

Little Planets in a Festival Galaxy
A Report on Special Interest Film Festivals in the Netherlands

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Introduction

Although film festivals have been around for almost a century, film festival studies is a fairly recent phenomenon and the number of festivals that exist today speaks to their importance. It could be said that what is commonly known as the ‘International Film Festival Circuit’ has now become more akin to a Film Festival Galaxy. “Nowadays the new map, the festival one, is a sparse aggregate in which each element is perfectly distinguishable. The interesting thing, however, is that those isolated points constitute an organic network, a significant system. A galaxy,”¹ As of today, this festival galaxy gives no indication of slowing in growth. With that, as early as the 1980’s, in the midst of the first major proliferation of film festivals, critics and scholars were already predicting the eminent downfall of the festival circuit.

This notion has been put forth several times in the last two decades, despite the fact that a collapse has yet to come.² It is generally believed that the huge number of film festivals that exists will create an oversaturation of the market because there is only “a certain number of truly impactful works in any given year,” and, as mostly not-for-profit organizations, a limited amount of funding exists as well.³ The other side of the debate postulates that the proliferation of film festivals is sustainable due to specialization and will continue expanding as filmmaking technologies become more and more accessible, and thus creating more and more content.⁴ Film festival scholar, Marijke de Valck argues that,

“Despite the proliferation of festivals, the network/system has not collapsed. The reason for this is that there is a strict task division between festivals; a small number of major festivals have leading positions as marketplace and media event and the remaining majority may perform a variety of tasks ranging from launching young talent to supporting identity groups such as women or ethnic communities,”⁵

In other words, film festivals have remained sustainable despite a presumed surplus because of specialization. While there may be a film festival taking place every weekend in some cities, they are more than likely catering to entirely different audiences and themes. For instance, Kristen Stevens predicts that this phenomenon, which does happen in Melbourne, Australia, will soon replace the art-house cinema all together because the exclusivity of a ‘one-time event’ proves to be more attractive to audiences. “The appeal of film festivals above other sources of cinema emanates from their event status and their ability to program a diverse range of cinematic

works,”⁶ This is again supported by the continued growth and relative stability of the system. Today, “the question is not whether a city has a movie house, but whether it hosts a good film festival,”⁷

This thesis takes the position the film festival galaxy is not in danger of collapsing and will continue to proliferate and flourish due to the specialization of events and programming as well as the commodity appeal of event culture. My overarching question is, how do specialized film festivals remain and sustain the festival galaxy all the while preventing oversaturation? More specifically, I will consider the festival culture within the Netherlands as a small-scale reflection of the wider festival galaxy format. The Netherlands has been chosen as a focus because, without being a huge player in the film industry, it nonetheless has a vibrant network of film festivals that began with a ‘major’ festival, the International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR), and thus appeals to the dictum of whether or not a city “hosts a good film festival,” To quote Stevens, “The city’s experience with the format therefore provides an opportunity to examine the sustainability of a crowded festival network,”⁸ Unlike Stevens, who examined how the festival culture in Melbourne impacted local screen cultures, I want to look more closely at the specific curatorial strategies that are employed by these specialized events as a way to analyze how the specific structures compare. For this reason, my subsequent chapters will concentrate on IFFR, as the leading Dutch festival, as well as two, very different, but equally as specialized, small scale festivals, TranScreen: Amsterdam Trans*Gender Film Festival (TranScreen) and Architecture Film Festival Rotterdam (AFFR), respectively.

By comparing two different, highly specialized festivals within the same country, it will help to illuminate how curatorial and thematic distinction decreases overall competition as well as support the notion that there exists an audience for nearly everything. “While fear of saturation or harmful competition is understandable in the face of a surplus of identical events, the reality of the festival phenomenon is that few identical events exist in direct competition,”⁹ To help answer my overarching research question as well as guide each chapter, I will ask, what is a contemporary typology and proposed structure of the festival galaxy and what are the key concepts and conventions of film festival studies? What are the curatorial considerations for identity-based and social issue film festivals? Lastly, I will ask, how does an identity-based film festival compare with a thematic film festival? Can they be compared, and if so, what does that imply about the overall structure of specialized film festivals? As mentioned before, each chapter

will take one of the three Dutch festivals as its case study and examine the curatorial and programming decisions as they reflect their different subjects and themes. Through this analysis and comparison, I will illustrate that, despite having fundamentally similar formats, the presentation and reflection of different themes shows how and why the specialization of festivals keeps the whole galaxy sustainable.

Relevance

Many of the texts written on film festivals in the last two decades have commented on the fact that, though film festivals have been around since the 1930s, have been extremely important to international film distribution and the formation national cinemas as well as other film movements, there is still a lack of academic work relating to the field. For the most part, film festivals were only written about by critics and thus never really examined for their historical significance. This has changed quite a bit in the last few decades and film festival studies have partly grown in conjunction with the festival galaxy itself.¹⁰ That being said, even with the growth of the field of study, it is more or less impossible to account for and study every film festival from every possible theoretical perspective. While no one scholar can create a truly comprehensive overview of film festivals, a multitude of scholars can provide a more localized study of the many different kinds of festivals and facets. Therefore, it is useful to add to the pool of knowledge by providing an in-depth analysis of highly specialized festivals in the Netherlands, as it is a system that may not receive as much attention otherwise. By zooming in on one corner of the festival galaxy, it helps to build up the larger picture, like building the corner of a galaxy-sized puzzle, so to speak. Looking at specialized festivals in the Netherlands not only adds to a general pool of knowledge about festivals, it also adds to the debate about festival saturation.

Methods and Framework

Some of the main perspectives used in film festival studies include sociological and ethnographic approaches, reception studies and historical approaches as well as the economics of film distribution and network theories. My own theoretical framework comprises of a more general approach that looks at the overall structure of film festivals, with a specific focus on curating and

programming. A general approach to film festivals comprises of looking at the overall structure of a film festival and incorporates smaller pieces of different perspectives. This is mainly based off the approaches of scholars Marijke de Valck and Kristen Stevens, both of who wrote full books on the subject of film festivals.¹¹ That being said, I have also chosen to incorporate a primary focus on curatorial and programming strategies as a way of considering how each festival reflects certain themes and agendas, and how specialized festivals in general depend on branding themselves.

Thomas Elsaesser proposed to “take a half dozen catalogues from different festivals, read the description of the films, or the speeches that go with the prizes, and do a semantic analysis: no more than a dozen or so words make up the evaluative and classificatory vocabulary needed to categorize the vast majority of festival films,”¹² In a similar vein, I have taken the programs from the most recent and previous three editions of TranScreen and AFFR, and compared them, both to each other and between editions. This is done as a way of evaluation and categorizing each festival, as Elsaesser proposed. I also paired with attendance to the most recent editions of each festival in order to examine some of the screenings from a curatorial perspective. By comparing the recent and archived programs of each festival, I will see how the structure and branding has changed overtime as well as what kind and quality of content has been chosen. I will also compare these findings between the festivals as a way of discerning their progression and to evaluate how similar the structures are. I will use a more historical and typological approach in chapter one to show IFFR as an example of a much larger festival’s influence on specialized festivals, and more specifically IFFR’s influence on Dutch film culture.

Film Festival Studies as a whole is fascinating because it can be approached from many different perspectives and therefore yields a plethora of different types of research. For this thesis, I will take a more general approach that looks at the overall structure of specialized festivals, with a more specific focus on curating and programming. I will do this through a comparative analysis of recent and previous edition program booklets from TranScreen and AFFR as well as comparing insights from attending each festival’s most recent edition. Using IFFR as an example of a major festival with general programming, I will give a contemporary definition of typology of festivals in order to categorize TranScreen and AFFR appropriately in a way that helps situate them within a larger curatorial context.

Structure

The overall structure of this thesis will consist of three chapters, each focusing on a specific film festival, followed by a conclusion that will give a brief summary of the findings and provide any criticism of my research methods as well as suggest some possible questions and approaches for further research. As stated above, chapter one will give a contemporary typology of film festivals, further define and explain the notion of the festival galaxy, and give a brief historical background to IFFR, illustrating its importance to Dutch film culture.

Chapter two will take up the subject of identity and social issue film festivals with regards to TranScreen, trans*gender and queer film festivals. This chapter will look at the programming and structure of TranScreen in relation to queer and trans* cinema. This will help to examine how and why curatorial strategies can become more complicated and potentially problematic when used to represent some marginalized identities. This chapter will also look at how TranScreen chooses to represent the trans* community in a way that challenges the stereotypes produced by mainstream culture as well as aims to provide inclusivity of works. Chapter three then goes onto focus on thematic and genre-based film festivals and, in this case, a festival influenced by a specific industry. This chapter will examine the architecture and design film festival, AFFR, in much the same as chapter two examined TranScreen, with a focus on looking at the similarities and differences between the both festivals. Though TranScreen and AFFR are wholly different in the themes and subject matter they present, their similarities will elucidate a common structure while supporting the benefits of specialization.

Ultimately, I would like to postulate that the film festival circuit has grown into a galaxy that represents categorization as various star systems; networks that work on an international, national, regional and local scales, from film festivals serve as an alternative international distribution to film festivals that exist solely for niche communities. As Stevens speculates,

“It seems that contemporary audiences are more than willing to be herded into cinemas, bars, parking lots, and sheds to watch even the most esoteric selection of films shown to them under the guise of a festival [...] the willingness of audience to journey to a new celebration in a rural area is indicative of the demand that still exists for new events,”¹³

In light of this, an examination of Dutch film festivals that focuses on the typology and curatorial strategies will help foster a continued expansion in the field of film festival studies and add to an overall greater understanding of a key aspect in film culture.

1. A Hierarchy and Typology of Film Festivals: International Film Festival Rotterdam

A contemporary typology of film festivals has become increasingly difficult to categorize due to the multitude of festivals that exist today and continue to develop. Nonetheless, it is important to have an idea of the festival hierarchy to help understand how the overall structure of film festivals works and how they necessarily differ. Ultimately these distinctions will help in the stylistic comparisons between TranScreen and AFFR that will be discussed in chapters two and three. As mentioned in the introductory section of this thesis, I will use the metaphor of a film festival galaxy as put forth by Quintín (aka Eduardo Antin) to convey the expansiveness of the festival network, as it exists today.¹⁴ This metaphor will also help to identify and describe the structural influences that top-tier festivals have on smaller festivals fulfilling the role of “gatekeepers” and “tastemakers,”¹⁵ To better explain this, I will use the example of IFFR and its influence on film festivals and film culture in the Netherlands. By analyzing IFFR in context with TranScreen and AFFR, I will reiterate the importance of smaller festivals as well as establish their sustainability because, though they have basically similar structures, their curatorial strategies and audiences are rarely ever in direct competition with each other. Despite IFFR’s ‘big name’, and a few other relatively large festivals in the Netherlands, the smaller festivals flourish because, as Quintín says, “even the most mediocre or worst programmed festivals do not lack audiences. The reason is very simple: they show what cannot be seen elsewhere,”¹⁶

Overall, film festivals are significant to film culture, industry and theory because “by presenting brand new films, a festival is able to shape the perception of the contemporary cinema landscape,”¹⁷ That being said, even though smaller festivals are often unable to offer monetary or distribution compensation, they nonetheless contribute to the contemporary cinema landscape because they offer exposure to both localized and delocalized audiences. Moreover, considering that the majority of festivals are on “undeniably shaky ground” in terms of funding and are “not designed to make a profit at all,” the galaxy has still not seen a collapse, or downsize.¹⁸ This chapter will first go into a definition of the festival galaxy and generally established hierarchy as well as give an overall description of different categories and types of festivals with examples of festivals within in the Netherlands. This will show how much specialization has expanded the

festival universe and provide a greater context in which to place my case studies, TranScreen and AFFR. After that I will go briefly into the history of IFFR as a way of establishing its importance on Dutch film culture and ascertain its influence on TranScreen and AFFR.

1.2 The Festival Galaxy and Hierarchy

A survey done in 2013 cited that there were around 3,000 active documented festivals globally and over 9,000 “unique festivals” that have run at least once in the previous fifteen years.¹⁹ In 2016, Skadi Loist said that “the global film festival network consists of more than 6,000 festivals,”²⁰ Quintín, as early as 2009, began describing the global film festival network as a galaxy, stating “Cannes is a sun whose rays reach all sectors of the Galaxy, while Venice (especially), Berlin, Toronto and Rotterdam are lesser stars that likewise possess their own orbiting planets,”²¹ This statement mirrors the proposed model of a festival network as put forth by both de Valck and Elsasser, who said that the system functions as a series of hubs and nodes with the most important nodes functioning “as essential forces in the flow pattern of the larger network... or so-called A-list festivals,”²² In other words, the A-list festival are also known as the ‘Big Three’; Cannes, Venice and Berlin and are among the very first established film festivals that continue to be the largest and most influential to the film industry today. For this reason they are considered the main trendsetters for the years productions as well as establishing an alternative distribution to Hollywood.²³ Quintín’s proposition of various ‘lesser’ star systems also includes, what would be considered ‘lower-ranked’ international film festivals that “still offer essential services on the business side of the festival circuit, but might be limited in reach compared to the core of top-tier festivals,”²⁴ This is the position that IFFR holds in relation to the larger system, with the smaller Dutch festivals as the various ‘orbiting planets,’²⁵ Loist continues a concise delineation of the festival system by stating that there are several “parallel specialized circuits” that are interconnected with top-tier festivals, but which establish “their own hierarchical system with core and periphery tiers,”²⁶ This means that there are multiple hierarchies that exist within the whole of the festival galaxy that accounts for the differentiation of type.

The festival galaxy consists of a number of different but vaguely interconnected systems, the largest of which is maintained by the ‘Big Three,’ or A-List film festivals. The secondary systems are made up of festivals that are slightly less globally influential but nevertheless act as

leading events in their respective regions. Next, there are third tier systems that “act as the major meeting site for local professionals, but do not initiate developments that cause ripples substantial enough to affect the first tier,”²⁷ While the big-three stand in as the major distribution alternative to Hollywood, festivals like IFFR help to facilitate significant exposure for slightly more obscure national cinemas and filmmakers that might appear at the top festivals in the next year. Festivals that are smaller than IFFR but still offer general programming and “major meeting sites for local professionals,” include Netherlands Film Festival, Leiden International Film Festival and Pluk de Nacht.²⁸ Then there are festivals with genre or format specifications such as documentary, animation, or short film festivals that form their own specialized systems and hierarchy. This would include the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA), which is considered one of the largest documentary festivals in the world (so it would be in the top-tier of documentary film festivals). Likewise, these types of festivals can also become highly specialized as many of them are based around specific genres and sub-genres.²⁹ For example, AFFR would be considered within this subset of festivals because it focuses on specifically “architectural films” and could even be considered as part of documentary film festivals (though it does not necessarily identify as such). Similarly, there are several systems of film festivals that are centered on identities and social issues, such as feminism and women, diasporic and national cinemas, human rights, and LGBT/Q (Queer) festivals.³⁰ Examples of identity-based film festivals include CinemAsia, Movies that Matter, Latin American Film Festival, and Roze Filmdagen: Amsterdam LGBTQ Film.³¹ As so, TranScreen would be categorized under the subset of identity festivals as well as LGBT/Q or Queer festivals.

A major consideration I had for choosing TranScreen and AFFR as my case studies was to be able to present festivals that could be categorized under several of these subsets in order to show the pervasiveness of the festival galaxy even within one, relatively small country. Beginning with IFFR, the Netherlands has been able to develop its own vibrant film festival system to the point that there is seldom a weekend that goes by without some kind of film festival event. This brings up the question of festival saturation in a more poignant way, as it affects the country’s ability to support these various events and therefore support an overarching film culture. As mentioned before, the question of oversaturation raises issues of funding as well as programming and audience interest. Stevens comments on this by saying, “appealing to specific niche markets, the narrowed focus of these events then reveals the ability of the festival

circuit to support a multitude of programs [...] [This] reveals the ability of the festival galaxy to sustain numerous specialised networks operating simultaneously,”³² In this way, the galaxy and the hierarchy that exists within the Netherlands works because there are only a few larger film festivals that are in competition for the premiere status of the years ‘biggest releases,’ while other, smaller and more specialized festivals can fill in the gaps where general programming is often lacking. This also brings into play how curatorial strategies differ depending on type of festival. For example, festivals that specialize in identity, social minorities and diasporic communities can “distinguish three possible curatorial purposes in this perspective: to function as a toll of cultural diplomacy, to promote a particular identity agenda, or to explore the economical potential of diasporic events and to foster ethnic minority talents,”³³ This shows that the type of film festival does have an impact on how the selections are curated and presented. Identity-based festivals will tend to place more emphasis on content over form, as in choosing films based on *what* they are saying or representing as opposed to *how* they are made. Whereas, genre and format festivals will be more concerned with films that adhere to certain aesthetic conventions. “Programming for differences relies on connecting individual affective responses to the project of interpellating different audiences into the collective experiences offered by festivals,”³⁴ While these curatorial distinctions will inevitably vary from festival to festival, they are still able to demonstrate a way in which the types of festivals affect the structure.

Originally, film festivals were created with political agendas as a way of promoting nationalistic sentiments as well as to help boost the country’s film industry and tourism. It was not until the late 1960’s that this form began to significantly change beginning with Cannes moving from a selection process that focused on the country or nation to being focused around the festival director and the subsequent tastes of the programmers.³⁵ From there festivals began to incorporate separate thematic programs in order to satisfy audience and filmmakers needs. Moreover, this also allowed for other festivals to develop focuses that differed significantly from the general programming of Cannes and concentrate more on a reflection of current events. In this way, “festivals adopted the idea that they could participate in film culture and make a political difference. By clustering carefully selected films in specialized and thematic program sections, they could frame the individual film screenings and mobilize public attention for a variety of issues,”³⁶ This corresponds to film festivals moving away from purely nationalistic agendas and realizing the influence that festivals have on film culture. Nowadays, by programing

a festival to include film concerning a specific issue, those films were much more likely to be seen by an audience than if it depended on more traditional distribution routes. Though larger festivals began to include specialized sections, they are still necessarily devoted towards industry needs and cultural capital than specialized festivals generally. Therefore, following the spirit of specialization that began in the late 1960's, specialized film festivals today, especially ones committed to representing marginalized communities, are developed in their respective cities in order to make up for something that was previously missing.

1.3 A Brief History: IFFR as Trendsetter

IFFR was founded in 1972 by Huub Bals and infamously had only seventeen guests attend the very first edition. Today, IFFR is the largest event for paying costumers in the Netherlands and is considered a staple among the top tiers of the festival hierarchy.³⁷ One of the many reasons that IFFR gained and maintained such success was because it “developed a clear image of what types of films and filmmakers it supported and could, by virtue of its consistent programming, acquire a competitive, nodal position on the international film festival circuit,”³⁸ In other words, since IFFR was able to clearly establish a different curatorial aim than that of the glamour devoted Cannes or Venice, it was able to distinguish itself and become known for its refreshing commitment to ‘innovative filmmaking’ and ‘nascent cinephilia’, at least within Europe. Furthermore, IFFR has been able to maintain a balance between locality, as in it is open to the public unlike Cannes, while still being of interest to industry professionals. Where it might not have the influencing power of Cannes, IFFR is still able to offer co-production and funding opportunities to new filmmakers and is noteworthy for its focus on countries with newly developing film industries and as being a gateway for Asia cinema into Western Europe.³⁹ In summary, IFFR was founded at a time in festival history that allowed it flourish and grow into a huge international event. The late 1960s and early 1970's corresponds to a major shift in the festival structure before the first major boom in festival proliferation that came about in the 1980s. For this reason, IFFR was able to mold the festival structure into something fresh, while being able to benefit from almost zero competition in government funds for cultural events.

IFFR was also founded in conjunction with an initiative to raise the cultural capital of the city of Rotterdam. Elsaesser talks about the influence of festivals on their host cities as points of culture and tourism,

“Other European festivals are located in industrial cities, some of whom over

years have been trying to repurpose and re-invent themselves as cultural centres... IFFR has greatly contributed to changing this city's image to: from being identified mainly with its giant container port and a harbour that brings ashore goods from China and Asia while servicing Europe in the past as the point of embarkation for hopeful New World emigrants, Rotterdam has become a centre of media, cinema, and architecture,”⁴⁰

This cultural initiative included a project that focused specifically on developing the film industry within the Netherlands, in which Bals was part of the committee. The goal was to “draw film closer to the local community” and “allow it to emerge as a genuine[ly] committed culture participation,”⁴¹ This initiative allotted significant government funds to building art house theaters throughout the country as well as developing IFFR into a influential cultural event representative of Rotterdam as a “centre of media, cinema, and architecture,” In this way, IFFR helped to change the face and perception of Rotterdam as a cultural center comparable to its rival city, Amsterdam.

Another benefit that IFFR had in emerging at this time is that festivals also began to take out the conventional format of international juries and prizes and added discussions, lengthy publications and audience participation. Due to the upheavals at the big festivals, they began to add parallel events “to accommodate the ‘young’, ‘experimental’ and ‘political’ movements. This left the way open for more, new film festivals to fill the demand for thematic programming,” which held the door open for IFFR’s success.⁴² This reiterates the importance of the timing that IFFR was founded, when there was a growing demand for festivals with formats that differed from the now traditional structures. As Cannes, Venice and Berlin tried to adapt, festivals like IFFR developed as an alternative. Later on, the proliferation of specialized festivals in the 1990’s and beyond can be seen as developing as an alternative to festivals like IFFR, that claim a focus on innovative and thematic programming, but still cater somewhat to industry needs. More recently, “critics questioned if Rotterdam was able to maintain relevance in competition with other international festivals [because] had been steadily losing its programming edge, in particular with regard to being a platform for launching new talent,”⁴³ This highlights some of the struggles that larger festival in particular come up against. For festivals that are known for facilitating distributions deals and therefore “launching new talent,” the pressure and competition to premiere one of the few “outstanding films” of the year is significantly higher or

the festival risks being seen as irrelevant.⁴⁴ Da Valck calls attention to this by citing critics who say that IFFR is “losing its programming edge,” because the foundation with which IFFR was built is based on a focus of diversity and innovation.

On a similar note, editor-in-chief Dana Linssen of *Filmkrant* is quoted as saying, “it would be better for the culture of wayward, explicit, and artistic films in general if these same people [the cinephile audience at IFFR] would also periodically go to the cinema during the rest of the year as well... The IFFR should be smaller, more explicit, and more accessible,”⁴⁵ Linssen refers to the size of IFFR and that many of the “highlights” of recent festivals would likely be released in Dutch cinemas and thus more accessible to general audiences, whereas a major benefit of a film festival is that it is able to show those films that are less accessible. She is commenting on the danger of IFFR losing track of its original mission in order to maintain a growing mainstream audience, which harks back to the need motivation of specialized festivals to develop as a more communal alternative. One way in which IFFR is trying to regain its programming edge is by offering new programs such as “Limelight [that] focuses on new releases, specifically those titles that were acquired at Dutch cinemas beforehand,” which gives audiences a sneak preview of what is to come and “makes clear that film festivals are not only about films. With a very rich surrounding program IFFR placed the films in dynamic context and allowed the audience to experience screenings as (live) events”⁴⁶ This appeals to a more contemporary approach to film festivals that focuses more on the aspect of the festival as an event.

1.4 Conclusion

The contemporary typology of film festivals distinguishes multiple hierarchies and an expansiveness that employs the metaphor of a festival galaxy. There exists a top tier of film festivals that operate as major industry festivals and set the trends of production for that year. Then there is a second tier of festivals that make up their own star system, which have much less influence over the film industry as a whole but are nonetheless vital to their country or region. Though these festivals may not dictate industry tastes, they are able to shine light back into the top star system and generate cultural capital for the films that they screen. From there, more and more specialization developed, creating different subsets and smaller star systems for festivals with specifically focused programming. These include identity-based festivals and genre or format based festivals, which my case studies, *TranScreen* and *AFFR*, fall into respectively. By

defining part of this contemporary typology, I hope to better situate my case studies within the context of a system that helps to influence the curatorial and structural considerations that each festival employs. I use IFFR as an example of how larger, general programming film festivals are necessary influences on smaller festivals and how IFFR has laid the groundwork for the festival system in the Netherlands to grow. Overall, the typology of film festivals exhibits how it is the audience and the community that really influences what sort of festivals develop and how they present themselves.

Julian Stringer says that ‘festival communities’ could be considered as, if not more, important than the actual films being screened, “a principal reason to hold a film festival is to interact with and celebrate the very public who gathers together at such an event,”⁴⁷ This is important for considering the motivations behind the proliferation of smaller festivals. It ties back to the idea that certain types of festivals develop in response to what is missing from an already established system. IFFR did this in response to industry driven festivals like Cannes and Venice, and the specialization of festivals in the Netherlands can be seen as a response to the growth of IFFR. As individual festivals continue to grow, smaller and more diverse festivals will continue to develop to fill in the gaps of representation in programming and in the community. Looking back at Stevens’ comment about the willingness of audiences to attend even the most obscure festivals and locations is indicative of the demand for new events. There will continue to be audiences for festivals as long as they continue to promote some kind of community.

2. Identity-Based and Grassroots Film Festivals: TranScreen: Amsterdam Trans*Gender Film Festival

In chapter one I discussed the structure of the film festival network and how it has evolved into a festival galaxy. By analyzing this development, I introduced a contemporary typology of film festivals and used IFFR as an example of a bigger, trendsetting film festival. Chapter two will take a closer look at the small ‘star system’ of queer and identity based film festivals with a specific focus on TranScreen: Amsterdam Trans*Gender Film Festival as small planet, or subset, of queer festival culture. My analysis of TranScreen aims to understand the curatorial considerations for identity-based festivals and trans* cinema, which will help to elucidate the importance of small festivals to marginalized communities. Identity-based festivals, in general, are important because they “have contributed significantly to the formation of racial, feminist and queer political identities by offering a space for disenfranchised artists and audiences to use culture as a means to strategize around social and political issues,”⁴⁸ In this way, identity-based festivals have different considerations for programming than, say, documentary festivals or a festival like IFFR. Since TranScreen is dealing with a marginalized community group, the festival has to be very mindful and intentional in what it chooses to represent that identity, in a way that both strengthens the identity and breaks down negative stereotypes. Though there is a relatively large number of queer festivals active and queer cinema has become more popular in mainstream cinema, there is significantly less that is specifically focused on the trans* identity.⁴⁹ Therefore, it is important to look at how the definition and representation of the trans* identity differs from that of queer representation. This chapter will look at some of the programs presented at the 2017 edition and consider how they reflect some of the concerns and conventions of queer and trans* cinema today. By doing this, it will help to discern some of the specific curatorial considerations employed by TranScreen to reflect trans* identity in the Netherlands and as a specialized film festival.

TranScreen is a biannual film festival that focuses on “international films about transgender and/or gender diversity,” with an aim to “increase (awareness of) gender diversity, visibility, acceptance and empowerment of trans* and gender diverse people,” This brings together different communities that work to challenge perspectives and “investigate

intersectionality,”⁵⁰ TranScreen was formed in 2009 in conjunction with a nonprofit foundation named TransMotion, partially as an extension of the Netherlands Transgender Film Festival (NTGF), which held its last edition in 2009. According to Eliza Steinbock, NTGF ran consecutively for five years and could no longer secure appropriate funding “because there is more funding available for new initiatives and very little funding available for sustaining institutions,”⁵¹ Due to this structure in funding TranScreen, as a new institution, was able to receive enough money to host the first edition at De Balie Theatre, where NTGF was traditionally held, which helped to maintain and transfer an already existing audience. TranScreen then moved to Cinema het Ketelhuis and Filmhuis Cavia for the 2013 edition, Cinema Rialto and Filmhuis Cavia for the 2015 edition, and Filmtheater Kriterion for the 2017 edition. In addition to the main theaters, the festival also holds separate events in different locations, such as an “after-lounge” bar in secret locations, opening and closing night parties and art exhibitions held in different galleries.

The 2017 edition was primarily hosted at Filmtheater Kriterion, with supplemental programs at Nieuwland and the Amsterdam Museum as well as an opening and closing program at Filmhuis Cavia. The frequent change in location for the TranScreen events gives some insight into the variability of funding and can also have a negative impact on the audience traveling inconvenient distances between venue, which is important to note for a festival who has an aim of creating a ‘safe space’ in the community.⁵² That being said, though the main sign of quality for a festival is its programming, it is nonetheless important to take into consideration the precarious funding that identity-based and social minority festivals often have to face because of the conflict between the need to professionalize and the desire to remain committed to grassroots.⁵³

2.2 Queer Cinema

Specialized festivals are uniquely positioned to focus on different kinds of representation that fill in gaps where larger festivals are often blinded. In the same vein, specialized festivals are also important for smaller communities because the festivals have more space to offer representation to minorities. Roya Rastegar speaks of these intentions, in the context of LA’s Outfest Fusion Film Festival by saying “while there is a need for exhibition spaces that provide access to radical, experimental, nonmainstream, grassroots, community-based, and social justice oriented films, it must be a directive grown and sustained by the community, for the

community,”⁵⁴ This is important for trans* festivals because, though gay and lesbian cinema has seen a growth in mainstream media in recent decades, trans* people are still largely underrepresented and misunderstood. Steinbock says of NTGF and TranScreen that “what we have managed to do is explain that trans* people are people who have partners, family, children, friends, allies, colleagues, and to show that their life is not only about transitioning,”⁵⁵ Even within the counter-publics of the LGBT/Q festival circuit there is a misunderstanding of the distinction between gender and sexual orientation, “transgender people labour under labels... struggling to persuade those close to them that they are transgender rather than gay, lesbian or bisexual,”⁵⁶ Therefore, specialized trans* festivals that take place outside of necessarily queer spaces helps to address issues of identification from within.

TranScreen works with these issues of identification by including thematic programming that addresses multiple aspects of the trans* community, including national and cross-cultural programs as well as programs that look specifically at trans* sexuality as well as other concerns such as intersectionality and intersex.⁵⁷ Still, there are persistent tropes and conventions that exist within queer and trans* cinema that create a tension in representation because, on the one hand they help gain a position in mainstream media, but, on the other hand, queer and trans* characters often end up as flat stereotypes. For a better understanding of selections present at TranScreen, I will put forth Skadi Loist’s definition of queer cinema as,

“Serve[ing] as an umbrella term for films which convey LGBT/Q imagery, narratives or sensibilities... What counts as queer cinema is a complex story. The definition of the lowest common denominator would be the presence of queer characters in the narrative. Yet, the context of the production and distribution as well as their framing have a significant influence on the appropriation and embrace of reception contexts,”

She goes on to say that the audience’ perception of films that are considered queer is ultimately informed by the programming choices of queer festivals⁵⁸. In this way, queer and trans* festivals have to pay particular attention and be intentional about what it is that they are screening and how that is informed by, or denies, mainstream stereotypes and definitions of identity. Jeremy Miller argues that “representing transgender people as comical buffoons or deceitful liars not only impacts an audience’s expectation of how transgender people should act in film but also expectations of the actions and motivations of transgender people in real life,” in

reference to films like *Mrs. Doubtfire* (1993) and *Tootsie* (1982).⁵⁹ Ruby Rich criticizes more recent queer cinema as focusing on the individual rather than depicting characters in “the world in which they move,” meaning that the films are often about the characters *being* queer rather than characters living their lives who *happen to be* queer.⁶⁰ Miller also talks about trans* representation in the mainstream as being largely about character’s whose main concern is “passing”, being as a convincing of the other sex as possible, or, at the other end of the spectrum, as being “variously unbalanced freaks.”⁶¹ Steinbock says that one of the main aims of TranScreen is to exhibit films that are “not only surgeries, sad narratives, or murder,” but instead show that trans* people function within the world in the same ways as everyone else, that “their life is not only about transitioning.”⁶²

In mainstream media, queer and trans* characters are most often focused on the process of their identity, whether they are coming out or transitioning, the *fact* of their identity is the major plot-point of the films. This is opposed to stories that show these minority characters simply *as they are*, which is what Rich means when she says “in the world in which they move.” This is why, as Loist says, the definition of queer cinema is such a complex story. Though there has been more representation of trans* characters in the mainstream in recent years, they are still almost always played by cis-actors and directed by cis-directors and are persistently defined by their marginalized identity.⁶³ While TranScreen does mostly present films about the trans* experience, as opposed to more conventional narratives that include trans* characters or star trans* actors, the festival, nonetheless, places an important focus on that experience as *told by* trans* identity as well as representing the multitude of experience that exists.

2.3 Programming

Each edition of TranScreen screens both short film programs and feature length films. Following the basic conventions of festival structure, the short programs are generally based around sub-themes that are either pre-established or out of common trends that arise from the submitted films. In this way, looking at the themes of the shorts programs is an interesting insight into some of the wider trends within the film industry during those production years. In the past three editions there have been programs such as Trans* Youth, Trans* Wise (quoted as being “for the elderly”), Feeling Community, Unambiguously Intersex as well as programs that focus on a specific country, like Australian, Turkish, or Dutch productions. Reoccurring programs include sessions on pornography and sex positivity, like “Sexperimental” and “PORN” for the 2017

edition, as well as some type of art programming, social lounge and debates. During the 2017 edition, instead of having programs devoted to different nationalities or sub-themes, TranScreen had collaborations with other ‘sister’ film festivals and cultural organizations such as Cinedans, the Transketeers and the International Queer Migrant Film Festival (IQMF). With these collaborations there were also two, non-themed, short film programs, two pornography short film programs and two themed short programs. The art programming was an exhibition held at the Amsterdam Museum, entitled *Trans*Objects*, which featured six film artworks by different artists representing different forms of the trans* experience. The overall selection was an even mix of short film programs and feature length films within the narrative, experimental and documentary forms. This gives a good indication of how broad trans* cinema can be, as it is not necessarily a genre unto itself but more of a lens with which to view films made within the context of the trans*identity.⁶⁴

The “IQMF Presents” program focused on the themes of “sexual diversity in migrant communities,” and the particular tensions between trans* identity and Islam.⁶⁵ *Nasser* (2015) is a fictional drama about a female-born teenager who struggles against the expectations of her parents to conform to the conventions of a particular gender, while trying to “stay true to herself,” and her identification with a more masculine identity.⁶⁶ At no point in the film is it explicitly stated that Nasser (the nick name of the teenager) is trans* identifying, but the implication is present in the tension between mother and daughter, in particular within a scene where the mother finds a box of clippings in which Nasser had pasted her face on the bodies of male sports stars. Later, the mother insists that Nasser wear a dress and act more feminine, to which Nasser, in retaliation and discomfort, cuts off all of her long, curly hair. The film ends with a tenuous resolution between mother and daughter, helped by a supportive father, in which the mother accepts Nasser’s decidedly un-feminine appearance, though any actual identification remains unsaid.

The other film in the “IQMF Presents” program is *Locked In* (2016) and is a documentary that focuses on a group of trans*gender Muslims in South Africa that are brought together by an organization called The Inner Circle, which provides a safe space and counseling for them.⁶⁷ *Locked In* provides insight into the experience of trans* people facing multiple layers of discrimination as a “Muslim population being black, working class and transgender,”⁶⁸ The documentary shows the subjects, two male-to-female (MTF) and two female-to-male (FTM),

interacting in various parts of their individual communities as well as with each other, through *The Inner Circle*. The film presents traditional documentary conventions in its use of talking head interviews mixed with newsreel footage showing acts of discrimination against the trans* community. The interviews are notable because they feature the subjects in public spaces as a way of trying to normalize the trans* identity into everyday life. For instance, there are interviews with one subject at a gym, with the mother of one of the subjects in her place of work and with a different subject at a skate park with friends. In the interview with the subject at the skate park, reveals to his friend that he is trans*gender and was born female and records the reaction and subsequent acceptance as a positive example of trans* and cis interaction.⁶⁹ Both *Nasser* and *Locked In*, despite being different in form, offer similar themes and representations of trans* conflict within societal and religious pressures, and the tentative but hopeful resolutions of acceptance and understanding in the face of discrimination.

Another documentary, *Kiki* (2016), “follows a fresh colourful LGBTQ generation who uses radical self expression in a dynamic, artistic and activist subculture known as the Kiki scene in New York City,”⁷⁰ *Kiki* is an interesting iteration of the queer/ trans* documentary because it presents a nonlinear portrait of an entire subculture within the queer community. Due to a mixture of portraiture and vérité style of filmmaking, *Kiki* exhibits a more naturalistic tone than *Locked In* that helps to highlight different types of trans* and queer experience. *Kiki* also features trans* and queer identifying people equally, which is an important quality because helps to address some of the tensions that come up between the specific labels of trans* versus gay or lesbian. This is shown through scenes in which the subjects themselves address some of the confusions and differences between gender identity and sexual orientation.⁷¹ *Kiki* demonstrates a move away from a ‘typical’ representation of a trans* story and, instead, moves towards a more inclusive representation of trans* and queer identifying people simply as they exist within their community. *Kiki* represents “the world in which [queer people] move” as opposed to “a plot problem to be solved,”⁷²

Like a majority of film festivals today, TranScreen also has a strong emphasis on art programming and non-film activities as a way of distinguishing itself and keeping audiences engaged. One way in which TranScreen does this is through an art exhibition made in conjunction with the festival each year. The 2017 edition featured an installation of six short films that explored “the tensions around visibility, the medical world and media representations

or transgender lives,” and was entitled *Trans*Objects*.⁷³ *Trans*Objects* was hosted at the Amsterdam Museum where the six videos were played in a loop and once a day there was a ‘Meet the Artist’ hour in which one of the artists would speak about their film. The Amsterdam Museum as the venue for *Trans*Objects* is significant because it is a location that is more open to a broader audience than a smaller, more niche, gallery space would be. Though the program itself was much more artistic in content than in form (as in, it was simply short films projected onto a screen in front of a seated audience) there was a very clear and interesting cohesion between each film that provided a strong representation of the festival to an outside audience. Each film dealt with a personal interpretation of the trans* experience and because they are experimental in form, they did not have the confines of narrative storytelling tying them to a more typical style of representation.⁷⁴

Two films in particular that gave very poignant presentations of the trans* experience were *A Received Notion of Masculinity* (2015) and *American Reflexxx* (2015). *A Received Notion of Masculinity* showed artist Julius Thissen trying “to come as close as possible to the stereotype [of a] macho gym male over a period of eight months,”⁷⁵ The seven minute video shows Julius with his trainer in a basement-like gym that held sparse pieces of equipment that were white and inscribed with sayings like, “Allow me to change my mind,” and “A received notion of masculinity,” The video shows Julius going through a grueling training practice, as he pushes his body to the edge in order to achieve a mainstream notion of masculinity and eventually breaks down. *A Received Notion of Masculinity* is pertinent because it shows a very specific aspect of the female-to-male transition and the pressures to conform to certain mainstream standards of masculinity.⁷⁶ *Trans*Objects* was very intentional in its representation of both female-to-male and male-to-female experiences equally. A more disturbing example is the film *American Reflexxx*, which documented a social experiment that took place in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. The fourteen-minute film follows performance artist Signe Pierce as she “struts down a busy oceanside street in stripper garb and a reflective mask,”⁷⁷ As artist and filmmaker walk down the street, a mob of people begin to follow them, shouting insults, which escalates to objects being thrown and one woman goes as far as pushing Pierce down into the street. The result of the video is shocking as it shows an unadulterated vision of violence against trans* person. Not all of the films in this section are as violent and sharp in their critiques of

mainstream Western culture, but they do present illuminating personal interpretations of the trans* experience that would probably not get exposure otherwise.

“The festival must embrace its role as a cultural platform as well as one of exhibition, becoming a better version of its two predecessors, television and the university. The future of this new cinema then relies on replacing the spectacle of occasional exhibition events with the rejuvenated promotion of an interactive cinema culture,”⁷⁸ This ties back to the prevalence of non-film programming within film festivals and TranScreen exemplifies this with its exhibition of Trans*Objects as well as multiple scheduled debates, talks and more general social events that aim to facilitate community outreach and create a safe space. Some of the ways in which TranScreen demonstrates its commitment to community and safe spaces is by including notices in the program and website informing guests of possible ‘triggers’ and providing extra information about the content of the selection.⁷⁹ Basil Tsiokos talks about how LGBT/Q festivals, and niche-identity festivals in general, “serve a need beyond simply showcasing what is called ‘positive images’... [by] providing a communal public social setting where LGBT individuals [can] celebrate or debate LGBT films together with other LGBT audience members,” and how, by being held outside of a bar or club, the anxieties that accompany those settings are greatly reduced.⁸⁰ Though it is difficult to assess the success of these intentions without performing more sociologically based research, it is at least clear in the marketing material and programming that TranScreen’s goals are aimed at creating this kind of atmosphere. More specifically, the 2017 edition organized three supplemental panels and debates that accompanied different screenings, including a debate on “intersectionality in the trans* community,” that followed a screening of the documentary *MAJOR!* (2015), about the “life and campaigns of Miss Major Griffin-Gracy, a 73 year-old black transgender activist,”⁸¹ Other programs included social events such as the “WTF Party” and the “MasQueerade Party”, both of which featured drag performances.

A key tenant of TranScreen is to create and promote a safe space for trans* identifying people. For this reason, the festival is run by community initiative and thus is seen as a grassroots festival, which also means that it faces a less stable situation in terms of funding and professionalization. As mentioned before, there is often a conflict of interest between professionalizing in order to receive better funding and staying true to the minority community that the festival represents. In other words, “to negotiate between industry aspirations towards

the mainstream and grassroots media that resist commodification,”⁸² For this reason it should be noted that the 2017 edition had the least amount of supplemental programming of the previous four editions (2011, 2013, 2015 and 2017), thus highlighting the precarious position that TranScreen and many other identity-based grassroots festivals face. That being said, it also reiterates TranScreen’s commitment to the community in spite of these issues. The programming of the 2017 edition of TranScreen shows this because, despite having a smaller number of programs, they still screened a wide selection based more on representation than on conventional quality.⁸³

2.4 Concerns and Funding

One of the main arguments stating that the festival circuit is oversaturated has to do with funding, or a lack thereof. Most film festivals operate as non-profit organizations and are therefore almost entirely funded by their municipalities and/or private sponsors. “The festival-as-non-profit model puts festivals in competition with one another [...] the end result has been a glut of film festivals and a crisis in the festival circuit,”⁸⁴ In other words, the more festivals there are, the less money is available for the individual institutions. As a result, initiatives are put in place that favor funding for newer festivals and institutions, in hopes that they are able to establish enough of an audience to be sustain by ticket sales and private sponsors.⁸⁵ For identity based and grassroots festivals, like TranScreen, searching for funding can become precarious. On one hand, the need and appeal for festivals like TranScreen is the ability to provide representation for non-mainstream films and makers, discuss difficult topics and to promote a sense of community for marginalized people. However, on the other hand, festivals need to be professionalized enough to appeal to government funding as a viable cultural institution.

The vast majority of film festivals run on unpaid staff and volunteers, which can also become increasingly problematic. Festival work is very time and labor consuming, particularly nearing and during the event itself, yet the workers often still need to maintain second jobs in order to live. For this reason, it is not uncommon for festivals to have a high turnover rate for even such seminal positions as director; “being a festival director is not a full-time job, but an all-the-time job,”⁸⁶ This makes the sustainability for a small festival based largely on personal investment, which can be inherently difficult to maintain when there is no monetary returns. TranScreen has an open policy for volunteers, meaning that anyone can become a volunteer, but there has never been enough funding to offer any paid positions or reimbursements to staff. What

makes this issue more difficult is that many of the volunteers are unemployed as a result of stigmatization of trans* people (and marginalized groups in general) because they are an “already at-risk identity,” Steinbock says this makes it more difficult to navigate the “tension between grass-roots activism, which is really focused on good representation, and the overarching need for funders to have organisations professionalize themselves,”⁸⁷ Loist touches on these challenges by saying festivals must be mindful of the danger of “commodifying their community as a specialized niche audience,” and respectful of the “politics of counter representation and community formation,”⁸⁸ For a festival like TranScreen, this is hugely important for how they conduct their organization and structure their programming. Not only do they need to remain committed to the idea of “grassroots activism” but they must also find ways to make it sustainable and socially responsible for the workers within the festival as well. An uneven tip in this delicate balance can end up proving fatal for TranScreen and specialized film festivals in general.

2.5 Conclusion

The 2017 edition of TranScreen exhibited a pretty even mix of documentaries, fictions and art films, both short and feature-length and all made by and for queer and trans* people. An immediately noticeable trait of this edition is the number of collaborations with other institutions that curated and presented the majority of the short film programs. There were ten short film programs in total, four of which were curated by other institutions, as well as eleven feature-length films. Another noticeable difference between editions is that 2017 generally had less clearly designated themes per program, for example, as compared to the 2013 edition, which screened twenty feature-length films, hosted two workshops as well as a number of discussion panels, all with a specific topic.⁸⁹ Programs that have stayed consistent between the editions include some kind of art programming, usually a separate exhibition, a program focused on Dutch productions, a program on trans* pornography, and some form of designated time and place for socializing and meeting artists. Aside from the consistent programs, there were much fewer topics presented at the 2017 edition, with the two main short film programs simply being titled “Shorts 1” and “Shorts 2”. This is not to discount the programs presented by the other institutions, including Cinedans, AKS, and the IQMFF, which presented clear themes in line with their respective organizations.⁹⁰ While the 2017 edition of TranScreen remains true to the aims of creating a safe space and promoting a community among trans* and queer people, it is

clear that their strategies have shifted from the previous years, which brings back the question of sustainability for a specialized festival of this type and size in general and within the Netherlands.

The programming and curatorial considerations that go into identity based film festivals like TranScreen are generally more focused on issues of representation and inclusivity as opposed to judgments placed on cinematic conventions. This has to do with what kind of role each type of festival plays. Where larger festivals fulfill the role of tastemakers and trendsetters, specialized identity festivals have to be more mindful of what they choose in terms of challenging mainstream stereotypes that work to marginalize identities while also being representative of the whole community. Rastegar says, “Festival programmers can use their role as gatekeepers to strategically challenge dichotomous valuations of film as either art or commerce, and to facilitate ways of looking that allow for difference rather than enforce nationalistic models of homogeneity,”⁹¹ TranScreen does this by programming a mixed selection in terms of form and by working to represent as many facets of the trans* community as possible through debates, art exhibitions and a variety of themed sessions. By having other organizations present different programs, TranScreen is also showing inclusivity to the larger queer and cultural community.

3. Genre Based and Thematic Film Festivals: Architecture Film Festival Rotterdam

Chapter one focused on defining a typology and hierarchy of film festivals, using the metaphor of a festival galaxy to represent its expansiveness and relative organization; as in, stars and star systems represent different subsets of festivals and planets of varying sizes represent the festivals themselves.⁹² Chapter two then went on to look at TranScreen: Amsterdam Trans*Gender Film Festival, as a ‘small planet’ in the ‘star system’ of queer film festivals. This chapter worked to establish some of the curatorial and structural concerns that exists for small, specialized film festivals, both in general and in regards to the Netherlands. Chapter three will move on to another ‘star system’ that represents a very different but as niche, if not more so, specialization of film festivals—architecture and design film festivals. Specifically, this chapter will look at the Architecture Film Festival Rotterdam (AFFR) as its case study and compare the curatorial and structural strategies with TranScreen. Though AFFR and TranScreen seem very far apart in subject matter, what I am interested in is how their status as specialized festivals affects their overall structure and how each theme is reflected in that structure. Comparing AFFR and TranScreen will ultimately tie back into my research question of how specialized film festivals help to sustain the festival galaxy and keep the system from oversaturation and collapse, as well as to postulate that the differences in content and audience is what helps to keep the differing ‘star systems’, and the galaxy as a whole, sustainable. This chapter should also help to compare and provide insight to festival and film culture in the Netherlands.

The major difference between AFFR and TranScreen is apparent in the subject matter that each festival focuses on, architecture and trans* identity; the two subjects do not appear to overlap whatsoever. More generally, the two festivals fall under the sub-categories of subject or genre based film festivals and community or identity based film festivals, respectively. It is much easier to draw connections between these broader categories as a sense of community is often created by a shared interest in a certain subject, as well as certain recurring themes and genres often emerge in identity-based festivals. My main question for this chapter is whether or not the overall structure of AFFR and TranScreen are more or less similar due to their relative sizes as specialized film festivals. My hypothesis is that the structures are essentially the same and it is the stark contrast in subject matter, and therefore audience, that distinguishes and supports the

proliferation and consequent specialization of festivals. First I will look at the conventions associated with and what constitutes an architectural films as well as what would be considered a typical selection at architecture and design film festivals. Then I will focus on the programming for the 2017 edition of AFFR and examine how it reflects the broader organization of AFFR. Lastly, I will give a comparative analysis of AFFR and TranScreen based on the examination of their respective programming. Chapter three will conclude with a reflection on the initial hypothesis given and determine how closely it matches with the comparative analysis of the characteristics of these two film festivals.

3.2 Architectural Films

Architecture film and architecture film festivals, though more numerous than expected, are still a fairly unknown and unwritten about topic, at least for those not already embedded in that specific industry. That being said, there are a number of proposed sub-genres that are labeled ‘architectural films’ including the ‘architectural essay,’ which can be described as projects that “reveal architecture’s relationship with memory, in symbolic, affective and structural terms [...] and merge film attributes, such as editing, continuity and montage, with architectural representation attributes, thus proposing film as an architectural drawing,”⁹³ This sub-genre proposes that films such as *Man With a Movie Camera* (1929) by Dziga Vertov and *If Buildings Could Talk* (2010) by Wim Wenders would fall under this category.⁹⁴ According to Arch FilmFest: Architecture Film Festival London, an ‘architectural film’ can be anything from “documentaries about architecture or cities, documentaries about architects, films that feature architects speaking, films made by architects, films where architecture, the city, or set design plays a significant roles, film that use iconic architecture in a significant way, to art or animation that directly uses architectural elements,”⁹⁵ Though this particular description is somewhat redundant, it does help to give a sense of how prevalent architectural elements actually are within cinema. In fact, by taking a step back, one can see that architecture and architectural elements are ubiquitous within cinema; after all, films have to take place *somewhere*. Examples of more mainstream films that rely heavily on architectural elements include *Blade Runner* (1982) that presents a dystopian version of Los Angeles, as well as films like *Metropolis* (1927) and *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), which are known for their impressive and dreamlike set designs.⁹⁶ Stephen Ward says, “Film is a medium in which architecture is framed, captured and described. No matter what culture or genre, films incorporate the built environment as set, with cities and

buildings used as backdrop,”⁹⁷ While it becomes easy enough to draw the connection between architecture and mainstream cinema, it does not necessarily illuminate what exactly would be screened at an architecture and design film festival. It does, however, help to establish a genre of architectural films and therefore a potential market for specially focused festivals and still begging the question, “Okay, so what exactly is being programmed?”

The types of films that are normally selected for AFFR are documentaries that involve some facet of architecture as the main subject. Generally, these include films about specific architects, buildings, cities, landscapes, or urban infrastructure. The theme for the 2017 edition is “City for Sale—The City as Investment Model,” which ties into the prevalence of films for this program that have to do with urban infrastructure and how it affects people. It should also be noted that the themes from the previous three editions also had a focus on infrastructure and its affects on living conditions. In this way, AFFR partly presents itself in the vein of human rights festivals. According to the festival’s director Joep Mol, “of all the subjects that cropped up in the over three hundred films submitted and scouted, the most striking was the globalization of the city and property market and the resulting problems of gentrification, mass tourism, speculation, and the threat of losing urban authenticity,”⁹⁸ To support each edition’s theme, AFFR organizes several of its non-film events around investigating the different aspects, as well as providing a curatorial statement for the theme in the program booklet. Their curatorial statement also helps to further situate the festival and the sub-theme within cinema by describing the affect of films such as *Roman Holiday* (1953) on tourism in Rome. Jord den Hollander, the head curator of AFFR, writes, “Cities discovered film as a new marketing tool that was eagerly deployed in the films of Antonioni and Hitchcock, just as it was those of Steven Spielberg and Woody Allen,”⁹⁹ By having a section towards the beginning of the program booklet devoted specifically to the contextualization of that year’s sub-theme, AFFR helps to define itself and connect to the larger film industry, despite apparent specificity of the subject. That being said, it is very clear that AFFR is oriented mainly towards the architecture industry and audiences that are specifically interested in architecture as opposed to cinema.¹⁰⁰ However, attending as a film scholar, I found that the different aspects of architecture that were being presented were still very easy to follow and understand, despite not having any background in that specific subject. This shows how AFFR is specifically targeted towards a niche community and how that creates a successful and sustainable festival in terms of audience.¹⁰¹

3.3 Programming

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the AFFR selection of films consist mostly of documentaries that focus on or around different aspects of architecture, which falls directly in line with the Arch FilmFest definition of architectural films. Although the 2017 selection are all documentaries, the films nonetheless represent a broad range of form, from informational talking-head documentaries to more poetic portraits that present architecture as its own character. Despite a seemingly narrow scope of content, there is no lack of architecture, buildings, architects, or spaces that could be focused on and, as AFFR exhibits, a coinciding plethora of films concerning to these various aspects exists. Evidence of this is further suggested by the number of sub-themes that the festival presents and is emphasized in the very detailed program booklet. For instance, the program booklet has several sections that are devoted specifically to providing an introduction and context to the various sub-themes, including the development of the main theme “City For Sale”. These sections comprise of promotions for films and events that follow specific topics. Such events include the City for Sale debate that is followed by a screening of a German film of the same name, which is about international property investors that are turning Berlin into a commodity city.¹⁰² The other films include *Dispossession—The Great Social Housing Swindle*, about the “failing housing policies of recent decades in England,” *Whose City*, another documentary about the changing social landscape of Berlin, and *Earthquake Tourism*, about the effect of tourism on the historical center of Lisbon.¹⁰³ These films, when grouped together, have a visibly discernible link to each other and to the overall theme because each focuses on issues of city as commodity and capital, and how that affects urban and social infrastructure. Otherwise, when viewed separately, as they are programed at the actual festival, they would perhaps never be seen through the lens of ‘city as commodity’ or paired with their complementary films. Peter Bosma posits, “The ‘product’ of a film festival is the programme. In order to be able to promote the programme properly it is necessary to create a recognisable ‘corporate identity’, in other words a clear curatorial profile,”¹⁰⁴ By providing detailed context behind the curatorial choices and grouping, AFFR shows its intentionality towards creating and maintaining a specific kind of curatorial profile.

Another interesting sub-theme that is presented in the program is entitled “100 Years After the Russian Revolution: in search of times past...” This section includes three films that all concern buildings that were built or influenced by Soviet-era Communist rule. *Bloki* is about an

apartment block named Bloki in Poland, *Novgorod Spaceship* looks at a huge theatre built in the small city of Novgorod, Russia, and *Bowlingtreff* focuses on a postmodern building “which is what makes it so utterly unique in the DDR,” that opened 1987 in Leipzig. “[Bowlingtreff] was able to proceed by systematically misleading the central planning authorities in Berlin [...] [and] offered an escape from the oppressive, everyday reality in the drab centre of Leipzig,”¹⁰⁵ This mini-program also presents a clearly defined connection between films that all look at specific era buildings and the influence of politics in their respective cities. It should also be noted that unlike a more traditional cinema program, which might show two or three connected films in one screening event, the mini-programs presented by AFFR are not shown together, or often even on the same day. Instead, the program booklet acts as more of a viewer’s guide to the festival, a way of suggesting some of the connections that could be made within the festival. This is an important characteristic of AFFR because it further confirms the intentionality behind the curatorial strategies and particularly on how the audience’s experiences are formed.¹⁰⁶ The use of mini-programs and in-depth contextual descriptions helps to professionalize AFFR and also give it a distinct “verbal architecture” that helps to distinguish it from other small festivals that are often characterized as being more grassroots or DIY.¹⁰⁷

AFFR clearly pays particular attention to providing insight and context to the themes of each edition with sections specifically devoted to different themes and groupings of films. Another distinctive aspect of the AFFR program is that it also includes a number of interviews with some of the film directors as well as thematic descriptions that are written by various architectural professionals. In this way, AFFR exhibits, not only its overall curatorial strategies, but also its connection and commitment to the industry as a whole. AFFR depends on and strategically promotes this emphasis on printed material as its own “verbal architecture” or “written festival,” both terms put forth by Daniel Dayan. He observes that, “In a way, a film festival is mostly spent answering questions self-definition, identity, and character,” and that there is an entire *other* festival that exists in the pages and pages of printed material.¹⁰⁸ Though Dayan’s point is that almost all film festivals have some form of a verbal architecture, AFFR’s ‘written festival’ is particularly pertinent because it is another layer of architecture and design that is being represented at an architecture and design film festival.

Stephen Ward writes about architectural programming saying, “some films fall into the category of documentary for the architecturally informed, rather than engaging with those with a

more general interest in architecture [...] The challenge is to produce films that both inform and debate architecture, that are designed for film audiences and not just the educated architectural observer,”¹⁰⁹ While AFFR is clearly catered towards a specifically “architecturally informed” audience, it does still manage to offer a selection of films that are more easily accessible for less-architecturally informed audiences and are simply high quality examples of the documentary form, in general. One example of this is the film *Some Kind of Joy* (2016) by Sam Hobkinson, which is about the architect Sir Nicholas Grimshaw and several of his most renowned and innovative buildings around the world.¹¹⁰ The film is described as being “a remarkable portrait of an era,” and manages to weave together descriptions of different buildings into a compelling narrative about how they came to be built and the people that inhabit them.¹¹¹ Although *Some Kind of Joy* is by all conventions a very traditional documentary, moved forward with talking head interviews that are paired with roaming landscape shots of various buildings, the pacing of the film is very cinematic with the opening of the film in medias res before going back in time to Grimshaw’s first building project.¹¹² By opening the film with this kind of narrative film convention, *Some Kind of Joy* takes the otherwise traditional conventions of documentary and gives it an interesting spin. This film serves as one of the more mainstream and easy-to-watch selections that ultimately helps to bring together an audience with a more general interest in architecture, or documentaries in general.

Another selection of AFFR 2017 that provides a nice counterpart to *Some Kind of Joy* is a portrait documentary about an old theatre in the small Russian town of Novgorod, entitled *Novgorod’s Spaceship* (2016).¹¹³ Unlike *Some Kind of Joy*, which looks at a number of works by a specific architect, *Novgorod’s Spaceship* focuses on a single building and its bizarre relationship with the town. It is easy to compare these two documentaries and suggest that *Some Kind of Joy* is a more mainstream documentary, whereas *Novgorod’s Spaceship* is a much more poetic and artistic form of documentary.¹¹⁴ However, it is *Novgorod’s Spaceship* that receives significantly more attention in the program, with a place in the mini-program “100 Years After the Russian Revolution” as well as a featured interview with the director, Andrei Rozen.¹¹⁵ Though there could be a number of ulterior reasons for AFFR to feature this interview, such as availability of directors, premier status etc., it helps to show that AFFR is open to more experimental work and lesser-known topics, helping to position itself as a festival of innovation. The film itself contemplates the fate of a monolith theatre that was built in a small town,

traditionally known for its old churches and small kremlin, as a way to keep workers from flooding into the bigger cities after the Russian revolution and to grow a leisure infrastructure.¹¹⁶ The result was a very bizarre looking building that is surrounded by myth and generally disliked and dismissed by the residents. According to the film and an interview with the director, the residents of Novgorod believed that the theatre was designed by the Russian rock-star, Andrey Makarevich, when in fact it was actually designed by an eccentric and reclusive old man, Vladimir Somov, who defies the archetypical architect “who lives in a posh house surrounded by design furniture.”¹¹⁷ Rozen goes on to say that “the film is not so much an anthem to this building. Architecture never exists in a vacuum. It’s more an analysis of the society that surrounds the building and lets it fall apart,”¹¹⁸ The interview, and that quote in particular, are significant to the festival because it connects a film, that may otherwise seem out of place among more traditional documentaries, more securely to the festival’s overall theme—essentially, architecture as a reflection of society.

Although *Some Kind of Joy* and *Novgorod’s Spaceship* represent a wide range of selections at AFFR, they do not necessarily fit into the edition’s main theme ‘City for Sale’. While each film does focus on an aspect of architecture that is reflective of a larger society, they do not necessarily address the idea of a city as a commodity. The theme ‘City for Sale’ does, however, manage to encompass many different aspects of urban infrastructure, as can be seen in the thematic selections, including, and with an emphasis on, issues of human rights. One way in which AFFR focused on this theme of infrastructure and human rights, along with the dedicated ‘City for Sale’ program, is through the AFFR College Day. College Day is an initiative wherein AFFR teams up with different architectural schools around the Netherlands to present introductory lectures to certain topics and screenings that apply to that edition’s theme.¹¹⁹ AFFR’s collaboration with architectural schools began with the 2013 edition, though in a slightly different iteration that has been further developed throughout the years. The 2013 edition presented a “Special Student Program” in which academics from two different schools in the Netherlands selected a number of films that were decided to be “must-sees” for any architecture student.¹²⁰ Then in 2015 there was the “College Tour”, which presented four films with longer introductions by different academics in architecture and design.¹²¹ The 2017 edition has grown this program to include six different schools and six corresponding lectures.

One of the College Day screenings for the 2017 edition included two shorter films that looked at different pieces of infrastructure in two developing cities. The films were *Addis Ababa-Chinese New Flower* (2016) by Silvan Hagenbrock, and *Cycologic* (2016) by Elsa Lövdin, Emilia Stålhammar and Veronica Pålsson.¹²² *Chinese New Flower* looks at the rapidly expanding city of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and how it is changing the way of life for its residents. The title *Chinese New Flower* is derived from the city name Addis Ababa, which translates to “new flower” and the looming presence of Chinese investors that have initiated the majority of the change.¹²³ *Cycologic* is a shorter film, fifteen minutes as opposed to thirty, and follows a similar theme of trying to navigate urban infrastructure in a rapidly developing city, this time in Kampala, Uganda. In this case, though, the film focuses specifically on advocating bicycles and bicycle lanes in the overcrowded city streets.¹²⁴ As mentioned before, these films were accompanied by an introductory lecture that talked about some of the different ways in which architects can and should go about planning and building in rapidly developing cities, like the ones featured. The lecture touched on different models of city design, including one that was highly tech-based and featured several skyscrapers as well as highlighting a disparity in wealth. Another model, that was meant to be a more organic development, was closely tied with the already existing culture. This city model featured fewer tall buildings and, instead, had a focus on public transportation, bicycle lanes and green spaces. The latter model was meant to be an example of a better and more sustainable city design that would help to decrease the disparity in social class.¹²⁵ The College Day programming and lectures serve as an example of the community involvement that AFFR participates in. By connecting these lectures by academics from architectural universities in the Netherlands to films *about* architecture from all over the world, AFFR gives students a chance to see their future trade in practice. This kind of programming also provides a significant networking opportunity for students, professionals and businesses, not entirely unlike the film industry networking that is facilitated by much larger film festivals. Or, on a smaller scale, the community development that is enabled by more grassroots festivals, like TranScreen.

3.4 Comparison

Though AFFR is not as clearly defined as a community-oriented festival as TranScreen is, it still manages to achieve a distinct feeling of unification in a similar way to TranScreen as well as being relatively bigger in terms of non-film events and theater size. That being said, there

are a number of outlying factors that could contribute to the relative popularity of AFFR as compared to TranScreen, including an already established interconnected community of architecture schools and firms throughout the Netherlands. While there is an already existing and robust queer festival network, as is mentioned in chapter two, since there are already several queer festivals in general, and specifically in Amsterdam, TranScreen does face more competition in terms of funding and support.¹²⁶ Though my original hypothesis is that the specialization of festivals is key to their sustainability because there is less competition between individual festivals, it does not eliminate competition entirely. Since TranScreen and trans* film festivals are a subset of a larger specialization, it naturally bears more competition than AFFR.¹²⁷ In contrast, those interested and functioning within the field of architecture in the Netherlands really have only one source of content, AFFR, and therefore, because the network is smaller, there is significantly less competition for both funding and audience.

Another outlying factor that could contribute to the difference in scale between the two festivals is the overall recognition and tolerance of each subject. TranScreen represents a marginalized identity that is “already considered a precarious at-risk identity,” whereas AFFR, though still presenting on different human rights issues, inherently comes from a more professionalized field that does not necessarily have to fight for its own representation in the same way that TranScreen does.¹²⁸ This affords AFFR a kind of security that TranScreen simply does not possess. That being said, it is these outlying factors that prevent AFFR and TranScreen from being compared on the basis of funding and support. In this case they are too dissimilar because these aspects are more or less beyond the control of the festival, whereas, though the themes and selections are widely disparate, they still have control over how they reflect and present their subjects. Therefore, the curatorial strategies and concerns for each festival, being that they are small-scale specialized film festivals, are still worth comparing because each represents a niche community in the Netherlands and function under similar festival formats.

An important similarity between TranScreen and AFFR is that both festivals have to deal with, and be very intentional about, the self-definition of the kind of film they represent because neither type of cinema is widely recognized by the mainstream. Though TranScreen is part of the wider queer cinema and festival network, it still represents a very specific subset of that and has to deal with questions and confusions between ‘queer cinema’ and ‘trans*cinema’. Similarly, while architecture and design is ubiquitous throughout cinema, there is still no clear genre or set

of conventions assigned to ‘architectural films’. Both festivals, then, need to have a strong focus on their own identity and branding as film festivals. While this is more or less true for any film festival, or event for that matter, to be successful, there needs to be a particular and intentional focus with specialized festivals. Another important similarity is that both TranScreen and AFFR include some sort of an art program or art emphasis. The way each festival organizes and presents their art programs is also indicative of the overall theme. AFFR is more design oriented in that all of the marketing and paper materials are intended to convey more precise information. That is not to say that TranScreen’s marketing materials do not convey information, it just does so in less precise way. Where AFFR’s program reads like an architecture magazine, TranScreen’s program reads like a program catalogue. In a similar sense, TranScreen’s art exhibitions are more focused on interpretations of trans* experience whereas AFFR’s exhibitions are more focused illustrating an aspect of architecture. Though, TranScreen has a more clearly defined focus on art programming, it is nonetheless telling that both festivals feature some kind of art program as a way of adding to the event experience.¹²⁹

The interesting differences that exist between AFFR and TranScreen have to do with the presentation of each theme in the marketing and paper materials, and specifically the presentation of the curatorial decisions in said materials. This comes down to the fundamental difference between the overarching ‘types’ of the festivals, identity versus theme based. Where many festivals, particularly the larger ones, wield their power in the form of taste making and as ‘gatekeepers’ to different kinds of cinema, oftentimes identity festivals, like TranScreen, have to purposefully work against being seen as ‘gatekeepers’. This is because, as focused on in chapter two, identity-based festivals are more often than not working to dispel negative definitions and stereotypes, and therefore to act as ‘gatekeepers’ perpetuates a connotation of exclusivity instead of a more inclusive and understanding community. AFFR, on the other hand, does not necessarily have to ward off negative stereotyping because architecture is not an identity and is, instead, an industry that, while ubiquitous, stands to benefit from more precise definition. Therefore, where AFFR focuses heavily on providing in depth context and insight into their curatorial choices, TranScreen works to invite a pointedly communal and open atmosphere with their programming and structure.¹³⁰ Where TranScreen is necessarily trying to avoid pigeonholing themselves and have to be weary of more stereotypical or problematic

representations of the trans* experience, AFFR has more room to lean into their niche, and in fact probably benefits more from it.

3.5 Conclusion

AFFR and TranScreen are much more similar in their community engagement than I had originally predicted. I was taken by the relative popularity of architecture and design film festivals in general because I had not been aware of that thematic subset prior to AFFR, due to a much smaller network as compared to the queer festival circuit. Overall, I discovered that AFFR is strongly rooted in themes pertaining to human rights and other social issues, much like TranScreen, but pertaining specifically to urban infrastructure rather than identity politics. As well, I learned about ‘architectural film’ as a genre, which, though not necessarily pertinent to the comparison to TranScreen, does help to illuminate the relevance of architecture and design festivals. The overall structures of AFFR and TranScreen are more or less the same, including thematically oriented screening sessions, non-film programs and some kind of art programming. They differ in their curatorial strategies due to the politics of their respective subjects, which is reflected in the marketing materials and overall branding of each festival. AFFR has more of a focus on self-definition and curatorial context, whereas TranScreen has more of a focus on facilitating a communal and inclusive atmosphere.

Conclusion

The film festival galaxy remains sustainable because of the specialization and localization of film festivals, which serve a multitude of different purposes and, most importantly, different audiences. However, since there has been a major proliferation in the number of festivals, the competition for financial support and sponsorship has risen between festivals and brings into question their individual sustainability. Contrary to what I expected, the key to remaining successful does not necessarily lie in the overall quality of films, but rather there is more equal emphasis on supplemental programming and marketing of the festivals as cultural events. In other words, many of the smaller festivals actually rely less on “exceptional filmmaking” than they do on committing to a certain level representation and diversity of non-film programming. This is partially evidenced by the outward differences of success between TranScreen and AFFR. Although the film programming is still hugely important to film festivals, and looking at the considerations that go into them is necessary when analyzing festivals, it has become clear that curating a film festival extends more towards the experience of the event as a whole. The other unexpected result is that, despite the fact that queer and trans* cinema has considerably more literature and theory written about it, AFFR was objectively more successful than TranScreen. This is also interesting because of the fact that there is almost no literature written about specifically architecture-themed/ oriented films, or a architecture-niche cinema, at least within film academia. That being said, AFFR is an indication of a thriving niche audience, and even a small architecture festival circuit.¹³¹

My research into the overall structure and curatorial strategies of specialized film festivals in the Netherlands has led me to the revelation that, oftentimes, smaller festivals can be less focused on the specific conventions of cinema and more focused on, and supported by, supplemental programming. This largely has to do with the idea that film festivals are cultural *events* rather than more traditional movie screenings and a major attraction to audiences is the feeling of attending a ‘live event’. In general, it is true that the specialization of festivals has helped to sustain the larger system and keep it from collapsing or becoming oversaturation, but the particular differences in how each festival markets itself and creates programming is much more nuanced than originally anticipated. A contemporary typology of the festival galaxy places different categorizations as ‘star systems’ or separate hierarchies that are interconnected with

each other as well as overarching hierarchy that makes up the ‘international film festival circuit’, which stands for an alternative distribution route to Hollywood. More specifically, by delineating some of the different ‘star systems’ into types such as genre or format-based festivals and identity or socially-based festivals, it helps to give an idea as to what sort of marketing and curatorial strategies will be employed. IFFR is located near the top tier festivals, which means that, though it does not have as much influence on the industry as Cannes, it is able to offer funding and other cultural capital to films and filmmakers that are screened each year. Since IFFR does general programming, meaning that it does not focus in one type of form, content or theme of film, specialized festivals have more room to develop in order to fill in certain gaps. This is the case for both TranScreen and AFFR, which provides content based around the trans* identity and content based around architecture, respectively. These festivals, as stated many times before, are able to function despite their relatively small size, budget and audience because they are specialized in ways that keep from being in direct competition with each other. This specialization is exhibited through the differences in curatorial and marketing strategies as ultimately delineated by their subsequent categorization as an identity and socially based festival and as genre and format based festival.

Criticisms and Suggestions

What I expected when deciding to position my thesis around two widely different case studies was to be able to ascertain a general overview and report on the state of film festivals in the Netherlands. I was hoping to find insight through the curatorial considerations of these specialized film festivals as a way of showing that festivals work as separate parts to a more unified whole and that, ultimately, they can exist without being in direct competition with each other, thus remaining sustainable. Though it can be concluded that IFFR, TranScreen and AFFR are not in danger of competing against one another, as was my intention, I did underestimate just how different the audiences for each festival would be, which may make my selection of festivals seem somewhat arbitrary. In the end, though my case studies do share similar characteristics in the general structure of film festivals, a curatorial analysis would perhaps be more insightful into the subject of sustainability of specialized festivals if based around more thematically similar festivals. That being said, AFFR does promote a specific focus on a type of activism, just not necessarily identity-based, like TranScreen.

In light of this, some personal criticisms around my research methods include having more specific questions when attending each festival as well as setting up formal interviews with guests and organizers. In other words, a suggestion for further research would be to take a more empirical approach that involves direct contact with audience members. This approach would permit a more in depth look into the perspective of reception studies within film festivals. In a related vein, it would also be more practical to look at two specialized festival within a similar categorization and compare the curatorial and marketing strategies to see how the relative success of each festival plays out. For instance, looking at the number of queer festivals in the Netherlands and comparing their sizes and audiences, or focus on architecture and design film festivals in Europe. On the other hand, further research could focus more on Elsaesser's and Dayan's approaches of gathering several program booklets of different festivals throughout the Netherlands and constructing a verbal architecture as a way of comparing structures and programming. This would allow for a much broader overview of the festival system within the Netherlands and give a better idea of how the structure as whole is sustained. There is also the potential to apply different perspectives to the study of specialized film festivals within a certain country. Stevens attempts this in her book on Australian film festivals by applying a curatorial approach to specialized film festivals in Melbourne, a historical approach the festival development in Australia in general, reception studies and how film festivals affect screen cultures, and an economic approach that looks at how festivals affect tourism and city perception. All of these approaches have been applied variously to festivals throughout the years, but few have done what Stevens has in focusing several perspectives on one region. However, this kind of research would stretch into a much longer-term project and would be better suited for a PhD dissertation or book.

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- ⁵ Marijke de Valck, "Film Festivals: History and Theory of a European Phenomenon that Became a Global Network," unpublished PhD thesis, 2006, 45. Quoted in Dina Iordanova, "The Film Festival Circuit," 2009, 116.
- ⁶ Stevens, "Apocalypse," 144.
- ⁷ Quintín, "Galaxy," 40.
- ⁸ Stevens, "Apocalypse," 141.
- ⁹ Ibid, 143.
- ¹⁰ There are several other reasons as well, but these are two most important ones in general and for this paper.
- ¹¹ Marijke de Valck, *Film Festivals: from European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia*, (2007). Kristen Stevens, *Australian Film Festivals: Audience, Place and Exhibition Culture*, (2016).
- ¹² Thomas Elsaesser, "Film Festival Networks, The New Topographies of Cinema in Europe (2005)," in *The Film Festival Reader*, 2013, 75.
- ¹³ Stevens, *Australian Film Festivals: Audience, Place, and Exhibition Culture*, 182.
- ¹⁴ Quintín, "Galaxy," 40.
- ¹⁵ Elsaesser, "New Topographies," 84. This is based off of Pierre Bourdieu's social mechanisms "behind taste and distinction," "by adding value and cultural capital at the top, while acting more as gentle gatekeeper than a bouncer at the bottom," in reference to festival hierarchy.
- ¹⁶ Quintín, "Galaxy," 42. This sentiment is also echoed by Stevens, as quoted in the conclusion of the Introduction.
- ¹⁷ Francesco Di Chiara and Valentina Re, "Film Festival/Film History: The Impact of Film Festivals on Cinema Historiography. Il cinema ritrovato and beyond," 2011, 134.
- ¹⁸ McGill, "View," 283.
- ¹⁹ Stephen Follows, "How many film festivals are there in the world?" 2015.
- ²⁰ Skadi Loist, "Crossover Dreams: Global Circulation of Queer Film on the Film Festival Circuits," 2016, 5. Loist cites the film festival portal *filmfestivals.com*, which "boasts of a comprehensive directory of over 6,000 festivals," and the film submissions portal *withoutabox.com* advertises over 5,000 festivals as of 2016.
- ²¹ Quintín, "Galaxy," 44.
- ²² Loist, "Crossover Dreams," 5. Loist cites de Valck's *Geopolitics* and Elsaessers "New Topographies,"
- ²³ Elsaesser, "New Topographies," 77. This is exemplified historically on many counts, in particular the advent of the French New Wave and the auteur theory and prominence. Also, Cannes was the first festival to place importance on the festival director and programmer, and away from national committees.
- ²⁴ Marijke de Valck, "Supporting art cinema at a time of commercialization: Principles and practices, the case of the International Film Festival Rotterdam," 2014, 47-48. Quoted in Loist, "Crossover dreams," 5.
- ²⁵ For the sake of the metaphor within the context of this thesis, I am ignoring any obvious misunderstandings of how actual galaxies work.
- ²⁶ Loist, "Crossover Dreams," 5.
- ²⁷ De Valck, "Supporting art cinema," 48.
- ²⁸ This list is by no means exhaustive, but these are the major 'minor' international festivals that usually span over ten days without a specific focus. Netherlands Film Festival takes place in Utrecht and includes several awards, Leiden International Film Festival is more geared towards cinephiles than filmmakers or distributors and also takes place over ten days, and Pluk de Nacht is in Amsterdam and is an outdoor festival.
- ²⁹ Some examples of specific genre festivals include the Dutch Mountain Film Festival, quoted as revolving around "the theme of mountainfilm," as well as the B-movies, Underground & Trash Film Festival that takes place in Breda and focuses on cult and exploitation films.
- ³⁰ This list is primarily based off of Loist's categorization in "Crossover Dreams," 5.
- ³¹ CinemAsia being for Asian cinema, Movies that Matter is based around social issue and human rights films (not necessarily documentaries), Latin American cinema, and Queer cinema respectively.
- ³² Stevens, "Apocalypse," 144.
- ³³ Peter Bosma *Film Programming: Curating for Cinemas, Festivals, Archives*, 70. Quoting Iordanova, 2010.
- ³⁴ Rastegar, "Crisis," 315.
- ³⁵ Elsaesser, "New Topographies," 78. At the time the festival director was seen as the ultimate programmer and dictator of taste in the festival. Today, that has shifted to more of a jury selection/ team of programmers.
- ³⁶ De Valck, *Geopolitics*, 175.
- ³⁷ Ibid, 163.
- ³⁸ Ibid, 179.
- ³⁹ Elsaesser, "New Topographies," 72. "Building bridges between Asian cinema and European audiences, a speciality of the Rotterdam festival for nearly two decades,"

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- ⁴⁰ Elsaesser, "New Topographies," 72.
- ⁴¹ De Valck, *Geopolitics*, 172.
- ⁴² Ibid, 167.
- ⁴³ Marijke De Valck et al, "Dossier: International Film Festival Rotterdam 2015," 2015, 2.
- ⁴⁴ Mark Peranson, "First You Get the Power, Then You Get the Money: Two Models of Film Festivals (2009)," in *The Film Festival Reader*, 2013, 192. Peranson posits that there are only around 50 truly amazing films that emerge each year and there is thus a race for the major festivals to premiere one of those.
- ⁴⁵ Dana Linssen, "Beste Sandra," 2004, 5. Quoted in De Valck, *Geopolitics*, 164.
- ⁴⁶ De Valck, "Dossier," 3.
- ⁴⁷ Julian Stringer, "Regarding Film Festivals: Introduction (2003)," in *The Film Festival Reader*, 2013, 65.
- ⁴⁸ Rastegar, "Crisis," 312.
- ⁴⁹ Skadi Loist and Marijke de Valck, "Trans* film festivals: An interview with Eliza Steinbock," 2013. Note 1 in interview article says, "Trans* with an asterisk is a way to denote the widest possible meaning of who is included under the trans banner. It comes from the search engine functionality, in which the wildcard * placed after a word will show everything related to it. [...] It has been taken up fairly widely in scholarly writing and by activists," It includes all noncisgender identities, such as transgender, transvestite, genderqueer, genderfluid, non-binary, genderless, non-gendered, third gendered, trans man, trans woman.
- ⁵⁰ TranScreen website, "About TranScreen", 2017.
- ⁵¹ Loist and de Valck, "Steinbock Interview," 2013.
- ⁵² Ibid. Steinbock talks about the benefit of hosting the first edition in the same space as NTGF because "it made for good continuity... People are familiar with it,"
- ⁵³ Skadi Loist, "Precarious Cultural Work: About the Organization of (Queer) Film Festivals," 2011. This point is talked about specifically in this paper and reiterated in the interview with Eliza Steinbock.
- ⁵⁴ Roya Rastegar, "The De-Fusion of Good Intentions: Outfests Fusion Film Festival," 2009, 494.
- ⁵⁵ Loist and de Valck, "Steinbock Interview,"
- ⁵⁶ Damian Barr, "The Second International Transgender Film and Video Festival. The Lux Cinema, London 24-27 September 1998," 1998, 216.
- ⁵⁷ "TranScreen: Amsterdam Trans*Gender Film Festival 2017," 2017, 23, 31. Intersectionality means "the intersection of different identities and forms of oppression that intersect in one person," and intersex, or genderclear referring to all other non-binary gender identities such as "agender, two spirit, genderqueer, genderfluid and gender nonconforming,"
- ⁵⁸ Loist, "Crossover Dreams," 2.
- ⁵⁹ Jeremy Russell Miller, *Crossdressing Cinema: an Analysis of Transgender Representation in Film*, 2012, 8. Miller refers specifically to films like *Mrs. Doubtfire* (1995), *Tootsie* (1982) and *Some Like It Hot* (1959); the significance of these stories all being about white cis-men passing as women should also be noted.
- ⁶⁰ Ruby Rich quoted in Katharina Lindner, "Review of Queer Film Culture: Queer Cinema & Queer Film Festivals International Conference," 2015, 101.
- ⁶¹ Kay Seibler quoted in Miller, *Crossdressing Cinema*, 9.
- ⁶² Loist and de Valck, "Steinbock Interview,"
- ⁶³ Ibid. Steinbock talks about *TransAmerica* (2005) where the main character is played by a ciswoman, such as the films *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) played by Hilary Swank and most recently *3 Generations* (2015) played by Elle Fanning; an exception being Laverne Cox in the series *Orange is the New Black*
- ⁶⁴ Ibid.
- ⁶⁵ "TranScreen 2017 Booklet," 11.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid. Melissa Martens, *Nasser*, (2015, The Netherlands) Film.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid. Allan McDonald, *Locked In*, (2016, South Africa) Film.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ It should be noted, however, that all of the trans* subjects in this documentary have already transitioned and would be considered "passing" or convincing of their preferred gender, so they have more control over how they are being perceived by others.
- ⁷⁰ "TranScreen 2017 Booklet," 29. Sara Jordeno, *Kiki*, (2016, Sweden & USA) Film.
- ⁷¹ Barr, "Transgender Festival London," 217. This is present in many texts about trans* culture and experience, in particular the struggle to distinguish gender identity from sexual orientation.
- ⁷² Rich quoted in Lindner, "Review of Queer Culture," 101; Loist and de Valck, "Steinbock Interview,"
- ⁷³ "TranScreen 2017 Booklet," 4.

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- ⁷⁴ On a personal note, I found this short films much more enlightening about the trans* experience than most of the other narratives and documentaries, but that gets into more of a critique on queer cinema than paper can go into.
- ⁷⁵ “Trans*Objects booklet,” 13.
- ⁷⁶ As opposed to the more common representation of the male-to-female transition and grappling with strict feminine standards of beauty. Though there is the recent film *3 Generations* about a female-to-male character, there are many more examples of the male-to-female, for example *The Danish Girl*, *Transamerica*, even films like *Dog Day Afternoon*.
- ⁷⁷ “Trans*Objects booklet,” 7.
- ⁷⁸ Stevens, “Apocalypse,” 146.
- ⁷⁹ “TranScreen 2017 Booklet,” 3. It is also interesting to mention that sensitivity and attention to triggers is a fairly recent occurrence that has really only seen widespread attention in the last 2-3 years, particularly on college campuses and within the media, which shows how the changing climates of media effects film festivals.
- ⁸⁰ Basil Tsiokos, “The Challenging State of Film Fests Today,” 2008. Even though this quote is talking specifically about LGBT people, it can be applied to any minority community
- ⁸¹ “TranScreen 2017 Booklet,” 23.
- ⁸² Rastegar, “De-Fusion,” 494.
- ⁸³ Conventional quality as in more inline with mainstream cinema: continuity editing, high production value and storytelling etc. In other words, what the films lack in technical prowess, they make up for in diversity.
- ⁸⁴ Ragan Rhyne, “Film Festival Circuits and Stakeholders (2009),” in *Film Festival Reader*, 2013, 146-7.
- ⁸⁵ Loist, “Precarious,” 269.
- ⁸⁶ Tsiokos, “Challenging State,” Also quoted in Loist, “Precarious,” 270.
- ⁸⁷ Loist and de Valck, “Steinbock Interview,”
- ⁸⁸ Loist, “Precarious,” 273.
- ⁸⁹ Program booklets from years 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2017 can be found in PDF versions on the TranScreen website. The total numbers of film programs are 25, 33, 22 and 21 respectively. **CHECK THIS**
- ⁹⁰ Cinedans is a dance film festival based in the Netherlands, AKS is the International Minorities Festival of Films-Art-Dialogue, which hosts festivals in Copenhagen, Manchester and Pakistan, presented a program on Pakistan, and the International Queer Migrant Film Festival is based in Amsterdam and in their second edition.
- ⁹¹ Rastegar, “Crisis,” 310.
- ⁹² Quintín, “Galaxy,” 44.
- ⁹³ Penelope Haralambidou, “The Architectural Essay Film,” 2015, Cambridge University Press, 236.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid, 236.
- ⁹⁵ Taken directly from the archfilmfest.uk “about” section of the website.
- ⁹⁶ Stephen Ward, “Film and Architecture,” 2005, 21-22. The specific examples of *The Wizard of Oz* and *Metropolis* are used throughout the article.
- ⁹⁷ Ibid, 21.
- ⁹⁸ Joep Mol, “AFFR 2017 Booklet,” p 4.
- ⁹⁹ Jord den Hollander, “AFFR 2017 Booklet,” p 7.
- ¹⁰⁰ Architecture Film Festival Rotterdam, directed by Joep Mol, 7-8, Oct, 2017. What I personally found interesting in attending AFFR 2017 was how much surprise I was met with when mentioning that I was attending the festival as a film scholar and had no connection to the architecture industry.
- ¹⁰¹ It also demonstrates AFFR’s ability and strength in defining itself as a festival as well as the theme and curatorial decisions for each edition.
- ¹⁰² “AFFR 2017 booklet,” 44.
- ¹⁰³ Jord den Hollander, “City for Sale. A New Trojan Horse,” 7. Film descriptions found on 44-46, 58.
- ¹⁰⁴ Bosma, *Film Programming*, 71.
- ¹⁰⁵ Cor Wagenaar, “100 Years After the Russian Revolution: in search of times past...” 13, film descriptions found, 42, 52.
- ¹⁰⁶ This type of programming is also present in the previous three editions of AFFR, 2011, 2013, and 2015.
- ¹⁰⁷ Daniel Dayan, “Looking for Sundance. The Social Construction of a Film Festival (2000)” in *The Film Festival Reader*, 2013, 48. “Film festivals live by the printed word, they are verbal architectures,”
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 48, 56.
- ¹⁰⁹ Ward, “Film and Architecture,” 22.
- ¹¹⁰ Sam Hobkinson, *Some Kind of Joy*, (2016. United Kingdom), Film.
- ¹¹¹ “AFFR 2017 booklet,” 56.

¹¹² Definition from britannica.com, Latin for “in the midst of things,” refers to the practice of beginning a narrative in the middle of an action, followed by flashbacks to reveal the plot.

¹¹³ Andrei Rozen, *Novgorod’s Spaceship* (2016, United States), Film.

¹¹⁴ It can also be noted that these two films were screened a second time on the last day of the festival as part of the “Archiectenweb Best of AFFR” and were shown side by side, which allowed for a very interesting and direct comparison between the two films.

¹¹⁵ Jord den Hollander and Joroen Slot, “The Film is Not an Anthem to the Building,” in “AFFR 2017 Booklet,” 16-18.

¹¹⁶ Wagenaar, “100 Years,” 15.

¹¹⁷ Den Hollender and Slot, “Not an Anthem,” 17. The interviewer asked, “Were you surprised to find the architect in the state he was in? He isn’t like your archetypical architect who lives in a posh house surrounded by design furniture. This architect looks more like a 19th century Russian writer,”

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 18.

¹¹⁹ “AFFR 2017 Booklet,” 66.

¹²⁰ “AFFR 2013 Booklet,” 33.

¹²¹ “AFFR 2015 Booklet,” 63.

¹²² Silvan Hagenbrock, *Addis Ababa- Chinese New Flower* (2016, Ethiopia), film. Elsa Lövdin, Emilia Stålhammar and Veronica Pålsson, *Cycologic* (2016, Sweden), film.

¹²³ “AFFR 2017 Booklet,” 40.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 60.

¹²⁵ Wouter Veldhuis, “Introduction for *Abbis Ababa- Chinese New Flower* and *Cycologic*” (Lecture, AFFR, Rotterdam, NL, October 7, 2017).

¹²⁶ Loist and de Valck, “Steinbock Interview,”; “We actually got that feedback as way to say ‘we are not going to give you money because the Roze Filmdagen: Amsterdam Gay & Lesbian Film Festival already programs trans* films,’” as an example of the specific competition for funding that TranScreen comes in contact with.

¹²⁷ Stevens, “Apocalypse,” 142-43. Stevens talks about the fear of oversaturation in terms of competing for funding as a surplus of identical events and then goes on to counter that argument by saying that “few identical events exist in direct competition,”

¹²⁸ Loist and de Valck, “Steinbock Interview,”

¹²⁹ Ibid. “We are struggling to not just be about trans* people, which is a limited fund, but also to be a cultural organisation, because we do art programming,”

¹³⁰ This is not to say that AFFR is not inviting a communal atmosphere, just that TranScreen places a strong emphasis on this aspect.

¹³¹ Even though TranScreen comes from a relatively well established field with a decent amount of literature surrounding it, and even though it falls in line with social issue, identity, and human rights festivals, which I am personally drawn to, AFFR was a lot more interesting, both in content and in contemplating its relevance and position.