film exhibition. Historicizing the present was, at the time, a way of noticing continuity and change. Eventually, of course, the writing is no longer in the present: This is now a historical account of a particular time and place. As darkness gathers around us, this book tells of times of joy and hope, moments of kindness, playfulness and fun. It observes, through the pretext of film screenings, the resilience of utopian imagination, practical cooperation and a desire for the public, as much as a love of film that has endured through technological change.

I set out to find through Scottish examples what cinema meant as something people do. I was aware of a thriving and diverse non-theatrical cinema sector, sustained by people who devote so much time and effort to screen films to their communities, to strangers, to each other. While individual initiatives may appear relatively marginal and inconsequential, altogether they constitute an ecosystem that adapts to, and sometimes resists, the conditions of cultural (re)production in the current phase of British capitalism. This book has tried to capture glimpses of the simplest, most unassuming plants in this garden, as well as the showy ones, the deep-rooted ones, and the ones with tangled rhizomes. It does not pretend to say which of these efforts will leave a deeper mark in future histories, and which will disappear without another trace. Gathering these stories is a small (or minor) intervention into a historical record dominated by major narratives.

By looking at non-theatrical practices in relation to one another, this project contributes to the sector's own understanding of its own options and strategies. I draw connections between exhibitors and activities that would not often be considered together, making them visible to one another and to other researchers and policymakers. By historicizing contemporary practice, I do not intend to deny innovation, but to acknowledge that ephemeral and non-theatrical exhibition is out of its novelty phase. The examples of best practice, the conscious or implicit strategies used by exhibitors, and their reflections on the obstacles they face, contribute to a more nuanced view of a maturing sector. Future

research might observe this in an international context. An international approach, connecting the growing research on non-theatrical exhibition around the world, could reveal other histories of DIY, other ways of doing independence and of existing alongside or against the mainstream. It would help rethink the relationships between institutions, communities, exhibitors and audiences.

At the start of this project, I intended to interrogate the 'relocation' of cinema as a potentially fractious displacement. My research showed that this relocation is fragmentary, and that it therefore demanded thinking about cinema in a non-essentialist but pragmatic way. These screening practices diverged from dominant exhibition through substraction, but were still socially recognizable, often through the word 'cinema'. Therefore, studying them offered an opportunity to disaggregate those elements that can be substracted, and to observe the new assemblages that become possible. Rather than a fixed object or a set of necessary characteristics, in minor non-theatrical exhibition practice there is an intensity that emerges through the temporary convergence of spatial configurations and social protocols. Each screening may have some elements and substract others, but it resonates with what people have called cinema in the past. These operations of unmaking, assemblage and recognition tend to cluster around historical patterns of practice, and can be studied genealogically.

This allowed me to address a second question, regarding the relationship between past and present. I set out to document a particular moment in exhibition practice, within a limited geographical area. The types of cinema activities I found in Scotland over that period were the anchor point for my historical research. Starting from the present and tracing the hybrid lineages that have fed into current practice, this selective archive research perhaps foregrounds continuities. However, there are important ruptures. For instance, easier access to films through online distribution, and the use of social media for event promotion, have lowered the barriers for people who want to put on a screening. However, the greater informality this allows clashes with slow-changing institutional models of licensing and funding. There is also greater porosity between 'high' and 'low' film cultures, so that it is not unusual to obtain institutional funding for popular or subcultural programming. Fandom and cult practices have also become much more mainstream, and the boundaries of 'specialized' film cultures have blurred, which has stimulated new forms of mixed creativity.

While recognizing the inventiveness and skill of cinephile screenings and richly intermedial live events, it was important not to lose sight of the many uses of film exhibition as a means to an end. People use social expectations associated with cinema to claim a portion of space and time in which they can be sociable in intentional ways. In that sense, the ephemerality of that space poses a contradiction. The pop-up is a precarious proposition as a business, as a line of work, as a strategy for cultural provision, and as a social space. It cannot replace the permanent, everyday spaces that have been stolen from neighbourhoods and towns; or the organized labour of workers that have been deemed unnecessary by neoliberalism. Indeed, it risks papering over those wounds with some gaudy branding. On the other hand, a temporary formation may materialize latent possibilities and open

vistas of alternative futures. The question is then whether, or how, temporary formations can become sustainable and *sustaining*, rather than sources of further anxiety and insecurity, without solidifying into institutions.

Doing cinema as an intervention in the context of 'crisis ordinariness' is, sometimes, a form of cruel optimism, an attachment to a bad object; in others, it is an accommodation that normalizes precarity, and in others, it may yet be 'the noise of a new politics' (Berlant 2011, 262). This is almost never by design, but rather a function of the dynamic tension between the everyday and the eventful that gets played out in film exhibition. The extraordinary qualities of a film event may offer an escape into conciliatory fantasies, a jolt to the senses, a party, an opportunity for distinction, or a little distance from the mundane, amongst other things. Meanwhile, non-theatrical exhibition can also be grounded in the everyday, without demanding a dedicated space or a separation from the social world, but instead rehearsing gestures of a new ordinary. However modest and short-lived these interventions may be, they shimmer with the possibility of different social relations and a fuller life. With these gestures and these small gifts, people make room for each other within the crumbling shell of this house, where any wall serves as a screen.

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Acknowledgements

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