# 'Some Considerations on the Diversity of Cinema Programs in the Digital Age: Notes and Topics for Discussion'

**Peter Bosma**
Independent film researcher and film programmer, based in The Netherlands

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***Please note: opinions expressed in this article are not those of EDCF but of the author, whose work is published for information only.***



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## 1. Introduction

Has the cinema a future? This remains a relevant question, especially in 2015. Twenty years ago the centenary of cinema was celebrated and for many experts it was an occasion for expressing their fear of witnessing the end of cinema as we know it. Is there still reason for alarm in 2015? I do not think so.

On the dark side there are still issues that need attention, I discuss these in the first paragraph hereafter. First, we need a diversity of cinema theatres. Second, we need a new distribution deal, to explore alternative business models. Third, we always need an audience for every screening. Fourth, we need an artistic diversity of cinema programs. On the bright side there are many opportunities to counter all these issues. In the second paragraph, I limit myself to a discussion of a line-up of six strategies. Some are old and proven; some are relatively new and promising.

This position paper originated from the general question 'Where do we stand now?' measured in Summer 2015. Film exhibition is more than ever in a process of adapting to new circumstances. Times are changing and so does the general set-up of cinema exhibition. One indication of this development is the fact that film projection in nearly all film theatres worldwide has been digitized. The purpose of this paper is to explore the consequences of this transition regarding the safeguarding and enhancing of the diversity and quality of the programs offered in European cinemas. Digitization offers a lot of potential possibilities for 'speciality programming', such as cinema on demand, or new forms of Event Cinema (integration of various alternative settings, or alternative content). But in practice it still implies a lot of challenging efforts to realize a wide variety of film events. In my view, it is important to face this challenge because I believe that a diversity of cinema programs improves the way we see ourselves and the others, far away and close at hand. The opportunity to have a choice of cinema experiences is for me an essential condition for a tolerant and open-minded point of view on the world you live in, a stimulation to reflect upon your own position and circumstances.

Digitization compels us to rethink the features of an inspiring cinema programming that stimulates the survival of a high-quality film culture. I would like to investigate the current situation and discuss the conditions, threats, possibilities and various existing options.

## 1.1 The condition to secure a diversity of cinema theatres

A sufficient diversity of cinema theatres in each territory is a prime condition for a healthy film climate. The diversity can be measured by the range of market segments that is covered. The market consists of commercial and non-commercial exhibition, subdivided in first run theatres and second run theatres (also known as repertory cinemas or revival houses). The supply of screenings should also contain a substantial representation of the international film festival circuit and the international archival circuit (cinematheques). Another indicator of diversity could be the range of size and ambiance of the cinema spaces, and to investigate if each territory has a sufficient variety of mega-plexes, multi-plexes, art house cinemas, and film clubs.

Digitization can endanger the diversity of the cinema exhibition infrastructure, because in general small independent 'mini-plexes' and single screen cinemas are struggling to finance the huge necessary investment in equipment. The inevitable investment in digital equipment is also a constraint for new, upcoming small initiatives, eager to enter the professional film exhibition market. The division is not between 35mm and 16mm anymore, but between Digital Cinema Package (DCP) on the one side and DVD or Blu-ray at the other side. Happily enough, several European governmental support programs were developed in recent years for digitization of cinemas (Norway as first and most famous example) and also several commercial options for leasing equipment are facilitated.

In the digital age it is necessary to keep all equipment and computer systems up to date. Besides that, a lot of new technological developments on the level of cinema infrastructure (film transport) and equipment (image and sound) are constantly introduced. I am not an expert of technology, but I have my common sense doubts about the flow of these so-called 'improvements': some of them are sincerely innovation driven, some of them are just profit driven. As far as I understand it, improvement of 'Screen Brightness' or 'High Dynamic Range Imaginary' seems to be a really significant issue and laser light projection seems to be a promising option. Dolby Atmos can be considered as a truly revolutionary development in cinema sound. In contrast, 'High Frame Rate' (HFR) and higher image resolution (4K and beyond) however seem to have very little impact on the quality of the image. In any case, cinema owners around the world are still facing huge investments to keep their equipment running and up to date. I leave a critical assessment to the experts. The *European Digital Cinema Forum* (www.edcf.net) is a valuable platform of reference, Managed by President David Hancock and CEO David Monk. Other writing and teaching technology experts of digital cinema include Peter Wilson, Michael Karagosian, Olivier Hillaire, Nick Dager, Frank de Neeve, and Kommer Kleijn. In the meanwhile, I keep in mind that the pragmatic priority remain as always to secure that the sound volume is not too loud in the perception of the audience and to avoid at all costs a black screen.

To conclude this technology paragraph, a comparison between digital projection and 35mm projection is interesting. Film prints have become computer files. What are the issues of discussion concerning this transition? Is it a gain or a loss?

- Technological: is digital projection delivering the same image quality as 35mm (color, contrast, resolution)? Some experts bemoan a loss of detail and are looking back in melancholy. For a more positive critical perspective, see among others: http://www.filmcomment.com/entry/this-is-dcp-is-that-it. For professional technical assessments, see among others: www.imago.org (European Federation of Cinematographers).
- Financial: is digital projection more cost-efficient or more expensive in the long run, for programming regular releases and programming alternative content?
- Environmental: what is the score of digital projection in the perspective of the environmental footprint (use of raw materials, need of transportation), compared to 35mm? How green is your valley of data?

- Archival perspective: is storage of digital files safe and sustainable?
- Legal: is digital projection offering a better protection against illegal trade and piracy than 35mm?
- Theatre Management: Manual controlling the projection and flexible scheduling the in-house screenings changed into automation, remote monitoring and security encryption. What is the balance between advantages and disadvantages? Copyright in cinema exhibition is protected by the encryption of movies, which results in communicating a Key Delivery Message (KDM). This proves to be still a bottleneck in the workflow of cinemas.

**1.2 The need to negotiate a new distribution deal, to explore alternative business models**
Ten years ago the business model for commercial film exhibition was clear: generally, theatrical release in combination with television sales and home cinema releases (video and DVD) resulted in nice profits. At the moment, the revenue of home cinema has declined (VoD has still a relatively small market share), television industry is changing, and cinemas have been digitized. The times of territorial exclusivity are over. We are moving towards a Digital Single Market (DSM) and multi-platform releasing. So, the market provides less profit, and generally national governments are providing very little financial support for independent cinemas and the option of crowdfunding is still to be developed in the area of cinema exhibition. How to survive?

In economical perspective, the most basic question is: Who pays which part of the costs of investments and maintenance? Who gets which part of the profit in the film value chain? Or more realistic: in which way all the various expenses and investments can be recouped? We need a new structure of financial deals and alliances between the whole market spectrum of exhibition firms, distribution companies, integrators, sales agents and film producers.

Digitization facilitates an increase of 'saturated releases'. In general, this enables the distributor to reach a quick turnover. This commercial practice could be considered as a positive change for small cinemas because formerly they had to wait until a 35mm-print was available for them. On the other hand, the result is that just a few releases are screened in every city, in many bigger cities even in several cinemas at the same time. The explanation is simple: distributors want to recoup their part of the Virtual Print Fee as soon as possible. Fair enough, but in my view this diminishes the possibilities for diversity of the cinema program. Recurring debate arises concerning the evaluation of the 'Virtual Print Fee' (VPF): is it a well-balanced solution of sharing costs? In my view, the VPF is most profitable and useful for mainstream releases. However, there are experiments with a reduced VPF and other tailor made VPF-agreements to accommodate small cinemas and restricted releases.

Cinemas do not offer an exclusive access to films anymore. Release windows are getting more narrow and I expect that they vanish soon. Commercial releases of the big box office hits are the last stand. It seems to me inevitable that the same content will be available everywhere, through various channels, in a variety of ways. Therefore, it gets even more important to present a divers and unique cinema program, in order to give added value for the customer. The ideal situation is to have options of flexible multi-programming in each cinema. This means not only offering a wide range of films, but also different versions of films and to create opportunities for Event Cinema.

Recent debate has risen about the question what are the positive and negative consequences of 'Day and Date Release'? This term indicates a wide, multi-platform release pattern where a film opens on the same day simultaneously at more than one territory, and more than one distribution channel (cinema theatres, DVD, Blu-ray, online streaming). The new distribution model of 'Day and Date Release' was successfully tried out in the United States with the release of *Margin Call* (J.C. Chandor, 2011) and *Melancholia* (Lars von Trier, 2011). The *BFI Distribution Fund* supported in 2013 the multiplatform releases of distributors Picture House/Film 4 (*A Field in England*), Curzon-Artificial Eye (*A Late Quartet*) and Lionsgate (*Bachelorette*), see Wiseman (2013). In the summer of 2013 the European pilot project 'TIDE Experiment' was tested, giving the documentary *Viramundo: A Journey with Gilberto Gil* (2013) a multiplatform release. A second test followed the same year, with the release of the feature film *Magnifica Presenza* ('A Magnificent Haunting', Ferzan Ospetek, 2012). In 2014 the experiment continued, with among others the Dutch release of *Those in Peril* (Daniel Borgman, 2013). Summer 2015 the documentary *Dior and I* (Frédéric Tcheng 2014) was released. The experiment was expanded to contain also a circuit of 'Festival-to-Date' (for updates see http://thetideexperiment.eu). Most people in the industry however are not convinced of the profitability of the Day and Date approach. In December 2013 the three European network organizations of film exhibitors (Europa Cinemas, CICAE, UNIC) for instance did send out a jointly statement arguing the need to protect the use of release windows. See also Candler (2014) and Keslassy (2015).

At the *Art House Convergence 2015*, discussions were held about new business models. Trade magazine *Variety* reported about this US exhibitors conference:
*"One of the most promising new ideas comes from Mark Fishkin, who runs the Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center theater and the Mill Valley Film Festival through his nonprofit California Film Institute. "What if there was a model where filmmakers work with a theater, market the film with in-person and online Q&As, go out on VOD at the same time and, with new technology, geographically limit the (number) of people they reach on VOD in a radius that's comfortable to them?" he says. "It allows the filmmaker to test it, and if it's successful, roll it out as a limited theatrical release in a similar way in more markets. And it would allow the theater to share in revenue they haven't shared before."* (Goldstein, 2015)

**1.3 The target to address and attract a sufficient audience for every screening**
It is an undeniable fact: cinema is not a mass medium anymore. There are alarming statistics about the average cinema attendance worldwide. The average Dutch person for example goes something like 1.8 times a year to the cinema (this key figure has been worse). The popularity of cinema is affected by the growing competition in the leisure market. The gross revenue in retail of computer games for instance became bigger than the revenue of cinema tickets, this happened already several years ago. In contrast, Video on Demand (VoD) is still a smaller market than cinema exhibition.

I would argue that digital projection influences the existing ways of addressing and attracting an audience in two ways. First, you get new faces in your cinema. Digital projection stimulates the cultural diversity of the audience, through the expanded choice of available films and also by providing the opportunity for multi-language subtitling. This option might attract new audience segments or target groups, such as the expat community (keywords: cosmopolitan curiosity, international circulation, tourist marketing, cultural diplomacy) or immigrants (keywords: nostalgia, second generation, ethno-programming, world cinema). Second, you get a new conversation about cinema. The development of digital projection has emerged alongside an increase in options for audience interaction. In a quantitative sense this can happen through crowd-sourced ratings at social media and IMDB, opinion aggregators (review portals such as *Rotten Tomatoes* for example), as well as all sorts of web-based recommendation engines. In a qualitative sense there are new possibilities for expressing opinions in blogs and also for creating dialogues, stimulating responses, sharing curating power and producing crowd sourced criticism. The ideal is to reach a status of tolerant pluralism: a wide variety of approaches are taken, a vast diversity of views and stands are expressed, different methods of interpretation and evaluation are accepted. However, user comments are still uneven in quality and depth. It proves to be difficult to create real conversations. Most of the time verbal response limits itself to the level of creating a superficial buzz of approval or rejection.

It is still a continuous struggle to seduce audiences to pay attention to your screenings, and it is even tougher to stimulate them to pay admission. Continuous fundraising and effective marketing are essential conditions for allowing filmprogrammers a basic freedom of choice. In addition, booking practices of distributors should be flexible enough, which is often a matter of fierce negotiation. Let's ignore further details of economical and technological aspects of the current situation in the film industry, and turn to the content of the cinema program in European venues.

**1.4 The urgency to curate an artistic diversity of cinema programs**
What would be a relevant definition of artistic diversity of the program in cinemas? The definition formulated by network organization Europa Cinemas is a quantitative regulation: "a certain minimum percentage of screenings of primarily non-national European films". See for details the Guidelines: http://www.europa-cinemas.org/en/Supports/MEDIA.

Academic studies performed by UNESCO and other parties distinguish three formal aspects of cultural diversity, the key words are: 1. richness of variety; 2. balance; 3. disparity. See also Barclay (2011). The first aspect could be specified as follows: an artistic diversity of the program in cinemas implies a variation of special event screenings and a broad range of film heritage, in addition to the presentation of the regular new releases of high graded international film productions. A more detailed specification of a wide choice of content of cinema programs could be formulated using some contrasting indicators. To start with, a diverse cinema program, local or national, would include a juxtaposition of all various approaches between fiction films and documentaries. Or in other words, the ideal would be to present a full range of fantasy and 'true stories' based upon reality. The safeguarding of a plurality of voices would also imply a diversity of business models. The result would be a mixture of commercial markets and non-profit niche markets, big and small releases, reruns, reprises, event cinema, film festivals, and audience driven programming. And naturally a wide range of all kinds of film heritage is requested: classics, minor classics, silent films, ephemeral films, cult films, experimental films, artists-films.

Let's be realistic: to create an exciting cinema program with a lot of variety of selected films remains a difficult task because between ambitions and realization stand several practical limitations, constraints and business laws.
- First, the side of supply: the possible amount of national releases per year is limited. Each territory has its point of saturation. What is the limit of the amount of films in distribution?
- Second, the side of presentation: Digitization of cinemas made a simultaneous release of a large amount of films in many copies possible, in many weeks a year. That is very finely fact, but each cinema has a rather limited amount of films that can be presented throughout the year. In theory you could program each day roughly four different films in each screening room, in practice this is unfeasible. The core question here is what do you consider the bottom line of doing sound business? A popular criterion used to answer this question is the determination of the minimum average number of visitors per show. Where do you draw the line of what is profitable and makes sense: at a minimum average of 50 visitors or 10 visitors or 5 visitors? At exhibition level, there is currently a noted tendency of 'congested screens'. This situation seems to be just a luxury problem, but in my view it is an alarming imbalance that is bad for business and it limits also the freedom of choice of the programmers. However, it is perfectly possible to reason differently: "On the other hand, it can mean that the wider range of movies available for programming enables more precise criteria to be used, in order to appeal to a better defined and perhaps even new target audience" (Dieter Krauss, 2014).

- Third, the side of customers: There is also a limit to what the audience can digest. The population can be segmented into a small group of heavy users (1 or 2 films per week) and a large quantity of incidental visitors (1 or 2 films a year), completed by a marginal amount of people who practice a total abstinence and never visit a cinema. Do you aim to stimulate the heavy users to see even more films, or do you try to seduce the incidental visitors to see one film more each year? In both cases it is not possible to stretch the demand infinitely.

As a programmer, it makes a difference if you are king of a single screen cinema or an emperor overviewing over 100 screens. You have different possibilities and constraints regarding doing business. However, on both sides of this scale you have to decide what your focus is: in which degree do you want to influence the supply side of your accommodation (actively searching for new films, or just passively react on offers from distribution companies) and in which degree do you want to influence the demand side (influence it actively, or just mirror public taste).

Seen from the perspective of the customer, a diversity of cinemas and cinema programs implies a sufficient variety of choice for you, matching your particular and individual expectations, desires and needs. In my view, to reach this kind of diversity it is necessary to satisfy two conditions. First, there should be a sufficient amount of 'little shops around the corner', in combination with a solid number of mainstream cinemas. Second, there should be a balanced mix of active and passive programming. In other words: it is necessary to customize the visit of the cinema and the screenings. This implies to respond more active to particular and individual wishes of both existing and potential customers. It means turning the supply chain into a demand chain. In my view, the average screening has become too much a standardized affair, an unimaginative routine that has inevitable only a limited appeal. To diversify your program means besides presenting a plurality of content, also to open up your screens to all possible audiences. Traditional distinctions of audience segments are age, gender, and life styles. The general challenge is to attract people with different preferences and expectations, people from different cultural backgrounds and belonging to different taste groups. It is necessary to develop a visionary strategy to widen the existing network of customers and to engage also audiences that are not yet currently attending screenings in a cinema. The implementation of the 'Lean Startup' strategy seems to me to be promising for cinemas too. I found the general arguments of Ries (2011) quite convincing. It would be interesting to apply his innovative approach of developing business to the domain of film exhibition.

**Summarized, the central question for me is: in which way could you aim for both a sustainable high quality artistic diversity, and at the same time create a network of loyal customers through an effective and efficient out-reach to all possible audiences?**

Here follows a list of six possible strategies, as a first attempt to answer this question. It is an overview of partly proven and partly still experimental practice.

## 2. Six Strategies of cinema programming

The six strategies of positioning of cinema offerings can be divided in three perspectives:
- location profile: 'Luxury Cinema', 'Movie Nostalgia',
- focus on audience participation: 'Cinema Club'
- program profile: 'Niche Festivals, and 'Film Heritage'
- 'Event Cinema' could be scheduled as part of all three perspectives.

### 2.1 Luxury Cinema: to indulge in creating comfort
In general, there are two options in this strategy. First, technological: be the Early Adaptor for new developments in offering pristine image & audio, and most optimal viewing conditions (premium large format screens, comfortable chairs). Second, gastronomical: provide a VIP treatment in a full-service comfort lounge, with excellent high-end food and beverages.

In business terms the idea of 'VIP Luxury Lounge cinemas' is a challenge, because many regular cinemas have upgraded the offerings in their concessions and also the quality of presentation of films in general has risen in many ways and good image and sound and comfortable seats became standard.

In artistic terms this strategy treat cinema as an 'one-stop entertainment center'. This approach is not my cup of tea, because in my view a film viewing should be separated from other sensations. In my view, serving food and beverages during a screening is an annoying distraction, it obstructs the immersive cinema experience. The visitors pay to experience a carefully selected film, presented in optimal conditions. They do not pay to spend time in a kind of theme park where film is just one of the attractions staged for the enjoyment of the guests. Film art is not to be considered as a side dish. The concept of the experience economy, as explained by Pine & Gilmore (1999/2011) can applied in other ways to film exhibition. The bottom line is: a cinema visit should be a memorable event and cinema visitors should be engaged in a personal way. This can be done with roughly five other strategies, detailed below.

### 2.2 Movie Nostalgia: to indulge in conserving old settings.

Some options are:

- **Keep old cinemas running.** Examples: 'De Uitkijk' (Amsterdam, in operation since 1912/1929 ), 'Tuschinski' (Amsterdam, since 1921), 'Kinodvor' (Ljubljana, since 1924), 'Gartenbaukino' (Vienna, since 1919/1960), 'Cinema Arlecchino' (Bologna, since the fifties), 'Kijow Cinema' (Krakau, since 1967), 'Kinoteka' (Warsaw, since 2001), 'Kino Svetozor' (Prague, since 1918) and 'Aero Cinema' (Prague, since 1933) and many more.
- **Mapping local film culture.** There are a lot of empty cinemas worldwide. But the decay of cinema buildings has many stories. In each territory there is a large amount of local film history and heritage projects consisting of mapping and sharing nostalgia about lost cinemas. Many blogs present collective memories of shared pleasures in the cinema. It is possible to pay homage to this past with a program of lectures, exhibitions and reenactment of legendary screenings.
- **Keep analogue projection alive.** It is an alluring option to present 35mm and 70mm screenings as special event, marked by an unique authenticity. Granted, just a few films were shot on 70mm, but they became legendary classics, such as *Lawrence of Arabia* (David Lean, 1962), or *Voyna i mir* (War and Peace, Sergey Bondarchuk, 1966), or *Playtime* (Jacque Tati, 1967). A rare exception to the rule that 70mm would belong firmly to the past is the existence of a 70mm print of *The Master* (Paul Thomas Anderson, 2012), which was shown among others at the International Film Festival Rotterdam 2013, in a few, totally sold-out screenings.
- **Celebrate jubilees.** Two examples of film productions: *Lumière et compagnie* (1995, produced to celebrate the Centennial of Cinema); *Chacun son cinéma* (2007, To Each His Own Cinema, produced to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Film Festival of Cannes).

### 2.3 Event Cinema: to indulge in organizing alternative settings or alternative content

- There is a variety of pop-up outdoor cinema events, such as rooftop cinema & pick-nick screenings, in gardens, on waterfronts, town squares, market places and industrial sites.
- The experience of open-air screenings is in many cases an established part of film festival programs. For example: International Film Festival of Locarno (new harvest of international art films), Festival 'Il Cinema Ritrovato', Bologna (new conservations of classics), International Animation Film Festival Stuttgart (new animation feature films).
- The other option is to organize indoor pop-up cinema screenings in a secret location, embedded in a specific thematic context. This option is gaining in popularity. Some examples of immersive cinema experiences through inspiring, purposefully staged coincidences are noted in the Appendix.
- 'Alternative Content' offers projection of a streaming connection to live events such as opera, concerts, or theatre performances. Also the registrations of visits to museums are popular. My inventory of existing options of 'Alternative Content' and suggestions for 'broadcast cinema' and 'media art in cinemas' is available at my website: http://www.peterbosma.info/?p=english&english=26

### 2.4 Cinema Club: to indulge in 'social network cinema'

One of the consequences of digitization is that a new borderline between 'informal film distribution' and established exhibition is created. Formally, there was a distinction between the 16mm-circuit and the 35mm professional projections. Nowadays, the demarcation is between a beamer-projection using BluRay or DVD, and a digital cinema projector which is uploaded with a Digital Cinema Package (DCP). For a professional cinema it could be profitable, or otherwise interesting, to reach out to the ranks of film clubs, because they offer a devoted audience who is passionate about cinema. They are potentially eager to like and share your announcements, to interact with you, and even to participate in realizing your program.

Some options are:

- 'Cinema Extravaganza': for example 'Sing-a-Long Cinema', combined with a masquerade of aptly dressed up audience. Dutch example: *Meezing Bioscoop* is organizing since 2001 incidental screenings of *Sound of Music* (1965) and *Ja Zuster, Nee Zuster* (2002) among others. There are also several 'DVD Special Editions' with optional Sing-a-Long subtitles available, featuring evergreens such as *Mamma Mia* (2008) or *Mary Poppins* (1964), so the audience could rehearse at home.
- Another Dutch example: *Upload Cinema*, using the tagline 'Taking web films to the big screen'. This initiative started in 2008 and was especially successful at festivals. Recently they expanded to broadcast ('Upload TV') and they operate also internationally (Belgium, Spain).
- To organize live participative premières and to distribute this event by streaming the introductions and Q&A's simultaneously to a connected network of several cinemas.
- Offering 'cinema on demand', or 'user driven cinema exhibition'. This option is based on critical mass ticketing which is channeled through independent online time sharing user-groups and facilitated by online databases. In essence, it is a timesharing concept combined with online crowd ticketing. This format of on demand screenings is promising: firstly, you get a happy audience, because they organized it all themselves, and secondly, the cinema owner get a low cost, low risk screening, because a sufficient large audience turnout is guaranteed. The worst-case scenario is a cost free annulation. The traditional perspective of aiming for as much 'bums on seats' as possible for your program, now changes in offering the option for bookings of a time slot in your screening rooms, conditioned by a critical amount of sold tickets and a choice based on a large, pre-selected assortment of available titles. In this way, the conventional top-down programming of entertainment (or art films) is changed into bottom-up bookings with a personal purpose,

or even community based cinema programming. The industry is sharing the power of the gatekeeper position with their customers. 'Push' changes into 'Pull'. The public becomes the programmer, using social media as communication tool. Also for film festivals it could be an interesting and promising option to cooperate with a portal of cinema on demand: they could upload their festival screenings as an additional way of attracting an audience.

- The most participative audience is a crowd that produces films themselves. This group can be reached by talent contests, animation film workshops, 48-hours film projects, 1-minute films, or home cinema heritage screenings.

### 2.5 Niche Film Festivals: to indulge in catering to target taste groups
For this strategy, you need to invent a new audience-segmentation. You could start to assess critically the traditional practices, such as:

- Segmentation in age groups: Toddler's Films (3+ or 4+); Children's Films (8+); Teen Screen (12+); 'Silver Screen' (Senior Matinees).
- Segmentation in content classifications: 'camp cinema', 'cult movies', 'genre films'.
- Other forms of traditional labeling, for example various national cinemas. This seems an obvious choice but it is still very rewarding, because screenings of a national cinema are a social event for immigrants, expats, travellers, tourists, and audiences with multicultural background.
- New target taste groups could be reached by a choice of thematic approaches, such as film festivals focused on jazz, architecture, literature, art history or food.
- Offering more variation in the supporting program items could attract a new audience too. For example: to add a custom-made package of short films before features. Inspiration can be found at www.goshort.nl (Dutch festival) or www.shortfilm.de (Germany).

### 2.6 Film Heritage: to indulge in a personal view on film history
There are many international offerings of re-issued classics in the catalogues of distribution firms as Park Circus, Europe's Finest, Carlotta Films and other commercially released 'back catalogues'. Granted: producing a DCP is still expensive, and providing live music accompaniment for silent films is a challenge. Access and use of the collection of film archives has still a lot of constraints. At the moment, restorations of the film archives are presented in a limited way, at selected film festivals and a few screenings, and sometimes aired through TV-channels as Arte. It would be interesting to organize a selection of restored films in a European tour along art house cinemas. In addition, there are also a growing number of Blu-ray versions of classic films (released by labels such as Eureka, Master of Cinema series; Criterion, and many more), with a wide choice of relevant bonus material. And there is also a growing availability of academic audiovisual lectures about film art. In my opinion, the documentary series *Story of Film: An Odyssey* (2011) by Mark Cousins offers an inspirational source for every programmer.

## 3. Discussion

### 3.1 The Never-ending Development of Strategies
Please feel free to invent a seventh innovative and surprising strategy of cinema programming, practicing both high quality content diversity, and an effective out-reach to the audience. The balance between supply and demand is shifting. How do we relate to the audience, get them involved in our concept of watching and appreciating films? Whatever strategy you choose, the main essential curatorial question remains: Who is programming which films for whom? To answer this timeless question we have to define our response to a new assortment of cinema content, and also to a totally new dimension of audience participation.

I observe two dilemmas in our field:
- Where is the balance in quantity, between the two extremes of too little variation and too much choice in a cinema program?
- Where is the balance in quality, between the opposing values of idiosyncratic personal artistic choice (possibly rewarded with critical acclaim), versus adapting oneself totally to the taste of the general audience (focused on an optimal customer satisfaction)?

These questions and dilemmas confront us with fundamental issues of curating. Dealing with it requires a thorough knowledge of both your audience and your organization. Which amount, and what kind of program offerings can they handle?

### 3.2 Some Critical Thoughts about 'Home Cinema'
In this presentation I focused on film exhibition on the big screen and therefore ignored the technological and economical developments in the market of Home Cinema. Many in the film industry consider Home Cinema as a threat, but maybe it is also an opportunity? To answer this question, first we have to acknowledge the big difference between the two modes of film presentation. Film exhibition in a cinema theatre is a service industry, operating by scheduled appointments. The core activity is providing a collective viewing experience. Home Cinema on the other

hand is a fundamental different mode of distribution and watching films. It is to be considered as a consumer-goods business, offering ideally an individualized film experience, through personalized media with a high degree of platform mobility for the users. In theory, the Home Cinema audience can watch films anywhere any time. This ideal is not yet fully realized, because in practice the accessibility and mobility of data is still often problematic, due to a lack of universal technological specifications, legal differences between territories, and different business approaches by providers and aggregators. In the meanwhile, the Home Cinema market has two subfields: on the one side the market of tangible audiovisual products such as the video, DVD, and Blu Ray, on the other side the market of online cinema, taking shape as intangible audiovisual files distributed through Pay TV, or Video on Demand (VoD), or streaming video websites. The broadcast market is influenced by dynamic patterns of shifting viewing habits and preferences. The mode of television consumption changed into a fragmented and eclectic way of watching programs, increasingly demand driven through availability of streaming video in data clouds, accessible with or without subscription. Pay TV and Cable TV seems to become outdated, statistics show a significant increase of 'cord cutters'. Therefore, we need another label for this market, because 'Home Cinema' is not appropriate anymore: many people watch their choice of films on mobile devices while they travel in trains, planes and automobiles. This large dislocated audience, which watches films individually or in small groups of family members or friends, is an important part of film culture. Maybe not yet in an economical sense, due to both the wide spread 'unauthorized viewing' and a slow start of VoD revenues, but certainly in terms of attention. New techniques are making online access to film heritage and new film releases increasingly easier, through a spectrum of satellite channels and websites. We witness the convergence of television and the Internet ('*smart television')* and an increase of the 'second screen' experience. In addition there is a growing number of possibilities of storage of film files in digital clouds and digital lockers. As a consequence, the availability of home cinema is determined by a fundamental different set of gatekeepers. The composition of one's personal menu of Home Cinema becomes more and more a question of filtering the supply automatically by means of computer algorithms. In a pessimistic view, this means that the attention of the film consumer is determined by a self-affirming taste schedule. The question rises if it is conceivable to be locked up in your own preferences? The answer is a matter for discussion. See for instance the arguments of Pariser (2011) and Tryon (2013,14), who identify the dangers of an algorithmic world.

### 3.3 To Conclude

"A film curator needs to do a lot of research, watching films and reading about them. Cousins (2004) offers an inspirational starting point for looking around with an open mind, searching with curiosity and enthusiasm for outstanding film productions, past and present. As a curator you create valuable memories by searching the supply of new films and digging in the available film heritage. A film curator has to check the international film festival circuit and discern the new harvest of notable films. The next step is to check your territory and see if these films get a release. If not, it gives you a motivation to program this as-yet-unknown film and attract an audience for these screenings. A film curator has also to check the content of the vaults of film archives – to circulate old films is to rescue them from oblivion. In both cases you are defying the barriers of high costs and in both cases you need a lot of co-operative professional friends." (Bosma 2015, 120-121)

One final question: in which way could we share good practice of cinema programming, and our other relevant experiences of presenting quality cinema? I hope to have given in this paper a first tentative start to answer to this question.

### Appendix

### References

*\* This text is an updated and enlarged rendition of my presentation at the Media Salles Conference 'DigiTraining Plus 2013: New Technologies for the European Cinema of the Future', held in Poland, 28 August – 1 September 2013. I would like to thank Elisabetta Brunella and her team for inviting me, and compliment them for the inspiring way they curate this series of excellent expert meetings.*

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- Ries, Eric (2011) *The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses.* New York: Crown Business.
- Tryon, Chuck (2013) *On Demand Culture: Digital Delivery and the Future of Movies.* New Brunswick: Rutgers UP.
- Wiseman, Andreas (2013) 'UK Distribution: A date with VoD', in: *Screen Daily*, 7 October 2013, URL: http://www.screendaily.com/features/uk-distribution-a-date-with-vod/5062241.article

The Scandinavian network organization 'Film Think Tank' has developed a project in progress, called 'The Big Film Think: Demand, Diversity and the Audience-Driven Future'. An overview is given at their website: http://filmthinktank.org/fileadmin/thinktank_downloads/TT_-_16_HC_THINKTANK_clean_17.03.15.pdf

**For more additional recommended resources, see my chronological *Bibliography of Digitization of Cinemas*, available at my website:** http://www.peterbosma.info/?p=english&english=18

### Examples

**1. Luxury cinema**
There are many established examples of cinemas following this strategy, and they are economical successful.
- UK: http://www.electriccinema.co.uk (-) http://www.everymancinema.com (-) http://www.odeon.co.uk/thelounge/ (-) http://www.curzoncinemas.com/cinemas/mayfair/ (-) http://www.roxybarandscreen.com (-) http://www.dominioncinemas.net (-) http://www.aubincinema.com/home/ (-).
- USA: http://www.cinepolisusa.com (-) http://www.loganmovie.com (-) http://www.carouselcinemas.com.
- Australia: http://www.hoyts.com.au/cinemas/luxury_cinemas.aspx.

**2. Movie Nostalgia**
Recommended websites:
- http://www.in70mm.com.
- http://homerproject.blogs.wm.edu (History of Movie-going, Exhibition and Reception (HOMER), since 2004)
- www.IslingtonLostCinemas.com (London) and http://cinemapping.co.uk/page-lost-cinemas.php (Bristol)
- http://www.cinemaheritagegroup.org
- http://cinematreasures.org (USA)
- http://twentyfourframes.wordpress.com ('Notes on Film', by John Greco)
- http://afterthefinalcurtain.net

Recommended reading: Pece, Masa & Koen Van Daele (eds. 2014) *Films You wouldn't Want to See Anywhere Else Than in a Movie Theatre*, Ljubljana: Kinodvor/Slovenian Cinematheque.

Recommended photo series: 'Theatres', documenting abandoned cinemas in ruins (USA), impressively photographed by Yves Merchand & Romain Meffre. See: http://www.marchandmeffre.com/theaters/ or http://www.polkagalerie.com/data/MarchandMeffre_Theaters_PolkaGalerie_e-catalogue_pl.pdf

Recommended exhibition: 'Booth: The Last Day of Film Projection', photo project of Joseph O. Holmes, exhibited in Museum of the Moving Image, New York, October 2013 – February 2014. See also: http://www.slate.com/blogs/behold/2013/10/16/joseph_o_holmes_photographs_projection_booths_in_his_exhibition_the_booth.html

**3. Event Cinema**
3.1 Pop-up cinema & open-air screenings
- http://www.timeout.com/london/film/outdoor-cinema-in-london
- http://www.secretcinema.org. Secret Cinema (UK). Tagline: "creating memorable, pulsating night of immersive cinema". For example: presenting in June 2013 the modern classic *Brazil* (Terry Gilliam, 1985), in an abandoned office block in West Croydon. Presenting in August 2013 *Dirty Dancing* (1987) on a secret out-door location in East London, aptly named 'Kellerman's Holiday Camp'.
- http://www.futurecinema.co.uk
- http://www.whereisthenomad.com
- www.EventCinemaAssociation.org (ECA, London)
- www.livecinemaevents.com
- http://www.lostpictureshow.org
- http://freereel.org/ (Free Reel, International Mobile Cinema)

- http://cinemobile.ie
- Some Dutch examples of open-air cinemas: 'Pleinbioscoop' (Rotterdam) is the oldest (since 1987); 'Roffa Mon Amour' (Rotterdam) is the most recent; 'Pluk de Nacht' (Amsterdam) is the boldest; 'Solar Cinema' is the most sustainable.

3.2 Alternative Content - an inventory of distribution companies:
- http://www.more2screen.com (UK)
- www.ArtsAllianceMedia.com/events (UK)
- http://www.nexodigital.it (Italy)
- www.aerofilms.cz/en/ (Prague)
- http://www.risingalternative.com (Europe/ USA)
- http://www.openskycinema.eu (Italy)
- http://pannonia-entertainment.com (Hungary)
- http://www.byexperience.net (New York)
- http://www.fathomevents.com (Thom Events is a division of National CineMedia, NCM)

## 4. Cinema Club
- Portal: *Support your Local Cinema*: an European web-platform, coordinated by Moviepilot (Berlin), funded by MEDIA. Tagline: "Bringing audiences to independent cinema in Europe via digital & social media". URL: http://supportyourlocalcinema.com
- UK: https://www.ourscreen.com
- France: *I Like Cinema* (www.ilikecinema.com) & *La Septième Salle* (www.laseptiemesalle.com)
- Spain: http://screen.ly
- USA - 'Theatrical on Demand' (TOD): www.tugg.com; www.gathr.com.
- Brazilian example: *Moviemobz*.
- The Netherlands: *We Want Cinema* (http://wewantcinema.com/en, bilingual website). *We Want cinema* (NL) started in 2012 and was awarded many prestigious prices for innovation. The catalogue contained more than 1,000 films, circa 19 Dutch independent cinemas were participating. However, to be sustainable, this visionary initiative needed more film theatres that would be willing to invest and would be patient enough about the return on investment. And most importantly, it needed to have more awareness in the minds of the public. In three years time, some 217 screenings were held. Expansion to Germany (Berlin) took place December 2013, but the funding dried up in 2015.

Call for action: Please start your own investigation of the history and diversity of cinemas in your neighborhood. Organize your own guided tour, or design your own website. Bloggers and journalists in London gave already several examples.
- http://www.timeout.com/london/film/the-essential-guide-to-filmgoing-in-london
- http://flamin.filmlondon.org.uk/resources/exhibition/independent_cinema/assets/features/independent_cinemas_in_london
- http://multiglom.wordpress.com/2011/08/05/rep-tales-and-other-cinema-memories/
- http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/cinemas/sect5.html
- *Shelf Heroes* is a film review blog, started in 2013 by designer Ben Smith. URL: http://shelfheroes.blogspot.nl/p/cinemas.html?fb_action_ids=523421147722140&fb_action_types=og.likes&fb_source=aggregation&fb_aggregation_id=288381481237582

## 5. Niche festivals and target taste groups
- Outreach: young talent nights, presentation of graduation films.
- Cooperation: join forces with independent film production, cooperation with visionary, emerging filmmakers. Network Organization: *Power to the Pixel*.
- Film Festivals: financing forums, film markets and co-productions funds (*Berlinale Talent Campus*; *Cinemart Rotterdam* and *Hubert Bals Fund*, tagline; "IFFR the supportive festival"; *Jan Vrijman Fund*, at IDFA; *Open Doors*, at Film Festival of Locarno; and many more).
- YouTube-films in Cinemas: *Upload Cinema* (http://uploadcinema.net)
- Streaming feature films in cinemas is an alluring option. In 2015 the International Film Festival Rotterdam organized a sidebar program called 'IFFR Live'. Five festival premieres were simultaneously streamed to cinemas across Europe. Audiences in more than 30 cinemas in 7 European countries could take part in the Q&A with the makers via social media.
- Cult and Camp Events: http://www.singalonga.net; http://www.meezingbioscoop.nl;
- Live Music and Movies: http://www.cinesonic.nl/about; http://www.b-movie-orchestra.nl;
- Popular theme: Food Film Festival, Amsterdam (http://www.foodfilmfestival.nl/en/, bilingual website)

## 6. Film Heritage

- A growing number of 'back catalogues' are available, for theatrical release and video on demand (VoD): http://www.finest-film.com (Germany), http://www.parkcircus.com (UK), http://hollywoodclassics.com (UK), http://www.carlottavod.com/cinema.html (France).
- A growing number of academic audiovisual lectures. See among others http://filmanalytical.blogspot.com and http://filmstudiesforfree.blogspot.nl (Catherine Grant), http://www.audiovisualthinking.org/ and *Frames Cinema Journal* no 1 (July 2012), URL: http://framescinemajournal.com/?issue=issue1

- Mark Cousins, Story of Film, London: Pavillion Books/Anova, 2004 & Film series of 15 parts, 2011.
- British film historian Kevin Brownlow and Thames Television producer David Gill made several outstanding television series: Cinema Europa: The Other Hollywood (1995, six parts). See also The Unknown Chaplin (1985); Keaton, A Hard Act to Follow (1987); D.W. Griffith, Father of Film (1996).
- Noel Burch: Correction Please, or How we Got into Pictures (1979) & La Lucarne du Siècle / What Do These Old Films Mean? (1985).
- Ian Christie & Terry Gilliam: The Last Machine (1995), book publication and television series.
- DVD Exotic Europe, Journeys into Early Cinema (Mark-Paul Meyer/ Connie Betz, 2000).
- Found footage films of Peter Delpeut: Lyrical Nitrate (1991) & Diva Dolorosa (1999).
- Books by Paul Verhoeven & Rob van Scheers (in Dutch: Volgens Verhoeven, 2012 + Meer Verhoeven, 2014).
- Filmed interviews with film directors: Room 666 (Wenders 1982), Great Directors (Angela Ismailos, 2009)

Some inspiring collections of essays about film history:
- Sato, Tadao (1982) Currents in Japanese Cinema. New York: Kodansha International.
- Scorsese, M. & M.H. Wilson (1997) A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese Through American Movies, London: Faber.
- Truffaut, François (1978) The Films in My Life, New York: Simon & Schuster. Transl. of Les Films de ma Vie, Paris: Flammarion, 1975.
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### Core issues of film programming

In 2015 my book *Film Programming: Curating for Cinemas, Festivals, Archives* was published by Wallflower Press (London), an imprint of Columbia University Press (New York). My intention writing this book is to analysis the act of film programming. It is a slippery subject because it still lacks rigid or institutionalized standards. I try to chart the core issues and give it some theoretical footing. My approach is to observe this activity as...
1. a creative act, expressing an artistic identity.
2. a management challenge, mapping costs and expenses, return on investment, opportunities to realize growth of the company, the focus is on entrepreneurship in the film trade.
3. a social phenomenon of offering and appreciating artistic value.
4. a craft or skill that can be learned by professional trainings. The focus is on smooth logistics, to optimize practical processes and schedules.

These four strands are connected and all of them are equally important. They can be placed in a quadrant, using the dichotomy of practice versus theory, and artistic focus versus business perspective. To complicate things there is also the dichotomy of the internal perspective of the organization and the external perspective of the context, the society at large. The result is a quadrant like this:

|  | practice | theory |
|---|---|---|
| artistic focus | 1. creative act (internal) | 3. social phenomenon (external) |
| business perspective | 2. management challenge (internal) | 4. craft (external) |

### Author Bio

Peter Bosma (1960) studied Dutch Literature and Film Studies at the University of Utrecht. After his graduation in 1986 he initiated and coordinated the Open University Introduction Course to Film Studies. His fascination with film art led him to joining the rows of professionals of cinema exhibition as a co-filmprogrammer of art house cinema LantarenVenster (Rotterdam), a position he held for twenty years. He focused on presenting film heritage, especially silent films. Eventually he returned to teaching film history and film analysis at art academies and cultural management at the University of Utrecht. At the moment he is freelance researcher and programmer, eager to explore the new possibilities and battle the constraints of digital projection. His professional experience covers three different domains: Film Exhibition (to organize special programs in a cinema); Higher Education (to lecture on film history and its institutional context; reflection on arts management and marketing); Research on subjects as the practice of cinema exhibition and the presentation of film heritage, exploration of the range of cinema art and its critical discourse (especially making meaning of the high lights of silent cinema). Website: www.peterbosma.info. Most recent publication: *Film Programming: Curating for Cinemas, Festivals, Archives* (Wallflower Press, 2015).

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