Film festivalisation: the rise of the film festival in the UK's postindustrial cities

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Abstract

This study presents an examination of three diverse film festivals that are based in postindustrial cities in the UK. It takes the view that all film festivals are intrinsically bound to and affected by their host location. The research is particularly concerned with how film festivals help to create eventful cities, an all important objective within the postindustrial era. By examining Glasgow Film Festival (GFF), Flatpack Festival (Flatpack) in Birmingham and Sheffield International Documentary Film Festival (Doc/Fest) the study presents a perspective on each festival that links their programming strategies and modus operandi to the specificities of their respective city's postindustrial milieu.

The thesis poses the following question: What are the prevalent characteristics that define film festivals located in postindustrial cities and conversely how does the postindustrial environment contribute to the realisation of each festival? It considers these questions by examining interlinking strategies that relate to programming, place-making and spatial materialisation. The research contributes to the growing field of film festival studies by being the first of its kind to present an in-depth comparative analysis of film festivals established in UK cities. As such the study offers an insight into the broader development of the film-festivalscape in the context of the UK during the most recent phase of its development.

Empirical evidence of each festival's strategic approach is provided through case study methodology including participant observation, semi-structured interviews and archival research that examines how each festival came into being, formulated its identity and achieved sustainability. The study maintains that these particular film festivals provide an apt articulation of the experience economy through a marked turn towards non-theatrical programming practices and alternative use of spatial materialisation that has elevated the context of viewing to being a defining differentiator of the festivals in postindustrial cities.

General acknowledgements

Funding

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I, Sarah Elizabeth Smyth, do hereby certify that this thesis, submitted for the degree of PhD, which is approximately 80,000 words in length, has been written by me, and that it is the record of work carried out by me, or principally by myself in collaboration with others as acknowledged, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree.

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Dear Sarah

Thank you for submitting your amendment application which comprised the following documents:

1. Ethical Amendment Application Form
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The School of Philosophical, Anthropological and Films Studies Ethics Committee meeting Ethics Committee is delegated to act on behalf of the University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee (UTREC) and has approved this ethical amendment application. The particulars of this approval are as follows –

Project Title:	Film Festivalization: The Rise of the Film Festival in the UK's Postindustrial Cities		
Original Approval Code:	SA11916	Approved on:	27/1/16
Amendment Approval Date:	27/7/19	Approval Expiry Date:	26/1/19
Researcher(s):	Sarah Smyth	Supervisor(s):	Prof Dina Iordanova

Ethical amendment approval does not extend the originally granted approval period of three years, rather it validate the changes you have made to the originally approved ethical application. If you are unable to complete your research within the original five year validation period, you are required to write to your School Ethics Committee Convener to request a discretionary extension of no greater than 6 months or to re-apply if directed to do so, and you should inform your School Ethics Committee when your project reaches completion.

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Yours sincerely

Dr Stavroula Pipyrou
Convener of the School Ethics Committee

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Origins of the Research

In 2007, while I was working as a film festival organiser in Ireland, I was approached by a well-known English cinema chain and asked if I would be interested in talking to some local officials about the possibility of starting a new film festival in the UK's second largest city, Birmingham. My interest was piqued, and I became curious about what a film festival in Birmingham would look like, asking myself questions about what shape and format it would take and how it would reflect what is unique about Birmingham? When I went along to meet the officials in question and discuss the proposed project, their ideas for the potential festival proved to be very traditional and disappointingly unrealistic in many ways.

Their vision was that of a red-carpet festival that competed with the long-established London Film Festival (LFF), the UK's largest film festival that was established in 1953. Notably LFF is sponsored by the UK's lead public funder for film, the British Film Institute (BFI), and boasted circa 100,000 attendees at that time. I remember wondering how a festival in Birmingham could compete at that level. In addition, I wondered what the benefit would be to distributors and filmmakers in giving an emerging film festival in Birmingham significant premieres. Why would they invest in providing talent for this festival rather than choosing the more internationally established, prolific and glitzy red-carpet LFF located in the global city of London a mere 130 miles away? What could be used as an incentive, if anything? In that particular moment, in the context of the UK and in the format proposed, the proposition didn't make any feasible sense.

Meanwhile, at more or less the very same time somewhere else in the same city a festival idea was being hatched that was considerably more fitting for England's second city. Birmingham's Flatpack Festival (Flatpack) came into being in the same year that conversation took place. Flatpack's programming ethos and physical materialisation

diverges considerably from the proposal for a formulaic, universal-survey film festival replete with red carpets that I was met with in 2007. In fact Flatpack's website boasts that "the festival is a state of mind" rather than a cinematic experience.[1] While this might be overstating the festival's curatorial ethos somewhat Flatpack has put its own unique imprint on both the city and the UK film festival ecology. Because of limitations within Birmingham's exhibition environment, which will be discussed in greater detail later, Flatpack operates on a malleable, spatially mobile and pop-up basis. This has given the festival a distinct voice that celebrates the local while finding alternative curatorial methods to engage the Birmingham audience that has arguably laid the groundwork for new modes of cinephilia in the city.

The dichotomy between the festival format that was proposed to me and the festival that actually came into being in Birmingham opened up a raft of questions concerning the nature and purpose of the second-tier and smaller film festivals. These are the festivals that can be considered to constitute and drive the larger part of the global film festival ecology making it a significant creative industry in its own right. Because these festivals don't carry the same level of power or generate as much media attention as the prolific A-list media events they often go unconsidered. Fortunately, this is a situation that is changing due to the massive expansion of the sector followed by a resulting surge in film festival scholarship over the past ten years. However, there is still much work to be done in relation to understanding the cultural and social significance of the recent film festival boom.

As the mass proliferation across the globe since the early 1980s attests, film festivals can compete on many levels and they don't necessarily need to do so on a like-for-like basis. Within this recent phase or new era of film festival development, there has been a discernible trend for new and emerging film festivals to be increasingly established in urban locations. This development marks a departure from the first international film festivals that were situated in tourist locales such as Venice or Cannes. Simultaneously, the role of the city and the nature of city life has also undergone a profound transformation with the cultural agenda now playing an increasingly pivotal role in city

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[1] "About," Flatpack Festival, last accessed 3 June 2019, https://flatpackfestival.org.uk/flatpack-festival/.

strategies as part of postindustrial regeneration efforts. Contemporary cities are progressively forced to invest in the "experience economy" as a strategy for advancement as inter-city competition continues to increase on a global level.[2]

This thesis builds on the foundational work of film theorists Julian Stringer and Thomas Elsaesser in relation to the film festival's relationship with the city and city image. Respectively, they have argued that contemporary cities use film festivals as a strategy to create "an aura of specialness and uniqueness" and that the importance of film festivals for the contemporary city and city branding "can scarcely be overestimated."[3] Furthermore, Janet Harbord asserts that the meaning of a film festival "is inseparable from its location."[4] Harbord's contention also provides an underpinning context for the research. Harbord asserts that film festival and place are intrinsically entwined with the local context helping to shape festival identity through its physical, political and social context. Conversely, each festival simultaneously leaves its own mark on the city, town or village where it is located. This creates a prism through which the festival is seen as adding to a place's narrative.

The study specifically questions what the role of the film festival is within the paradigm of the postindustrial city. As a result of this Marijke de Valck's continued work on the International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) has proved particularly instructive for this thesis. The study particularly engages with de Valck's argument that there has been a broadening of the type of visitor that attends film festivals that has led to the popularisation and diversification of cinephilic practices. This development can be specifically related to two themes apparent in the case of Rotterdam and throughout the cases analysed in this work: the emergence of the experience economy and event

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2 B. J. Pine II & J. H. Gilmore, "Welcome to the Experience Economy," *Harvard Business Review 76,* vol. 4 (1998): 97-105.

3 Julian Stringer, "Global Cities and the International Film Festival Economy," in *Cinema and the City: Studies in Urban and Social Change,* ed. Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 137; Thomas Elsaesser, "Film Festival Networks: The New Topographies in Europe," in *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 85.

4 Janet Harbord, "Film Festivals-Time Event," in *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit,* ed. Dina Iordanova with Ragan Rhyne (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2009), 44.

culture. As a result of this de Valck argues that nowadays "the context of the 'festival' is at least as important as the films themselves, if not somewhat more so."[5]

This thesis takes the view that the film festival is a particularly apt articulation of and cultural strategy for the postindustrial city. The study proposes to examine these two cultural phenomena – the postindustrial city and the film festival – by considering how they interact with, represent and reflect each other. It will use the UK as a geographical framework. Postindustrial cities that host diverse film festivals including Birmingham, Sheffield and Glasgow are used to provide empirical evidence through case study methodology. The study's original contribution to the field lies in it being the first of its kind to present a comparative analysis of three diverse yet comparable film festivals that have all emerged in UK cities that are considered to be postindustrial in nature. The study also provides an insight into the UK's film festival environment beyond its most reported on film festivals, BFI London Film Festival in England and Edinburgh International Film Festival (EIFF) in Scotland. The research will question to what extent the film festival has become an articulation of the postindustrial moment through formal and informal means and how these two amorphous phenomena support mutual agendas and objectives.

A common trope identified by the thesis is a commitment by all three to creating accessibility for their local audience. Each of these festivals professes to provide inclusivity and reduce barriers for audiences to access cultural cinema as a defining trait of their purpose. The Cambridge Dictionary offers the following definition in relation to the term accessibility. It suggests that accessibility is defined the by 'the quality or characteristic of something that makes it possible to approach, enter, or use it.'[6] The film festival space can often be seen as either the exclusive realm of the cinephile, or alternatively, that of the industry professional and therefore the question of whom these

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[5] Marijke de Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 195.

[6] "Accessibility," *Cambridge Dictionary,* last accessed 31 May 2019, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/accessibility

particular festivals are targeted at becomes an important consideration. The question arises; are they truly accessible?

In relation to cinemagoing practices in the UK the term accessibility most often refers to ensuring that audience equality, diversity and inclusion is priority for organisations. In practice this means engaging with minority audiences such as people with disability or socially and economically disadvantaged parts of the community that may experience a barrier to attending cultural cinema. This remit is particularly fitting in the context of the postindustrial city that is made up of an uneven demographic of the socially and economically advantaged and disadvantaged. While this objective can be considered laudable the reality of realising it can be difficult. In each of the cases to come strategies to create accessibility manifest differently and are successful to differing degrees.

This is all the more pertinent when considering that postindustrial cities tend to be viewed as crucibles for creative cultures. A common rhetoric employed by city marketing strategies is the resituation of the creative industries as a promotional tool for creating a cosmopolitan city image. Undeniably the explosion of festival culture has contributed to the development of this phenomenon and informs this on-going narrative. However, despite the celebratory implications of the rise of creative cultures and the resultant festivalisation in these cities there is frequently a divide between the promotional fantasy and the grimmer lived reality that they hide. This becomes especially prominent in performances of accessibility for each of the festivals.

As an extension of this consideration, the political economy in which these festivals operate is also examined to analyse how they fit within the national cultural agenda in the UK. Certain programming tropes are identified in all three festivals that indicate a turn towards experiential and alternative storytelling. This is apparent through the predominance of enhanced non-theatrical cinema events and the inclusion of virtual reality (VR) as a significant programming practice in each. This feeds into a distinguishable trend towards disrupting an understanding of what constitutes film

exhibition in the contemporary moment. Challenging traditional theatrically bound definitions the BFI's latest five-year strategy, BFI2022, offers the following definition:

> For the future, (and throughout this strategy), 'film' will mean anything that tells a story, expresses an idea or evokes an emotion through the art of the moving image, whilst honouring the platform for which the work was intended.[7]

The trend towards alternative modes of exhibition is evidenced in all three festivals to a lesser or greater degree. The most literal reflection of this can be seen at Doc/Fest, which also puts story rather than film format at the heart of its programming strategy as defined by the festival's 2017 tagline, "What's Your Story?"[8]

1.2 Research Question

This study will question how film festivals in postindustrial cities in the UK interact and represent the cities where they are located. The thesis will address three key areas of programming, place and space.

Specifically, the following questions will be answered:

1. What is the purpose of each festival?

2. What are the characteristics of film festivals in postindustrial cities in the UK? What similarities or differences are apparent? Can we extract a specific model for film festivals based in postindustrial cities?

3. Does the postindustrial environment bring something discernibly unique to the festivals?

4. How does each festival interact with the city's image?

5. What strategies do the festivals employ in relation to (1) programming, (2) place, and (3) space?

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[7] "BFI2022 Homepage," British Film Institute, last accessed 1 June 2019, http://www.bfi.org.uk/2022/downloads/bfi2022_EN.pdf.

[8] "Doc/Fest Homepage," Doc/Fest, last accessed 17 July 2017, https://sheffdocfest.com/.

1.3 The Structure of the Study

The first stage of the research will provide a literature review, critical framework and social context within which to establish the purpose, structure and practices of the film festival construct in relation to the postindustrial city. The structure of this section of the study will be broken down into two distinct subchapters: the postindustrial city and the film festival. The first of these sections will present a definition of the postindustrial city as well as engaging with various theoretical underpinnings that specifically relate to the role of culture as part of arts-led city regeneration strategies. This chapter will also present key discourses specifically related to the growth of the event economy and eventivisation of cities as a direct effect of this re-envisioning of the city. The second part of this chapter will focus on and present literature specific to the study of film festivals. The study of film festivals is a relatively new but rapidly growing field of study within wider film culture studies. The literature presented in this section will define how the construct of the film festival is distinct from other forms of festivals and aims to highlight some of the key constitutive components of the film festival pertinent to its role within the city.

The following chapter specifically addresses the UK context of the research. The chapter briefly outlines the historical development of the UK's film festival ecology in order to situate the individual case studies within the wider context. Along with charting the historical development of the sector, the chapter takes a broader perspective to look at the UK's political economy and its adoption of the creative industries discourse as an economic driver since the 1980s. I relate this political intervention into the cultural industries to the emergence of a groundswell of film festivals in the UK that was also reflected throughout the globe. The chapter also specifically discusses the role and influence of the BFI as the UK's leading film funding agency in relation to the film festival environment.

In the remaining chapters (4-6) I examine three distinct film festivals that are situated in postindustrial cities in the UK: Glasgow Film Festival (GFF), Flatpack Festival in Birmingham and Sheffield International Documentary Festival (Doc/Fest). By looking at

multiple festivals across a specific historical moment the intention is to provide a multidimensional view into the film festival phenomenon within the environment of the UK's postindustrial cities. The three cases selected allow me, the researcher, to examine a range of issues about the function and role of these festivals and discern if there is a model that applies to them.

Three main considerations are addressed within each chapter: programming, place and space. As interconnected concerns, these issues tend to overlap and intersect rather than being wholly distinct modes of enquiry. While the case studies themselves offer quite differing perspectives of the film festival construct, each example adheres to the same overarching narrative structure to create a cohesive basis for comparison across all three. Each account commences with a Key Facts box that provides a snapshot of relevant material to inform the context for the chapter to come. This includes the date of establishment, admissions figures, spatial footprint, summary of programming format, budget, primary stakeholders and key creative personnel.

Each case study is then broken down into five specific components that follow the same narrative trajectory in each account. These include:

1. Introduction – this provides some brief background information and an outline of the case study structure to come.

2. City context – primarily addresses the issue of place by discussing each host city and pinpointing characteristic/s of the city's urban regeneration that can be specifically related to the film festival under review.

3. Definitional context for the festival – presents specific attributes of each festival that make it unique. The hierarchy and importance for each attribute discussed is different in each case and therefore the issues outlined for each is specific to the festival examined. These include factors such as institutional or organisational model, audience, impact on the city, branding, modus operandi and practices of participation.

4. Programming – this section specifically examines each festival's programming approach and strategy. Again, as these three festivals are markedly different,

there is not a one-fits-all structure applied to the issues examined under this heading. Instead the structure of this section is broken down into individual subheadings that reflect the uniqueness of the festival's programming strategy.

5. Material festival – the final section in each case addresses how each festival is physically materialised. It discusses the spatial manifestation of each and how the liminal festival experience is shaped by and interacts with the physical space of the host city.

While the broad structure of each case study follows the same overall scheme the factors discussed under each heading and depth of scrutiny differ depending on the festival examined. For instance, as a mobile festival the spatial dimensions of Flatpack are examined in more detail than in the case of GFF. However, as GFF is part of a key film institution in Glasgow then a subheading has been included that addresses this relationship and its impact on the festival that is not present in the other two case studies. In each study a significant section is dedicated to defining each of these festivals within their own specific contexts. The internal structure and factors considered within these are purposely quite different as they reflect and communicate the unique characteristics of each festival.

1.4 Case Study Rationale

The rationale behind choosing these cases lies firstly with their particular postindustrial city context. Birmingham, Glasgow and Sheffield are all recognisably identifiable postindustrial cities. While I will discuss the specificities of each city's particular character and regeneration strategies within the corresponding case study it's useful here to draw on a contention made by cultural policy scholar Franco Bianchini in 1991. Bianchini particularly cites these three cities, along with Liverpool and Newcastle[9], as early adopters of arts and culture-led urban regeneration strategies within the UK's postindustrial era making them particularly apt objects of study. Each city has employed its own unique approach to urban regeneration and therefore an analysis of their individual strategies helps to frame and position the emergent film festival.

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[9] Neither Liverpool nor Newcastle currently have a significant film festival.

Both Flatpack and Glasgow Film Festivals are relatively new entrants to the sector, the former was established in 2006 while the latter was established in 2005. In contrast Doc/Fest is an older festival. However, its significance has come to the fore during the same time period. Doc/Fest's redevelopment was prompted by the reinvigoration initiatives instigated during former Festival Director, Heather Croall's ten-year tenure from 2006 to 2015, when she returned to Australia to become CEO and festival director of Adelaide Fringe Festival.

The three film festivals under review represent very different programming objectives, modes of exhibition and material manifestation of festival space. GFF positions itself as a non-exclusive audience festival that is situated as an institutional initiative of Glasgow Film Theatre while Flatpack presents as a 'mobile, temporary and guerrilla'[10] festival that embraces non-theatrical forms of cinephilia. In contrast Doc/Fest hosts a predominantly genre-focused industry event that is also open to the public and is highly successful in manifesting a materialised festival space within the city of Sheffield.

The selected festivals also cover a wide geographical spread covering the Midlands, the North-East and Scotland forming a cohesive overview of the UK environment informed by different regional perspectives. All three festivals engage with and reflect their host locations in their own unique ways. This positions all three festivals as salient examples of both the UK's thriving film festival eco-system. Importantly, this study's intervention addresses significant examples beyond the UK's stalwart and internationally recognised capital city film festivals, LFF and EIFF. All three also provide unique examples of how cities harness cultural strategies to create and communicate cosmopolitan city narratives and imaging strategies in the knowledge-based economy. Finally, two of the cities in question, Birmingham and Glasgow, have second city status creating an interesting perspective on how it is contingent on cities that have lower status in the global hierarchy to compete and create status within the competitive worldwide city stakes. Each festival is considered from its inception up to 2017, the final year where participant observation took place.

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[10] Charlotte Brunsdon and Richard Wallace, "A Cinema without Walls: An Interview with Ian Francis, Director of the Flatpack Film Festival," *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 15, no.1 ed. Charlotte Brunsdon, Jon Burrows and Richard Wallace (January 2018): 131.

While at first glance these three festivals seem to embody very different modes of festivalisation, there are in fact pronounced similarities between them. The sequence that I present the case studies in reflects the order in which they come within the annual cycle, which allows me to build a cumulative argument around the differences and similarities between the cases under review.

1.5 Methodology

The primary research strategy that has been used in this study to gather empirical evidence is that of the case study approach. This research method provides a useful and flexible research tool for investigations where events or phenomena can be considered to be especially contextually rich and multiple factors need to be considered. Robert K Yin proposes that case study strategy is an empirical inquiry that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon ('the case') in its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident."[11] This makes case study methodology one of the most fluid approaches to research design that allows the researcher to retain the holistic characteristics of real-life phenomena while investigating empirical events contained within it.

Yin proposes that the justification for employing case studies as a research strategy lies with three key aspects of enquiry. Case studies are the preferred method when the central thesis involves questioning "(1) the how, why or where of a phenomena, (2) the researcher has little control over the environment or event and (3) the focus is on a contemporary, rather than historic phenomenon."[12] Thus employing case study methodology provides a particularly pertinent research strategy for examining the complex film festival phenomenon.

One of the particular strengths of the case study is its ability to coalesce a variety of diverse qualitative data such as documents, artefacts, interviews and observation. In

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[11] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 5th ed (London: Sage, 2015), 2.

[12] Yin, *Case Study Research*, 2.

this instance case study material has been compiled through participant observation, conducting semi-structured interviews with a range of film festival personnel and drawing upon secondary data such as archival information, trade publications and mainstream press reportage, festival own-produced material such as catalogues, websites and marketing materials, along with reviews and reports produced by stakeholders, institutional or otherwise. Ethical approval for fieldwork and interviews has been received by the University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee (UTREC).

Participant observation has been used as a key tool throughout this case study research strategy. To date, sustained and partial participant observation has proved to be a successful methodology employed by a vast number of film festival investigators to gain insight into the film festival construct from a range of perspectives. These include sociologist Daniel Dayan at the Sundance Film Festival,[13] film critic Kenneth Turan's insightful presentation of nine diverse film festival case studies in the monograph *Sundance to Sarajevo: Film Festivals and the World They Made*,[14] film festival theorists Marijke de Valck at Cannes, Berlin, Venice and Rotterdam,[15] Toby Lee at Thessaloniki International Film Festival,[16] Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong at Hong Kong International Film Festival and Jeffrey Ruoff at Telluride Film Festival, among many other emergent studies.

Instructed by Bill Nichols seminal 1994 essay *Global Image Consumption in the Age of Late Capitalism*, Toby Lee emphasises the importance of "being there" as part of the valid methodological practice of participant observation. For Nichols, the specificity of each unique festival environment can only be understood by taking part. He describes the process of observation in the following eloquent terms:

> hovering, like a spectre, at the edges of the festival
> experience, are those deep structures and thick

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[13] Daniel Dayan, "Looking for Sundance: The Social Construction of a Film Festival," in *Moving Images, Culture and the Mind,* ed. Ib Bondebjerg (Luton: Luton University Press: 2010), 42-54.

[14] Kenneth Turan, *Sundance to Sarajevo: Film Festivals and the World They Made* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California, 2002).

[15] De Valck, *Film Festivals.*

[16] Toby Lee, "Being There, Taking Part: Ethnography at the Film Festival," in *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice,* ed. Marijke de Valck, Brendan Kredell and Skadi Loist (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 122-137.

descriptions that might restore a sense of the particular to and local to what we have now recruited to the realm of the global.[17]

As the festival can be considered an embodied experience I would suggest that it is imperative for the film festival researchers to actively participate so that they can understand and capture the "deep structures and thick descriptions"[18] described by Nichols. The act of "being there" has provided a crucial dimension for the methodology employed in this work in relation to gaining first-hand observations and informal conversations that inform the study. Each of the festivals attended have an undeniably unique atmosphere that can only be encountered and observed by the act of experiencing them.

While the benefit of employing participant observation allows the researcher to gain a deep understanding of a particular social phenomenon it also presents specific limitations. In the first instance it has been recognised that maintaining objectivity while employing participant observation can be challenging. The way any particular researcher encounters and engages with a given social phenomenon will be shaped by previous experiences and our positionality in the social structure. Therefore, maintaining critical self-reflexivity is essential in order to recognise and overcome how the data collected is viewed and understood. In other words, how the researcher influences and shapes the material as a result of their own lived experiences and cultural understanding. As a former film festival organiser I was very aware of projecting my own preconceptions on this research. One of the key ways that I chose to counter this was by choosing to focus on the UK environment rather than the Irish one, where I had previously lived and worked. Focusing on a different country's context allowed me to assert a level of critical distance that would have been more difficult to establish and maintain in Ireland due to my strong social connections, previous history in the industry and lived experience within the environment.

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[17] Bill Nichols, "Global Image Consumption in the Age of Late Capitalism," *East West Film Journal* 8, no.1 (1994): 122.
[18] Ibid., 27.

A further challenge presented by using participant observation methodology relates to the breadth and complexity of each festival studied. With multiple events happening simultaneously in different locations it is simply impossible for an individual researcher to experience each festival as a whole within the confines of the finite timebound festival period. This has implications for the obervations collected as each choice made by the reasercher has an impact on the data gathered. As will become apparent throughout the thesis, different festival spaces constitute multiple festival experiences. On a practical level this required me to ensure that I attended events in every programme segment and venue to safeguard against my own subjective personal choices and to ensure I was getting as widespread experience of each festival. A further step taken was my decision to visit each festival more than once so that I could ensure so that I could compare the festival exerience across a number of years.

A supplemental methodology utilised involved conducting a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews with key personnel from each festival (see figure 1.1). This approach has provided an alternative internal perspective for each case study. In total, seven interviews were conducted across the three festivals, from September 2016 to April 2018. A sample of the questionnaire used in the interviews is provided in Appendix A.

Name	Position	Interview date
Glasgow Film Festival		
Allison Gardner	Glasgow Film Programme Director / GFF Co-Director *(2007-current)*	23/09/16
Allan Hunter	GFF Co-Director *(2007-current)*	28/04/17
Flatpack Festival		

Ian Francis	Director *(2006-current)*	06/12/17
Sam Groves	Programmer *(2008-current)*	06/01/18
Doc/Fest		
Heather Croall	CEO and Festival Director *(2005-2016)*	05/04/18
Andy Beecroft	Programme Manager *(2006-2013)*	07/02/18
Charlie Phillips	Marketplace Director *(2008-2013)* Deputy Director *(2013-2014)*	20/04/18

Figure 1.1. Overview of Interviewees. Source: Researcher's own.

Interviewees were selected for their seniority in relation to programming strategy and length of service. Co-directors, Allison Gardner and Allan Hunter have jointly led GFF since 2007 while Ian Francis at Flatpack co-founded the festival and continues to lead it. The selection proved more difficult at Doc/Fest. This is due to the festival's longer life span and considerably larger staffing. Heather Croall was selected due to her longevity in the role of CEO and festival director and her considerable impact on Doc/Fest's transformation. Since Croall relinquished her position as CEO and director in 2015 the festival is now on its fourth director. Two of these, Mark Atkin and Melanie Iredale, have only held the position as interim posts. My request for an interview with Liz McIntyre coincided with her resignation and went unanswered.

The interviews took a flexible in-depth format that allowed respondents as much freedom in answering as possible and to avoid pre-empting answers. While the format was semi-structured each interview followed a similar trajectory designed to engage with matters of programming, place and space. Interviewees were invited to reflect on

programming choices, the relationship between festival and city, how festival space is materialised and festival perception.

The research also draws on the manifold media reviews that abound in the regional and national press as well as drawing heavily on each festival's own communications such as brochures, annual reports, press releases, websites and social media to triangulate findings. While the research actively uses festival own-produced materials it is necessary at this point to call attention to the fact that as these are marketing, PR and institutional communications that they invariably assume a positive stance. Inevitably these materials utilise promotional rhetoric or "spin" within their narrative that I have needed to weigh objectively against the real experience of each festival. Nevertheless, this material provides an important insight into each of the festival's own discourses such as its history, its aspirations, its programming policies and so on. In addition, each festival's visual identity and design strategy also plays a key role in constituting festival image and special attention has been given to the visual analysis of festival branding and the design of materials produced.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Context of the Study

This study questions how film festivals in selected postindustrial cities in the UK interact with and represent the cities where they are located. To answer this question it is first necessary to establish what is meant by the categorisation of *postindustrial city* and how this is defined both in a global and UK context. The first part of this chapter sets out to define the term and outline the resulting sociological and cultural effects that this development has had on the city as the predominant context of this thesis. The discussion pays particular attention to the role of culture as an economic and urban regeneration strategy in the postindustrial paradigm.

The second section of the chapter hones in more specifically on the film festival. Firstly, it introduces an outline of literature concerning the general study of festivals and the recent processes of festivalisation. This establishes a context and understanding of where the film festival is situated within the wider field of festival studies and how it differs from other sorts of festivals.

The chapter then goes on to examine the burgeoning body of literature that has emerged over the past decade in response to the mass proliferation of film festivals worldwide. The literature is considered from three key perspectives related to the concerns of this thesis: a focus on the relationship between the film festival and city, film festival representation and curatorial imperatives.

2.1 The Postindustrial City

Undisputedly cities now play a more important role in global society than at any other time throughout history. The United Nations' 2018 revision to the "World Urbanization Prospects" report estimates that over 55 percent of the world's entire population now

live in urban areas.[1] In Europe, this equates to 74 percent of people inhabiting cities while in North America it is estimated at 82 percent.[2] This combustion in urbanisation signals the increased importance of formulating an understanding of the changing role of the city within contemporary society. The rapidly changing nature of the city since the emergence of the great industrial cities of the Industrial Revolution has made this urban phenomenon increasingly difficult to define.

Problematising an understanding of this increasingly complex phenomenon recent theoretical approaches to the contemporary city encompass a multiplicity of divergent terms and definitions. For instance, the sociologist Daniel Bell proposes that cities are characterised by being "postindustrial" while anthropologist David Harvey describes the city as a postmodern construct.[3] Urbanist Charles Landry suggests that contemporary cities should be understood through the lens of a regenerative "creative city" while Saskia Sassen's influential concept of the "global city" repositions the city in a world order that situates certain cities as having gained precedence over nation states.[4]

The multiplicity of terms used and the spread of theoretical perspectives points to the deeply ambivalent nature of the contemporary city. Added to this, all cities have not developed equally and manifest their own specific exigencies. Ferocious city competition has compelled cities that are lower in the global hierarchy to become more innovative and entrepreneurial in their pursuit of profile and status on the world stage to help drive their economies. However, not every city can achieve global city status and therefore certain postindustrial cities are more inclined to rely on strategies of differentiation to help them to carve out distinct identities. Because of this development the role of cultural and creative strategies has taken on elevated importance in the postindustrial era.

[1] The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (UN DESA), *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision*, *Highlights* (New York, 2019), 1, https://population.un.org/wup/Publications/Files/WUP2018-Highlights.pdf.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, Inc.,1973); David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity an Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

[4] Charles Landry and Franco Bianchini, *The Creative City* (London: Demos. 1995); Saskia Sassen, *The Global City; New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

While some of the above theoretical terms will be encountered within this thesis, the primary concern of the study is with cities that are considered to be specifically postindustrial in nature. Before moving on to discuss the specifics of how the postindustrial city came about it is useful to briefly summarise a list of indicators that help to identify cities that fall under this categorisation. Social policy professor Anne Power, a former member of the UK's Urban Taskforce, who has written extensively about the cycles of growth, decline and recovery in European cities, offers four primary criteria. She proposes these to be:

> rapid growth in population, jobs and wealth creation during the first industrial revolution

> significant loss of population, jobs and industrial prowess during their steep and rapid decline in the late twentieth century

> a private, public and civic alliance committed to reinvestment, recovery and reversal of decline in the 1990s and 2000s

> clear signs of resilience and recovery in spite of crisis[5]

Power's criteria offer an overarching and succinct summation of the characteristics of the postindustrial city. However, her summation neglects to include one important factor that has gained prominence. I propose that culture-led regeneration is a noteworthy defining factor of the postindustrial milieu. Indeed urban planner Charles Landry, a key proponent of culture's integral role in the UK's urban regeneration strategies, suggests that culture offers a "graphic representation" of a city's ability to compete.[6]

2.1.1 The Transition from Industrial to Postindustrial

The term "postindustrial" is largely attributed to Daniel Bell and was first used in his treatise on impending social and cultural transformations in 1973.[7] Bell forecasted the

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5 Anne Power, *Cities for a Small Continent: International Handbook of City Recovery* (CASE Studies on Poverty, Place and Policy) (Policy Press: Kindle Edition), Kindle Location 498-500.

6 Charles Landry, *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators* (London: Earthscan, 2000), 56.

7 Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, 14.

emergence of a vastly changed society in the wake of declining industrialisation. His seminal work succinctly anticipated the subsequent social and economic transformations that would take place in cities over the ensuing thirty to fifty years. Bell's theory anticipated a postindustrial society that would be increasingly shaped around the domination of what he described as being a "service-based economy."[8] This economic shift would redistribute the majority of the urban population's employment to deriving from the provision of services across a range of information-based industries including finance, business, technology, creative, culture and tourism.

Bell's prediction refers to a sea change that has been experienced right across society and can be seen in cities of all sizes in the postindustrial era. However, the term postindustrial city is specific to those cities that were wholly developed as a result of mass industrialisation and then later suffered the effects of significant decline. These are cities that emerged as recognisable powerhouses of the Industrial Revolution during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Initially emerging in the UK (Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Glasgow, Sheffield, Belfast and so on), industrialised cities spread throughout Europe (such as Rotterdam, Lille, Barcelona, Bilbao, Torino, Leipzig) and North America (Detroit, Chicago, Seattle, Toronto) as part of the rapid acceleration of urban and industrial expansion.

This historical transition was marked by an unprecedented level of urban growth as people migrated from the country to take up industrialised modes of employment such as factory and construction work in cities. A direct outcome of this massive transformation was the creation of a wealth of skills-based manufacturing jobs as well as the development of sophisticated city infrastructures and services to support workers. These cities tend to be typified as being working class due to the large predominance of proletariat or "blue-collar" workers that constituted their populations.

The same industrial cities underwent a stark reversal in the 1960s as a result of the rapid processes of globalisation and resulting de-industrialisation.[9] In the UK alone 45

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Michael C. Hall, "Geography, Marketing and the Selling of Places," *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing* 6, 3/4 (1997): 62.

percent of manufacturing jobs were lost during the initial period of transformation as industrial bases moved from the cities of the developed world to more cost-effective locations such as South East Asia.[10] The decline was further augmented by a damaging trend of population loss as people were forced to migrate due to severe job losses. This caused formerly prosperous industrial cities, such as those examined in this study, to become severely depressed and depopulated.

2.1.2 Culture-Led Urban Regeneration

As noted above, culture has emerged as a competitive key strategy for cities in the postindustrial era. An important point is made by Mark Shiel in the introduction to the edited collection, *Cinema and the City: Studies in Urban and Social Change*, when he observes that it is the notion of culture rather than of service that defines the postindustrial moment. Shiel contends

> an important part of the very thesis of postindustrialism is that
> culture has become increasingly important in society and, indeed,
> the development of postindustrialism as a concept in Sociology
> may now be identified as one of the first steps in what David
> Chaney has termed 'the cultural turn' in social history and theory
> since the 1950s.[11]

The trend towards culture-led urban regeneration as a first became apparent in the United States in the late 1970s and early 1980s when policymakers started to initiate investment into urban and cultural tourism policies to aid the revival of local economies. This tendency was evident in the efforts of port cities such as Baltimore, Portland and Chicago to regenerate formerly defunct waterfront sites into mixed-use leisure developments. The trend towards utilising "cultural capital" to reverse the effects of

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[10] Steven Miles, *Spaces for Consumption* (London: Sage, 2010), 36.

[11] Mark Shiel, "Cinema and the City: History and Theory" in *Cinema and the City: Studies in Urban and Social Change,* ed. Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 5.

industrial decline was also adopted by cities across Europe and proved to be a particularly popular approach in the UK.[12]

Returning to Bianchini's earlier contention, which posits that Britain's cities were early adopters of culture-led regeneration during the 1980s, he proposes that these strategies became "an increasingly visible part of local responses to the decline of manufacturing industry and steep rises in unemployment."[13] Indeed Bianchini has highlighted the specific culture-led strategies employed by each of the cities examined in this thesis. He argues that Glasgow adopted the American model of regeneration that favoured employing public / private partnership to fund and capitalise on major arts regeneration initiatives. This strategy was employed as a bid to counter and reconstruct the city's bleak external image as being depressed and crime ridden. The success of Glasgow's designation as European Capital of Culture in 1990 offers a salient example of this approach. In contrast, Birmingham pursued a consumerist approach. This undertaking initially focused on investing in developing large-scale capital projects such as the International Conference Centre (£200 million) in an effort to attract business tourism. This strategy was augmented by redeveloping surrounding areas into mixed-use leisure sites. Alternatively, Sheffield's approach was predominantly led by the city council and involved the development of one of the UK's first cultural industry quarters (CIQ).[14]

These three examples demonstrate specific and interlinking culture-led urban regeneration strategies that emerge as intrinsic characteristics of the postindustrial city. These encompass:

> the initiation of significant design-led urban regeneration in city centres, usually featuring either spectacular architectural initiatives or the redevelopment of formerly defunct industrial areas

> the manifestation of cultural tourism, leisure and entertainment as driving forces within a city's economy

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12 Kevin Meethan, "Consuming (in) the Civilized City," *Annals of Tourism Research* 23, no. 2 (1996): 322.

13 Franco Bianchini, "Urban renaissance? The arts and the urban regeneration process," in *Tackling the Inner Cities: The 1980s Reviewed, Prospects for the 1990s*, ed. Susanne MacGregor and Ben Pimlott (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991), 221.

14 Ibid.

an emphasis on city marketing activities that promote an enlivened atmosphere to help improve city image

Undoubtedly, design-led regeneration has proved to be a highly popular strategy with postindustrial cities across the globe. A model that caught the attention of cities was that used by Bilbao. The approach involved visibly and spectacularly repositioning culture as a prime factor of the city's regeneration strategy. This was achieved by securing high-level public / private investment that established a local outpost of world-class cultural museum, the Guggenheim Museum. The most impactful facet of the initiative came from the physical aspect of the project. World-renowned architect Frank Gehry was commissioned to design a spectacular building with "wow factor" to house the museum. The building materially altered Bilbao and helped to reposition the city's image as iconic, competitive and unique that in turn contributed to the city's objective to market itself as a cultural tourism destination.

Figure 2.1. Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. Source: http://architectuul.com.

This strategy has been replicated in postindustrial cities across the globe. Indeed Northern Europe has experienced a boom of cultural building projects designed to improve destination image and to rebrand cities as cultural tourist attractions. So popular has this approach been that it is commonly referred to as "the Bilbao effect."

One of the most recent examples of this is Scottish postindustrial city, Dundee, that opened the doors to its £80 million Victoria & Albert development in 2018. The museum was designed by architect Kengo Kuma and is hailed as being "a transformative project" that will reboot Dundee's previously depressed reputation of being a city in decline.

However, there is a drawback. Prolific cultural initiatives such as these are high-risk / high-cost ventures that require extensive public and private investment. Urban scholar Antti Vihinen refers to these schemes as "the fairytale of modern destination management."[15] She proposes that all too often the resulting outcome is characterised by poor planning and frequent overspending that creates additional pressure for city management while not necessarily achieving the desired re-invention.

In accord with this perspective Steven Miles proposes that the urban renaissance has become "the obligatory norm" for cities.[16] He argues that by presenting a symbolic dynamism, or "a fake it till you make it" outward appearance that real urban renaissance may be prompted to actually happen.[17] Flagship, landmark and other smaller niche events increasingly prove to be a far more cost-effective and agile strategy for the creation of a symbolic city image than the highly risky design-led strategy outlined earlier. In addition, the fluidity offered by events has proven to be better suited to achieving economic cultural economies of scale consistent with individual cities' capabilities.

These combined aspects have led to the increased importance of events in the postindustrial era. This has resulted in an observable transition at a strategic level reflected by cities becoming *eventful cities* rather than cities that merely host events. A key ambition that has resulted from the rise of the service-oriented economy is to extend the tourist season to a year-round happening thus elevating status to that of the eventful city. Richards and Palmer refer to this trend as the "festivalisation of places" citing Edinburgh's year-round programme of festivals and events as a pertinent example

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15 Antti Vihinen, "A Guggenheim in Every City," in *Branded spaces: experience enactments and entanglements*, ed. Stephan Sonnenburg & Laura Baker (Weisbaden, Springer VS, 2013), 193.

16 Miles, *Spaces for Consumption*, 2.

17 Ibid.

of festivalisation or the eventful city.[18] The increasing dominance of the event industry clearly reflects a fundamental shift in the economy of postindustrial cities towards a reliance on entertainment consumption for both visitors and inhabitants that "epitomises the eventful city."[19]

2.1.3 The Creative Economic Turn

The notion of culture or the cultural industries as a postindustrial regeneration strategy has further become inscribed into political and economic legitimacy following the adoption of the creative industries discourse by the UK Government. This paradigm shift came to prominence in the late 1990s as a result of the Department of Culture, Media & Sports (DCMS) setting up a Creative Industries Task Force as part of Tony Blair's New Labour government. The change from cultural to creative industries was adopted so that culturally viable industries could be positioned as a significant and discrete component of the postindustrial industries.

This piece of cultural policy will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter when the study focuses more specifically on the context of the UK's cultural policy in relation to film festivals. However, for the moment, it's important to note that the creative industries as a concept emerged as a valuable reconception of cultural assets within the contemporary global economy. This paradigm shift had the subsequent effect of establishing an international policy discourse for defining and endorsing the value of the creative industries that legitimised and promoted their value as an economic driver.

The turn towards the *creative* rhetoric also extended to a reconceptualisation of the city in relation to urban planning theories. This intrinsically linked culture and the arts with the city. The term "Creative City" was initially mooted by Franco Bianchini and Charles Landry in their 1995 manifesto, *The Creative City*.[20] The concept of the Creative City emerged as part of their work with the think-tank Comedia, founded in the UK by Landry in 1978. While situated in the UK, Comedia's work responded to the rising global

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[18] Greg Richards and Richard Palmer, *Eventful Cities: Cultural Management and Urban Revitalisation* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2010), 11.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Charles Landry and Franco Bianchini, *The Creative City* (London: Demos, 1995), 18.

postindustrial urban crisis and sought to find innovative strategies to approach urban regeneration. Whereas many conceptions related to the creative rhetoric are primarily concerned with the role that arts and culture industries play within society the work carried out by Comedia had a much broader vision.

The stated aim for the Creative City project was formulated as a call to action to cities to develop the right creative conditions to encourage people to think, plan and act with imagination to address a variety of what Landry terms as, "intractable urban problems" including "addressing homelessness, to creating wealth or enhancing the visual environment" in his summation of these.[21] Bianchini's and Landry's conception of the Creative City holds particular resonance for this study. One of the first detailed studies carried out by Comedia was an analysis of Glasgow's cultural assets as part of its urban regeneration strategy in 1990.

The resulting consultation process entitled "Glasgow: The Creative City and its Cultural Economy" proved to be an influential factor for helping to initiate a conceptual shift towards the cultural / creative agenda in Glasgow. In May 1994, Comedia facilitated The Creative City workshop in Glasgow, which formed the bedrock for their later manifesto that was published the following year. The workshop also marked the first step in a long-term project of research and practical initiatives that would explore the creative potential of cities worldwide. This concept would later develop into a methodology for assessing the creative abilities and potential of cities, the Creative City Index, successfully employed as part of the re-imaging strategy of cities as diverse as Bilbao, Helsinki, Adelaide, Mannheim, Ghent, Canberra, Taipei, San Sebastian, Oulu, Cardiff, Freiburg and Seville.

On the opposite side of the transatlantic an alternative concept that also addressed the notion of the city as a creative entity was proposed by urban studies theorist Richard Florida. Florida's conception presents three interlinking ideas: the emergence of a creative class, the creative economy and the conditions provided by cities to attract the

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[21] Ibid.

professionals that make up the creative class.[22] In contrast to Comedia's conception of the Creative City, Florida's thesis presents an urban development concept that relies heavily on positioning the creative city as exclusively designed for attracting highly professionalised human capital or a creative class of high-earning workers. To achieve this then cities need to provide access to certain amenities and lifestyle choices. According to Florida, the so-called creative class is "attracted more by cultural amenities than by recreational amenities and climate."[23] From this perspective the provision of culture becomes a key objective for contemporary cities to ensure a particular type of lifestyle is catered for.

Although it has been widely adopted by key city stakeholders there are significant problems with Florida's thesis. Firstly, it is a widely encompassing theory that is predicated on the effects of creativity on the economy by using an indexical 3Ts model, which measures the provision of technology, talent and tolerance. According to Florida, the most successful cities possess high levels of these qualities and this forms the basis of making them desirable locations for attracting an increasingly mobile creative class. As well as being difficult to define or measure, the above tenets of Florida's proposal are highly reductive and based on generalisations.

Troublingly Florida's notion marginalises creativity to a secondary function of the contemporary city that has no intrinsic value or merit other than as a way of entertaining or attracting the creative classes. Nevertheless, in spite of this, Florida's thesis has proved incredibly popular and become widely adopted by municipal management seeking solutions for reinvigorating and repositioning cities. Landry and Florida approach the conception of the Creative City quite differently. However, the emergence of both of these concepts at a similar time signalled a significant shift in perception towards the purpose and function of the city as being a creative entity.

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[22] Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 99.
[23] Ibid.

2.2 Film Festivalisation

Inarguably festivals celebrating every art form, as well as a gamut of themed festivals featuring niche interests from astrology to baking, have become a ubiquitous feature of the contemporary cultural landscape. A direct correlation can be drawn between the elevation of the event economy or the eventful city that characterises the postindustrial city discussed at the end of the last section and the increasing predominance of festival culture that extends across the globe positioning it as an all-encompassing world phenomenon.[24]

Festivals have proved to be an enduring cultural phenomenon through the ages. According to tourism studies scholar, Bernadette Quinn, people of all cultures have always recognised a need to "set aside certain times and spaces for celebratory use."[25] Certainly, festivals have existed as celebration in one form or another since the Dionysian festivals of ancient Greece. While the contemporary festival shares many of the celebratory aspects of earlier iterations, there is no denying that they have also evolved to become extremely specific cultural constructs. The contemporary festival is a highly organised, professionalised and crucial expression of commodification in the current service-oriented economy. Therefore, defining festival culture has become a considerably more complex matter to that of a more multi-layered and often commercially oriented cultural phenomenon.[26] As a result of this, since the 1970s, the study of festivals has become an increasingly important and multidisciplinary field of academic enquiry with the emergence of specific fields such as leisure, tourism and event studies while also becoming a field of enquiry for sociological and anthropological concerns.

However, criticisms have been levelled at the field for exhibiting a tendency to be skewed towards the more logistical and economic aspects of festival delivery. In 2008,

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[24] Zsuzsa Hunyadi, Peter Inkei and Janos Zoltan Szabo, *Festival-world Summary Report: National Survey on Festivals in Hungary* (Budapest, 2006), 8.

[25] Bernadette Quinn, "Festivals, events and tourism" in *The SAGE Handbook of Tourism Studies*, ed. Tazin Jamal and Mike Robinson (London: Sage, 2009), 483.

[26] Liana Giorgi and Monica Sassatelli, "Introduction" in *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, ed. Gerard Delanty, Liana Giorgi and Monica Sassatelli (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 2; Hunyadi et al, *Festival-world Summary Report*, 8; Stephen Page and & Joanne Connell, "Introduction," in *The Routledge Handbook of Events*, ed. Stephen Page & Joanne Connell (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 1.

event studies scholar Donald Getz undertook a comprehensive review of all literature pertaining to festival studies carried out to that point. Getz identified three overriding discourses apparent throughout the literature: tourism, event management and, to a much lesser degree, the meaning of festivals for culture and society. Concerns about this tendency towards focusing on the organisational were also echoed in Charles Arcodia's and Michelle Whitford's work on festival attendance and its relationship to social capital.[27] The pair argue that considerably less attention had been given to date on examining the equally important social, cultural, and/or political impacts of festivals.

The prevalent trend identified by these scholars is unsurprising when considered in relation to the emergence of both the postindustrial economy and resultant creative industries whereby the economic survival of many cities was in the balance. As this thesis will attempt to demonstrate the social and cultural meaning of festivals and their economic importance are indelibly linked and so one aspect cannot meaningfully be examined without the other. It is notable that it was at around this time that the emergence of film festival studies as a specific area of academic enquiry began to take shape. This tendency is all the more important in understanding the festival's contemporary role when considering how festivals have been traditionally positioned within scholarship.

As far back as 1912, the eminent sociologist Emile Durkheim described festivals as instances of "collective effervescence." Getz asserts that "a festival is a public themed celebration," and a more recent description proposed by Andy Bennett and Ian Woodward suggests that festivals are "sensual and embodied experiences."[28] A commonality that runs through all of these definitions is that they focus on the celebratory and communal nature of the festival rather than commercial aspects identified by Getz in his review. However, Getz is right to identify the commercial as an as perhaps the most important fact that distinguishes the contemporary festival from its

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[27] Charles Arcodia and Michelle Whitford, "Festival Attendance and the Development of Social Capital," *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism* 8, no. 2 (2006): 1.

[28] Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious of Life,* trans. Carol Cosman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1912), 4; Donald Getz, *Event Studies: Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events, 2nd ed* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 36; Andy Bennett and Ian Woodward, "Festival Spaces, Identity, Experience and Belonging" in *The Festivaiization of Culture,* ed. Andy Bennett, Jodie Taylor and Ian Woodward (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 12.

historical counterpart.

The ongoing proliferation of urban festivals has resulted in a feeling of festivalisation or hyper festivity in many cities. This suggests that the relevance of the contemporary festival has expanded beyond the realm of discrete events to become mechanisms that both give meaning to and represent city life as outlined in relation to eventivisation. Certainly the three case studies examined in this study go some way to presenting unique aspects of their particular locales. In his analysis of mega-events, such as the Olympic Games, Maurice Roche argues that festivalisation refers "to the role and influence of festivals on the societies that host and stage them – both direct and indirect."[29] Therefore, the processes of festivalisation can be understood as the traditions, institutions and cultural practices that create an understanding of a given society and project a collective place identity. Roche's formulation proves particularly useful for this thesis by directly positioning festivals in terms of how they express or convey the meaning of a place through the construct of the festival.

2.2.1 Ten Years of Film Festival Studies/The Second Decade of a Burgeoning Field

The title of this section refers to an event that took place at Birkbeck, University of London, in March 2019 to mark the passing of ten years since the "burgeoning field" of film festival studies was established.[30] Julian Stringer first drew attention to the paucity of academic inquiry into film festivals in 2003 in his influential and widely used PhD thesis entitled *Regarding Film Festivals.* Stringer's thesis called for the opening up of a wider debate "around this neglected yet vital field of inquiry."[31] As both the title of the event and of this section suppose, this area of academic enquiry has particularly gained prominence within the last decade since Stringer's initial observation. For the purposes

[29] Maurice Roche, "Sociocultural Significance of Mega-Events" in *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, ed. Gerard Delanty, Liana Giorgi and Monica Sassatelli (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 126.

[30] Marijke de Valck and Skadi Loist, "Film Festival Studies: An Overview of a Burgeoning Field" in *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit* ed. Dina Iordanova with Ragan Rhyne (St. Andrews, St. Andrews Film Studies, 2009), 179.

[31] Julian Stringer, *Regarding Film Festivals* (PhD diss., Indiana University, Department of Comparative Literature, Indiana, 2003), 2.

of this literature review the event also provides a useful starting point for summarising the most influential interventions to date.[32]

The objective of *Ten Years of Film Festival Studies/The Second Decade of a Burgeoning Field* was to take stock of the contribution that film festival studies had made into the world of film festivals over the past decade. A similar event, the International Film Festival Workshop, was held at the University of St Andrews in 2009. In a report on the initial event, William Brown noted that the overriding question that dominated this first session concerned whether there was enough academic interest to formulate film festival studies as a discrete field.[33] In the intervening decade, the area has developed rapidly and there is little question that while film festival studies does not necessarily require recognition as its own field it is now established as a specific and pertinent area of the study of film culture. The two events usefully bookend the growth of the first phase of film festival studies into a robust and diverse area comprising of important interventions from around the globe that help to inform and strengthen it as a whole.

Throughout the event a general consensus was reached that over the past decade film festival studies have been successful at taking a macro-level view of the film festival landscape. It has achieved this by examining larger questions of definition and context, especially in relation to the international film festival format. However, it was noted that there is still much to be learnt from studies that address medium and smaller festivals that sustain the film festival system at grassroots level. Tamara Falicov eloquently articulated this call to action in her video testimonial. She suggested that a turn to micro-level investigations that "dive down more deeply" is now required to usefully take the area forward.[34] In light of this call to action this thesis can be considered as joining the

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[32] Participants included Professor Dina Iordanova, Dr Marijke De Valck, Jean-Michel Frodon (film critic), Dr Dorota Ostrowska, Hannah McGill (former artistic director of the Edinburgh International Film Festival) and Marco Müller (artistic director of the Pingyao International Film Festival, formerly affiliated with Pesaro, Turin, Locarno, and Venice film festivals).

[33] William Brown, "The Festival Syndrome: Report on the International Film Festival Workshop, University of St. Andrews, 4 April 2009," in *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit* ed. Dina Iordanova with Ragan Rhyne *(*St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2009), 216.

[34] Tamara Falicov, "Ten Years of Film Festival Studies" (Video Presentation, Birkbeck, University of London, 8 March 2019).

second wave of film festival scholarship by attempting to look beyond the larger concerns of the sector. The study creates a specific insight into the role and concerns of the smaller entities that proliferate throughout the field and operate in contrary ways to the international film festival format.

In spite of the noted paucity of film festival scholarship prior to its first decade, there were several key interventions before this. These interdisciplinary contributions have formed the underpinning theoretical bedrock for the ensuing area of film festival scholarship. Formative theoretical interventions include: film critic and theorist Andre Bazin's anthropological meditation on the rights and rituals unique to film festivals that likened them to a religious experience as early as 1955; Bill Nichol's pivotal article in 1994, "Global Image and Consumption in the Age of Late Capitalism," the first essay to engage with the aesthetics and politics of film circulation within the film festival circuit; Daniel Dayan's anthropological study of Sundance Film Festival as a space of divergent performances in 2002; Janet Harbord's work on festivals as spaces of flow, also in 2002 and Thomas Elsaesser's important 2005 essay that positioned the film festival environment as a post-national entity that is formulated in the mode of a network.[35]

The establishment of film festival studies proper can be attributed to two key publishing interventions that have formed the basis of film festival studies as a discrete and recognised endeavour. Firstly Marijke de Valck's monograph *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* published in 2007 provided the first full-length study to research the overarching development of the international film festival circuit as an institutional entity.[36] De Valck uses four case studies of international film festivals to interrogate different aspects of the film festival construct including geopolitics (Berlinale), business / industry interests (Cannes), media attention and value addition (Venice) and programming and curation (Rotterdam). De Valck's contribution to the field

[35] Andre Bazin, "The Festival Viewed as Religious Order" in *Dekalog 3: On Film Festivals* ed. Richard Porton (London and New York: Wallflower, 2009), 11–22; Bill Nichols, "Global Image and Consumption in the Age of Late Capitalism," *East-West Film Journal* 8, no. 1 (1994); Daniel Dayan, "Looking for Sundance: The Social Construction of a Film Festival" in *Moving Images, Culture and the Mind,* ed. I. Bondebjerg (Luton, Luton University Press, 2010), 43–52; Janet Harbord, *Film Cultures* (London: Sage Publications, 2002); Thomas Elsaesser, "Film Festival Networks: The New Topographies in Europe" in *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 82-88.

[36] Marijke de Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press).

importantly provides the only cohesive overview of the historical development of the film festival circuit to date albeit from a European perspective.

The second development concerns the series of Film Festival Yearbooks established in 2009 by Dina Iordanova at the University of St Andrews. Numbering six in total, the series provides thematically focused edited collections. Each one offers an overview of specific or niche areas of interest within film festival studies that provides an in-depth and multifaceted view of the entire topic when taken as a whole. Contributors to these anthologies have comprised of both festival practitioners and academics providing multiple perspectives from both inside and outside the film festival world. To date themes addressed by these anthologies have included the circuit, imagined communities, East Asia, activism, archival festivals and the Middle East.[37]

As a nascent discipline, it is not surprising that one of the most important interventions to its ongoing development and the formulation of a cohesive field of study has been online. The Film Festival Research Network (FFRN) was founded in 2008 by Marijke de Valck and Skadi Loist and has provided a central point for film festival researchers to converge.[38] Inarguably FFRN has been instrumental in helping this burgeoning area of research to transform into a unified subfield of film culture studies and provided a point of convergence for researchers. Indeed Lesley-Ann Dickson describes FFRN as the "online epicentre" of film festival research.[39] The aim of the site is stated as being "to make festival research more available, to connect its diverse aspects and to foster interdisciplinary exchange between researchers as well as festival professionals."[40]

The website has achieved this in a number of ways. Firstly by providing a highly comprehensive thematically categorised online bibliography of film festival research,

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[37] Dina Iordanova with Ragan Rhyne, ed., *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit* (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2009); Dina Iordanova and Ruby Cheung, ed., *Film Festival Yearbook 2: Film Festivals and Imagined Communities* (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2010); Dina Iordanova and Ruby Cheung, ed., *Film Festival Yearbook 3: Film Festivals and East Asia* (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2011); Dina Iordanova and Leshu Torchin, ed., *Film Festival Yearbook 4: Film Festivals and Activism* (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2012); Alex Marlowe-Mann, ed., *Film Festival Yearbook 5: Archival Film Festivals* (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2013); Dina Iordanova and Stephanie de Veer, ed., *Film Festival Yearbook 6: Film Festivals and the Middle East* (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2014).

[38] Film Festival Research Network, last modified 26 July 2017, http://www.filmfestivalresearch.org.

[39] Lesley-Ann Dickson, "Film festival and cinema audiences: a study of exhibition practice and audience reception at Glasgow Film Festival" (PhD diss., University of Glasgow, Glasgow, 2014), 29.

[40] Ibid.

which is updated on an ongoing basis and is an invaluable first port of call for many researchers. The bibliography was particularly useful for providing a cohesive overview of research in the early days when film festival research was leaner and scattered throughout a range of disciplines. Along with this, the website has helped to facilitate the formation of a community by providing a forum for academic exchange through its open access mailing list used by researchers to update the community on events, calls for papers and to initiate conversations. Finally, FFRN facilitates opportunities for real-world exchange by arranging and sponsoring dedicated film festival research panels at various conferences such as those hosted by the European Network for Cinema and Media Studies (NECS) and the Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS).

It is here too that the most obvious growth in film festival literature is apparent. For example, in its first iteration, also published as a chapter in *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit*, the thematic category entitled "Film Festivals: The Long View" contained three subsections and an entirety of thirty-one entries.[41] In contrast, the last online update to the same section, dated 30 November 2018, showed that the category has now expanded to contain six subsections with 317 entries marking a ten-fold increase to the original bibliography. This simplistic example illustrates a clear demonstration of both the expansion of academic interest and the centrality of FFRN to the growth of the field with many of the listings submitted on an unsolicited basis by their authors for inclusion in the bibliography.

Another marker of the field's maturity is the 2016 publication of Marijke de Valck's, Brendan Kredell's and Skadi Loist's anthology, *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice.*[42] Bringing together insights into issues related to the research methodology for investigating film festivals, the collection serves as the first textbook and methodological tool for scholars entering the film festival studies fray.

A criticism that has been levelled at the historical development of film festival studies is that it has taken a particularly Eurocentric view to date. However, recent contributions

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[41] De Valck and Loist, "Film Festival Studies: An Overview of a Burgeoning Field," 170-215.

[42] Marijke de Valck, Brendan Kredell and Skadi Loist, ed. *Film Festivals; History, Theory, Method, Practice* (London & New York: Routledge, 2016).

that build on the transnational perspectives presented by Iordanova's work in the Film Festival Yearbook series have begun to take up the mantle of examining alternative perspectives. These works are all the more important for signalling a second wave of film festival studies that continues to widen the enquiry to encompass a more truly global perspective. Notable publications that have helped to broaden this perspective include Lindiwe Dovey's monograph *Curating Africa in the Age of Film Festivals: Film Festivals, Time, Resistance*, Chris Berry and Luke Robinson's anthology *Chinese Film Festivals: Sites of Translation*, and Kristen Stewart's monograph *Australian Film Festivals: Audience, Place, and Exhibition Culture*.[43]

2.2.2 The Era of Proliferation

The early 1980s brought about a profound transformation in the film festival environment. These changes directly reflect the wider trends of eventivisation and festival inflation synonymous within the postindustrial era outlined in the earlier part of this chapter. In relation to film festivals, this was marked by a vast proliferation of new events being established across the globe and a professionalisation of the sector as a whole. De Valck proposes that film festival development follows a three-phased historical trajectory that has been widely adopted by film festival scholarship. This framework can usefully be employed here to create a context for the development of the contemporary landscape or, as I term it, the era of proliferation. She proposes that:

> The first phase runs from the establishment of the first recurring
> film festival in Venice in 1932 until 1968, when upheavals began
> to disrupt the festivals in Cannes and Venice, or, more precisely,
> the early 1970s, when these upheavals were followed by a
> reorganization of the initial festival format (which comprised film
> festivals as showcases of national cinemas). The second phase
> is characterized by independently organized festivals that
> operate both as protectors of the cinematic art and as facilitators

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[43] Lindiwe Dovey, *Curating Africa in the Age of Film Festivals: Film Festivals, Time, Resistance. Framing Film Festivals* (London, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Chris Berry and Luke Robinson, ed. *Chinese Film Festivals: Sites of Translation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Kirsten Stevens, *Australian Film Festivals: Audience, Place, and Exhibition Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

of the film industries. This phase ends in the course of the 1980s when the global spread of film festivals and the creation of the international film festival circuit ushers in a third period, during which the festival phenomenon is sweepingly professionalized and institutionalized.[44]

Throughout this latest era of institutionalisation widely varying and fluctuating figures have been attributed to how many film festivals are operating globally indicating that the breadth and complexity of the film festival sector makes it difficult to quantify let alone characterise linearly. To take a marker of sorts the online film festival submissions platform FilmFreeway claims to list over 7000 active film festivals on its website reaching over 800,000 filmmakers worldwide.[45] This is only a percentage of the actual known figure in operation. There is no single model of festival format resulting in the sector being made up of a complex and difficult to classify array of festivals. All of these have differing status within the hierarchy and divergent relationships with each other.

Film industry professionals most often characterise the sector by using the metaphor of a circuit. However, scholars have taken issue with this conception of a *film festival circuit* as seeming to imply that it offers a formal, linear and systematic form of circulation for film and film professionals. In contrast, the reality is that it operates on a considerably more informal and ad-hoc basis. A further criticism of this conception has been its predisposition towards the international film festival format while not accounting for the larger section of the film festival world made up of small and medium-sized festivals.

Progressing from this view other conceptions of how the sector functions have been offered. A theorisation that has gained much purchase is the configuration of the sector as a network. Based on Bruno Latour's work, network theory depends on the analysis of a variety of inter-connected relations between humans and non-humans. Considering the film festival sector through the frame of a network allows an analysis that is

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[44] De Valck, *Film Festivals,* 19-20.

[45] "How it works," Film Freeway, last accessed 13 April 2019, https://filmfreeway.com/pages/how-it-works.

contingent on analysing processes, performances and relations as "*necessary links that make up* the construct."[46] However, one of the drawbacks of this conception is that it does not allow for an analysis of the hierarchical nature, the power relations within the sector or how the field actually functions economically.

Ragan Rhyne draws attention to this in her essay "Film Festival Circuits and Stakeholders" through her discussion of how the field has developed "through the discursive and economic articulation of a discrete new cultural industry."[47] Rhyne's inclusion of policy as a key discourse that upholds the film festival field as an industry is a noteworthy one. Rhyne partially attributes the recent proliferation of festivals to changes in cultural policy that has caused many film festivals to adopt the not-for-profit model as a response to public funding being made available. The emergence of the not-for-profit model has provided an ideal solution for managing diverse interests across the commercial / public interests divide within the cultural industries. This discourse proves particularly useful in relation to the next chapter that discusses this trend in the context of the UK.

Furthermore, Rhyne claims that this model has been instrumental in pitting festivals against each other for funding with each now needing to have its own mission, agenda, programmatic strategy and activities to justify its existence. Rhyne concludes by noting that the not-for-profit has provided the ideal laboratory for mediating between the interests of the state and market. However, in effect the not-for-profit still exercises a form of control over festival agendas through the influence of funding allocations while also allowing commercial entities to take the brunt of the overheads.

Scholars have also raised concerns about the sector's validity and sustainability in its recent inflated guise. The explosion of the film festival sector has resulted in ferocious competition for content, profile, prestige and resources to survive and thrive. As former director of Buenos Aires Film Festival, Quintin eloquently sums up in his essay "The Festival Galaxy":

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[46] De Valck, *Film Festivals,* 34.

[47] Ragan Rhyne, "Film Festival Circuits and Stakeholders," in *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit,* ed. Dina Iordanova with Ragan Rhyne (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2009), 135.

The rivalry with other film festivals becomes the most important concern for those in charge. Venice's artistic director dreams about his/her peers at Cannes. But in Rome, they're dreaming about Venice. And Locarno. And San Sebastian. And in Rotterdam, they're dreaming about Locarno. And in Amsterdam (a documentary festival), about Marseille (another documentary festival). And in Marseille, about Cinema du Reel in Paris (a third documentary film festival). And in Guadalajara, about FICCO in Mexico City. And Mar del Plata, about BAFICI. And in Montreal the World Film Festival worries about Toronto – or the other festival in Montreal, the Festival Nouveau Cinema. And in Valladolid, they dream about San Sebastian; and in San Sebastian about Gijon, which is on the way up and is younger and more modern.[48]

In this era film festivals have been compelled to compete with each other in the global economic space. Conversely, they have also been forced to co-operate with each other creating a self-referentiality across the sector. Concurring with this assertion, Dina Iordanova explains that festivals "mushroom autonomously from each other, copying each other's model and replicating it in their own locality."[49] In this way, film festivals are forced to assume a format that is recognisable to both attain legitimacy and to sustain the overall system in which they operate.

These conceptions are particularly pertinent for this study as each point to the broad, interrelated and complex nature of the sector as a whole. Each case in the study is considered individually in relation to its own specificities on a micro level as well as being analysed in relation to the macro view of where it exists within the UK and global scheme. Quintin's above description demonstrates the intrinsically interrelated relationships all festivals have with one another meaning that it's impossible for them to be considered in isolation. As this study particularly focuses on festivals within one

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[48] Quintin, "The Festival Galaxy," in *Dekalog 3: On Film Festivals* ed. Richard Porton (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2010), 45.

[49] Dina Iordanova. "The Film Festival Circuit" in *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit.* St. ed. Dina Iordanova with Ragan Rhyne (St. Andrews, UK: St. Andrews Film Studies. 2009), 26.

distinct national region its specific hierarchical structure plays a particularly pertinent role in the analysis presented here.

2.2.3 Festival Cities and Cosmopolitanism

Janet Harbord crucially claims that space and place are vital components of film festival culture and that "when attempting to think of a film festival, its meaning is inseparable from its particular location."[50] Harbord's claim provides an underpinning concept for this thesis whereby I contend that each festival is influenced, shaped and framed by its physical location. Along with place, the materialisation of festival space also plays an integral role in creating the festival environment and experience. Harbord proposes that film festivals are "a particular manifestation of the way that space is produced as practice."[51] This is an assertion demonstrated by the strategies employed by each festival in this thesis. For example, Doc/Fest's ability to transform Sheffield's city centre into an inclusive and cohesive festival hub at the service of industry attendees or Flatpack's response to Birmingham's changing architecture through its strategy of pop-up and site-specific screenings.

In a chapter dedicated to the notion of the festival city as part of his influential PhD thesis, Julian Stringer convincingly argues that the simultaneous development of the film festival and the city are intrinsically linked as part of the project of "global cosmopolitanism."[52] Stringer states that "the rise of film festivals on a global scale in the modern era cannot be separated from the restructuring of an alternative social entity, namely the modern city."[53] Stringer positions his argument by drawing a differentiation between the first established film festivals, such as those located in the tourist resorts of Cannes and Venice, and the contemporary situation. His argument paints a glamorous picture of the early years of film festival development. He describes these as being occupied by a "jet-setting elite" that constituted an exclusive realm imbued with an "aura

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[50] Janet Harbord, "Film Festivals-Time Event," in *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit,* ed. Dina Iordanova with Ragan Rhyne (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2009), 40.

[51] Harbord, *Film Cultures,* 61.

[52] Stringer, *Regarding Film Festivals*, 104.

[53] Ibid., 105.

of exclusivity."[54] However, for Stringer, a shift has occurred in recent times whereby this aura of exclusivity has evaporated and film festivals have been relocated into a strategy used by cities for city branding. He explains that cities now utilise film festivals to create "an aura of specialness and uniqueness as a way of promoting a cosmopolitan image in order to compete for mobile investment such as tourism."[55]

In today's highly competitive global economy, Stringer notes that it has been incumbent on cities and towns of all sizes to set up their own film festivals so that they can "stay in the game."[56] This assertion leads him to question whether there can be anything truly special or unique about the contemporary film festival. Stringer's contention raises issues concerning exclusivity versus accessibility within the film festival sphere. It is interesting to note in relation to Stringer's contention that of the three festivals under review here that two (GFF and Flatpack) profess to be open access "audience festivals" while the third (Doc/Fest) manifests as the exclusive realm of a closed industry event and yet promotes an inclusive and accessible rhetoric in its communications.

A further key concern of this thesis is also apparent in Stringer's question. Stringer rightly asserts that festivals now need to make strident efforts to create points of differentiation and establish unique identities as the field has progressed to become more competitive. Problematically, while film festivals strive to create their own unique identities and selling points, they are also bound by the inbuilt similarities that constitute their very processes, structures and format. This is a necessary process that helps to sustain the systemic element of the film festival environment that helps film to circulate through it.

Stringer is not alone in pointing out the tension between formulating film festivals that adhere to recognisable structuring traits while at the same time establishing points of differentiation as part of a competitive strategy. Stringer's argument is echoed in Jesper Strandgaard Pedersen's and Carmelo Mazza's institutional work on cities as late

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54 Ibid.

55 Ibid., 137.

56 Ibid.

adopters of film festivals.[57] They propose that recognisable structures are in fact a necessity for festivals attempting to gain legitimacy. Festivals rely on assuming the existing conventions of other festivals in the field so that they are recognisable and desirable while at the same time conversely needing to establish their own unique identities.

Arguably film festivals have become an essential component of city image-making and place-branding strategies in the twenty-first century. However, in Can-Seng Ooi's and Jesper Strandgaard Pederson's study on the establishment of the Copenhagen International Film Festival (CIFF), they propose that city brands do not communicate a whole picture of the place. Instead, they shape public perception as part of an "image modification process" and create a city narrative by communicating positive images that tell a story about the place. In this way film festivals become part of the city's brand story by enlivening the social space, creating vibrancy, providing content for the programmable city and creating international awareness.

However, one of the most salient points to arise out of their discussion of CIFF relates to the way divergent stakeholders represent their interests differently. What became evident through the study was that while the relationship between film festival and city branding is intertwined that it is only "loosely complementary, rather than symbiotic" due to diverging agendas.[58] Ooi and Strandgaard Pederson make clear that while film festivals are a successful tool for place marketing the predominant concern of film festival organisers must be film. Indeed, the pair extend their argument by saying that film festivals risk their legitimacy if their sole function is place marketing.

The pair also proposes that film festivals contribute to place marketing by imbuing cities with a "film identity" or as it might alternatively be understood, a symbolic cinematic city. The notional "cinematic city" has become a marker of cosmopolitanism and therefore a useful trope for the postindustrial city to engender. Initial theorisations of the cinematic

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[57] Jesper Strandgaard Pedersen and Carmelo Mazza, "International Film Festivals: For The Benefit of Whom?," *Culture Unbound. Journal of Current Cultural Research*, 3 (2011): 158, http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se/v3/a12/cu11v3a12.pdf.

[58] Ibid.

city such as that offered by David Clarke in his seminal book The Cinematic City were largely concerned with depictions or representations of the city, real or imaginary, viewed through the cinematic lens.[59]

However, the cinematic city can also refer to those cities that have a thriving cinemagoing environment such as that investigated and celebrated in Jean-Michel Frodon and Dina Iordanova's edited collection Cinemas of Paris. In the introduction to this collection Frodon and Iordanova assert that "to celebrate cinema theatres in Paris is to celebrate film culture itself" firmly positioning Paris as one of the ultimate cinema cities.[60] Alternatively, it can refer to those urban centres connected to film production such as Los Angeles, largely considered to be the quintessential cinematic city. As film festivals have proliferated, they have also become a contributing characteristic of those cities that have aspirations to be a cinematic city that don't necessarily possess Paris's cultural legacy or Los Angeles' industry association.

In his foundational text, *Film Festival Networks: The New Topographies of Cinema in Europe,* Elsaesser also links the issue of film festival proliferation to city strategies. For Elsaesser, this trend can largely be attributed to the progressively pivotal role that the cultural agenda and creative industries have come to play in the liveability of cities. Elsaesser relates the establishment of film festivals to popular reimaging strategies used by many formerly industrial cities in Europe as part of a project of repurposing, re-inventing or re-launching their images as "capitals of culture."[61]

In accord with Stringer, Elsaesser contends that a key role that film festivals have assumed is as a city-branding strategy. Elsaesser identifies two key developments that have taken place within urban culture to "re-valorise location." He posits that the first of these is predicated on the "cultural clustering" concept proposed by Sharon Zukin that resulted in the emergence of a mixed economy of leisure, culture and creativity. Recalling Richard Florida's hypothesis on the rise of the creative class, Elsaesser argues that influential companies within the knowledge-based economy now require

[59] David B. Clarke, *The Cinematic City* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).
[60] Dina Iordanova & Jean Michel Frodon, *Cinemas of Paris* (St. Andrews, St. Andrews Film Studies), xxi.
[61] Elsaesser, "Film Festival Networks," 85.

"culture-rich environments" so that they can attract and retain creative and skilled workers to specific cities.[62] The second development refers to the emergence of a "total-city" concept implemented to cater to the new economic class whereby the municipality is compelled to become festivalised by offering year-round entertainment. Elsaesser terms this "the programmed or programmable city."[63] He goes on to argue that within this framework the film festival holds a special position due to its cost-effectiveness in contrast to the costly architectural projects popular with city strategists as a result of the Bilbao effect.

Pre-empting my study, both Marijke de Valck and Brendan Kredell have specifically linked postindustrial regeneration efforts to the success of the Rotterdam (IFFR) and Toronto (TIFF) film festivals respectively. Both scholars pinpoint a "trend towards an increased market logic in the cultural sector" that has helped to create the right circumstances to establish these as pre-eminent international festivals with the support of their cities.[64] De Valck maintains that IFFR offers a particularly pertinent example of a new form of cinephilia whereby the festival experience is frequently as important as the films screened.[65] In this sense, IFFR plays an important role in creating Rotterdam's programmable city that provides festivalgoers and Rotterdam's creative class with all-important social capital within the experience economy. Equally important is the invaluable contribution that IFFR made to improving the perception of Rotterdam and motivating tourism to the city.

Kredell's study on Toronto traces the trajectory of film's position within the city's cultural policy framework over a thirty-five-year period (1974-2009) that highlights how TIFF established its pre-eminent cultural position. Kredell's in-depth analysis of Toronto's cultural policy is useful for this study as it serves to highlight a perceptible change to how film culture is viewed and employed by cities the world over as part of their cultural policy. He argues that film was formerly perceived as an outlier art form that gained an

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[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Marijke de Valck, "Supporting Art Cinema at a time of commercialization: Principles and Practices at International Film Festival Rotterdam," *Poetics* 42 (2014): 40.

[65] De Valck, *Film Festivals,* 194.

elevated and prominent position through successive changes to Toronto's cultural policy. Kredell identifies a philosophical shift that repositioned culture from being seen as part of a municipal responsibility towards the social good to becoming a viable asset that paved the way for making film culture an attractive investment for the city. A similar shift of attitude took place in the UK's approach to cultural policy that will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. Driving this point home Kredell asserts that

> one cannot overemphasize the degree to which Toronto's cultural policymakers have created an environment favourable for the cultural industries, and for the cinema in particular, by successfully redefining culture to stress the instrumental and economic benefits that it has for the city.[66]

In Toronto's case, this resulted in a very tangible and visible investment into TIFF as an emblem of postindustrial Toronto. The municipal's investment took the form of $60 million investment from 2000-2008. This investment was specifically used to develop the Bell Lightbox and Festival Tower, a forty-six-storey, mixed-use cultural and residential skyscraper development in the downtown area. Bell Lightbox serves as a landmark permanent home and cinema for the festival clearly signalling the city's commitment to its international film festival. While none of the cases in this study has managed to harness a similar level of city support that TIFF has there are echoes throughout that each city recognises the usefulness of its film festival in terms of developing city image. It is also interesting to note that GFF specifically attributes TIFF with being an inspiration for how the Glasgow festival was developed.

2.2.4 Representing the Film Festival

The strategies used by festivals to represent themselves play an important role in this thesis. The study questions how identity and image is constructed as well as the methods and mechanisms used to project these. A common thread that runs throughout film festival studies has been the argument that, as an institution, film festivals serve the

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[66] Brendan Kredell, "T.O. Live with Film: The Toronto International Film Festival and Municipal Cultural Policy in Contemporary Toronto," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 21, no.1 (Spring, 2012): 30.

interests of multiple divergent stakeholders. One of the first scholars to note this as a characterising feature of the film festival was anthropologist Daniel Dayan in his 1997 study, *Looking for Sundance: The Social Construction of a Film Festival*. Dayan's seminal intervention argues that a profound "definitional process" formulates the festival experience differently for each of the many and varied constituent groups (organisers, jury members, filmmakers, sponsors, journalists, distributors, volunteers, audience and so on) involved.[67]

Dayan found that the recorded representation of the festival constituted as important an understanding of the event as the lived experience with the festival seeming to "live by the printed word."[68] He notes that "a Niagara of printed paper" in the form of programming copy, advertising and reportage are produced to create and stabilise festival meaning that tells "the story of an experience."[69] Dayan's intervention highlights how the practice of writing the event defines and constructs festival identity beyond the experience itself. Instead, Dayan's "Niagara of words" acts as a counter to the ephemerality of the event by creating a fixed and permanent record of the festival. He contends that the festival needs to be understood as a double festival, "the visual festival of films and the whole of Park City as the written festival."[70]

In the cases offered by this study I add to Dayan's proposal by also addressing how these festivals visually represent themselves through their design identity and branding. Arguably these factors can also be understood to be a part of Dayan's notion of the double festival that helps them to reach a stable paradigmatic form. Certainly all festivals relay carefully constructed meaning through their design strategies. However, branding and design play an additional role in the cases of Flatpack and Doc/Fest. For Flatpack, design identity acts as a way of commenting on and responding to Birmingham, albeit inadvertently, that helps constitute the place's meaning. In Doc/Fest's case, branding acts as a way to cohesively formulate space and create the material festival experience.

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67 Dayan, "Looking for Sundance," 48.

68 Ibid., 45.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid., 52.

De Valck proposes that the symbolic representation of the festival also helps to create, constitute and project meaning for the city. Using Cannes as the most obvious example of this she posits that media representations, imagery and city branding during the festival period supersede the reality of the city, resulting in the outward projection of "a virtual city."[71] The image projected transmits a "larger than life" spectacular version of Cannes that bears little or no relationship to the physical town.[72] The reality of Cannes (the city) is that it is in a state of deterioration in contrast to the transformed city image circulating during festival time that is imbued with glamour provided by stars, red carpets, premieres and the iconic Côte d'Azur.

De Valck's assertion chimes with the argument presented by event studies scholars Stephen Page and Joanne Connell. They note that contemporary events not only add meaning to places but also frequently constitute the entire visitor experience. This means that an understanding of or an engagement with a given city is entirely framed and experienced through the prism of the event. In some cases the city itself can now be considered to be the event. Media coverage of these events plays a crucial role in creating a positive perception of cities by creating a dynamic and energised aura or appeal through a city's projected narrative and image.

2.2.5 Curatorial Imperatives

The underpinning motivation of all film festivals is "to serve the cinema" as attested to by countless film festival catalogues and websites the world over.[73] A key characteristic of the film festival experience is to transcend normal cinemagoing or home entertainment activities by creating a heightened, unique and exclusive experience that depends on the act of *being there.* This objective is fulfilled through a combination of professional programming and curatorial practices. Programming strategies include creating unique or privileged film experiences by creating additional value to screenings. These include the glitz and glamour that accompanies red-carpet premieres, direct interactions with filmmakers through Q&As, master classes and workshops, generating

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[71] De Valck, *Film Festivals,* 118.

[72] Ibid., 119.

[73] Chris Darke and Kieron Corless, *Cannes: Inside the World's Premier Film Festival* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 11.

a unique social atmosphere of festivity or, a recently observable trend, the presentation of exclusive or performative so-called live cinema events such as the screening of restored or recovered silent film with original live scores. Arguing the case for this perspective, film scholar Liz Czach asserts that for many people film festivals provide "a seductive return to classical cinephilia with their promise of a unique, unrepeatable experience."[74]

Czach's contention can be directly linked to B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore's conceptualisation of the "experience economy."[75] Their hypothesis proposes that the experience economy is a distinct value-added economic offering that is the next natural stage of progression following on from the emergence of the service-based economy. Pine's and Gilmore's significant thesis has been widely adopted across industries cultivated within the postindustrial economy, especially those involving leisure, entertainment and culture. Film festivals offer a particular and pertinent articulation of the experience economy by creating an added experiential dimension to the practice of film going.

De Valck offers a useful periodisation of how programming practices have developed aligned with the three distinct periods outlined in her taxonomy of historical festival development in Europe.[76] The first phase of development was characterised by nationalistic agendas. This was manifested by festivals adopting a competitive format akin to an Olympics for film whereby countries competed against each other so that they could showcase national output similar to world fairs and expositions. During this period programming and curatorial practices were more closely aligned with an expression of national identity rather than the art of cinema.

De Valck posits that the second period of development (1968 to 1980s) was the most influential in relation to developing the professional programming practices employed today. Terming this "the age of programmers," she attributes the Pesaro Film Festival

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[74] Liz Czach, "Cinephilia, Stars and Film Festivals," *Cinema Journal,* 49, no. 2 (Winter, 2010): 141.

[75] B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, "Welcome to the Experience Economy," *Harvard Business Review* 76, no. 4 (1998): 97.

[76] Marijke de Valck, "Finding Audiences for Films: Programming in Historical Perspectives" in *Coming to a Festival Near You: Programming Film Festivals* ed. Jeffrey Ruoff (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2012), 29-31.

(1965) with establishing certain tropes that have been widely adopted proposing four defining programming characteristics that include:

1. The logic of programming changed from nationally submitted films to a process of selection creating an ideology of "discovery" which opened up the supply of films globally. Active selection has resulted in a process of "cultural intervention" where those films selected make an explicit statement about the festival where they were screened.

2. A programming philosophy and discourse which foregrounded the notion of cinema as art was adopted. This allowed festivals to be repositioned as being at the service of cinema rather than the nation.

3. This discourse legitimised independent film but also created a dichotomy between commercial cinema as entertainment and independent cinema as cinephilia.

4. A "politics of participation" was formulated that offered enriched ways of contextualising and framing the films screened. This was achieved through a variety of methods such as producing programming notes, developing curatorial practices such as themed sections or retrospectives and creating added value such as Q&As with filmmakers.

Taking a similar view, film scholar and festival programmer, Roya Rastegar argues that the task of the curator is to definitively frame "the conditions within which audiences come together, and how they see and engage with screen cultures."[77] Indeed for Rastegar the various practices of participation that surround festival viewing are often seen as being just as important as the films themselves. For instance, the film festival experience consists of a variety of activities that create and add to the experience including selection practices, endorsements such as award giving, attendance modes, and supplementary activities (volunteering, talks, workshops, master classes, in-person interviews, parties, receptions, drinks and dinners).

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[77] Roya Rastegar, "Difference, Aesthetics and the Curatorial Crisis of Film Festivals," *Screen* (September, 2012): 313, http://screen.oxfordjournals.org/content/53/3/310.short.

For filmmaker, former Edinburgh Film Festival Director and current Chair of Belfast Film Festival, Mark Cousins, the process of curatorship is an act of authorship that needs its own specific narrative and aesthetic. Cousins proposes that "the people who run film festivals must think of themselves as storytellers and stylists."[78] While Cousins' suggestion presents an important approach to formulating a cohesive programming narrative, the pursuit of this goal is not as straightforward a process as it first seems with many constraints and limitations that shape and sometimes block the curatorship in practice.

Jeffrey Ruoff highlights this difficulty in his discussion of the invisible processes that are involved in film curatorship. The process of curatorship involves festival programmers entering into laborious negotiations with various film industry rights holders such as filmmakers, distributors and sales agents to try and secure screenings.[79] It is often during this process that the hierarchical structure within the film festival environment is at its most pronounced. Secondary tier and smaller film festivals frequently find that their reduced leverage and cache curtails negotiations and has a real impact on realising programming ambitions.

Taking this a step further, Sonia M Tascon suggests that films excluded from a festival programme can be as illuminating as those that are included for gaining an insight into the programming objectives of specific film festivals.[80] This observation is highly perceivable in two of the cases presented by this study. Both GFF and Flatpack employ programming strategies that can be considered as a result of lack. GFF's third place position within the UK's film festival hierarchy presents a challenge to securing premieres ahead of EIFF and LFF. As a result of this restriction the festival has been forced to carve out its own innovative and novel programming strategies to create an identity that is not reliant on being the very first to screen titles in the UK. For Flatpack, the limitation was imposed by the lack of appropriate exhibition facilities in Birmingham

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[78] Mark Cousins, "Film Festival Form: A Manifesto," in *The Film Festival Reader,* ed. Dina Iordanova (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2012), 171.

[79] Jeffrey Ruoff, "Introduction," in *Coming to Film Festival Near You: Programming Film Festivals,* ed. Jeffrey Ruoff (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2012), 3.

[80] Sonia M Tascon, *Human Rights Film Festivals: Activism in Context* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 10.

that forced the festival to embrace alternative, non-theatrical modes of exhibition.

Added to this constraint, British film scholar and former Edinburgh Film Festival Director, Hannah McGill, challenges the lack of innovation apparent within film festival structures that appear entrenched and even outmoded in the rapidly changing digital film environment. She argues that

> as distribution and exhibition models evolve more rapidly and confoundingly than ever, film festivals for the most part remain resolutely committed to old-school forms of presentation: they fetishize exclusivity via premiere status, and they tend to be resistant to advances in technology.[81]

McGill's contention highlights both a curatorial and operational conservatism within the film festival environment linked to Iordanova's earlier observation that situates film festivals as reproducing and self-referential entities that bolster and uphold the system through their similarities.

Part of the intention of this thesis is to examine how specific UK festivals have formulated points of differentiation and uniqueness within this competitive environment. Yet while these film festivals exhibit moments of originality, for the most part they are still limited to operating with the formulation of the overall system. However, one of the latest developments within the UK at policy level is a decategorisation of film festivals by the British Film Institute's public funding structure. In the BFI's latest strategic plan, "BFI2022: Supporting UK Film," festival funding has been subsumed under the more general auspice of project funding.[82] This development will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter but suffice to say that it offers an indication that a delimiting of the film festival format at policy level may be in progress.

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[81] Hannah McGill, "Film Festivals: A View from the Inside," *The Film Festival Dossier, Screen,* 52, no. 2 (Summer, 2011): 281.

[82] British Film Institute, *BFI2022: Supporting UK Film – BFI Plan 2017-2022*, last accessed 28 May 2019, https://www.bfi.org.uk/2022/downloads/bfi2022_EN.pdf.

2.2.6 The Business of Film Festivals

In one of the first in-depth treatises on the role of the film festival, Bill Nichols' seminal essay "Global Image Consumption in the Age of Late Capitalism," the author notes that "film belongs to an industrial, if not postindustrial mode of production."[83] Nichols' assertion is useful to remind us that by extension an understanding of what constitutes the film festival, primarily an exhibition site for film, is also contextualised by film's linkage to its inherent industrial or even postindustrial processes. Because of film's highly commercial nature film festivals offer a divergence to other types of arts festivals. In contrast, festivals exhibit specific practices that are fundamental to advancing the industry as a whole such as aiding films to secure distribution. Regardless of type, film festivals always need to be understood as political actors that are at the behest of a range of forces such as stakeholder interests, their relationship to each other and the wider flows of film exhibition.

This, in turn, has an impact on programming practices as different types of film festivals have different objectives. Or as Mark Peranson argues different interest groups that comprise different target audiences shape film festival agendas.[84] Peranson divides the world of film festivals into two useful and distinct models of operation: the business model and the audience model. While two of the festivals examined in the study, GFF and Flatpack, can be primarily considered to be audience festivals, the third case study on Doc/Fest offers a business festival perspective on the question of film festivals located in the UK's postindustrial cities.

Peranson's business model, also more widely known as and referred to in this study as the industry festival, aligns with those festivals more commonly understood to be premier or A-list festivals that occupy the top tier of the film festival hierarchy such as Cannes, Berlin or Toronto. Peranson lists the following attributes as defining the business model: an element of prolific major competition, big budgets, world premieres, the participation of A-list celebrities, global prestige, international media coverage and

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[83] Bill Nichols, "Global Image Consumption in the Age of Late Capitalism," 37.

[84] Mark Peranson, "First You Get the Power, Then You Get the Money: Two Models of Film Festivals" in *Dekalog 3: On Film Festivals*, ed. Richard Porton (London and New York: Wallflower, 2009), 25.

an audience largely made up of film industry personnel. The inclusion of a film market is a vital component of the business model that firmly aligns film festivals with the industrial practices of the film business and ensures industry attendance, thus formulating the festival experience.

In contrast, Peranson defines the audience model as more local in nature, run on smaller budgets and usually predicated around a best-of-festivals model, by selecting festival hits from premiere festivals on the circuit. Alternatively, audience film festivals can be very specific events that celebrate a niche or special interest such as national film, film noir, silent movie classics and so on. As Peranson points out, while audience film festivals tend to sit at the periphery of scholarly attention the audience model actually "constitutes the majority of film festivals operating around the world."[85]

Peranson's simplistic model offers a useful entry point to understanding film festival modus operandi but can be considered problematic due to its binary nature, that sets business and interests in opposition to each other rather than as being complimentary or interactive. In most cases, as Peranson himself acknowledges, the majority of film festivals are not confined to one or the other model but combine characteristics of both to varying degrees. Therefore, it is more useful to view the model as a sliding scale or spectrum of stakeholders interests. For the sake of analysis then, a more useful question to pose; is where does a particular festival sit within the spectrum and whose interests are served by it?

Economist Jeremy Rifkin proposes that in the new global economy the metamorphosis from industrial production to cultural capitalism has also been accompanied "by an equally profound shift from the work to play ethic."[86] Rifkin's proposition is a useful concept for understanding the role that film festivals play within the contemporary consumption-oriented urban landscape. The hybrid nature of the film festival as a construct lends itself uniquely to an experience where the boundaries between work and play are dedifferentiated, a concept that will be further explored in relation to

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[85] Ibid.

[86] Jeremy Rifkin, *The Age of Access: The New Culture of Hypercapitalism, Where all of Life is a Paid-For Experience* (New York: Tarcher, 2000), 44.

Doc/Fest. The film festival is exceptional in its ability to combine entertainment with business or art with commerce. It is this defining factor that sets the film festival apart from other types of festival.

2.2.7 Escaping the Frame

An additional aspect of the contemporary film experience that emerges as a consideration in all three cases is the recently emergent trend for "live cinema" events. Sarah Atkinson and Helen Kennedy coined the term "live cinema" to provide a classification for the variety of non-theatrical experiential film events that have recently become an identifiable segment of the film exhibition sector in their own right. The "Live Cinema in the UK Report 2016" aptly describes the phenomenon as "the creation of a cinema that escapes beyond the boundaries of the screen."[87]

To date, the key scholarly contribution to this specific categorisation has been led by Atkinson and Kennedy who have attempted to marshal this amorphous cultural phenomenon into a concept as well as providing a common definition for it. This work began with Atkinson's 2014 monograph, *Beyond the screen: emerging cinema and engaging audiences.*[88] It was continued jointly by the pair in 2016 when they co-edited a themed section on experiential cinema in the journal *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies* (2016) and most recently with the publication of an edited collection *Live Cinema: Cultures, Economies, Aesthetics* (2017).[89] While the earlier interventions sat more firmly within the theoretical framework of audience and reception studies *Live Cinema: Cultures, Economies, Aesthetics* marked a departure, as denoted by its title, by including considerations related to culture, economy and aesthetics.

Events that fall under the categorisation of live cinema run the gamut from entirely film events hosted in unusual non-theatrical locations such as heritage sites that are

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87 Sarah Atkinson, Lisa Brook and Helen Kennedy, *Live Cinema in the UK Report 2016* (Live Cinema Ltd, 2016), 2. http://livecinema.org.uk/live-cinema-in-the-uk-report.

88 Sarah Atkinson, *Beyond the Screen: Emerging Cinema and Engaging Audiences* (New York, London, New Delhi & Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2014).

89 Sarah Atkinson and Helen Kennedy, *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies.* 13, Issue 1 (May 2016), http://www.participations.org/Volume%2013/Issue%201/S1/1.pdf; Sarah Atkinson and Helen Kennedy, *Live Cinema: Cultures, Economies, Aesthetics* (New York, London, New Delhi & Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2017).

accompanied by a live musical performance to immersive film experiences. A good example of the immersive experience is exemplified by the "secret cinema" phenomenon. This is where audience members are submerged into a physical environment that makes them feel that they have entered the world of the movie outside of the screen. The attributes of these events can be broadly defined as having a live or experiential element or can be described as a cinema *happening* that is not confined to the film text or auditorium. The programming strategies of all three film festivals under consideration in this study utilise live cinema or novel programming practices as a significant strategy to differentiate their particular festival experience.

Atkinson and Kennedy offer the following characteristics as key elements or tropes that constitute what they term to be live cinema: "synchronous live performance, site-specific locations, technological intervention, social media engagement, and all manner of simultaneous interactive moments including singing, dancing, eating, drinking and smelling."[90] Building on this description the pair typify live cinema as consisting of three distinct categories:

1. **Enhanced:** Some form of non-theatrical physical enhancement that adds to the experience of attending a screening i.e. open-air cinema.

2. **Augmented:** Adds a further filmic dimension to the filmic text, i.e. situates the screening at a site relevant to the screening / adds a live score – this can be live score of the original or rescored. There is no participation with the text though i.e. although in an alternative venue the audience is seated traditionally.

3. **Participatory:** Direct engagement between audience and text along a spectrum of immersiveness i.e. sing along à la Rocky Horror Show to full immersion à la secret cinema.

Atkinson attributes the popularity of this emerging phenomenon as a way of extending the audience experience, heightening the spectator's absorption and stimulating vicarious audience engagement.[91] In other words, the experience of live cinema

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[90] Atkinson and Kennedy, *Live Cinema*, 139-40.

[91] Atkinson, *Beyond the Screen*, 50.

intersects with film festival programming strategies as a way of creating a distinct and unique experience. Indeed many live cinema experiences play on the specificity of place, especially in the case of site-specific screenings that are predicated on themed programming. This strategy provides an opportunity to view films, especially retrospective titles, reframed by an alternative viewing experience. For example, the 1923 film *Safety Last!* screened in one of Birmingham's Victorian shopping arcades as part of Flatpack.[92] The screening offers a particularly apt example of live cinema's ability to create an extra-filmic experience. In this case the screening was specifically framed by the city's own Victorian architectural heritage which added an additional layer of context to the event.

Evidence presented in the inaugural "Live Cinema in the UK Report 2016" suggests that live cinema has already become mainstream, achieving box office success and commercial gain during its short life cycle. A key finding of the report indicates that 48% of all UK independent film exhibitors host live events, constituted by cinemas, festivals and pop-up events.[93]

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed a range of theoretical studies that underpin the case study research to come, as well as creating a context for both the changes experienced by the contemporary city and the role the film festival plays within it.

In the first section of the chapter, I have drawn on a combination of sociological and urban studies to provide an understanding of recent changes that have resulted in the evolution of cities and the urban environment to position them as postindustrial. The city has been considered from a number of perspectives that closely link the rise of service-based economy to the emergence of a rhetoric that positions the creative industries as being an underpinning driver of the contemporary economy.

Significantly, as Mark Shiel has pointed out, it is culture that has become one of the

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[92] *Safety Last!,* directed by Fred Neymeyer and Sam Taylor (Hal Roach Studios: 1923).

[93] Atkinson, Brook and Kennedy, *Live Cinema in the UK Report 2016,* 3.

most important factors of the postindustrial society and it is the consumption of culture, particularly popular entertainment, that has come to define the era. The role of the creative industries and its associated strategies has taken on a new and elevated level of importance in relation to cultural image-making that provides a tangible graphic representation of each city's ability to compete and its place within the global city competition. This ever-increasingly pronounced competition has compelled cities that are lower in the global hierarchy to attempt to carve out their own distinct identities and become more innovative and entrepreneurial in their pursuit of profile and status on the world stage. The creative industries as a concept and its specific role within the UK's political economy and specifically in relation to the UK's film festival industry is considered in more depth in the next chapter.

Therefore, the rising popularity of city-based film festivals has a particular importance in relation to the contemporary city strategies. It provides a low-risk and relatively low-cost proposition that creates competitive cache and a cosmopolitan image. An added factor that has made this possible is the adoption of B. Joseph Pine II's and James H. Gilmore's conceptualisation of the "experience economy" as playing a fundamental role within the postindustrial moment that is a direct outcome of the rise of the service-based economy. As this chapter observes, Pine's and Gilmore's thesis has proved to be widely popular across a range of disciplines, especially those involving leisure, entertainment and culture seeking to add value to their consumable services. However, as a concept, the experience economy has far more social and cultural importance as the provision and consumption of ephemeral experiences assumes a more central part of contemporary society. This identifies the film festival experience as being elevated above that of regular cinemagoing through the creation of an exclusive aura of one-off-ness. The notion of experience proves to be a key theme in understanding how each case in this study differentiates itself and attempts to compete in the film festival marketplace.

Following on directly from Pine's and Gilmore's proposition is the concept of the eventful or programmable city that creates a prestigious city image through hosting events that cast an aura of specialness or exclusivity; Cannes International Film Festival and Mardi

Gras in New Orleans being just two cases in point. It is impossible to consider either of these cities without viewing them through the prism of their landmark internationally renowned events. However, the eventful city is not just useful for projecting city image to the world. Eventivisation and festivalisation of cities also plays a role in creating and formulating civic identity that is fundamental to constituting the experience of a place and has become an expectation within contemporary city life. As Maurice Roche suggests in his consideration of mega-events it is clear that the project of a collective place identity and the experience of its society and culture are deeply intertwined.

The second section of the chapter went on to more closely consider the proliferation of film festivals across the world in relation to the role they play within the city. This section commenced by giving a brief overview of the first decade of film festival studies that situated where this study falls within the oeuvre of academic enquiry. This work joins a second wave of film festival studies as part of Tamara Falicov's call "to dive down more deeply" into studies of the smaller and medium-sized film festivals that constitute the environment as a whole and is intended to give a deeper insight into the UK's film festival environment beyond LFF and EIFF.

The festivals under consideration here are all part of the latter part of the development of the film festival environment that falls under Marijke de Valck's third phase of development characterised by the professionalisation and institutionalisation that I term the era of proliferation. It is in this era of overabundance that fierce competition has emerged between film festivals as each attempts to carve out its own unique identity while at the same time remaining viable and sustainable within its own location and adhering to the structuring of the circuit.

As this chapter suggests there are multiple ways that festivals attempt to formulate their own specific identities. Two of the predominant factors that emerge for constituting festival identity are linked to considerations of space and place. The literature shows both of these factors have been ongoing considerations for how each festival experience is expressed. As Harbord asserts, film festivals are "a particular

manifestation of the way that space is produced as practice."[94] Inarguably film festivals become part of a city's brand or place marketing strategy that attempt to create a cosmopolitan image linked to the establishment of a cinematic city narrative. However, an important point raised here relates to the authenticity of film festivals' curatorial imperatives. While city stakeholders may employ festival image to the advantage of the city, a festival's sole reason can never just be as a place marketing strategy lest it lose its programming authenticity or legitimacy within the wider film industry.

Questions of curatorial strategy arise as the single most important factor for defining and positioning each festival beyond place and space. Importantly film festival curation is not a straightforward matter. It involves a complex understanding of the innate hierarchy within the system that situates power dynamics and therefore available content that is in turn influenced by city and festival prestige. Certainly film festival curation should be an authored activity in the vein suggested by Mark Cousins. However, the complexity of the system often acts as a barrier to smaller festivals that then goes on to shape their curatorial imperatives through exclusion rather than inclusion of content.

In the cases of these particular festivals, the process of curation also needs to be considered in relation to the practices of participation employed. As Rastegar points out the practices of participation are often as important as the films themselves. This is an aspect of film festival analysis that becomes particularly pertinent throughout each of the case studies undertaken as part of this study. The employment of novel viewing practices such as Flatpack's mobile approach to exhibition, GFF's reliance on large-scale, site-specific events to create profile and Doc/Fest's commitment to creating innovative social and networking opportunities demonstrates the importance of creating and contextualising screenings as well as creating differentiated experiences that contributes to creating a competitive edge.

The next chapter focuses on the specific UK context for this study. Questions addressed include how the concept of the creative industries was established as part of

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[94] Harbord, *Film Cultures*, 61.

the UK's political economy; how this development related specifically to the national film industry and film policy, and how the film festival sector developed within this specific historical and political context.

Chapter Three: The UK Context, Developing the Contemporary Film Festival Sector

The research undertaken for this thesis has implications for all film festivals born of an urban environment. However, the particular festivals under examination here emerged within a very specific political climate that can be linked to the auspices of postindustrial strategies in the UK. The ongoing fortunes of all three festivals under discussion individually interact with the UK's political economy and resulting cultural policies in their own specific ways. To gain a full understanding of the three film festivals examined here it is useful to set the scene for the political economy that they emerged from.

This chapter will begin by outlining the particular political climate that the festivals examined in this thesis were born into. It will continue by sketching a brief history of how the UK's film festival sector developed from its inception. The chapter argues that there is a parallel between the emergence of the creative industries discourse as a political strategy in the UK and the proliferation of a second tier of new film festivals that emerged during the latter phase of development. National film festival policy and funding is charted from the beginning of this period up to the present time. This is outlined to create an understanding of how and where the film festivals examined in the study fit into the overall national framework and their relevance within it. Public funding and policy have had a specific impact on the status and programming strategies employed by these festivals. As the chapter develops it becomes clear that from a national perspective there is a marked division between the UK's most prolific film festivals, EIFF and LFF, and the rest of the sector.

3.1 Competing on Brains not Brawn: A Creative Industries Discourse

The late 1990s saw a reinvigoration of the country's international image as being that of a progressive and forward-thinking economy under Britain's New Labour government

(1997-2010) led by Prime Minister, Tony Blair. The New Labour government sought to harmonise socialism and capitalism under a new regime of centrism referred to by the party as the Third Way. Described as a "a time of optimism and hype" the country's new image was part of a strategy to counter the effects of industrial decline that had impacted the UK as a whole.[1]

It specifically strove to establish a new economical narrative that departed from an association with its dependence on the manufacturing industry. The establishment of the creative industries discourse, referred to briefly in the last chapter recognised and promoted culture as a driving force within the new knowledge-based economy. This rhetoric became a central tenet of the New Labour era and proved to be key to repositioning Britain on the global stage. Espousing a strategy to compete on "brains not brawn" New Labour sought to harness the new knowledge-based economy.[2] Throughout their time in office they extensively promoted the creative industries rhetoric as part of a strategy for rebranding the UK as a nation of creative talents in the wake of de-industrialisation. This strategy was exemplified by the brand name "Cool Britannia" that exploded onto the international stage gaining global recognition for the symbolic goods created as part of the Creative Britain discourse as well as creating a confident new image of the nation.

Indeed at the time, Tony Blair declaimed that the arts and culture had moved from the "periphery" to become part of the "core script" of the UK's political landscape.[3] Importantly, all three festivals examined in this study came into being under this prevailing political atmosphere. Glasgow Film Festival and Flatpack were established in the early 2000s, during the period that elevated and promoted the UK's creative industries as a golden age of sorts. While the third, Doc/Fest, was established in 1994 just three years prior to New Labour coming into power in 1997.

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[1] Kate Oakley, "Not So Cool Britannia: The Role of the Creative Industries in Economic Development," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 7, no. 1 (March 2004): 69.

[2] GOV.UK, Department of Culture, "Media and Sport," Speech by the Prime Minister Tony Blair at Lord Mayor's banquet (speech, 10 November 1997).

[3] GOV.UK – Prime Minister's Office. "Prime Minister Tony Blair speaks on the Arts at Tate Modern" (speech, Tate Modern, 6 March 2007).

Thirty years on, the creative industries continue to hold considerable economic and political weight in the UK. In a 2017 speech, the UK's former right-wing Conservative Prime Minister, Theresa May, pronounced the centrality of the creative industries within the UK's economy and wider cultural life using a similar rhetoric to that used by Tony Blair in 1997. May described the sector as being alternatively "at the heart of what makes Britain great" and as "flying the flag for Britain on the global stage."[4] The former Prime Minister's statement reinforces the continued value of the creative industries to the economy and the important role it performs in shaping how the UK is perceived as a nation internationally. The ongoing promotion of this rhetoric has formed an underpinning strategic driver for the urban regeneration efforts of individual postindustrial cities in the UK such as Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, as well as Birmingham, Glasgow and Sheffield that have all utilised culture as a tool for city re-imaging.

In a direct echo of Tony Blair's buoyant discourse, May elaborated, "so while our films captivate audiences the world over, our fashion designers surprise and delight, our architects are shaping skylines and cityscapes on every continent."[5] May's speech demonstrates the importance of ensuring that the political narrative related to the creative industries remains robust in terms of international image-making. It also highlights the specific importance that the film sector holds within the UK's creative industries. A recent valuation (November 2017) estimated the creative industries sector to be worth £92 billion to the nation's economy. [6] To put this statistic into perspective, this figure accounts for 14.2 percent of the nation's overall economy with the wider creative economy including media and sports contributing almost £250 billion to the UK's Gross Value Added (GVA).[7] These figures position the creative industries as the fastest growing sector of the country's economy with a growth rate recorded as twice that of the wider economy.

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[4] GOV.UK – Prime Minister's Office, "Prime Minister Theresa May speaks at the Creative Industries reception at Downing Street" (speech, 10 Downing St, 8 May 2018).

[5] Ibid.

[6] GOV.UK – Department of Culture, Media and Sports, "Creative industries record contribution to UK economy," Press Release (29 November 2017).

[7] Ibid.

3.2 UK Film Festival Development – Historical Overview

According to the BFI's report "Opening Our Eyes" the cultural contribution of film is "embedded in the UK's way of life."[8] Interestingly, and as I have observed elsewhere, in spite of the BFI's assertion a comprehensive overview of the UK's film festival environment is notable by its absence.[9] This contention is equally notable in relation to documentation produced by the UK's leading film agency or alternatively throughout academic literature that relates to the UK's film culture. This absence is a grave omission given the important role that film festivals now play as part of cultural cinema's distribution and exhibition landscape. Not to mention, the real value provided to the sector by providing employment to film and media professionals.

A review of the literature shows that the lion's share of academic writing focuses predominantly on the UK's oldest film festival, the Edinburgh International Film Festival (EIFF). The festival is primarily documented in two notable monograph contributions including Matthew Lloyd's comprehensive history of the festival from 1968 to 1988, *How the movie brats took over Edinburgh: the impact of Cinephilia on the Edinburgh International Film Festival, 1968-80* and Forsythe Hardy's *Slightly mad and full of dangers: the story of the Edinburgh Film Festival.*[10] The UK's other most longstanding festival, BFI London Film Festival (LFF) receives less academic attention. While appearing in Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Chris Dupin's laudable history of the BFI, *The British Film Institute, the government and film culture, 1933-2000,* it warrants only a mere couple of mentions throughout the entire edited collection.[11]

More recently Lesley-Ann Dickson and Mar Diestro-Dópido have made invaluable interventions into the field. Dickson's doctoral thesis *Film Festival and Cinema*

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[8] British Film Institute, *Opening our Eyes: How film contributes to the culture of the UK. A report for the BFI by Northern Alliance and Ipsos MediaCT* (July 2011), 1, https://www.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/bfi-opening-our-eyes-2011-07_0.pdf.

[9] Sarah Smyth, "From Lerwick to Leicester Square: UK film festivals and why they matter," in *The Routledge Companion to British Cinema History,* ed. I.Q. Hunter, Laraine Porter and Justin Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 407.

[10] Matthew Lloyd, *How the movie brats took over Edinburgh: the impact of cinephilia on the Edinburgh International Film Festival, 1968-80* (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2011); Forsyth Hardy, *Slightly mad and full of dangers: the story of the Edinburgh Film Festival* (Edinburgh: Ramsay Head Press, 1992).

[11] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Chris Dupin, ed., *The British Film Institute, the government and film culture, 1933-2000* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

Audiences: A study of exhibition practice and audience reception at Glasgow Film Festival and resultant articles "'Ah! Other Bodies!': Embodied spaces, pleasures and practices at Glasgow Film Festival" and "Beyond Film Experience: Festivalizing Practices and Shifting Spectatorship at Glasgow Film Festival" examine audience reception and exhibition practices at GFF.[12] Dickson's work has proved a vital and timely contribution to examining GFF's value as a new and significant participant in the UK. Alternatively, Diestro-Dópido's doctoral thesis presents a chapter examining LFF, "Film Festivals: Cinema and Cultural Exchange," supplies a significant insight into the festival's recent increased profile and repositioning on the international circuit.[13]

Nevertheless, while these recent interventions have gone some way to addressing these gaps a comprehensive overview has still not been forthcoming. In this section I will attempt to sketch a very brief history of how film festivals have developed in the UK that situates the film festivals under discussion within the national framework. The historical overview given is not exhaustive but gives a high-level overview of the sector's development.

Diverging from de Valck's three-phased historical framework the UK's development can more readily be divided into just two distinct phases of development.[14] The initial phase of development dates from the establishment of the first UK film festival in 1947, Edinburgh Film Festival, and continues until the late 1980s. The environment primarily consisted of only two large film festivals that took place in the nation's capital cities, Edinburgh (1947) and London (1957). Apart from these two key festivals the UK's film festival sphere mainly comprised of smaller and non-recurring localised film festivals hosted by local cinemas and arts centres about which little is written.

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[12] Lesley-Ann Dickson, *Film Festival and Cinema Audiences: A study of exhibition practice and audience reception at Glasgow Film Festival* (PhD diss., Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2014); "'Ah! Other Bodies!': Embodied spaces, pleasures and practices at Glasgow Film Festival," *Participations, Journal of Audience and Reception Studies,* 12, no. 1 (2015); "Beyond Film Experience: Festivalizing Practices and Shifting Spectatorship at Glasgow Film Festival," in *Live Cinema: Cultures, Economies, Aesthetics,* ed. Sarah Atkinson and Helen Kennedy (New York, London, New Delhi & Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2017).

[13] Mar Diestro-Dópido, *Film Festivals: Cinema and Cultural Exchange* (PhD diss., London: Queen Mary, University of London, 2017).

[14] Marijke De Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press), 19-20.

While the Edinburgh festival offers a useful starting point to mark the first phase of the UK's film festival development, it is important to momentarily draw attention to Dina Iordanova's observation in the foreword to *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice.*[15] Iordanova asserts that fourteen years before the Edinburgh festival was established that the UK had already made an important intervention into the international film festival landscape through the Amateur Glasgow Film Festival. Established in 1933 the Glasgow festival habitually sought and supported international submissions. The most obvious differentiator between the Glasgow festival and the festivals that arose during the first phase of development was its amateur status. This might possibly account for the festival being written out of academic history until Iordanova recovered it in her recent intervention.

Both EIFF (formerly known as Edinburgh Film Festival) and LFF arose directly from practices forged within the UK film society movement during the post-war decades. Both festivals shared a strong cinephilic determination by being staunchly non-competitive in contrast to the competitive national showcase format of their European counterparts. Edinburgh Film Festival was initially established by members of the Film Guild and Scottish Federation of Film Societies and is credited with being the longest continually running festival in the world. It can be argued that EIFF played a defining role in determining the global film festival format. The festival adopted a specific set of critically focused practices by framing its core programme with a series of lectures, discussions, debates and publications that bore the hallmark of intellectual rigour exemplified by the film society movement. In addition, during its formative years the Edinburgh festival focused primarily on presenting documentary film making it the first specialised or genre film festival of international significance.

Just a decade later the newly instituted British Film Institute established the London Film Festival as part of its wider remit to become "the home of world cinema."[16] The festival specifically sought to promote cinephilia by bringing the best cinema sourced from the international film festival circuit to the London audience and formed the

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[15] Dina Iordanova, "Foreword: the film festival and film culture's transnational essence" in *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*, ed. Marijke de Valck, Brendan Kredell and Skadi Loist (London & New York: Routledge, 2016), xi.

[16] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Chris Dupin, *The British Film Institute,* 78.

template for other significant international film festivals including New York and Hong Kong. Importantly both LFF and EIFF were set up to serve England and Scotland's respective capital cities. They continue to retain their overall positions at the apex of the UK film festival hierarchy boasting the largest admissions in the country, circa 205,000 and 55,000 respectively in 2018.

It wasn't until 1977 that they were joined by a further significant annually recurring event, Cambridge Film Festival. However, no significant film festivals were presented in the UK's second-tier postindustrial cities until 1987 when Leeds International Film Festival (LIFF) was established. This implies a difference in attitude up to this point between the role of film culture in the nation's capital cities and its industrial cities that shifted with the emergence of the creative industries rhetoric.

LIFF's establishment marked the beginning proper of a second phase of UK film festival that continued to circa 2010. This new phase was characterised by a proliferation of emerging film festivals that constituted a festival boom in the UK. This development aligns with the third phase of development proposed by de Valck whereby film festivals became more professionalised and institutionalised.[17] The UK's second phase of film festival development was reflective of the expansion that was happening on a macro level in the global space and saw the emergence of a whole host of new and significant film festivals that materialised in quick succession throughout the 1990s. These were located in a range of geographically dispersed regional postindustrial cities including Sheffield (Doc/Fest,1994), Bradford (Bradford International Film Festival, 1995; Bite the Mango, 1995) and Bristol (Encounters, 1995). Interestingly, significant film festivals have not been established in two of the UK's most prominent postindustrial cities, Manchester and Liverpool. Both of these cities have undergone significant postindustrial regeneration utilising cultural strategies and involving the revival of their respective night-time economies. To date, Liverpool does not present a flagship arts festival of any kind while Manchester hosts an internationally acclaimed biennale, Manchester International Festival.

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[17] De Valck, *Film Festivals,* 20.

3.3 A Sign of the Times: The UKFC and Film Festival Funding

The establishment of the UK Film Council (UKFC) in 2000 offers a salient illustration of the New Labour government's agenda for establishing and promoting the creative industries. The newly formulated quango was tasked with overall responsibility for industrial and cultural policy. Its establishment also coincided with the beginning of the UK's second phase of film festival development and is directly attributable to its initial emergence. The body was a direct result of a Film Policy Review entitled "A Bigger Picture" that was commissioned by the incoming government.[18] It sought to cohesify the UK's formerly fragmented film policy and funding landscape. According to Jack Newsinger the recently formed agency

> appeared to signal the government's strong support for the development of a prosperous British film industry, symbolic of the 'cool capitalism' that was central to the identity of New Labour during its first term in office.[19]

Newsinger's notion of "cool capitalism" reflects the strategies employed by the UK's postindustrial cities to renegotiate their identities based upon their newly formulated image as creative cities and cultural destinations. The UKFC's first chairman, filmmaker Alan Parker, described the contemporary film industry as "the key driver of the creative industries" and announced "a policy of aggressive investment into 'popular' films."[20] Parker specifically cited the United States' creative industries, valued at half a trillion dollars annually, as an inspiration for the policy thus positioning the agency's agenda as being unquestionably economically driven. Gillian Doyle, Philip Schlesinger, Raymond Boyle and Lisa W. Kelly posit that "it was universally understood that the primary mission for the new organisation was to promote industry sustainability."[21] This was reflected through a strategy realignment that switched the focus from production to

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[18] GOV.UK, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, *A Bigger Picture. The Report of the Film Policy Review Group. Department for Culture, Media and Sport* (London, March 1998), https://bigpictureresearch.typepad.com/files/a-bigger-picture.pdf.

[19] Jack Newsinger, "The UKFC and the Regional Screen Agencies," in *The Routledge Companion to British Cinema History* ed. I.Q. Hunter, Laraine Porter and Justin Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 367.

[20] Sir Alan Parker, "Building a Sustainable UK Film Industry" (presentation – UK Film Council, 5 November 2002).

[21] Gillian Doyle, Philip Schlesinger, Raymond Boyle, and Lisa W. Kelly, *The Rise and Fall of the UK Film Council* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 2015), https://edinburgh.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748698233.001.0001/upso-9780748698233-chapter-4.

distribution indicating its economic and industrial imperative. In addition, responsibility for the sector's cultural activities was delegated to the BFI as the nation's lead cultural film institution.

The UKFC now assumed responsibility for the distribution of all lottery funding for the UK's film sector.[22] While the UKFC and its predecessors provided lottery funding to film festivals through a variety of mechanisms it wasn't until 2007 that the body implemented direct funding provision for festivals. The agency announced its inaugural Film Festival Fund as part of its three-year plan "Film in the Digital Age, 2007-2010." The fund pledged £1.5 million to provide direct support to "strategically important festivals" across the UK over three years.[23] While the figure itself was relatively modest, the implementation of a specialised and named fund was an important strategic development. Its discharge recognised the rising importance of film festivals as part of the distribution and exhibition landscape as well as being part of the UKFC's overall national vision. While not overtly mentioned this initiative also seemed to acknowledge the rising cache of the secondary cities where some of these film festivals were located.

Birds Eye View	Birds Eye View Film Festival	175,000
Cinemagic Ltd	Cinemagic World Screen Film and Television Festival	150,000
Film and Video Workshop	The London International Animation Festival	50,000
Flatpack Festival Ltd	Flatpack Festival	70,000
International Documentary Festival Sheffield Ltd	Sheffield International Documentary Festival	175,000
Light House Media Centre	Deaffest	50,000
Nottingham Media Centre Ltd	British Silent Film Festival	70,000
	Total film festival film awards 2008/09	**740,000**

Figure 3.1. Recipients of the UKFC's Film Festival Fund 2008/9. Source: UKFC, Group and Lottery Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2009.

Funding provision for film festivals was included in the policy as one of fifteen stated priorities. This named inclusion recognised the increasingly important role of film

[22] This task had previously been shared by a combination of agencies including the Lottery Film Department of the Arts Council, British Screen Finance, the British Film Commission and the production and funding functions of the BFI.

[23] UK Film Council, *Film in the Digital Age*, 2007-2010 (London, 2007), http://www.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/uk-film-council-film-in-the-digital-age-uk-film-council-policy-and-funding-priorities.pdf.

festivals for promoting British film and new forms of film viewing practice. The policy stated its objective as being

> to ensure that audiences across the UK have access to a wide variety of film festivals which maximise audience choice; and that collectively these festivals contribute to a more competitive UK film industry.[24]

Seven recipients that were deemed to be of national importance were awarded a combined total of £740,000 over three years from the Film Festival Fund (see figure 3.1). The festivals that were successful were notable for the diversity of their locations, programmes and target audiences beyond the UK's two stalwart capital city festivals, EIFF and LFF. This included festivals such as:

- Birds Eye View Festival – "a festival that celebrates and campaigns for women in film."[25]

- Cinemagic – "a film festival programmed by and for young people."[26]

- Deaffest – "a festival that supports deaf filmmakers."[27]

Both Flatpack and Doc/Fest also received significant awards from the fund denoting important recognition within the newly formed national structure. However, although it was established in 2005, GFF was not among this initial group and didn't receive direct funding from the BFI until 2015 through the Audience Network Fund but was funded under the wider remit of Glasgow Film Theatre.

Other smaller niche and grassroots film festivals catering to a diverse range of interests and audiences also emerged within the same period. Over one hundred film festivals of varying size, programming focus and location emerged across the UK. This tranche of festivals catered for a range of specific and thematic tastes such as documentary and short film as well as ensuring that peripheral and independent cinema reached regional

[24] UK Film Council, *Group and Lottery Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2009* (UK Film Council, 2010), 66. http://www.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/uk-film-council-annual-report-and-accounts-2008-09.pdf.

[25] "About Us," Birds Eye View Festival, accessed 16 April 2019, https://www.birds-eye-view.co.uk.

[26] "About Us," Cinemagic, accessed 16 April 2019, https://cinemagic.org.uk.

[27] "About Us," Deaffest, accessed 13 February 2019, https://deaffest.co.uk.

and local audiences beyond London. A notable trait of this phase of film festival development is that it is definitively characterised by its regionalism. These can be considered to have emerged as a direct consequence of the promotion of the creative industries as a strategy to counter the effects of de-industrialisation across the UK.

Following rapidly on from its initial establishment the fund received an additional financial boost of £4.5 million just one year later in 2008. The additional contribution to the fund reveals rather more about the UKFC's strategic objectives than its initial establishment the previous year. The newly introduced monies were specifically introduced to support festivals in a separate strand that was only open to those with "major international and national significance."[28] The new framework effectively narrowed applicable candidates to just EIFF and LFF while excluding festivals that were regionally, thematically or genre focused thus positioning their roles as differing.

Subsequently both festivals were awarded £1.88 million over three years in 2008 and 2009 respectively. However, with increased funding came greater strategic intervention from a national perspective. The UKFC's increased stake ultimately resulted in both festivals being repositioned within the UK's film festival sphere as part of the strategic redevelopment of the UK's film sector as a whole. As journalist Adam Dawtrey (*Variety*) pointed out:

> The new coin for festivals, which was first flagged earlier this year, has already started to change the UK's fest landscape. It was one of the factors that influenced Edinburgh's decision to move its date from August to June, further away from the London fest in October. This fits better with the UKFC's strategy to support two complementary rather than competing international events.[29]

Given the level of greater funding awarded to the UK's most established festivals it was apparent that the UKFC's focus was firmly focused on the international market and

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[28] Adam Dawtrey, "UKFC boosts festival funding," *Variety*, last modified 1 November 2007, https://variety.com/2007/film/markets-festivals/ukfc-boosts-festival-funding-1117975172/.
[29] Ibid.

clearly reflected New Labour's objective to rebrand Britain. While it is not the remit of this thesis to dwell particularly on either LFF or EIFF, the disparity between financial support awarded to these two festivals and the rest of the sector during this period is glaring. Undoubtedly the UKFC's specific intervention into the sector through means of the film festival fund can be considered to be a catalyst that set the course for the trajectories followed by EIFF and LFF up to the present day (for full case studies on EIFF and LFF during this period refer to Appendix B and Appendix C respectively).

While the progression of these two festivals differs widely their status as festivals of national and international importance has meant that they continue to receive the most funding, media coverage and commentary. I propose that this positioning, in turn, shapes and influences the UK's film festival sector as a whole and has had an impact on the perception of and strategies employed by the festivals reviewed in this thesis. The funding disparity between these two festivals and the rest of the sector raises questions about the perceived purpose of the other festivals from a national policy perspective. Furthermore it raises a question around how smaller up-and-coming festivals can then differentiate themselves from or compete with the elevated status of these longstanding festivals that were considered internationally important.

As a government agency the UKFC days were numbered. After only ten years in existence the body was rapidly and abruptly abolished in 2010 as part of the austerity regime. The demise of the body was considered a symbolic gesture in many respects. Gillian Doyle et al point out that after the new coalition government came into power "they determined to axe at least some quangos strongly associated with Labour."[30] The UKFC strongly denoted the former government's term in office and thus the body was abolished unexpectedly without any consultation resulting in significant disarray to the UK's public funding for film. A number of months later the majority of the UKFC's activities were divested to the BFI.

During this period the Creative Britain discourse was at its height, demonstrating a clear correlation between the government's agenda to promote a cosmopolitan knowledge-

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[30] Gillian Doyle, et al, *The Rise and Fall of the UK Film Council.*

based economy and the impetus to build a strong and sustainable film industry. In a sign of the times the establishment of a host of new film festivals that signalled the second phase of development for the UK's film festival sector aptly reflects the wider political moment. As previously mentioned it is significant then that both GFF and Flatpack were established against this optimistic political backdrop.

3.4 Film Festival Funding in the BFI Era

In the wake of the UKFC's abolition the responsibility for shaping film policy and administering lottery funding for the majority of film-related activity including production, distribution, education, audience development and market research was devolved to the BFI. Since 2012 public funding for the UK's film sector has been shaped by two specific five-year strategies produced by the BFI; "Film Forever" (2012-2017) and "BFI2022" (2017-2022).[31] In the initial strategy the institution streamlined its priorities to three key areas: boosting the audience, the future success of British film and unlocking film heritage. The BFI established a new Film Festival Fund with an increased value of £1 million and utilised a similar two-stranded framework as had been in place under the UKFC. One of the most significant differences to that of the previous funding policy's remit was that the first tier of funding now prioritised regional festivals rather than festivals of national importance while the second tier focused on festivals of so-called international importance rather than the other way around.

However, the main difference between film festival funding as administered by the BFI to that under the UKFC was that this funding was now categorised as part of the wider remit of the newly instigated Audience Fund. The Fund's predominant objective was stated as being "to provide a greater depth and breadth of film and to increase choice to audiences across the UK."[32] The other two initiatives under this umbrella included the UK Audience Network initiative (£3m) and the Programming Development Fund

[31] British Film Institute, *Film Forever: BFI Plan 2012-2017,* BFI (October 2012), https://www.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/bfi-film-forever-2012-17.pdf; *BFI2022: Supporting UK Film – BFI Plan 2017-2022,* BFI (October 2017), https://www.bfi.org.uk/2022.

[32] British Film Festival, *Film Forever: BFI Plan 2012-2017*, 13.

(£1.5m), which firmly fused festival purpose with ensuring audience choice. The policy outlined its main two objectives in relation to film festivals.

> The first will be funding for regional festivals that are anticipated to be participants in the UK Audience Network, providing audiences with significantly greater choice. The second will be established to enhance film festivals in the UK that have an international reach and profile, enabling them to contribute to a more competitive UK film industry internationally as well as increasing audience choice.[33]

As part of a strategic shift in line with the BFI's cultural remit one of the key developments has been the implementation of a network of nine regional hubs, the Film Audience Network (FAN) that has superseded the Regional Screen Agencies (RSA) that were previously in place. Notably the RSAs were predominantly production focused corresponding with the UKFC's industrial bias. In contrast the audience network is formulated around supporting the exhibition sector to provide greater and more diverse choice to regional audiences throughout the UK. The BFI describes FAN as a "regional networks of cinemas, festivals and other exhibition organisations working together to develop a thriving and inclusive film exhibition sector."[34] Strategically this was a very important development on the part of the nation's lead film agency that demonstrated a greater focus on developing audiences for cultural cinema and marked a departure from the UKFC's outward-looking priorities.

3.5 Film Festival Funding into the Future: BFI2022

The BFI's most recent five-year strategic plan (November 2016) announced a £500 million investment into the UK's film sector and saw a new strategic shift in direction. The strategy places a significant focus on the future and how the agency can support both the film form and film sector during the current period of rapid technological change. As an integral part of the strategy BFI2022 states that its underpinning tenet is

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[33] Ibid., 14.

[34] "Film Audience Network," BFI, accessed 17 April 2019, https://www.bfi.org.uk/supporting-uk-film/distribution-exhibition-funding/film-audience-network.

a "wider interpretation of film to embrace new forms with a commitment to supporting work that expands the possibilities of storytelling and form."[35]

By broadening its categorisation of what constitutes "film" the BFI is making a clear attempt to respond to the UK's rapidly changing screen industries in the contemporary era. To this end BFI2022 defines film as being "anything that tells a story, expresses an idea or evokes an emotion through the art of the moving image, whilst honouring the platform for which the work was intended."[36] The BFI's definition presents a striking parallel with how Doc/Fest describes itself as a festival that extends beyond film to being a "hub for all documentary and non-fiction storytelling across all platforms."[37] The similarities between these two definitions suggest that the BFI's new direction has been informed by and is a response to changes already taking place within the UK's landscape rather than taking a top-down approach to policy.

However as part of the BFI's new direction the Film Festival Fund has been expunged from the latest strategy all together. Funding for film festivals is still available but has now been subsumed into the BFI's Audience Fund. This new framework replaces individual funding strands such as Distribution, Film Festival, Programming Development and Neighbourhood Cinema Fund. This strategic decategorisation suggests that a specific Film Festival Fund has become too prescriptive in the current cultural moment. By devolving film festivals into a wider categorical project fund the BFI appears to be anticipating the potential evolution of the film festival format in response to the changing form of both film and cinema. While the eradication of the Film Festival Fund can be considered reflective of the large-scale notional shift outlined by the BFI's reinterpretation of film it seems pre-emptive to remove it all together. Especially when considering the one hundred or so film festivals that currently operate on an annual basis in the UK. This is made all the more pertinent by BFI2022's acknowledgement

[35] British Film Institute, *BFI2022*, 7.

[36] Ibid., 4.

[37] "About Doc/Fest," Doc/Fest, accessed 20 July 2018, https://sheffdocfest.com/view/aboutdocfest.

that "feature films are made for the big screen" as part of a shared experience and that this viewing practice is still core to the institution's vision.[38]

On the other hand the wider remit of the Audience Fund offers a considerably more flexible derestricted format than the former Film Festival Fund. The Fund specifies its objective as being:

> To support those who wish to make a positive difference and inspire change in our industry, applicants are invited to apply to the Audience Fund, an open access, flexible fund which is designed to support a range of audience-facing activities (such as film festivals, distribution releases, multiplatform distribution proposals, touring film programmes, large scale and ambitious film programmes) with £5.6m available annually.[39]

The fund consists of two strands, one that is open to projects and the other that is open to organisations, rather than being guided by the former hierarchical distinctions made between being regionally, nationally or internationally important. This change of format allows some space for festivals to grow or adapt beyond the constraining parameters formerly in place that tended to define their scope. The pool of funding that is now available to festivals is considerably larger at £5.6 million but as this is an amalgamation of discrete funding pots it is also open to a far greater number of projects and organisations with varying remits resulting in greater competition.

As already observed film festivals tend to be only referenced minimally throughout the BFI's strategic policy documentation. This tendency continues to be apparent in both of the most recent policy documents produced by the BFI. BFI2022 makes only three direct references to the role of film festivals and records only one mention of a film festival. This is all the more telling for being the BFI's own flagship festival, BFI London Film Festival. LFF is specifically noted as one of the action points outlined by the BFI in regard to increasing opportunities for the international promotion and export of UK film.

[38] British Film Institute, *BFI2022,* 10.

[39] British Film Institute, *Film Funding Guidelines* (London, April 2018), https://www.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/bfi-audience-fund-guidelines-2018-04-03.pdf.

This firmly situates the festival as an important strategic component for showcasing UK film talent. The strategy states:

> We will further develop and grow the BFI London Film Festival as a
> showcase and launch platform for great British and world filmmaking,
> as a meeting place for filmmakers and industry leaders in film,
> television and the moving image, and as a high-profile platform for new
> thought, leadership, debate and discussion.[40]

Following the trend established previously by the UKFC this statement reveals a continued prioritising of support for LFF as an internationally important festival thus elevating its status and differentiating it from all of the other film festivals in the UK. This can be considered an important oversight when considering what else is happening within the UK film festival space such as GFF's rising international profile, Doc/Fest's firmly established international importance on the documentary circuit and EIFF's restabilisation and growth over the past few years.

Figure 3.2. Interference, a VR work created by Julie Freeman (part of AND's COSMOS residency that takes place annually at Jodrell Bank Observatory). Source: https://www.andfestival.org.uk.

A recent addition to the UK's circuit that provides an example of the type of film festival format that the BFI's definition is widening to include is the boutique film festival Abandon Normal Devices, aka AND. AND is a nomadic film festival that takes place

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[40] British Film Institute, *BFI2022,* 26.

biannually and as its name suggests is dedicated to interacting with the screen and viewership using alternative methods of exhibition outside of the traditional cinema setting. Its most recent editions took place in the Lake District and Peak District respectively and primarily took place outdoors. Notwithstanding AND, which offers an extraordinary example of an innovative and disruptive model for a film event, the format of film festivals has not changed radically yet.

The redefinition and broadening of film at national policy level is not confined to the UK and is a trend that is quickly becoming evident beyond the UK. One recent example is Ireland's national film body that changed its name from the Irish Film Board to Screen Ireland in June 2018 to more aptly reflect its broader screen remit. However, in contrast to this perceived shift in definition, also in June 2018, Creative Scotland's newly inaugurated Screen Unit diverged from this tack of attenuating categorisations by announcing a new dedicated Film Festival Fund of £600,000. The Film Festival Fund grants awards of £5000 to £70,000 to smaller festivals that fall beyond the remit of Regularly Funded Organisations such as EIFF and GFF. Commenting on the establishment of the fund, Scottish Cabinet Minister for Culture and Tourism Fiona Hyslop said:

> Scotland's screen sector has grown significantly in recent years, with an increase in production spend of more than 200% since 2007. Film festivals play an important part in this success story – particularly by promoting domestic productions and encouraging more people to go to the cinema.[41]

The implementation of this fund denotes recognition of the specificity of role played by film festivals in Scotland that enriches film viewing practices and their contribution to the film sector at large as a platform for showcasing the nation's output. Furthermore, the difference in policy approach that contrasts to the BFI's example can also be considered an illustration of Brexit's influence. This offers a concrete example of Scotland's public

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[41]Tom Grater, "Creative Scotland opens £600,000 film festivals fund," *Screen Daily*, last modified 27 June 2018, https://www.screendaily.com/news/creative-scotland-opens-600000-film-festivals-fund/5130474.article.

agencies' determination to create discrete policies that are notably different to more general UK policy.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of how the UK's film festival environment developed in comparison to the wider project of the European film festival sector. The chapter specifically draws attention to the UK's political economic climate in the early 1990s under the New Labour government. This time period provided particularly auspicious conditions for supporting a new tier of secondary film festivals including GFF, Flatpack and Doc/Fest that all emerged as a result of this.

I have argued that the establishment of a celebratory and optimistic rhetoric around the creative industries as part of the Cool Britannia discourse supported the development of the film industry and the film festival sector as an extension of this. However, the chapter has also highlighted a crucial intervention on the part of the UK's lead film agency and public funder that was initiated by the now defunct UKFC and later continued by the BFI. The chapter has proposed that both agencies have played a role in significantly shaping the sector at national level by elevating LFF from a "best of fests" to a significant red carpet event that places it at the apex of the UK's film festival sector.

In the first instance this was achieved by the UKFC's initiation of a two-tiered film festival fund. This created a notable division between festivals of national and international importance by effectively increasing LFF and EIFF's status while relegating newly established festivals to being categorised as regional events. While the ongoing fortunes of LFF and EIFF have proved to be quite different since the early 2000s, the increased focus at policy level has also resulted in continual media attention that has kept them in the spotlight and reinforced an impression of their importance as part of the international film festival circuit. The increased status of these two festivals positions them as tentpole events within the UK. This has created additional pressure for the remaining festivals to establish their own unique selling points so that they can differentiate and compete within the national arena.

The chapter concludes by drawing attention to the latest changes to film festival policy as part of the BFI's most recent strategic plan, BFI2022. Within this, film festival funding has undergone a process of declassification and no longer exists. This development can be directly attributed to the BFI's broadening of the notion of what constitutes film, now reinterpreted as being "anything that tells a story, expresses an idea or evokes an emotion through the art of the moving image, whilst honouring the platform for which the work was intended."[42] Because of this interpretative shift all film festivals, apart from LFF that is directly sponsored and delivered by the BFI, now come under the catch-all of project funding. It is too soon to anticipate if this policy-level decategorisation will have a significant impact on the format of film festivals. However, all three of the film festivals under review in this thesis show signs of attempting to engage audiences in alternative film viewing practices.

My objective in this chapter has been to create a wider view of the UK film festival environment that establishes a context for and situates the film festivals reviewed here as part of a larger system. In addition I have provided an insight into how the sector developed within the UK and the impact that the nation's lead funding agency has on the specific festivals that results in a significant intervention into how the sector is shaped as a whole.

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[42] British Film Institute, *BFI2022,* 4.

Chapter Four: Glasgow Film Festival: Programming without Prejudice

Key Facts

- Established in 2003.
- Takes place annually in February over 11 days.
- 2019 admissions figures – circa 42,000.
- Predominantly takes place in Glasgow Film Theatre. Other key venues include the Contemporary Centre for Arts and Cineworld, Renfrew St.
- Considered to be the third largest film festival in the UK after BFI London Film Festival and the Edinburgh International Film Festival respectively.
- Approximate budget £650,000.
- Hosts an extensive programme of live cinema events in site-specific locations across the city.
- Main funders include: Creative Scotland, Glasgow City Marketing Bureau and the National Lottery via the BFI.
- Co-directed by Allison Gardner and Allan Hunter.
- Ticket prices range from free events up to £17 for special events. Standard tickets cost an average of £11 each.
- Glasgow Film Festival is an initiative of and trades as Glasgow Film Theatre (parent company of both is Glasgow Film). It is a private company limited by guarantee without share capital. Glasgow Film Theatre is registered as a charity with OSCR: Scottish Charity Register.

4.1 Introduction

Figure 4.1. GFF Co-directors – Allison Gardner and Allan Hunter.
Source: https://www.dailyecho.co.uk/news/16039977.amp.

Glasgow Film Festival provides the material for the first case study presented in this thesis. The case study sets out to question the purpose of GFF as the UK's third largest film festival, its role within Glasgow as a postindustrial city and to identify the festival's defining characteristics. The case also offers the opportunity to examine the cultural phenomena of city and film festival by considering how each represents and reflects each other in order to better understand the relationship between the two.

As a particularly prolific example of a de-industrialised city that has overcome its former depressed reputation Glasgow provides an interesting case for examination. For example, Glasgow is frequently cited as "the model of urban renewal in Britain" and therefore the festival's role within the city takes on increased importance as a cultural asset.[1] The case is particularly concerned with whether GFF has any particularly identifiable traits that are suited to the cultural agenda of the postindustrial city and how it interacts with or enhances the city's image. It draws on Glasgow's often cited success

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[1] Gerry Mooney and Mike Danson, "Beyond Culture City: Glasgow as a Cultural City," in *Transforming Cities: New Spatial Divisions and Social Transformation,* ed. Nick Jewson and Susanne MacGregor (London: Routledge, 1997), 74.

as a European Capital of Culture in 1990 that is regarded as being a catalyst for the city's cultural transformation from a deprived declining industrial enclave to a reinvigorated postindustrial one.

As this is the first of the case studies, it plays a key role in establishing some of the defining tropes that occur in all three examples examined. The identification and establishment of these traits will help to formulate identifiers that are specific to those film festivals situated in the UK's postindustrial cities. The study approaches this question by tracing and analysing the conditions of how Glasgow Film Festival operates in relation to its host city, Glasgow, and in this particular case, its governing institution, Glasgow Film. The case study presents a broad overview that primarily encompasses GFF's history since its inception in 2003 up to 2017. While the study is informed by the entire trajectory of the festival there is a primary focus on the two editions where participant observation took place in 2016 and 2017. The key axis of enquiry throughout are the interlinking issues of programming, space and place. The following two key interviews were also conducted and informed the findings of this case study:

Interviewee	Position	Date of Interview
Allison Gardner	Glasgow Film Programme Director / GFF Co-director *(2007-current)*	23/09/16
Allan Hunter	GFF Co-director *(2007-current)*	28/04/17

Figure 4.2. Source: researcher's own.

4.1.1. GFF Background

GFF was established in 2003 during the "UK's second phase of film festival development."[2] In spite of its young age GFF can already lay claim to being the third largest film festival in the UK. The festival has developed rapidly within its brief lifespan

[2] Sarah Smyth, "From Lerwick to Leicester Square: UK film festivals and why they matter," in *The Routledge Companion to British Cinema History,* ed. I.Q. Hunter, Laraine Porter, Justin Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 410.

rising from 6000 admissions during its inaugural edition to a seven-fold increase by 2017 to over 42,000 admissions. This rapid growth makes it a particularly pertinent case for examining within the context of this study. Certainly some of the factors that have contributed to GFF's success such as its focus on live cinema and its objective to be accessible can also be attributed to the other two festivals examined later in the study. These factors can also be applied to the notion of the experience economy as a defining trope of the postindustrial era.

GFF's rapid rise in status is all the more surprising given its close geographical proximity to the UK's second largest film festival, Edinburgh International Film Festival (EIFF) situated just an hour to the east. While EIFF is considered to be a "middle-ranking" festival on the international circuit, it is notable for being one of the world's longest running film festivals and still holds considerable influence within the context of the UK's film festival ecology as discussed in Chapter 3.[3] In terms of admissions, the yardstick most often used to measure the success of festivals, EIFF reported circa 53,000 admissions in 2017 just 20 percent ahead of GFF.[4] In relation to how the two festivals programmes compare, EIFF presented twenty-two world premieres, screened 151 features from over forty-six countries and hosted over 1200 press and industry delegates in 2016.[5] In the same year, GFF boasted the presentation of 310 events including screenings of more than 180 films from thirty-eight countries.[6] Screenings included nine world premieres, three European premieres and sixty-five UK premieres indicating that GFF is rapidly catching up with and presenting a challenge to its prolific neighbour's status as Scotland's leading film festival.[7]

From an institutional perspective GFF differs markedly from the other two case studies presented. The festival is hosted as an initiative of Glasgow Film, also the parent company for Glasgow Film Theatre (GFT), rather than being a standalone event as is

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3 David Archibald and Mitchell Miller, "Introduction," Screen: Film Festival Dossier 52, no. 2 (Summer 2011), https://academic.oup.com/screen/article/52/2/249/1665955.

4 "EIFF 2017 Boosts Audience Figures," EIFF, last modified 3 July 2017, https://www.edfilmfest.org.uk/eiff2017-boosts-audience.

5 Ibid.

6 GFF, Glasgow Film Review Annual Review 2016-2017 (Glasgow, 2017), 5-6, https://glasgowfilm.org/assets/files/Annual-Review-2016-17_FINAL_digital.pdf.

7 Ibid.

the case with the other examples. An important factor of GFT's overall institutional vision is its stated commitment to the city's urban regeneration.

> To be acknowledged by our partners and our audiences as being central to artistic and cultural, educational and social life. Playing a leading role in innovation and risk taking in film and moving image, to span the virtual and real worlds, achieving access and excellence and making a positive contribution to the regeneration of Glasgow.[8]

As a core ambition of GFT this objective also extends to the festival. While both of the later cases in this thesis undoubtedly play an important cultural role within the urban regeneration strategies of their respective cities, Glasgow Film represents the only organisation to implicitly state this as a principal value. Furthermore, in 2016, the UK Parliament passed a motion stating that Glasgow Film Festival (GFF) "makes a significant contribution to the cultural life of Glasgow."[9] The motion endorsed the idea that GFF is a recognised, intrinsic and valued asset within the cultural life of the city. By elevating the festival's status to a matter of national importance the motion highlighted the increasing importance of film culture, not just for Glasgow, but for the real and ongoing wellbeing of contemporary de-industrialised cities in the UK.

A brief scan of GFF's brochures and website over the years reveals that the festival also has solid public support from the city and at national level. For instance, Glasgow Film Festival lists its major supporters as being Creative Scotland, Glasgow City Marketing Bureau, the British Film Institute / National Lottery funding and Event Scotland. The predominance of national Scottish support and local regional support further underscores Glasgow Film as having significant cultural value for the city. Indeed Glasgow City Marketing Bureau is often cited on festival communications as being one of the founding partners for GFF. This further reinforces that civic stakeholders recognise the value of GFF as an asset for upholding the project of Glasgow's image as a cosmopolitan creative city.

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[8] Glasgow Film, *The Glasgow Film Theatre Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2017* (UK: Companies House, 2017), 2, https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/SC097369/filing-history.

[9] "Early day motion 1176," Parliament.uk, last modified 1 March 2016, https://www.parliament.uk/edm/2015-16/1176.

GFT's institutional relationship with GFF has also created a stabilising bedrock for the development of the festival that can be considered accountable for the festival's swift success and sustainability. However, in spite of the unquestionable success demonstrated by GFF's admission figures, the breadth of its programme and its recognised public value, the festival has also struggled to carve out a unique identity within the national film festival ecology beyond that of a regional universal survey festival or best-of-fests. GFF presents the first example in this thesis of a film festival that was established during the boom of film festival emergence. This boom has been explicitly linked to the renegotiation of postindustrial city strategies. A repercussion of this over-inflation was that film festivals were forced to create their own unique identities and USPs so that they compete. Both Flatpack and Doc/Fest have faced similar challenges in relation to offering a unique and saleable experience while also retaining their relevance on the circuit. An added challenge for all three has been how to overcome the difficult perception associated with their host cities formerly depressed profiles. To date GFF has attempted a range of programming strategies to combat this issue including the implementation of a prolific and costly experiential Special Events strand that presents live cinema and site-specific screenings.

GFF's audience is a predominantly local cohort with 37 percent under thirty years old, according to the most recent audience profile. It has an even split between male and female audience across all age groups. Fifty percent come from within Glasgow City, 36 percent from elsewhere in Scotland and 13 percent from the rest of the UK and international.[10] In a 2017 partnership proposal flyer GFF described its audience as being predominantly made up of "young and upwardly mobile patrons."[11] This description bears an overwhelming resemblance to Richard Florida's formulation of the "creative classes" that now inhabit postindustrial cities and seemingly embody one of GFF's target audience groups.

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[10] Glasgow Film, *GFF 2020 – At a Glance* (Glasgow, 2019), https://glasgowfilm.org/assets/files/GFF2020-at-a-Glance.pdf.

[11] Glasgow Film, *Partnership Opportunities* (Glasgow, 2017).

In relation to the festival's programming strategy, Co-director Allan Hunter describes GFF's overall approach as "programming without prejudice."[12] In line with this rationale and Glasgow Film's "cinema for all" doctrine he suggests that GFF's key programming objective is to be highly inclusive with wide appeal for the local audience. He summarises the festival's approach in the following way:

> There's no distinction made, we never think a movie is too populist to show at the film festival or it taints the cool of this great artistic endeavour. Some people love *Predator*, some people love this new Romanian film that's two hours long. There should be space for everybody.[13]

Echoing this sentiment he and Gardner claim that GFF's programming strategy tries "not to be preachy or pretentious about what movies can be."[14] By adhering to this central programming tenet the festival positions itself as "open to everything."[15] GFF's programming ideal is to champion a wide spectrum of film tastes that makes room for both cinephilic and popular taste.

This position is also reflected in the festival's pricing strategy. To honour its commitment to being affordable the festival's standard tickets are comparably priced to regular GFT tickets. General festival tickets cost approximately £11 but there is also a discounted scheme for 15-25 year olds of £6 per ticket to encourage the growth of young audiences. There is also a range of screenings offered at £6 per film throughout the festival and a series of free classic screenings that take place each morning. Special events tend to be more expensive at approximately £15-£17 due to the extra resources needed to present them and the added value derived from their experiential nature. The festival has consistently presented this case throughout its communications. Glasgow Film's Annual Review in 2016 provides a pertinent example of this principle. It declares that even though the festival has experienced rapid exponential growth and a

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[12] Allan Hunter, interview by author, Edinburgh, 28 March 2017.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Glasgow Film, *Glasgow Film Festival Brochure 2014* (Glasgow, 2014), 3.

[15] Hunter, interview.

substantial increase to its international reputation it will continue to be committed to "remaining accessible and affordable."[16]

4.1.2 Case Study Structure

This case study is comprised of four parts: 1) Glasgow: Cultural Metropolis, 2) Definitional Context: An Audience Festival, 3) Programme: Creating an Architecture and 4) Materialising GFF. Each section analyses the festival from a different perspective to present a view of the whole entity. The first of these sections presents an overview of Glasgow's recent postindustrial history and discusses the city's ongoing dedication to culture as a key strategy for urban regeneration. This section charts Glasgow's cultural history since the early 1990s when Glasgow achieved European Capital of Culture (ECOC) status and argues that Glasgow's dedication to culture-led regeneration has created favourable socio-cultural conditions for presenting a non-elitist and accessible film festival of note in the city. This section also draws upon Glasgow's history as a cinematic city and how the city uses this legacy to inform image-making for the city.

The following section primarily deals with GFF's role as a so-called audience festival. It begins with an analysis of the specific institutional context that GFF and its sister organisation, Glasgow Film Theatre (GFT) operate in, namely Glasgow Film. This section examines the symbiotic relationship between GFT and GFF and discusses how Glasgow Film has provided a stable institutional bedrock for the festival's rapid growth. The inter-relationship between the two entities is examined to analyse how each affects and shapes programming strategy. The analysis also draws attention to Glasgow Film's status as a significant cultural institution in Glasgow and more widely in Scotland. This angle of enquiry is particularly pertinent for the study as it marks GFF's modus operandi and identity as significantly distinct from the other two festivals under investigation.

The section goes on to address the question of GFF's audience. Festival communications frequently position the festival's audience as GFF's greatest differentiator. Festival messaging claims that it is this aspect of the festival that sets it apart in the UK's competitive film festival market rather than the films presented. This

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[16] Glasgow Film, *Glasgow Film Annual Review 2015-16*, 5-6.

portion of the enquiry questions why this is the case and asks if GFF's audience are really so different from other festival audiences who tend to be characterised by being a highly invested cohort. The enquiry asks whether the festival's emphasis on the audience as a defining trope of the festival is a result of GFF's struggle to establish a clearly identifiable programming strategy in the absence of being able to secure high-profile film talent or significant premiere status film titles.

The following section of the chapter specifically addresses the question of GFF's programming strategy by looking at the content presented and how this has altered and evolved since the festival's inception. This section examines a selection of curatorial strategies implemented by GFF over the years that have create a definable festival identity both on the festival circuit and as separate to GFT's year-round programme. Particular attention is given here to GFF's Special Events strand, which presents a series of high-profile experiential site-specific screenings that have become a defining aspect of the festival's identity. This programming strategy is notable for being reliant on utilising cult and popular film titles that tend to foreground the experiential elements of the event presented rather than the screening. While this strategy has proved to be successful for garnering local media attention and attracting new audiences the research questions why this particular programming strategy has been implemented. I argue that while this crowd-pleasing aspect of the programme has been successful for increasing admissions and creating awareness of the festival, its precedence within the programme is in danger of eclipsing other equally important aspects such as the development of cinephilia.

The final section addresses how the festival is materialised within the space of the city and questions how the use of space impacts the festival's programming strategies. This section specifically focuses on some of the constraints and challenges resulting from GFFs close affiliation with GFT as the predominant festival venue and its physical footprint within the city outside of the Special Events programme.

4.2 Glasgow: Cultural Metropolis

Figure 4.3. Clyde Arc, Glasgow.
Source: http://www.clydewaterfront.com/projects/pacific-quay--secc/infrastructure/finnieston_bridge.

As the above Parliamentary motion illustrates the role of culture is considered an important aspect of Glasgow civic life. According to Glasgow Life, the cultural agency for Glasgow City Council, "the City of Glasgow has led the way in culture-led regeneration" in the UK.[17] Since 1990, when Glasgow was designated as the first UK European Capital of Culture (ECOC), the city has gained a reputation for effectively harnessing culture and place marketing strategies. This has led to the city significantly altering its previously downbeat image and effecting a more cosmopolitan perception of Scotland's largest metropolis. While many postindustrial cities in the UK have successfully employed culture-led strategies to reinvigorate city image Glasgow is notable as one of the flag bearers of this approach. The city's marketing and communications consistently reinforce the city's role as a cultural innovator creating a natural environment for situating a significant festival of note.

It's important to note that Glasgow is characterised by being a staunchly working-class and socialist city. Due to its successful industrial background, initially derived through the tobacco industries and later through heavy industry such as shipbuilding, Glasgow was considered Britain's second most prosperous city during the Industrial era. The city's high level of employment opportunities meant that it attracted a large volume of manual labour workers causing it to be one of the most densely populated cities in the

[17]Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Life and Glasgow Community Planning Partnership, *South West Arts and Cultural Strategy 2011-2012* (Glasgow: 2011), 3.

world in the mid-twentieth century. The city continued to prosper during the first half of the twentieth century but was badly affected by high levels of unemployment and poverty during the postindustrial decline that resulted in a severe rise in violent crime. In spite of changes to the city's boundaries that resulted in the growth of the Greater Glasgow area the city itself continues to be Scotland's most highly populated city. The number of people living in the city currently is estimated at 596,000 while the larger Greater Glasgow area has a population of approximately 1.2 million. Added to this the region surrounding the conurbation is estimated to have 2.8 million residents. This figure represents approximately 42% of Scotland's entire population.

Whilst Glasgow's manufacturing industries have declined the overall region has demonstrated significant growth in the tertiary sector since the early 1980s, which has boosted the expansion of the creative classes in the city. Industries such as financial services, business services, communications, creative industries, healthcare, higher education, retail and tourism have taken the place of manufacturing and form the bedrock of Glasgow's economy. Indicative of this transition Glasgow is now recognised as being one of Europe's sixteen largest financial centres and is Scotland's largest retail centre.

Figure 4.4. Glasgow's Miles Better – Billboard. Source: https://www.glasgowlive.co.uk.

Before the 1990s it's fair to say that Glasgow's outward image was a problematic one. The city's reputation for being depressed and dangerous tended to deter tourists and inbound visitors. Commencing in the 1980s with the "Glasgow's Miles Better" campaign (see figure 4.4), Glasgow made a profound investment into rebranding the city so that its reputation could be regenerated and position itself as a viable tourist destination. The campaign banner features the cartoon character of Mr Happy and is recognised as one of the world's first successful attempts at a city reimaging initiative that created a new city narrative.

This was followed closely by Glasgow being awarded ECOC status. The importance of Glasgow's successful designation as an ECOC cannot be underestimated in relation to establishing the city's dynamic cultural agenda and creating a perception of Glasgow as a progressive and innovative city. The designation culminated in a year-long programme of cultural events entitled *Glasgow 1990* that proved to be the catalyst for Glasgow's image transformation. In the influential evaluation report, "Monitoring Glasgow 1990," cultural analyst John Myerscough describes the city's primary objective as being "to demonstrate a new face as a European postindustrial city geared to growth and a commitment to using the arts to communicate its renaissance."[18]

The longitudinal effects of the accolade are still apparent today as part of the city's continuing cultural strategy. In addition Glasgow's innovative approach to the designation has positively influenced the ECOC initiative in relation to cultural regeneration across Europe. Cultural studies scholar, Beatriz Garcia, argues that the ECOC initiative began life as a "rather sanguine" EU project designed to raise the profile of culture throughout Europe.[19] These days competition to receive the accolade is rife and gaining the title is perceived as a meaningful success that positively impacts city image and results in real economic returns as well as acting as "an attractive catalyst for cultural regeneration."[20]

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[18]John Myerscough, *Monitoring Glasgow 1990,* prepared for Glasgow City Council, Strathclyde Regional Council and Scottish Enterprise (Glasgow 1991), 2.

[19] Beatriz Garcia, "Deconstructing the City of Culture: The Long-term Cultural Legacies of Glasgow 1990," *Urban Studies* 42, no. 5-6 (2005): 841, http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00420980500107532.

[20] Ibid.

Glasgow also played an important role in repositioning the designation of ECOC. It was the first postindustrial city to hold the title and highlighted the city's recognition of culture's rising significance in the postindustrial environment. In contrast to previous holders of the title including Athens, Florence, Amsterdam, Berlin and Paris, Glasgow was the first city not perceived as a prestigious cultural centre to hold the title. As Robert Hewison points out:

> The decision to make Glasgow European City of Culture in 1990 – Glasgow being a city that, unlike previous choices such as Paris, was not thought of as a cultural destination – led to a remarkable makeover of the city's image and set an example for the rebranding of city through cultural investment.[21]

Glasgow also differed in other ways from previous holders of the title. Traditionally the other cities had received substantial financial support from central government to mount their respective initiatives and showcase their cultural heritage. In contrast, Glasgow's activities were primarily funded through local and regional support demonstrating local recognition and commitment to the value of the initiative as well as a recognition of the value of culture-led regeneration strategies.

Glasgow has been widely acclaimed for deviating from its contemporaries' approach to the designation. The city adopted an all-encompassing city-wide programme of events covering the entire twelve months of the designation rather than merely presenting a dedicated programme in celebration of the accolade.[22] Glasgow's innovative approach is now the regular modus operandi for ECOCs. By taking an alternative approach Glasgow 1990 acted as a catalyst for longer term cultural strategies to be realised within the city, which have directly contributed to its postindustrial regeneration. Initiatives with far-reaching effects were developed to have a lasting or permanent effect on the cultural life of the city and therefore positively impact on social and economic factors.

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[21] Robert Hewison, *Cultural Capital: The Rise and Fall of Creative Britain* (London and New York, 2014), 34.
[22] Ibid.

The key outcome of the year-long initiative of activities included a substantial boost to the production of additional cultural activities throughout the city, an increase in local attendance and a significant boost to tourism. Throughout the year tourist visits to arts and cultural events demonstrated an increase of 81 percent. According to Myerscough's report an estimated "4 out of 5 adults lives were touched" by the initiative.[23] A range of capital projects were funded as part of the initiative that created a permanent legacy. One of these projects was the provision of funding for a second screen at GFT, which only housed one screen at the time. This indicates the importance of the cinema as a valued Glasgow cultural commodity and a recognised player in the city's cultural strategy. The overwhelming success of the accolade and resulting activities laid the foundations for increased value to be placed on culture and the arts as having a real impact on the economic wellbeing of the city. Glasgow 1990 also achieved its objective to improve perceptions of the city and reposition it as a tourist destination. "Monitoring Glasgow 1990" reports that in the wake of the celebrations the city was now perceived "as rapidly changing for the better."[24] In addition, the designation helped to establish an unrelenting and deeply held city rhetoric that has helped to situate Glasgow as a cultural leader.

In 2011 Glasgow Life, Creative Scotland and Glasgow City Council followed up "Monitoring Glasgow 1990" by commissioning a longitudinal study, "Glasgow Cultural Statistics Digest" to measure and assess the continued impact of culture on the city.[25] Thirty years after Glasgow 1990 the report's findings suggest that Glasgow's cultural sector has continued to prosper and remain a vital component of the city's reinvigorated postindustrial image. It states that "Glasgow's exceptional cultural sector is unequalled in its range and scale in the UK outside London" and confirms that Glasgow is the most visited city in the UK outside of London apart from Edinburgh.[26] The city's ongoing measurement and analysis indicates a continued commitment to sustaining the established cultural city discourse. One particular response that cements Glasgow's

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[23] Myerscough, *Monitoring Glasgow 1990*, 6.

[24] Ibid.

[25] John Myerscough, *Glasgow Cultural Statistics Digest: A Digest of Cultural Statistics, Prepared for Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Life* (Glasgow, 2012), https://prodglportalv2.azureedge.net/media/2476/gcsd-2013-with-overview.pdf.

[26] Ibid, 6.

vision of the city was offered by the Leader of Glasgow City Council and Chair of Glasgow City Marketing Bureau, Gordon Matheson. He commented that "Glasgow is Scotland's cultural metropolis, a creative powerhouse which boosts the city's standing both at home and abroad."[27]

A more recent example of Glasgow's continued commitment to culture-led image promotion is Glasgow 2014. In 2007 Glasgow won the bid to host the biggest sporting and cultural event in Scotland's history to date. The city played host to the prestigious Commonwealth Games 2014 also known as The XX Commonwealth Games or Glasgow 2014 just two years after the much acclaimed 2012 London Olympics. This ambitious undertaking gave Glasgow another opportunity to mount an extensive celebration of culture in the city. On this occasion the celebration extended to a nationwide initiative across Scotland that was led by Glasgow and hosted over 12,000 events to reach an audience of 2.1 million. The "Glasgow 2014 Cultural Programme Evaluation: Overarching Report" clearly calls attention to the city's ongoing strategic commitment to culture some twenty-four years after Glasgow 1990. The report states that:

> The Games was also a milestone in Glasgow's long-term plan to increase local cultural participation and boost the city's international profile through culture that dates back to the International Garden Festival in 1988 and the European Capital Culture status that Glasgow held in 1990.[28]

The initiatives outlined above clearly situate Glasgow in the mould of a creative city as proposed by Charles Landry and Franco Bianchini in their manifesto. As already stated Glasgow played an important role in the formulation of this particular concept. These strategies are not only applicable to city re-imaging but have also contributed to a real solution for some of Glasgow's "intractable problems" such as its high rate of

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[27] BBC, "Glasgow's cultural sector 'booming'," BBC News, last modified 7 March 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-12659782.

[28] BOP Consulting, *The Glasgow 2014 Cultural Programme Evaluation: Overarching Report, Prepared for Creative Scotland and Glasgow Life* (Glasgow, 2015), 7, https://www.creativescotland.com/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/31670/Glasgow-2014-Cultural-Programme-Evaluation-Overarching-Report-v1-1.pdf.

unemployment.[29] Glasgow's exceptional regeneration can also most certainly be considered to exemplify Anne Power's earlier assertion that a defining characteristic of the postindustrial city is its resilient spirit in the face of critical disruption.[30] Cinema plays a particular role in both the formulation of Glasgow as a re-envisioned and creative postindustrial city and as part of its social and cultural legacy. The next section moves on to discuss the context and relevance of its cinematic history in relation to GFF's establishment.

4.2.1 Glasgow: Cinema City

Thomas Elsaesser posits that one of the ways that global cities demonstrate their cosmopolitanism is by projecting a vibrant film culture. In his seminal essay on film festivals, "Film Festival Networks: The New Topographies in Europe" Elsaesser proposes that the importance of film festivals for the contemporary city and city branding "can scarcely be overestimated."[31] More recently Elsaesser has added to this by suggesting that hosting a film festival "is the cheaper and less fiercely competitive option to hosting the World Cup or the Olympic Games."[32] While Glasgow has embraced large-scale arts and sporting initiatives such as the ECOC designation or by hosting the Commonwealth Games, Elsaesser's assertion situates GFF as being a more cost-effective and realisable ongoing solution for creating an aura of cosmopolitanism. In a similar vein, Mark Shiel proposes that film has a long-held cultural and economic value for cities. Shiel argues:

> Industrially, cinema has long played an important role in the cultural
> economies of cities all over the world in the production, distribution,
> and exhibition of motion pictures, and in the cultural geographies of
> certain cities particularly marked by cinema (from Los Angeles to

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[29] Charles Landry, *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators* (London: Earthscan, 2000), 18.

[30] Anne Power, *Cities for a small continent: International handbook of city recovery (CASE Studies on Poverty, Place and Policy)*, (Policy Press, Kindle Edition), Kindle Locations 498-500.

[31] Thomas Elsaesser, "Film Festival Networks: The New Topographies in Europe" in *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 85.

[32] Thomas Elsaesser, "In the City but not Bounded by it: Cinema in the Global, Generic and the Cluster City" in *Global Cinematic Cities: New Landscapes of Film and Media,* ed. Johan Andersson & Lawrence Webb (New York: Wallflower Press, 2016), 25.

Paris to Bombay) whose built environment and civic identity are both significantly constituted by film industry and films.[33]

In Shiel's formulation, and as an extension of Glasgow's aforementioned role as a culture-led city, it can be seen as an inevitable progression for the city to play host to a significant national film festival. In fact it might even be considered imperative for a culturally progressive city such as Glasgow to host a significant film festival. Certainly city leaders have articulated their belief that both the institution, Glasgow Film, and the festival contribute to elevating Glasgow's image to being that of a cinematic city. The Leader of Glasgow City Council, Councillor Gordon Matheson, states that

> Glasgow Film Festival is recognised as one of the premier film
> events in the UK today and is a real stand-out in the city's cultural
> calendar. Hosting the festival brings significant benefits to
> Glasgow; boosting our economy, attracting visitors from
> throughout the UK and beyond and reinforcing our credentials as
> a world-class cultural destination and leading cinema city.[34]

Of the three case studies carried out in this thesis Glasgow can claim the most identifiable history as a cinema city. Glasgow's perception as being that of a city strongly connected to its cinematic heritage is not a recent development. Indeed Glasgow Film's CEO, Jaki McDougall, describes cinemagoing as "being in the blood" of Glaswegians and suggests that it forms a key part of the shared collective memory of the city.[35] Lesley-Ann Dickson argues that GFF's inception and identity are inherently connected to Glasgow's historic profile as a cinematic city and its contemporary image as a 'media city.'[36] Its current status as a media city can mainly be attributed to Glasgow's position as the home of Scotland's film and TV industry and as a thriving media hub. However, Glasgow's cinema exhibition history also supports the

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[33] Mark Shiel, "Cinema and the City in History and Theory," in *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Studies in a Global Context,* ed. Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (London: Blackwell, 2001), 7.

[34] Glasgow Film, *Glasgow Film Annual Review 2015*, 16.

[35] Glasgow Film, "Cinema City: Glasgow City Centre," online video, accessed 10 February 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ut8BBvf_uSU.

[36] Dickson, "Ah! Other Bodies!," 703.

understanding of the city through the prism of a cinema city.

Figure 4.5. ABC Cinema, Sauchiehall Street (circa 1940s).
Source: http://www.scottishcinemas.org.uk.

Indeed, the city was known locally in the 1930s as "Cinema City" and laid claim to having more cinemas per head of population than anywhere else in the world. Glasgow Film's recent project, entitled Cinema City, played tribute to the fact that Glasgow has a highly visible rich and valued cinema history that it continues to draw upon to inform and strengthen its contemporary positioning as a cinematic and cultural city. According to the project Glasgow's "love affair" with the movies spans generations and is an integral and celebrated part of the city's cultural fabric.[37] The Cinema City project lasted four years and involved charting Glasgow's cinemagoing history using local cinema workers and the general public to piece together an overall picture of Glasgow's cinematic legacy. The project sought contributions from the general public to share their cinemagoing memories tracing a history back to the 1940s. The culmination of the project was featured online and as part of an interactive exhibition at GFF2015 entitled *Jeely Jars and Seeing Stars: Glasgow's Love Affair with the Movies*.[38] It presented a social history of a forgotten part of Glasgow's history and served to illustrate the ongoing and integral role that cinema has played in the past and continues to play in the life of the city.

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[37] Glasgow Film, "Cinema City: Glasgow City Centre," online video.

[38] "Glasgow Film: Cinema City," Glasgow Film, accessed on 10 February 2017, http://cc.glasgowfilm.org/cinema-city.

While many of the city's original cinemas are not in use as working cinemas nowadays, or have entirely disappeared, Glasgow's cinematic history is apparent through some of the iconic architecture still in existence. This is especially visible in the Sauchiehall Street area of the city where GFT is located and which was home to a large section of the city's picture palaces in previous times. While cinemagoing practices may have changed considerably in the intervening years Glasgow's love of cinema is still apparent in the city. Certainly the queue pictured above (see figure 4.5) at the former ABC Cinema is not so different from the queues witnessed at GFF's gala screenings nowadays. The city also boasts of being home to the UK's tallest cinema. Cineworld's seven-storey high site is located on the former site of Green's Playhouse. In its heyday, Green's was famous for being the largest cinema in Europe, seating over 4000 people in the main auditorium. It can be said that Cineworld's impressive multiplex carries this legacy forward to some extent.

As noted in Chapter Two, Glasgow can also lay claim to being one of the first recorded instances of a city hosting an established and recurring international film festival. This aspect of the city's filmic history strengthening the case for Glasgow's status as a cinema city. A popular misconception in the recorded history of film festivals is that the first international festivals of note established were the Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematografica (Venice Film Festival) in 1932 followed by the first full edition of the Cannes International Film Festival in 1946. However, the Scottish Amateur Film Festival was established in Glasgow before either of these. The festival, which was supported by the Scottish Film Council, ran as a recurring event from 1933 until 1988 challenging this accepted historical order of events. [39]

Dina Iordanova contends that the festival was significant for its transnational dimensions and open competition, which elicited submissions from all around the globe.[40] Iordanova's observation makes an important connection between the development of the first Thai cinematic master, Rattana Pestonji, and the Scottish

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[39] "Biography of 'Scottish Amateur Film Festival (SAFF)," National Library of Scotland, accessed on 10 February 2017, http://movingimage.nls.uk/biography/10043.

[40] Dina Iordanova, "Foreword: the film festival and film culture's transnational essence," in *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice,* ed. Marijke de Valck, Brendan Kredell and Skadi Loist (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), xi.

festival as a result of his winning entry to the festival in 1937. The festival's competition was judged by a professional panel of adjudicators including cinema luminaries such as John Grierson, Alfred Hitchcock and Michael Powell. Indeed, the presentation of prizewinning films usually took place at the Cosmo, now GFT, directly linking cinema, festival and city with a long history of festivalisation. Of the three case studies in this thesis Glasgow provides the most identifiable cinema city context for the festival to utilise as an underpinning context. The city's strong cinematic legacy supplies an obvious cultural factor to build on and promote as part of its postindustrial regeneration strategy.

4.3 Definitional Context – An Audience Festival

An important aspect of Glasgow Film Festival's inception is that it largely came into being as an extension of the city's predominant not-for-profit arthouse cinema, Glasgow Film Theatre (GFT). In her study of the festival Lesley-Ann Dickson observes that GFF's inception was supplementary to the cinema's activity as an audience development strategy rather than being a standalone event.[41] The festival is operated as a core GFT initiative that primarily utilises the cinema's physical and human resources as well as partially sharing an audience.

GFF and GFT operate under the umbrella organisation, Glasgow Film, along with separate festival entities Glasgow Short Film Festival (GSFF) and Glasgow Youth Film Festival (GYFF). Both GSFF and GYFF formerly started life as programming components within the main festival but are now standalone events in their own right that take place at alternative times of the year complete with their own identities. The title Glasgow Film provides an encompassing designation that gathers together all in-house and outreach programming activity that is connected to the cinema.

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[41] Dickson, *Film Festivals and Cinema Audiences,* 110.

Figure 4.6. Glasgow Film Theatre, Glasgow Film.
Source: https://glasgowfilm.org/latest/news/80-years-of-cinema-celebrated-at-gft-this-weekend.

As well as providing a clear identity and brand for all film exhibition activity related to GFT, Glasgow Film, provides an overarching institutional structure. The institution describes its purpose as being to provide

> a national centre for film and moving image media where
> audiences and filmmakers experience and debate cultural
> practice and ideas through diverse, unique and quality
> programmes that transform the way people see the world,
> through film.[42]

This description clearly illustrates Glasgow Film as an ambitious organisation with aspirations to be perceived as an institution of national significance in Scotland, the UK and within the global film community. It also highlights the organisation as a direct competitor with CMI in Edinburgh for the role of national cinema centre as noted in the previous chapter. Strengthening this aspiration, Glasgow Film, was made the lead organisation for Film Hub Scotland (FHS), one of the BFI's Film Audience Network hubs, in 2018. This situates Glasgow Film as Scotland's key audience development agency,

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[42] "What we do," Glasgow Film, last accessed 31 January 2017, http://glasgowfilm.org/what-we-do.

which in turn significantly strengthens the organisation's commitment to creating accessibility beyond the cinema and delivering on its defining ethos to ensure *cinema for all.*

4.3.1 Glasgow Film Theatre

It is impossible to assess or analyse GFF without first considering the festival's integral, intertwined and symbiotic relationship to its sibling organisation in greater depth. Founded in 1974 on the site of the former independent cinema, The Cosmo, GFT is the city's foremost film institution. The festival can be considered an extension of GFT adhering to the same ethos of *cinema for all* and building on the cinema's core programming and audience development strategies along with benefiting from its longstanding role as the leading cultural cinema institution in the city.

GFT is considered to be one of the UK's leading independent cinemas outside London. Demonstrating its pole position it was awarded the UK's Screen Awards "Cinema of the Year" winner for a single-site cinema in 2015. I propose that the institutional stability offered by being an initiative of GFT can be considered a key factor in GFF's rapid establishment and growth to become the third most attended film festival in the UK. GFT lays claim to being the "best publicly attended independent cinema" in Scotland recording just shy of 200,000 (198,900) admissions overall in 2016 with 12,103 (6%) of these being directly attributable to GFF.

In its former guise as The Cosmo and in alignment with the city's profile of being a socialist and working-class stronghold the cinema was known for being "the working man's education." The Cosmo was built by Glasgow cinema chain owner, George Singleton, during the height of Glasgow's cinematic heyday. It opened its doors in 1939 with a remit to show alternative films to those screened by mainstream or commercial cinemas and was considered the first purpose-built arthouse cinema in the UK outside of London. Glasgow Film's Cinema City project asserts that GFT's iconic Art Deco building located in Rose Street embodies a physical representation of the city's

architectural, cinematic, social and cultural heritage.[43]
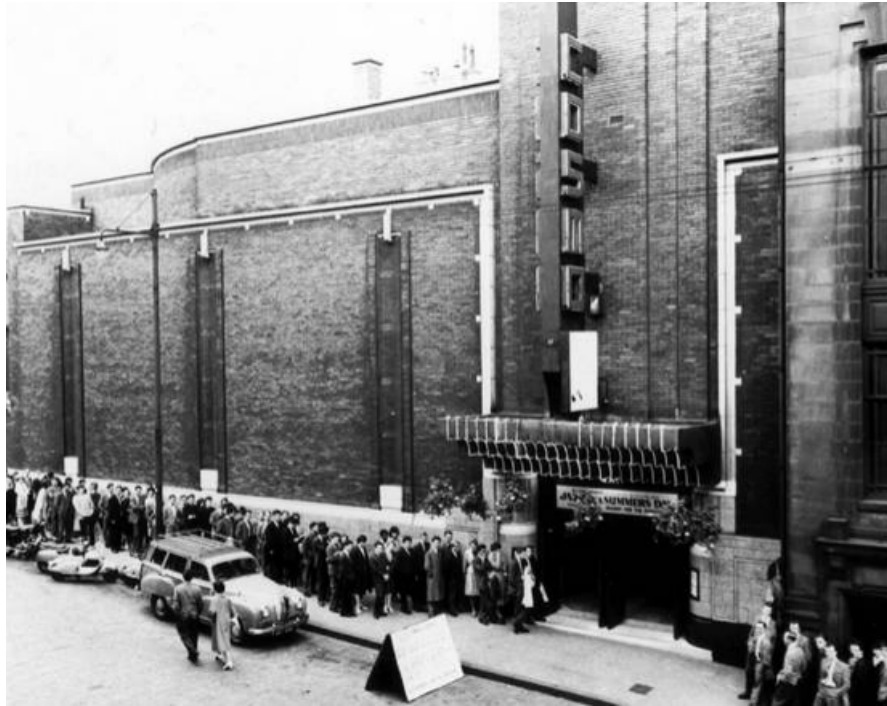
Figure 4.7. The Cosmo, Rose St.
Source: https://twitter.com/glasgowfilm/status/1116296333319491586.

Unlike many of its contemporaries GFT is still used today for the very same purpose as it was originally intended, to present alternative film to that of the mainstream. The Cosmo was bought by the Scottish Film Council in 1974 and renamed Glasgow Film Theatre. Its incorporation of the city's name into the cinema's title as well as the transference of the cinema from a purely commercial to a publicly funded venture pays testament to the cinema's importance as a valued city arts institution. Underlining this comic-book author Mark Millar contends that GFT is at "the heart of Glasgow cinemagoing" for generations of Glaswegians.[44] He describes his experience of the cinema in the following way:

> My parents watched movies there when Attlee was Prime Minister
> and I take my children there now. I love that it's modernising and
> expanding and yet still retains a look that evokes the Golden Age of

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[43] "Glasgow Film: Cinema City," Glasgow Film, online video.

[44] Glasgow Film, *Glasgow Film Annual Review 2015-16*, 17.

Hollywood. It's pretty much my favourite cinema in the world and in a cultured city brimming with cinephiles is just irreplaceable.[45]

Another important characteristic of GFT's heritage has been its ability to act as an early adopter and cinematic innovator. McDougall cites a range of examples including GFT being the first to show a live broadcast of the Queen's inauguration in 1953 and being the very first cinema in the UK to present a digital screening.[46] It is unsurprising then that the institution has developed a festival that tests the boundaries of its own programming framework and indeed its own infrastructure. GFT's most recent developments have been the addition of a third screen to enhance programming flexibility and the redevelopment of the cinema's original butterfly staircase to restore some of the glamour of the picture-palace era as part of a £3 million building project.

According to Allison Gardner, GFT's programme director and co-director of GFF, the festival was largely implemented by GFT as a "capacity building strategy."[47] The catalyst for implementing the festival came about as the result of a European cinemagoing report that found that hosting a film festival positively impacted on arthouse cinema attendance. GFF was established as a strategy to broaden accessibility and help counteract the perception of GFT as being high-brow, elitist or niche. Perceptions of the arthouse as an exclusive or elitist space can be considered commonplace. Indeed, the Scottish Film Council's former Director, David Bruce, recalls how GFT was initially perceived as a private members' society when it first opened.[48] Unlike the two further cases in the study this positions GFF as emerging from a long-standing arthouse cinema tradition rather than being established as an entirely new cultural innovation.

Arguably GFF's ongoing sustainability can be attributed to being part of an established institutional structure that has greatly reduced the risk of presenting the event. For instance, in 2015 Glasgow Film became a Regularly Funded Organisation (RFO) under Scotland's primary arts funding body, Creative Scotland. This means that funding is now

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Glasgow Film, "Cinema City – Glasgow City Centre," online video.

[47] Allison Gardner, interview by author, Edinburgh, 8 September 2016.

[48] "Interview: David Bruce," by Sean Welsh, *cc.glasgowfilm.org,* accessed 2 February 2017. http://cc.glasgowfilm.org/cinema-city/features/192-interview-david-bruce.

granted on a three-year rolling basis and was restructured to incorporate all of the institution's activities including GFT, GFF, GSFF and GYFF. Again this signals the increased security afforded by Glasgow Film's institutional stability. RFO funding ensures that significant Scottish cultural organisations have greater ability to carry out long-term strategic plans. In the last cycle of regular funding, 2015-2018, Glasgow Film was awarded £1.9 million over three years breaking down to an award of £633,000 per year. Circa £200,000 of this is allocated to festival delivery per annum, which helps to underwrite the festival and decrease economic risk. In financial terms, this puts the GFF in a very sound position in comparison to other standalone festivals.

The festival's budget of circa £650,000 (see figure 4.8 for breakdown) is primarily allocated to costs associated with the programme, guests and site-specific screenings as well as the additional staff that are dedicated to the programming and co-ordination of GFF. Because a large percentage of the festival's programme is presented at GFT overheads such as venue hire, and the larger part of staffing are absorbed by the cinema.

Income for GFF2017 was loosely broken down as follows:

Amount:	Source:
£160,000	Glasgow City, BFI, Event Scotland
£210,000	Earned income including ticket sales, industry delegate fees, submissions, advertising
£80,000	Sponsorship (corporate / cultural)
£200,000	Creative Scotland

Figure 4.8. Source: researchers own.

As part of Glasgow Film's funding restructure from Creative Scotland the organisation received an increase from circa £200,000 to £600,000 per annum for the entire organisation that folded all of its activities into one award. The bulk of the increase was used to restructure staff organisation and to increase pay for all staff excluding the CEO

(see Appendix D for information on company registration and a list of trustees).

The aim of this was to ensure fair pay for everyone but also to ensure that the percentage of pay for the highest and lowest paid people in the organisation were closer together (see figure 4.9). The organisation's decision to use additional funding to directly benefit staff can be considered emblematic of both the general socialist attitude that characterises the city and Glasgow Film. Indeed Gardner specifically points this out when she outlines the changes brought about by the funding increase. She states both her own and CEO, Jaki McDougall's socialist inclinations as being key to how they approach running the organisation.

A further aspect of this institutional integration is apparent in how the festival's staffing is resourced. In contrast to the two upcoming cases, GFF is a component part of a much larger operational structure. Because of this only a small percentage of the staff that deliver the festival are solely dedicated to working on it.
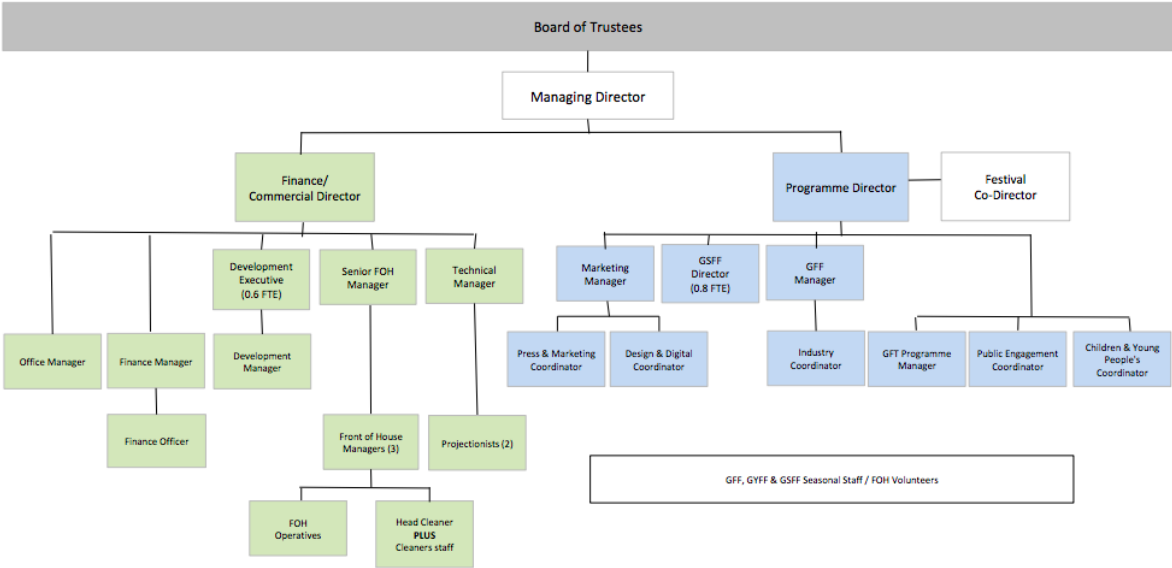

Figure 4.9. Glasgow Film – Organisational Structure, 2015-18. Source: Glasgow Film.

Rather, the delivery of GFF is a part of Glasgow Film's overall offering led by McDougall. Again, this puts GFF in a far more secure and sustainable position than standalone festivals that operate on a far more precarious basis engendered by an

over-reliance on seasonal and contractual workers. Staff that are specific to the GFF include Co-director Allan Hunter, a freelance film critic and programmer, who is contracted for approximately six months each year specifically for programming purposes. Hunter's role contrasts with his counterpart, Allison Gardner, also a co-director of the festival, who works year-round as programme director for Glasgow Film and dedicates approximately 30 percent of her time to the festival. GFF's festival manager and industry co-ordinator are employed on a full-time year-round basis while a small team of seasonal positions at varying contract lengths are offered to dedicated positions such as a marketing co-ordinator, programming co-ordinator, venues and volunteer co-ordinator, festival industry assistant and guest services assistant.

A large percentage of the festival's operational delivery, however, is fulfilled by the staff already in situ such as the front of house, communications, development and technical teams. This is important as it means that there is a permanent structure in place along with staff security that results in continuity of quality for how the festival is delivered each year. The importance of having a transparent staffing structure and fair pay is a core ethos for Glasgow Film that has resulted in all contractual GFF staff being paid at least the minimum Scottish working wage. Festival delivery is also augmented by a volunteer programme. Here again the integration between Glasgow Film and GFF is apparent. Glasgow Film operates a robust and active volunteer programme on a year-round basis. It reported that in 2017 volunteers contributed 7400 hours to the cinema with 40% (3000) of these being dedicated to the delivery of GFF.

GFF's core mission remains to drive audiences for Glasgow Film Theatre. Bearing this mission out, GFF's post-event press release for the 2017 edition of the festival proudly proclaims that the "13th annual celebration of cinema saw the busiest week in GFT history, with over 12,500 people through the door in seven days."[49] A press release issued the year before in 2016 also presented the same rhetoric by announcing GFT's busiest footfall across the week of the festival to date with both releases placing an emphasis on the cinema rather than the festival. This positioning clearly demonstrates

[49] Glasgow Film, "Record-breaking attendance announced for Glasgow Film Festival 2017," Press Release (6 March 2017), http://glasgowfilm.org/glasgow-film-festival/latest/news/record-breaking-attendance-announced-for-glasgow-film-festival-2017.

the festival's role as an extension of the cinema and its key role as a driver of audiences for GFT. The amalgamation of both entities is also visible on visiting the website for either GFT or GFF. They are hosted on the same website and inevitably users end up navigating between the two. This further cements a perception of them as the same entity.

4.3.2 People Make Glasgow Film Festival

In the same year that Glasgow played host to the 2014 Commonwealth Games the festival celebrated its tenth anniversary edition. A trope that is common to all three cases in this thesis is their commitment to being accessible and non-exclusive, which I attribute to their locatedness within formerly working-class industrial cities. In GFF's case this rhetoric is forcibly enforced across its communications and as a defining character of the festival. In the 2014 brochure GFF was described as being "an access-all-areas Festival where you can meet the filmmakers, challenge the programmers and make friends with the person sitting next to you. Everyone is a VIP."[50] This discourse is repeatedly stated across Glasgow Film and GFF's communications. The organisation's website states definitively that the audience is "at the heart of GFF's ethos" and that a core festival objective is to "become one of Europe's top audience-focused film festivals."[51]

One of the stand-out visual markers in the city during the 2016 and 2017 editions of the festival was created by GFF's founding partner, Glasgow City Marketing Bureau. The marketing body implemented a campaign to promote the city that was predicated on the slogan "People Make Glasgow" (see figure 4.10). The slogan was liberally scattered around the city on unmissable hot pink billboards and posters that inadvertently framed the festival experience. In an apparent coincidence GFF's identity and design strategy for both editions strongly featured a hot pink colour palette that visibly complemented the city's latest branding activity that visually linked the city and festival intrinsically (see figure 4.11).

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[50] Glasgow Film, *Glasgow Film Festival Brochure 2014* (Glasgow, 2014), 1.

[51] "About" Glasgowfilm.org, accessed 4 June 2019, https://glasgowfilm.org/glasgow-film-festival/about-the-festival.

Figure 4.10. Glasgow City – People Make Glasgow Campaign.
Source: peoplemakeglasgow.com.

Figure 4.11. GFF2017 – Brand Identity.
Source: https://www.facebook.com/glasgowfilmfestival, https://bit.ly/2L6bYq2.

While Gardner asserts that the design strategy was coincidental this symbiotic visual connection reveals cohesion between the festival and the city's identity, albeit on an unconscious basis. Their physical branding compatibility positions the festival as a fundamental part of the city's identity and image in February each year. This was especially apparent when walking through the city's thoroughfares that were bedecked

with hot-pink flags promoting the festival that visually complemented the city's key promotional campaign.

The city's ongoing promotion of itself demarks it as having a continued destination tourism strategy in place that continues to attract visitors to the city. Glasgow City's marketing campaign is predicated heavily around the narrative that the city's unique selling point is the people of Glasgow. This factor is also highly applicable to GFF's promoted narrative that people make Glasgow Film Festival. This narrative is one that is also frequently applied to Glasgow's famous music scene. A mythology of specialness and uniqueness has sprung up around the notion of the Glasgow music audience. This perspective is informed by the idea that musicians playing in the city undergo a particular and distinctive experience attributed to that of the Glasgow audience.

Gardner proposes that this trait is also applicable to the GFF audience. She suggests that it is the audience rather than the programme that sets GFF apart on the UK film festival circuit. In agreement, Co-director Allan Hunter also asserts the centrality of the audience as a defining factor of what makes GFF unique. At the launch of GFF 2014, Hunter described the atmosphere in the following way; "one thing remains essential, though – GFF is and will always be an access-all-areas event, where you can meet the filmmakers, ask awkward questions, and make friends with the person sitting next to you."[52] A particularly apt example of the audience's enthusiasm for filmmakers is offered by GFF's 2014 brochure. It recounts that the GFF audience greeted filmmaker Bertrand Tavernier with such a high level of thunderous applause that he was stunned into silence.[53]

GFF's atmosphere is also referred to in media reviews and responses to the festival year-on-year. Many of these draw attention to the role that the audience plays in creating a specific GFF atmosphere. In her 2013 review of the festival Anna Smith (*Sight and Sound*) suggested that "while the Edinburgh International Film Festival has

[52] Leo Barraclough, "Glasgow Film Festival Checks into 'Grand Budapest Hotel," *Variety,* last modified 22 January 2014, https://variety.com/2014/film/global/glasgow-film-festival-checks-into-grand-budapest-hotel-1201066477.

[53] Glasgow Film, *Glasgow Film Festival Brochure 2014*, 1.

been grabbing the headlines, Glasgow has been quietly building a reputation as a user-friendly, grassroots festival. Attending events at the ninth festival this February I was struck by the enthusiasm of the crowd."[54] The use of the word "grassroots" here is instructive. It signals GFF's status as an accessible film festival in spite of its third-largest film festival status. Tom Linay's review in the *Huffington Post* in 2014 also specifically notes this as a definable attribute of both festival and city. However, Linay draws a direct link between the city and the festival's character framing GFF as a product of its environment. His review states that "like the City itself, it's [GFF's] friendly, welcoming and its enthusiasm is utterly infectious."[55] This factor is also singled out again the following year. Glasgow Film's 2015 Annual Report states that "the festival's friendly spirit, clear passion for cinema and deeply committed audiences were all remarked upon by visitors."[56]

Figure 4.12. GFF2017 – Audience. Source: Glasgow Film.

Gardner maintains that this attitude is a common characteristic of Glasgow people and she frequently hears feedback from out-of-town journalists and visitors that comment on

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[54] Anna Smith, "Mingle, don't talk: Glasgow 2013," *Sight and Sound,* last modified 6 April 2017, http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/comment/festivals/mingle-dont-talk-glasgow-2013.

[55] Tom Linay, "Glasgow Film Festival Round-Up – The Grand Budapest Hotel, Blue Ruin and More," *Huffington Post,* last modified 28 April 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/tom-linay/glasgow-film-festival-round-up_b_4859795.html.

[56] Glasgow Film, *Glasgow Film Annual Review 2015-16*, 5.

it.[57] In addition she describes GFF's audience as a highly vocal cohort that are unafraid to contribute "constructive criticism" when they feel it is required thus demonstrating a clear sense of investment in and ownership of the festival.[58] Presumably this can partly be attributed to GFF's close affiliation with GFT. A significant segment of the festival audience are also regular attendees of GFT and therefore familiar with the organisation's personnel.

By and large film festival audiences can be considered to be an invested cohort. Therefore it's difficult to ascertain whether this is an aspect of GFF that is indeed unique. Or, alternatively, if it is something that is focused on in festival communications in the absence of high-profile guests or titles. By foregrounding the important role of the audience as stakeholders and enthusiastic supporters of the festival this rhetoric becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that effectively motivates further buy-in. Certainly in other instances the audience is often cited as a differentiator for selling a unique atmosphere at certain festivals across the globe. A resounding example of this is Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). TIFF has made its audience into one of its largest defining factors thus positioning it as the most famous audience film festival in the world. Gardner draws a link between the two festivals citing TIFF as the predominant festival that has influenced the vision for GFF.[59] This assertion presents an interesting comparison when considered in relation to Kredell's examination of TIFF as a key component of Toronto's regeneration and the notion that film festivals located in postindustrial cities share similar defining characteristics.

4.4 Programme: Creating an Architecture

Overall programming is led by Co-Directors, Allison Gardner and Allan Hunter. GFF's core programme can primarily be described as exemplifying the 'best of fests' or universal survey model. This model is predicated on screening the best films sourced by the programmers from the film festival circuit over the previous twelve months. Mark Peranson aligns the best-of-fests model with audience focused festivals which is a trait

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[57] Gardner, interview.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

already identified in relation to GFF. However, the growth of the festival's industry section from 2016 onwards highlights a shift along business / audience spectrum towards growing industry interests and signals an emerging and more complex strategy in train. Gardner and Hunter employ a collaborative approach to programming the festival. The pair visit a number of festivals on the circuit throughout the year, jointly and separately, to select titles for the main programme.[60] Staple festivals include Cannes, Locarno and Toronto as well as accepting feature film submissions. The festival receives approximately 250 submissions that are initially viewed by a screening panel before being shortlisted for selection. However the amount of submissions actually selected to screen at the festival is a relatively small percentage that numbers between seven and ten each year. Notably the 2017 Audience Awards winner, *Lipstick Under My Burka*[61] was received through submissions.

4.4.1 Programming Pathways

While the two co-directors work in tandem Gardner's dual role across both cinema and festival puts her in the position of a strategic programming overseer who has a foot in both camps. From a curatorial perspective the prospect of securing additional screenings as part of GFF's year-round programme adds increased negotiating power for acquiring rights to screen festival titles. This renders the two programming strategies as intrinsically linked and helps to strengthen relationships with distributors and sales agents. This is a valuable curatorial strategy that is not available to the other two festivals examined in this study. Gardner also has overall responsibility for scheduling the festival. She suggests this is due to her greater understanding of what films will work best in what slots and her in-depth knowledge of the audience as a result of her year-round responsibility for scheduling GFT's programme.

GFF utilises a programming strategy that takes its lead from BFI /LFF approach outlined in the case study on LFF (refer to Appendix C). This initiative involves the BFI's nationwide strategy of packaging and touring theme-based seasons that are initially

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[60] Mark Peranson, "First You Get the Power, Then You Get the Money: Two Models of Film Festivals," in *Dekalog 3: On Film Festivals*, ed. Richard Porton (London and New York: Wallflower, 2009), 23.

[61] *Lipstick Under My Burka,* directed by Alankrita Shrivastava (Prakash Jha Productions, 2017).

screened and launched at LFF each year including thrill, dare, love, laugh, debate, cult, journey, sonic, family, treasures and experimenta. The BFI's packaging device conveys overarching thematic concerns under mood banners that act as a selection guide or programming pathway for the LFF audience. The festival provides a high-profile launch pad to strategically develop these seasons into coherent nationwide touring programmes extending their programmatic lifespan and reach beyond the festival.

GFF's main programme is also structured around thematic programming strands including "Pioneer," "Local Heroes," "Windows on the World," "Modern Families," "Sound and Vision" and "Nerdvana." These categorisations cluster films together to help the audience navigate the selection by providing an approach similar to the pathways used by LFF. Reflecting the BFI's strategy some of these strands have been strategically developed to have a life beyond the festival where they have been transformed into seasons that run throughout GFT's year-round programme to augment the organisation's audience development strategy.

By positioning GFF as a launch site for these strands the intrinsic and complementary link between festival and cinema is again foregrounded. Examples of this strategy include the Sound and Vision season in 2016 and the CineMasters season in 2017. Both of these strands were implemented at the festival and went on to be presented as discrete seasons following the same ethos later in the cinema's annual cycle. Similarly to the BFI/ LFF model, GFT harnesses the increased profile and attention given to strands within the festival to inform a wider year-round programming strategy. The audience becomes familiarised with the tropes of each strand during the festival, which make them easier to promote as a packaging device later in the year. However, this complicates an understanding of GFF as an extraordinary happening and instead positions it as an extension of GFT's usual sales and marketing cycle.

Generally festivals create an economy of prestige around certain titles by. They do this by capitalising on the first-timeness of seeing certain films in advance of their release or categorising particular films in the guise of a premiere. However interestingly Hunter suggests that the Glasgow audience are less concerned about the so-called premiere

status of films selected for the programme. In fact he suggests that GFF's audience are more interested in just seeing a really good film that they may not otherwise view and tend to have little concern for if a film has screened elsewhere before arriving at GFF.[62]

The core programme is augmented by a number of established strands. These include the Special Events season that takes place in alternative site-specific locations around the city; Sound and Vision, a programme of music related films and Crossing the Line, a programme of experimental and artist moving image films co-curated with LUX Scotland. In addition, the festival has established an ongoing strategy to invite external guest programmes and programmers to take creative responsibility for specific strands, seasons or even festivals within the festival. Some examples of this from over the years include Game Cats Go Miaow, a strand that was dedicated to the crossover between gaming and film and the Fashion on Film programmes presented in 2014 and 2015.

4.4.2 Creative Incubation

GFF's inclusive programming strategy has proved so successful that in some cases the festival can be viewed as a creative incubator for smaller festivals. GSFF and GYFF offer pertinent examples of this. Both started life under the mantle of GFF and have now become robust enough to assume their own positions within the institutional framework and become established festivals in their own right.

Since 2011, both festivals have been initiated as standalone events. Initially, all three festivals took place concurrently forming a type of super festival that spanned close to a month of festival activities. This resulted in an extensive drain on shared GFT resources and positioned the smaller festivals as an extension of GFF rather than having their own discrete identities and agendas. More recently, both festivals have gained independence by being scheduled separately to GFF. GSFF now takes place in March and GYFF takes place in September with both festivals acquiring their own unique reputation, identity and branding that is separate to the main festival. Under the direction of Festival Director, Matt Lloyd, GSFF is now considered Scotland's leading

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[62] Hunter, interview.

competitive short film festival while GYFF lays claim to being the only film festival in Europe that is wholly curated by teenagers.

Figure 4.13. Opening Night – Glasgow Short Film Festival 2019.
Source: https://www.facebook.com/GlasgowShort, https://bit.ly/2swe24v.

These initiatives consist of their own strongly identifiable programming strategies. This development again raises questions around GFF's programming identity that continues to evolve as it experiments, develops and sheds curatorial strategies. However, in relation to the wider question of the city's cultural agenda the formation of these events undoubtedly aids the project of festivalisation in Glasgow. In this case the GFF has provided a period of creative incubation and support for these fledgling festivals to become established enough to become independent from the main festival.

4.4.3 Crowd Pleasing and Thrillseeking: Live Cinema at GFF

In recent years GFF's novel Special Events strand has increased in prominence to become a key identifier of the festival programme locally. GFF's Special Events strand fits neatly with Sarah Atkinson and Helen Kennedy's recently coined categorisation of live cinema.[63] It can loosely be described as providing enhanced film experiences that

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[63] Sarah Atkinson and Helen Kennedy, "Introduction – Inside-the-scenes: The rise of experiential cinema," *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*, 13, no 1 (2016): 140, http://www.participations.org/Volume%2013/Issue%201/S1/1.pdf.

extend audience interaction with a film beyond the confines of the traditional cinema (aka theatrical) format. These tend to be highly interactive events that take place in unusual non-theatrical, site-specific venues across the city. In most cases the venue either complements or reflects the film's theme in some way and therefore adds to the experiential element of the screening.

GFF's Special Events strand was first established in 2013 and is now a much-anticipated aspect of the programme. It grew out of the festival's strategic objectives to reach an alternative and younger audience, raise awareness and to "inject some fun into the programme."[64] Over recent years the strand has gained elevated prominence with the audience and in the local media to the extent that it can now be considered to be an intrinsic factor of the festival's programming DNA. As a festival that hasn't always been able to secure significant film talent, the press attention garnered from this highly novel programming initiative has proved to be invaluable for raising GFF's profile and driving admissions locally. The season also provides an important contribution to the festival's spatial materialisation by taking the festival out into the city. The initiative allows GFF to celebrate and engage with Glasgow's specific physical environment beyond GFT. As one reviewer commented about the strand "Glasgow itself is the biggest star of the festival."[65]

Since the strand's inception, GFF has become steadily more adventurous and ambitious in its approach to programming live cinema events. According to the "Live Cinema in the UK Report 2016" GFF now exemplifies

> the best example of a festival that utilises all forms of cinema:
> live soundtracks, theatrical intervention, artists moving image,
> digital experiences and cult events including themed parties and
> fancy dress are regular features at the festival.[66]

So far the events staged have been quite diverse in their delivery. Examples include a

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[64] Gardner, interview.

[65] Leo Barraclough, "Glasgow Film Festival Checks into 'Grand Budapest Hotel'."

[66] Atkinson, Brook and Kennedy, *Live Cinema in the UK Report 2016* (Live Cinema Ltd, 2016), 12, http://livecinema.org.uk/live-cinema-in-the-uk-report.

screening of a mystery film in a location underneath Glasgow's Central Station that had not previously been accessed by the public as well as screenings of *Con Air*[67] and *The Lost Boys*[68] in secret locations.

Figure 4.14. GFF Audience – Special Event: *Con Air*.
Source: https://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival, https://bit.ly/2L8nxx5.

In the cases of *Con Air* and *The Lost Boys*, the festival mounted elaborate and playful rituals around the event reminiscent of the popular Secret Cinema format. To date instances have involved the location of the screening being kept under wraps until the audience arrived or the audience being actively and physically embroiled in the action. For instance, the screening of *Con Air* engaged the audience by dressing them in bright orange prison jumpsuits and handcuffing them before they were transported to an airport hangar outside of the city for the screening. Following this, GFF2017 took nine busloads of the audience through the city to a private screening of *The Lost Boys* at Glasgow's M&D Amusement Park. To add to the thrill of the event the buses were escorted by a gang of bikers and the amusement park was closed to the general public. Part of the experience of the event involved the audience having the run of the park to participate in attractions such as riding rollercoasters before the film began. The

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[67] *Con Air*, directed by Simon West (Touchstone Pictures, Jerry Bruckheimer Films, Kouf/Bigelow Productions, 1997).
[68] *The Lost Boys,* directed by Joel Schumacher (Warner Bros, 1987).

experiential value of this strategy created an unrepeatable and exclusive dimension to the event as well as heightening the viewing experience by allowing the audience to participate in an environment reminiscent of the filmic world.

Figure 4.15. Glasgow's M&D Amusement Park – the site for Special Event: *The Lost Boys*. Source: https://twitter.com/glasgowfilmfest, https://bit.ly/2R3SEO1.

The key aim for the Special Events programme was to take the festival's experiential cinema strategy to the next level of novelty and ambition. By articulating these events as special or out of the ordinary and clustering them together in their own separately denoted season GFF laid the foundation for its current high-profile series. Gardner attributes the unabated popularity of these events to the rise of the Secret Cinema phenomenon that has initiated an increasing appetite for experiential type film events. The strand offers a particularly apt articulation of Pine and Gilmore's formulation of the "experience economy" as part of the postindustrial economy.[69] Their hypothesis proposes that the experience economy is a distinct value-added offering that creates an extra level of engagement to a service or product. GFF's special events series offers highly conceptualised cinematic experiences that create significant added value through social engagement and live interaction beyond that of a traditional screening.

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[69] B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore. "Welcome to the Experience Economy," *Harvard Business Review* 76, no. 4 (1998): 97.

In 2013 the festival offered no less than forty-six of these events. GFF's programme described the season as "an outstanding range of unique events in special places to really get you into the festival spirit," placing the emphasis squarely on the context of the screening rather than on the film.[70] The season involved a diverse gamut of variously sized enhanced film events designed to create an additional layer of value to the festival experience. Types of events included a walking tour, treasure hunt, 70mm screening, film accompanied by live music performance, films accompanied by new original scores, post-screening concerts or live music, talks, workshops, artist films and multimedia events.

During this time the festival developed a defining event format for their Special Events strand that can now be considered to be their established blueprint for presenting live cinema. Two examples taken from GFF2013 that illustrate this are the *Calamity Jane Barn Dance* that took place at Glasgow's Grand Ole Opry and *Carnival featuring Black Orpheus* as part of that year's Brazilian season. Both events were designed to enhance the life of the film by extending it beyond the screen and into the physical world so that the audience could play an interactive role with the text and have a social experience that was framed by it. They both followed a similar format that consisted of presenting the films in venues that were complementary to the film text and were followed by themed parties. In the case of *Calamity Jane* the screening was followed by a barn dance and for *Black Orpheus* there was a carnival-themed party. Crucially, this event format can be categorised under Atkinson and Kennedy's typography of live cinema as an "enhanced" film event. This classification posits a physical enhancement to the social experience of watching the film but importantly does not alter or touch the film text itself.[71] Further examples of this format from recent years include using the opulent surroundings of Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery for a late-night screening of *Silence of the Lambs*[72] and The Planetarium at Glasgow Science Centre to screen *The Man Who Fell to Earth.*[73]

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[70] Glasgow Film, *Glasgow Film Festival Brochure 2013* (Glasgow, 2013).

[71] Atkinson and Kennedy, "Introduction – Inside-the-scenes," 141.

[72] *Silence of the Lambs,* directed by Jonathan Demme (Strong Heart/Demme Production, Orion Pictures, 1991: USA).

[73] *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, directed by Nicolas Roeg (British Lion Film Corporation, 1976: UK).

However, a large percentage of the audience that attend the Special Events season do not necessarily convert into being regular GFT, or even GFF, attendees. So while these events extend the breadth of the festival's spatial footprint in the city and help to create an aura of festivalisation they do not attract new audiences to GFF or GFT. Instead these audiences constitute a new and separate cohort that have become regular special-event attendees. This indicates that the live or experiential cinema audience doesn't necessarily translate into a cinephile, or even, a festival audience but instead constitutes an alternative entity that may instead indicate a new form of viewing practice. As Atkinson and Kennedy point out, these types of novel events tend to be more closely aligned with mainstream cinemagoing rather than independent cinema and therefore are unlikely to succeed as a strategy for strengthening cinephilia.[74]

For Gardner, this audience behaviour isn't overly concerning. She views the main objective of these events as encouraging audiences to engage with either GFT's building or its ethos rather than the festival per se. In this case then the Special Events series is successful in fulfilling GFT's ethos of *cinema for all* to some extent. However, Gardner anticipates that continued interaction will result in translating audiences to other parts of GFF's or GFT's programmes at a later stage.[75] In contrast, I propose that the likelihood is that audiences for GFF's Special Events are driven predominantly by highly recognisable or cult titles and the addition of an enhanced and unique experience. Arguably these audiences are less likely to respond to more obscure titles or events formed around new or less well-known films or filmmakers.

Nevertheless, the strand has been particularly successful at increasing the overall capacity of the festival and helping to lower the age profile of GFF attendees, but there are some obvious drawbacks to this strategy. Firstly, while these prolific novelty events tend to translate into creating increased media awareness and physical visibility for the festival beyond GFT, they also tend to pull focus. Their novelty value often overshadows the rest of the programme. Secondly, while it can be argued that the Special Events strand successfully acts as a mechanism that extends the reach of the

[74] Ibid., 142.

[75] Gardner, interview.

festival out into the city so far it hasn't necessarily translated into visitors back to GFT. The nature of the initiative means that audiences have little or no interaction at all with GFT's building or other aspects of the festival for that matter. As already noted, the live cinema phenomenon has a tendency to rely on mainstream or cult fare already well known to audiences and so does not extend the project of cinephilia or discovery of new talent.

Added to this, events of this nature are intensely resource-heavy undertakings. In an attempt at streamlining, GFF2017 saw a decrease in the number of live cinema events presented down to eight over the course of the eleven-day festival in comparison to previous years. Instead there was an evident focus on scalability, increasing admissions and optimising available resources. In 2017, this number constituted almost one big site-specific event a day outside of Opening and Closing Night Galas that are events that tend to be accompanied by their own resource-heavy needs.

Finally, as the programme of events has become evermore ambitious, audience expectation has grown in equal measure. For example, in 2017 GFF presented John Carpenter's *The Thing* at an indoor ski slope in minus-five-degree temperatures.[76] The screening was attended by a four-hundred-strong audience that sat under blankets in an atmospherically snowy landscape replete with husky dogs roaming the auditorium. While the event was an extraordinary experience there is a sense that the bar is being raised in relation to audience expectation resulting in GFF having to formulate increasingly sophisticated and amplified event experiences year-on-year. The increased scale of these events creates a perception that live cinema now forms an intrinsic part of the GFF experience. By and large events in the strand sell out well in advance, often within minutes of going on sale, making a salient case for their commercial viability and the festival's ongoing focus on them.

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[76] *The Thing* directed by John Carpenter (Universal Pictures, 1982: USA).

4.4.4 FrightFest Glasgow

In a 2013 review Anna Smith (*Sight and Sound*) noted that "GFF targeted cult/specialist markets more determinedly than ever."[77] Smith's comment refers to the presence of FrightFest as an ongoing initiative within the festival programme. Now in its thirteenth year, GFF's programming partnership with the UK's largest and most prolific horror and fantasy genre film festival, FrightFest, offers an additional programming strategy that broadens the reach of the festival to yet another cohort that is not necessarily the regular GFT audience.

The FrightFest programme provides a significant intervention into the festival's programming format by habitually dominating the final weekend of the festival when it takes over GFT's main screen. While FrightFest Glasgow (FFG) adds an alternative dimension to GFF it doesn't necessarily cohere with the rest of the programme. Instead, the genre-based strand has the sense of being an entirely separate entity to the festival. As its title (that makes no mention of the larger festival) indicates it is less of a festival season and better considered as a festival-within-a-festival that encompasses its own self-contained zone.

Compounding this differentiation to the main festival's programme FFG is programmed by FrightFest's core programming team. This consists of Alan Jones, Paul McEvoy, Ian Rattray and Greg Day who are prolific programmers in the horror genre realm. In his analysis of the Sundance Film Festival, Daniel Dayan raises an issue in relation to how the vernacular of genre can lead to audience segregation. Dayan suggests that the constitution of separate genre communities creates a danger of disparate audiences becoming sealed off or "protected from any contact with other audiences."[78] For Dayan festivals provide a way of overcoming this. He suggests that the festival is the place "where segregated publics are allowed to attend each other's event, to look over each

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[77] Smith, "Mingle, don't talk: Glasgow 2013."

[78] Daniel Dayan, "Looking for Sundance: The Social Construction of a Film Festival," in *Moving Images, Culture and the Mind,* ed. Ib Bondebjerg (Luton: Luton University Press, 2010), 49.

other's shoulder."[79] In contrast to Dayan's assertion, FFG does indeed operate as an almost entirely separate festival zone that is quite separate to the rest of GFF with its own audience and filmviewing practices.

Figure 4.16. FrightFest Glasgow – Branding.
Source: http://cloutcom.co.uk/frightfest-glasgow-2019-line-up.

Underlining its distinction from the rest of GFF is the fact that FrightFest is predominantly attended by horror fans that are perceivably different to the main festival audience. In contrast to GFF's audience profile, that is defined by an even split between males and females, FFG's audience is constituted by a predominantly male cohort. This profile correlates with studies of the Brussels International Festival of Fantastic Film (2004) and San Sebastian Horror and Fantasy Film Festival (2016), which both found that horror-themed events were largely attended by a primarily male cohort.[80] This trend is also clearly visible at FFG where the audience is a visibly male cohort and an estimated headcount through the day on Saturday put its number at approximately 75%-80%.

From an operational point of view FrightFest audiences purchase a separate pass that allows them access to all screenings within the FFG programme. As part of the pass there is an option for pass holders to be allocated the same seat for the duration of the entire programme resulting in FFG audiences remaining physically confined to one

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Rosana Vivar, "A film bacchanal: Playfulness and audience sovereignty in San Sebastian Horror and Fantasy Film Festival," *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies* 13, no. 1 (May 2016): 242.

element of the event. This is a noted practice at horror events that define this audience as exhibiting different filmviewing behaviours to those exhibited at more general film festivals. Notably, FFG attracts a higher percentage of attendees that specifically travel to it than the rest of the GFF programme. The resulting community often know each other from other horror events and therefore constitute a particularly niche audience. Because of these factors FFG has a markedly different atmosphere to the rest of the festival. It can be considered more akin to a self-contained horror convention with only minimal opportunity for casual or incidental encounters with other festivalgoers.

This differentiation is further compounded through the production of branded material received by every member of the FrightFest audience (see figure 4.16). While the publication bears GFF's logo it uses FrightFest's design concept and clearly calls attention to the smaller festival's identity and programming strategy as being entirely separate.

Given that this audience is a highly invested one and that the programming and guests are programmed as an offshoot of the main FrightFest programme it raises the question as to why this is not a standalone event in the same way that GSFF or GYFF have become. Certainly from the outside there are some clear benefits to GFF. These include bolstering audience figures, attracting an alternative demographic, using collaborative resources to secure films and guests and the ability to trade on FrightFest's highly visible, albeit niche, cache and promotional strategy. However, as the atmosphere is so notably different there is a sense that FFG is not really part of GFF but its own unique and separate entity.

4.4.5 New Directions – Industrial Impetus

Figure 4.17. Amma Asante speaking at the GFF2019 Industry Focus.
Source: https://www.screendaily.com, https://bit.ly/2rlt1HV.

Since being established GFF has primarily positioned itself as an audience festival in alignment with Mark Peranson's model.[81] However, in 2015 the festival launched a significant industry focus. The programme consists of a range of events targeted at emerging filmmakers through to industry veterans. During its short existence the Industry Focus has already increased from a two-day schedule of events to span a multi-day programme. The 2017 edition saw over 100 speakers and 200 attendees taking part each day. The value of the initiative is demonstrated through the status of the partners it has attracted to date. These have included Screen International, Glasgow Film Office, Screen Scotland, Screen Academy Scotland and the National Film and Television School.

While GFF has always positioned itself as an audience festival the introduction of a more industrial aspect to the programme seems a natural progression so that it can cater to the city's screen professionals. This new direction is particularly pertinent to Glasgow's status as the home of Scotland's film and TV industries. The screen sector is considered to be a major component of the city's economy with 57 percent of

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[81] Peranson, "First You Get the Power, Then You Get the Money," 23.

Scotland's screen-production infrastructure based in Glasgow. This is made up of around 200 businesses incorporating 47 percent of Scotland's production companies and 60 percent of its facilities. Scotland's principal broadcasters, BBC Scotland and STV Group as well as BAFTA Scotland are also based in the city. More recently, Channel 4 has also set up one of three regional hubs in Glasgow. As a cohesive media hub there is a natural audience for industry-focused events. This programming initiative seems an appropriate endeavour for the festival when considering Glasgow's reputation as a progressive culturally competitive city that has embraced the creative industries as part of its postindustrial regeneration.

The festival team don't view the introduction of the Industry Focus as strategically changing either the programming direction or identity of the festival. According to the festival's former Manager, Rachel Fiddes "any business that gets done at the festival is secondary."[82] In 2017 the industry programme included a finance forum, pitching sessions, workshops, public interviews and a range of networking events implemented to connect industry professionals. For Hunter, the festival's inclusion of an industry offering represents an organic progression that responds to a clear gap in the Glasgow market. He contends that the industry programme represents the festival's natural evolution that has recognised an underserved audience but that won't change the overall ethos of the festival.[83] Were it not for GFF's close geographical proximity to EIFF, which operates a significant industry programme, the implementation of this development might not even warrant comment.

In addition, GFF also views its role as being an important platform for showcasing local talent. In an interview with the Glasgowist in the run up to the GFF2017, Hunter put the case for supporting new Scottish talent by saying "we want to be a showcase for local filmmakers whose work is acceptable, and we should be doing everything we can to support them. We are a Glasgow festival, we are a Scottish festival."[84] One initiative that has highlighted GFF's commitment to local talent was the inclusion of a Works in

[82] Screen, "What's the purpose of film festivals in the 21st Century?," *Screendaily,* last modified 16 August 2016, http://www.screendaily.com/comment/whats-the-purpose-of-film-festivals-in-the-21st-century/5108598.article.

[83] Hunter, interview.

[84] Paul Trainer, "Interview: Allan Hunter From Glasgow Film Festival," Glasgowist.

Progress event. This "invite only" event was directed at distributors, sales agents and exhibitors and previewed excerpts from three local films currently in post-production to help these films reach the next phase of their lifecycle.

4.5 Materialising GFF

A specific concern of this thesis is to question the strategies that these festivals employ to materialise their presence within the cities that they are located in. While the festival's home, GFT, has provided institutional stability it has also created a specific physical marker that defines the festivals. However, GFF's programme is not just confined to GFT but also takes place at neighbouring venues, Cineworld and Contemporary Centre for Arts (CCA). This has made GFF's extensive programme of non-cinema-based events all the more important for creating a wider physical footprint in the city and creating a festivalised space beyond GFT.

The introduction to the festival's 2014 brochure articulates this manifestation of the festival as a citywide event by prompting the audience to participate in the festival "at iconic buildings across the city for a little extra something."[85] The brochure's focus on the extended physical shape of the festival foregrounds how GFF's Special Events programme acts as a mechanism for extending the festival beyond the confines of the GFT building. The use of alternative venues has proved to be a successful strategy in altering a perception of the festival, situating it as a broader entity than just merely an extension of its institutional home. By bringing the festival to the city, rather than the other way around, the festival has been able to break down some of the preconceived notions of nicheness that might be associated with GFT and by extension the festival.

An analysis of the GFF2017's use of venues showed that outside of the Special Events programme the festival's physical footprint is quite compact (see figure 4.18). More often than not special events only happen once and therefore utilise alternative venues on a minimal or one-time-only basis that are not really fundamental to constituting a recognisable festival space. In 2017 the predominant venues included GFT, Cineworld, the CCA and the two main venues used for the industry focus, Glasgow School of Art

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[85] Glasgow Film, *Glasgow Film Festival Brochure 2014*, 3.

and the Theatre Royal. These five venues are all located within a few streets of each other.
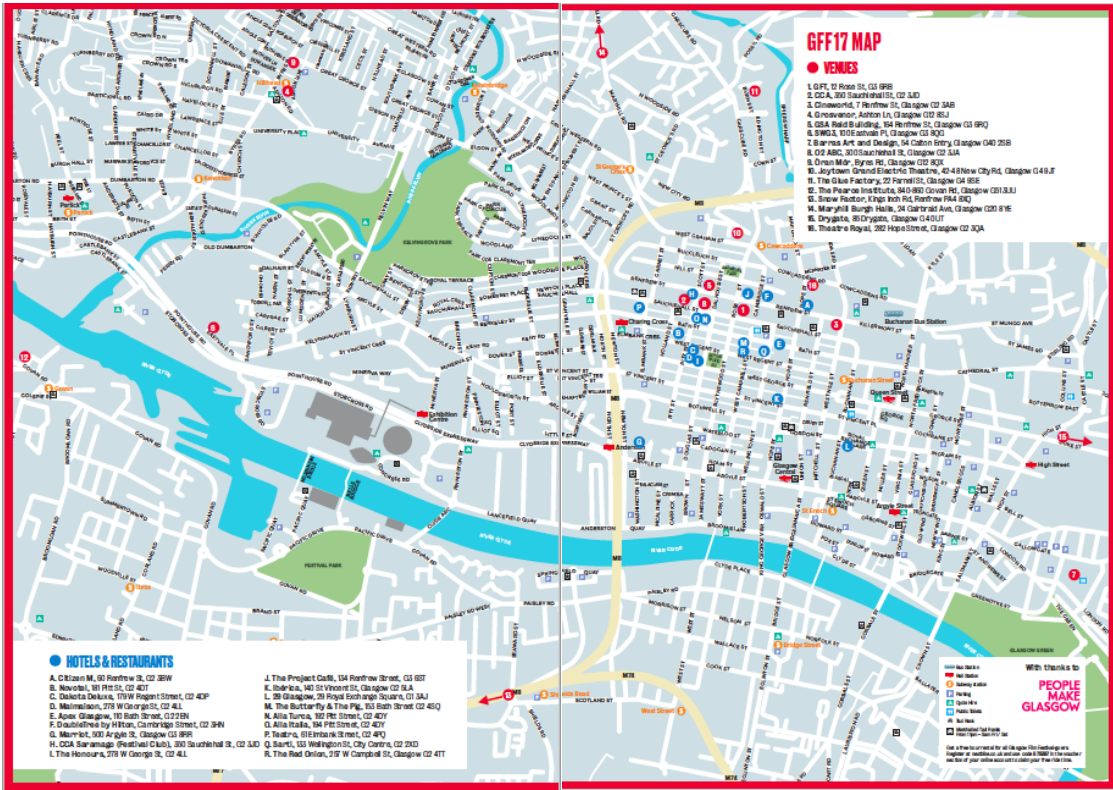
Figure 4.18. GFF2017 – Venues Map.
Source: *Glasgow Film Festival Brochure 2017.*

GFT still forms a natural home for the festival with the lion's share of the screenings taking place here. This results in the other two key venues, Cineworld and the CCA, seeming to be tacked on rather than intrinsic to the festival's central hub. Interestingly, the above map from GFF2017 belies the breadth of the liminal festival making it appear to cover a much larger area than the physical reality. Many of the venues used above are only used once so while they are part of the festival space the majority of the audience will still only visit the area closest to GFT. In addition, the inclusion of hotels and restaurants with only a spurious connection to the event, such as offering a discount to festivalgoers, creates a false impression of the festival's spatial materialisation.

Added to this there is a natural gravitational pull towards GFT because of its permanent year-round institutional status. This can also be attributed to the fact that the GFT tends

to be the primary location for the festival's more prolific premiere screenings. While the use of GFT provides a recognisable central point for the festival with its iconic cinema architecture the venue itself doesn't lend itself to a large turnover of people. In spite of a recent investment amounting to almost £3 million the cinema can still be considered to be a bijoux space that is stretched to capacity during festival time. There is little space to accommodate people between screenings. This results in the audience being encouraged to leave the building directly after each screening rather than staying around to socialise, which diminishes the social aspect of the festival to a certain degree. The venue itself has great charm and visiting it for screenings adds a sense of occasion to events but the revolving door aspect of screenings creates a significant challenge for GFF, especially given the emphasis placed on engaging with the building as a stated objective of the festival's ethos.

An aspect of GFT's compactness that does work favourably for the festival is the evident presence of both of the Co-Directors, Hunter and Gardner, who can often be found in the foyer between screenings. This may sound like an insignificant factor but in fact Hunter and Gardner's ongoing visibility and approachability helps to consolidate the sense of community that is apparent at the festival. The audience's familiarity with the two directors becomes evident very rapidly, which also reinforces the festival's narrative regarding how they value people at the festival. During their interviews both talked at length about their commitment to ensuring the ongoing accessibility and non-hierarchical nature of the event. Hunter articulates this as an impetus to "in no sense create the impression that there's a festival for the audience and a different festival going on somewhere else for the VIPs."[86]

GFT's position as the festival's core venue and hub presents a challenge of a different type. For festivals competing on the international circuit it is essential to have a venue that can facilitate a high number of attendees at Opening and Closing Galas so that these events can be situated as significant. Currently the largest screen at GFT only has capacity for an audience of 404. This falls shy of a significant gala status venue especially for a city of Glasgow's size. The ability to offer capacity is a key component

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[86] Hunter, interview.

for being able to attract and secure significant gala status premieres along with the requisite key talent.

One of the strategies employed by GFF to offset this capacity challenge is to use all three screens simultaneously to present Opening and Closing Night films. Combining the three screens in this manner creates upwards of 600 seats at the venue. While this format can be marginally effective in facilitating capacity it tends to fall down on creating a sense of occasion for those seated in the smaller screens. In addition, for this approach to work the film being screened needs to be a highly anticipated title that the audience members don't mind being seated in what can be perceived as one of the overflow cinemas. A further challenge arises when film talent is in attendance and utilised as a key selling point to position these events as gala-type screenings, as it can be problematic to effectively host three staggered introductions and Q&As in three separate cinemas in order to ensure that audiences get a similar experience.

As it happens, during the 2015 and 2016 editions of the festival managing film talent and ensuring quality assurance across Opening and Closing events was not an issue that arose. GFF was unable to secure guests for either opening or closing nights during these editions. In his interview Hunter expressed some disappointment about this factor and suggested that without the presence of key talent at these events that it's hard to consider these screenings as gala screenings. Given that GFF's star could be considered to be on ascent during this time it's surprising that the festival was faced with this challenge.

This predicament illustrates the image perception issue that GFF has struggled with. While it can certainly be said that GFF has secured competitive advantage with regard to admission figures the same could not be said about its profile as an influential festival on the film festival circuit. For all of the festival's rhetoric about being the third largest in the country, GFF's inability to secure film talent for these key events feeds back into a perception of the festival as a popular and populist regional festival. As a result of this challenge GFF has tended to emphasise the social element of Opening and Closing nights.

This has meant that the after-parties have gained increased importance in defining these particular nights as extraordinary or special. This again foregrounds GFF's correlation with the experience economy as a defining factor of the festival. When asked what the quintessential GFF event was, Gardner responded that for her it was these party nights that truly summed up GFF. Recalling GFF's core ethos that situates the festival as being accessible and non-hierarchical event every ticket holder at these screenings is entitled entry to the parties that accompany Opening and Closing Night.

While this practice is not entirely unique to GFF it is also not a given at festivals, especially those with a more hierarchical nature. There is frequently a division between audiences that segregates them into being insiders with a high level of access and ordinary punters with limited access. This particular circumstance will be examined in more detail in the case study on Doc/Fest in Chapter Six.

4.6 Conclusion

The first of the case studies addressed, Glasgow Film Festival, presents an interesting perspective on how the UK's film festival environment is broadening and developing. In just over a decade since it was first established, GFF has assumed the position of third place in the overall UK film festival hierarchy. This chapter has argued that GFF's rapid development to become the third-largest film festival in the UK is indelibly linked to Glasgow City's adoption of culture-led regeneration that has helped to revive its former flagging city image in the postindustrial era. The festival's ongoing sustainability can be attributed to the security offered by being part of a stalwart cultural institution in Glasgow, the GFT, which actively draws on the city's legacy of being known locally as a cinema city.

When reviewing GFF's historical trajectory a key theme that emerges almost immediately is the primary difficulty encountered by newer and smaller festivals beyond the international circuit. The need to establish a distinct identity in the competitive film festival environment is of paramount importance and this challenge is one that quickly becomes apparent in all three cases within this thesis.

In spite of the recent development of its industry-focused activities, GFF broadly identifies as an audience festival. It was initially established as an audience development strategy for GFT and its key purpose continues to be to grow and broaden the audience as well as helping to overcome perceptions of the institution as an exclusive high-brow cultural entity. Already in this chapter, one of the defining tropes that characterises postindustrial city film festivals starts to emerge. This relates to accessibility. All three festivals position accessibility as a defining objective. This is apparent through a stated commitment by all of them to being non-exclusive, non-VIP or non-red-carpet festivals. While in practice this isn't always the case at all of the festivals under review, GFF's core values and practices uphold this objective. In fact, GFF describes itself as being "an access-all-areas Festival where you can meet the filmmakers, challenge the programmers and make friends with the person sitting next to you. Everyone is a VIP."[87]

Accessibility is also a defining characteristic of GFF's programming policy under the auspice of the organisation's mission promoted under the cinema for all banner. The festival's programming practices are formulated around a central curatorial tenet of programming without prejudice. This is apparent through GFF's broad and inclusive curatorial approach. One example of this is the festival's annual presentation of the stand-alone programme, FrightFest. Alternatively, the festival has offered an incubatory space for smaller festivals to develop their own identities and audiences such as Glasgow Short Film Festival or Glasgow Youth Film Festival. These have gone on to become standalone festivals in their own right that enrich Glasgow's cultural milieu and further contribute to the festivalisation of the city.

There is no denying that GFF has established its popular appeal through its audience figures. Nevertheless, in spite of its increasing popularity, the festival still faces significant challenges in securing talent and premiere-status films. This factor alone defines it as having a different status and role to the UK's key international film festivals, LFF and EIFF. In turn, this points to a second important theme established by this study. In the face of this challenge it has become contingent on film festivals located in

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[87] Glasgow Film, *Glasgow Film Festival Brochure 2014,* 1.

postindustrial cities to develop alternative programming practices and tactics. This has given rise to the increased use of novel cinema practices such as live cinema events that have become a defining curatorial trope of GFF. The popularity and centrality of this strand exemplifies GFF's adoption of the experience economy as an important factor in constituting the festival and by extension its contribution to the festivalisation of Glasgow.

The increasing importance of live cinema within the festival's curatorial approach is designated by its shift from small makeshift events at the periphery of the programme to headlining it. Nowadays GFF's complex large-scale performative affairs in the mode of Secret Cinema can be considered integral to the festival's programming DNA and a key identifier for the festival. The example of GFF transporting nine busloads of the audience to a secret site-specific screening of *The Lost Boys* at a funfair on the outskirts of Glasgow in 2017 denotes its full-scale adoption of the experience economy.

In 2019 the festival demonstrated that the popular appeal of this strategy continues to increase unabated by presenting a twentieth anniversary screening of *The Matrix* on two consecutive nights in the subterranean caverns underneath Glasgow Central Station. The predominance of alternative non-theatrical viewing practices as an increasingly important factor of the festival experience more widely indicates the emergence of new forms of cinephilia beyond the traditional cinema setting. However, the ongoing popularity of GFFs themed experiential screenings has not necessarily converted into new audiences for either the festival, or indeed for GFT, a stated objective for implementing the festival in the first place.

In relation to city image, I have proposed that GFF's ongoing focus on the audience as a defining characteristic of what makes the festival unique upholds the city's own marketing strategy narrative, People Make Glasgow. Undeniably, Glasgow's rebrand and continued place marketing is a key factor in the city's successful regeneration. One of the city's main selling points is the notion that Glasgow's populace is special and unique in some way. They are characterised by being a down-to-earth yet vocal cohort. This is reflected in the festival's communications that have also made a virtue of the

audience's enthusiasm and support for the festival. In this way GFF repositions the Glasgow audience as a key asset and interacts with the city's saleability as a cultural tourism destination.

Chapter Five: Flatpack Festival: Film, and then some

Key Facts

- Established in 2006.

- Takes place annually over the May Bank Holiday weekend and lasts for six days.

- 2019 admissions figures – circa 21,000 during the festival. A further 10,000 reached through outreach activities.

- Takes place all over Birmingham city using a large percentage of non-cinema and pop-up venues instead of cinemas.

- Overall budget is approximately £150k.

- Programme consists of an eclectic mix of features, shorts, animation, live performance, multimedia and site-specific events.

- Primary public funding is awarded from Arts Council England (ACE) and the BFI. There is currently no direct funding from Birmingham City Council.

- Festival Director and Founder is Ian Francis.

- Prices range from £5-£10 for children's events, shorts programmes, features and workshops. Bespoke special events are priced individually depending on live elements.

- Flatpack Film Festival trades as part of Flatpack Projects. It is registered as a charitable incorporated organisation with the Charity Commission for England and Wales.

5.1 Introduction

Figure 5.1. Site-Specific Screening of *Kill Bill Vol 1* at Huan Gate in Birmingham's Chinatown, 2016. Source: https://flatpackfestival.org.uk/news/misty-frequently-water-coloured-memories.

The second case study presents an analysis of the Flatpack Festival (Flatpack) located in Birmingham. Situated in the UK's second city, Flatpack has come to embody a specific representation of its home city that I propose is directly attributable to Birmingham's unique physical and cultural environment as a postindustrial city. This case provides a significant example of how the cultural phenomena of city and film festival are intrinsically linked to each other. This account examines how Flatpack responds to and presents the city's past and present in a singular way through innovative niche programming choices, use of physical space and dedication to *Birmingham,* the place*.*

I argue that Flatpack uses Birmingham's specific postindustrial milieu as an essential curatorial imperative and framing device for the festival's programming strategy that can be considered unique to its environment. This case questions how certain constraints presented by the city's physical environment inform and constitute Flatpack's exhibition practices from a programming and spatial perspective. The chapter specifically considers Flatpack's programming practices by employing Yi-Fu Tuan's concept of

topophilia, that posits "the affective bond between people and place or setting."[1] This perspective resonates powerfully with Harbord's previously cited assertion that festival and place are inseparable.

The study proposes that Flatpack presents an optimal model for the postindustrial city. It acts as an agile cultural agent; part researcher, part archivist and part curator that bears witness to the city's shifting image and urban landscape through its programming and exhibition practices. In this sense the festival observes, interprets and records the changing city through the lens of its curatorial practices. I argue that Flatpack's approach to programming as witness and interpreter of the city offers an alternative to that of usual practices exhibited on the international film festival circuit. The festival's programming practices provide a lens through which to view the on-going changes taking place within the city and offers a record of the city's relentless transformation that might otherwise go unrecorded or captured.

The role of witness is an important one in Flatpack's case. Historically the role of the witness is that of the observer. However, it's important to note that the role of witness is not necessarily a passive one. Often it is the witness that ratifies or sanctions an action or activity and therefore its role is to actively represent, remember or render an event. Because of this the witness' role is a performative one that inevitably shapes and influences historical narratives.

The notion of the witness refers to someone who has a lived through or experienced something from beginning to end and therefore bears witness to it. Those in the arts, such as writers, artists, photographers and filmmakers play a crucial role in creating representing historical, social or political events. In a sense their creative stance allows them to stand outside of the event itself and act as a third party observer or spectator. Arguably all festivals act as witnesses through the curatorial choices that they make about what films they show and how these reflect the contemporary moment. However,

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[1] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perceptions, Attitudes and Values* (New York, Chichester and West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 1974), 4.

Flatpack's ouvert stance to capturing Birmingham's fleeting and transitional nature puts it in a unique position.

Buiding on the idea that Flatpack not only observes the city but also contributes to the it's narrative the chapter considers how the festival interacts with the Birmingham's image. This interaction happens both inadvertently and deliberately, sometimes aligning with it and sometimes countering it but always in dialogue with it. One of the aims of the enquiry is to trace and analyse the conditions of how Flatpack operates in relation to its host city, Birmingham, and where applicable, the wider West Midlands region. The study follows the trajectory of the festival since its beginning assess and focus on perceived patterns, trends and decisions from the festival's inception to maturation. It will question the purpose of the festival as a mutable entity and how this affects programming strategy.

Again, in this case study there is a primary focus on the two editions of the festival where participant observation took place, 2016 and 2017, although the entirety of the festival's history is considered. The research is also augmented by two key interviews that were carried out with:

Interviewee	Position	Date of interview
Ian Francis	Founder and Director *(2006-current)*	06/12/17
Sam Groves	Programmer *(2008-current)*	06/01/18

Figure 5.2. Source: researchers own.

Figure 5.3. Ian Francis, founder and festival director and Sam Groves, programmer.
Source: https://flatpackfestival.org.uk/about-flatpack.

These two personnel have primary responsibility for the delivery of the festival's creative vision. The investigation is also informed by the festival's own documentation and communications, media responses to the festival and strategic city planning documentation.

GFF and Flatpack present as two very different festivals at first sight. However, in spite of their widely differing first impressions, the two festivals have a considerable amount in common. This case study builds on the last so that it can identify and formulate an understanding of characteristics common to both in relation to their postindustrial context.

5.1.1 Flatpack Background

Flatpack was first founded by partners Ian Francis and Pip McKnight in 2006 as a direct result and extension of a series of short film nights organised by the pair that ran from 2003 to 2008 entitled, *7 Inch Cinema*.[2] At the time, Birmingham's cinema culture was largely dominated by multiplex cinemas and there was only limited access to independent or cultural film. This is unfortunately still largely the case today with Birmingham city centre's current exhibition sector consisting of thirty-eight screens

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[2] McKnight is no longer professionally involved with organising the festival. She left in 2009 to pursue an alternative career path.

across five cinema sites with just six of these screens categorised as being independent cinema. The pair instigated the film night to fill a significant gap in the city's cultural scene by creating a discursive context for engaging with film viewing. The film night revolved around screening a programme of shorts and animation. The mode of presentation was augmented by extra-textual elements such as DJ sets and filmmaker talks that were implemented to provoke conversation and create social interaction.
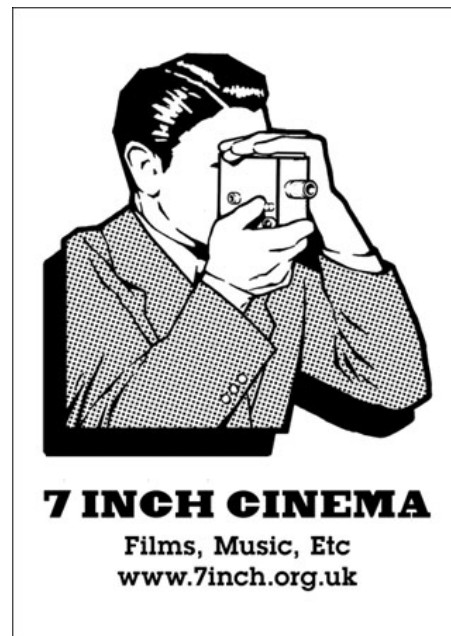
Figure 5.4. 7 Inch Cinema logo.
Source: https://flatpackfestival.org.uk/news/catherine-oflynn-on-7inch.

Both organisers came from the local film exhibition background, which made them heavily invested in the project. Originally hailing from close by in Shropshire, and after graduating from literature and film studies at Warwick University, Francis had worked with the Birmingham Film and Television Festival (defunct since 2002). This is where he says that "he caught the event bug."[3] On the other hand, McKnight, who is no longer involved on a professional basis, had been a projectionist at the Odeon Cinemas.

Francis describes his experience of cinemagoing at the time of 7 Inch Cinema's inception as "quite a solitary pursuit, where you would just go to a fleapit cinema with

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[3] Ian Francis, interview by author, Birmingham, 6 December 2016.

three other blokes and watch a film a bit out of focus."[4] Importantly, the film night was founded in the wake of the demise of the Birmingham Film and Television Festival, which left a gap in the city's cultural scene. It also used a portable cinema kit from the discontinued festival as the basis of its key exhibition practice. The flexible and mobile screening principles employed at 7 Inch would later become a defining part of Flatpack's programming DNA. They also provide an apt illustration of the "politics of participation" proposed by de Valck in her taxonomy of professional programming practices.[5] 7 Inch represented the first step towards creating a richer filmviewing experience that was completely missing in Birmingham's cinematic landscape, albeit outside of a traditional exhibition site.

Figure 5.5. Garbage Whirl (an immersive life-size zoetrope), Flatpack 2015.
Source: https://flatpackfestival.org.uk/event/the-amusement-park-2.

While the film night would go on to transform into an expanded festival format when Flatpack was established the centralising do-it-yourself attitude that defined 7 Inch would remain the same. In their investigation into alternative forms of cinema projection, Charlotte Brunsdon and Richard Wallace suggest that rather than considering Flatpack's "lo-fi" exhibition practices as a limitation, the festival created the conditions

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Marijke de Valck, "Finding Audiences for Films. Programming in Historical Perspectives," in *Coming to a Festival Near You: Programming Film Festivals,* ed. Jeffrey Ruoff (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2012), 30.

for a new form of cinephilia.[6] The pair argue that the festival "has pioneered exhibition strategies which, in the context of an emerging hybrid, multi-screen, twenty-first century audio-visual culture, now seem prescient."[7]

Flatpack has been described as "wilfully eclectic" and "one of the most idiosyncratic film events in the UK."[8] Indeed the very first Flatpack unabashedly declared its departure from more traditional film festival formats through the use of the strapline "film, and then some."[9] The strapline is still in use today and proves equally applicable as a way of summarising the festival's idiosyncratic nature. As the introduction to the premier festival programme explains:

> We've had a job explaining what this festival is, even to ourselves at
> times. You could write a long list of ingredients (shorts, animation,
> documentaries, live events, etc.) or use zappy words like 'cutting
> edge' and 'experimental' or just define it by what it isn't: a film
> festival that shows everything except features. But it always ends up
> sounding a bit lame or obscure, when there's actually a fair bit of fun
> to be had at this festival. So we're making do with a cryptic four-
> word strapline and this booklet full of verbiage and nice pictures that
> you hold in your hand today.[10]

The playful tone of Flatpack's declaration is one that still reverberates today as the festival continues to transform programmatically and physically each year in response to spatial changes in the city. In its contemporary format the festival now, in fact, presents a selection of feature films although this still remains a small component of the overall programme. Animation, shorts, exhibitions and live audio-visual events continue

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[6] Charlotte Brunsdon and Richard Wallace, "A Cinema without Walls: An Interview with Ian Francis, Director of the Flatpack Film Festival," *Journal of British Cinema and Television (Special Edition)* 15, no. 1, ed. Charlotte Brunsdon, Jon Burrows and Richard Wallace (January 2018): 131.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Steve Rose, "Food For Real, Human Rights Watch Film Festival: this week's new film events," *The Guardian*, last modified 14 March 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/mar/14/this-weeks-new-film-events; Virginie Sélavy, "Birmingham Freezes Over: Flatpack 2013,*" Sight and Sound,* last modified 12 June 2015, http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/comment/festivals/flatpack-2013.

[9] Flatpack Festival, *Flatpack Film Festival Brochure 2006* (Birmingham, 2006) 4.

[10] Ibid., 3.

to be the main focus along with a range of TV, documentary, walks, talks, AV sets and parties. Since Flatpack was established it has grown from recording just under 2000 attendees during its first three-day festival to circa 21,000 in 2018 when it reached its twelfth edition. The festival also reached a further 10,000 people through its out-of-festival outreach work as a lead organisation of Film Hub Midlands.[11]

Figure 5.6. Flatpack Volunteers.
Source: https://flatpackfestival.org.uk/tags/volunteers.

Both the festival and Flatpack's activities on behalf of Film Hub Midland are run as initiatives of parent organisation, Flatpack Projects. This is set up as a not-for-profit charitable trust that is governed by a board of seven trustees who meet on a quarterly basis (for full details on company registration and governance see Appendix D). The festival operates with a small team of permanent staff on a year-round basis. Roles include festival director, programmer, shorts programmer, operations manager, development and marketing manager and young person's co-ordinator. This is augmented by approximately eight to ten freelance workers and two paid interns that are employed for the festival period and on ad hoc projects throughout the year. In addition, Flatpack recruits approximately one hundred volunteers to support the festival's delivery.

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[11] Film Hub Midlands is an audience development agency that is part of the Film Audience Network (FAN) funded by the BFI. Film Hub Midlands region encompasses Derbyshire, Birmingham, Herefordshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Rutland, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire.

In the intervening years since Flatpack's zappy introduction the festival has refined its overall ethos into five core values. The festival outlines these as:

1) To show amazing work

Flatpack Festival has developed a national and increasingly international reputation for the quality and variety of its programme – in particular by exploring the fertile areas where film meets other art forms.

2) To bring people together

Streaming and social media do not mean the death of the communal experience. By building an inclusive context for adventurous work, we create opportunities for connection and conversation.

3) To develop skills

Whether offering an early step in an arts career, mentoring young curators or giving school kids the chance to make their first flipbook, we work to foster creativity and problem-solving.

4) To nurture new ideas

From the start we've acted as an incubator for projects and a launchpad for artists, and increased stability means we can now play this role in a more structured and strategic way.

5) To illuminate place

Flatpack acts as a beacon for Birmingham's independent creative scene, attracting thousands from outside the city every year. We also support partners across the region by coordinating Film Hub Midlands, while our heritage activity draws out connections between the stories of the past and the world we live in today.[12]

Flatpack's objectives demonstrate a considerable shift from its ad hoc beginnings to its current institutional stability. However, its mobile exhibition practices still remain fundamental to delivering all of its activities. As with GFF the objective to create

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[12] Flatpack Festival, *2017/2018 Annual Report* (Birmingham, 2018), 5, https://res.cloudinary.com/flatpack/image/upload/v1565108447/annual_report_revised_1_ub5yhj.pdf.

accessibility is core to Flatpack's central ethos. The festival's objective to bring people together is all the more important for being situated in Birmingham. The UK's second city is notable for its multicultural ethnic diversity that is expected to gain plural city status, where no ethnicity forms a majority, by 2024. The city's population of just over one million is made up a cross section of White (55% including Irish), Asian / British Asian (23%), Black / Black British (7%) and other ethnicities (15%).[13]

While Flatpack doesn't overtly state its commitment to regeneration in its vision in the same way that Glasgow Film does, its objective to "act as a beacon" can be considered a comparable ambition. Flatpack's ticket prices are just slightly cheaper than GFF's with the standard ticket price averaging at £10 although workshops and children's events tend to be priced more cheaply than this at approximately £6. Alternatively, the festival offers a season pass to gives access across the board for £85. However, only five tickets can be booked in advance using this and all other tickets are offered on a first-come-first-served basis, which makes it a risky prospect to purchase.

In spite of Flatpack's significant contribution to the festivalisation of Birmingham, and in contrast to GFF and Doc/Fest, the organisation does not receive direct funding for the festival from the city. In fact Flatpack's primary cultural public funder is Arts Council England (ACE). As a direct result of austerity measures employed in the city Birmingham City Council (BCC) discontinued direct funding provision to the festival in 2016. While BCC had previously only provided minimal financial support of £5000 annually the city's funding contribution was a prime endorsement for Flatpack's importance as part of Birmingham's cultural offering. Indeed in its first year the festival was mounted with equal £5000 contributions from BCC, BFI and ACE. However, the introduction of austerity measures forced Birmingham to cease funding to many smaller festivals and arts organisations. The specific effect of this on the city's urban regeneration strategies is discussed further on page 153.

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[13] Birmingham City Council, *2011 Census: Key Statistics for Birmingham and its constituent areas* (Birmingham, December 2012), https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/4576/census_2011_ks201_ethnic_groupspdf.

Income for Flatpack 2017 was loosely broken down as follows:

Amount:	Source:
£68,000	ACE
£30,000	BFI
£32,000	Earned income including ticket sales, submissions and advertising
£20,000	Sponsorship (corporate / cultural)

Figure 5.7. Source: researcher's own.

5.1.2 Case Study Structure

The following case study is divided into four separate sections. By way of introduction the chapter commences with a brief discussion of Birmingham's transition from industrial powerhouse to re-imaged postindustrial city. The effect that this dramatic urban transformation has had is outlined and considered in relation to the trend of city transformation in the postindustrial era as exemplified by the Bilbao effect. The chapter proposes that in the face of ongoing transformation that the perception of Birmingham as a city in transition has resulted in an identity crisis that has de-stabilised its image. This consideration of the city is provided to create a context for the cultural landscape that Flatpack operates within and the forces that shape it.

As with the previous case study the following section addresses the festival's definitional context. It opens up a discussion around Flatpack's identity and how it defines itself in contrast to the traditional film festival format. The section provides a brief overview of how Flatpack came into being that explains the festival's approach to exhibition practices that can be described as embracing a DIY or do-it-yourself attitude. A definition of the festival that places it more realistically under the broader remit of media or boutique festival will be presented and the role of film as a centralising programming thread will be established. Flatpack's branding and visual identity also plays a key role in defining the relationship between the city and festival. I go on to discuss the how Flatpack's 2017 visual branding strategy contributes to positioning Birmingham as a creative city through its construction and use of an alternative cityscape.

In the next section, Programming: Catalyst Versus Constraint, consideration of the festival's curatorial imperatives and exhibition strategies is approached. Firstly, the constraints of Birmingham's limited exhibition landscape are considered in relation to how this affects Flatpack's programming strategy and why the festival has assumed a mobile and portable format. Secondly, Yi-Fu Tuan's concept of topophilia is employed to explore Flatpack's programming tendency for utilising Birmingham, the place, as the inspiration or bedrock of the festival's curatorial strategy.[14] These interrelated aspects of Flatpack's programming strategy reveal a unique affective bond between festival and city that sets it apart from its counterparts within this study.

This section goes on to discuss Flatpack's transition from a grassroots festival to its recent role as a newly institutionalised audience development agency for the West Midlands. Flatpack's new role engages with the BFI's strategy for the decategorisation of film into the broader remit of screen culture. I propose that Flatpack's portable and mobile approach to date has provided it with the exhibition freedom to engage with younger audiences utilising alternative methods that promote new modes of cinephilia in line with the BFI's most recent definition of film. The additional institutional stability that has been provided by this new development into an organisation with year-round activity marks a significant shift in the festival's ongoing sustainability. It also provides an interesting comparison with GFF's institutional status.

The final section of the chapter takes a closer look at the material use of space given the festival's mobile modus operandi. It considers how this impacts Flatpack's ongoing transformation by offering two examples of how space is deployed in response to illuminating the city's cinematic legacy and the physical constraints of the city.

5.2 Birmingham: A City in Transition

In the introduction to his 2004 book, *Remaking Birmingham: The Visual Culture of Urban Regeneration*, Liam Kennedy proposes Birmingham's ongoing thirst for physical re-invention as the defining factor that makes it unique. Kennedy argues that in the

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[14] Tuan, *Topophilia,* 4.

post-war period no other British city embraced redevelopment with as much zeal as Birmingham did. He describes it, "as a city that embraced utopian visions of modernist planning."[15] For Birmingham, the nineteenth, twentieth and, thus far, twenty-first century has witnessed dramatic ongoing transformations in trade, industry, economy, and urban landscape. This is so apparent that the trademark perception of Birmingham has become that of a city in transition. Since the late 1980s, the volume and rapidity of urban transformation has reached incomparable levels to that of any other British city. In the latest of a series of multimillion-pound redevelopment initiatives Birmingham's "Big City Plan" is in the process of drastically transforming the city centre yet again over the next twenty years.[16]

Figure 5.8. Selfridges Department Store and St Martin in the Bull Ring – Birmingham's City Centre. Source: https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2019/10/visitor-numbers-soar-in-birmingham-says-City-redi-report.aspx.

In spite of tremendous and continual investment over the past thirty-five years into both spectacular urban transformation and aggressive place marketing strategies the question of Birmingham's image still faces a considerable challenge. Arguably some progress has been made in resituating Birmingham's depressed gritty urban reputation in recent years, but progress is slow. An important factor that is frequently cited as

[15] Liam Kennedy, *Remaking Birmingham: The Visual Culture of Urban Regeneration* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), 1.

[16] Birmingham City Council, *Big City Plan: City Centre Master Plan, Birmingham* (Birmingham: Birmingham City Council - Development Directorate, 2011), https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/214/big_city_plan.

contributing to the city's unassertive identify is the notion of a particular type of modest attitude that has come to typify Birmingham. Tony Naylor refers to this in his *Alternative Guide to Birmingham* as a modesty that has become a "self fulfilling prophecy."[17] Marketing Birmingham, the city's former investment and economic development agency, describes it as being a "city with a self effacing and down-to-earth charm – never boastful, never arrogant" that can be attributed to its working-class background.[18]

Figure 5.9. Spaghetti Junction, Birmingham's infamous network of motorway.
Source: https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/gallery/spaghetti-junction-8819061.

However, there has been a progressive shift in perception helped by the city receiving a number of quality of life and tourism accolades. These include the city being ranked top UK regional city for having the most attractive quality of life for three years in a row (a position that Birmingham held jointly with Glasgow in 2017).[19] The city was also listed as the ninth best in the world to visit in popular travel guide, Rough Guides, in 2015.[20] Birmingham's own official messaging is also working towards shaping a new perception

[17] Tom Naylor, "Alt city guide to Birmingham," *The Guardian,* last modified 6 November 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2016/nov/22/alt-city-guide-birmingham-uk-art-music-food-drink.

[18] "The Birmingham Story," Marketing Birmingham, accessed 10 January 2017, http://birminghamtoolkit.com/the-birmingham-story.

[19] "Vienna Tops Latest Quality of Living Rankings," Mercer, last modified 4 March 2015, https://www.uk.mercer.com/newsroom/2015-quality-of-living-survey.html.

[20] "Top 10 Cities," Rough Guides, accessed 15 January 2017, https://www.roughguides.com/best-places/2015/top-10-cities/.

of the city. It describes the city as being "the UK's most energetic city."[21] It also notes that the city's population of 1.1 million is one of the most youthful and diverse in Western Europe. Birmingham's population comprises of British, West Indians, Irish, Indians, Pakistanis and Eastern Europeans with over 37 percent aged under twenty-five years old. Yet in spite of this Birmingham continues to suffer from an identity crisis and perceptions of the city are still more closely aligned with its former image as a "motor city" than the competitive international city that it strives to be.

Naylor also goes on to suggest that Birmingham "does not have an identifiable cultural DNA."[22] This makes it an elusive prospect from a promotional and cultural tourism perspective. Unlike other postindustrial cities in the UK that have all successfully traded on their associations with music and nightlife, such as Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow, Birmingham is still perceived as being faintly un-cool in the city stakes. A description of Birmingham's cultural landscape on Marketing Birmingham's website presents an eclectic list of claims to fame including: the city hosts over fifty festivals per annum, is home to the UK's oldest working cinema, is the birthplace of Heavy Metal music and houses the world's largest Pre-Raphaelite collection.[23] Birmingham's checklist of cultural assets makes it difficult to discern a unique characteristic that can be related to the city's overall cultural agenda.

5.2.1 Birmingham, 2031

Urban studies scholar, Phil Hubbard, proposes that as a former powerhouse of the UK's industrial revolution that Birmingham has faced a very specific challenge in contrast to other British cities affected by the changing fortunes of the postindustrial era.[24] The changes wrought by the transition from industrial to postindustrial era will be briefly outlined to help offer some insight into the city's contemporary situation.

Birmingham can be considered largely as one of the first manufacturing towns in the

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21 "The Birmingham Story," Marketing Birmingham.

22 Tom Naylor, "Alt city guide to Birmingham."

23 "The Birmingham Story," Marketing Birmingham.

24 Phil Hubbard, "Re-imaging the City: The Transformation of Birmingham's Urban Landscape," *Geography* 81, no.1 (1996): 29.

world. The height of the city's prosperity dated from the mid-eighteenth century to the early twentieth century and was predicated on the production of high-value metal items that required a highly skilled and innovative workforce. During this time the city carved out a niche in the metalwork industries forging a global reputation as the "workshop of the world."[25] In the first half of the twentieth century, Birmingham continued to trade on its expertise with metal goods and evolved to become the core manufacturing base for heavy-duty metal goods such as ammunitions, aircrafts and the motor trade.

During the post-war period until the late 1960s, Birmingham experienced a significant boom exemplified by the average household income being thirteen percent higher than that of any other region in the country. The city reaped the benefit of its economic success and underwent change on an unprecedented level with a massive growth in the tertiary sector augmenting the other industries. Unlike Glasgow, Birmingham's decline was initially prompted by political intervention. One of the key stumbling blocks for Birmingham's continued success came from the UK's Labour Government which, amid fears that the region's population and employment were growing too rapidly, enforced restrictions to stop new industry being established.

The imposed constraints resulted in a definitive halt for Birmingham's thriving economy. The region had previously thrived because of its innovative spirit and ability to adapt but its resilience was now thwarted because of its over-specialisation and inflexibility. Hubbard contends that in hindsight Birmingham's industrial specialism left the city completely vulnerable when global economic changes were wrought, and the manufacturing bases were no longer needed. The 1970s saw an extended period of recession that hit the region dramatically resulting in businesses and factories closing and causing high levels of unemployment. Along with this, the region's previously robust status plummeted, and it began to be perceived as a city in crisis. Increasing social unrest as exemplified through events such as the Birmingham Pub Bombings in the 1970s. The subsequent Handsworth Riots in the mid-1980s also contributed to the creation of poor reputation similar to Glasgow's. Again, a major investment into urban regeneration and re-imaging was called for to re-invent the city for a new era.

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[25] Ibid.

Figure 5.10. Birmingham Pub Bombing, 1974.
Source: http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/36427068/what-happened-at-the-birmingham-pub-bombing-in-1974.

In Birmingham's case this has resulted in exponential investment into a dramatic and costly physical transformation of the city. Phil Hubbard argues that Birmingham can be viewed as a "textbook case of the way traditional urban geographies are being rapidly restructured and repackaged" in the face of de-industrialisation and increasing city competition.[26] However, I propose that Birmingham has in fact gone much further than most other cities in the UK by almost entirely re-inventing its urban geography. For many postindustrial cities, Glasgow and Sheffield included, design-led architectural intervention acts as an enhancement to the city rather than an overhaul. In contrast, vast parts of Birmingham bear no resemblance to how they looked twenty years ago.

The first phase of Birmingham's transformation came about in 1987 as a result of the Highbury Initiative, a meeting of international architects, planners and urbanists whose aim was to establish a vision for the city. The predominant finding from the group was that the city had no clear visual identity. This conclusion initiated a major redevelopment and revision of Birmingham's city centre with an emphasis on highly visible and iconic architectural prestige projects funded by a public-private partnership. Its reasoning was firmly focused on regenerating the city centre's vast areas of dangerous and unsightly wasteland in the hope of attracting commercial and business tourism to the city. The

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[26] Ibid.

building of multimillion-pound developments such as the National Indoor Arena and International Convention Centre in the 1990s marked the first phase of development.

This was shortly followed by the ambitious £1.5 billion redevelopment of Birmingham's city centre area. This early phase of redevelopment was designed to reduce the impact of the car on the city centre in a scheme designed to give the city back to citizens. The initiative literally obliterated a large segment of the city centre. It completely levelled the majority of the city's more dangerous and grimy pedestrian subways. Along with this it removed part of the city's famous elevated ring road known as the "choke collar" that had previously formed a stranglehold on the city centre. The city's core commercial and retail centre was transformed into a shopping mecca.

Most recently the city's urban transformation strategy has fallen under the auspices of the utopian Big City Plan. This strategy has been developed by Birmingham City Council's Development Directorate. As the name suggests this is a city plan with an aspirational vision to position Birmingham as a competitive international city. The City Council describes it as "the most ambitious, far-reaching development project ever undertaken in the UK."[27] The plan proposes to build on Birmingham's previous urban regeneration. Its strategy revolves around a central master plan to continue to redevelop the city centre into a spectacular cityscape emblematic of the postindustrial era set to be complete in 2031.

The plan's stated mission is to deliver "transformational change in our city centre by supporting sustainable growth, creating new and improved public spaces, giving our streets back to pedestrians and bringing the cultural life of Birmingham to the heart of the city."[28] It is formulated around six broad key objectives that will create a "liveable, connected, authentic, knowledge, creative and smart city."[29] The plan proposes to achieve these objectives through a strategy of urban regeneration, which focuses on creating physical and iconic transformation that situates retail and leisure consumption

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[27] Birmingham City Council, *The Big City Plan Work in Progress Report* (Birmingham: Birmingham City Council Development Directorate), 2008.

[28] Birmingham City Council, *Birmingham Big City Plan: City Centre Masterplan* (Birmingham, 2011), 3, last accessed, 21 March 2018, https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/214/big_city_plan.

[29] Ibid., 10.

at its core. Culture as part of the city's regeneration is only referenced in passing in spite of the plan's stated objective to be a creative city. Evidence of the city's irrevocable transformation is already highly visible through the recent completion of prestige and iconic architectural developments. Two examples include the Library of Birmingham, now one of the largest public libraries in Europe costing £188 million to complete and the £750 million transformation of Birmingham's iconic New Street station and Bull Ring Shopping Centre into a glittering transport and retail hub, Bull Ring and Grand Central.

Birmingham's city centre regeneration draws directly on Bilbao's successful redevelopment strategy providing a salient example of the Bilbao effect in action. However, there is one major and concerning difference between the strategies of these two cities. Bilbao's urban regeneration is predicated on using culture as the driver of its urban regeneration strategy whereas Birmingham's revolves around retail and leisure consumption. This strategic divergence is a key differentiator when considering if Birmingham can truly claim to be creative city.

Added to this, Birmingham's public spending has also been severely affected by austerity measures in the post-recession era. BCC has been forced to reduce outlay by £650 million since 2010. This has resulted in a direct effect on arts and culture that has meant that all funding to smaller festivals in the city has ceased. BCC now only provides direct subsidy to Birmingham's two flagship festivals, Birmingham Dance Festival and the popular citywide outdoor performance, art and entertainment event, Weekender. Birmingham's cultural stalwart institutions City of Birmingham Symphony and Birmingham Rep also suffered from cuts of twenty-five percent and sixty-two percent respectively in 2016. The reduction or complete withdrawal of funding is particularly challenging for the cultural sector given that the city's positioning relies on being seen as a progressive creative city. In addition, the minimisation of culture's strategic importance has a specific impact on the city's creative industries infrastructure, and specifically on Flatpack with the loss of its direct city funding in 2016.

Figure 5.11. Birmingham's New Street Railway Station and Grand Central.
Source: https://www.networkrailmediacentre.co.uk/resources/ap-4061.

Alongside this and with still approximately fifteen years left on the redevelopment schedule, Birmingham's urban transformation is far from being complete. Significant tracts of land still bear the hallmark of industrial wasteland and therefore it is not surprising to see why there might be some confusion about Birmingham's identity. So-called cultural quarters that were proposed as part of the early phase of redevelopment such as Digbeth and the Jewellery Quarter are only partially developed. These partly realised plans have caused a vast disparity between Birmingham's ambitious vision of the future and its current reality.

Nevertheless the narrative of Birmingham's ongoing transition is itself a part of the city's history and identity, although this is invariably an aspect of the city's strategy that tends to go undiscussed. To date one of the key ways that Flatpack has proved to be culturally relevant has been its ability to interact and even celebrate some of these forgotten, unspoken about or interstitial parts of the city. While the festival's material modus operandi can primarily be attributed to funding limitations and the specific exigencies of the city's exhibition landscape it also provides a direct comment on the city's ongoing transformation.

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5.3 Definitional Context – An Alternative Ethos

In the introduction to Flatpack's Almanac, a festival-produced publication that charts the festival's history and development, author, Catherine O'Flynn, describes her experience of returning to Birmingham and rediscovering her home city through the lens of the Flatpack experience:

> I'd returned to Birmingham because I had a perverse hankering for a certain type of mediocrity, for empty Sunday afternoons, for anonymous A-road carveries and mosaic lined underpasses. It was a little disorienting then to find so much stuff going on that somehow picked up on that plangent Betaville tone and turned it into something beautiful or exciting.[30]

O'Flynn's description links her new understanding of the city to her experience of the festival, situating them as integrally bound together. The author's description also illustrates the significant mark that the festival has made on the city and the importance of the role it plays in both enlivening and understanding Birmingham in its current format.

5.3.1 The DIY Approach

An understanding of Flatpack's underlying ethos can almost immediately be derived from its idiosyncratic and deliberate use of a descriptive rather than place-related title. The name "Flatpack" was particularly chosen to represent the festival's flexible and versatile screening practices that resonate with its makeshift beginnings at 7 Inch Cinema.[31] Brought into common use by the Scandinavian furniture company Ikea the term flatpack comes with a particular set of connotations associated with DIY or do-it-yourself practices. The term flatpack is usually associated with certain characteristics such as easy assembly, ability to be dismantled and transported with ease, highly customisable and tends to denote a cheaper option than made-to-measure items.

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[30] Catherine O'Flynn, "Introduction," 7 *Inch Cinema and Flatpack Festival: 2003-2013 Almanac* (Birmingham: Flatpack Festival, 2013), 2.

[31] Francis, interview.

Largely these characteristics circumvent the need for specialist or expert intervention and are supposed to offer an alternative that can be built by anyone. This 'everyman' approach immediately connects with the festival's objective to be adaptable to space, customisable to circumstance and cheaper than being tied to the constraints of cinematic exhibition. It's important to note here that while this approach has been developed to overcome the constraints of Birmingham's limited exhibition offering it also aids the festival's objective to be accessible by disrupts the formal cinema setting of most film festivals.

Furthermore Flatpack's name provides the first indication that the festival may have an alternative relationship with its host location to that of other film festivals. Can-Seng Ooi and Jesper Strandgaard Pederson propose that film festivals often assume a city-branding role by becoming part of the city's brand story.[32] One of the most pronounced or obvious ways that this happens is by the festival assuming the city's name in its title. The resulting linkage creates an indistinguishable association between festival and city. This association is also noted by de Valck. She asserts:

> The physical location of the festival is very important for the festival's image of cultural difference and it is used in festival marketing strategies to compete with other film festivals. Location, the element most central to a festival's image is usually reflected in the name. By and large, festivals are named after the city where they take place.[33]

In this way film festivals align themselves closely with their host location. By doing this, festivals create a recognisable framework through which they are encountered and interpreted that is informed by the perception of the place where they are located. For example, Cannes International Film Festival, Venice Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival, London Film Festival and so on, which immediately conjure up specific festival and city images.

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[32] Can-Seng Ooi and Jesper Strandgaard Pedersen, "City Branding and Film Festivals: Re-evaluating Stakeholders Relations," *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy,* 6 (2010): 316, http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/pb.2010.30.

[33] Marijke de Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 137.

Julian Stringer also asserts that in the contemporary global era most festivals refer to the "big festivals as models so as to bring the world to the city in question, while simultaneously spreading the reputation of the city in question around the world."[34] If this is true, then Flatpack's choice of a name that doesn't immediately connote or promote its physical location raises a conundrum. Flatpack's apparent misnomer seems determinedly unconcerned with the auspices of city branding strategies and runs counter to Stringer's assertion altogether. In contrast, Flatpack seems to sidestep this tack by instead using a name that represents the spirit of the festival rather than by evoking a perception of place. If anything, Flatpack's name seems to be a deliberate ploy to disassociate itself from perceptions attached to Birmingham's former lack-lustre city image. However, in spite of its intangible name, out of the three festivals examined, Flatpack is arguably the most closely aligned with or shaped by the city where it is located.

As well as placing a premium on novelty, global competition has created a forcible need for film festivals to conceptualise themselves within the film festivalscape. In Flatpack's case the festival has consistently used "Birmingham" the place as the bedrock of its unique conceptualisation and programming activity. Given Birmingham's transitional nature the name Flatpack may be more appropriately aligned than at first perceived. Indeed, it might even be considered "a more apt reflection and articulation of the city than the name Birmingham itself."[35]

5.3.2 Putting the "Film" in Flatpack

"Flatpack" is not the only intangible notion in the festival's title. Another aspect of the festival's name that warrants some brief consideration before moving on is the use and non-use of the word "film" at various points in the history of Flatpack's name. Festival organisers have wrangled continuously over the appropriate use of the word "film" in Flatpack's title indicating the festival's resistance to being tightly categorised as a film festival per se.

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[34] Julian Stringer, *Regarding Film Festivals* (PhD diss., Department of Comparative Literature, Indiana University, Indiana, 2003), 104.

[35] Sarah Smyth, "Topophilia at Birmingham's Flatpack Film Festival," *Necsus: European Journal of Media Studies* (Autumn 2017), https://necsus-ejms.org/topophilic-tendencies-at-birminghams-flatpack-film-festival/.

Until 2014 the word "film" did not appear in the festival's title at all. The decision to include "film" came about as a strategic audience development and marketing strategy. It was determined that Flatpack's somewhat ambiguous name was creating a barrier for introducing potential new audiences to the festival who were not already familiar with it. Therefore, it became necessary to spell out the festival's predominant function to the casual passer-by. In an interview with Francis he suggests that the inclusion of "film" was not an easy decision to make as the festival did not want to become constrained or limited by being bound to the "film festival" label.[36] While Flatpack's revised title did initially appear to result in creating a clearer profile for the festival and conceivably played an instrumental factor in attracting greater numbers, the festival's underpinning eclectic programming imperative remained unchanged. As the 2014 edition of the programme explains in its announcement of the new title, "we've gone the full three Fs this year and called ourselves Flatpack Film Festival, but as ever we're defining 'film' very broadly."[37]

However, only two years later the change was already viewed with some regret by the festival team. By 2018, "film" had once again disappeared from the title of the festival, returning it to its original form "Flatpack Festival" or just "Flatpack." In many ways the expungement of "film" from Flatpack's title makes sense as the festival might more appropriately be described as a multimedia or arts festival or possibly even categorised as a boutique festival. In this sense then film can more appropriately be considered to be the jumping-off point or "central thread" that unifies the programme.[38] Supporting this contention, the *Guardian's* overview of film festivals in 2015 described Flatpack as being "an agreeably eccentric" festival that brought interactive events to 30 venues in the city, "few of which involve actual movies."[39]

Flatpack's ongoing definitional process also reflects the wider trend of film festival decategorisation in the UK's film policy as discussed in the previous chapter. Indeed Flatpack's resistance to characterising itself as a film festival may well be seen as pre-

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[36] Francis, interview.

[37] Flatpack Festival, *Flatpack Film Festival Brochure 2014* (Birmingham, 2014), 5.

[38] Francis, interview.

[39] Virginie Sélavy, "Birmingham Freezes Over: Flatpack 2013."

empting the BFI's perception change that proposes "a wider interpretation of film."[40]

5.3.3 Branding the City

Flatpack's design strategy and visual identity also play an important role in representing an aspect of the city. Flatpack's visual identity helps constitute Birmingham's image as a creative city by being part of the city's brand narrative, albeit sometimes inadvertently. Due to the ephemeral nature of festivals and their finite period of existence the branding, marketing and promotional materials produced by festivals often constitute their lasting legacy. Sometimes these representations provide the only interaction that some people will have with the festival and therefore accounts for their entire understanding of it. Because of this, physical artefacts such as the hard copy of the programme or digital representations like the festival website take on increased importance before and after the liminal event.

It is interesting to observe then that depictions of the city, although not necessarily of Birmingham per se, have become a key part of Flatpack's brand identity. This was particularly apparent in the visual identity for Flatpack 2017 when the festival's visual design featured a futuristic cityscape that notionally referenced the changing face of Birmingham's architectural landscape.

Figure 5.12. Flatpack 2017 – Brand Identity.
Source: https://flatpackfestival.org.uk/news/new-year-new-design.

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[40] British Film Institute, *BFI2022: Supporting UK Film – BFI Plan 2017-2022* (London, 2017), https://www.bfi.org.uk/2022/downloads/bfi2022_EN.pdf.

On first encountering the festival's website, brochure and promotional material (see figure 5.12), the audience was met with a striking cherry red depiction of a futuristic city reminiscent of the modernist skylines featured in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927).[41] The concept from graphic designer, Justin Hallström, conjures up a streamlined and imaginary Birmingham of the future while at the same time evoking nostalgia for the modernist architecture of the city's past. Rather than presenting the more realistic and ad hoc Birmingham of the present, Hallström's non-realistic representation of the city skyline effectively captures the aspirational spirit of the city. At the same time, it foregrounds Flatpack's own ongoing fascination with the city of Birmingham's past and the city's ongoing spatial transformations. Commenting on the launch of the 2017 identity, the festival website further asserted the synergy between the festival and the city. It stated: "we go hand-in-hand with the city and its eclectic mix of modern high-rises and Victorian heritage."[42]

5.3.4 Audience

In a 2016 review of the festival, Thirza Wakefield (*Sight and Sound*) notes that

> differently to the higher-profile festivals, such as Cannes, where a pass-holder can be pleased at seeing a film *some months* before his brothers, a Flatpack audience member can expect to see films few others will *ever* see.[43]

Wakefield's comment highlights the tightrope balance that Flatpack's programming operates under, which has implications for audience profile. On one hand, the festival can be considered highly accessible in terms of events such as screenings in pubs. However, on the other hand, its programming also runs the danger of being seen as being high-brow, esoteric or niche due to its experimental tendencies.

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[41] *Metropolis* directed by Fritz Lang (Universum Film, 1927: Germany).

[42] "New Year, New Design," Flatpack Festival, accessed 20 April 2018, http://flatpackfestival.org.uk/2017/01/new-year-new-design.

[43] Thirza Wakefield, "Come show off with us: Flatpack's ten years of public spaces and spirits," *Sight and Sound,* last modified 2 June 2016, http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/comment/festivals/come-show-us-flatpack-film-festival-public-spaces-spirits.

Over the past ten years Flatpack's audience has broadened and diversified as reflected in its continued increase in attendance figures. Strategic decisions such as that of including "film" in the title of the festival have been crucial to demonstrating the festival's key objective: to be more accessible. As one of its objective states its ideal is to "bring people together." It also targets a wide range of niche audiences including Birmingham's Indian, Pakistani, Chinese and South-East Asian and Irish populations as well as targeting by interest type as diverse as skateboarding through to trainspotting.

Figure 5.13. Between Us: Birmingham Portraits, Street Photography Exhibition – Flatpack 2015. Source: https://flatpackfestival.org.uk/event/between-us-birmingham-portraits.

Festival attendees in 2016 were roughly broken down into 50 percent from Birmingham, 35 percent from the wider West Midland and 15 percent from other places such as outside the UK. Visitors from outside of the West Midlands tend to be profiled by an industry connection such as being programmers, curators and filmmakers. The main audience profile for Flatpack still aligns with that of 7 Inch Cinema. These audience members have remained loyal returning attendees. Francis describes this group as being a "culturally adventurous" cohort, a term that could be mistaken for being a niche or "hipster" type of audience.[44] However, as the festival matures and with the advent of Flatpack's increased visibility as one of, if not the most, predominant cultural film organisation in the West Midlands, the demographic of the audience is broadening. Its year-round activities to develop young audiences and the inclusion of a significant children's programme have helped introduce a broad new cohort to the Flatpack

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[44] Francis, interview.

experience, develop film literacy and generate future generations of Flatpackers.

5.4 Programming: Catalyst Versus Constraint

As discussed above, the most overt reason for Flatpack's naming convention is due to the DIY ethos that characterises the festival's exhibition practices as a result of Birmingham's constrained exhibition environment. Both the lack of independent cinema venues and a conscious antipathy to using generic multiplex venues, as described by Francis earlier, has caused Flatpack to adopt alternative exhibition practices.

An important theme related to programming practices that emerges strongly in all three cases in this study is Stringer's notion that the novel is at a premium in the current crowded film festival marketplace.[45] This is articulated through a notable presence of enhanced cinematic experiences as a defining trend within the programming practices of all the festivals under review in this study. The tendency towards novel screening practices has already been noted in relation to Glasgow Film Festival but is particularly apparent in the case of Flatpack where non-theatrical screenings constitute its core programming activity.

Figure 5.14. Deborah Pearson's History History History, Flatpack 2017.
Source: https://flatpackfestival.org.uk/event/history-history-history.

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45 Stringer, *Regarding Film Festivals*, 111.

Although Flatpack has a longstanding partnership with the Electric Cinema and utilises screens at Midlands Art Centre (mac), the festival tends not to use traditional cinemas for the larger part of its programme. Instead it has formulated its programming practices through the use of non-theatrical and sometimes unusual screening spaces. Flatpack presents screenings and events in venues as diverse as art galleries, buses, churches, warehouses, inflatable cinemas, pubs, nightclubs, shopping arcades and outdoor locations. Part of the festival's programming practice is to align the venue and screening thematically that creates singular extra-textual experiences that are unique to each event.

5.15. Flatpack 2017 – Opening Night, Segundo de Chomon Programme.
Source: researcher's own.

A further challenge that Flatpack has faced is that of securing premiere status titles. This challenge is also applicable to GFF. As already noted a fundamental distinction of film festival programming relates to its "first-timeness." Flatpack's novel and experimental exhibition practices largely discount it from being perceived as a platform

for premiering new film.[46] The festival resituated this impediment into its underlying programmatic ethos. Rather than being governed by the dictates of the film festival circuit the festival actively seeks out niche content that might be better suited to unusual or non-traditional screening spaces.

The centrality of live cinema practices differentiates Flatpack even further from mainstream or universal survey festivals. Frequently, live or enhanced cinema events tend to be corralled into special event slots at festivals or thematic sidebars such as that employed by GFF. An audit of Flatpack's live cinema programme demonstrates that these screenings often occupy significant Opening or Closing Night slots rather than being additional to the core programme. Examples of this include an evening of short film dedicated to pioneering silent filmmaker Segundo de Chomon, presented in the opulent ballroom of the Grand Hotel that had been previously closed for seventeen years (see figure 5.15), *Another Fine Mess*[47] at Birmingham Cathedral accompanied by renowned composer and silent film accompanist, Neil Brand, and *Safety Last!*[48] screened in a Victorian Shopping Arcade

In 2016 the festival presented three major live cinema events over the six-day festival encompassing Opening and Closing nights where *Vampyr* and *Faust* were shown respectively as well as a screening of *Girl Shy* starring Buster Keaton that took place in the Edwardian Tearooms at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.[49]

These highly nuanced programming and exhibition practices create an intense burst of eventivisation that stimulates heightened, if sometimes a little rough around the edges, screening experiences. This particular strategy comes with its own set of challenges including budgetary implications (Flatpack's entire budget in 2016 was circa £80K). This is coupled with the festival's limited human resources and the added pressure of often literally having to create the exhibition site / venue from scratch.

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[46] Jeffrey Ruoff, *Telluride in the Film Festival Galaxy* (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2016), 4.

[47] *Another Fine Mess*, directed by James Parrott (Hal Roach Studios, 1930: USA).

[48] *Safety Last!*, directed by Newmeyer & Taylor (Hal Roach Studios, 1923: USA).

[49] *Vampy,* directed by Carl Theodor Dreyer (Tobis Filmkunst, 1932: Germany, France); *Faust,* directed by F.W Murnau (Universum Film, 1926: Germany); *Girl Shy*, directed by Newmeyer & Taylor (The Harold Lloyd Corporation, 1924: USA).

Nevertheless, while new or preview status feature films form only a fraction of the overall programme, Flatpack still plays a small but significant role in presenting quality independent feature film in Birmingham's cinematic landscape. As already noted the independent exhibition sector is surprisingly limited in the UK's second city especially given the popularity and expansion of independent cinema chains such as Picturehouse and Curzon across the UK. In 2017, when participant observation was being carried out, there were only three cinemas comprising of six screens in the city centre that cater to the arthouse audience on a year-round basis. These included the Electric Cinema, the Everyman Cinema at the Mailbox, and the Mockingbird Cinema at the Custard Factory, a boutique cinema aimed more at events than serious arthouse programming. While there are continued rumours that cinemas chains that show independent film such as Picturehouse or Curzon Cinemas will open in Birmingham this is yet to come to fruition. This situates Flatpack's contribution to the city's curated film offering as all the more important. Film critic Simran Hans (*Sight and Sound*) suggests that Francis's and Groves' small but essential input is extremely valuable to offer "both the punters and the programmers of venues like the Electric, Cannon Hill Park's Midlands Art Centre (mac) and Wolverhampton's Light House an experience of curated independent and world cinema."[50]

On the other hand, the films that are excluded from a festival programme can often be as illuminating as those included for understanding a festival's role in a wider context as both Flatpack and GFF demonstrate. Flatpack's resistance to becoming yet another of the eponymous universal survey festivals on the circuit has definitely been influential in formulating the festival's conceptualisation of itself and carving out its own unique identity. Conversely, this restraint provides Flatpack with a great deal of programming freedom. Without being caught in the struggle to compete for titles on the international festival circuit or adhere to the mechanism of the release schedule, curators have the prerogative to explore themes and create stories in a way that many festivals don't. This gives Flatpack's greater authorial scope reminiscent of Mark Cousins' earlier definition, which posits that festival's need to have their own specific narrative and aesthetic.

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[50] Simran Hans, "DIY Punk: Flatpack 2014," *Sight and Sound,* last modified 3 December 2014, http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/comment/festivals/diy-punk-flatpack-2014.

A notable event from Flatpack's very first programme, which demonstrates the festival's approach to programming usefully is *An Afternoon with Henry Jacobs* that screened the entirety of the 1971 cult TV series *The Fine Art of Goofing Off*.[51] Flatpack describes the series as "Sesame Street's psychedelic, philosophical cousin." Each episode was developed around an open-ended theme, such as time or work, using a weird and wonderful collage of different styles of animation such as stop-action photography, claymation, continuous drawing and so on. The TV show's oddball sensibility, exploration of contemporary life and experimental nature also signal the beginnings of a recurring theme and format for Flatpack's programming. The event also exemplified the festival's tendency to present work that blurs the boundaries between art forms and not stay confined to the medium of film per se but to explore the medium more widely.

However, the core content is only one dimension of how the event articulates Flatpack's authorial propensity. The central event was augmented by an exclusive interview with Jacobs, filmed especially for the festival along with various curated excerpts of his experimental output that presented the pioneer and his oeuvre from a number of perspectives. Rather than show the work as a standalone event it was presented as part of a highly curated afternoon of work that exemplified de Valck's politics of participation. It not only told Jacob's story but also provided a deeper engagement with the artist and his work.

Finally, Flatpack's lack of leverage can be linked back to a former downbeat perception that situates the city as an uncosmopolitan space unlikely to be connected with film. As Hans points out in her assessment of the festival,

> Birmingham seems an unlikely place for a film festival. Britain's
> sprawling, commercially-minded 'second city' is not famed for its
> contribution to much counterculture […]; with independent cinemas
> and arthouse chains like Picturehouse or Curzon conspicuously

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[51] *The Fine Art of Goofing Off,* written and directed by Henry Jacobs, aired 1971-72, on KQED, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7626164/.

absent and audiences weaned on multiplex blandness.[52]

Yet, in direct contrast to this perspective, Thomas Elsaesser annexes the Dutch architect and urban theorist Rem Koolhaas's term "the generic city" as the ideal location for the contemporary film festival. Elsaesser describes the generic city as "one where high modernist boxes reign triumphant, and where an overhead shot of the cityscape looks no different from the circuit board of a computer."[53] Elsaesser's description resonates strongly with both O'Flynn's description of Birmingham at the beginning of this case study and with Flatpack's design identity discussed earlier (see figure 5.12) that presents an uncannily apt visualisation of the generic city.

As with many aspects of how the city is being perceived differently the notion of Birmingham as a viable cinematic city is also growing. Examples of Birmingham's transition into a cinematic city include Steven Spielberg's use of the city as a key location for *Ready, Steady, Player One* and by Warner Brothers for zombie horror film, *The Girl with All the Gifts*.[54] As the brochure for Flatpack's *Birmingham on Film* season in 2017 claims, "even Spielberg is shooting his latest film here and it's easy to see the attraction: Victorian grandeur and concrete brutalism; leafy suburbia and postindustrial grit; Birmingham has it all."[55] There are also ambitious plans in the works for a 40-acre state-of-the-art studio near the city that will be aimed specifically at the blockbuster film market.[56] The project is spearheaded by Steven Knight, writer and director of the hit gangster TV series, *Peaky Blinders* starring Cillian Murphy and set in Birmingham.[57] The cult status and global success of the TV show has itself added to the city's rising cache.

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[52] Ibid.

[53] Thomas Elsaesser, "In the City but not Bounded by it: Cinema in the Global, Generic and the Cluster City," in *Global Cinematic Cities: New Landscapes of Film and Media,* ed. Johan Andersson & Lawrence Webb (New York: Wallflower Press, 2016) 26.

[54] *Ready Player One*, directed by Steven Spielberg (Amblin Entertainment, De Line Pictures, Dune Entertainment, 2018: USA); *The Girl with all the Gifts*, directed by Colm McCarthy (Poison Chef, BFI Film Fund, Altitude Film Entertainment, 2016: UK, USA).

[55] Flatpack Festival, *Birmingham on Film Brochure* (Birmingham, 2016), 3.

[56] Dalya Alberge, "Peaky Blinders writer plans £100m film studio in Midlands," *The Guardian*, last modified 9 March 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/mar/09/peaky-blinders-writer-film-studio-birmingham.

[57] *Peaky Blinders,* created by Steven Knight (2013: BBC, Television).

The city's regional screen agency, Film Birmingham, estimated that the city earned an approximate £8.5 million as a result of being used for film sets in 2015-16, suggesting a new cosmopolitanism in the city tied directly to the creative industries.[58] It will be interesting to see if this shift in perception has an impact on Flatpack's programme over the coming years.

5.4.1 Illuminating Film Through Place and Place Through Film

A defining aspect of Flatpack's programming strategy has been its use of non-theatrical screening spaces. It's useful here to return to Yi-Fu Tuan's conception of topophilia as a guiding principle employed by the festival.[59] Topophilia posits a strong sense of place and a deep or abiding love of certain aspects of it. Or, as the poet John Betjeman would have it, "a special love for peculiar places."[60] In its contemporary form Birmingham can certainly be considered to fall under the auspice of a peculiar place. From a programming perspective the festival has formulated its self-conceptualisation and festival identity by creating a strong topophilic connection with Birmingham's social and cinematic history as well as its physical space. Flatpack Programmer Sam Groves sees this as a defining factor more than any other that makes the festival distinct within the UK's film festivalscape.[61]

If, as programmer Roya Rastegar argues, the task of the programmer is to definitively frame "the conditions within which audiences come together" then Flatpack's ongoing use of unusual Birmingham spaces clearly demarks the festival's exhibition practices.[62] The programme notes for an ambitious event mounted during the third edition of the festival in 2009, *Curzonara,* illustrates this

> Birmingham, 1901. Electric trams are making their debut on the Bristol
> Road, councillors are plotting to bring water all the way from Wales, and

[58] Alex Homer, "Steven Spielberg in Birmingham: Why film directors come to the city," BBC, last modified 8 September 2016, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-37297173.

[59] Tuan, *Topophilia,* 4.

[60] Alan Watts, *In My Own Way: An Autobiography, 1915-65* (California: New World Books, 1972), xxxi.

[61] Sam Groves, interview by author, via Skype, 19 January 2017.

[62] Roya Rastegar, "Difference, Aesthetics and the Curatorial Crisis of Film Festivals," *Screen* 53, no.3 (2012): 310, https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/hjs022.

at the Curzon Hall in Suffolk Street a showman named Waller Jeffs has just begun his first season of animated pictures in the city. Two shows a day, with as many as 3,000 punters per show marvelling at scenes of comedy and romance, the exotic and the mundane, accompanied by live music, sound-effects and performing animals. Within ten years he will be a Birmingham institution, but the audiences who have discovered film at 'Curzonora' will desert him as full-time cinemas arrive on the scene.[63]

For Francis *Curzonora* embodies his vision for the festival and provides the quintessential Flatpack experience.[64] The event combined archive film, live music and performance in an attempt to recreate the "wild-west" feeling of the pre-cinema era in a thoroughly Birmingham-inspired event. Additionally, *Curzonora* is an important moment in the festival's own history because it established some of the key programming tropes that have gone on to distinguish Flatpack, most notably the tendency to stage enhanced cinematic experiences that specifically relate to Birmingham.

The festival's preoccupation with the city can also be evidenced throughout its discourses. Various communications such as the brochure, website and ancillary marketing material articulate an ongoing concern with the city's forgotten or under-discussed cinematic, cultural and social past. The introduction to the 2013 Flatpack brochure sums this up stating that "one of the recurring themes of our work is Birmingham itself. Not out of navel-gazing but because it's a fascinating place and so little of its past has been talked about or properly documented."[65] Given Birmingham's relentless architectural re-invention, it is possible to view the festival's above comment and its ongoing Birmingham-centric programming ethos as a mechanism for preserving the past and present while the city continues to transform.

This curatorial tendency connects the Flatpack experience to the "eventful city"

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[63] "Curzonora," Flatpack, last accessed 15 January 2017, https://flatpackfestival.org.uk/event/curzonora.

[64] Francis, interview.

[65] *Flatpack Film Festival Brochure 2013,* 16.

proposed by Page and Connell.[66] The notion of the eventful city posits that contemporary events not only add meaning to places but also frequently constitute the entire experience of the city. For Page and Connell this means that an understanding of or engagement with a given city is entirely framed and experienced through the event such as the earlier example of Mardi Gras as being symbiotic with New Orleans and its musical heritage. While Flatpack is not a city takeover festival with the profile or breadth of Mardi Gras, its interaction with Birmingham is important as a framing device for making meaning of the city in its contemporary guise.

By unearthing and recovering Birmingham's past along with engaging with the city's transformed physical present the audience is afforded an alternative interaction with the city. The following two examples present specific thematic programming initiatives undertaken by Flatpack. The first of these, Birmingham Arts Lab Revisited, demonstrates how Flatpack uses the city's cultural history to recover and celebrate part of Birmingham's forgotten cinematic history. While the second, Birmingham-on-Sea, offers an insight into Flatpack's interaction with Birmingham's physical space through the film text.

Birmingham Arts Lab Revisited

Figure 5.16. Birmingham Arts Lab (circa 1970).
Source: https://flatpackfestival.org.uk/event/birmingham-arts-lab.

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[66] Stephen Page and Joanne Connell, "Introduction," in *The Routledge Handbook of Events*, ed. Stephen Page & Joanne Connell (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 2.

Earlier in this chapter I referred to the supposition proposed by Simran Hans in her review of the festival. The critic suggested that the UK's second city was not particularly recognised for its contribution to counterculture. Hans's assertion highlights why Flatpack's curatorial ethos to challenge these perceptions is so important. In 2013 the festival featured a celebration of Birmingham's little spoken about avant-garde cultural and cinematic past by presenting a focus on Birmingham Arts Lab that challenges this perception. Birmingham's mostly forgotten about Arts Lab (1968 to 1982) was one of the longest running and most influential of a network of forty or so Arts Labs established in the UK during the late 1960s as part of the counterculture movement. Flatpack celebrated the Arts Lab by presenting an audio installation that featured rare interviews with key proponents from the Birmingham Arts Lab scene.

In many ways Birmingham's Arts Lab example can be considered a direct forerunner of Flatpack. The two organisations share many parallel characteristics such as a self-reliant approach and a dedication to innovative cinema programming in spite of technological constraints. Described by film critic Antony Everitt as being "one of the emblematic institutions of the 1960s," the Arts Lab was an experimental arts centre and arts collective.[67] It embraced a DIY approach across the arts combining performance, music, experimental art and multimedia. During its heyday the Arts Lab was originally situated on the second floor of a run-down youth centre on the northern edge of the city centre that was accessed from the street using a metal fire escape.

Cinema played a pivotal role in the Arts Lab project. It was led by two key figures from British and Irish film exhibition history; Tony Jones, now director at Cambridge Film Trust, and the late Pete Walsh who went on to be head of cinema at the Irish Film Institute. Jones and Walsh built a working cinema space at the Lab made from whatever they could scavenge from building sites, fleapit cinemas and contributions such as a cast-off screen from Birmingham Film Society. Known as the "world's most uncomfortable cinema," the Arts Lab cinema programme consisted of a combination of arthouse and avant-garde cinema that had been previously unavailable to the

[67] Anthony Everitt, "Ted Little – Obituary" in *The Guardian*, last modified 12 August 1999, https://www.theguardian.com/news/1999/aug/12/guardianobituaries.

Birmingham audience. Jones and Walsh presented the work of experimental filmmakers such as Jonas Mekas and Kenneth Anger as well as silent films with live music and cult cinema, national focuses and an annual film festival.

During its existence the Arts Lab played a vital role in enriching Birmingham's cinematic environment much as Flatpack does now. Flatpack's reflection on the crucial work undertaken by Birmingham Arts Lab as one of the unsung heroes of Birmingham's cultural history directly links the festival to a tradition of cinematic experimentation not largely associated with Birmingham. More importantly, Flatpack has exposed a little known and endangered aspect of the city's cultural history. Birmingham's vision of the future involves being an authentic city. However, in this case it has fallen to a festival largely unsupported by the city to assure that this important piece of its heritage does not simply get buried along with all the other aspects that don't fit with the most recent iteration of its image.

Birmingham-on-Sea

In 2014 the festival presented a season entitled Birmingham-on-Sea that specifically tackled the city's landlocked physical location at the centre of England and Birmingham's relationship to water. As the 2014 edition of the brochure reminds readers, Birmingham lays claim to having the most canals outside Venice and so while being a landlocked city water has nevertheless been a key part of the city's identity as well as being a central source of industry and commerce during the Industrial era. In keeping with postindustrial regeneration trends the waterways within the city have largely been regenerated now serving as zoned areas of leisure, retail and accommodation for city dwellers.

The programme provided an opportunity to meditate on this relationship through events such as *Dark River*, an installation by David Rowan that presented a series of short films made by Rowan while he explored the River Rea on foot along its entire length from the Waseley Hills to Spaghetti Junction. Rowan's work was inspired by

Birmingham-born poet, Roy Fisher, who has often written about the city's hidden waterways. The theme of water is used as a jumping-off point to consider the global context rather than a tightly constricted theme that only considers Birmingham. So while some films such as the archival film programme *Rough Seas and Unquiet Waters* consider the UK's factory fortnight tradition, other screenings such as *Watermark* a Canadian-made documentary explore the global dependence on water.[68]

5.4.2 Flatpack to the Future

It can be assumed that the festival runs the danger of being perceived as a specialised, niche or even culturally elitist event due to its experimental and esoteric programming. However, for Francis the opposite is true. He states the festival's core purpose as being to open up access and an understanding of cinema to new and diverse audiences.[69] This was particularly apparent in a 2016 initiative entitled Assemble when Flatpack began working in conjunction with the BFI's Film Audience Network (FAN). This new strategic partnership situated Flatpack in the capacity of an audience development agency that broadened their remit beyond presenting the festival. Francis describes the initiative, which has now been renamed Build Your Own Film Night, as providing an opportunity to develop an "army of cinema lovers."[70]

The project provided the opportunity to diversify and increase the film audience across the six counties of the West Midlands encompassing a population of circa 5.5 million people.[71] In many ways it can be viewed as a natural progression for the festival. Part of the initiative's defining ethos is built on extending the festival's politics of participation to facilitate individuals and communities to present their own film screenings / film nights. This is achieved by encouraging and empowering potential audience members to become curators of their own events rather than passive viewers.

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[68] *Watermark*, directed by Edward Burtynsky & Jennifer Baichwal (Sixth Wave Productions, 2013: Canada).

[69] Francis, interview.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Since this initiative, responsibility for the West Midlands has been devolved to the newly formed Film Hub Midlands, which covers both East and West Midlands. While Broadway in Nottingham is the lead organisation, Flatpack is acknowledged as the key facilitating organisation for the West Midlands.

This approach recalls the portable and mobile ethos that both 7 Inch Cinema and Flatpack were founded on. Indeed Francis proposes that one of the underpinning ideas the initiative is based on is the idea of an Ikea-type instruction manual for setting up pop-up film nights. This includes practical tips and advice such as "find somewhere it's easy to black out" and "playing directly off a laptop gives you better quality than DVD."[72] To some extent this practice disrupts the notion of film festivals as purveyors of taste arbitration and opens this space up to a more democratic approach to programming that interacts with new and expanding modes of cinephilia. Francis points out that younger viewers are now natural curators who actively curate through online and mobile activities such as creating and sharing YouTube playlists.[73]

Part of the purpose of the initiative was to democratise the act of film curation and overcome the perception that film programming should be considered the exclusive right of professionals. Assemble / Build Your Own Film Night initiatives demonstrate how Flatpack has come full circle since its beginnings. By continuing to utilise DIY screening practices, Flatpack has inadvertently devised an innovative method of developing younger audiences that acknowledges and engages with new filmviewing practices that translate into a communal or shared practice.[74]

Figure 5.17. *Beware the Moon*, a Film Hub Midlands initiative at Dudley Castle, 2018.
Source: https://www.facebook.com/flatpackfestival/photos.

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[72] Flatpack Festival, *Birmingham on Film brochure* (Birmingham, 2016), 6.

[73] Francis, interview.

[74] Ibid.

With no discernible independent cinema institution to take the lead on behalf of FAN in either Birmingham or the West Midlands, as in other regions such as Home (Manchester) in the North West, Watershed (Bristol) in the South West or Glasgow Film in Scotland, it has fallen to Flatpack as the region's most visible and actively engaged film organisation.[75] Film Hub Midlands is co-ordinated on a partnership basis between Flatpack in West Midlands and Broadway Nottingham covering East Midlands. It's interesting to consider that as Flatpack has gained in profile and become more established that a natural dropping of the festival's DIY approach might have occurred. Instead it is the festival's very DIY approach that has caused this audience development strategy to evolve from being a makeshift exhibition solution to being the central innovative technique employed as part of its role as an audience development agency.

Flatpack's role also has important implications in terms of institutionalisation. As the lead agency for the West Midlands, Flatpack is now active on a year-round basis. This ensures an additional income stream through BFI FAN that increases Flatpack's ability to sustain itself as a not-for-profit organisation as well as ensuring continual annual visibility. In addition, the initiative repositions Flatpack as an alternative model of cultural cinema institution that acts as a facilitator of film exhibition rather than only that of expert curator or gatekeeper.

A parallel that aligns Flatpack's strategic vision with the BFI's strategy, BFI2022, (outlined in Chapter 3), can also be discerned in this development. As already observed, BFI2022 indicates a shift towards the decategorisation of the current film festival format at cultural policy level. The policy proposes a revised emphasis on more general audience development at regional level that festivals can play a part in on a project basis. On an institutional basis it's noteworthy that both Glasgow Film and Flatpack Projects, the parent companies for GFF and Flatpack now have responsibility for these audience development agencies.

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[75] Flatpack was initially appointed under Film Hub Southwest and West Midlands.

5.5 Materialising Flatpack

In her case study on the Berlinale, Marijke de Valck argues that the spatial construction of the festival space acts as a specific way of promoting a particular political festival image.[76] De Valck's argument focuses on the Berlinale's spatial relocation from West Berlin to the Potsdamer Platz as a political commentary on the city's reconfiguration after German reunification. De Valck contends that the decision for the Berlinale's relocation to the Potsdamer Platz from its former home in West Berlin was propelled by the municipality as part of a cultural city marketing strategy rather one of the festival's own making. Located on the former site of no-man's-land the Potsdamer Platz provided a new city centre landmark that was neither bound to the East or the West and therefore acted as a symbol of the new Berlin. For the city resituating the "heart of the Berlinale" to the Potsdamer Platz was an important strategy for constituting a cosmopolitan image of new Berlin.[77]

Flatpack's physical and spatial manifestation also offers a comment on the city of Birmingham. Taking into account that by their very nature festivals are provisional happenings for the most part, the most immediate reading of Flatpack's eclectic spatial mapping indicates a lack of municipal intervention, physical infrastructure and spatial concentration that tends to typify other film festivals. Flatpack's makeshift and pop-up nature also seems to signal its continued position as an outlier within the city's cultural landscape.

The following two extracts from Flatpack's 2010 and 2014 brochures provide a colourful description of the festival's spatial dimensions and the breadth of space covered in the city. They also provide an insight into the festival's interaction with the city's physical space that demonstrates its makeshift nature.

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[76] De Valck, *Film Festivals,* 71.

[77] Ibid., 77.

As ever, the variety of the programme is also reflected in the venues, from cafes and art spaces to a century-old cinema and a 300-year-old cathedral. We kick off in the Jewellery Quarter, occupy the city centre over the first weekend, amble eastwards for the mid-week Swipeside focus, and come to a rest at the Flatpack hub in Digbeth. Everyone who visits the festival picks their own path through this cultural undergrowth; when you come out the other side, please let us know what you made of it.[78]

Here you hold the roadmap to eleven days of amazing events and screenings in venues all over Birmingham, taking you from a Korean-style DVD lounge to canal side walks, from once-lost archive treasures with live music to the best new films from around the world.[79]

The sheer diversity of experience and location portrayed in both of these descriptions is striking. The descriptions above firmly situate the festival's programme in terms of needing to be navigated and explored over a spatial distance to be experienced.

The festival's deliberate use of the rhetoric of the journey is illustrative of the city's alternative topography. Further to this, the transitional nature of the city necessitates a continual remapping of the festival space. Through this necessary re-envisioning and remapping of the physical urban space, Flatpack positions its local audience as tourists in their own city. Flatpack describes this discursive positioning by asserting that "both the people who live here and those who visit for the weekend seem to share our interest in its hidden corners and all things that have been buried by the city's insatiable appetite for redevelopment."[80]

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[78] Flatpack Festival, *Flatpack Film Festival Brochure 2015* (Birmingham, 2015), 5.

[79] *Flatpack Film Festival Brochure 2014*, 5.

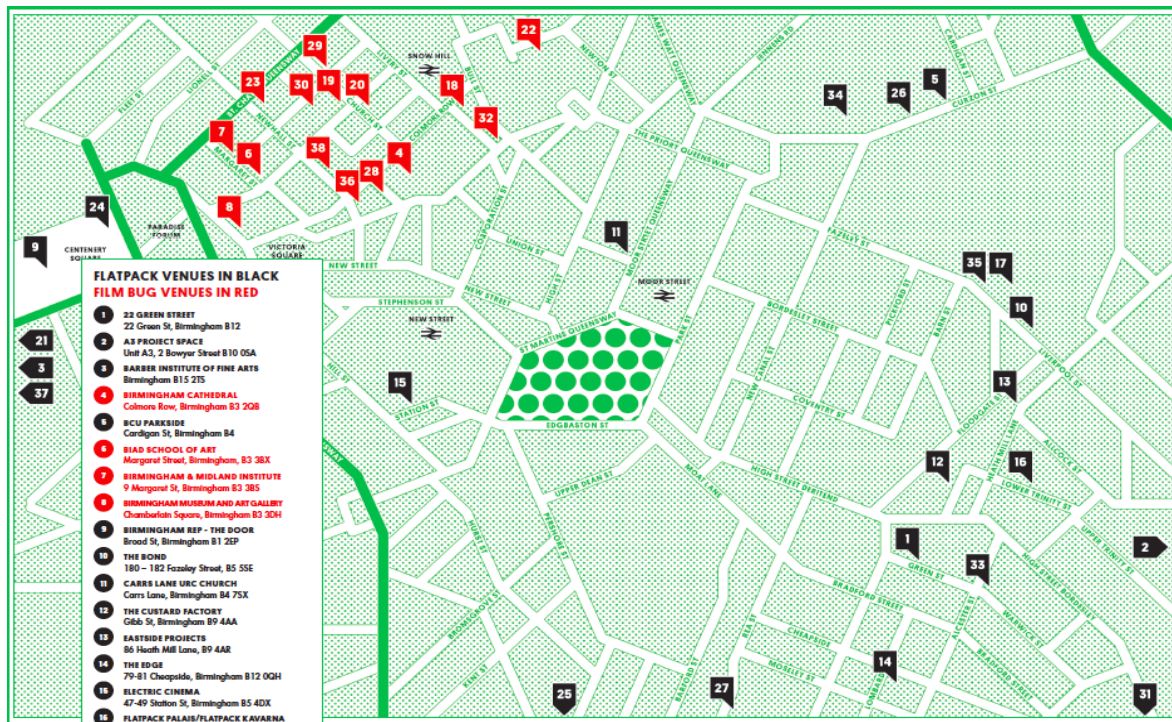[80] *Flatpack Film Festival Brochure 2013*, 16.

Figure 5.18. Flatpack Venue Map, 2014. Source: *Flatpack Film Festival Brochure 2014.*

The 2014 festival map (see figure 5.18) highlights the breadth of the city space covered by the festival. It clearly depicts events happening on opposite sides of the city. It also illustrates an important strategy employed by the festival in the face of minimal public funding support from the city. The map highlights the festival's Film Bug initiative (venues demarcated in red), a festival-within-a-festival that ran over four editions from 2012 to 2015. The initiative was supported by Colmore BID (CBD, one of Birmingham's Business Improvement Districts (BID).

The BIDs are a UK-wide scheme funded by public-private partnerships whereby businesses within a defined geographical area of the city pay an additional levy to fund projects, services and initiatives to improve the area where they work. Geographically, CBD encompasses a significant area close to the city centre but, as a predominantly commercial quarter, one of its largest challenges is to animate the area after hours when the quarter becomes largely deserted.

However, the area is also home to significant landmark cultural and heritage sites such as Birmingham Art Gallery and Museum, Birmingham Cathedral and the

Birmingham and Midland Institute. CBD's key objective is stated as being to look after "the physical aspects of the District by delivering, influencing and partnering on public realm projects to make an outstanding place made up of outstanding places."[81] A key strategy that CBD has employed to animate the area is to host cultural events in spaces that are usually closed at night. CBD's partnership with Flatpack via The Film Bug initiative offered a fitting example of a successful public / private partnership in the service of urban regeneration. Interestingly the geographical area that encompasses CBD went on to become the core festival zone in 2016, presumably as a result of the relationships built up throughout the initiative.

Added to the festival's ongoing remapping, Birmingham's buildings are frequently in flux while the city continues to transform. This means that older buildings are still in the process of being regenerated or recovered while other buildings continue to change use and yet more new buildings are being built. As a result of this ongoing change the festival's physical materialisation interacts with the city in unplanned and unforeseen ways.

Figure 5.19. Birmingham Central Library, 2016. Source: researcher's own.

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[81] Colmore Business District, *Colmore BID Business Plan 2019-2024,* (Birmingham: Colmore BID, 2019). https://colmorebusinessdistrict.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/2018/10/COLMORE.BID_.BOOKLET.FINAL_.PRINT_READY.pdf

These inadvertent interactions create their own social and political commentary on the city's shifting terrain that often reveals the city's fractured topography. During the 2016 edition it was necessary to pass the visually arresting sight of Birmingham's brutalist structure, Central Library, being demolished to attend many of the events at the festival hub. This unexpected aspect of the festival's outlook did not escape festivalgoers. In her review of the festival, Thirza Wakefield (*Sight and Sound*) reports:

> Birmingham Central Library, designed by architect John Madin, was – during this year's Flatpack, the festival's tenth edition – in process of being demolished. On the final day, a Sunday, the demolition site was quiet. The library – looking like a birthday cake sliced by a kid given charge of the knife – was in uneven bits behind two-metre-high fencing: not much to see but its floors exposed, and tussocks here and there of wire rope.[82]

Inevitably, as Wakefield points out, the dramatic sight of Central Library being carved up formed a backdrop to the tenth anniversary edition of the festival. This unforeseen physical disruption created its own narrative about the ever-changing architectural landscape of Birmingham that formed an inadvertent dialogue about Flatpack's ongoing relationship with the city as a witness of change. On this occasion the encounter between the city and the festival was unintentional but drew attention to the loss of one of Birmingham's most iconic brutalist buildings.

However, Flatpack followed this up during its subsequent edition in 2017 with a deliberate curatorial comment that reminded audiences of Birmingham's brutalist heyday. One of the highlights of the 2017 edition was an open-air screening of the musical *Take Me High* (1973) directed by David Askey.[83] Described as 'a cinematic love song to Birmingham', *Take Me High* is somewhat of a peculiarity.[84] The film's depiction of Birmingham's *concrete city* phase acts as a pertinent reminder of a

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[82] Wakefield, "Come show off with us."

[83] T*ake Me High* directed by David Askey (The Brumburger Company, Balladeer Ltd, 1973: UK).

[84] *Flatpack Film Festival Brochure 2017*, 6.

"rapidly disappearing earlier stage of the city's urban development that also proudly proclaimed a brave new world, albeit one of motorways and brutalism."[85]

The film features Sir Cliff Richard in his very last movie role as a hot-shot banker, Tim Matthews, who is transferred to Birmingham. The world of the film presents a bizarrely prophetic vision of Birmingham's hyperbolic gentrification. In a prescient foreshadowing Matthews' chooses to make his home on a canal boat and start an entrepreneurial gourmet burger business, serving the legendary 'Brumburger' also located on the canal. However, one of the key scenes from the film strikes a significant chord. The scene depicts a newly arrived Matthews dancing down the steps of the not-yet-opened Central Library. This Birmingham brutalist icon was only in existence for a mere forty years before the city razed it to the ground in 2016. Flatpack's inclusion of the film in the programme acts as a reminder of this architectural loss to the city.

5.5.1 Celluloid City

Much like Glasgow Film's Cinema City, project Flatpack mounted a specific initiative entitled Celluloid City from 2015-2017 that sought to recover the city's intrinsic historical link to the world of cinema. Flatpack's programme described the project as being an attempt to "map out a century-plus of film-going, in a city that boasted over 100 picture houses at its peak."[86] The initiative particularly brought to light the influential and now largely forgotten role that Birmingham has played within the UK's cinematic history and its former historical legacy as a cinema city. The notion of the journey, as discussed in the last section, also carries through as a programming convention to this curatorial concern. Two events that particularly brought these two programming endeavours together are the *Odeon Bus Tour* in 2010 and *Invisible Cinema,* an illuminating walking tour of Birmingham's forgotten cinemas that was part of the Celluloid Cinema project.

In 2010 the festival highlighted Birmingham's influence on cinema's architectural past by conducting a bus tour of the early Odeon cinemas. The tour brought audiences on a journey around the city and suburbs to visit some of the still existing sites of the UK's

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[85] Smyth, "Topophilia at Birmingham's Flatpack Film Festival."

[86] "An Introduction to Celluloid Cinema," Flatpack, accessed 22 January 2017, https://flatpackfestival.org.uk/news/an-introduction-to-celluloid-city/.

first Odeon cinemas. Many of these are now closed, demolished or have been relegated to bingo halls. Nevertheless, the event not only celebrated the Birmingham entrepreneur, Oscar Deutsch, founder of successful Odeon cinema chain's vision but also celebrated its iconic and influential art deco architecture. Notably, Odeon cinemas are credited with introducing modernist architecture to towns across the UK. These landmark buildings were designed by a Birmingham-based architectural practice, Weedon Partnership, that were lauded for their use of streamlined curves that ultimately changed the look of the British High Street.

Figure 5.20. Art Deco – Odeon Cinema.
Source: https://flatpackfestival.org.uk/event/odeon-bus-tour.

Invisible City involved local historian, Ben Waddington, taking audiences on a walking tour of city centre cinemas "which over time have been demolished, abandoned, repurposed or generally absorbed back into the fabric of the city."[87] Many of the sites visited on the route proved to be cinemas that were hiding in plain sight behind the city's contemporary guise. However, all of these could be clearly identified once they had been identified. One example encountered was a silent cinema that closed in 1910 but was later transformed into one of Birmingham's iconic Victorian shopping arcades, Piccadilly Arcade. Its steeply sloping central thoroughfare once formed the cinema's

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[87] *Flatpack Film Festival Brochure 2016,* 53.

seating rake and provided an indicator of its former identity. Another surprising instance proved to be an abandoned cinema hall on the upper storey of a building on one of Birmingham city centre's busiest shopping streets. The cinema itself is still largely intact but has lain empty and unused since the 1960s.

In another part of the city the walk visited the decaying brutalist cinema, Odeon Queensway. The subterranean 555-seater cinema was originally opened in 1964 as the Scala Superama Cinema on the site of the former Scala Cinema before being taken over by Odeon in 1970. It lies forty feet underneath Holloway Circus, one of the city's remaining subways and a reminder of its Brutalist architectural era. The Odeon Queensway closed in 1988. It offers yet another example of Birmingham's cinematic history that remains largely untouched but still present and almost forgotten behind the city's changing facades was it not for Flatpack's intervention.

5.5.2 From the Dirty End to the Gas Hall

From a different perspective the 2016 edition of Flatpack provides a useful instance to explore the spatial strategies that the festival deliberately employs. This edition is particularly pertinent as the festival's physical materialisation changed considerably in comparison to previous incarnations. Contrary to former editions, where events were located widely throughout the city, there was an attempt to construct a cohesive spatial concentration in the city centre's museum quarter. For the first time in its history the festival used a central recognisable institutional location for its main hub in a bid to unify audiences and motivate increased festivity. Flatpack also situated the larger part of its activities in the immediate vicinity thus establishing a "concentrated footprint" or a recognisable festival zone.[88] The Festival Hub was located at Gas Hall, part of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (opposite the demolition site of Central Library) with other established landmark venues being used in the adjacent streets.

These included the Birmingham and Midland Institute, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and Birmingham Conservatoire as well as an eye-catching inflatable cinema that was installed in front of Birmingham City Council House in Victoria Square.

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[88] Francis, interview.

The map below (see figure 5.21) illustrates the cohesive spatial materialisation achieved by the festival, especially when compared to the 2014 version that spanned both sides of the city (see figure 5.18). As already noted this more streamlined version of Flatpack's festival space correlates with the area previously defined as being Film Bug, the CBD-supported festival-within-a-festival developed to animate Birmingham's commercial quarter.

Figure 5.21. Flatpack Venue Map, 2016. Source: *Flatpack Film Festival Brochure 2016.*

In the past Flatpack's main festival hub has tended to occupy various repurposed warehouse-type spaces. These usually bear ironic titles such as *The Dirty End* or *Festival Palais* and are inclined to be multipurpose spaces that were used for a variety of activities such as screenings, talks and social events. While in 2016 the festival's central hub was relocated to a more institutional home it retained Flatpack's playful ethos. The festival brochure described its new hub as "a multi-purpose hub fit for film showing, diary-reading, creature building, tape-baking, award-giving and plenty more besides."[89] It also served the practical purpose of providing a central box office, information point and a place to have a coffee but still retained a unique and interactive environment in Gas Hall. Continuing the tradition of previous hubs the festival enlivened a normally institutional space by hosting a number of events here including shorts

89 *Flatpack Film Festival Brochure 2016,* 10.

screenings and industry talks as well as installations and exhibitions.

Until this edition a large percentage of the festival's physical environs had tended to be situated in Digbeth's cultural quarter for the most part (see figure 5.20 – venues demarcated in black). Digbeth has mainly been considered the key creative quarter of the city since the opening of Birmingham's hip creative arts complex, the Custard Factory, located on the site of the old Birds Factory. Up until 2016 Digbeth had seemed to be the natural home for the festival. It had certainly provided an incubatory location where the surrounding thriving start-up culture had supported the festival's growth through in-kind support such as the provision of free and cheap spaces. However, throughout this period, Digbeth also developed a culturally elite reputation associated with gentrification. This perception may have acted as a barrier for wider audience accessibility. This was an issue raised by Simran Hans (*Sight and Sound*) in her review of the 2014 edition of the festival:

> Though Francis claims he is inspired by 'Birmingham itself', with all of 'its nooks and crannies, it's buried layers and jumbled architecture', the city's geography does not always work in festival-goers' favour. Many of the events and screenings take place in Digbeth, a rapidly gentrifying industrial estate that houses the Custard Factory, Flatpack's hub and home to Birmingham's creative community.[90]

This perception of Digbeth's cultural elitism was also apparent in a wider investigation of Birmingham's creative arts audiences where some participants reported feeling that Digbeth "was in some sense not for them, or not easily discovered and entered into."[91] Digbeth has long been on various city redevelopment plans and is named as a key redevelopment zone on the Big City plan. However, the reality of the current-day landscape is quite different. Notwithstanding the fact that it is home to a community of over five hundred artists and creative enterprises, the area is still characterised by abandoned and dilapidated industrial units and warehouses. In addition, as a holdover

[90] Simran Hans, "DIY Punk: Flatpack 2014."
[91] Jonathan Gross and Stephanie Pitts, "Audiences for the contemporary arts: Exploring varieties of participation across art forms in Birmingham, UK," *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies* 13, no 1 (2016): 15.

from the demolished ring road, the area is divided by a traffic choked artery route by day while largely deserted at night. As Sam Groves notes "there are still a lot of people who won't venture down to Digbeth and who see it as quite seedy."[92] Interestingly, one of the reasons cited for Flatpack's relocation into Birmingham's city centre relates to the recent high cost of remaining in Digbeth rather than issues of accessibility.[93] Many of the once cost-effective and innovative venue and space solutions offered by Digbeth have now become too expensive for the festival in the face of increasing gentrification and in spite of its still ramshackle appearance.

Naturally with a repositioning of this extent there was a risk that the festival's unique atmosphere carefully nurtured in Digbeth would be eroded or diluted. One of the concerns raised was that by being more closely aligned with traditional cultural institutions that the event would lose its "edge" and become safer and more sanitised. However, the move to the centre of the city proved to be mainly successful. Having a centrally located focal point close to one of Birmingham's main thoroughfares resulted in greater accessibility for the general public that resulted in the largest percentage of new admissions recorded to date.

Rather than "selling out" the festival's relocation demonstrated its ability to continue to be agile and responsive in relation to ensuring its own sustainability. But, just as importantly the re-siting of the festival demonstrated its continued ability to be a mobile entity. In addition, the completion of one of Birmingham's urban redevelopment projects, the city's spectacular new train station and retail complex, Grand Central, provided a further motivation to situate the festival more centrally. Groves suggests that this development has had a significant impact on the atmosphere of the city centre. He contends that the new development has opened the city centre up to make it feel more accessible thereby making it a more natural environment to situate the festival in than previously.[94] The following year saw the festival retain its more centrally located focus with a significant move back to less institutionalised spaces within the city centre.

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[92] Groves, interview.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that Birmingham's Flatpack embodies a very specific and graphic representation of the city's fragmented and transformational physical postindustrial environment. Using Yi-Fu Tuan's concept of topophilia, I have proposed that Flatpack's affective bond with Birmingham is its most defining programming trope. The festival acts as an agile cultural agent that takes on the role of researcher, archivist and curator that witnesses and records the city's shifting image and urban landscape by way of its programming and exhibition practices. This contention is particularly pronounced in relation to Flatpack's spatial materialisation that takes on a different form each year in response to the city's transformation and limited cinematic amenities.

The case study has also presented the argument that Flatpack's ongoing programming strategies respond to Birmingham, the place, and its social and cultural history. This curatorial impetus formulates an ongoing authorial narrative that directly informs the festival's distinctive identity as a festival informed by its location. Again, in this case there is a notable practice of non-exclusivity and a commitment to creating an accessible social environment for festivalgoers where everyone is equal and nobody is a VIP.

Flatpack was first established to fill a glaring gap in Birmingham's cinematic landscape. It was established to create a space for independent and alternative film to be shown and to provide an opportunity for social engagement with cinema. In 2019, this is still the case. As one of its five core values, the festival proposes that it builds an inclusive context for adventurous work by creating opportunities for connection and conversation. However, while the operational activities of the festival bring film out of the cinema and into more easily accessible spaces such as pubs, restaurant, cafes or outdoor spaces, it can also be perceived of as somewhat culturally high-brow due to its esoteric cross-genre programming in contrast to GFF's curatorial drive to be populist. As Thirza Wakefield noted in her review, "a Flatpack audience member can expect to see films few others will *ever* see." In the past this has brought its own challenges for promoting the festival as the negotiation of "film" in and out of the festival's title demonstrates.

As with GFF, Flatpack's mode of curation can be considered a direct result of its positioning within the UK's film festival hierarchy as a secondary festival. In the case of both festivals this has had a direct impact on how these festivals are programmed. This positioning has motivated both to adopt alternative mode of authorship. In both cases this has manifested as a turn towards live and enhanced cinema as a key curatorial practice. However, in Flatpack's case the tendency towards novel cinematic practices is considerably more pronounced. This coupled with the city's constrained exhibition landscape has forced Flatpack to adopt a form of mobile lo-fi exhibition practice. Pop-up, site-specific screenings, multimedia and genre crossover events are positioned as a central and defining trope of the Flatpack programme rather than being special or out-of-the-ordinary events as in Glasgow's case.

This study specifically questions if the postindustrial environment brings anything unique to the festival. In Flatpack's case the answer to this question is a resounding yes. Birmingham's particular physical environment, which has resulted from postindustrial urban regeneration strategies, strongly influences how Flatpack materialises within the city. Birmingham's transitory architectural milieu compels the festival to take on different spatial materialisations on an annual basis, making it a fluid and mutable entity. This has resulted in Flatpack assuming an ambulatory, portable and flexible format in response to the city.

Arguably Flatpack's changing shape is a key factor in the festival retaining its dynamism and uniqueness as well as making it distinct within the UK's cinema exhibition landscape. Setting it in opposition to the other festivals examined in this study, Flatpack has tended towards assuming a wide geographical spread across the city that takes on the form of a roving journey. This contrasts with both GFF and Doc/Fest that assume a focused spatial concentration that forms the nexus of the festival. While the 2017 edition of Flatpack experimented with a tighter spatial concentration there was a drift back to using the wider scope of the city the following year. This can be attributed to that latest physical changes and new opportunities within the city's physical landscape.

In relation to the question of Flatpack's relationship to the city's image, the festival's

unconventional yet oddly apposite name specifically situates the festival as an alternative, yet fitting, representation of the city. It calls attention to the city's continually changing spatial materialisation as well as implying Flatpack's DIY exhibition practices. This representation of Flatpack directly contrasts with the notion presented by Ooi and Strandgaard-Pederson that city place marketing strategies utilise film festivals as part of projecting a cosmopolitan city narrative. Indeed, as part of the UK's austerity measures, Birmingham City Council is no longer in a position to offer any financial support to the festival. However, investment into Birmingham's spectacular architectural regeneration continues at pace, while tending to favour highly commercial retail ventures such as Grand Central over cultural investment. This poses a problem for a city that proposes itself to be a forward-thinking creative city.

Nonetheless, even without significant public funding support from the city, Flatpack still plays an important role for place-making in Birmingham. In the first instance the festival helps project a cosmopolitan image by helping to bolster Birmingham's image of being a cinematic city. The very fact of hosting an annual, increasingly recognisable and growing film festival contributes to the growth of Birmingham's reputation as such. It also contributes to Birmingham's reputation as an eventful city, a designator of postindustrial urban regeneration strategies that enriches city life for citizens. The festival's ongoing curatorial drive to uncover, recover and highlight the city's cinematic history also plays a part in the constitution of Birmingham as a cinema city. Outwardly at least, Birmingham is not understood to have a particularly strong cinematic legacy. However, because of Flatpack's dedication to uncovering, presenting and communicating this aspect of the city's history, this impression is slowly changing.

The festival also plays an integral role in advancing the growth of cinephilia beyond Birmingham in the wider West Midlands. In the last case study I attributed GFF's sustainability to it being an initiative of a secure institutional structure and so it's interesting to observe Flatpack's changing institutional nature. The festival has extended its purpose by taking on the institutional role of foremost agency for audience development in the West Midlands as part of the BFI's Audience Network. Once considered a quirky outlier festival, Flatpack is now funded to fulfil a vital cultural service

for the whole region outside of festival time, repositioning it as Birmingham's foremost cultural cinema organisation.

Interestingly, Flatpack's alternative methods of audience engagement have increased its ability to create access to film. While its esoteric programming can be considered high brow or culturally elitist on one hand, its methods of engagement have proved to be advantageous for reaching younger and more diverse audiences. Flatpack's DIY ethos seems to speak more successfully to younger audiences than that of the more traditional cinema format or setting. Indeed Flatpack's audience development activities such as Build Your Own Film Night can be considered to promote and develop new forms of democratic cinephilia. This approach challenges traditional cinemaviewing practices and unseats the more commonly understood film festival format that privileges premiere and preview screenings. Its success is directly attributable to repositioning young audiences as curators in their own right.

Flatpack's unusual practices chime more readily with the overall direction that the BFI is taking in relation to decategorising film and, by extension, the usual film festival format. The festival's strapline "film…. and then some" offers an apt illustration of the festival's broad format signalling a less stringent understanding of what constitutes screen culture and encouraging a wider screen experience in Birmingham and the West Midlands.

Chapter Six: Sheffield Doc/Fest: Serious Leisure

Key Facts

- Established in 1994.
- The UK's largest documentary festival.
- Takes place annually in June over six days.
- 2019 admissions figures are recorded as 31,587. This combined figure consists of UK and international industry delegates and the general public[1]. The breakdown of this is:

  3489 industry delegates – typically attend more than one event and have a business-related objective.

  28,098 festivalgoers through public admissions – tend to be single-ticket buyers.
- The festival is comprised of five key programme segments that are curated individually but link together: Films, Alternate Realities, Talks and Sessions, Marketplace & Talent, and Parties & Social.
- The scope of the 2019 programme consisted of screenings of 186 films in 14 venues, 84 industry and public talks at 7 venues that featured 205 speakers, 28 VR projects showcased at Alternate Realities and 40 social events including drinks receptions, parties and networking events.
- The value of deals under negotiation in the Marketplace was estimated at £8.1 million.
- Doc/Fest utilises the central part of the city centre as a cohesive festival hub.
- Principal funders and sponsors include: BFI Lottery funding, Sheffield City Council, Creative Europe – Media, Arts Council England, British Council, BBC, Channel 4, ITV, Sky.

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[1] Throughout this case study reference is made to the general public and/or public audience. In this context the general public and/or public audience specifically refers to single ticket purchasers as opposed to industry delegates who attend Doc/Fest for the purpose of conducting commercial activity.

- Current Festival Director, Cíntia Gil. Tenure commenced in 2019.
- Pricing: individual tickets are priced from £5-£10. Industry delegates pay £260 for a full pass that allows entry to the entire festival.
- Estimated budget: £1.7 million.2
- Registered as a charitable incorporated organisation with the Charity Commission for England and Wales.

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2 Doc/Fest, *Doc/Fest Festival Report 2017* (Sheffield, 2017), 22.

6.1 Introduction

Sheffield Doc/Fest provides the final case study in this comparative analysis. As with the other two cases examined, this chapter questions what Doc/Fest's primary purpose is and identifies its specific characteristics. The study examines how these attributes interact with the city of Sheffield's cultural agenda as a postindustrial city. It approaches this by examining Doc/Fest in relation to its postindustrial city setting and by considering the resulting specificities that have come to define the festival. This examination feeds into the larger question of how film festivals interact with and are a result of their particular environments. It also provides the most overt example in this thesis of the issue of uneven accessibility for audiences.

Importantly, Doc/Fest presents a divergence from the other two festivals examined in this thesis so far. Doc/Fest is differentiated from Glasgow Film Festival (GFF) and Flatpack Festival (Flatpack) by its primary status as an industry festival that is a prolific member of the international documentary circuit. This broadens and complicates an analysis of the festival in comparison to GFF and Flatpack that are both primarily considered to be audience-focused festivals. Further issues that set Doc/Fest apart from its predecessors include its formulation as a genre festival, the effect of its industrial status on both city and event, and how this affects specific programming tropes and strategies as well as the festival's much longer lifespan.

Following the same logic as the previous two case studies, the same set of questions pertaining to the festival's relationship with Sheffield and its postindustrial status will be applied here. However, an additional consideration arose through the process of analysis that couldn't be ignored. This issue resulted in my questioning more closely who Doc/Fest is targeted at rather than in the cases of the other two festivals.

The 2016 and 2017 editions of Doc/Fest's brochure, the festival's publication specifically targeted at the general public, opened by welcoming festivalgoers to "your

festival."[3] This simply articulated message strongly situated the festival as an event for the city and its citizens by bestowing ownership of Doc/Fest on the general public and positioning them as the most important stakeholders. In contrast, Doc/Fest's exclusive Industry Catalogue produced specifically for industry attendees did not carry the same welcome message. While the usual variety of introductory notes from key members of the management team including the chairman of the board, CEO and programming director were present, this key piece of rhetoric was missing.
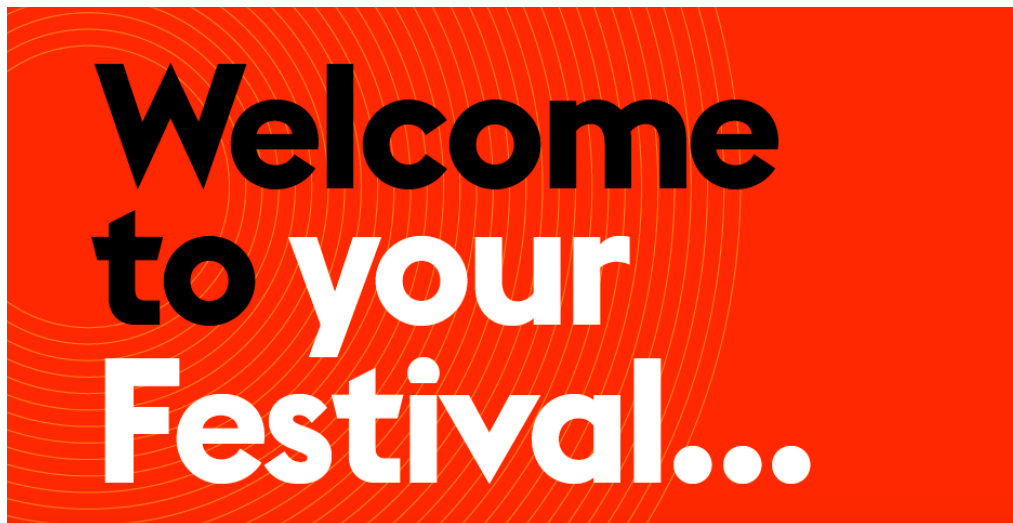

Figure 6.1. Introduction to Doc/Fest Programme 2017.
Source: *Doc/Fest Programme 2017.*

In part, I would suggest that this type of pointed messaging is simply not necessary for industry attendees. The act of purchasing accreditation and becoming a delegate represents a significant stake in and of itself that immediately bestows visible inclusion to the Doc/Fest community.[4] In contrast, the visibility of the public audience is far less noticeable than their highly apparent industrial counterparts. Indeed, over the three years that I have attended the festival as a participant-observer, I have often found myself questioning both where the general public is and if indeed their role is as prominent as festival communications would have us believe.

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[3] Doc/Fest, *Doc/Fest Brochure 2016* (Sheffield, 2016), 2; Doc/Fest, *Doc/Fest Brochure 2017* (Sheffield, 2017), 2.
[4] A cost of £309 (+ 20% VAT) in 2019.

The absence of this important message raises questions around how the festival views and positions stakeholder cohorts, the public and the industry. It also raises a question about what the primary purpose of the festival is and who the festival is aimed at. Doc/Fest's pointed messaging suggests a strategic intervention on the part of festival organisers that constructs these groups and their experience of the festival quite differently.

It is my contention that the festival's industrial bias privileges its industry delegates over the Sheffield-based public audience. The question of who the festival is targeted at links closely to what Doc/Fest's primary purpose is, and in turn, what bearing this has on the programming and operational strategies employed by the festival and its role within the cultural strategies of the city. In this chapter I identify three specific strategies that uphold Doc/Fest's industrial bias and affect the festival's materialisation in the city.

Figure 6.2. Doc/Fest Audience, 2019.
Source: https://www.facebook.com/sheffdocfest/photos, https://bit.ly/2R6POrF.

Bearing this contention in mind, this account examines Doc/Fest's role in relation to being positioned as Sheffield's flagship cultural event. It considers how this positioning supports and interacts with the revitalisation of Sheffield's image as a postindustrial city. The case also considers the strategies used to revitalise Doc/Fest and make it a

destination of choice for the film industry above other festivals and how this then relates to the city's cultural tourism agenda.

In spite of Doc/Fest's notably different strategic approach to that of GFF and Flatpack, all three festivals manifest common characteristics. As with the other two cases non-traditional and non-theatrical screening practices such as live cinema, and VR in Doc Fest's case, make an appearance here also. Following on from the other two case studies, the intertwining issues of programming, place and space will be examined in order to extract comparable features and tropes. Undoubtedly, all three festivals exhibit entrepreneurial and disruptive tendencies when it comes to use of space and their own unique materialisation within their given cities. Doc/Fest's physical materialisation is specifically effective and will be examined in order to formulate an understanding of its intrinsic relationship with city space during the festival period.

The primary focus of the study will be on the three editions where participant observations took place: 2015, 2016 and 2017. However, because of Doc/Fest's longer lifespan it is necessary to give greater attention to additional historical aspects of the festival's development that have influenced its contemporary format and set the trajectory for its strategic aims. This case study particularly pays attention to Doc/Fest's significant period of expansion (2006-2014) under Festival Director and CEO, Heather Croall's directorship. This brings the primary time period examined to approximately twelve years, in line with the other two case studies, although Doc/Fest is at a later stage in its overall life cycle. Some contemporary material has also been included that is pertinent to the argument presented.

The study is augmented by three key interviews:

Interviewee	Position	Date of interview
Heather Croall	CEO and Festival Director (2005-2016)	05/04/18

| Andy Beecroft | Programme Manager (2006-2015) | 07/02/18 |
| Charlie Phillips | Marketplace Director (2008-2013)

Deputy Director (2013-2014) | 20//04/18 |

Figure 6.3. Researcher's own.

These three personnel are particularly relevant to the period when the festival was undergoing significant expansion and set the agenda for the festival's current format. Analysis is also informed by Doc/Fest's own-produced materials, including an in-depth analysis of festival programmes from 2005 onwards, extensive media reportage and coverage in the trade press and strategic city planning documentation.

A Note on Participant Observation

The three editions, from 2015-17, where participant observation took place coincided with a transition period for the festival where the lead artistic executive changed marking both a disruption to the festival's programming strategy and a new phase for Doc/Fest as a whole.

From a curatorial perspective, the 2015 festival can be considered a changeover edition. This edition was led by Mark Atkin (former executive producer of Doc/Fest's VR programme) as acting festival director and CEO following Heather Croall's relinquishment of the position in 2014, when she returned to Australia to take up the post of CEO at Adelaide Fringe Festival. While Atkin was charged with delivering the 2015 edition of Doc/Fest, his appointment was an interim measure while recruitment took place for Croall's replacement. As such it was not necessary for him to put his own creative or distinctive mark on the festival.

This is specifically noted as this was the first year that I attended Doc/Fest for participant observation. This edition was fundamental to the formulation of my initial impressions of the festival as a vibrant, thriving and convivial environment. While Atkin was at the helm for this edition, I propose that the festival still very much bore the

hallmark of Croall's tenure affording me a partial insight of the event's format and atmosphere that allowed me to form an impression of the former period of development, albeit at one remove.

Following on from this transition year, the next two editions observed were led by Liz McIntyre (2015-2018). A former documentary filmmaker and commissioner for Discovery Channel, McIntyre had also been part of the advisory committee for Doc/Fest for a number of years. McIntyre's tenure ran for a period of three years and was followed by a further interim period of one year, so it is difficult at this point to anticipate if her influence on the festival's direction has had a lasting impact. Certainly a perceivable shift in the festival's communicated and rhetorical agenda as well as a notable change in key personnel and approach to programming had become evident during McIntyre's tenure. These developments signal changing strategic implications that will be considered as part of this study.

6.1.1 Doc/Fest Background

Doc/Fest was established in 1994, during the UK's second phase of film festival development. It is my opinion that Doc/Fest operates as two separate and quite distinct dimensions. Each of these have their own specific agendas that represent a complex hybrid structure combining characteristics of Peranson's business and audience models.[5] Indeed, Doc/Fest highlights how problematic the binary nature of Peranson's model is. The festival professes to serve dual agendas by engaging the local Sheffield audience with the documentary genre, while at the same time acting as a key industry event, both on a national level as part of the UK's film industry and on an international level as part of the global documentary circuit. In this case the festival's twin objectives need to be viewed side-by-side rather than at the opposing ends of a spectrum.

Each year Doc/Fest presents a programme of documentary film screenings and ancillary talks to an audience of circa 28,000 (2019) to 36,000 (2017) public festivalgoers who attend single events. At the same time, Doc/Fest facilitates a parallel

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[5] Mark Peranson, "First You Get the Power, Then You Get the Money: Two Models of Film Festivals" in Dekalog 3: On Film Festivals ed. Richard Porton (London and New York, Wallflower, 2009), 25.

industry-specific programme that is attended by an additional 3,500 industry delegates. Doc/Fest's industry programme consists of a busy marketplace that generated an estimated £8.1 million in business deals during the 2019 edition.[6] Additionally, the industry programme is augmented by a complex schedule of talks, workshops, master classes, screenings, networking events and parties.

One of the themes that has emerged in this research has been to discover how and why these particular second-tier UK film festivals have gained prominence in recent years and the methods that they have employed to differentiate themselves in a busy and competitive festivalised environment. The most immediate factor that singles out Doc/Fest is its clearly defined position as a prolific genre festival dedicated solely to the presentation of documentary, non-fiction and factual content on an international basis.

Unlike the other two festivals discussed, Doc/Fest's industrial and political agenda was established before a host city was secured making its location a secondary concern for the festival. The festival's origin is attributed to the documentary maker, Peter Symes, who had the initial idea to establish an event for British documentary makers. Co-founder, former board member and academic, Sylvia Harvey, ascribes the festival's establishment as being a direct response to the UK's 1990 Broadcasting Act. The Act was a piece of legislation that came into effect under Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government. The Bill established a new privatised framework for the development of the multi-channel environment and for the regulation of independent television and radio services. Harvey asserts that the Broadcasting Act initiated a period of intense competition causing many British documentary makers working in the industry to fear that factual commissioning and programming would be obliterated as a format entirely. This aspect of the festival's inception firmly positions Doc/Fest as being predominantly defined by its core objective rather than its location. This marks a divergence from the other two festivals, which profess to have intrinsic relationships with their physical locations.

[6] Doc/Fest, *Doc/Fest Report 2019* (Sheffield, 2019), 14.

As already observed in the other two cases, a festival's naming convention can indicate a great deal about an organisation's strategic agenda and how it wants to be perceived. The festival is referred to colloquially as Doc/Fest and its branding tends to use derivatives of the form Sheffield Doc Fest or Doc/Fest. However, the festival is registered for business purposes as International Documentary Festival Sheffield and was initially known as Sheffield International Film Festival.[7] The inclusion of the word "international" in the festival's title during its initial stages of development firmly cemented its ambition to be a part of the global circuit rather than serving a regional remit as in the cases of GFF and Flatpack.

Nowadays, Doc/Fest is recognised as being an international platform for premiering documentary and successfully attracts a dedicated inbound international industry audience that travels from elsewhere to attend the festival. As film critic Nick Bradshaw observes, Doc/Fest is now considered the UK's leading documentary festival and a "landmark event in the global film industry calendar."[8] Doc/Fest's establishment and adoption of the role of industry event offers a pertinent example of Marijke de Valck's observation that there was a mass turn of film festivals offering industrial services in the 1990s within the film festival circuit.[9] Because of this, the experience of festival attendees differs markedly from the other two festivals considered. Industry delegates attending Doc/Fest do so in order to specifically perform market-related and commercial activities. These include pitching for funding and distribution or conversely, providing funding, commissioning, distribution or broadcast opportunities.

Importantly, in the case of both GFF and Flatpack the same creative leadership has largely been in place throughout their historical trajectory so far. Festival Director, Ian Francis founded Flatpack while Festival Co-directors, Allison Gardner and Alan Hunter have been at the helm of GFF since its third edition. This continuity has provided creative and managerial consistency during the development of a stable artistic vision

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[7] Companies House, "International Documentary Film Festival Sheffield," accessed 2 February 2018, https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/CE018493.

[8] Paul Drury, "Truth or Dare? A Golden Age for Documentary Film," *Huffington Post,* last modified 17 August 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/paul-drury/documentaries-golden-age_b_3455567.html.

[9] Marijke de Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 109.

and supporting strategy for both festivals. In contrast, Doc/Fest has undergone several changes to artistic leadership. In recent years, this has become a pronounced tendency resulting in a churn across artistic leadership. The below offers an overview of recent changes to Doc/Fest's artistic executive:

- Heather Croall – festival director and CEO, 2006-2015
- Mark Atkin – interim director, 2015
- Liz McIntyre – festival director and CEO, 2016-2018
- Melanie Iredale – interim director, 2019
- Cíntia Gil – director, 2019-current

Doc/Fest's development to date also consists of a number of distinct stages that reflect changes in creative leadership and accompanying developments to the festival's agenda as it has grown and changed over time. Sylvia Harvey's provides a useful typography of Doc/Fest's history.[10] It divides the festival's lifespan into three distinct phases that she terms:

1. Development Phase (1995-1996)

2. Consolidation Phase (1996-2005)

3. Expansion Phase (2006-2014)

For the purposes of considering Doc/Fest's most recent history, I propose a fourth period of development be added to Harvey's historical framework that can be termed the "maturation phase." This phase begins with McIntyre's appointment in 2016 and runs currently.

While Doc/Fest's expansion phase will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter it is necessary to point out here that this period was a key turning point in the festival's historical trajectory. Under Croall's directorship the festival went through a period of exponential expansion and reinvigoration. During this time the festival was

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[10] Sylvia Harvey, "A History of Sheffield Doc/Fest, 1994-2016" (talk, presented by the Radical Film Network, Sheffield Doc/Fest, 10 June 2016).

strategically developed to establish Doc/Fest's marketplace on the international circuit and attract influential industry personnel such as buyers to Sheffield. During this period Croall transformed and energised what had been previously considered to be a staid nationally focused festival. Reflecting its 2010 and 2011 tagline "Sex & Docs & Rock 'n' Roll," the festival metamorphosed into a vibrant social event with increased recognition on the global circuit. In addition, Croall's intervention made specific use of the city centre to create a focused festivalised space that made Sheffield, the physical place, integral to the realisation of the festival for the first time.

In a 2016 review, Nick Bradshaw provides an apt description of Doc/Fest's re-envisioning, commenting:

> Twenty-two this year, Sheffield Doc/Fest can claim its part in
> nonfiction cinema's recent-years renaissance, having been the only
> UK festival to wave the flag for documentary culture through the
> 1990s and 2000s, and developing a once heavily British TV-centric
> delegate base into something more buzzily eclectic and
> international, with regularly rising audience numbers to prove it.
> Doc/Fest now boasts of being the world's third largest of its kind,
> after Amsterdam's IDFA and Toronto's Hot Docs.[11]

Innovations implemented to boost and invigorate Doc/Fest's industry agenda and activities during this period included:

> Rescheduling the festival from November, where it was in direct competition with the world's largest documentary festival, International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA), to a more accessible slot in June

> Implementing a programme of innovative industry pitching forums such as MeetMarket – a form of speed-dating pitching session

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[11] Nick Bradshaw, "The new guard: an interview with the new heads of Sheffield Doc/Fest," *Sight and Sound*, last modified 10 June 2016, http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/comment/festivals/new-guard-interview-new-heads-sheffield.

Introducing an exhaustive schedule of social events sponsored by various industry stakeholders in order to facilitate networking opportunities.

6.1.2 Case Study Structure

While the structure of this case study follows a similar trajectory to its predecessors the festival's longer lifespan and industrial nature brings alternative issues to the fore. The chapter has commenced with an overview of the festival's background in order to set the scene for the case to come. A brief historical framework has been included within this that highlights specific periods of development in Doc/Fest's history in order to set parameters around the study and to delineate between various phases of development.

The following section entitled, Sheffield: The Socialist Republic, considers the site of Doc/Fest's location by introducing Sheffield's socialist history and how the festival came to be located in the "Steel City." This section draws a parallel with the postindustrial city histories outlined in relation to Birmingham and Glasgow that saw all three cities forced to revise city strategies in the wake of the decline of the manufacturing industries that they were dependent on. The section draws particular attention to Sheffield's socialist leanings as an ideal location for an event focused on documentary with an activist agenda at the time of establishment.

The following section, Definitional Context: An Industry Festival, considers interlinking factors that impact on an understanding of Doc/Fest. The first part establishes the defining traits that constitute Doc/Fest as primarily being a commercially oriented industry event. Linking to this the following section of this segment considers the city's civic relationship to the festival as a key stakeholder that positions it as the city's pre-eminent commercial conference.

The fourth section of the case study, Programming: Transforming Doc/Fest through Conviviality, considers the programming strategies employed by Doc/Fest since the beginning of the festival's expansion period. It considers Doc/Fest's exceptional transformation in order to provide an insight into the creation and establishment of its current practices. I propose that these practices have formulated sociability and

participation into a key programming strategy as part of Doc/Fest's industry focus. This section discusses the methods employed to achieve this. These include the festival's rescheduling to a summer event and the implementation of novel practices of participation such as the introduction of the Parties and Social and Alternate Realities programmes. I go on to propose that the implementation of these strategies has created a heightened festival experience.

The final section of this chapter considers the festival's material impact on the city and how its spatial dimensions are manifested during the event. The section argues that it is not only the built city that constitutes the festival environment but that festival delegates also create an embodiment of the festival space. This section particularly notes the discrepancy between the material festival space open to the public audience and the exclusive festival space available to industry delegates. There is a marked difference between these two festival spaces that constitute two entirely different and parallel festival experiences.

6.2 Sheffield: The Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire and Cultural Regeneration

Figure 6.4. Sheffield City Centre.
Source: https://policypress.files.wordpress.com/2017/01/sheffield.jpg.

Importantly, Doc/Fest's establishment in Sheffield rather than elsewhere can be connected directly to the city's economic and urban regeneration in the early 1990s as a strategic response to the decline of the steel industry. The festival was initially expected to take place in Bristol where founder Peter Symes, a documentary maker based at BBC Bristol, and the formative board were based. However, difficulties in raising the initial funding to establish a Bristol-based festival and reticence to mounting a festival without financial surety caused the organisers to look elsewhere.

The festival organisers quest for a suitable location to situate the event coincided with Sheffield's early efforts to employ culture as an economic driver and as a tool for urban regeneration. Along with this, Sheffield's status as a socialist or left-wing city provided an ideal political environment for the establishment of a forum that gave voice to those who felt disenfranchised or were directly affected by Thatcher's previously outlined media legislation. Sylvia Harvey attributes the festival's initial establishment in Sheffield to a number of dedicated individuals that recognised the value of potentially hosting a significant media festival that would align with the city's burgeoning cultural strategy.[12] In addition, Sheffield City Council supported the festival from the outset by providing both funding and legal support through the provision of a solicitor to write the company articles. For Harvey, the city council's ongoing support has been fundamental in ensuring the festival's survival and sustainability.

Notably the City of Sheffield plays a pertinent role in UK postindustrial history by being one of the earliest adopters of strategic cultural development at city level. Several years in advance of New Labour establishing the Department of Culture, Media and Sports in 1997, or the term "creative industries" becoming common political parlance, Sheffield had implemented policy at local government level to promote the creative and media industries as an alternative to the decline in heavy industry.

Up until the 1980s, Sheffield's economy had been exclusively based on the production of steel with the city often being referred to as Steel City. Following a similar trajectory

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12 Harvey, "A History of Sheffield Doc/Fest, 1994-2016."

to that of Birmingham's industrial decline there had been a steady deterioration in employment that commenced in the 1960s and culminated in labour-saving strategies introduced in the early 1980s. This degeneration led to the loss of over 50,000 skilled steel-working jobs, the equivalent of ten percent of Sheffield's overall population and catapulted the city into a major depression.[13] The impact on daily life in the city was overwhelming. As cultural studies researcher Lisa Moss describes:

> In a city so exclusively focused on steel production as Sheffield, this was a devastating change of fortune, leaving thousands of skilled workers unemployed, and swathes of the city transformed from 24-hour shift-based activity to abandoned postindustrial wasteland.[14]

While Sheffield doesn't particularly manifest as a cinema city per se, two important films that depicted the effects of deindustrialisation in the UK were set in the city. *The Full Monty* and *Brassed Off* were both set in the Sheffield City Region and helped to raise the national consciousness about the social damage of economic restructuring in the postindustrial era.[15]

Sheffield's adoption of cultural strategies was a direct result of the city's economic situation. However, it can also be attributed to Sheffield's contemporary political landscape. In the early 1980s, Sheffield was a stronghold of the British Labour Party in opposition to the right-wing Conservative Party government. Under the leadership of Councillor David Blunkett, Sheffield was a staunchly Labour stronghold that exhibited overt socialist leanings that earned it the nickname, the Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire. During the 1970s, arts and culture had played an important role in expressing the concerns of socialist movements such as those connected with feminism, ethnic minorities and disability rights for political ends. As such, culture was

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[13] In recent times the City of Sheffield's population has returned to its pre-1980s figure of circa 550,000. It is considered England's 4th largest city and the largest metropolitan borough in South Yorkshire with a population of around 1.8 million people as part of the wider Sheffield City Region.

[14] Laura Lane, Ben Grubb and Anne Power, "Sheffield City Story: CASE Report 103: May, 2016" (LSE: Housing and Communities and Centre for Analysis and Social Exclusion, May 2016), 6, http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/67849/1/casereport103.pdf.

[15] *Brassed Off* directed by Mark Herman (Channel 4 Films, Miramax, Prominent Pictures, 1996: UK); *The Full Monty* directed by Peter Cataneo (Redwave Films, Channel 4 Films, Twentieth Century Fox, 1997:UK).

an important factor in the socialist agenda whereby it was considered an agent for change. This marked a distinct opposition with the Conservative governance stance that positioned culture as merely part of service provision.

6.2.1 Sheffield: Early Adopter

A pertinent example of Sheffield's progressive attitude towards the role of the cultural industries is exemplified through the city's establishment of the Cultural Industries Quarter (CIQ) in the 1990s. As noted by Bianchini in Chapter Two, Sheffield's CIQ was one of the first of its kind in the UK.[16] Housed on a thirty-hectare site on the edge of the city centre, the quarter was established as a base for cultural and media companies in a largely defunct sector of the city previously used for small-scale industry.

Today the quarter is home to more than 300 companies that are predominantly "connected to creative or cultural industries, such as film-making, music production, software design, broadcasting, new media, architecture, art and traditional crafts."[17] The quarter also houses the main site for Sheffield Hallam University, one of the key sponsors of the festival.

At the time of its establishment in the early 1990s, the initiative was considered to be a "spendthrift and lunatic" use of public money. While not initially successful in its early stages due to an emphasis on creating jobs rather than implementing the mixed-use economy model later adopted by cultural quarters, it is still in existence today and is now thriving. Sheffield CIQ proved to be a forerunner to the establishment of successful cultural quarters across the UK such as the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham or Northern Quarter in Manchester. In addition, the establishment of the quarter laid the political foundations for cultural production to be seen as an essential part of city regeneration strategies that went on to embrace Doc/Fest as its flagship cultural event.

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[16] Franco Bianchini, "Urban renaissance? The arts and the urban regeneration process," in *Tackling the Inner Cities: The 1980s Reviewed, Prospects for the 1990s*, eds. Susanne MacGregor and Ben Pimlott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 221.
[17] Sheffield City Council, "Council set to boost cultural industries quarter", accessed 3 March 2018, http://www.sheffieldnewsroom.co.uk/council-set-to-boost-cultural-industries-quarter/.

6.3 Definitional Context: A Documentary Festival

Before considering Doc/Fest further, it is important to define the festival in relation to the particulars of the non-fiction festival. According to a definition of non-fiction festivals offered by Igor Blazevic, founder of Prague's One World Human Rights Film Festival, Doc/Fest can be considered to fall under the auspice of the "traditional" documentary film festival.[18] Blazevic identifies the presence of a significant market as one of the key traits of the traditional documentary film festival. He argues that this positions the festival as being primarily commercially motivated rather than politically inspired. In line with this categorisation then, both Doc Fest's market and its highly developed industry programme, situate the festival as being the realm of the filmmaker rather than the activist.

Extending from this contention, Doc/Fest can be considered to be a survey festival that encompasses as broad as possible an overview of the latest documentary films from the circuit. This includes presenting an immense range of topics including politics, the environment, LGBTQ, the arts, science, religion, history, sport, family and biography, to name but a few. In addition Doc/Fest increasingly uses multiple storytelling formats to provide a platform for documentary as a form. Programmer, Sean Farnel, offers a useful insight into the programming ethos of the documentary survey festival. Taking his experience at Hot Docs as an example, Farnel argues that Hot Docs tried to show that documentary can do as much as the fiction film. He proposes that Hot Docs unofficial curatorial motto was "let's show everything a documentary can do."[19] This is a caveat that can equally be applied to Doc/Fest's programming policy. Doc/Fest's website reinforces this underpinning strategic programming ethos by describing it as seeking "to push the boundaries of documentary through a carefully curated programme that sets trends, responds to hot topics and sparks debate."[20]

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[18] Igor Blazevic, "Film Festivals as a Human Rights Awareness Building Tool" in *Film Festival Yearbook 4: Film Festivals and Activism*, eds. Dina Iordanova and Leshu Torchin (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2012), 111.

[19] Alex Fischer, "Hot Docs: A Prescription for Reality: An Interview with Sean Farnel, Former Director of Programming at Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival" in *Film Festival Yearbook 4: Film Festivals and Activism*, eds. Dina Iordanova and Leshu Torchin (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2012), 230.

[20] "About Doc/Fest," Doc/Fest, accessed 18 March 2018, https://sheffdocfest.com/view/aboutdocfest.

Doc/Fest segments its activities into five distinct elements: Films, Marketplace & Talent, Parties and Social, Talks and Sessions and Alternate Realities within its programming architecture. Each element is curated individually by its own team but all work together in tandem to create a cohesive programming strategy with complementary individual segments that feed into each other. Importantly, the programme is divided between those segments that are open to the general public and those dedicated to industry activities. This delineation is shown clearly on Doc/Fest's website that direct the two cohorts to separate activities dividing the programme between Films, AR and Talks for the public audience and Industry, Marketplace and Talent aimed at industry attendees.[21] The film programme is the main section of the festival that is open to both the general public and industry attendees alike.

6.3.1 Doc/Fest as Industry Event

As already established Doc/Fest's initial purpose was to create profile for the genre and provide a forum that represented and defended the UK's documentary industry. As a result of this, a large percentage of Doc/Fest's partner organisations and board of directors initially comprised of representatives from major UK media institutions such as BBC, Channel 4, Discovery Channel and ITN, among others. This continues to be the case today (for full details of company registration and governance see Appendix D). Indeed in her discussion, Harvey emphasises the specific importance of BBC, Channel 4 and Discovery Channel in contributing to the festival's early development on both a "moral and financial basis."[22] The scholar goes as far as saying that without their support that the festival may not have actually happened.

It can certainly be argued that this investment from industry stakeholders has significantly influenced the festival's strategic direction towards an industry bias as becomes clear throughout this chapter. This is a bias that is reportedly still evident today. Indeed so much so, that the final stages of this research coincided with Doc/Fest's Director of Programming, Luke Moody's, resignation from his position in 2019 as a result of purported board-level bias. Moody's reasons for leaving Doc/Fest

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[21] "Home Page," Doc/Fest, accessed 25 March 2018, https://sheffdocfest.com.
[22] Harvey, "A History of Sheffield Doc/Fest, 1994-2016."

were widely cited in the trade press as the result of an in-depth interview with *Sight and Sound*. He publicly and resoundingly criticised "the dominance on the Doc/Fest board of the factual TV departments" claiming their focus was fixed solely on self-interest to secure commissions rather than on advancing the artistic credibility of the programme.[23] Moody maintains that Doc/Fest is in a state of regression that places constraints on international programming strategies. Commenting on the contemporary board, he claims that

> their anchor is the festival as it was 10, 20 years ago –
> putting forward colonial forms of filmmaking, annually offering
> and pressuring to include content only relevant to a domestic
> market and directed by white men over 40. The chimney
> needs sweeping before a fire can be lit.[24]

Moody's criticism points to an analogous concern raised by this chapter regarding a perceivable industry bias at Doc/Fest that extends to constraining programming strategy. It also verifies my contention that in spite of the festival's communicated messaging attributing Sheffield's citizens as being the most important stakeholder cohort that Doc/Fest continues to be directed towards the concerns of the industry.

Doc/Fest's commitment to attracting an international, presumably industry-related audience presents as a clear strategic driver. Illustrating this point, Doc/Fest's website proclaims its cosmopolitan status by stating that each year the festival welcomes "over 3,500 industry delegates from over 60 countries."[25]

This ongoing focus on the festival's industry objectives presents a challenge to whether a seemingly niche festival that is focused on a specific format does actually serve local interests as one of Sheffield's predominant annual arts festivals. Unquestionably as the UK's premier documentary festival, Doc/Fest fulfils an important function within the

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[23] Nick Bradshaw, ' "The Chimney Needs Sweeping": Luke Moody on the end of his tenure programming Sheffield Doc/Fest,' *Sight and Sound,* last modified 16 July 2019, https://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/comment/festivals/sheffield-doc-fest-2019-film-programme-latin-american-outreach-luke-moody-resignation.

[24] Ibid.

[25] "About Doc/Fest," Doc/Fest, accessed 20 May 2019, https://sheffdocfest.com/view/aboutdocfest.

framework of the national film industry and wider film festival circuit. Nick Higgins credits Doc/Fest with being among a core group of prestigious festivals on the global documentary circuit that have the ability to confer cultural capital and cachet on films, which positions the festival as a valuable industry destination along with the likes of IDFA and Hot Docs.[26]

Following on from this Doc/Fest's industry realm can be considered a textbook example of Mark Peranson's "business model" in many ways.[27] This model is predicated on the operations of major international film festivals such as Cannes, Berlin or Venice festivals that have a large focus on the industry. According to Peranson, most festivals oscillate along the spectrum between business and audience model combining some elements of both. While Doc/Fest doesn't necessarily fulfil all of Peranson's criteria, it demonstrates a large enough percentage to fall into the category of business (or "industry") festival (see Appendix E for a table that offers a full comparative analysis of Doc/Fest against Peranson's criteria).

In spite of fulfilling much of Peranson's criteria for being an industry event, Doc/Fest's previously mentioned public admission figures seemingly indicate that it is the public audience that makes up the lion's share of overall attendance. Again, this problematizes Peranson's straightforward assessment of how the conditions that the film festival sphere operates under and highlights that neither of Doc/Fest's key objectives can be considered in isolation.

A particularly apt example of this is the 2017 edition. This edition recorded a peak year with over 36,000 individual tickets sold to the general public, equating to 91 percent of Doc/Fest's overall admissions. A breakdown of the public audience profile showed that 47 percent of attendees were from Sheffield while the other 53 percent travelled to the festival from elsewhere. This was divided between the rest of Yorkshire (6%), London (22%), the rest of the UK (20%) and international (8%). However, given the festival's

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[26] Nick Higgins, "Tell Our Story to the World: The Meaning of Success for A Massacre Foretold – A Filmmaker Reflects" in *Film Festival Yearbook 4: Film Festivals and Activism*, eds. Dina Iordanova and Leshu Torchin (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2012), 133.

[27] Mark Peranson, "First You Get the Power," 25.

active targeting of the industry it is distinctly possible that many of those recorded as public audience visiting from elsewhere, particularly London, were in fact industry attendees that hadn't purchased festival accreditation. This seems particularly likely when compared against the geographical breakdown of industry delegates. This was reported as being international (29%), national (65%) and local (6%). However, this will have to remain unconfirmed as requests to Doc/Fest for a further breakdown of this information were denied. This particular example illustrates that film festival analysis is a more opaque and complicated issue than a top-level breakdown of attendance figures can reveal and disrupts the notion of a binary division between business and audience festivals.

6.3.2 Economic Impact on the City

From a civic perspective the festival's economic impact on the city can also largely be attributed to its industry focus. Doc/Fest's post-event report in 2017 ascribed a significant and direct economic impact on the City of Sheffield. It stated that the festival can now be "considered to be a major cultural contributor to the city's cultural economy" as a result of outside investment and inbound commercial tourism.[28] The report clearly delineated income raised within the city and outside of it.

It valued income derived from the city via Sheffield City Council, other partner contributions and local ticket sales at £240,762 while ascribing the greater portion of the festival's revenue of circa £1.4 million to investment from outside the city. The report calculated that for every £1 attributable to city investment that Doc/Fest re-invests £3.79 back into the economy.[29] Further to this, the report valued delegate spend in the city during the festival period as being an estimated £1.8 million across accommodation, transport, food and drink. This investment makes a clear case for the significant economic value that the festival brings to the city by targeting industry delegates.

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[28] Doc/Fest, *Doc/Fest Festival Report 2017* (Sheffield, 2017), 22.
[29] Ibid.

In June 2017, the city council announced the latest three-year cycle of funding support for the festival. As one of the festival's largest funders it's clear that the city's council values Doc/Fest's ongoing importance for promoting a cosmopolitan image of Sheffield and positioning it as a competitor in the global city contest. However, the monetary value of the city's support is notable for its absence and this information was unavailable when requested from the festival. The news was announced on the city council's website noting the festival's contribution to the city's "strong economy" strategy.[30] The statement endorsed Doc/Fest's contribution to the city by stating that "hosting the festival adds to our reputation as a cultural and creative destination, enhancing Sheffield's appeal to visitors, businesses and those who may wish to move to Sheffield to work."[31]

This contention by the city strongly resonates with Richard Florida's formulation of the Creative City. Florida's theory posits that cultural activity is at the service of the creative classes and that its primary function as a form of attraction that enhances the liveability of cities. I have already taken issue with this contention in Chapter Three for sidelining cultural activity to a form of service rather than being a valuable recognisable asset. However, the statement issued by Sheffield sheds some light on how the city views the benefits of hosting the festival. It clearly demonstrates that the festival is seen as important for promoting a creative city image but less so for its value to the promotion and advancement of documentary or film. This is compounded further by the city's claim that Doc/Fest is in fact Sheffield's largest conference.[32] This positioning of the festival takes the onus away from the city's cultural agenda and places it squarely on the festival's business activities by using it as a promotional tool in order to promote Sheffield as a commercial tourism destination.

The next section goes to on to discuss the programming strategies employed by Doc/Fest since the beginning of the festival's expansion period. It considers Doc/Fests

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[30] Sheffield City Council, "Council pledges support for festival of film," last modified 12 June 2017, http://www.sheffieldnewsroom.co.uk/council-pledges-support-for-festival-of-film.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Welcome to Sheffield, "Sheffield's largest conference secures 3 year commitment," last modified 15 June 2017, http://www.welcometosheffield.co.uk/conference/conference-news/2017/jun/15/sheffield-s-largest-conference-secures-3-year-commitment.

exceptional transformation in order to provide an insight into the creation and establishment of its current practices. I propose that these practices have formulated sociability into a key programming strategy as part of Doc/Fest's industry focus.

6.4 Programming: Transforming Doc/Fest through Conviviality

Filmmaker and former executive producer of BBC arts strand *Arena,* Anthony Wall, describes Doc/Fest as formerly having a reputation for being a "rather fusty, miserable affair" during its first phase.[33] In its early years, the festival had primarily focused on the UK industry and tended to mainly be attended by London-based filmmakers and producers making it a narrowly focused event. Doc/Fest only really started to flourish and establish its own unique identity in its third phase of development. Termed by Harvey as "the expansion phase," this period of reinvigoration can be predominantly credited to Heather Croall who was appointed as festival director and CEO.[34]

Programme Co-ordinator, Andy Beecroft, who worked with Doc/Fest from 2007-2016, likens the exponential expansion and reformulation that took place during this period as being similar to that of "a dotcom boom."[35] To put this into perspective, during the period from 2006 to 2014 Doc/Fest's general admissions rose from 3000 to over 30,000 while industry delegates increased from 500 to 3500. Croall was instrumental in implementing the "robust, innovative and energetic programming" practices that the festival has now become renowned for on the documentary circuit. Commenting on taking up her post in 2006, Croall observed:

> The festival was in a moribund state by the time I arrived, but I didn't
> know that. I didn't know there were murmurs that Sheffield had lost its
> mojo and was a little bit flat. Once I analysed it and realized what a

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[33] Variety Staff, "Croall takes Sheffield to a new level," *Variety,* last modified 31 October 2018, https://variety.com/2008/film/markets-festivals/croall-takes-sheffield-to-a-new-level-1117995112.

[34] Harvey, "A History of Sheffield Doc/Fest, 1994-2016".

[35] Andy Beecroft, interview by author (via Skype, February 2017).

tragic situation we were facing, I thought, OK, we need to create

something so new and different.[36]

One of the festival's key objectives from the outset of Croall's tenure was to attract international buyers, decision makers and commissioners to Doc/Fest's market in order to reposition it as an international destination festival and a place to do business. Resonating with an assertion made by Leshu Torchin that "the value of networking that takes place at, and behind the scenes of, film festivals cannot be underestimated," Croall set about revitalising the festival.[37] Her core strategy involved resituating social interaction and networking to the centre of the festival's format in an attempt to ensure that attending Doc/Fest became a valuable and memorable experience as well as creating talk-ability.

Figure 6.5. Networking at Doc/Fest.
Source: https://www.facebook.com/sheffdocfest/photos, https://bit.ly/2q2PTBA.

In a tribute to Croall at the end of her tenure, filmmaker Robert Graeff, describes the atmosphere in the festival bars as having gone from a "respectful hum to a deafening

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36 Kevin Ritchie, "Doc/Fest enters its second decade," *Realscreen*, last modified 12 June 2013, http://realscreen.com/2013/06/12/docfest-celebrates-its-second-decade.

37 Leshu Torchin, "Networked for Advocacy: Film Festivals and Activism," in *Film Festival Yearbook 4: Film Festivals and Activism*, eds. Dina Iordanova and Leshu Torchin (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2012), 9.

roar."[38] Graeff's statement confirms that the festival had definitely cast off its former staid reputation.

Beecroft characterises the entirety of this period as embodying the punk rock ethos of the festival's tagline "Sex & Docs & Rock 'n' Roll" (2010-2012), a play on Ian Drury's 1970s punk rock hit. This new identity and ethos were implemented to shatter previous perceptions of the festival by repositioning it as a youthful, edgy, diverse and fun event. Reflecting this new anarchic attitude the festival entered an intense period of experimentation designed to disrupt the festival format and attract attention by generating a media profile and valuable word of mouth on the international circuit. As Croall points out, it was necessary to create something really different in order to attract influential industry to a formerly depressed postindustrial town in the north of England.[39]

Figure 6.6. More Sex & Docs & Rock 'n' Roll – Doc/Fest Branding 2012.
Source: https://www.facebook.com/sheffdocfest/photos, https://bit.ly/34CvEd2.

In terms of breaking with the traditional film festival format, this strategy reached its zenith in 2013 when Doc/Fest hosted not one but three Opening Night screenings. All

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[38] Doc/Fest, *Doc/Fest Industry Guide 2015* (Sheffield, 2015), 5.

[39] Heather Croall, interview by author (via Skype, 5 April 2018).

three screenings included augmented or enhanced extra-filmic elements in the vein of Atkinson and Kennedy's definition of live cinema.[40] The events included:

- The world premiere of Sheffield music documentary, *The Big Melt: How Steel Made us Hard,*[41] Sheffield musician and frontman of internationally famed pop band, Pulp, Jarvis Cocker's ode to the city's steel industry. The screening was accompanied by a live soundtrack performed by over 50 musicians including Cocker, members of The Human League, The Verve, Richard Hawley and the Sheffield Youth Choir.

- A site-specific screening of *The Summit.*[42] The screening was presented in a cave in the Peak District approximately an hour from Sheffield city centre, which required the entire audience to be transported to the location by bus.

- A screening of provocative documentary, *Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer*,[43] followed by a surprise Skype link-up interview with the protagonist, Yekaterina Samutsevich, in her home in Russia.

As well as experimenting with the programming format, Croall extended this approach to enlivening industry activities at Doc/Fest by implementing novel networking practices. Innovations such as the establishment of the MeetMarket and Alternate Realities to reinvigorate the festival's commercial activities in order to resituate them as dynamic and novel.

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[40] Sarah Atkinson and Helen Kennedy, *Live Cinema: Cultures, Economies, Aesthetics* (New York, London, New Delhi & Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2017).

[41] T*he Big Melt: How Steel Made us Hard* directed by Martin Wallace (BBC Storyville, BBC North in association with the BFI, 2013).

[42] *The Summit* directed by Nick Ryan (Image Now Films, Fantastic Films, Passion Pictures, 2012).

[43] *Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer* directed by Mike Lerner and Maxim Pozdorovkin (Britdoc Foundation, Roast Beef Productions, Third Party Films, 2013).

Figure 6.7. MeetMarket, 2017.
Source: https://twitter.com/sheffdocfest/status, https://bit.ly/33AnRem.

MeetMarket was initially formulated at the Australian International Documentary
Conference in 2003 (AIDC) by Croall and Karolina Lidin, who later became
MeetMarket's executive producer at Doc/Fest. The initiative was introduced in 2006 and
operates as a form of speed-dating pitching forum where filmmakers pitch their ideas to
funders in rapid one-to-one meetings.

The festival's website describes MeetMarket

> as one of the world's largest documentary and factual markets, and the
> flagship pitching opportunity at Doc/Fest with the opportunity to meet
> with over 300 international funders, broadcasters, distributors and
> exhibitors.[44]

Joshua Oppenheimer's highly acclaimed documentary, *The Act of Killing*,[45] can be
offered as a pertinent example of MeetMarket's success. *The Act of Killing* secured
funding from a meeting in the marketplace and returned to the programme in 2013
where a director's cut of the film premiered, although its actual world premiere took

[44] "About MeetMarket," Doc/Fest, last accessed 3 June 2018, https://sheffdocfest.com/view/meetmarket.

[45] *The Act of Killing* directed by Joshua Oppenheimer (Final Cut for Real, Piraya Film A/S, Novaya Zemlya, Spring Films, 2012).

place at Telluride. This also offers a pertinent example of the argument that the festival circuit fuels and produces festival films in an ongoing feedback loop that creates an interdependency between film supply and film festivals.[46] While this is not a key line of enquiry in this thesis, this circular process can be attributed to MeetMarket's ongoing success. As journalist Nick Bradshaw comments:

> The MeetMarket pitching forum is now sufficiently well-tried and tuned
> that it can boast a healthy number of successful pitches that have come
> full circle to the festival's programme, including Joshua Oppenheimer's
> singular and devastating genocide exposé redux *The Act of Killing*, which
> perhaps inevitably scooped both the festival's Grand Prix and (with
> Walter Murch's *Particle Fever*) shared the audience award.[47]

This example is further illustrated by Oppenheimer's follow-up film *The Look of Silence*,[48] which also secured funding in the Marketplace and went on to fill one of Doc/Fest's Opening Night slots in 2016.

6.4.1 Rescheduling Doc/Fest

As mentioned earlier, a further strategic tactic that was employed during this period was the festival's relocation within the annual schedule from November to June in 2011. Previously, Doc/Fest took place during parallel dates to those of IDFA making it difficult to secure titles against competition from the more prolific and established festival. Doc/Fest's move forward by six months took the festival out of direct competition with IDFA thus opening up new opportunities to secure content that had previously been difficult or completely unavailable to obtain. On a national level, the move also reconfigured the festival's position and profile. The festival's new dates now placed it just before EIFF making it a direct competitor of factual content for the Edinburgh festival. However, at the same time, the move also positioned Doc/Fest further away from LFF's October / November dates. The benefit of this strategic rescheduling was

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[46] Dina Iordanova, "Introduction" in *The Film Festival Reader,* ed. Dina Iordanova, (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2013), 5.

[47] Nick Bradshaw, "The Best of Sheffield Doc/Fest 2013," *Sight and Sound,* last modified 5 December 2016, http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/comment/festivals/best-sheffield-docfest-2013.

[48] *The Look of Silence* directed by Joshua Oppenheimer (Anonymous, Britdoc Foundation, Final Cut for Real, 2014).

that it removed Doc/Fest from direct competition with LFF while also opening up an alternative platform for documentary film that sought an earlier UK premiere date.

Rescheduling Doc/Fest from winter to summer proved to be instrumental for fundamentally changing the festival's atmosphere. Doc/Fest's new summer positioning allowed the festival a greater opportunity to repurpose the city's outdoor public spaces for screenings and activities such as talks, receptions, an outdoor bar, street food concessions and various novel happenings such as a morning exercise class.

Figure 6.8. Outdoor Screening Site – Howard Street.
Source: https://sheffdocfest.com/films/6869.

Doc/Fest's physical move out of the confines of the cinema and onto the streets made the festival more visible within the city. It also aided the creation of a more convivial atmosphere that promoted social interaction resulting in an environment more akin to the urban music festival than the film festival.

6.4.2 Practices of Participation

While Doc/Fest can primarily be understood as a marketplace or industry event, its role as a forum for activist filmmaking shouldn't be wholly discounted. Thus far I have explicitly defined Doc/Fest as a documentary festival rather than a human rights or activist film festival. However, its programme of talks and sessions also offers a conduit

for contextualising screenings. As Roya Rastegar argues, the task of the curator is to definitively frame "the conditions within which audiences come together, and how they see and engage with screen cultures."[49] In this way Doc/Fest augments its screening programme with further in-depth analysis and active engagement with the texts screened.

In agreement with Rastegar's contention, Igor Blazevic also describes the act of activist film curation as being about creating the right viewing conditions to raise awareness. He proposes that it is not necessarily "the films we screen, but what we 'do' with the films and the interpretive contexts we build for their screenings."[50] Blazevic's description resonates with Doc/Fest's original ambition to create a political forum for disenfranchised voices in the documentary industry. This objective is apparent through the festival's extensive programme of talks, public Q&As, panel discussions, in-conversation interviews and master classes that offer an additional layer of participation for both filmmakers and attendees. It is also evident through Doc/Fest's investment to create additional value and build on its strategy of connectivity by supporting filmmakers to attend in person or virtually (via Skype interviews etc.).

Figure 6.9. Documentary Campus, 2016.
Source: https://www.facebook.com/sheffdocfest/photos, https://bit.ly/35NEd4Z.

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[49] Roya Rastegar, "Difference, Aesthetics and the Curatorial Crisis of Film Festivals" *Screen* 53, no. 3 (Autumn, 2012): 313, http://screen.oxfordjournals.org/content/53/3/310.short.

[50] Igor Blazevic, "Film Festivals as a Human Rights Awareness Building Tool," 112.

For Dina Iordanova the role of discussion is as important as the screening of films at festivals with an activist motivation.[51] However, problematically all of the talks and sessions are not open to the public at Doc/Fest. Here again the division between public and industry is apparent. The "Talks" programme that is open to the public audience is formulated around a number of prolific events that present highly recognisable popular personalities from television and film and assume a public interview format. Thematically the public talks programme tends to gravitate towards the lighter end of the current affairs spectrum. This is demonstrated through a tendency to programme comedy, political satire, celebrity and lifestyle-related talks that can be considered closer to entertainment rather than testimony per se. As an illustration of this strategy the 2017 *In-Conversation* programme that was open for booking to the public featured:

> TV personality Louis Theroux interviewing documentary maker Nick Broomfield about *WHITNEY "Can I be Me"* (which premiered at the festival)[52]
>
> Comedian, Sir Lenny Henry, addressing diversity
>
> *Private Eye* editor, Ian Hislop, discussing post-truth and satire
>
> Acclaimed director, Peter Greenaway CBE, talking about what's next for storytelling
>
> Local actress, Maxine Peake, discussing her love of documentary in an event entitled "My Desert Island Docs"

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51 Ibid.

52 *WHITNEY "Can I be Me",* directed by Nick Broomfield (Lafayette Films, Passion Pictures, Showtime Networks, 2017).

Figure 6.10. In Conversation – Nick Broomfield and Louis Theroux, 2017.
Source: https://www.facebook.com/sheffdocfest/photos. https://bit.ly/37RSIMc.

The events outlined above offer a broad appeal by covering easily accessible topics and featuring recognisable film and TV personalities. In addition, all the participants listed above are notable for being British. The series is also live streamed to passers-by on a large outdoor screen at the front of the venue, Sheffield's Crucible Theatre. The Crucible is situated in Tudor Square, the site of the main outdoor hub and a central point of convergence for the festival. The liveness of the public interviews coupled with the recognisability of the interviewees serves to animate the area. It also acts as a useful promotional tool for non-festivalgoers who may potentially inadvertently stumble across these events and be introduced to Doc/Fest by a recognised TV personality or celebrity.

In contrast to the publicly available Talks programme, the festival's Industry Talks are primarily curated to relate to and draw from the screening programme and marketplace. Topics addressed are mostly concerned with either the act of filmmaking or the business of film such as finance, production, co-production, multimedia, talent, technology and exhibition being addressed. However, because of the thematic content of the films shown at Doc/Fest, the Talks and Sessions also provide a platform where other activist-related issues can be raised thereby taking the programme beyond its

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industrial remit. A concern that arises from the exclusive nature of this segment of the programme is the issue of "preaching to the converted."[53] Presumably those working in documentary are by and large an already invested and well-informed cohort. By presenting a large percentage of talks in a closed and exclusive scenario only intended for a cultural elite of film industry professionals, Doc/Fest creates an exclusionary ethos around issue-based filmmaking.

6.4.3 Parties and Social

Turning to practices of participation of a different kind, Doc/Fest programmes a profuse schedule of receptions, networking events and parties. This programme was specifically developed to complement the Marketplace's objectives and to give industry attendees the opportunity to connect in a social scenario where the barriers were more permeable. As a self-description on the Cinando website explains, Doc/Fest's objective is to "connect thousands of creatives in a nurturing environment, resulting in the discovery of new talent, new collaborations and new commissions for cinema, television and online."[54]

Figure 6.11. Guilty Pleasures Party, 2016.
Source: https://www.facebook.com/sheffdocfest/photos, https://bit.ly/2rCpMSr.

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[53] Alex Fischer, "Hot Docs: A Prescription for Reality," 230.

[54] "Sheffield Doc/Fest", Cinando, accessed on 13 March 2018, https://cinando.com/en/Company/sheffield_docfest_9412/Detail

Indeed the "Parties and Social" section of the industry programme is constructed as its own discrete dimension. This programme segment has equal weighting to the festival's other four dimensions (Films, Alternate Realities, Talks and Sessions and Marketplace & Talent), indicating its centrality as part of the festival's core strategy for creating conviviality. While social events are a given at festivals it tends not to be usual for them to be allocated their own specific programme strand. By actively programming Parties and Social in to its own named and curated segment Doc/Fest repositions these events as being just as important as the rest of the programme.

As I have proposed, the role of social interaction and the establishment of a highly invested industry community was key to Doc/Fest's successful transformation.[55] Croall's strategy for reinvigoration placed networking at the heart of its project in a way that it hadn't been before thus situating conviviality as a key trait of the festival. For her, it was extremely important to ensure that commissioners, broadcasters and funders were not siloed away from filmmakers and that all industry attendees were treated equally in order to create a "cauldron effect" that might result in unexpected encounters and outcomes.[56] Doc/Fest's emphasis on the social is far from unusual in the world of festivals. As Leshu Torchin's earlier assertion observes networking and social interaction is a key method for developing and furthering the formation of documentary film culture.[57]

However, harking back to the Doc/Fest's former tagline "Sex & Docs & Rock 'n' Roll" the festival's innovative approach to implementing its social strategy is the factor that set it most apart. Demonstrating this point, the festival's former Event Manager, Lisa Brooks, claims that Doc/Fest's parties are legendary on the global circuit.[58] Events such as the hedonistic Guilty Pleasures Party where delegates go to "dance up a storm" have become intrinsic to the Doc/Fest experience.[59] Adding to Brooks' assertion,

55 Smyth, From Lerwick to Leicester Square, 2017, 441.

56 Croall, interview.

57 Torchin, "Networked for Advocacy: Film Festivals and Activism," 9.

58 Doc/Fest, *Doc/Fest Industry Guide 2016* (Sheffield, 2016), 207.

59 Ibid., 197.

Beecroft suggests that over the years delegates have frequently maintained that the Guilty Pleasures Party is the best place to pitch a project.[60]

Doc/Fest's social events are not just confined to parties and receptions. They extend to novel happenings such as a Docsercise class each morning, live storytelling, the annual roller disco (now discontinued), maseoke (a form of mass karaoke) and a pub quiz, among others. In addition, each evening a multitude of networking receptions takes place that are hosted by national delegations as well as by more targeted film funds and broadcasters such as The Grierson Trust, Molinare, BFI, ITV and Innovate UK (UK's trade organisation for research), to name but a few. While this strategy was initially implemented to attract and entertain international buyers from the marketplace, it also highlights the need for festivals to be competitive and create their own unique selling points on the international circuit. Importantly, it indicates the importance of creating the whole festival experience not just that related to the films screened or the business conducted.

The centrality of such a heady level of social activity and entertainment as a key festival strategy also resonates with Jeremy Rifkin's proposition that in the contemporary global economy that there has been a "profound shift from the work ethic to the play ethic."[61] The hybrid nature of film festivals and their close link with the entertainment business lends itself uniquely to an experience where the boundaries between work and play are dedifferentiated. Or alternatively, where play or pleasure can be perceived as a catalyst for benefitting the advancement of the industry. Rifkin's proposition provides an important conceptualisation for understanding Doc/Fest's transformation and resulting focus on conviviality as a competitive differentiator for attracting the industry.

In his introduction to the 2015 Industry Catalogue, Acting Festival Director, Mark Atkin, provides an interesting insight into the community created by the Doc/Fest's play ethic. Atkin observes:

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[60] Beecroft, interview.

[61] Jeremy Rifkin, The Age of Access: The New Culture of Hypercapitalism. Where all of Life is a Paid-For Experience (New York: Tarcher, 2000), 44.

But the best thing about Doc/Fest is the people. It creates a unique space, like no other in the world, where the commercial and the activist, queers and punks, nerds and stars, young and old, can dance and debate, disagree, challenge, and inspire and collaborate with each other, and collectively celebrate this strange and wonderful industry that we have all built together.[62]

By aligning seemingly incompatible activities such as dance and debate as well as uniting incompatible groups of people: the commercial, the activist, the queer and the punk, Atkin's statement draws attention to the dissolution of the boundaries between the work and leisure characteristics of Doc/Fest. This can be extended to the postindustrial moment as exemplified by the rise of the leisure industry as a core city asset. Atkin's description of the festival as a liminal space also resonates with Falassi's configuration of festivals as a "time out of time." His description firmly situates the ephemeral space created by Doc/Fest as an alternative to everyday life and the usual work setting. Added to this, it is useful to remember that documentary as a form tends to result in issue or politically based content and therefore attracts a particularly vocal and invested group of filmmakers and attendees.

Figure 6.12. Guilty Pleasures Party, 2016.
Source: https://www.facebook.com/sheffdocfest/photos, https://bit.ly/33Dzrpm.

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[62] Doc/Fest, Doc/Fest Industry Catalogue 2015 (Sheffield: 2015), 4.

My own experience of the Doc/Fest community bears out Atkin's description. I have been repeatedly struck by how easy it is to start conversations in Sheffield and the breadth of topics that are encountered. My lasting impression of festival encounters is that quite often the theme or topic of the film work takes precedence over the medium. This is borne out by my experience of one festival reception in particular where I conversed with a variety of filmmakers about their work that covered as widely diverging topics as Syria, breakdancing, female genital mutilation, computer hacking and rural isolation.

Dina Iordanova refers to this as "intentionality."[63] Iordanova argues that activist filmmakers are driven by the intent "to warn, to prevent and to sometimes change the course of events" as well as believing that film can have an impact.[64] The story or the issue is frequently the primary objective of the filmmaker in this cohort. Often the use of the documentary form is secondary and the medium is merely an expedient and impactful way of reaching the widest and most accessible audience as a form of advocacy. This tends to make for a particularly passionate and communicative cohort that actively seeks to make deep connections and gain recognition for their project at festivals.

While Atkin's statement envisions the festival space as a utopian creative catalyst, Doc/Fest's underlying commercially driven imperative is still very much apparent. The predominant visibility of key media sponsorship counters his ideal view of the festival. This is particularly evident in relation to the festival's social programme with UK media heavyweights such as Channel 4, BBC and the Guardian as named sponsors of the festival's large and prolific nightly parties. Again, an indicator of the weight of influence that these organisations have at Doc/Fest as indicated by Moody.

Importantly, while the social aspect of the festival is promoted as a key selling point for the industry, it is also non-accessible to Sheffield's general public. Naturally, networking

[63] Dina Iordanova, "Film Festivals and Dissent: Can Films Change the World" in *Film Festival Yearbook 4: Film Festivals and Activism*, eds. Dina Iordanova and Leshu Torchin (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2012), 13.
[64] Ibid.

can be considered to be a key objective for most visiting industry delegates. However, by limiting the convivial aspect of the festival experience a form of control and division is exerted. This again undermines the festival's ethos of being open and accessible to the Sheffield public and challenges the contention that it is their festival.

6.4.4 Alternate Realities

I have argued throughout the study that there is a pronounced tendency in all three cases to present multimodal viewing practices beyond the traditional theatrical experience. In Doc/Fest's case its non-fiction remit translates into presenting content across a broad range of formats and experiences beyond film including television, digital, video installation, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR). Indeed, in recent years formats, such as VR, interactive and immersive media have increasingly gained prominence within Doc/Fest's programme as part of Alternate Realities. This has resulted in the festival becoming almost as relevant for showcasing cross-storytelling practices as it is for its more traditional offering.

Figure 6.13. Alternate Realities, 2017.
Source: https://www.facebook.com/sheffdocfest/photos, https://bit.ly/2DvJuls.

A recent poll on global VR content platform Veer named Doc/Fest as one of the most important VR-focused festivals to attend in the world alongside the likes of SXSW,

Tribeca, Sundance and Venice.[65] This designation demonstrates Doc/Fest's increasing importance in relation to emerging exhibition practices and a wider trend amongst influential festivals on the circuit to support and showcase new formats. Veer's commendation also very clearly situates Doc Fest as having international status as a launchpad for VR content. Given Doc/Fest's status within the realm of VR and new technology the festival can conceivably be considered to fall more aptly under the categorisation of media or screen festival. This was an observation also previously made in relation to Flatpack's cross-genre programming strategy. Supporting this contention one of Doc/Fest's most recently used taglines was to celebrate "the art and business of documentary and *all* non-fiction storytelling" (italics are mine) rather than the art and business of film.

Alternate Realities presents an extensive programme of interactive, AR and VR pieces. The programme consists of a central exhibition of projects, a day-long summit, a range of special projects variously situated throughout the city and one of the world's only and already longest running dedicated markets unique to AR and VR that facilitated over 25 projects in 2017. These pieces invite "festival-goers and the public to bravely step into new worlds, where interaction and immersion make you part of the story."[66] The account of *Munduruku: The Fight to Defend the Heart of the Amazon*, offered below by Sight and Sound reviewer, Marisol Grandon, provides an apt description of the type of experience encountered when attending Doc/Fest's Alternate Realities programme.

> On a revolving chair mounted on a riser, an attendant carefully
> lowers a heavy canvas curtain. The busy Millennium gallery is
> blocked out and we are alone, enclosed in a kind of green egg
> about to be transported to the Amazon rainforest.
>
> "I'll be your multi-sensory technician," he explains softly before
> passing me a headset and headphones. Who am I to argue? We're

[65] Mina Bradley, "Top 38 VR Film Festivals to Attend in 2018", Veer VR Blog, last modified 19 December 2017, https://veer.tv/blog/top-vr-film-festivals-to-attend.

[66] "Alternate Realities", Sheffield Doc/Fest, accessed 3 March 2019, https://sheffdocfest.com/interactive/overview.

going to the Amazon for Munduruku, this year's audience award-winner at Sheffield Doc/Fest's Alternate Realities exhibition.

For the next 15 minutes, I visit the Munduruku tribe, share breakfast, join a crop harvest and climb high above the canopy to see the forest in its full glory. There are surprising sensations: the sun beats down; it's humid. There are deep rumblings, cool breezes, subtle movements and pungent aromas.[67]

Doc/Fest's VR programme was initiated as a festival-within-a-festival and was originally presented by the immersive media company, Crossover, in 2014. Crossover, a standalone company that specialises in "the curation and creation of cutting-edge projects that combine technical innovation and storytelling" established the programme to support, develop and showcase new storytelling techniques and emerging formats that use the latest technologies.[68]

Figure 6.14. Doc/Fest Post Event Report – Covers, 2015/2017.
Source: *Doc/Fest Post Event Reports 2015/2017*.

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[67] Marisol Grandon, "Realm of the senses: alternate realities at Sheffield Doc/Fest 2017," *Sight and Sound,* last modified 3 August 2017, http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/comment/festivals/alternate-realities-sheffield-docfest-2017.

[68] "About," Crossover, accessed 14 April 2018, http://www.xolabs.co.uk/about.

In 2016, the programme's title changed from Crossover to Alternate Realities and it was resituated as an integral component of the programme rather than a sub-festival. The festival's repositioning of Alternate Realities indicates its increased and ongoing programmatic importance. It also implies that Doc/Fest has an agenda to be at the vanguard of new technological developments in storytelling. Alternate Realities also provides an additional strategic opportunity for Doc/Fest to differentiate itself from its counterparts on the circuit. This importance was articulated by McIntyre during her inaugural programme launch in 2016. She stated that bringing the "programme into the heart of the festival" was a primary objective for Doc/Fest. Alternate Realities' significance as a defining component of both the festival's agenda and institutional identity is further compounded by the use of its imagery as the cover illustration for Post Event Reports in both 2015 and 2017 (see figure 6.14).

Additionally, Alternate Realities was awarded £85,000 by Arts Council England (ACE) in 2017. This award demonstrated an increase of £235,000 up from £61,500 in 2016. While the funding is specific to supporting the strand, ACE's significant contribution positions the funding body as a principal sponsor of the overall festival. This bears testament to the rising importance and centrality of Alternate Realities to Doc/Fest's overall agenda.

It is notable that Alternate Realities represents one of the key programme strands that is open to the public beyond both ticket holders and industry delegates. More importantly the strand is marketed as "free entry" making it one of the most accessible segments of Doc/Fest's programme to Sheffield's citizens. Doc/Fest's adoption of new developments in digital storytelling and technologies exemplifies the increasing popularity of experiential formats and how film festivals use them to engage audiences in novel ways.

6.5 Materialising Doc/Fest

The festival's visibility within the physical space of the city is an important factor for consideration in relation to how it festivalises Sheffield and constitutes parallel festival dimensions. Indeed, the cohesive materialisation of festival space within the city centre is one of the most striking aspects of attending Doc/Fest. From an operational perspective the festival constructs a tangible environment that helps to position Sheffield as a recognisably eventful city for the duration of the event. As I have described elsewhere,

> Doc/Fest preserves a boutique feel that is sustained by the compact and contained layout of the festival in Sheffield's city centre. Festivalgoers are never far from an easily recognizable festival venue or event, branded in Doc/Fest's fluorescent colours giving the festival a distinctly cohesive feel that can sometimes be missing in other city centre-based festivals.[69]

The majority of events take place within a ten-minute walk of each other in the city centre environs that successfully fuse city and festival space. The city's civic participation is evident through the festival's use of buildings such as Sheffield's Town and City Halls as key venues. City Hall is regularly used as a setting to host the festivals largest and most prestigious screenings such as Opening and Closing Nights as well as for special events such as the premiere of Nick Broomfield's documentary *WHITNEY 'Can I Be Me'*[70] that was broadcast live to 130 cinemas across the UK and Ireland.

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[69] Smyth, "From Lerwick to Leicester Square," 413-413.

[70] *WHITNEY "Can I be Me,"* directed by Nick Broomfield (Lafayette Films, Passion Pictures, Showtime Networks, 2017).

Figure 6.15. Doc/Fest's distinctive branding.
Source: https://www.facebook.com/pg/sheffdocfest/photos, https://bit.ly/2R2FIYQ.

Since 2010, Doc/Fest's design strategy has tended to use a prominent and eye-catching fluorescent colour palette to represent its visual identity (see figure 6.15). The effect of the festival's impactful orange branding in public spaces cannot be underestimated in contributing to the city centre's visible transformation and festivalisation. The festival employs a bold and immediately recognisable visual strategy to establish its identity that contributes to shaping an alternative and reimagined physical space within the city. In this case, Doc/Fest's use of boldly coloured spatial and human branding specifically works to contrast against Sheffield's predominantly grey industrial backdrop. This reimagining of the city in a vibrant and contemporary colour creates an alternative physical manifestation to that of everyday Sheffield or in the words of Falassi, "a time-out-of-time."[71]

6.5.1 Embodying Doc/Fest

Extending this argument even further I would suggest that the use of branding is not just confined to the material city but also encompasses the festival's industry delegates that creates a form of embodied branding. This results in 3,500 industry delegates donning Doc/Fest's highly visible branding through the use of brightly coloured lanyards

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[71] Alessandro Falassi, *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 4.

and branded bags that create an additional dimension of festival visibility within the material space.

Figure 6.16. Doc/Fest Delegates – Lanyards and Branded Bags.
Source: https://www.facebook.com/sheffdocfest/photos, https://bit.ly/35Kox2h.

A useful contention proposed by Lesley Ann Dickson in her PhD thesis on GFF suggests that "the embodiment of people (audience members, journalists, film professionals, festival staff) at GFF is key to understanding the ways in which spaces become transformed and how audiences experience and use festivals."[72] While Dickson's argument is specific to the GFF experience, it is equally applicable here. By branding the delegates themselves, Doc/Fest creates a visible buy-in or stake that not only aids the formation of a separate or privileged community but also contributes to constituting the liminal world of the festival.

One of Sheffield's citizens described the physical impact of the festival's delegates on the city in the following way:

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[72] Lesley Ann Dickson, *Film festival and cinema audiences: a study of exhibition practice and audience reception at Glasgow Film Festival* (PhD diss., University of Glasgow, Glasgow, 2014), 268.

That orange…. that orange is everywhere. You get a sort of migration of orange through the city as groups file towards you or flow past you in a mass of directed movement.[73]

The above description of the festival's industry delegates illustrates the powerful visible impact of Doc/Fest's dynamic human branding on the city. It is interesting to note that this citizen predominantly describes the festival's delegates in terms of Doc/Fest's unmissable branding and as a mass rather than as individuals implying a strong communal effect. However, what became noticeable for its absence rather than its presence was a lack of non-branded audience members. In other words, a group that is less perceivably visible seems to be the public audience.

It is not unusual for a festival community to adopt a visible uniform or identifiable marker of some type that helps to constitute, formulate and regulate the festival environment. Accreditation is used the world over as a method of people management at festivals, conferences and events. However, as far back as 1955, Andre Bazin drew particular attention to the importance of how attendees' behaviour and appearance can define the festival space. Bazin specifically noted the obligatory formal dress code required to attend evening screenings at Cannes and Venice film festivals (still in place today), commenting that "today the whole press corps wears the uniform, and it all seems perfectly normal".[74] Based solely on this observation, Bazin creates a strong visible impression of the festival environment at Cannes and Venice as a space that is formulated around prestige and glamour but reliant on the human actors within it to help manufacture this sense (see figure 6.17).

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[73] Cassie Last, informal conversation with Sarah Smyth, 13 January 2018.

[74] Andre Bazin, "The Festival viewed as a Religious Order," in *Dekalog 3: On Film Festivals*, ed. Richard Porton (London and New York: Wallflower, 2009), 16-17.

Figure 6.17. Press Corps at Cannes Film Festival 2019.
Source: https://www.net-a-porter.com, https://bit.ly/2Oxkall.

This visible strategic formulation of an industry community at Doc/Fest correlates directly with Aida Vallejo's contention that "documentary festivals have become key social encounters for the formation of a cultural elite."[75] Vallejo posits the facilitation of festival encounters as key for the development of film culture. She contends that this tendency is more pronounced on the documentary circuit where the personal connections established and nurtured at festivals are integral for developing creative and economic partnerships as well as extending specialised film knowledge. There, embodied construction of Doc/Fest's community aids the facilitation of Vallejo's encounters. However, the successful construction of a visible "cultural elite" that helps to constitute a successful community also has the knock-on effect of marginalising or eclipsing the local audience.[76]

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[75] Aida Vallejo, "Travelling the Circuit: A Multi-Sited Ethnography of Documentary Film Festivals in Europe," in *Film Festivals and Anthropology,* eds. Aida Vallejo and Maria Paz Peirano (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 277.

[76] Ibid., 277.

6.5.2 Mapping Doc/Fest

A further delineation between these two distinct groups becomes apparent when considering the spatial materialisation of the festival. This can be clearly seen in a comparison of two festival maps produced by Doc/Fest in 2017 (see figure 6.18 and figure 6.19). The first was published as part of the Industry Guide given to delegates and the second in the Festival Programme that is targeted at the public audience.

A view of both maps produced uncovers a striking difference between the industry and the general public's festival space. By viewing both of these maps together it would appear that there is a significant disparity between the two main festival cohorts that privileges the festival's industrial agenda. In the first instance, a difference of eleven venues is shown. Members of the general public have access to twelve listed venues events whereas industry delegates have access to twenty-three venues. This creates a markedly different festival experience for both cohorts.

To some extent, this discrepancy between festival spaces is the inadvertent outcome of a successful business strategy to make the festival sustainable. Accreditation was introduced as a pricing strategy during Doc/Fest's expansion period in order to ensure that the industry cohort invested both time and money into the festival. In order to justify the increased pricing and make it worthwhile, it was imperative for Doc/Fest to create value through the addition of exclusive industry events. However, because of the rhetoric of inclusivity promoted by Doc/Fest, the difference between the industry and the general public's festival space becomes problematic.
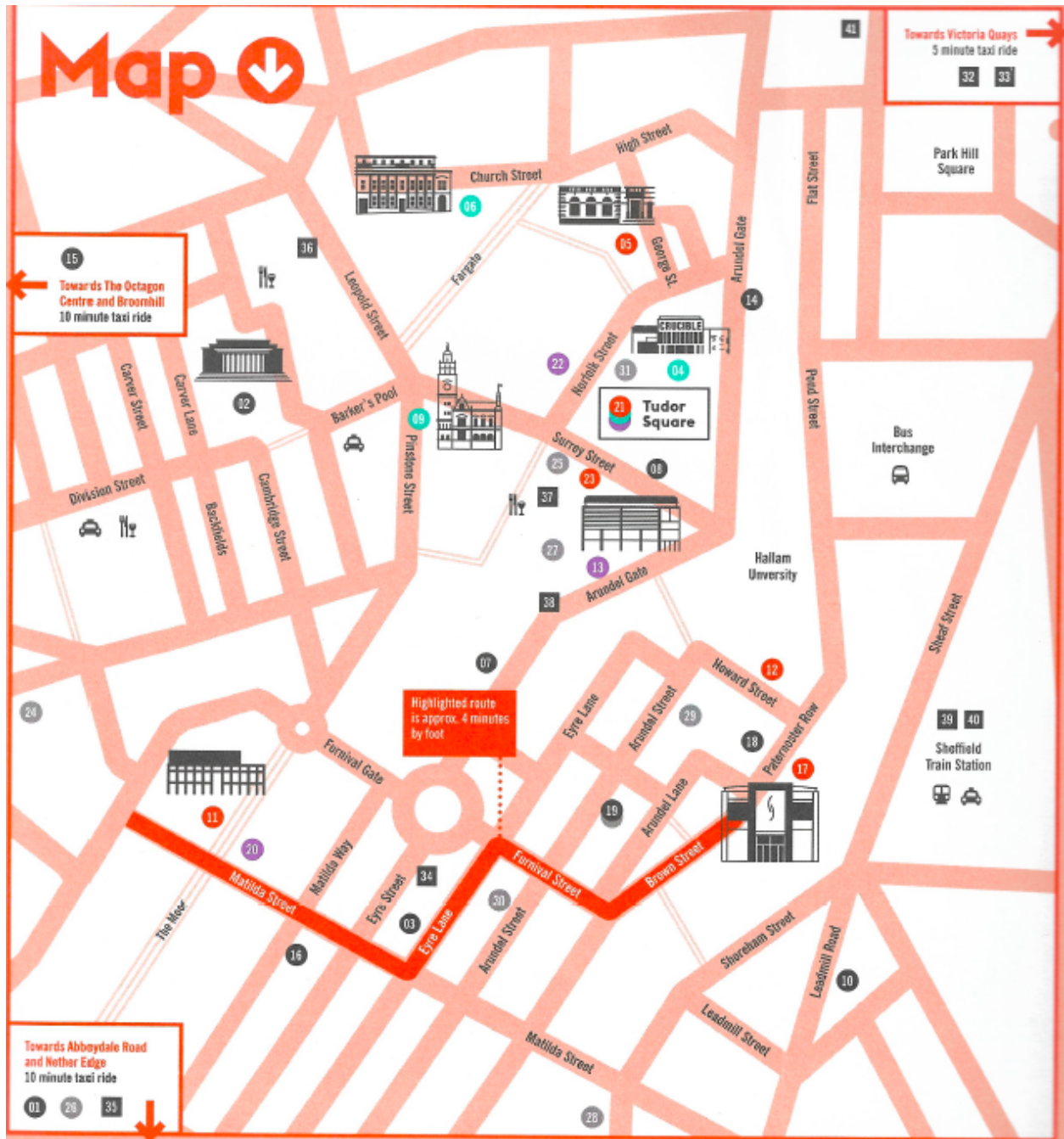
Figure 6.18. Doc/Fest Venue Map - Industry, 2017.
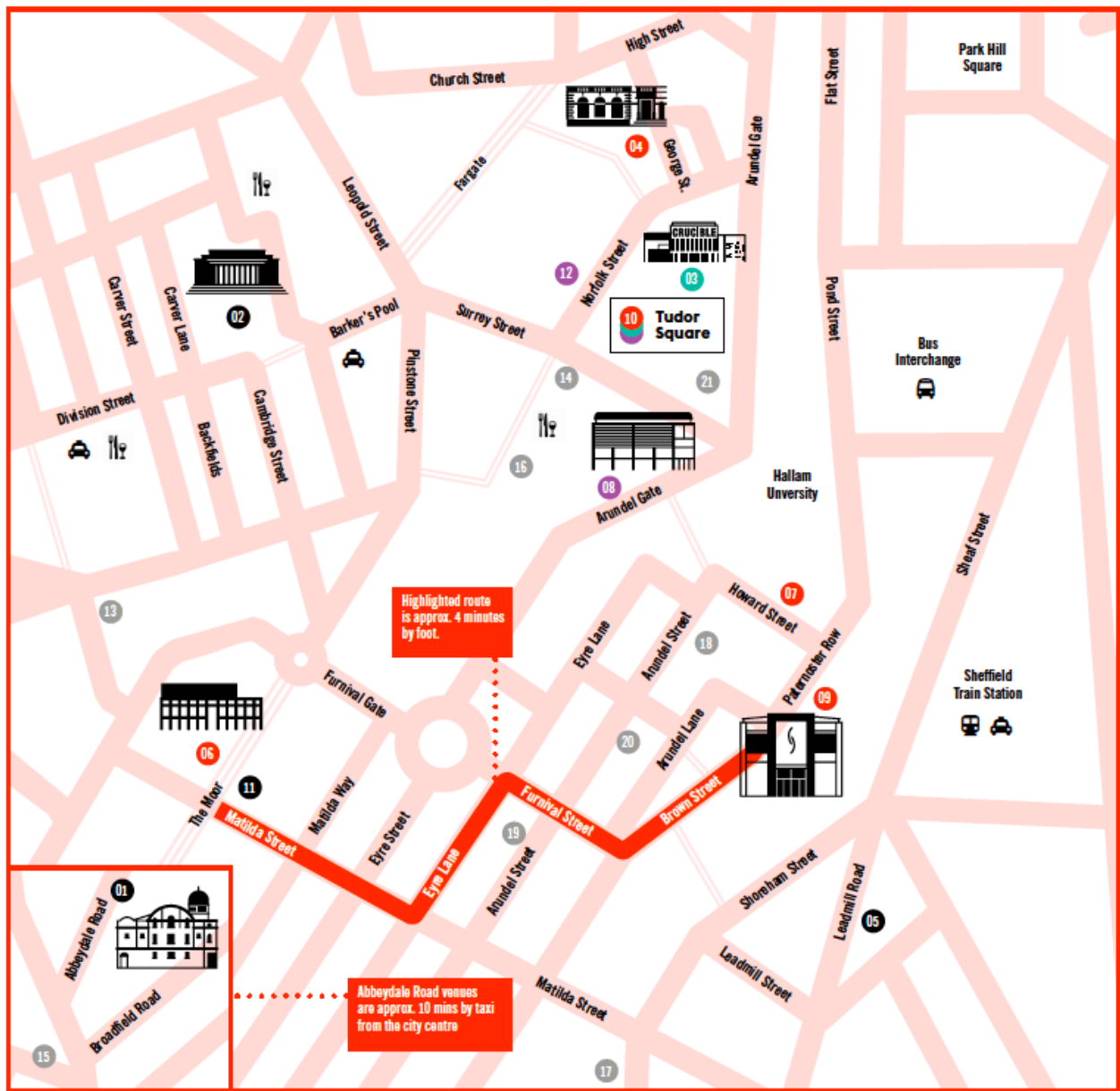Source: *Doc/Fest Industry Guide 2017.*

Figure 6.19. Doc/Fest Venue Map – General Public, 2017.
Source: *Doc/Fest Brochure 2017.*

6.5.3 Doc/Fest in Print

The discrepancy between industry delegates and the general public is further highlighted through the deliberate and strategic positioning of the various print publications published by the festival. This has been demonstrated thus far by both the

short example of messaging presented in the introduction to this case study and the above example of the production of distinct festival spaces.

As well as creating varying festival spatialisation, Doc/Fest also produces clearly conceived separate versions of the programme that represent different visions of the festival. While these publications are branded in the same way, their contents are palpably different (see 20 for an example of covers from the 2016 edition). This creates a further delineation between how the festival is presented to the festival's two separately designated publics. Recalling Dayan's ethnographic research Doc/Fest generates a large amount of written material as part of a "definitional process" that contextualises and shapes both cohorts' participation in and experience of the festival.[77] Festival publications take the form of the Festival Programme directed at the general public and a much heftier Industry Catalogue that is also accompanied by a Decision Makers Guide. These are given to all industry delegates as part of their festival pack.

The page count of these differing publications alone indicates a resounding difference in festival experience and choice. For example, in 2017 the Festival Programme consisted of ninety-one pages while the Industry Catalogue ran to 226 pages and was accompanied by a further one-hundred-page Decision Makers Guide. An immediate conclusion that can be drawn from this cursory information is that the Doc/Fest's industrial agenda has a greater weighting than the programme directed at the general public.

It can be assumed that both of these cohorts have their own distinct objectives when attending Doc/Fest and it is necessary from a marketing and customer service perspective to address them differently. However, it is also important to note that by producing alternative publications the festival plays an active role in deliberately constructing these groups as different to each other.

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[77] Daniel Dayan, "Looking for Sundance: The Social Construction of a Film Festival," in *Moving Images, Culture and the Mind,* ed. Ib Bondebjerg (Luton: Luton University Press, 2010), 48.

Figure 6.20. Brochure Covers, 2016.
Source: Doc/Fest 2016: *Industry Catalogue, Decision Makers Guide, Festival Programme.*

Julian Stringer noted a similar process at work in his analysis of Shots in the Dark Festival in Nottingham. Stringer argues that festival brochures act as a way of speaking to audiences and suggests that three specific outcomes are achieved: "understanding and definition, the offering of entertainment and display, and the creation and sharing of community."[78] Stringer's argument makes it clear that festival audiences are both formulated and positioned by the rhetoric apparent in the brochure and the way the audience is addressed within it. In the case of Doc/Fest, the production of separate highly produced and formulated publications makes this all the more apparent.

The next question that arises then is how these publications differ beyond the issue of size. At first glance, all three publications appear visually united by Doc/Fest's branding strategy. However, the use of the word "catalogue" as opposed to "programme" in the industry targeted publication clearly sets it apart as a trade publication. Doc/Fest's Industry Catalogue is organised around a colour-coded categorisation scheme. Categorising the programme of events in this way aids attendees in navigating the festival's multifaceted schedule of screenings, talks, exhibitions, standalone conferences, master classes, workshops, pitching forums, receptions, networking events and parties as well as the marketplace. This attention to detail in supporting

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[78] Julian Stringer, "Genre Films and Festival Communities: Lessons from Nottingham, 1991-2000." *Film International 6*, no. 4 (2008): 52.

delegates to effectively navigate the programme again positions Doc/Fest very much in the vein of industry experience akin to that of the trade show. It also illustrates that this particular cohort holds greater importance for the festival.

It is then interesting to note which elements have been excluded in the version directed at regular festivalgoers. As well as the more specific industry events tied to networking and the marketplace such as pitching forums, conferences, master classes and industry hosted receptions; the general public is excluded from the nightly parties and social events. This practice of conviviality situates these events as very much the realm of industry networking rather than more general socialising and indicates two very differently constructed realms.

It is also notable that the Industry Catalogue features a different version of the Festival Director's introduction to that of the Festival Guide. As Stringer points out, a great deal can be surmised about a festival's agenda and objectives from the introduction text in festival brochures. These statements set out the stall for that specific edition of the festival and are designed to contextualise the programme's offering. Further to this, Roya Rastegar suggests that festival programmers crucially shape the atmosphere and identity of festivals by crafting the conditions and context in which audiences experience films on show.[79] One of the key ways of doing this is through the written context.

For example, the festival director's introduction in the 2017 version of the Industry Catalogue took a far more political tone than that of the introduction published as part of the Festival Guide. In the Industry Guide, McIntyre sounds a clarion call to attendees by suggesting that the festival's content can be conceived of as a "call to action to resist the dividers, the pussy grabbers, the racists, the bystanders."[80] This call to action does not appear in the Festival Guide. McIntyre's stronger political tone and more clearly activist rhetoric strongly indicates that the two cohorts are viewed, situated and addressed quite differently by the festival.

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79 Rastegar, "Difference, Aesthetics and the Curatorial Crisis of Film Festivals," 311.
80 Doc/Fest, Doc/Fest Industry Guide 2017 (Sheffield, 2017), 7.

6.6 Conclusion

In light of its industrial bias Doc/Fest has presented a more complex set of issues to be considered than GFF and Flatpack. In 2018, the festival's website displayed the tagline, "celebrating the art and business of all documentary and non-fiction storytelling" firmly establishing the festival's industrial agenda as its overriding concern. In contrast to the other two cases examined, this analysis has questioned how Doc/Fest's more industrial ethos materialises as part of its programmatic strategy and how then the festival's modus operandi interacts with the Sheffield audience and the city's physical space. Overall the case has presented the challenge and complexity of balancing multiple agendas as well as responding to and staying abreast of a rapidly changing art form and technological formats.

The start of Liz McIntyre's tenure in 2016 signalled a new chapter for the festival with a new phase of maturation underway. Signs that Croall's "dotcom boom," which had reconstructed and reinvigorated the festival to situate it as an integral constituent of Sheffield's image as a cultural or creative city, had come to an end. Instead Doc/Fest is now positioned as the city's flagship industrial conference. As I reach the end of this thesis, Cíntia Gil, former director of DocLisboa has just recently taken up the post of Doc/Fest's festival director. The turnover of executive personnel at Doc/Fest marks a sharp contrast to that of Flatpack and GFF, which still have the same lead artistic direction in place. The longevity of artistic leadership at GFF and Flatpack has provided continuity for each of these festival's visions. Furthermore, it has facilitated the development of dedicated festival communities.

This leads me back to the question raised at the beginning of this case study. Does Doc/Fest serve the general public of Sheffield or is it now a highly successful and established genre festival that is predominantly an industry event? The case study has demonstrated that Doc/Fest creates two parallel festival worlds; one aimed at its industrial bias and the other to serve its civic purpose as one of Sheffield's flagship cultural arts events. Throughout this chapter it has become clear that in order for Doc/Fest to become a vital and sustainable festival on the international documentary

circuit it was absolutely necessary for the festival's industrial imperative to take precedence during its expansion phase. There is no denying that Doc/Fest presents a vibrant and vital festival for its industry cohort. Innovations such as the materialisation of the city centre as a visible festival hub, implementing a social strategy that increased exposure and generated word of mouth as well as rescheduling Doc/Fest to the summer have all added to the vitality and sustainability of the overall event.

However, the festival's industry bias appears to have come at the expense of the local community. Notably, the number of industry delegates that visit the festival each has remained stable at circa 3500. In contrast there has been a marked decrease in public audience figures from circa 36,000 in 2007 to 28,000 in 2019. During the 2017 edition there was a marked emphasis on trying to create buy-in from the local public and a sense that they were being actively targeted. However, my on-the-ground experience of the festival left me wondering where they were. The festival presented an overt rhetoric of inclusiveness and accessibility reminiscent of both GFF and Flatpack's core ethos but the festival's materialisation doesn't support this. In reality the festival's industrial objective still takes precedence. This exclusion is all the more surprising given Sheffield's status as a postindustrial city that has actively employed culture as a strategy for regeneration.

Doc/Fest's relationship with Sheffield, as a postindustrial city that has undergone urban regeneration, can be understood in quite different terms to the other two festivals under review. The raison d'être of the festival as a political forum for documentary makers was established before a location city was secured. Therefore, Doc/Fest doesn't exhibit the same intrinsic relationship with the city as GFF and Flatpack do. However, Sheffield's commitment to culture as a strategy for urban regeneration and its leftist political leanings did provide an ideal location for the documentary festival. Civic support, as testified by Harvey, played an instrumental role in ensuring the establishment of the festival in the first instance.

It can be concluded that Doc/Fest continues to hold demonstrable value for promoting a cosmopolitan image of the city. This is illustrated by the festival's inclusion as part of the

overall city's narrative, albeit positioned as Sheffield's most successful conference rather than as a flagship cultural event. The city's support of the festival is apparent across its communications as a tool for promoting Sheffield as a commercial tourism destination or alternatively to enhance its liveability in order to attract a creative class of workers.

In addition, I have proposed that the city's intervention and support for the festival manifests in the very visible and real materialisation of festival space that transforms the city centre into a finite and successful hub. Of the three festivals examined in this study, Doc/Fest's transformation of the city centre into a liminal festival hub can be considered the most successful in relation to creating a material eventful city. The creation of this festivalised space is highly perceivable and marks an out-of-the-ordinary event taking place within the city. However, I have argued that while this strategy is highly successful for inbound visitors to the festival, it also acts as an exclusionary zone that blocks accessibility for the local audience. This is especially noticeable in relation to the use of embodied branding that formulates a visible cultural elite.

While Doc/Fest presents quite a different proposition to both Flatpack and GFF there are noted similarities within its programming strategy. The turn towards non-theatrical programming practices is also apparent here. The presence of this emergent trend indicates a new phase for the film festival format. While Doc/Fest also hosts live cinema this turn has manifested more directly through its VR and AR programming as part of Alternate Realities, the festival's significant international platform for VR. The Alternate Realities programme also exemplifies another theme that has arisen within this study, that of the decategorisation of film to screen culture. In each case so far there has been a notable presence of alternative formats that reflect BFI2022's new definition of film as "anything that tells a story, expresses an idea or evokes an emotion through the art of the moving image, whilst honouring the platform for which the work was intended."[81]

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[81] Ibid., 4.

7. Conclusion: Breaking the Mould

This chapter concludes my examination of three of the most notable film festivals located in the UK's postindustrial cities. The study joins a second wave of film festival scholarship tasked with "diving down more deeply" into the overall area of enquiry.[82] As such it has attempted to provide an alternative perspective of the UK's film festival sector beyond that of the nation's longest running and most written about film festivals, EIFF and LFF. The study has asked what role film festivals play within postindustrial cities in the UK and if there is something that specifically sets them apart. It has approached this by taking a cross-section of three diverse film festivals located in postindustrial cities throughout the UK and examining their specific programming strategies and spatial materialisation.

As the first of its kind, it has presented a comparative study of three diverse film festivals, Glasgow Film Festival, Flatpack and Doc/Fest that have emerged in UK cities considered to be postindustrial in nature. The symbiotic mushrooming of film festivals around the globe and the emergence of cities viewed as being postindustrial has happened simultaneously thus linking these two phenomena as being fundamentally related. It approached this by examining each film festival in relation to its postindustrial city setting and by considering the resulting specificities that each environment contributed to its corresponding festival.

The study has taken the view that the film festival is a particularly apt cultural strategy for the postindustrial city to adopt in order to contribute to the economic and promotional endeavours of the creative industries. However, it has also sought to question if these film festivals truly do provide an accessible cultural activity to all of its denizens or are they just for the so-called creative classes that postindustrial cities so actively pursue in an attempt to ensure robust local ecomomies. By viewing each of these cities through the crucible of the film festival an identity struggle becomes

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[82] Tamara Falicov, "Ten Years of Film Festival Studies" (Video Presentation, Birkbeck, University of London, 8 March 2019).

apparent. In each case there is a gap between the cosmopolitan city image that the idea of the film festival plays into and its lived reality.

On a macro level, the study set out to examine the cultural phenomena of city and film festival by considering how each film festival interacts with, represents and reflects its specific host location in order to better understand the relationship between the two.

On a micro level, the specific strategies of each festival have been examined in order to connect them to the unique character of each city through their physical, political and social materialisation. More specifically, the thesis has closely analysed each festival's primary purpose, identity and modus operandi by using three axes of enquiry: space, place and programming, in order to interrogate similarities and differences in strategic approaches.

The research specifically sought to contribute to the field of film festival studies by considering the relationship between each film festival and its postindustrial city location. The study builds on Thomas Elsaesser's and Julian Stringer's foundational contributions to film festival studies that have both raised the importance of film festivals for contributing to a cosmopolitan city image. Marijke de Valck and Brendan Kredell have also interacted with the question of the film festival's validity within the postindustrial environment through their respective examinations of the specific cases of IFFR and TIFF. However, this is the first study to present a comparison of film festivals based on their postindustrial location and to question if there are commonalities that can be attributed to the particularity of the environment and the challenges that arise from this.

The research has also provided the opportunity to focus in on the national context of the UK's film festival sector and how this relates to cultural policy, particularly in relation to the national lead film agency, the BFI. As the first academic intervention to date that undertakes a comparative study of UK film festivals, it has also provided an insight into the wider trends and programming practices happening on a national level. This is especially pertinent in relation to the context of the UK's most recent stage of

development that proposes a decategorisation of film and a broader understanding of its format.

A key question posed by this study was whether a specific model for film festivals based in postindustrial cities could be extracted. While the festivals under review here share certain attributes they have proved to be widely differing making it difficult to formulate one finite model that encompasses them all. In many ways their differences are the most important aspect of understanding that a national film festival ecosystem requires differing strategic approaches in order to respond to the specificity of varying local environments. However, by focusing my research on the particularities of each of these three distinctive film festivals, I have established certain commonalities that are apparent in all three and can be attributed to their postindustrial locales. Overriding common characteristics include:

- a strategic commitment to creating accessibility
- the employment of alternative non-theatrical programming practices as a method of differentiation
- the use of alternative non-cinema spaces that creatively use each city's specific environment
- a marked contribution to positioning its locale as a cinema / screen city

A consensus emerged across all three cases whereby each festival's purpose is conceived around an overtly stated commitment to creating accessibility. In other words, connecting audiences to independent and alternative types of film. However as the film festival space is frequently associated with the cultural elitism of arthouse cinema the reality of overcoming these preconceived notions and associations are challenging. In each of the cases presented there was a genuine drive towards breaking down this cultural barrier. This is evidenced by the historical analysis presented in each case that shows a strategic commitment across to ongoing programing and spatial experimentation.

While each festival serves a common purpose they were all established for fundamentally different reasons. GFF, for example, was established as an audience

development strategy in order to broaden and diversify Glasgow Film Theatre's (GFT's) customer base. The festival also provided a useful conduit for helping overcome a perception of GFT as an exclusive or culturally high-brow club. In Flatpack's case, the festival emerged as a response to a specific lack in Birmingham's cinematic landscape. It was established to provide an alternative to the dearth of cultural cinema and independent exhibition facilities in the city and presented an opportunity to create a social space where a film community could be engaged, nurtured and connected to each other. Both of these festivals share a committed focus to expanding the cultural lives of their respective cities.

In contrast, Doc/Fest diverges considerably from the other two examples that were both established to specifically build a cultural film audience. The study established that Doc/Fest was born of a political need to represent the UK's disenfranchised documentary film and TV community. Importantly, Sheffield was not the initial city where the festival was expected to take place and Doc/Fest was not established to respond to a local need, as was the case with the other two festivals. In its early years Doc/Fest could be very much considered to be a niche UK industry event. This changed during the festival's expansion period. Doc/Fest's energetic regeneration initiatives effectively drew the city's physical space into the festival's materialisation. These efforts certainly made Doc/Fest far more visible to the local audience and resituated it as one of the city's flagship cultural events. However, Doc/Fest's core purpose remains to be primarily in the service of the industry and the advancement of the documentary form. These days the festival promotes a heavyhanded rhetoric of inclusion for the Sheffield public. However, I have argued that Doc/Fest is still a largely industry focused festival despite its best efforts to present a festival that appeals to a more general Sheffield audience.

One characteristic that emerged strongly in all three cases was that the festivals share a steadfast commitment to NOT being a VIP or red-carpet festival. This was specifically identified as a defining ethos by each festival analysed, either through their communications or at the interview stage. This contrasts directly with the prevailing modus operandi of the international film festival format where hierarchical structures

reign supreme and certainly plays into the notion that these are festivals that aspire to be accessible.

A link can be made here between the underpinning ethos of each festival and the defining character of the city where it is located. That all three festivals share a dedication to accessibility as an aspiration would also seem to relate to their placement within recognisably working-class cities that are connected by a strong socialist ethos. There is a sense, as I myself intuited when faced with the prospect of establishing a film festival in Birmingham, that the red-carpet model would simply not serve the cultural needs of these particular cities and that a more pressing requirement needed to be fulfilled.

For instance, GFF's communications continuously position the festival as an access-all-areas event. Arguably, this can be attributed to GFF's ongoing focus on its audiences as a defining characteristic and an asset of the festival. In turn this attribute reflects the wider city marketing narrative that "People Make Glasgow" and by extension that people make Glasgow Film Festival. This is also apparent in the case of Birmingham. Flatpack was established to specifically overcome the lack of access to independent cinema in the city. The festival's ongoing mobile and flexible exhibition practices firmly position it as a non-exclusive event. Flatpack have also nailed their colours to the mast through their ongoing work as one of the lead organisations of audience development agency, Film Hub Midlands. Initiatives such as Build Your Own Film Night have not only developed and created access for younger and more diverse audiences but also acted to disrupt the traditional role of the film festival curator as a purveyor of taste and authority.

In contrast, I have argued that Doc/Fest's primary purpose is in the service of the filmmaker and the documentary form rather than the local audience as in the other two cases. Indeed, the question of inclusion for Sheffield's local audience is a considerably more contentious issue. While the festival's 2016 and 2017 communications positioned Doc/Fest as belonging to the general public, this contention doesn't translate in reality. This is very apparent through my argument that the festival is constituted as two

separate realms; one aimed at the industry and the other at the public audience. An examination of how these two realms are materialised differently demonstrated that the industrial realm is privileged over the public one.

However, the objective to ensure a non-hierarchical environment was also raised in relation to Doc/Fest's industry focus. Many of the initiatives implemented during the festival's expansion period were specifically designed to ensure that there were no boundaries between industry attendees. These were initiated to create a cauldron-like atmosphere where unexpected encounters that might take place would result in driving the festival's business agenda and provide a more conducive environment for creative connections to be formulated. So, while I have raised lack of accessibility as an issue for Sheffield's general public, the festival also demonstrates an ethos that counters the hierarchical structure of the international film festival format, albeit only in its industry zone.

The study also questioned if the postindustrial environment brings something discernibly unique to each of the festivals. Undoubtedly, the increased relevance and importance of cultural-led regeneration strategies in postindustrial cities has paved the way for all three of these festivals to be established. As Stringer suggests, cities now use film festivals as a strategy to create "an aura of specialness and uniqueness."[83] However, the mere fact of hosting a film festival is not enough to achieve this. It has become apparent throughout this study that each of these festivals has struggled to create a stable, competitive and recognisable identity. In part, this can be attributed to their secondary, or lower, status as part of the film circuit and in part to being established in cities that have also undergone their own identity crisis. It can also be ascribed to the overinflation of the overall film festival circuit that has created an extremely competitive environment. While this has presented a challenge, it has also provided an opportunity to each.

It became clear as the study progressed that in order for each festival to create a meaningful purpose and become sustainable they have all had to look beyond the

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[83] Julian Stringer, "Global Cities and the International Film Festival Economy" in *Cinema and the City: Studies in Urban and Social Change,* eds. Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 137.

traditional theatrical cinema experience and push the boundaries of what the film festival format can offer. Time and again throughout this thesis the strategy of providing novel, experiential and non-theatrical cinematic experiences, particularly in the form of live cinema, has come to the fore. This has proved to be a popular programming strategy among all three. De Valck also found this to be true of IFFR. Her observation that programming practices at Rotterdam could be understood in light of the rise of the experience economy and event culture in the 1990s finds its echo in these three cases.[84]

The implementation of this strategy has provided the means to differentiate, create profile and attract alternative audiences. Not only does this approach signal a need to distinguish its identity in the crowded film festival marketplace but importantly it also indicates the rising centrality of the experience economy and event culture more generally. The importance of this strategy for all three relies on creating unrepeatable events that create an aura of one-off-ness that can only be created by each festival in question using the specificities of their own locales.

I propose that the fulfilment of a symbiotic need in the postindustrial city has given rise to the popularity of this particular strategy. In the first instance, the recovery, regeneration and reintegration of industrial or previously unused spaces has become de rigueur in postindustrial cities. Finding innovative and creative ways to animate and reintroduce these spaces into use is now the norm. Added to this, the volume and availability of these spaces has lent itself to the employment of non-theatrical and site-specific cinema practices. Had these spaces not been available this particular strategy may not have become so widely adopted. Certainly Flatpack's transitory and mobile approach to its exhibition practices provides a tangible example of this. The festival's adoption of these is a direct response to Birmingham's specific ongoing and disruptive architectural transformation that is attributable to its physical postindustrial milieu. Indeed, Flatpack offers an optimum model of exhibition in light of the challenges presented by the city's limited cinema exhibition environment. While Birmingham

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[84] Marijke de Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 194.

provides a particularly striking example of a postindustrial city that has undergone physical transformation, all three cities have experienced significant material regeneration that have provided possibilities for alternative spatial interactions.

Flatpack's mobile exhibition practices were borne of necessity and a deep-seated dedication to providing alternative cinematic experiences in Birmingham's limited and challenging exhibition environment. However, for GFF and Doc/Fest creating novelty has proved to be just as important a strategy in order to enliven their offerings, help create their unique identities and increase profile. Indeed I have suggested that GFF's strategy of presenting large-scale, site-specific and crowd-pleasing events has become a central part of its programming DNA. In the absence of high-profile or celebrity film talent, this has enabled GFF to create a saleable event and generate local media attention. Their inclusion in the programme has also provided an additional way for GFF to enact its populist programming strategy by presenting recognisable cult and mainstream titles to attract a wider audience and attempt to create accesibility.

This strategy also allows GFF to go beyond its anchor venue, GFT, in order to take advantage of Glasgow's postindustrial spatial environment. However, this thesis has found that it is unlikely these events convert audiences to GFT. It can certainly be argued that this practice represents an increasingly popular form of filmviewing practice and even constitutes a new form of cinephilia that connects with the film due to the experiential element of the event. However, as an audience development strategy it doesn't translate into encouraging or activating a particular motivation to engage with independent film within the confines of the cinema per se. On the other hand, it does act as a way of promoting GFF as an accessible event for Glasgow citizens. By bringing film out of the arthouse context of GFT and taking it into the city in a way that it is undoubtedly perceived as thrilling and fun, GFF actively challenges the elitist and high-brow connotations associated with its institutional status.

For Doc/Fest, embracing the novel has also allowed the festival to challenge former preconceptions of the festival as being a staid event as well as overturning its parochial reputation. The objective for Doc/Fest's transformation was as a competitive strategy

that would create essential buzz on the international circuit in order to attract commissioners, broadcasters and buyers. The festival did this by adopting an unlikely punk rock attitude. However, it was Doc/Fest's increased focus on conviviality that marked it out in the overcrowded global marketplace.

While Doc/Fest is the only case in this thesis with a predominant industrial focus, its objective to create the most favourable conditions for ensuring participation are informed by a similar motivation to that of the other two festivals. In order to make doing business a desirable activity in Sheffield, the festival employed a deliberate strategy to make industry activities dynamic, fun and novel. This strategy chimes with Jeremy Rifkin's proposal that a profound shift has taken place in relation to the work/play continuum. Rifkin's concept of "serious leisure" proposes that work and play have become interdependent in the postindustrial society.[85] Doc/Fest's strategic implementation of putting fun into the festival's business practices provide an apt example of Rifkin's contention that feeds into the wholescale adoption of the experience economy in culture more generally.

As the adoption of live cinema and non-cinematic practices indicate spatial materialisation plays an important role in how each festival is constituted and experienced within the city environment. All three provide an alternative interaction with their respective cities regardless of the resulting spatial shape that each assumes. In this regard, Doc/Fest particularly stands out for creating a liminal festival space that directly contributes to creating the festival's convivial atmosphere. It can be assumed that the majority of industry delegates that attend Doc/Fest will rarely, if ever, visit Sheffield outside of festival time. Therefore, for these visitors, an understanding of Sheffield will only ever be perceived through the prism of the festival. This is informed by Doc/Fest's materialisation as a visible and festivalised space that encompasses a significant portion of the city centre. Indeed, I have argued that Doc/Fest's ongoing success can be directly attributed to this visible spatial manifestation. Undoubtedly the

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[85] Jeremy Rifkin, *The Age of Access: The New Culture of Hypercapitalism. Where all of Life is a Paid-For Experience* (New York: Tarcher, 2000), 44.

resulting finite festival experience during this time contributes to Sheffield's international profile as an eventful and vibrant city.

In direct contrast, Flatpack's mobile and transitory exhibition practices can sometimes be deemed as somewhat elusive. As a result, it has sometimes been a challenge for the festival to create a cohesive atmosphere of festivity. However, in this particular case, the transitory nature of Birmingham's physical landscape has offered Flatpack the opportunity to create an alternative and highly fluid approach to the spatial materialisation of festival space. This materialisation enacts a particularly agile and flexible relationship with city space. The construction of the festivalised environment acts as a journey through and around the city. This makes it quite unique within the context of the UK. It also opens up the potential for the festival to embody the city in everchanging ways that are reflective of Birmingham's transformative architectural landscape. Indeed, Flatpack has actively used this challenge to reposition its local audiences as tourists within their own city and encourages them to use the festival as an opportunity for discovery. While Flatpack uses its programming ethos to deliberately frame festivalgoers experience of Birmingham, its transitory spatial materialisation also leaves space for inadvertent and unplanned interactions with the city.

Undoubtedly, all three festivals examined strongly demonstrate Harbord's contention that an understanding of each festival is inseparable from the place in which it is situated.[86] This is illustrated in very real terms through the example of Flatpack's response to the city's physical landscape and its conscious curatorial practice of using Birmingham the place as the inspiration for its programming ethos. In Flatpack's case, I have specifically employed Yi-Fu Tuan's concept of topophilia that posits an affective bond between people and place to frame the festival's curatorial practices.[87] The festival demonstrates a genuine commitment to revealing the hidden layers of Birmingham's cinematic and cultural history, which is helping to reframe the city's image as a cinema city. Indeed, both Flatpack and GFF play an invaluable role in contributing

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[86] Janet Harbord, "Film Festivals-Time Event" in *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit,* eds. Dina Iordanova with Ragan Rhyne (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2009), 44.

[87] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perceptions, Attitudes and Value* (New York, Chichester and West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 1974), 4.

to establishing an understanding of their cities as intrinsically linked to the cinema or their constitution as cinema cities.

In this sense Tuan's concept can equally be applied to GFF. This is apparent through the festival's institutional framework. GFT's (formerly The Cosmo's) cinematic legacy and physical art deco building, which is used as the festival's hub, intrinsically links GFF to Glasgow's heritage as a cinema city. GFF's recently increased industry focus also actively helps to validate Glasgow as Scotland's pre-eminent cinema city by highlighting it as the primary home of the national film industry.

Again here, Doc/Fest presents a different case. There is no denying the benefit of the festival to the city in economic terms or its resounding success as a destination festival that attracts a significant volume of film industry visitors to Sheffield. Undoubtedly, the festival's recognised international profile contributes to the city's cosmopolitan status and reputation. There is also clear evidence that the city actively employs the festival's pre-eminent status as the UK's foremost documentary festival in its marketing of Sheffield. However, Doc/Fest does not aid Sheffield to identify as a cinema city per se. This is partially due to its status as a documentary festival that uses a range of formats, but also because the festival is primarily used to brand Sheffield in the mode of Richard Florida's formulation of the creative city.[88] Therefore, Doc/Fest is positioned as the city's flagship industry or media conference in order to attract further commercial tourism and its connection to cinema is somewhat lessened.

Disrupting the Film Festival Format

As a precursor to the case studies presented, I offered an account of the historical development of the film festival sector within the UK in order to create a national context for the study to come. Particular attention was given to the UK's political economic climate as providing a catalyst for the resulting creative industries' rhetoric and policies, which provided opportune conditions for a proliferation of film festivals to emerge and form a second phase of development. The role of the BFI, as the lead national public

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[88] Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class and how it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life* (New York: Basic Books, Inc, 2002), 67.

film-funding agency, was also examined in relation to the UK's film festival environment as a whole. By charting policy from the UK Film Council through to the BFI's most recent strategic plan, it became apparent that a process of change is afoot. A process of transformation is clearly identified through the research that implies a decategorisation of the film format as a result of changing technology and viewing practices. The broadening of the BFI's understanding of film inevitably has a knock-on effect at policy level for film festivals. In this particular instance this has manifested through the elimination of dedicated film festival funding to be replaced by the more broadly encompassing definition of project funding.

Looking to the future, a trend that has become apparent within this study at both policy level and in the day-to-day reality of festival strategies is a move toward the decategorisation of film as a format or art form towards the broader definition of screen. BFI2022's definition sets the tone for a wider understanding of what constitutes film in the changing technological environment. The BFI proposes that its new understanding encompasses a "wider interpretation of film to embrace new forms with a commitment to supporting work that expands the possibilities of storytelling and form."[89] Certainly, a wider interpretation of programming practices and the film festival format is apparent as a core feature of each festival under review within this study.

Within the UK context, it is apparent that it has fallen to the secondary film festivals to forge new curatorial paths and implement alternative forms of programming beyond the traditional film format so that they could establish their own unique identities. All three festivals demonstrate evidence that are creating space for new forms of cinephilia and filmviewing practices. Indeed, it is impossible for the film festival format to remain static in light of ongoing technological advancement that has resulted in changes to viewing practices. Each of the case studies examined has offered evidence to a more or lesser degree that the film festival format is beginning to change in response to both technological innovation and audience expectation.

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[89] British Film Institute, *BFI2022: Supporting UK Film – BFI Plan 2017-2022*, last accessed 28 May 2019, 8, https://www.bfi.org.uk/2022/downloads/bfi2022_EN.pdf.

Both Flatpack and Doc/Fest's broad programming practices would seem to have anticipated the BFI's change in definition. Each of these festivals sits more comfortably under the categorisation of media or screen festival rather than conforming strictly to the notion of film festival. GFF can be considered the most closely aligned with the traditional film festival format of the three cases under review. However, even in this case where the festival is bound by its institutional relationship with GFT, GFF has afforded an oportunity to explore alternative modes of exhibition. The result of this is that the reach of the programme has expanded out into the city beyond the confines of the cinema. It can be surmised that the challenge faced by all three to differentiate within the competitive film festival marketplace has created an opportunity for them to disrupt the existing model to some extent.

I have linked the film festivals in this study to the creation of a cinema city profile. However, taking a lead from the BFI's decategorisation of film, it would perhaps be more apt to redefine these as Screen Cities rather than Cinema Cities. The shifting terrain of the postindustrial environment would seem to lend itself more appropriately to this broader definition.

This study has served to open up an examination of secondary film festivals in the UK. However, this research has only scratched the surface in many ways. The UK's film festival environment is a rich and vibrant one that offers fertile ground for further research. New festivals are emerging all the time that warrant further analysis. Niche and specialised film festivals such as the Hippodrome Silent Film Festival, AND, the Radical Film Festival, Open City Documentary Film Festival and Encounters Film Festival, among countless others, are forging new paths in cinephilia and challenging the more traditional format associated with the international film festival format. I have argued that while in all three cases the impetus to break new ground has been a case of necessity it has also provided the opportunity to pave the way for new programming practices to emerge.

My hope is that this thesis has in some way served to create exposure for the UK's diverse film festival landscape beyond LFF and EIFF. The festivals in this study can all be considered to be disrupting the traditional film festival to some extent in response to the challenges presented by being located in postindustrial cities. Their presence in these locales speaks more widely to the ongoing success of using cultural-led regeneration to revive the fortunes of formerly ailing deindustrialised cities. Although as I have pointed out this is still remains largely a case of image reinvigoration. There continues to be a danger that a hidden lived reality still exists beyond the popular image of a well-heeled creative class inhabiting an imagined culturally rich postindustrial city. In this study is has become apparent that this dichotomy is replicated within the film festival space. Despite the best efforts of all three festivals to ensure accessibility it has become apparent that this remains a struggle rather than a given.

Appendices

Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interview Sample

Ian Francis Interview

Background

1. How did Flatpack come about? What was the motivation behind starting the festival?

2. Have these objectives been achieved?

3. Are the objectives for the festival still the same or have they changed?

4. What is the purpose of the festival?

5. Why the name? What significance does this have?

6. What is unique about Flatpack?

7. Did any other festival inspire / influence what you wanted Flatpack to be?

8. For you, what are the essential ingredients that make a successful festival?

9. To what do you attribute Flatpack's success to date?

Programming

1. Can you name a single event from anywhere in Flatpack's history that sums up / encapsulates what Flatpack is for you?

2. What do you see as your key programming objective for the festival?

3. Flatpack has always proclaimed itself to be an audience festival. Who are your audience? What type of audience do you set out to attract? How does this affect programming decisions?

4. How is the audience made up? Do many people visit from outside of Birmingham?

5. What do you think the audience most enjoys at Flatpack?

6. Who are your guests? Are guests important to the festival? Why?

Place

1. What does Flatpack bring to the city? Why are these factors / aspects important?

2. What relationship does Flatpack have with the city of Birmingham as a place? For instance, would the festival work elsewhere?

3. What relevance do you think film festivals have for cities?

4. What public support do you get from the City of Birmingham (i.e. funding)?

5. Do you think the festival has an impact on the city's profile?

6. What is Flatpack's role in the UK-wide festival space?

Space

1. Over the years Flatpack has demonstrated a deep interaction with city through use of non-theatrical or alternative spaces. What was the reasoning behind it? What role have these alternative spaces played within the festival?

2. Has this been successful as an initiative?

3. Do you think it reaches a greater or more diverse audience than if the festival was to use more traditional cinema spaces?

Future

1. What does the future hold for Flatpack?

2. What is your prime ambition for Flatpack to be in ten years' time?

3. If you could sum Flatpack up in a sentence, what would it be?

Appendix B

Case Study – EIFF: The Sundance of the North

In 2008, EIFF received an award of £1.88 million over three years from the Film Festival Fund that effectively increased its operating budget by 50 percent. This significant award seemingly indicated a commitment on the part of the UKFC to ensuring EIFF's continued international stature in keeping with its reputation as the world's longest continually running festival. However, this increased funding injection came at a cost. EIFF now needed to provide a considerably more ambitious strategic vision in order to demonstrate its value in both the UK space and on an international level. Led by Artistic Director, Hannah McGill, the festival "declared a bold ambition to become the world's 'must attend' Festival of discovery."[1] The trade publication, *Screen Daily*, reported that EIFF's intention was to build on its reputation as a "launchpad for indie talent."[2] It would assume a similar role to that of the Sundance Film Festival (Sundance) in North America as the primary platform for discovering and launching independent American independent filmmaking.

This strategic positioning was backed by the UKFC who commented that "the hope and the aspiration for the festival from the Film Council is that Edinburgh becomes the film festival for discovering new talent – full stop."[3] Indeed, as part of a promoted rhetoric at the time, the festival was frequently referred to as the "Sundance of the North" or the "Sundance of Europe". This classification would later be debunked when Sundance set up its own offshoot festival in London in 2012, initially taking place in April but later rescheduling to June in 2016, creating a direct challenge to EIFF's informal brand positioning.

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[1] Allan Hunter, "UK Film Council backs Edinburgh Film Fest with $3.8m over 3 years," *Screen Daily,* last modified 17 March 2008, https://www.screendaily.com/uk-film-council-backs-edinburgh-film-fest-with-38m-over-3-years/4037832.article.

[2] Ibid.

[3] BBC Staff, "Huge Cash Boost for Festival', *BBC*, last modified 17 March 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/edinburgh_and_east/7301216.stm.

Rather than marking the beginning of a golden era for EIFF, the UKFC's financial injection signalled the start of a period of major disruption for the festival lasting from 2008-15. In the highly competitive and rapidly increasing worldwide film festival landscape the "dogma of discovery" had become a centralising institutional imperative.[4] Therefore, the idea of discovery as EIFF's underpinning raison d'être was simply not a strong enough unique selling point to differentiate it from other festivals in the marketplace. Notable contributing factors to EIFF's destabilisation during this time can also be attributed to a number of other disruptive factors not least of which was a significant cinema calendar change from August to June. As mentioned earlier, this move was instigated to balance out the UK festival calendar and make room for two internationally important festivals in the UK's annual cycle. However, the initial effect on the festival proved to be a debilitating one.

Over the years EIFF "had successfully capitalized on the millions of arts-seeking festival goers visiting the city to sustain festival attendance and ticket sales."[5] Being part of the Edinburgh's high season in August had both coloured the festival experience for attendees and given EIFF a unique selling point like no other on the film festival circuit. In defence of this controversial move, spokespeople from EIFF argued that the move was strategically important in order to stop the festival from being overshadowed by the explosion of events in the city during Edinburgh's competitive festival season. It was anticipated that the rescheduling of EIFF would give it "room to breathe."[6] It would also help potential attendees avoid the "dizzying choice of clashing activities" happening in the city.[7] Organisers also identified a salient opportunity to reduce costs by moving EIFF out of the city's most economically challenging and competitive month while energising the city during the less crowded early part of the summer. However, the

[4] Marijke de Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 20.

[5] Sarah Smyth, "From Lerwick to Leicester Square: UK film festivals and why they matter," in *The Routledge Companion to British Cinema History*, eds. I.Q. Hunter, Laraine Porter and Justin Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 410.

[6] Adam Dawtrey, "EIFF gets room to breathe," Variety, last modified 13 June 2008, https://variety.com/2008/film/markets-festivals/eiff-gets-room-to-breathe-1117987483.

[7] Hannah McGill, "Why we're moving the Edinburgh film festival to June," The Guardian, last modified 7 August 2007, https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2007/aug/07/whyweremovingtheedinburghfilmfestivaltojune.

"considerable psychological leap" that would be required to resituate the festival after over sixty years in its August timeslot was severely underestimated.[8]

A range of funding cuts also took their toll on the festival, plunging the organisation into financial difficulty. Significantly, one of these cuts included the end of the Film Festival Fund's contribution only two years later in the wake of the UKFC's abrupt abolition in 2010. This funding cut contributed to creating a rollercoaster effect on the festival's finances. In part the UKFC funding had been awarded in order to aid the festival in its transition but by 2011 the festival was in severe difficulty with one critic going as far as to describe it as being in "freefell."[9] During this period, admissions also plunged, suffering a radical decline that reached an all-time low of 34,500. This figure was in contrast to the festival's recorded figure of 54,500 in 2004, the festival's highest year on record just seven years before. However, it's important to note that reduced attendance figures can directly be attributed to the festival's presentation of a considerably constrained programme as a result of operating on a curtailed budget rather than a decrease in popularity. Additionally, the loss of EIFF's key annual sponsor Standard Life the following year (2011), worth £70,000, further impacted the festival's bottom line detrimentally and influenced decision making away from EIFF's initial aspirational strategic vision.

Along with successive financial challenges, EIFF was beset by rapid changes to artistic direction caused by a high turnover of senior personnel that resulted in a persistent tearing up of "the Edinburgh Film Festival script."[10] The appointment of prolific programmer and film journalist, Mark Adams, in December 2014 marked the fifth festival leader to take the helm in only ten years. Previous programme leaders included Shane Danielson (2002-2006), Hannah McGill (2006-2010), James Mullighan (2010-2012) and Chris Fujiwara (2012-2014).[11] As a result of these successive changes, the

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Andrew Pulver, "The Trouble with Edinburgh Film Festival," The Guardian, last modified 20 June 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/jun/20/edinburgh-film-festival-what-went-wrong.

[10] Michael M. McLeod, "Another new director tears up Edinburgh film festival script," *The Guardian*, last modified 6 February 2012, http://www.theguardian.com/uk/scotland-blog/2012/feb/06/edinburgh-film-festival-chris-fujiwara.

[11] James Mullighan was appointed as producer of EIFF in a new format with responsibility for leading on a programme of guest curators. There was no artistic director in role during this period.

quality and consistency of both the festival's programme and format endured considerable fluctuations resulting in a keen sense that EIFF had lost its direction. The banishment of the red carpet at premieres and the festival's most prolific award, The Michael Powell Award for Best British Feature, during James Mullighan's tenure are just two noteworthy examples of disruptions that provoked negative media coverage and public consternation at the direction the festival was taking. These were later restored under Chris Fujiwara's artistic leadership.

Changes in artistic leadership were also mirrored, and presumably caused by, a significant change to the governance of EIFF. In 2010 a new body, the Centre for Moving Image (CMI), was incorporated as an umbrella organisation that combined EIFF with Edinburgh's arthouse cinema, Filmhouse and later the Belmont in Aberdeen (2014). The establishment of CMI was part of a report commissioned by the City of Edinburgh Council entitled *A Moving Image Strategy for Edinburgh*. The strategy sought to build on the city's recent rebrand as "Edinburgh – Inspiring Capital" and cohesify activities linked to the moving image industry.[12] CMI's stated objective was to "provide a national focus for curatorial, research and educational resources in the film industry and public in Scotland and the UK."[13] The body was chaired through EIFF's most turbulent period by Leslie Mills, a documentary producer and former Commercial Director, Gavin Millar, was appointed as its initial CEO. Millar resigned abruptly in 2011 to be replaced by the former chair of the then-defunct national screen agency, Screen Scotland, Ken Hay.[14] This transition signalled an internal discord at work that was clearly affecting artistic leadership during the early years of the new governance structure. All of the above added up to a period of serious instability for EIFF with a loss of coherent direction and a reduction in media and public confidence that had serious impact on the festival's programme, profile and admissions for a time.

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[12] Edinburgh Council, *A Moving Image Strategy for Edinburgh*, (Edinburgh, March 2007), http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/6021/a_moving_image_strategy_for_edinburgh.

[13] Screen Daily Staff, "Scotland's Centre for Moving Image appoints senior team," *Screen Daily*, last modified 5 July 2010, https://www.screendaily.com/scotlands-centre-for-moving-image-appoints-senior-team/5015702.article.

[14] Sarah Cooper, "Ken Hay appointed as interim CEO of Centre for the Moving Image," *Screen Daily*, last modified 21 September 2011, https://www.screendaily.com/ken-hay-appointed-as-interim-ceo-of-centre-for-the-moving-image-/5032357.article.

In recent years there has been a return to form with EIFF finally stabilising and becoming re-established on the circuit in its June timeslot. This was confirmed by a significant boost in attendance from 2015 onwards with admissions returning to pre-schedule-change levels. In fact, the 2019 festival recorded over 55,000 admissions, a higher figure than in its final year in its August placement in 2008. Annual admissions have been further augmented by the launch of a series of outdoor screenings, Fest in the City. The outdoor programme takes place in the lead-up to the festival and boosts attendance by approximately 20,000.

While the fortunes of EIFF were certainly in flux during this period it's important to note that media coverage and commentary maintained, and even increased, its focus on the festival. Serious concerns were articulated by the press, industry, supporters and audiences denoting EIFF's ongoing importance as an internationally important festival for the UK. This is especially relevant in the cases of GFF and Doc/Fest, both of which have an incontrovertible relationship to EIFF as part of the UK's circuit. Certainly at the time, GFF's geographical proximity coupled with its rapid expansion, positioned it as a potential competitor for EIFF.

Figure B.1. Robert Carlyle and Ashley Jenson, Opening Night Gala: *The Legend of Barney Thomson*, 2015. Source: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-33188031.

At the height of EIFF's troubles in 2011, critic Andrew Pulver suggested that the Glasgow festival already offered enough of an alternative that "threatened to eclipse" the ailing festival in spite of its youth.[15] In addition, CMI's national focus provides an interesting comparison with the later incorporated Glasgow Film, GFF's parent company, both of which assert their objective as being Scotland's primary national film centre. Alternatively, Doc/Fest's temporal proximity to EIFF creates an intrinsic linkage with it. Doc/Fest takes place immediately before EIFF. This often causes one festival to run into the other and almost certainly creates competition for documentary titles and talent between the two.

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[15] Andrew Pulver, "The Trouble with Edinburgh Film Festival," *The Guardian*, last modified 20 June 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/jun/20/edinburgh-film-festival-what-went-wrong.

Appendix C

Case Study – LFF: A "Razzle-Dazzle" Strategy

At the opposite end of the spectrum, LFF also received an award of £1.88 million from the Film Festival Fund in 2009. Again this award came with its own caveats, although in the case of LFF the UKFC was more overt in its positioning of the festival. Traditionally considered a "festival of festivals" or a "best of fests," LFF was now charged with becoming one of "the world's foremost red carpet festival's with major premieres and a big dollop of razzle-dazzle" in keeping with London's revitalised cosmopolitan image.[1] Indeed, the imperative to shift LFF's profile was so strong that its initial 2008 proposal for a similar level of funding to EIFF was rejected as not being ambitious enough. Commenting on the declined 2008 proposal, UKFC Chairman Stewart Till responded

> They made a bid, but it was a Band-Aid on the existing operation.
> So we said, 'Let's go on with the 2008 festival as it stands, let's
> not stick a Band-Aid on it, and let's work together on a strategy of
> creating a London Film Festival in 2009 and beyond that is the
> festival everybody in the British film industry wants.'[2]

Stewart Till further made clear that the UKFC's vision for LFF and the UK sector by suggesting that the festival needed to double its budget to circa £7-£8 million in line with A-list festivals such as the Venice or Berlin festivals in order to fulfil a remit that reflected the UK film sector's stature. Till argued that the UK was "the Western world's second most important film industry, and the Film Council feels very strongly that it needs to work with the BFI to create a much bigger festival."[3]

Notwithstanding the disparity of funding between the two festivals at the apex of the UK's festival hierarchy and the rest of the sector, Till's above statements made clear that the UKFC's strategic focus lay particularly with the London festival. The impetus to

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[1] Adam Dawtrey, "Brit fest scene is a tale of two cities," *Variety,* last modified 21 March 2008,
https://variety.com/2008/scene/columns/brit-fest-scene-is-a-tale-of-two-cities-1117982768.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

increase LFF's prestige was echoed the following year by incoming UKFC Chairman, Greg Dyke, who commented "a glitzier film festival is a good idea. It does something for London, which I think is a sensational city of many communities, a transformed city. The festival should reflect that excitement."[4]

Figure C.1. Helena Bonham Carter, LFF Closing Night Gala: Great Expectations, Leicester Square, 2012. Source: https://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/bfi-news/57th-bfi-london-film-festival-announces-2013-dates.

In her thesis on festivals and cultural exchange, Mar Diestro-Dópido proposes that Dyke's statement directly correlates with Thomas Elsaesser's contention that cities use film festivals as a strategy for city branding "when he emphasises what the Festival can do for London (instead of England, or the UK)."[5] In relation to how this fits into the national film sector strategy, the emphasis on a London agenda skews the focus away from the nation's film sector at large and puts it squarely onto the capital city's imaging strategy. This strategy resonates with Saskia Sassen's work relating to the articulation of a new urban economy that elevates global cities such as London to nodal points in the global flow in place of the nation state. It is unsurprising then that there has been an increased strategic focus on LFF from a national strategy perspective.

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[4] Tim Teeman, "Greg Dyke: our man in the stalls at the BFI," The Times, last modified 6 March 2008, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/greg-dyke-our-man-in-the-stalls-at-the-bfi-9wntfmglhr9.

[5] Diestro-Dópido, "Film Festivals: Cinema and Cultural Exchange," 252.

A period of exponential expansion was implemented the following year in 2009 when LFF did finally secure the funding. However, unlike EIFF, the London festival was largely unaffected by the UKFC's demise in 2010. LFF continued to receive a similar level of support as before albeit through the BFI's, now the national lead cinema agency, title sponsorship. This positioned the festival as the standard bearer for the British film industry and the UK's film festival landscape. Notably, LFF no longer received funding from the Film Festival Fund. Instead the festival was directly sponsored by the BFI as part of the institution's cultural exhibition remit.

Initially, LFF's expansion took place under Sandra Hebron's, head of BFI festivals and artistic director of BFI London Film Festival, stewardship until 2011. More recently this role has been assumed by Claire Stewart (2011-2017) under the mantle of head of exhibitions (a newly formulated position that merged the roles of artistic director of the LFF and artistic director of the BFI Southbank into one position). While still mostly retaining its "best of fests" format, LFF's profile has changed considerably in the intervening years with the UKFC's initial investment serving as a catalyst. Indeed, a round-up of the world's major international festivals in the *Guardian* newspaper in 2012, just three years after the UKFC's funding injection, summarises LFF's ascent in the following terms:

> As Edinburgh suffered, London gained. The strategy review that branded Edinburgh's festival one of 'discovery', designated London a 'major international festival', with funding to match. Taking over two massive cinemas and building a giant gantry in Leicester Square for the world premiere of Wes Anderson's Fantastic *Mr Fox* in 2009 was a statement of ambition, and its exhaustive programming of mainstream film ensures a good celebrity quotient, and it benefits from the scramble for Bafta votes that begins in late autumn. Studios now compel their stars to visit London to woo support at private British academy screenings, then pop across the road to LFF events. All this activity is in addition to London's traditional practice of programming as many foreign films as possible, catering for and

supported by the capital's multiple immigrant communities. And now
its principal sponsors, the BFI, have become British cinema's lead
agency, it can only get better.[6]

While Andrew Pulver's above assertion fails to note that the funding injection for both festivals was on a par, there is no denying that there has been a significant shift in LFF's stature and role both within the city of London and on the international circuit.

The festival's increased stature and red-carpet cachet has also paved the way for increased exposure for British film. Beyond this the festival's ability to attract star power and international premieres has created a reframing of the festival in the global stakes. Diestro-Dópido outlines six key conditions that were attached to the initial award designed to increase LFF's international profile and kick-start the festival's repositioning.[7] These included:

1. An increase to the number of World and European premieres presented
2. A greater amount of European press invited
3. The introduction of press conferences for gala screenings
4. The introduction of a big popular title screened across the city
5. Developing the festival's online coverage in order to create greater engagement
6. An overall professionalisation of the festival in order to enhance its production values in relation to areas such as gala screenings.

While more recently Stewart's direction has been attributed with having had the greatest impact on LFF's redevelopment, changes to format and profile were well underway during Hebron's tenure. An increase in red-carpet activity and attendant cultural capital was very much in evidence with high-profile gala screenings taking place most nights at Leicester Square. In addition, Hebron implemented a significant increase to the industry programme that has changed LFF's profile as a solely audience-focused festival arguing that "strengthening the industry side of the festival is actually of

[6] Andrew Pulver, "Film festivals: which is top dog?" The Guardian, last modified 19 April 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2012/apr/19/film-festivals-which-is-top-dog.

[7] Mar Diestro-Dópido, *Film Festivals: Cinema and Cultural Exchange* (PhD diss., Queen Mary, University of London, London, 2017), 258.

fundamental importance if we are to enhance the festival's reputation as a strong public event."[8]

Figure C.2. BFI Thematic Programming: Love.

After being appointed, Stewart set about restructuring the programme in response to what she identified as being a perception problem. She suggests that LFF was viewed as being elitist or "a bit of a closed shop; that it was for BFI members and for the industry."[9] In order to make the festival more accessible, Stewart converted the regionally formulated programme structure into a revised theme-based format predicated on experiential pathways that branded films "under mood banners."[10] Pathways or mood banners included the themes thrill, dare, love, laugh, debate, cult, journey, sonic, family, treasures and experimenta.

According to Diestro-Dópido, Hebron's preceding strategy had viewed thematic programming as being the separate remit of the National Film Theatre's (NFT) year-round activity. However, as Stewart's role combined artistic creative direction of both LFF and NFT, amalgamating the two seems like a more natural programming strategy. This new programming structure was developed with the intention of opening up the

[8] Variety Staff, "London fest welcomes suits, civilians," *Variety*, last modified 10 October 2007, https://variety.com/2007/film/features/london-fest-welcomes-suits-civilians-1117973823.

[9] Charles Gant, "How Clare Stewart transformed the BFI London Film Festival," *Screen Daily*, last modified 4 October 2017, https://www.screendaily.com/features/how-clare-stewart-transformed-the-bfi-london-film-festival/5122932.article.

[10] Ibid.

LFF programme by extending it into the NFT's year-round programming and by extension to its nationwide touring programme. Interestingly, Stewart's programming initiative was to have an unanticipated and significant influence on film festival programming strategies across the UK with this tactic forming a programming trend. This programming strategy is evident at a number of UK film festivals, not least of which, at GFF and Doc/Fest.

Other initiatives implemented by Stewart that helped to create a new chapter in LFF's story also included shortening the festival's length from sixteen to twelve days. However, rather than decreasing the festival's offering, LFF has increased the amount of venues used to create a more extensive footprint across London to ensure a more truly citywide festival in contrast to the previous era where it had tended to be confined to specific venues in the West End and the Southbank.

Illustrating this, in 2017 LFF used fifteen venues across the city encompassing London's West End (Vue Leicester Square, Odeon Leicester Square, Picturehouse Central, the ICA, Curzon Mayfair, Curzon Soho, Empire Haymarket, Prince Charles Cinema and Ciné Lumière and Embankment Garden Cinema – a temporary venue set up by LFF), Southbank (BFI Southbank, BFI IMAX),) and a range of local neighbourhood cinemas (Hackney Picturehouse, Rich Mix in Shoreditch, Curzon Chelsea) as well as hosting special screenings at the National Gallery and the Barbican. The number of films screened also rose by 21% from approximately 200 to 242 in order to facilitate the wider geographical spread. Along with this, the amount of screenings that each title was given also rose considerably in order to ensure the widest possible access to the festival's 200,000-plus audience across the city.

There is no denying that since LFF's repositioning in 2009 it has become the flagship UK film festival with substantial and continued public funding support. Contemporary public funding is awarded via the BFI, the festival's home institution and main sponsor. The BFI's end-of-year accounts from 2015-16 recorded funding for LFF at £1million. This was the only funding awarded from the Clusters Fund. In comparison, EIFF was awarded a mere £150,000 from the Programme Development Fund. This amount was

also in contrast to Doc/Fest, which received £200,000 from the same fund, demonstrating a shifting national agenda.

In 2017, LFF reported admissions of 208,900. This included 180,900 London-based attendees and 28,000 UK-wide audiences that engaged with the festival through satellite screenings streamed live across the country.[11] LFF has almost doubled its admissions since the UKFC's initial injection of funding with admissions rising steadily year-on-year from an estimated 110,000 in 2009.

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[11] British Film Institute, "London Film Festival Draws to a Close," *British Film Festival,* last accessed 16 October 2017. https://whatson.bfi.org.uk/lff/Online/default.asp?BOparam::WScontent::loadArticle::permalink=lff-closing-announcement&BOparam::WScontent::loadArticle::context_id=.

Company Registration and Governance Details for GFF, Flatpack and Doc/Fest

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Glasgow Film Festival – Company Registration

Registered Company:

The Glasgow Film Theatre[1]

Company number:

SC005932

Company Status:

Private company limited by guarantee without share capital

Registered as a charity with OSCR: The Scottish Charity Register[2]

Registered office address:

12 Rose Street, Glasgow, G3 6RB

Incorporated on:

18 February 1986

Charitable Object:

The advancement of, arts, heritage, culture, or science.

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[1] "The Glasgow Film Theatre," Companies House, "last accessed 16 November 2019 https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/SC097369; "Glasgow Film Theatre, SC009532," OSCR: The Scottish Charity Register, last accessed 16 November 2019, https://www.oscr.org.uk/about-charities/search-the-register/charity-details?number=5932.

[2] Registered as a charity on 1 January 1992.

Flatpack – Company Registration

Registered Company:

Flatpack Projects[3]

Company number:

CE1162754

Company Status:

Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) registered with The Charity Commission for England and Wales.[4]

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[3] "Flatpack Film Festival Ltd," Companies House, last accessed 16 November 2019, https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/05987936; "Flatpack Projects," Companies House, last accessed 16 November,2019, https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/CE005084; "1162754 – Flatpack Projects," The Charity Commission for England and Wales, last accessed 16 November 2019, http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Showcharity/RegisterOfCharities/CharityFramework.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=1162754&SubsidiaryNumber=0.

[4] The festival was initially incorporated under the name Flatpack Film Festival Ltd as a Charitable Company Limited by Shares on 3 November 2006. The initial company was dissolved on 28 August 2018 and the festival now operates as an activity of Flatpack Projects.

Registered office address:

Unit 304, Scott House The Custard Factory, Gibb Street, Birmingham, West Midlands, B9 4AA

Incorporated on:

21 July 2015

Charitable Objects:

1) To promote appreciation of and education in the arts and their associated technologies, especially but not exclusively those of the cinema, film and other forms of moving images, through the production and performance of festivals, workshops, seminars, projects events, online resources, new media and in other ways as the CIO may decide from time to time.

2) To advance the education of the public in history, culture, aesthetics, practice and theory of arts, cinema film and other images.

Doc/Fest – Company Registration

Registered as:

International Documentary Festival Sheffield[5]

Company number:

CE018493

Company Status:

Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered with The Charity Commission for England and Wales.[6]

Registered office address:

The Workstation, 15 Paternoster Row, Sheffield, S1 2BX

Incorporated on:

22 September 1993

Charitable Objects:

1) To advance education, and training, in the art of the documentary cinema, film and new and emerging technologies in the field of film and in all other forms of related artistic or creative work.

2) To advance the arts and heritage with particular reference to documentary film and all related disciplines.

Board of Trustees:

Alex Graham, chair (Two Cities Television)

Brian Woods, deputy chair (True Vision Productions)

Barbara Lee (Sky)

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[5] "International Documentary Festival Sheffield Ltd," Companies House, last accessed 16 November 2019, https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/02856141; "International Documentary Festival Sheffield," Companies House, last accessed 16 November 2019, https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/CE018493; "International Documentary Festival Sheffield – 018493," The Charity Commission for England and Wales, last accessed 16 November, 2019, http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Showcharity/RegisterOfCharities/CharityFramework.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=1184849&SubsidiaryNumber=0.

[6] International Documentary Festival Sheffield Ltd was converted from a Charitable Company Limited by Shares to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation on 1 August 2019.

Derren Lawford (Woodcut Media)

Helen Scott (Clear Focus Productions)

Ian Wild (Sheffield Media & Exhibition Centre)

Jo Clinton-Davis (ITV)

Madonna Benjamin (Channel 4)

Mary Burke (British Film Institute)

Patrick Holland (BBC)

Peter Armstrong (Harbottle & Lewis)

Sharna Jackson (Site Gallery)

Shirani Sabaratnam (freelance)

Sue Cook (Arts Council observer)

Appendix E

Comparative Table: Peranson's Business Festival Model Against Doc/Fest Attributes

Peranson's Model	Doc/Fest
High budget that is not necessarily dependent on ticket sales	In 2017, money raised was recorded at being circa £1.7 million. No percentage is recorded against ticket sales / delegate passes but it can be assumed that a greater percentage comes from funding and sponsorship.
A significant onus on premiering films	Onus on premiering work – in 2017 the festival's post-event report stated that Doc/Fest hosted 33 world premieres, 23 European premiers and 72 UK premieres.
Major corporate sponsorship	Major corporate sponsorship is present through media / broadcast sponsors.
Filmmakers in attendance for most films	200 filmmakers attended to represent films in the form of Intros / Q&As.
Market or business presence	A high level of business presence in the form of initiatives such as the MeetMarket, several major pitching competitions and work-in-progress screenings along with panel discussions, talks, training and master classes that address filmmaking concerns and the

	state of media more generally. The festival's post-event report recorded the value of anticipated business generated at Doc/Fest 2017 as being in the region of £10.2million.
Large staff	Large staff (50 x core team members listed)
Major competition	Significant competition in 2017 included Grand Jury Award, Art Doc Award, Tim Hetherington Award, Environmental Award, Illuminate Award, Short Doc Award, New Talent Award, Youth Jury Award, Doc Audience Award, Whicker's World Funding Award, Whicker's World Sage Award and Doc/Dispatch Prize.
Film fund investment	N/A
Retrospectives	Doc/Fest's focus is more largely focused on premiering work.
Most films are submitted	Attracts a large volume of submissions – 2231 in 2017.
Hollywood studio involvement	While not Hollywood investment per se, there is a high level of media and broadcast sponsorship and investment. The UK's major broadcasters such as BBC, ITV and Channel 4 have all been major stakeholders since the outset as well as acting as part of the advisory

	committees and part of the board of directors that have helped shape the festival's trajectory. Additional media sponsors have also become apparent such as cable media conglomerate Sky, national media outlet, the Guardian as well as more recently, streaming service, Netflix.
Always expanding	The festival has recorded a year-on-year increase in its admissions / industry delegates since 2006.

Figure E.1. Source: Mark Peranson.[1]

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[1] Mark Peranson, "First You Get the Power, Then You Get the Money: Two Models of Film Festivals," in *Dekalog 3: On Film Festivals*, ed. Richard Porton (London and New York: Wallflower, 2009), 27.

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