

Inequalities within the international film arena. A framework for studying Latin American film festivals

Tensiones en el circuito cinematográfico internacional: modelo para el estudio de los festivales latinoamericanos

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Abstract

The unequal dialogues and tensions between centres and peripheries that rule the international film context referred to by Film Festival studies. The idea is directly related with the differences in importance that experts note among each one of the festivals that constitute the international circuit. The main purpose of this article is to set a model for the analysis of these unequal relationships among events. It will consider the Latin American film festival circuit and key concepts provided by the Film Festival Studies and the World-System Theories developed during the 1970s.

Keywords: film festivals, Latin American cinema, peripheral cinema, core-periphery, centre-periphery, methodological proposal.

Resumen

Las tensiones y diálogos asimétricos entre centros y periferias que se evidencian en los estudios dedicados a festivales de cine y a fenómenos que tienen lugar en dicho contexto, están estrechamente relacionados con la importancia de los eventos que conforman el circuito internacional. Este artículo desarrolla un modelo para el análisis de dichas relaciones a partir del circuito latinoamericano y de un marco teórico que toma elementos del propio campo de los *Film Festival Studies* y de las Teorías del Sistema Mundo desarrolladas en los años setenta.

Palabras clave: festivales de cine, cine latinoamericano, cine periférico, centro-periferia, propuesta metodológica.

1. Introduction

In three decades of research on Film Festival Studies, attention to new phenomena, events, dynamics, agents and professionals, creators, aesthetics, sections, geographies and sub-circuits have revealed this field's complexity and diversity. However, and despite the vast specialized bibliography, the development of theoretical frameworks and methodologies for the study of these issues has been more limited. Among the more noteworthy contributions made is that of Marijke de Valck in *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (2007), whose proposal is based on the theory of Actor-Red de Bruno Latour (2008). Following Latour's framework, de Valck establishes a model for the integral study of festivals that considers all the elements present in said events (from films, to the attendees and professional critics). Both the work of de Valck and the theoretical frameworks which support it are important references in this field. Also fundamental are the proposals developed from anthropology and the study of arts and culture. Along this line, the international congress held in Paris in 2011 and the publication deriving from it, *Une histoire des festivals* (2013), constitute another one of the milestones in the field, given that they decisively situate film festivals in the category of cultural festivals, and therefore placing them in a broader disciplinary context (Fléchet *et al.*, 2013)¹. Given its anthropological perspective, there is also *Film Festivals and Anthropology* (Vallejo & Peirano, 2017), a collective publication that addresses the complex dynamics that are deployed in these events, proposing, at the same time, specific methodologies to study the circuit and the phenomenon specific to them.

With the objective of contributing to the study of synergies and tensions that take place in this context, this article develops a theoretical-methodological proposal that allows us to analyze the importance, influence, and power that each particular event has within the international circuit and in the different sub-circuits outlined for study. Although festivals act as mediators between theaters around the world (in terms of gathering places, dialogue and configuration of categories), we believe that they neither eliminate nor reduce the asymmetries verified in the international film context and that here we will analyze in terms of

centers and peripheries. We understand that they maintain and feed said tensions because the festivals themselves relate to one another based on a hierarchical scheme that we also analyze using the centers/peripheries perspective. It is precisely this hypothesis that guides our work.

To analyze the importance and the role of festivals held in Latin America in the international circuit and in more specific sub-circuits, we will first discuss the inequalities that emerge upon addressing this cinematographic region considered peripheral to another, due to which, precisely, this statute and that, by opposition, would prove to be key in the contemporary film context. The analysis is, initially, focused on the tensions that emerge in the international circuit, and later turns its attention to the power, influence, and importance film festivals held in Latin America would have in this and other contexts.

2. Theoretical Framework

If we look at film from a global perspective, the USA and Europe emerge as two central axes on which cinema defines itself worldwide. In the first case, the importance of the United States would be a direct consequence of its predominant film industry. In the second case, the importance of Europe is related to, rather, the power of legitimization of its film institutions (Crofts, 1993; Elena, 1999; Czach, 2004). The configuration of these tensions in a centers-and-peripheries scheme, in some terms we will discuss further ahead in this article, is based on film being organized around the Euro-North American axis and "the rest of the world". It is a polarization also present in other categories like those of *Tercer Cine*, Third-World Cinema, World Cinema and *Cine del Sur*, at times used as equivalents among them and as synonyms of periphery film (Campos, 2016b).

In any case, these concepts refer to (trans)national films that are less commercial, less industrialized, and less influential that, in addition, receive less international attention (and, broadly speaking, are produced in Africa, Asia, and Latin America). Although, from a theoretical perspective the national issue on which these categories are based

seems to be obsolete, in the film environment, it continues to be an operative criterium for festivals spoken about here, as well as for the academia, and the industry. In the case of the previous, it serves as one of the traditional criteria for the selection, organization, and description of films that comprise each one of the sections, although the procedures have varied over time and in each festival (Campos, 2018). Also, in the film production and distribution environment, the domestic category continues regulating the participation and the business agreements in different territories, which, at the same time, affects the politics of promotion at varying levels (state, regional, international) and the international distribution strategies.

As in the domestic case, the center-periphery equation is the object of an intense debate over its obsolescence (Appadurai, 1996, p.46) while it still continues to be operative in the film industry. It consists of two opposite concepts that are often cited (in the professional and academic context) and that seem to have consolidated as non-problematic categories, ignoring the dynamics and mechanisms that have created them and that, over time, have reproduced and consolidated unequal relations among the film industries of the world (its institutions, agents, creations, and politics). The objective of this article is therefore to shed light on the dynamics and implicit tensions each time we refer to the film industries and festivals in these terms.

We will review some concepts of the studies on film festivals that are key to understanding a film context divided into two large areas tensely connected by unequal power relations. In order to identify the main characteristics of the regions considered central and peripheral, we will address the theoretical conceptualizations proposed by Johan Galtung (1971) and Immanuel Wallerstein (1974, 1976) in the fields of economics and politics. We will also analyze the way in which each festival operates according to this centers and peripheries model and how the tension among them takes shape in the international film festival circuit and in most enclosed sub-circuits. Finally, we will also review the hypothesis of the programming ghettos and we will explore the importance of the hierarchies described when creating and legitimizing film categories, once again, using the Latin American film festivals as basis.

3. Key Concepts of *Film Festival Studies*: Festivals, Hierarchies and (Sub)Circuits

This section discusses the concepts of Film Festival Studies that refer to the "film festival" object and to the way in which these events relate among them. Each approximation to the film festival resulted in a different definition. Janet Harbord (2002), for example, considers film festivals as an integral part of an initial distribution circuit² and describes them as a space situated among the economic interests, specialized knowledge and tourism (pp. 2-67).

In our proposal we highlight aspects pertaining to the film festival that allow, based on its independent study, multiple approximations to the field and that, on the other hand, also prove useful when organizing and defining specific sub-circuits based on the characteristics they share. The film festivals consist of making available a reduced series of audiovisual content during a certain period of time in a defined space (although not one sole place). This dynamic generates a context for the gathering of different audiences (general public and/or professionals) interested in the films included in the program (films that could present different genres, lengths and formats). Just what is made available has to do with the films proposed by a festival in each one of its editions and do not only correspond to showings, but rather, often times, the events transfer part of its programming to the internet or are, in other cases, festivals intended to be held online. For this reason, we leave behind the idea of a physical place and a sole space, considering both the multiplicity of screens and the cases of itinerant festivals (like *Ambulante. Documentary Itinerant Cinema in Mexico*) or those that are simultaneously held in different parts of the world (like *Márgenes*, which in 2017 held showings in Madrid, Cordoba, Barcelona, Mexico City, Santiago (Chile) and Montevideo, in addition to having programmed films available online).

Another aspect that characterizes the festival is that at least some of the films chosen form part of a competitive section and are, therefore, nominated for one of the prizes awarded in each edition. There is a lively discussion as to whether the

competitive sections are one of the criteria that can be used to differentiate a film festival from a showing or other kind of event. In 2020, the Cartagena de Indias International Film Festival, for example, was designed for the first time as a festival without prizes, which led to a large debate in terms of the programming, among critics and academics as to the appropriateness of this decision, as well as reformulating the very idea of festival to include events that dispose of all their competitive sections. At first, and taking into account both the economic dimension of the prizes (that usually imply a sum of money) as well as the amount of press films receive (during the time in which they are exhibited for competition, at the moment the award is given, and in the festival summary report), this article considers the competitive sections one of the defining aspects of film festivals. Although, there may be exceptions that redefine this and other parameters of analysis based on the proposed study and the adopted perspective.

Another key idea is that of the circuit. The international festival circuit emerged at the same moment in which the references to the new competitions were, precisely, the already existing festivals and featured mutual synergies and competitions, as occurs today. We propose a loose definition of festival circuit susceptible of being applied to other cinematographic spaces. A circuit consists of a group of events (or screens) that share all or some of the characteristics previously mentioned and that constitute a possible itinerary for films. In addition, all the festivals belonging to the international circuit would be connected to the extent they are announced and acknowledge the operations, selections, and prizes that take place in the rest of the events that comprise the group or circuit. It is also possible to determine smaller sub-circuits depending on the characteristics shared by the individual festivals included in each one. The sub-circuits are more restricted and well-defined in regards to diverse criteria and their programming line-up (a sub-circuit dedicated to Latin American cinema), the specific place where they are held (festivals in Latin America), on certain types of screens (projection in theaters or exhibition via streaming), based on their format (sub-circuits of super-8 or digital cinema), their length (short, full-length or medium-length) or their genre (of trash or political cinema). There are different cri-

teria to define independent sub-circuits with their own calendars that, dedicated to different films, exist simultaneously and parallel to the international circuit (Iordanova, 2009, pp.31-32).

The third key idea is that of the hierarchy. Various authors have discussed the hierarchies that organize the international circuit and the way in which each festival holds a certain position and role in it (De Valck, 2007; Iordanova, 2009). In the case of the international circuit, Julian Stringer (2001) highlights the inequality that reigns among the festivals included and mentions the center-periphery binomial that defines its relations: "the events are measured and compared, they are given high or low profiles, glamorous and sexy places separated from the not so glamorous or sexy places. The inequality is built then within the structure of the international film festival circuit", this circuit being part of the new "center-periphery" relations that take place among the different countries and regions (p.138).

De Valck (2014) addresses the festival hierarchies establishing three different categories that we can define as business-related and specifies three levels on the basis of the importance of the markets and the prestige of the competitions of the cases analyzed (p.47). Although in this article the author leaves out the geopolitical dynamics that affect this classification, other specialists have emphasized the unequal power relations that operate among festivals situated in different regions (Stringer, 2016, p.38). Upon analyzing the collaborations that occur among festivals of larger or smaller size, relationships of hierarchic nature are identified (Falicov, 2017).

Following the proposals of Stringer and de Valck, there are first and second-class events. However, we must put the focus beyond this point: on the relative and different importance each festival has if we consider its role in the international circuit and in some of the sub-circuits that comprise it. These dynamics of geopolitical nature also operate in the themed and specialized sub-circuits.

4. The Concepts of Center and Peripheral

The center-periphery scheme (in the sense of its reference to geopolitical territories) relates to concepts like that of the domestic and the regional. Although the center-periphery binomial and the categories of the domestic and the regional seem obsolete in a contemporary world ruled by transnational agreements and world or globalized markets, they are highly operative terms because they consider the co-existence of two simultaneous phenomena that affect cinema worldwide. On one hand, there is a growing complexity in the hybrid transnational narratives, in the global markets, and the transnational production and distribution agreements. On the other hand, there is a "nationalization" of films in the sense that they are often associated to one or several countries and to specific regions of all those that appear in their production credits, a phenomenon that has a special impact in the case of territories pertaining to peripheral regions. Some authors have mentioned the association between films and countries or regions in commercial and promotional terms (Ross, 2011, p.266; Crofts, 1999, p.52). These phenomena globalize markets while at the same time eliminating borders, meanwhile the other establishes categories and labels based on territorial boundaries (national or regional). In regards to this study, both operations uphold film festivals as a privileged space and are a constant throughout their history (Campos, 2018).

Johan Galtung (1971) and Immanuel Wallerstein (1974, 1976) propose this dual categorization of the world in centers and peripheries. The unequal relationships among territories have been previously explored by colonial, postcolonial studies, and theories of dependence. Considering this background, we highlight the idea of development and underdevelopment as two sides of the same coin and from behavior deriving from colonial relations in which the center exercises influence on the periphery³; we refer to the power that the festivals of the center exercise on the rest of the events that comprise the international circuit.

Galtung (1971) describes the world as a polarized system ruled by inequality and organized into central and peripheral areas as a result of these rela-

tions (Galtung, p.81). In accordance with this, the world is divided into centers and peripheries and each one of these two divisions has its own centers and peripheries⁴. In his analysis, Galtung identifies different relational models among the four areas described. One of them is a positive and collaborative model that offers a scheme of transactions and influences that can be summarized as from the centers to the peripheries (C-P; C-p; c-p), among peripheries (P-p) and among centers (C-c) (p.106). This model is especially appropriate for studying film festivals because we consider that the events relate with each other in this circuit in a collaborative manner (regardless of the competition that takes place among festivals to obtain films, sponsors, business opportunities and even for calendar dates). In addition, the Galtung model indicates that some areas are relatively stable in the center and in the periphery, partly as a result of the processes that take place in both areas and that consolidate and reinforce the circumstances of each one. The author states that, "upon accepting cultural transmission, the Periphery also, implicitly, validates for the center, the culture developed in the center, whether that center is intra- or international. This reinforces the Center as center [...]" (p. 93). In other words, the festivals located in the periphery of the circuit contribute to the central events maintaining their privileged position.

In his research, Galtung also indicates the importance of studying these phenomena in specific geopolitical contexts, analyzing the "interaction between countries or groups of countries" (p.85). It is possible to analyze how peripheral festivals follow and imitate the models and mechanisms (sections, activities, formulas, business and training spaces) put into practice initially by central festivals. In addition, the peripheral festivals are interested in the film tendencies made visible largely (not necessarily "discovered" or previously exhibited) by events situated in the center of the international circuit and of sub-circuits of those that comprise it, repeating certain tendencies and thus consolidating the influence that central events exercise on the rest of the (sub)circuit.

Given the large number of festivals held worldwide, it is necessary to emphasize the possibility that various centers coexist simultaneously (p.105). There are festivals with very similar power and influence that, in this sense, coexist (as centers or

peripherals) in the center, the periphery, and areas in between. The latter correspond to what Galtung calls “*go-between*” and defines them as a zone of contact between the center and the periphery (p.104); we can locate a festival here that occupies a peripheral place in regards to the sub-circuit of European festivals, but central in that they constitute festivals held peripherally in Latin America, for example.

Wallerstein develops a model based on three aspects (core, semi-periphery and periphery) that goes beyond the developed-underdeveloped / center-periphery binomial previously proposed by the theories of dependence (Wallerstein, 1974, p. 3). The author defines and identifies the role of the semi-periphery based on the context in which it is analyzed and states that “the productive activities of these semi-peripheric countries are equally divided. They act partly as a peripheral zone for central countries and partly as a central country for some peripheral areas” (Wallerstein, 1976, pp.462-463).

Wallerstein also defends the possibility that the statute of each territory changes, which is to say a peripheral space could become semi-peripheral, and later, become central. Likewise, the opposite of this process could occur (Wallerstein, 1974, p.7). In the context of the film festivals, this mutability seems not to have taken place considering the consensus that exists on how, since the 1940s, central cinema territories and institutions are always the same and situated on the previously-mentioned Euro-American axis. Similarly, the regions and spaces associated to the periphery also continue to be stable.

These asymmetric concepts and relations proposed by Galtung and Wallerstein are useful for analyzing the international festival circuit, as well as other dynamics native to the cinematographic field. Another interesting proposal is the one developed by Homi K. Bhabha within the context of post-colonial studies, which identifies several liminal territories that mediate between colonized and colonizing regions, becoming a concept

useful for describing an “intermediate” place in which cultural transformation takes place [...] the colonized subject can exist in the liminal space between the colonial discourse and the acknowledged

gement of a new “non-colonial” identity. But this identification is never simply the passing from one identity to another but rather a constant process of commitment, response, and appropriation (Bhabha, 1994, p.117).

Owen Evans (2007) takes this idea of liminal space from Bhabha to analyze film festivals, identifying them as spaces of mediation that reduce inequalities between some colonizing territories and film industries (centers) and the colonized (peripheries). We believe that, although festivals play a mediating role between the film industries of the world, they do not eliminate such inequalities, but rather they uphold them given that they are the most important festivals in the international context -those that constitute the center of said circuit- those that organize the films of the world in categories that, often times, also respond to the center-periphery dichotomy.

5. Analysis of Latin American Festivals in the International Circuit: Relative Importance and Sub-circuits

Our hypothesis is that the largest festivals were situated in the center of the international circuit at the moment of its creation: Venice in 1932, Cannes in 1939/46 and Berlin in 1951, and maintain said position. According to this, some European (and North American) festivals would be the ones designing and creating the categories by which films worldwide organize themselves, as well as identifying and legitimizing new aesthetics, movements, and filmmakers. At the same time, other festivals that deploy similar strategies play a secondary role and have a lesser influence in this task due to their smaller size, mediatic importance, budget, or number of professionals in attendance, but also due to their belonging to a peripheral film region.

Firstly, let’s analyze the relations between Latin American festivals and the international circuit considering the four categories established by Galtung: center of the center (C), periphery of the center (P), center of the periphery (c) and periphery of the periphery (p)⁵. By belonging to one of these four categories, the importance of each event decreases in this order. In accordance with this proposal,

we can talk about Europe and North America⁶ as the center and the rest of the world as periphery of cinema worldwide. There are festivals that, in addition to being at the top of the international circuit, are central to the European context (C), such as Cannes, Venice, and Berlin. Others are located on the periphery of this European center (P), such as the Festival of San Sebastian, in Spain. Considering Latin America a peripheral cinematographic region, we identify various festivals that would be central in said context (c): BAFICI and Mar del Plata in Argentina; Guadalajara and Morelia in Mexi-

co; SANFIC in Chile; or FICCI in Colombia. Finally, other festivals hold a peripheral position within this same framework (p), like the Tandil Cine Festival that has been held in Tandil, in the province of Buenos Aires, since 2002.

Table 1 shows a map of festivals according to the proposed centers and peripheries scheme. It also includes a classification based on the different sub-circuits with the purpose of highlighting the relative importance of each event according to the context in which it is analyzed.

Table 1: Central and Peripheral Festivals

Central and Peripheral Festivals (regarding the Latin American circuit)				
(SUB)CIRCUIT	CENTER	PERIPHERY		
		SEMI-PERIPHERY (Wallerstein)		PERIPHERY (Wallerstein)
		PERIPHERY OF THE CENTER (Galtung)	CENTER OF THE PERIPHERY (Galtung)	PERIPHERY OF THE PERIPHERY (Galtung)
INTERNATIONAL CIRCUIT	Cannes, Venice, Berlín	Rotterdam, Sundance	BAFICI	Sucre Film Festival
A-CLASS FESTIVALS (FIAPF)	Cannes, Venice, Berlín	San Sebastián, Karlovy Vary, Locarno, Montreal	Shanghai, Tokyo, Moscow, Mar del Plata, Goa	Cairo
FESTIVALS DEDICATED TO LATIN AMERICAN CINEMA	Latin American Film Festival of Toulouse	Huelva	FESAALP de la Plata Latin American Film Festival	Festival Zero Latitude (Quito, Ecuador)
INTERNATIONAL FESTIVALS HELD IN LATIN AMERICA	BAFICI, Mar del Plata, SANFIC, Guadalajara, Morelia	Viña del Mar, Valdivia, Sao Paulo	Lima, La Habana	FENAVID International Film Festival (Santa Cruz, Bolivia)

Source: Own elaboration

Festival importance is, *almost* always, decreasing from the center of the center in direction towards the periphery of the periphery. The emphasis of the word *almost* is due to the weight that some festivals share regardless of their belonging to central or peripheral regions. The importance of festivals in the periphery of the center (P) and in the center of the periphery (c) is very similar. Based on this, there is an equivalency between the San Sebastián Festival in Spain (peripheral in Europe in regards to Cannes and Berlin) and BAFICI, in Argentina (central in the context of the festivals

held in Latin America). From this perspective, the periphery of the center (P) and the center of the periphery (c) will share a semi-peripheral space.

The relative importance of each event is one of the main hypotheses of this article. Therefore, we can say that BAFICI holds a different role when we consider its relevance in regards to film and the Latin American region, when we analyze it considering its relation to Spanish-language films and when we do so in the framework of the international circuit⁷. In the first two cases, BAFICI is a

central event when giving visibility to films and filmmakers and influencing in other festivals that later select these same titles or the creator's future films. In the third case, it would be peripheral in regards to festivals like Cannes and Berlin. Sergio Wolf (2016), former director of BAFICI, defines it as a "lighthouse festival" for Latin America given that, from its origin, it has influenced other festivals founded later in the region that have copied its organizational aspects and programming (p.82-83). A study on festivals of the region also highlights the influence of BAFICI on other festivals created afterwards (Gutiérrez & Wagenberg, 2013).

Galtung's scheme can also be updated in terms of the different sections which comprise festival programming. Therefore, the importance of the Official Competition (C) and the Director's Fortnight (P) of the Cannes Festival, could be compared to the International Competition of BAFICI (c) and to Panorama (p), organized by the same festival. The same thing happens when addressing the Official Competition (C) and Forum (P) at Berlinale and the Official Selection (c) and the Best Chilean Film Soundtrack section (p) at the Viña del Mar Festival, in Chile.

The previous scenario is found in other markets, initiatives, and activities organized by festivals around the world. It is also the case of the funds for financing and workshops put into place since the 1990s that, all together, would constitute a specific sub-circuit. The proposed scheme of centers and peripheries is appropriate for studying the dialogues and systems of influence that take place in this specific sub-circuit. We could speak here of the relative importance that the Hubert Bals de Rotterdam Fund has for different film industries, which we place in the center of the center (C), the secondary role of the fund organized by the Amiens Festival (P), the workshops organized in the framework of the Buenos Aires Lab at BAFICI (c) or, finally, the projects in development sessions organized by the Asterisco Festival of Buenos Aires (p).

According to the aforementioned, we could analyze the importance and visibility that a film receives upon being programmed in a particular section of a specific festival. Therefore, if it participates in the Official Competition at Cannes, the result would be C>C: a central section in a central festival of the

international circuit. Following this same example, a film programmed in a retrospective section in BAFICI would result in C>P: a peripheric section of a central festival in its peripheric region context if we take the international circuit as reference. If, on the other hand, we use the frame of analysis of the sub-circuit of festivals held in Latin America or that of festivals dedicated to Spanish-language cinema, the latter would result in C>P, given that BAFICI is at the head of both sub-circuits and that a retrospective section would always be peripheral in the programming of any festival. Therefore, there are differences between the festivals and the central and peripheric positions based on the analysis framework and sub-circuits in consideration.

These schemes and unequal relations affect key aspects in the international cinematographic context together with State policies on financing and promoting internationalization, and distribution strategies designed for each film. In the first case, there are many organizations that have a specific line of action destined for domestic film participation (and those who make them) in international markets and festivals. When distributing the annual budget among the contending films, these organizations have charts in which the amount of support is more or less based on the festival and the section for which the film has been selected. In the majority of cases, the organizations create their own categories based on the importance that they give each festival and section, although they are often inspired in those established by the International Federation of Film Producer Associations (FIAPF). This is the case of funding for Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Uruguay; as well as Argentina, where the amount to participate in one of the festivals considered A-Class (Berlin, Cannes, Venice and San Sebastian) varies if the film is programmed in an Official Competition (up to 50 000 USD), a Parallel Competitive Section (up to 25 000 USD) and a Non-Competitive Section (up to 8000 USD)⁸.

Similarly, the importance the industry gives each festival affects distribution strategies, although here we only refer to the international distribution in festivals. We can indicate previous articles that have analyzed the same regarding national and regional films and their presence in the international circuit. At first glance, in 1994, Manthia Diawara indicated that European and North American festivals'

interest in the best African cinema led filmmakers to turn their attention away from the Festival Pan African Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO) in order to premiere their films (Diawara, 1994, p.386). This dynamic limits FESPACO's ability to bring new storylines and African filmmakers into the international circuit, even more so if we consider that they prefer to be programmed beforehand in Euro-North American festivals because they believe it is more important for the distribution of their films. This also occurs in other film industries. In her study of recent Chilean film internationalization, María Paz Peirano (2018), joining the two lines indicated here, proposes that the strategy of late in Chilean film, via the CineChileno agency, has been to take films and filmmakers to the international circuit and mentions, as an example, the filmography of Sebastián Lelio (p.65).

6. The Problem of Programming Ghettos

Festivals and parallel sections are sometimes considered *programming ghettos*: spaces that are counterproductive for films because they work against their dissemination and valorization (Diawara, 1994). Festivals situated in the center of the system influence peripheral events and these synergies also occur among the festivals of the center and between those located in the periphery of the audiovisual industry. Let's consider the cases of Cannes (as festival C), BAFICI (c), Latin American Film Festival of Toulouse (P) and Tandil Cine (p): the influence of Cannes on BAFICI and Latin American Film Festival of Toulouse, these two festivals could influence each other (upon considering c and P as equals) and all three could inspire Tandil Cine. However, the influence could also go in the opposite direction, from the peripheries towards the center: a film premiered in Tandil Cine (p), that is later programmed at BAFICI (c) and Latin American Film Festival of Toulouse (P), in one of the different sections of the Official Competition, could go on to be programmed in some later edition of the Cannes Festival (C), possibly as part of a retrospective.

Based on this inverted influence we can analyze the idea of programming ghettos related to Afri-

can cinema (Diawara, 1994). It is really difficult for a film that premiered in Tandil Cine (p) to be later programmed at Cannes (C); however, it is possible. As Diawara states, the fact that the producers and creators are interested in sending their films to more important festivals of the international circuit is at the very root of the creation of certain festivals and sections considered less important. They are interested in placing their films in the most important festivals of a certain sub-circuit, as well as in the most important section of each event (in detriment to parallel or non-competitive sections). Among the competitive sections, there are some of higher interest because they offer more important and larger cash prizes (Czach, 2004). The main sections occupy a more privileged place in both the catalogues and physical spaces of the festival, where show times and venues are often better. These are some of the reasons, together with media attention they arouse, for which filmmakers and producers prefer the official and competitive sections of each festival in detriment to other parallel or retrospective spaces. However, as we have seen, this tendency does not impede the influencing coming from necessarily less relevant festivals in the international circuit towards others of larger scope. For this reason, it is also important to relativize the character of programming ghettos associated to some spaces.

7. The Importance of Center-Peripheral Dialogue in Film Discourse

Evans (2007) defines festivals as spaces of mediation between different cinematographic regions. Although we agree with this idea, we believe that film festivals also maintain these differences between the central and peripheral regions. Festivals situated in the center of the international circuit often influence the cinematographic tendencies and regulations of the other events. We also concur with Evans's statement on festivals being liminal spaces and places of "commitment, response and appropriation" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2007, pp. 117-118). By way of these processes, festivals create certain cinematographic categories to organize their programs and sections based on criteria such as a film's place of origin, its format

and its themes. What's key in this process is that all the international circuit festivals have the ability to propose their own programming categories and their canons, although not all of them have the same power in this task or enough influence to affect the festival circuit in its entirety (or in a wide enough spectrum).

Considering these arguments, we can determine that the role each festival plays in the creation of cinematographic canons and categories in the general context depends on its belonging to the center or periphery of the circuit. Based on this, the European and American institutions and the festivals at the center of the international circuit (Cannes, Venice and Berlin) will have greater power and be able to build said categories and identify tendencies, as well as consolidate them and legitimize them.

Based on the Spanish-Peruvian co-production *Madeinusa* (Llosa, 2006) we can identify the unequal forces that appear in the processes indicated. Every time a festival programs a film, it does so within a determined category that has to do with the title of the section or with the event's theme. Therefore, with each selection, they go adding "labels" to the films that accompany them when they are programmed in other festivals and on other screens. Although this "label" has importance for critics, the museums, galleries, cultural institutions and the film's materials and promotional campaigns, in this case only we only address the context of the festival. Therefore, after its premiere in the 2006 Festival Rotterdam, *Madeinusa* has been programmed in sections like "Latin American Territory" at the Festival de Málaga (2006, Spain), "Femmes du Cinéma" (Women of cinema) in the Latin American Film Festival of Toulouse⁹ (2014, France) and in NATIVE- A Journey into Indigenous Cinema at Berlinale in 2013. In the first case, it was programmed as a Latin American film (although it was a co-production with Spain); in the second, as a film directed by a woman; and, in the third, as an indigenous film (although its inclusion in this category is controversial). In the three cases, the different labels were added progressively to *Madeinusa* and they are, often, when the film is mentioned and programmed in different contexts. This taxonomic process would be, at the same time, a political operation that obligates us to pay attention to the way in which the unequal

relations that exist between the cinematographic institutions decide, build, transfer and legitimize categories of interpretation of different nature.

8. Conclusion

In this article we have aimed to address the issue of the central and peripheral categories in the context of film studies and the way it operates in order to analyze the influence and weight each film festival has in the international context despite having been mentioned, similar to the categories linked to the national, as obsolete to address a worldwide reality and industry. Our objective, once the center-periphery opposition is maintained in the discourses on contemporary cinema, is to highlight the unequal dialogues and the frictions that this binomial implies and the need to always address film industries, institutions, and agents belonging to each category based on their relationship with the other.

For this reason, and going beyond the most radical polarization that the center-periphery terms imply, we have aimed to highlight the intermediate spaces proposed by Immanuel Wallerstein and Johan Galtung as well as some of his ideas on the direction of the influences in this type of asymmetric relations, the simultaneous existence of centers and peripheries and the possible change in the statute of each one of the regions considered central and peripheral. All these phenomena are visible and identifiable in the field of film festivals and valid for the analysis of dynamics and problems that occur within.

Finally, the model proposed and theoretical frameworks considered in this article, not exempt from some problems mentioned throughout the text, would be equally valid for the study of other film and cultural institutions and circuits, although here we have put the focus on Latin American festivals and cinema.

Notes

1. The first film festivals were created precisely in the framework of previous cultural festivals. The Festival of Venice was founded as a new space for the Biennial of Arts that the city had been organizing for many years (Toulet 1986, en Taillibert & Wäfler, 2016).
2. The idea of film festivals as an initial distribution circuit can be reviewed and updated to the extent that the parallel and retrospective sections allow festivals to reuse films premiering in previous seasons.
3. Osvaldo Sunkel includes both concepts in a long list of terms opposite and relative to the developed and underdeveloped world that "[...] interact and relate with one another; and whose geographic expression takes place in two large polarizations. On one hand, the polarization of the world into industrialized, advanced, developed and central countries and underdeveloped, lagging, poor, peripheral and dependent countries [...]" (Sunkel, 1971, p.9).
4. Key: C: center of the center; P: peripheral of the center; c: center of the peripheral; p: peripheral of the peripheral.
5. For the cited examples and cases, we consider the impact that festivals have had in the emergence and consolidation of the denominated new Latin cinemas, the specialized bibliography, the study of empirical data and the results of a previous research project (Campos, 2016a).
6. Together with the importance of the American film industry, we also consider the importance that a festival like Toronto's has.
7. Authors like Bill Nichols have indicated the possibility that one international festival holds a marginal position in geographic terms, but central in cultural terms for a specific cinematography (Nichols, 1994, p.74).
8. Data from the 2012 National Cinema and Audiovisual Art Institute call to submit (Campos, 2016a: pp.238-239).
9. Rencontres Cinémas d'Amérique Latine.

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