

***A Trojan Horse: Twenty-First Century Argentine Community Cinema
as a Device of Decolonial Praxis***

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We make films, therefore, we are...

ABSTRACT

In contemporary Argentina, if the overriding factor for subaltern groups' integration into audio-visual production has been the technological democratization of resources, which allowed them to become literate in audio-visual language, we need to make clear that this "democratization of resources" meant also a "democratization of human resources". This calls our attention to the task assumed by community audio-visual production facilitators who perform in a "critical frontier positioning" dynamic that involves the borderisation of knowledge (intellectual-artistic/popular) as their working framework. It also seeks to conceptualize power relations involved in its production-circulation processes, including its technical and rhetorical strategies to communicate through the senses (its aesthesis), as contestations to neoliberal logics self-perpetuating as the only possible ethical alternative in contemporary *modus vivendi*. In this scheme, community cinema emerges as an ethical-aesthetic performative device involved in decolonial aesthesis and decolonial pedagogy to advance toward the decolonial project. In this thesis' selected cases casted from peripheral geo-cultural locations, such functioning could be observed as a discourse of critical interculturalism consolidation operated by semio-practical processes of technological and territorial appropriation, some of which can be defined as: "resilient communication", "aesthetic performance" and "techno-aesthetical embodiment".

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Concerning the consolidation of this monograph

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Ethics Approval

This research project has been approved by Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 15 October 2018, AUTEK # 18/313.

AUTEK Letter of approval from 18/10/2018 is provided as Appendix 2

Attestation of authorship

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

FOREWORD: on this Thesis' Intentions

This thesis is marked by the complexities of the space and time needed for its concretion. It comprised one year of bibliographic and filmographic research for the writing of the research proposal; a plan conceived from the perspective of a student and an institution accustomed to being able to plan and establish schedules. However, the project was intended to be carried out in Argentina, the country of origin of this researcher. Since this was my culture and I was aware of its socio-political circumstances, I was confident of taking up the challenge and departed in November 2018, shortly after my ethics permission was approved. The field research was planned for 18 months so I was due to be back in Aotearoa by April 2020 with a finished documentary and an exegesis to account for it. At that point, my focus of attention was the Cinema Made With Neighbours movement from Saladillo, Buenos Aires, Argentina, with whom I had been in contact on and off since my previous trip in 2009. As people say when the plan is solid: "whatever can go wrong?"

What you have in front of you is nothing like what was planned. My encounter with Cinema Made With Neighbours was not what I had envisioned and observed 9 years earlier; the project had somehow lost genuineness and I had to dig deeper if I wanted to find what I went there for. Hence, my interest to see community cinema thriving as a device for decolonial praxis made me open my range of observation. Let us keep in mind that so far, the research was thought of as a documentary, and as such, the methodology was to interview agents and groups, video-record contextual scenarios, collect samples of original producers, attend and video record events in which community cinema was involved (festivals, symposiums, workshops). As the data collection had the point of view of a documentary making in situ and as during summer 2018-2019 people were difficult to reach, I started to develop active writing over the recorded data. This is something I later called 'deferred visual ethnographic observation'.

At the beginning of 2019, the interest for broadening my research scope took me to move to Córdoba city, where I had completed my undergraduate degree in Film Studies. The objective was to reconnect with ex fellow students and teachers to start the networking from where to find my new interview subjects, focus groups and observation cases. One of my strategies then was to join the Faculty of Communication Sciences, National University of Córdoba as a visiting teacher in the Audio-visual Production Workshop. A yearly paper established by its director Dr. Elizabeth Vidal in 1998 and of which I was senior tutor until I emigrated to New Zealand in 2000. In one way, being there was as to be back home. As a teacher, I contributed to these classes with my observations made on community cinema and prepared teaching

session that introduced the phenomenon of community cinema to be studied epistemologically, historically and methodologically. I also organized encounters between the students and community cinema referents; this is how I first got in touch with the community cinema organizations. A timely connection since, during these days, the groups were in the process of consolidation under the “Network of Social and Community Cinema of Córdoba”. I attended their meetings, exhibitions and events; I interviewed them individually and in groups and I travelled to their original districts to video-record their workshops and to meet their groups of influence. As an advance towards my data analysis, I joined an academic research group whose topic of interests would give a great impulse to my perspective on community cinema, technological appropriations. My further active writing integrated this angle into Córdoba’s community cinema cases. During this year, I have reencountered an old school of cinema mates, I had visited my former school of cinema, attended and video- recorded their classes, their exhibitions and events, I have taken seminars and conversed with university authorities. By the end of 2019, I had built a strong network, so I left for my hometown, San Juan, for the summer planning to be back in late March for the beginning of the academic year. The plan was to use the summer months to make a script for the documentary and go back to Córdoba to edit the material into documentary format. However, we were all in for a surprise.

On 16 March 2020 as I was packing to go back to Córdoba, COVID 19 restrictions came into order, and we were confined to our homes. The prospects were unclear, my child’s school did not start, and I could no longer get into editing rooms, video- recording or any public space to complete shots for the documentary. I could not get back to New Zealand either. All I could do was interviews online, which I conducted with community cinema directors from Córdoba and Buenos Aires. Facing these circumstances my supervisor and I decided to shift the thesis format to a monographic form (Format 1). I devoted the following months to finding a structure for this thesis which involved reviewing the epistemological and methodological framework now with a monographic output in mind. Even though my PhD scholarship had run out and I had used up my savings, I managed to keep working and a draft for the theoretical chapters was handed at the end of the year 2020. After that, I decided to take a break to re-evaluate my circumstances. Without the scholarship I had to go back to work so since then I have been working on this thesis on and off, when taking breaks from my work at the Institute of Visual Expression at the Faculty of Philosophy Humanities and Arts, National University of San Juan. This position was a strategic point to keep in touch with local audio-visual producers and the current socio-political affairs even outside my work as a PhD researcher. In 2021, I was able to go back to video recording interviews and produce visual data about the analysed cases (with the view in mind that now my observations were on the images as a deferred observation). At the National University of San Juan, I also joined academic research groups

to attend the analysis of some of the cases drafted as a part time PhD student. I also continued with active writing approaching a partial hypothesis on community cinema intersubjective dynamics.

At the end of 2022 I returned to New Zealand for six months during which time I reviewed my writing and started to organize my chapters on case analysis. In May 2023, I went back to Argentina with the purpose of finishing my work. At that point, I decided to conduct a practical experience of community cinema using my connection with the university. This was my chance to merge all the perspectives and findings I had collected from my observations and analysis it. As it was going to be the last chapter and, in some way, a mode of practical conclusion for my thesis, I devoted my part time enrolment of 2023 to the design this project (with a pedagogical component and a creative/researching one). At the end of 2023 I submitted the project to the University's academic board. As a program of Socio-educative Practices in community cinema was unprecedented at the University of San Juan, it required much internal and external bureaucracy to become a feasible project; I was caught in that web until mid-2024 when I finally could run it undertaking preproduction, production and postproduction until September 2024. In October, I returned to New Zealand filled with experience, thankful for so much learning and carrying 90 hrs. of recorded interviews and happenings that are not included in this thesis. What you see in front of you is a written monograph of a project that still wants to be a documentary film. Hence its autoethnography methodology (as the director behind the camera, present and observing) and the perusal of the "occurrence", like the documentarist who seeks for "the moment" in which the reality reveals itself in an image able to condense all the universe of meaning, in a metaphor.

INTRODUCTION

Let me start by acknowledging that Twenty first Century's Latin American context has experienced an important socio-cultural shift with respect to its traditional forms of cultural prominence derived from the logics of "Coloniality of Power" (Quijano, 2000). These dynamics determined which groups had the right to "speak" (as hegemonic subjects they have the right to voice their ideas, opinions and identities), and which group shall be socio-symbolically silenced (treated as "the others", the outsiders to the Modern/Colonial pattern ruling through "Coloniality of Being" [Maldonado-Torres, 2007], Coloniality of Knowledge" [Castro-Gómez, 2000]) and "Coloniality of seeing" [Barriendos, 2011]).

Nowadays, and throughout the Latin American territory, such dynamics are being firmly revised by Decolonial thinking through projects such as Decolonial Pedagogy (Walsh, 2013), Decolonial Aesthetics (Mignolo & Vázquez, 2013) and Decolonial Consciousness (Maldonado Torres, 2007) which amalgamates counter-hegemonic theory and collective civil praxis. This paradigmatic revision, promoted by "internal others" (De Oto y Catelli, 2018), involves a re-narration of the colonised collective memory. Such discourses and praxes aim to unveil how they have been subalternised by the foundational narrations of the Nation-State supported by the national creole-bourgeois elites. They bring to public attention how they have been made invisible and materially and symbolically appropriated, on the basis of their belonging to epistemological, ethnic, economic, symbolic or generic systems other than the Christian, bourgeois, phallogocentric, heterosexual and European-descent centrality imposed on them by Modern/Colonial discourse. As I review in Chapter 1 and 2, cultural production plays a big part on this transformation.

While the latest examinations conducted from Latin America about twenty-first century Argentine community cinema have advanced from the perspective of visual anthropology and communication studies by mapping different territorial expressions and modes of production in a rather behaviouralist way, my perspective in this thesis leans more towards the viewpoint of Cultural Studies. Such orientation involves conceiving community cinema as a phenomenological fact immersed in the tension established between the onto-epistemological dynamics of Coloniality of Power's discursive reproduction and their counter-hegemonic intervention opportunities.

From a hybridization of qualitative research approach (with emphasis in autoethnography and visual ethnography), I explored a Decolonial impulse emerging (occurring) from community

cinema cultural production relationships, directly manifested throughout the lived experience of its agents when involved in such semio-practical endeavour. As such, my field research (rather intermittently) observed, from 2018 to 2024, the organizational experiences, production and dissemination dynamics of twenty-first century Argentina's community cinema groups as part of a collective process of technological and territorial appropriation. This exploration on community cinema's collective creative dynamics looked at, not only the signs the excluded and silenced by State and mass media presently exhibit of their access to audio-visual technology, but also, the traces of their discursive empowerment emerging from their interaction with other social actors at play. As such, I believe community cinema's territory encompasses the relations with referents from: peripheral urban and sub-urban communities; environmental activism; identity organizations and movements for civil rights; audio-visual education environments; academic, governmental or non-governmental bodies; national and regional networks of exhibition and technical-rhetorical re-nourishment; as well as associations in defence of the right to communication as a human right.

My guiding perspective through community cinema's territory sought its production-circulation dynamics as an expression of "cultural occurrence" (Kusch, 1976). These are instances in which marginalized, underrepresented or ignored communities' voices are made visible/audible because of a social network restitution brought up by the alliances between communities, intellectuals, non-governmental institutions, film workers and broader social movements that encouraged autonomous communication experiences such as those expressed through audio-visual platforms. Therefore, through this perspective I attempt to justify that community cinema 'occurs' as a cultural enactment encouraging recognition of cultural diversity. Therefore, even when it is true that the democratized access to technology (characteristic of the first quarter of 21st Century) has been a springboard that allowed the leap from a cinema of individuals (commercial and author cinema) to a cinema of communities (beyond the formats of intellectualized left-wing representations), such transformation is not the exclusive influence of a technological bonanza. It has more to do with a paradigm change in contemporary socio-political coexistence, of which community cinema is a part. This shift includes a change of self-perception by the involved communities' experiences as "to be being" with, as they recognize a sense of togetherness within a "cultural occurrence", a moment of ethical change alongside other counter-cultural emergent forces, sometimes synchronizing with the direction of state cultural policies (labour parties), at other times against it (Neoliberal right-wing parties). In this framework, the availability of new technology as instruments that they may manipulate, is just a part; what matters to me around the new access to technology is 'when and how' communities acquire the knowledge of technology's social, political and intersubjective potential to operate it as a Decolonial device.

Epistemologically my analysis draws from Critical Theory (especially from the Poststructural, Decolonial and Spatial turns) to frame community cinema as a territory where a network of players, texts, cultural codes and geo-socio-historical circumstances are in permanent negotiation, redefining its own limits and modifying the territories in which it is immerse. Accordingly, I conceive community cinema's cultural production as a symbolic act (Jameson,1981). That is, that is, as a device that operates a dual procedure: its process of production-circulation represents the lived experience of this territory's subjects whose subjectivities are body-politically signed by the coloniality of power, and simultaneously, the intersubjective dynamics at play in such process, reshape this lived experience by affirming decolonial praxes. I claim therefore, this to be its socio-symbolical performative ability, that of replacing previous territorial relationships signed by Coloniality of Power with new ones belonging to a Decolonial project; this is its reterritorialisation strategy.

This framework proposes community cinema as a device to intervene in the network of knowledge/power relations that forges subjectivity in accordance with the Coloniality of Power. My interest concerns finding the possibilities of community cinema as an agent of simultaneous performative intervention of the three fields of Coloniality of Power's reproduction; coloniality of knowledge, being and seeing. My exploration has therefore, looked at the cultural occurrences in which there appears to be a possibility for such interventions.

My focus over such interventions has been on the instances in which community cinema is developed as a dynamic of "frontier critical thinking" (Walsh, 2005). I follow Walsh's concept which describes an attitude to socio-political praxis in which academic knowledge, as well as the technical/artistic expertise of a given field, is put in the service of emancipatory actions by subaltern groups. Such perspective aims for an ethos of "critical interculturality" (Walsh, 2005): an enhancement (by the very subaltern subjects once they become producers of meaning) of their knowledge, identities and aesthetics, which have been made invisible by the onto-epistemological channels of reproduction of coloniality of power (coloniality of knowledge, being and seeing).

In order to examine such dynamics across the regional community cinema studied in Chapters 4 to 7, I have observed practices of "frontier critical thinking" as occurrences of critical interculturalism emerging from the intersubjective dynamics of community cinema's production-circulation. I highlighted these occurrences because they exemplify lines of potency with socio-performative counter discursive force when facing the reproduction channels of Coloniality of Power (coloniality of Knowledge, being and seeing). To establish an epistemological framework fitting for fellow researchers future approaches to the field of

community cinema, I developed these three categories of occurrences organized by their potency of intervention (*vis à vis* coloniality of knowledge, being and seeing):

A) Resilient communication is the encounter between community audio-visual education/production and community activism/cooperativism, which sets in motion a critical interculturalism sustained in bordering knowledge as a praxis that strengthens the epistemology of Decolonial pedagogy. It is therefore a form of intervention in the dynamics of Coloniality of Knowledge.

B) Aesthetic performance is a praxis played out at the socio performative level of the community cinema's audio-visual production-circulation process in which, semio-practical and socio-symbolical interactions foster the reappearance of a collective sensitivity, which identifies itself with a communitarian ethos. This type of occurrence emerges within community practices as manners of repartition of the sensible. This praxis' performance is therefore an active dynamic of Decolonial Aesthetics, and its power of intervention is on Coloniality of seeing dynamics.

C) Techno-aesthetical embodiment is the consequence of the lived experience of community cinema praxis projected back into everyday life's territorial appropriation. It involves body political semio-praxis of visibility and a process of legitimization of the self. It is therefore a form of Decolonial consciousness able to intervene in Coloniality of the being dynamics.

These lines of potency are explored in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 4 approaches the occurrence of Techno-aesthetical embodiment by exploring true commitment of critical frontier positioning to residents' territorial practices. The enquiry is made to the chance Cinema Made with Neighbours (Saladillo, Buenos Aires) has as a praxis of Decolonial Consciousness. Chapter 5 explores the process of technological appropriation networking based on critical frontier positioning as occurrence of resilient communication. The enquiry is on the possibilities the Social and Community Cinema Network of Córdoba has as a praxis of Decolonial Pedagogy. Chapter 6 explores occurrences of Aesthetic performance looking at technical-rhetorical strategies brought up by critical frontier positioning when fostering resilient communications. The case studies emergent community cinema of San Juan (Community radio, Social Cinema Cooperative and local film school students) as praxes of Decolonial aesthetics. Chapter 7 narrates a practicum I conducted at the National University of San Juan, involving graduate students, governmental and non-governmental institutions, neighbourhood residents, and social cinema producers. In it, I applied the possibilities of these lines of potencies into a practice-based pedagogical exercise on Community cinema as a Decolonial praxis.

Summarizing

In twenty-first century Argentina, an important factor contributing to the development of community cinema's production-reception has been the State's policies of inclusion of communities' cultural expression under a national canopy. As such, and as has been observed in this thesis' Literature Review (Chapter 1), State promotion of community audio-visual initiatives has been important for community cinema's autonomy. For example, one cluster of relationships studied by the referential authors has to do with the role of the State, (and some entities such as universities or NGOs), sorting out legal, finance, production and dissemination issues linked to the practices of community cinema. Here, they focused on studying community cinema as a receiver of government measures towards the democratization of technology.

From this perspective, when observing the past quarter of a century, we can count three main periods. A) the multi-sectorial struggle to propose the New Media Law (from the social anti-neoliberalist explosion of 2001 to the end of Nestor Kirchner's government in 2007).¹ B) the short period in which it was sanctioned and actually executed (Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner's two consecutive governments from 2007 till 2015); and C) the arrival of right-wing government policies which heavily chastise the right to communication and of course the law that guarantees it (2015 onwards). Here I include the halfhearted period of the last Kirchnerism (2019-2023) which did little to nothing to recover the New Media Law from the debilitation caused by Macri's movement, while indeed allowing media monopolies to undermine the populist government's own credibility to the point of losing power to the present right-wing government (Milei's presidency 2023 till present).

By applying autoethnography as a methodological tool, I have used the "occurrence" as the perspective for my alignment with Cultural Studies as a field of observation rather than creating a historical-political review of institutional relationships between community cinema and the state. Autoethnography guided by occurrence delimited the timeframe to a period when I could be a direct participant observer; this moved the temporal focus of my case analyses, especially to the last period 2019-till present. It also followed my participatory transit as I travelled from New Zealand to Argentina at the end of 2018, visited Saladillo and Buenos Aires for two weeks, then settled in Córdoba province for a year to finally establish myself in San Juan province from 2020 until 2024.

¹ In December 2001, Argentina experienced a devastating economic crisis that included a default on its public debt, bank runs, frozen accounts and social unrest led to clashes with the police and several deaths. President Fernando de la Rúa resigned on 21 December and fled the country by helicopter. The crisis caused a collapse in output, high unemployment, and political and social turmoil. Argentina's economy fell by around 20%, similar to the Great Depression

It should be emphasized that the occurrence perspective facilitated flexibility in the data collection method since in the beginning I started exploring physical collaborative research environments from the perspective of a documentary film maker by videorecording of individual and group interviews and taking part in debates raised after festival screenings, in workshops, press conferences and/or public conservatories. However, pandemic restrictions influenced a shift to working virtually. The research then moved towards participant observation in group zoom calls and cell phone chats. It embraced, as well, deferred observation both of my own collected data as of sources circulating on social media and topic-specific websites, blogs and online platforms. These were the fonts from where I accessed recorded-interviews and open chats given by community cinema referents, editing of past festivals and conferences and/or promotional audio-visual content as well as filmographic and bibliographic works.

As for the interpretation of collected visual ethnographic data relating to the occurrence approach and an auto-ethnographic method, the strategy was to challenge partial hypotheses by interacting in academic environments from where I researched, shared, debated and tested possible interpretations of this phenomenon through permanent active writing. This included also taking these understandings back to the community cinema producers for approval and comments as well as running ideas and relevant discussion through my supervisor. In all, and with the aim of developing the following interpretative ideas in each of the case analysis chapters, I propose that resilient communication, aesthetic performance and techno-aesthetical embodiments, emerged as collective practices of technological and territorial appropriation in moments in which this “cultural occurrence” is at variance with state policies and measures. Therefore, they can be understood as feasible Decolonial praxes at least at the epistemological, aesthetic and ontological level. This means they are fit to simultaneously contest the Coloniality of Knowledge, of Seeing and of Being.

Finally, in this thesis I understand that the semio-practical bordering of knowledge formed around the praxis of community cinema, accompanies a process of epistemological emancipation. In this way, the notion and practice of “Community Cinema”, in its process of technical-rhetorical appropriation (and intervention) of a hegemonic language, moves through criticism and knowledge of what exists to apply it to the praxis of resilient communication aimed at the transformation of circumstances of their own producers of meaning. The fundamental philosophical problem I touch upon across this thesis is, therefore, the practical problem of transforming the social world toward a world that embraces us all.

LITERATURE REVIEW: Community Cinema and Cultural Democratisation in Twenty-First Century Argentina

Introduction

Scholarship on Argentine community cinema is recent, explored by a few scholars examining this social practice from communicational, sociological, historical, and anthropological perspectives, developing maps, diagrams, and categories to systematize this complex field. This chapter acknowledges research perspectives aligned with my three discussions on Argentine community cinema presented by Chapter 1 (on genealogy), Chapter 2 (on epistemology), and Chapter 3 (on methodology).

The first group of scholarship connects community cinema to broader Latin American cultural production, opening the chronological scope to read this production as part of a historical conversation with previous artistic/communicative attempts, extending analysis to a Latin American regional perspective (for instance, Gumucio Dagron, 2014). This aligns with my previous research (2010, 2012, 2018a, 2020) and forms the basis of Chapter 1's genealogy discussion, especially regarding ethical/aesthetic heritage.

The second, most prevalent perspective describes community cinema as relational dynamics between production groups and State cultural politics (Barnes and Quintar, 2016), emphasizing the "New Media Law" as a generative force for community cinema². Recent contributions focus on these groups' challenges under right-wing governments since 2015, particularly the government's dismantling of the Law's funding/broadcasting articles. This perspective contextualizes the New Media Law within the cultural arena, illustrating current scholarly views on the Law's sanctioning, execution, and weakening in relation to community cinema as a cultural producer. This exposition provides a contextual background of State-community communication dynamics, which I would like to offer a new perspective. Chapter 2 proposes a new epistemological framework analysing community cinema's praxis as a decolonial praxis device.

A third research line recounts methodological considerations for approaching community cinema. For example, Molfetta's reflections (2016) on using cinema anthropology over narratological textual analysis distinguish the object of analysis as social action, not text. I understand this in connection with authors proposing technological appropriation as a social

² This chapter includes a section titled "Life and death of the New Media Law" to contextualize this third perspective.

dynamic/paradigm. These discussions are valuable for my methodological approach in Chapter 3, also pursued in previous research (2010, 2012, 2018a, 2020).

This literature review has three sections: Section A describes the “New Media Law,” its social context, and the political implications of its weakening for community communications; Section B focuses on the three scholarly perspectives linked to Chapters 1, 2, and 3; and Section C offers a summary of community cinema’s emergence in Argentina.

A. Life and Death of New Media Law

In Argentina, as in much of Latin America, a monopolistic political caste of ruling elites and media owners dictated state policy throughout most of the 20th century. With little civic participation in decision-making or media presence, control rested with profit-seeking companies or those under strict state regulation. State-market agreements ensured the press would not antagonize the government, allowing politicians to manipulate oligopolistic media. However, Néstor Kirchner’s 2003 presidency brought new possibilities for marginalized groups.

Kirchner’s push to overturn amnesty laws protecting dictatorship-era human rights violators signalled what was attainable. Reform advocates viewed the existing media law as a discriminatory relic, and a broad coalition formed, creating cross-sector agreements on new legislation principles (Mauersberger, 2012). Their nationwide advocacy legitimized the project and promoted communication as a human right (Mauersberger, 2012).

In 2004, the “Coalición por una Radiodifusión Democrática” (Coalition for a Democratic Broadcasting) formed, uniting community organizations, human rights associations, press, trade unions, neighbourhood associations, and academics to reform the existing media law. The Coalition launched a nationwide campaign to replace the law with a new one based on 21 collectively drafted principles, introducing radical changes. Changes in policy network stability created advocacy opportunities, and nationwide support legitimized the project, making marginalized proposals relevant.³ This promoted communication as a human right (Mauersberger, 2012) and led to the New Media Law (Law N° 26,522), restricting large corporation ownership and ensuring broadcasting space for non-profits organizations (Liotti, 2014).

³ Coalición. (2016, 10 de marzo). 21 Puntos por el Derecho a la Comunicación [21 Points for the Right to Communication] <https://web.archive.org/web/20170402160826/http://www.coalicion.org.ar/21-puntos-por-el-derecho-a-la-comunicacion/>

For instance, Article 97 stipulated that 10% of license holder tax revenue be earmarked for “special audio-visual projects, community and border support, and audio-visual services for native populations, with particular focus on cooperation in digital projects” (Kitzberger, 2017). This fostered local audio-visual production at a federal level and supported non-profit community projects. Thus, independent film production and community media (TV/radio) benefited, adopting pluralist/intercultural content.

Even though this Law of Audio-visual Communication Services (New Media Law) was sanctioned in 2009 under Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner’s presidency, the law got implemented in 2013 due to multimedia groups’ legal obstruction, as the law’s multiplication of voices threatened their monopoly. Barnes and Quintar, (2016) agree that this law had two key aspects: acknowledging non-profits’ right to operate audio-visual media and allocating a third of the broadcasting spectrum to them. Promoted by a vast social/cultural movement, the law led to unprecedented participatory debate, recognized by the UN Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, enshrining information pluralism, audience rights, multiple voices, educational media’s role, and non-profits. The law also created funds to promote cinema, theatre, music, and community production, limiting powerful actors’ concentration/authoritarianism. Community cinema’s growth during this period is remarkable, with most studied groups created alongside new community TV channels, university radios, and indigenous-led content strengthening territorial identity.

However, as much of the Argentine political elite believed dominant media should endorse their agenda, they sought to veto the law. Grupo Clarín and allied agencies like La Nación paved the way for a centre-right government in December 2015. Mauricio Macri’s neoliberal government’s adjustments (privatization, welfare cuts, IMF realignment, militarization) created a hegemonic safety net destroying decentralized media. Weeks after taking office, Macri issued decrees repealing the 2009 Ley de Medios’ core, removing provisions restricting media ownership, despite the Supreme Court ruling it constitutional in 2013. These modifications revoked audience limits, broadcasting licenses, and monopolies obligations, eliminated public service obligations, treating licenses as market products, removed civic society representatives from regulating agencies, and instituted a new executive-reporting authority. The Federal authority for Audio-Visual Communication Services (AFSCA) and Information/Communication Technologies (AFTIC) were dissolved, replaced by the president’s National Communications Entity (ENACOM).

These efforts were rhetorically justified as ending “populist” policies hindering “independent journalism” and initiating “modernization” and “digital convergence.” Besides these setbacks

in a leading country for media reform, almost all other Latin American left-wing governments showed political exhaustion. At that point Kitzberger, (2017) wrote “In this new scene, activist stations that promote democratic media reforms will face difficult times if they keep a pluralist approach”.

Since 2015, right-wing governments have had impunity to dispose of the radio spectrum and national orbital positions, using funds like Universal Service in ICT or under-executing the Communications Development Fund (FOMECA) in the audio-visual sector. ENACOM encouraged commercializing communication and assigning radio frequencies to friendly business groups. Grupo Clarín benefited most, expanding after previously having to disinvest. The final step was Grupo Clarín’s merger with Telecom, endorsed by Macri’s government, creating a company with unparalleled turnover and concentration in telecommunications and information/cultural product dissemination in Latin America. Pulleiro and Collazo (2021) noted that the Public Defender’s Office for Audio-visual Communication Services’ “deliberate acephaly” prevents it from functioning with due legitimacy.

The “Coalition for a Democratic Communication” in 2004 stated these policies were completed with discretionary public funds for propaganda and adjustment policies that, with high rates and recession, silenced independent media and caused job losses in journalism/content production. Scrapping public companies and abandoning the Open Digital Television (TDA) program also demonstrate a departure from a democratic communication agenda, leading to information blackouts.

Pulleiro and Collazo (2021) observe that while no legal measures directly worsened the community media sector’s situation, the Macri government delayed/under-executed FOMECA resources and carried out seizures. Beyond delays, ENACOM completed legalization, granting some channels/radio stations frequency permits.

For community cinema, the transition was painful. While it flourished under the New Media Law through programs promoting community/alternative productions (inclusive cinema, cinema with Neighbours /children), after 2015, this sector faced state invisibility/neglect. While the Law ensured broadcasting through public TV and other instances like itinerant cinema, after Macrism, distribution survival depended on cooperative strategies, collective efforts, and alternative networks.

In 2019, the Kirchnerist party’s return to power has been unable to ratify what Macri’s DNU (Urgency and Need Decree) dismantled perhaps due to the 2019 pandemic or hegemonic

survival priorities⁴. Despite advice to relaunch a plan involving workers/civil society to strengthen public telecommunication, the state's lukewarm measures allowed neoliberal discourse to roam free through privatized media, the near-sole information source. This allowed oligopolist power to manufacture consent, distorting public opinion into voting for far-right libertarian Javier Milei and his state-shredding/working-class-hating program. Actions against working-class communication, education, and culture rights have been numerous. Milei's government suspended broadcasts of all state communication platforms (National Public Television/Radio). Through DNU 117/2024, Milei ordered public media intervention for a year, with possible privatization. He also announced TELAM's (national news agency) closure in March 2024; the building was fenced off, and workers received "work exemption" emails. These interventions are seen internationally as a threat to journalistic diversity/freedom of information.

Regarding education and research, CONICET (the main academic research government agency fostering science and technology, hosting 11,800 researchers, 11,600 fellows, over 2,900 technicians, and 1,400 administrative staff) faces restricted entries and funding reductions, with constant threats of closure. National Universities' salaries and research subsidies remain "frozen" (without inflation adjustments since December 2023), with no calls for positions or academic promotions or regularization. These measures aim to coerce critical thinking and minimize intellectual opposition, traditionally strong within left-wing and labour parties. Control over education secures the uncontested status quo. Furthermore, the right to protest is met with militarized streets and detentions, generating fear and self-censorship reminiscent of the 70s/80s dictatorship.

In this "cultural battle" waged by the neoliberal government against working and middle-class human rights, subsidies to public cultural institutions have been drastically reduced, closing programs and affecting numerous workers. The intention to privatize them is justified as part of an austerity plan and public spending reorganization. The opposition argues these measures dismantle the 20th century built cultural infrastructure that made Cinema, Theatre, Dance, Music, and Visual Arts high-quality national patrimony.

The blockage even affects traditionally self-sufficient institutions like INCAA. The government intends to reduce its operating costs to 20% of the Film Development Fund, collected (by law) via a 10% tax on cinema exhibition tickets of national and international films. However, paid

⁴ A DNU (National Constitution, Article 99, paragraph 3) is for exceptional urgency/emergency, empowering the executive to legislate without Congress. Macri's and Milei's right-wing governments have used this to modify laws benefiting their allies, the economic powers that financed their rise.

online platforms like Netflix, MAX, Disney Plus, Amazon, MOBI, CLARO, etc., are exempt from this tax, despite drastically reduced cinema attendance. Despite defunding, INCAA has subsidized, disseminated, and trained human resources to sustain national film production, including ENERC, the Mar del Plata International Film Festival (since 1954), Federally partnering National Film Festivals, *Cine.Ar* (free online platform), and INCAA exhibition spaces nationwide (with national films at popular prices). Due to the current resolution, all these areas are endangered. This reduction implies a significant INCAA restructuring, closure of areas/programs, and uncertainty about a new film promotion plan. Activity is almost paralyzed since December 2023 due to non-payment to producers.

Milei's government officially closed several areas and suspended staff with paid leave. Restructuring implies the disappearance of areas like Development Management; Exhibition and Audiences; Supervision of the Audio-visual Industry; and International and Institutional Affairs. This affects not only INCAA workers but a sector generating approximately 700,000 jobs. INCAA's non-payment since December causes bankruptcies of small production companies (created for funded projects) unable to cover expenses/private loans against INCAA subsidies. Many filming processes are unfinished. No new projects can be submitted to INCAA, and projects in progress by 2023 without signed resolutions were rejected.

Besides jobs, National festivals, *Cine.Ar*, INCAA exhibition spaces, and production subsidies depend on INCAA and aim to federalize Argentine cinema and make it accessible. Their defunding/closure attacks national cinema dissemination, ignoring audience generation and the expertise of those working in these spaces. It also ignores the international recognition of Argentine cinema. This attack is not a general budget cut, as film promotion money comes from a fund created to tax mainly foreign films exhibited nationally. The hostility is a cultural battle from the right-wing government to secure business for multimedia platforms and foreign industries and control critical positions of independent cinema exposed at international forums. It also secures the containment of a popular sector taking control of audio-visual production/reception mediums, like community cinema, which, during previous labour governments, had participation in INCAA and other audio-visual boards. Curiously, unlike independent auteur cinema (dependent on state funding), community cinema (due to its organic production/reception mode traditionally marginalized by state cultural policies) is in a better position for survival.

Thus, since the 2015 New Media Law changes, community cinema's challenge has been self-organization for anti-globalization resistance, manifested in their production and reterritorialization of local/itinerant cinemas to guarantee distribution. They have also

generated new online distribution/circulation forms via film festivals, internet channels, social media, blogs, etc.

B. Three Scholarship Perspectives on Argentinean Community Cinema

1. Argentinean Community Cinema Historical Lineage and Geographical Connexions in Latin America

Gumucio Dagron's *Cine comunitario en América Latina y el Caribe* (2014) provides an early overview of community cinema, offering a broad temporal/spatial scope. Dagron's chapter "Approaching community cinema" (2014, pp. 18-79) introduces the concept/practice of regional community cinema, referring to audio-visual productions by grassroots groups, indigenous peoples, marginalized communities, and those traditionally lacking mass media access. This cinema emerges as alternative expression/communication, with communities controlling production/dissemination. The article explores community cinema's origins in 1960s/70s Latin America/Caribbean militant/revolutionary film movements (e.g. Argentina, Chile, Cuba), using film for political/social consciousness.

Over time, community filmmaking evolved into a practice focused on local realities and community participation. Dagron highlights media appropriation by marginalized sectors as empowerment and collective identity construction, emphasizing community cinema's impact on subaltern visibility, injustice denunciation, and community empowerment. It also discusses challenges due to its counter-hegemonic potential: lack of resources, limited distribution, and legal impediments in funding/production. Dagron's chapter offers a valuable introduction, highlighting its importance as expression, representation, and empowerment for marginalized communities.

Molfetta's "From Avant-Garde to Resistance: Third Cinema theory revisited by community cinema" (2017, 105-130) provides a relevant perspective on community cinema's historical development as a Third Cinema heir. Molfetta explores community cinema's emergence in Greater Buenos Aires's southern region as cultural/economic resistance to the 1990s neoliberal model. From Molfetta's perspective, Argentine community cinema has reworked Third Cinema's principles, adapting them to a contemporary/local context. While Third Cinema aimed at large-scale revolution, community cinema seeks small, everyday neighbourhood resistances, emphasizing neighbour participation in film production/exhibition/discussion, generating symbolic appropriation of film as cultural expression/resistance. Molfetta states that community cinema updates Third Cinema's liberation ideals to contemporary neighbourhood struggles and deepens film practice democratization. While agreeing, I believe the subaltern representation dynamic involves the filmmaker-subject dialectic, requiring further thought,

explored in my chapter 1. This is a perspective I approached in early papers on community/Latin American cinema (2010, 2012, 2018a, 2020).

Endorsing this, I developed Chapter 1, “Framing community cinema at the crossroads of political culture and cultural politics,” pursuing cultural discursive factors since the 1960s important for community cinema’s consolidation as a socio-cultural phenomenon with decolonial performative power. This review involves three ethical-aesthetic movements: 1960s/70s New Latin American Cinema, 1980s/early 90s Testimonial Discourse, and late 90s/early 2000s New Argentine Cinema. I distinguished these as semio-practical developments toward Decolonial Pedagogy — precursor practices developing “critical frontier positioning”, constitutive of Decolonial Pedagogy (Walsh, 2005, 2008, 2013). I also observed this semio-praxes as concrete experiences, reflections, and criticisms functioning as antecedents in the Decolonial Aesthesis pursuit (Mignolo & Vázquez, 2013), emphasizing these two decolonial praxes as central to my discussion on contemporary community cinema’s ethical/aesthetic aspects.

2. Community Cinema’s Relationship with State’s Cultural Politics

The second set of scholarly inquiry focuses on the impact of Argentine cultural democratization policies on media production, placing community cinema as a socio-cultural effect. Barnes, González, and Quintar explored Argentine community audio-visual production as technological appropriation for democratizing social relations. Their “Community Audio-visual Production: a narrative democratization” (2014) offered a perspective on social organizations’ transformative role in audio-visual production in Greater Buenos Aires. Focusing on community film/video, the study highlights “alternative” productions as vehicles for authentic expression of diverse popular sectors, outside commercial circuits and industrialized production modes. They signal the 1980s Latin American political-cultural democratization, marked by technological advances and ICTs, as the moment community cinema emerged to decentralize audio-visual narrative power and give voice to marginalized groups. Narrative democratization becomes resistance/empowerment, allowing communities to tell their stories and reaffirm cultural identity. The authors highlighted the inclusion of over 120,000 Latin American social organizations in this process as testament to community audio-visual production’s transformative power. These organizations not only make social issues visible and promote social integration but also encourage active community participation in creating meaningful/relevant content.

Another contribution of this article is the commentary on the 2009 Audio-visual Communication Services Law (26.522) as a milestone marking the state-non-profit relationship, recognizing communication as a democratic pillar. This legislation broadens media diversity and strengthens community actors as key agents in inclusive/pluralistic communication. This article is relevant because the authors describe this moment as narrative (discourse) democratization achieved by a double state of affairs. First, in an increasingly globalized/digitized world, where dominant narratives overshadow marginalized voices, community audio-visual production challenges the status quo and promotes cultural diversity/social inclusion (by claiming their right to communicate their own narrative). Second, through authentic/relevant content, these organizations not only inform/entertain but also inspire, educate, and empower, contributing to a more just/equitable society.

In the same year, Barnes, González, and Quintar presented “Social organisations and young people: new modes of inclusion through audio-visual production” at the VIII Sociology symposium at the National University of La Plata. This study focuses on socio-cultural organizations in northwestern suburban Buenos Aires promoting youth inclusion through educational/cultural audio-visual productions. Paraphrasing the authors: these productions, characterised by an emphasis on the horizontality of the relationships between participants and the privileging of practice as a way of acquiring knowledge, recognised the perspective of popular education as a source of inspiration. This highlights youth participation in audio-visual production as resistance, social change, and a voice for marginalized groups. Another aspect is the relationship between social organizations and audio-visual production in terms of social inclusion. The authors highlight that activities planned in extracurricular spaces and developed in schools incorporate community organizations’ popular education methodology, promoting youth participation/inclusion through audio-visual production. This contribution’s significance is its insight into community audio-visual production’s importance in youth social inclusion, highlighting socio-cultural organizations’ relevance in promoting active participation, popular education, and social resistance, contributing to diversity, pluralism, and communication democratization. This is paramount to my analytical framework on Decolonial Pedagogy’s relationships through community cinema workshops addressing marginalized youth. In Chapter 2, I dedicate a section to this dynamic.

Also in 2014, the authors published “Community film and video: a contribution towards a greater democratisation of social participation,” highlighting community filmmaking as a visibility/self-legitimization strategy empowering precarious sectors. They stressed community actors’ fundamental role in constructing an alternative communication model, providing a new community-based understanding of communication. They differentiated independent cinema

and community audio-visual production. While independent cinema focuses on theatrical exhibition and is not necessarily thematically continuous (linear), community audio-visual production relates to other community practices/projects, considers alternative circulation channels, and addresses health, memory, and other social aspects (circular). This is a valuable contribution for my search for a new epistemological conceptualization of community cinema (Chapter 2) approaching it as an ecosystem.

Barnes and Quintar (2016), in “Democratization of audio-visual production. New technologies as a support for the development of alternative experiences”, analysed alternative audio-visual production and its relationship with new technologies, highlighting these initiatives’ importance in promoting culture, community participation, and diverse voices. Their findings informed this thesis’s preliminary epistemological approach, especially their categories of alternative productions based on defining non-variables. They suggest alternative community audio-visual projects differ from commercial circuits, primarily targeting their own social sector, involving subjects telling their own stories. A constant is community presence in production, involved not only thematically but also technically. They then detail alternative production, dissemination, and consumption modes. Barnes and Quintar (2016) presented a detailed classification, categorizing alternative audio-visual productions as “community cinema,” “cinema made with Neighbours”, “piquetero (street demonstrator) cinema”, and “slum-dweller cinema”.

First, they distinguished “community cinema” as a production-reception variable, not a film style. This means they see community cinema as a self-agent collective short film production promoting grassroots participation, particularly from vulnerable sectors grouped by an ideal-political interest, often accompanied by young film/communication graduates training people in audio-visual technique/rhetoric. They observe that this media graduates are likely link/interact/cooperate in production-reception and developing community cinema as a productive sector in permanent relationship with the state and formal institutions. I address relevant examples in Chapter 5.

Second, they mentioned “Cinema made with Neighbours”: short/feature fiction involving Neighbours from a specific (often rural) location discussing their human relations. Protagonists decide/design the narrative; friends/family cooperate in the entire production-reception circuit; each production involves the whole town. From my observations, they are not necessarily from economically vulnerable sectors. In rural Greater Buenos Aires towns, participation in this collective cinema does not necessarily focus on economic scarcity/exploitation. Productions often centre on private countryside life and interpersonal dynamics; this is the focus of my Chapter 4. In other interviews with Rural Buenos Aires community cinema directors (not

included in this thesis) I also observed a type of cinema made with Neighbours which works alongside secondary school programs, using film to trigger student research on topics/historical facts that the school community/director transforms into a narrative involving parents, Neighbours, students, and teachers. I consider this an excellent strategy for territorializing collective knowledge/identities. The resulting creative/collaborative fluxes are, in my view, a real example of cultural democracy, involving the active intervention (reconstituting ideological statements) of at least three of Althusser's (1970) ideological state apparatuses: Family, School, and Media.

Third, Barnes and Quintar (2016) distinguished "Piquetero" (street demonstrator) cinema, emphasizing unemployed worker movements' struggles. Finally, they noted "Slum-dweller cinema," recording social reality within very poor/crowded areas, filmed outdoors with non-actors portraying their world/neighbourhood/family. I explore this type of community cinema in Chapters 6 and 7.

To these, we could add other hybridizations, such as the linear (independent cinema)/circular (community cinema) hybrid presented by the "Audio-visual cluster" (led by José Campusano) as a widespread alternative form of communitarian production-distribution. It's a hybrid because while maintaining community cinema's production-distribution characteristics, these creations are led by professional filmmakers aspiring to high technical quality using innovative technologies/narrative strategies, with organizational strategies similar to independent cinema. There is no ideological project; they are one-off projects authored by one filmmaker, demanding a traditional structural hierarchy in film production and understanding film as an end, not a means (as in community cinema). However, traces of community cinema are present: cooperative/consecutive executive production, *ad honorem* work, using common people/real scenarios, even script ideas/anecdotes arising from community life. What makes this not entirely community cinema is that it's made by professional filmmakers/authors, who often emerged from the same social extraction represented by the film, due to film school democratization reaching working-class neighbourhoods (e.g., Campusano) or cinema studies being taken in prison (e.g., Cesar Gonzalez). Even when common people aren't involved creatively/technically, those who emerged from this social class can discuss their problems as insiders. Audio-Visual Cluster directors could be seen as organic artists-intellectuals. With this "insider's license," and refusing government subsidies (with potential content/tone restrictions), their productions are morally/ethically controversial, their provocative approach challenging the social status quo as established countercultural struggles, problematizing social claim discursivity that can romanticize subaltern representation (victims of poverty, patriarchal violence, political persecution, or ethnic exclusion). Another difference from "Cinema made

with Neighbours” is that this collective’s films focus on the precariat (the lower, more heterogeneous, and socially disarticulated class inhabiting big metropolis peripheries), with a harsher character emphasized by a raw aesthetic and adult language differing from CMWN’s naivety, with a movement’s self-definition as “Brute cinema.”

Another constant in Barnes and Quintar’s perspective (2016) is their emphasis on new information and communication technologies’ crucial role in democratizing alternative audio-visual production. They point out that widespread access to digital technologies has lowered production costs, enabling large social collectives to create their own audio-visual experiences. Therefore, they stress the importance of cultural politics shaping policies that contemplate alternative audio-visual productions and promote identity/symbolic reaffirmation, mentioning special funding programs/competitions promoting alternative content production/distribution. While I found this framework useful for my thesis’s preliminary epistemological approach, I consider it necessary to look beyond community access to new technology and state measures favouring collective alternative audio-visual production to encounter the human side of this phenomenon. Therefore, Chapter 2 constellates concepts to explore intersubjective relationships, lived space experience, and onto-epistemological relationships between audio-visual facilitators and community members (critical frontier positioning) in community cinema’s production-reception. This is my journey, searching for the human factor in territorial and technological appropriations conveyed in community cinema as social enactment.

Gonzales de Leon in “Cooperatives of Audio-visual communication in Greater Buenos Aires South,” describes the relationship between worker cooperatives and community communication and analyses community organizations’ audio-visual production processes. He argues that communication cooperatives represent socio-economic, symbolic, and cultural alternatives, intervening in social economy to overcome traditional employer-employee relationships, allowing work self-management. Emerging on the margins of the hegemonic media system, community audio-visual production groups provide expressive opportunities for underrepresented communities/citizens. Gonzales de Leon’s chapter highlights the human right to communication for democratic life, emphasizing the need for media plurality for information, expression, and interaction with other communities/the state. It mentions that the 2009 Audio-visual Communication Services Law and digital inclusion programs created favourable conditions for community audio-visual production companies. This offers an interesting frame for my analysis of community cinema groups’ cooperative work in Córdoba (Chapter 5) and San Juan (Chapters 6 and 7).

Orts (2013), in “Communication policies, pluralism and not-for-profit television: the case of Argentina,” reflects on how this law marked a significant milestone in Argentine media history, establishing a legal framework promoting diversity, pluralism, and communication democratization. The New Media Law represented a radical change in Argentine audio-visual communication, leaving behind media concentration and lack of non-profit media recognition. This legislation reserved a third of the spectrum for non-commercial media, recognizing them as fundamental actors in defending/promoting communication pluralism. The author highlights civil society’s active participation, particularly the Coalition for Democratic Broadcasting (CRD), in drafting/promoting a law guaranteeing media diversity/equity. The CRD’s struggle for more democratic/pluralistic broadcasting reflects citizen mobilization’s importance in shaping communication policies and defending communication rights as fundamental human rights. However, despite legislative advances, the article points out that the New Media Law’s implementation faced obstacles, especially regarding non-profit television, which continued facing spectrum access difficulties and relegation in communication policies, posing challenges for their development/consolidation. Guimerà Orts’s critical analysis invites reflection on strengthening/promoting media diversity/pluralism and overcoming barriers hindering communication democratization, ensuring an equitable/representative media environment reflecting Argentine society’s diverse voices/perspectives.

Gabriel Katz (2013), in “Community audio-visual producers in the framework of the Audio-visual Communication Services Law”, discusses the law’s importance/impact, representing a milestone in media democratization by promoting audio-visual diversity, freedom, and plurality. Katz describes the law as a fundamental achievement from broad participatory debate (2013), reflecting the political will to transform Argentine media toward a more pluralistic/democratic/diverse landscape. He emphasizes the law’s broad consensus among ruling/opposition legislators, underlining its importance as an instrument guaranteeing the right to communication (2013). His article highlights that the law encourages new voices/diverse views, emphasizing media/audio-visual production decentralization, allowing new channels/signals. Katz also states that the law promotes access to content reflecting diverse cultural/regional/community identities, contributing to a more inclusive/representative communication ecology, underlining community audio-visual production’s importance within the law, highlighting these productions’ key role in promoting diversity, citizen participation, and representativeness, contributing to a more inclusive/democratic media space. Katz concludes that these initiatives promote new voices, community stories, and media diversity.

Following a similar argument, María Soledad Segura (2014), in “Civil society and the democratisation of communications in Cordoba,” analyses civil society’s fundamental role in

the struggle for communication democratization in Latin America, particularly Córdoba, Argentina. She highlights how various social movements/organizations have been protagonists demanding public policies guaranteeing equal media access and voice plurality. Segura contextualizes this within the social mobilizations from the 1980s onward, when democracy recovery struggles re-emerged. Demands for communication democratization became particularly relevant, questioning media ownership concentration in select economic groups. For Segura, a key milestone was the early 2000s formation of the Coalition for Democratic Broadcasting in Argentina, composed of social organizations, trade unions, universities, and other actors, successfully placing the debate on a media law promoting diversity/community access on the public agenda. While Segura acknowledges regulatory advances, she warns of large media groups' constant attempts to maintain power, stressing the importance of continued civil society activism/mobilization to defend won democratic communication spaces. Segura's work contributes by highlighting social movements' leading role in communication democratization struggles, as a counterweight to economic/political power concentrated in large media corporations.

In "Before and after the Audio-visual Law. Communication practices in territorial movements" (2014), Natalia Gabriela Traversaro also focuses on social dynamics surrounding the New Media Law's sanctioning/execution. She analyses how Argentine territorial social movements used communication as a tool for media democratization and demand promotion, stressing their recognition of communication's importance in social transformation. Beyond traditional protests, they developed diverse communication strategies, such as creating their own media, communication training, and network articulation. Prior to the 2009 Audio-visual Communication Services Law (LSCA), social movements faced difficulties accessing mass media and making demands visible. They created alternative/community media to disseminate perspectives and strengthen identities. The LSCA represented a significant advance in communication democratization, establishing screen quotas for social interest content and reserving frequencies for non-profit media, providing new opportunities for social movement participation/visibility. However, Traversaro (like Segura and Guimerà Orts) notes implementation obstacles/resistance, especially through Macri's 2015 changes, signalling that social movements must adapt communication strategies and continue fighting for media democratization.

María Soledad Segura et al. (2018), in "The multiplication of community, popular and alternative media in Argentina. Explanations, scope and limitations", addresses the growth/diversification of Argentine community media, based on empirical research collecting/systematizing information on current community/popular/alternative media. The

essay highlights that Argentine community radio/television has a four-decade history and is present throughout the country. Despite their importance, complete/reliable data on their number/characteristics is lacking. Since 2008, with the Audio-visual Law project's public debate, there has been exponential growth in social sector radio/television stations. The expansion of community media is related to media markets and national/regional socio-political conditions. Broadcaster concentration is highest in metropolitan/central regions, where main urban/economic centres are located. Recent years have seen community media creation in rural/rural-urban areas, reflecting policies encouraging development in less urbanized areas. This work also highlights New Media Law's implementation limitations and implications for the non-profit sector. The lack of a frequency technical plan, slow policy implementation, and community media marginalization in official advertising distribution are obstacles. The need for greater territorial deployment by authorities to better understand community experiences is pointed out. In summary, the article provides a detailed/critical overview of community media multiplication in Argentina, highlighting their importance/challenges and public policy implications, offering a valuable perspective on the landscape of community/popular/alternative media and their contribution to communication diversity/democratization.

To conclude my dialogue with this second perspective, my contribution in Chapter 2 goes beyond state regulation and community technological access, framing the discussion as Decolonial praxis — a transformation at an onto-epistemological and aesthetic level within a hegemonic battle fought within the Coloniality of Power's reproduction logics. This trusts the social dynamic at play as sustained by the collective's power to operate a paradigm shift (beyond laws/regulations). As I argued in Chapter 2, Community Cinema is linked to resilient communication, alternative pedagogical processes of technological appropriation (Decolonial Pedagogy), subaltern knowledge visibility (Decolonial Aesthetics), public (physical/virtual) re-territorialisation, the right to communication, and freedom of expression as a human right.

3. Methodological Approaches to Community Cinema

Andrea Molfetta's work has addressed methodological/epistemological approaches to defining a framework for researching community cinema. Her 2017 edited book, *Cine comunitario argentino: mapeos, experiencias y ensayos: 2005-2015 (Argentinean community cinema: mapping, experiences and essays)*, compiles research strengthening community cinema studies. In the introduction and first chapter, Molfetta presents the general hypothesis and methodological framework:

The central hypothesis ... is that film practice is a strategy of visibility, recognition and self-legitimation that empowers the social sectors where film and community communication are made. How? By generating in groups already organised in other social struggles a transfer of technical and artistic knowledge, from which an emancipated production of content emerges. These contents make singular aesthetic appropriations, symbolic production that we understand as political action on the horizon of the digital revolution and the Audio-visual Media Law (2017a, 17).

From this hypothesis, she separated the project into three stages. The first mapped the organization/production of cinematographic spaces in Greater Buenos Aires (GBA) and Greater Córdoba (GC), with the objectives of: Building/strengthening collaborative networks among producers, toward a social culture movement (in Buenos Aires), and, Contributing to network formation after the first mapping workshop, when the Córdoba Social and Community Film Network was born (in Cordoba).

The second stage was to develop ethnographic interviews and an archive recording field work. The third stage, continuing with a largely qualitative methodology, analysed/systematized data following four hypotheses: the first hypothesis is that in GBA/GC community cinema, self-narration/storytelling and using the filmic device as a “technique of the self” (Foucault, 2003) is an act of resistance (Comolli, 2007), empowerment, and socio-cultural diversity liberation, in a context of globalizing domination by the entertainment/information industry. For Molfetta, these cinematic practices carry out a “molecular revolution” (Guattari and Rolnick, 2005) led by a precariat (Standing, 2011) aimed at intervening/reforming the national cinema’s voice/narrative/media map (Molfetta, 2017a, 25).

The second hypothesis is that GBA/GC community cinema develops cultural practices beyond the aesthetic sphere to politicize cinema, turning it into a convergent/transversal strategic space for transcending current social dynamics. Molfetta suggest that community cinema does this by fostering identity/belonging bonds, encouraging critical appropriation of global/national values and opening expressive spaces for social diversity, and expanding/articulating cinema’s social functions with other public spheres (Molfetta 2017a, 25).

The third hypothesis is that, in the studied period, conditions combined to potentiate these practices in GBA/GC. The digital revolution, post-2001 social movements, and the New Audio-visual Media Law created exceptional historical conditions for film production that now aesthetically influences open digital television (TDA) and industrial cinema (independent/commercial), constructing a new national cinema media-audio-visual landscape (Molfetta, 2017a, 25).

The final hypothesis is that these community productions construct representations of GBA/GC problems stylistically characterized by strong realism. In fiction, they appropriate genre cinema (police, melodrama, suspense) and produce a “raw aesthetic” linked to socialist realism, grotesque, and “gore” cinema (Molfetta, 2017a, 26).

These books created ramifications within the research field of community cinema. As such the authors have fostered the following perspectives, which I will address in due course while discussing these topics in my case analysis. It is worth emphasizing that the chapters compiled in Molfettas’ edited book created ramifications within community cinema research, fostering the following perspectives, addressed in my case analysis:

- Possible definitions of community cinema.
- Comparison between community cinema and 1960s Third Cinema.
- The impact of laws/policies on community cinema productions.
- Community cinema production modalities through social structures (cooperatives).
- Technological incidences as a productive possibility.
- Workshops imparting technical knowledge to train doers and position subjects within a symbolic structure, transferring them to the entity of doers.
- Main producers/managers of the movements.
- The idea that this production generates a new form of subjectivity aligned with the prosumer.
- The importance of visual anthropology /ethnography in studying film practices in community contexts

A key contribution of Molfetta’s book, resonating with my approach, is that the film analyses move beyond textual analysis, employing a notion of text combining socio-semiotics and focusing on subject and ideology, prominent in community cinema. As Molfetta states, “this goes far beyond narratology’s textual analysis and leads us to the analysis and understanding of the historical subject who makes and watches films, to the aesthetic and political implications at both ends of the text, and to a critical study of the use of the audio-visual device within social phenomena” (2017a, 31).

For example, in “Precariat, Media Law and Third Cinema: community cinema in Greater Buenos Aires and the grandparents of Berazategui” (2017b), Molfetta focuses on the intersubjective, social, and cultural dynamics of independent cinema by production collectives, highlighting its political value and community impact. The article emphasizes valuing cultural policies’ economic impact on professional knowledge generation and job creation in community audio-visual production, stressing that this community cinema not only focuses on audio-visual content but also articulates with other community practices related to health, the socially

collaborative economy, the environment, continuing education, and citizen participation⁵. This intersection demonstrates this independent filmmaking's transformative potential and political relevance.

Another example of Molfetta's work sustaining this shift in analytic perspective is "Visual anthropology of community cinema in Argentina: theoretical and methodological reflections" (2016). This article addresses the methodology used in the research project "The cinema that empowers us: collective mapping, visual anthropology and essays on community cinema in Greater Buenos Aires and Córdoba," which led to the 2017 collaborative book. Here, she describes the methodologies, focusing on community cinema in GBA/GC, highlighting techniques like collective mapping workshops, ethnographic interviewing, and ethnographic exploratory filmmaking. Believing community cinema to be audio-visual production within a social phenomenon, she reflects on traditional narratology's relevance/limitations when studying community cinema, advocating anthropological/visual approaches – a visual anthropology of cinema – to understand new artistic/communicational practices.

In "Collective and communitarian. Voices and economies of cinema as resistance to neoliberalism in Greater Buenos Aires South" (2017a), Molfetta argues that community cinema represents a "molecular revolution" (Guattari 2004) transcending the purely cinematic. Using Guattari's concept, Molfetta suggests that by questioning capitalist production modes and promoting community participation, this practice transforms subjectivities and generates new social/economic organizations (e.g., senior citizen cultural community centres, service, education, and art craft exchange cooperatives). Molfetta uses this concept to propose that community audio-visual experiences modify participants' individual/social subjectivities by generating expressive transformation opportunities. When grandparents recount elderly difficulties or war veterans narrate memories, they metaphorically transform collective conscience and their present conditions. Community cinema builds intersubjective links strengthening existing social spheres by fostering social group empowerment affecting their social organization. For instance, among Molfetta's visited cases, short film production among senior citizens led them to establish a Retirement Centre.

On this subject, she also authored "Community cinema, molecular revolution and new communisms" (2023), exploring the relationship between community cinema and the social/subjective transformations it generates. She argues that community cinema is not only

⁵ Citizen participation is associated with direct democracy mechanisms, e.g., bill initiative, referendum, plebiscite, public consultation, revocation of mandate, and citizen council integration in public organizations for public policy design/reorientation.

artistic practice but also resistance against neoliberalism/hegemonic media, defining it as alternative communication emerging from communities, aiming to tell their stories/experiences from a local/collective perspective. This cinema is characterized by its participatory approach, with community members as protagonists in all process stages, from conception to exhibition. A key aspect is its capacity to generate a “molecular revolution”– a profound transformation in individuals’ subjectivity/consciousness. By controlling audio-visual production and telling their stories, communities experience empowers cultural identity reaffirmation. Molfetta (2017a) argues this “molecular revolution” occurs on several levels. Individually, narrating/representing one’s reality from a communal perspective allows participants to rethink their relationship with their environment/themselves. Collectively, community cinema fosters collaboration, solidarity, and community tie strengthening. Additionally, it presents itself as an alternative to mainstream media, which often excludes/distorts marginalized communities’ voices/experiences. By telling their stories, communities challenge hegemonic discourses and claim representation/visibility. Community cinema becomes a tool of resistance against neoliberalism and its homogenizing effects on culture/identity. Molfetta highlights how these community audio-visual practices promote cultural diversity, local knowledge valorization, and counter-hegemonic narrative construction.

From another set of epistemological coordinates, this social dynamic is explained as “Technological appropriation.” Susana Morales (2015) states that Technological Appropriation is understood as practices through which subjects – having elucidated the techno-media’s economic, social, and ideological conditions (and their discourses) – express, in competent object use, their desire and freedom to creatively/productively adapt them to their needs, convictions, and interests, within a framework of individual/collective autonomy.

Technological Appropriation explores the ‘technology’-‘individual’ relationship, describing the process of a technology going from unknown to part of daily life (or the technology becoming involved with the individual). Following Quezada and Perez Comisso (2016), Technological Appropriation consists of four stages ending with knowledge/skill/new technological strategy adoption: access, learning, integration, and transformation.

Continuing on community cinema as technological appropriation, Luis Ricardo Sandoval’s “Appropriation of technologies as a process, a proposed analytical model” (2020) addresses understanding technological appropriation as a complex/multifaceted process, proposing a holistic analytical model. Sandoval (2020) argues that technological appropriation is not merely tool adoption/use but involves socio-cultural processes intervening in how users relate to technology. The model consists of four interrelated moments: technical development

(innovation, design, production), regulations (policies, laws governing technology access/use), business strategies (companies' business, advertising, marketing strategies promoting adoption), and user resignifications (how users adapt, reinterpret, and transform technology for their needs/contexts). Sandoval's model highlights technological appropriation's dynamic/multidimensional nature – not a linear process but a constant interplay between technical, regulatory, commercial, and socio-cultural factors, allowing deeper/more contextualized analysis of how people appropriate technologies. Furthermore, it highlights users' active role in technology re-signification/adaptation – not passive recipients but agents shaping/redefining technological tools' use/meaning. By understanding appropriation's various factors, more effective strategies can be developed to promote technology adoption/meaningful use in different social/cultural contexts. The proposed approach challenges the deterministic view of technology as external/neutral, recognizing users' active role and the socio-cultural dimensions shaping technological appropriation.

In the same book edited by Canales Reyes and Herrera Carvajal (2020), Susana Morales's chapter "From media to technologies, from mediations to appropriations" presents a critical reflection on Latin American communication/cultural studies' evolution. Morales takes a historical journey from media-centred approaches to a broader view incorporating technologies, cultural mediations, and appropriation processes by subjects/communities. Morales identifies an epistemological shift in communication from traditional mass media (press, radio, television) analysis to deeper exploration of ICTs, implying understanding not only devices but also surrounding social/cultural practices. Another key contribution is emphasizing cultural mediation as central to understanding communication processes. Morales uses Martín-Barbero's (1987) ideas and highlights analysing how subjects/communities appropriate media/technologies, re-signifying/adapting them to their contexts/needs, advocating studies focused on how different social groups appropriate technologies, considering material, symbolic, and practical dimensions and power/inequality relations. Her call to move from media to technologies and from mediations to appropriations invites deeper exploration of the complex relations between technology, culture, and subjects in specific contexts.

The approach of community cinema as a social phenomenon with performative ethical/aesthetic power, analysing beyond narratology (cinema as text) to its role within cultural hegemony dynamics (cinema as fact), has been my reflection since 2010/2012. I have viewed community cinema as a symbolic act for subaltern resistance and collective anti-capitalist reconstruction, as in my 2010 AILASA conference paper, "Short Films going long distances: community cinema as a form of epistemic independence," and my 2012 University of Auckland

PhD thesis analysing contemporary independent Latin American cinema's lineage, linking community cinema to 1960s "New Latin American Cinema" activist rhetoric. I agreed with Molfetta's 2017 epistemological approach and cinema anthropology methodology, as this was already my approach. My 2010 paper resulted from six weeks of field research on new Argentine audio-visual production and cultural democracy in 2009, contacting the "Cinema made with Neighbours" group and conducting collaborative visual ethnography for a week. Chapter 3 builds from that qualitative methodology, now taking an auto-ethnographic perspective and a tripartite semio-practical framework to collect, describe, and analyze images from my observant participation in community cinema's production-circulation dynamics; the created pieces, and interviewee recall images. The focus on community communication as technological appropriation in Canales Reyes's 2020 edited book is one I subscribed to during academic research on group participation in Argentina, and I am an author in that edition. I made crosses/intersections with these texts while incorporating the technological appropriation perspective, methodologically identifying symbolic/physical territorial signs for observation and, epistemologically, when theoretically conceiving analytical readings on these signs, as in Chapter 3.

C. A Summary on the Emergence of Community Cinema in Argentina

In "Community audio-visual production", Quintar, González, and Barnes (2014) stated that communitarian audio-visual production emerged with the 1980s political-cultural democratization, facilitated by ICT dissemination. They proposed that non-professional user access to new ICTs was fundamental to cultural democratization, as the possibility to operate audio-visual production equipment allowed subaltern groups to make their message viable and closer to self-representation.⁶ Following these authors, we can consider this advance technological appropriation, especially after the new-millennium internet enabled multiple reception, circulation, and message reconstruction possibilities in social media. This renewed content communication dynamic favours community cinema work dissemination as a social group discourse.

In 2016, another Barnes and Quintar article identified community cinema as nearby event creation/production. They observed that community cinema's themes refer to issues

⁶ The concept of Subaltern here uses the framework of the 1992-founded Latin American subaltern studies group by John Beverley and Ileana Rodríguez, inspired by the South Asian Subaltern Studies group, applying a similar perspective to Latin American studies. This was a major recent development within Latin American cultural studies, from which names now associated with Decolonial Studies stand out (e.g., Walter D. Mignolo), and interesting updates of their epistemological field can be found in John Beverley, *Subalternity and Representation: Arguments in Cultural Theory* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1999)

challenging/affecting life in society, such as poverty, marginality, education, health, youth, work, and senior citizens — issues related to political/economic impact on everyday life. They describe community cinema as a territory associated with social participation and popular education for social change, confirming that its circulation helped vindicate social claims and support group internal dynamic debates. They affirm that contemporary communitarian audio-visual production is generally practiced by sectors habitually made invisible by hegemonic discourses, and its purpose/proposal differs qualitatively from commercial production, as the generated images/stories pursue consolidating an aesthetic identity capable of manifesting, technically/rhetorically, issues particular to its social collective's realities/sensitivities. Similarly, in "The Precariat, Media Law and Third cinema" (2017b), Molfetta proposes community cinema as the visibility/self-legitimacy strategy empowering the precariat, becoming a production mode that, using new technologies as tools, promotes/expands social grassroots participation.

Based on this, we could regard community cinema as a non-professional production mode resulting from cultural democratization processes promoted/strengthened by new social movements seeking to regain civic power. Their production logics were based on direct democracy practices, whereby new social movements overthrew messianic social leaders and shifted toward a more horizontal, cooperative, and self-managing activist dynamic. I suggest that their use, since the 1990s of audio-visual technologies to voice interests can be considered one way to recognize community cinema as an art form of a social-national process of ethical-epistemological re-narration to combat the market rationale that had long been the only *modus vivendi*. The democratization of social narration/representation, where communities tell their hi/story and reaffirm cultural identity, becomes an act of popular resistance/empowerment. This is why I regard community cinema as a collective-political and ethically performative art form. One challenge this production type presented was the economic aspect, as they generally lack financial backing from governmental or non-governmental institutions. Another problem is clearly differentiating it from other production styles with continuous contact, like documentaries and independent fiction. Quintar, González, and Barnes (2014) identified two forms. One which is typical of independent cinema, where each production (fiction/documentary) is planned as an isolated project without continuity (linear production structure). The other, distinctive of community cinema production; linked to social activism practices/projects, pursuing visibility of social claims on problems like gender inequality, family violence, patriarchal abuse, police abuse, human rights violations, disability exclusion, health inaccessibility, and economic instability. Community cinema needs alternative production/circulation forms. This model has, in Argentinian community cinema director José Capusano's words, "a production model that manages all within the community; the origin of the anecdotes, the actors, the locations to represent the story and the sites of circulation and

reception” (in Molfetta, 2016). This production form constitutes a network inserted into other social life ecosystems with the performative power to modify them by altering the network’s relationships.

A constant expression at alternative production/circulation levels is the idea of filmmaking primarily as an ethical process, a means for social cohesion and political empowerment, not pursuing film production as an end/product. These films’ main preoccupation is enacting/communicating the subaltern voice on topics like social inclusion and interpersonal solidarity. By making community cinema, these groups are “not only telling a story; the very act of representing that story puts into practice social dynamics that renew the group’s political potency” (Molfetta, 2016: 43). I also reflected on this in 2010, 2012 (p. 157), and 2018a (p. 84) when analysing community cinema’s production-reception, considering their solidarity (cooperative-based production) as “a material form of production” reinforcing social links through the production praxis not subordinated to commercial cinema’s economic, aesthetic, or technical requirements. As I noted,

A process of such characteristics creates a new subjectivity of ethical character: an ontology that saves us from the solitude, by structuring through the responsibility towards the other, as ‘being-for-the-other’ (Levinas 1969, 150). In the case of ‘Cinema with Neighbours’ productions, this ethics is narrativized within the body of its cinematographic language as well as through its dynamics (solidary, horizontal, heterogeneous and self-managing) of production-reception (Grosman, 2012, 157).

Also, during reception, community cinema reaches numerous instances where the occasion is the means, not the end. For example, using a public film screening (like a film festival), these groups aim to interpellate their creative process involving complementary activities:

- Debates with the public
- Group-specific reflections on their creative/technical process
- Planning representation strategies for identity empowerment
- Engaging in inter-group forums for resolving common conflicts (legal, economic, ethical).

Macro-structurally, a fundamental consequence of this new production movement is associated with the New Media Law’s favourable conditions that weakened cultural industries’ and communication monopolies’ power as control/ideological reproduction mechanisms, as community media’s entrance into the mediasphere challenged commercial cinema/television production as hegemonic reproduction instruments. In this context, throughout the New Media Law’s first decade (2013–2024), community audio-visual production has been articulated into collective social change projects within social participation/public education contexts. As their

productions' dissemination progressively asserted influence on ongoing social claims/political debates, we can identify how bureaucratic restrictions, funding limitations, and legal obstacles have affected these two sectors (public education and community communication), leaving only the vacancy for new propositions in advancing both.

CHAPTER 1

On Genealogy: Framing Community Cinema at the Crossroads of Cultural Politic and Political Culture

Introduction

As anticipated in the literature review section, there was a segment of the scholarship consulted which frames community cinema in a wider historical timeline connecting this expression form with other moments in Latin American cultural production. The book edited by Dagron (2014) is a referent in this regard. This perspective, which reads this collective type of production as part of a historical conversation with previous artistic and communicative attempts, is also a path I have taken in previous research (2010, 2012, 2018a, and 2020). It is, as well, the core standing point for this chapter where I endeavour to create a possible genealogy of community cinema especially focused on its ethical and aesthetical heritage.

This chapter establishes a genealogy of community cinema, focusing on its ethical and aesthetic heritage. It reflects on cultural and discursive factors since the second half of the 20th century influencing community cinema's emergence. The chapter reviews three ethical-aesthetic movements: first, the New Latin American Cinema (NLAC) of the 60s and 70s; second, the Testimonial Discourse of the 80s and early 90s; and thirds, the New Argentine Cinema from the late 90s to the early 2000s. These are distinguished as semio-practical developments towards Decolonial Pedagogy (Walsh, 2005, 2008, 2013) and Decolonial Aesthesis (Barriendos, 2011 and Mignolo & Vázquez, 2013). Chapter 1 closes with a review of the ethics and aesthetics of contemporary community cinema.

“New Latin American Cinema” & Cinema Language Deconstruction as an Onto-Epistemological Decolonisation Strategy

The New Latin American Cinema (NLAC) (1950s-1970s) arose from social and political processes centred on the struggle against US imperialism. It stemmed from growing awareness of shared colonial dependency across Latin American countries (Grosman 2012, 2018a, 2020, 2024). Their epistemological centre was in Cuba, which became a key space for these ideals, exemplified by Álvarez's documentaries.

NLAC promoters advocated a cinematographic language reflecting these countries' sociocultural characteristics, opposing the elite's use of cinema for domination and neo-colonisation (Fernando Birri, 1988; Getino and Solanas, 1969; Julio García Espinoza, 1970; Glauber Rocha, 1982; Tomás Gutierrez Alea 1983). The movement aimed to ensure, as José Martí prescribed, that "prose be loaded with ideas" ([1881]1991, 11). *The hour of the furnaces*

(1968), by Solanas and Getino, exemplifies this, referencing Martí's phrase, "It is the time of the furnaces, and only light should be seen," also cited by Che Guevara in 1967 (Deutschmann, 1997).

NLAC filmmakers explored cinema's political potential as a response to the continent's social crisis, raising awareness of neo-colonisation. This project aligned with a social change movement, placing its diverse ideology and aesthetics at the service of political struggle. As such, the NLAC united national political-aesthetic projects from various countries, creating a sense of geopolitical unity. Its focus was on the relationship between representation and reality. Discursively, it aimed to expose hegemonic power's reproduction mechanisms. The filmmakers were a utopian vanguard, challenging hegemonic epistemology.

Following postcolonial thinkers like Fanon (1964) and Césaire (1950), the group analysed the symbolic practices constructing what we today call 'the coloniality of seeing' or 'the coloniality of the sensible'. Solanas and Getino (1969) explained that while colonial culture uses military penetration, neo-colonial countries prioritize penetration to institutionalize colonialism. They argued that "the work of art must be inserted as an act in the process of liberation, that is, to put the function of art before as a function of life itself, to dissolve aesthetics into social life". This involves to "restore the words, the dramatic actions, the images to the places where they can fulfil a revolutionary role, where they are useful, where they become weapons of struggle" (Solanas and Getino 1969, p.50). They recognized the need to reintegrate symbolic language into social reality's construction.

NLAC artists believed modern rationality depoliticized art by relegating it to an autonomous sphere, even though this rationality used art to maintain its hegemony. This is evident in Hollywood cinema and its imitations. Following these authors and using Doris Sommer (1991) concept of "foundational fictions" we could state that Industrial cinema attempts to consecrate new "foundational fictions" to perpetuate traditional bourgeois arguments portrayed through nineteenth century's novels and essays to naturalize the subalternity of 'internal others' as a by-product of capitalist power reification. In response Solanas and Getino (1969, 8) warned that incorporating Latin American cinema into American models would lead to adopting the ideology inherent in that language; thus "first cinema" continued subalternizing viewers. Therefore, to contest this commercial language, NLAC proposed actions to deconstruct it epistemologically.

NLAC's anti-imperialist rhetoric manifested in several ways. Firstly, it emphasized the opposition between industrial and artisanal work, creating low-resource cinema addressing urgent real-life events. This was art created from, but not part of, underdevelopment. As Birri

(1988, 6) stated, "the cinema that becomes an accomplice of underdevelopment is sub-cinema". Different names were used for this kind of cinematic approach: Solanas and Getino (1969) argued "Third Cinema" deconstructed not only hegemonic "First cinema" but also auteur "Second cinema," which they saw as maintaining bourgeois ideology. García Espinosa (1970, 11-14) argued that this New Cinema could not aim for high production values, thus making "imperfect cinema" revolutionary. Rocha (1982, 70) believed revolutionary New Cinema must emerge from the "aesthetics of hunger".

Secondly, NLAC promoted an open cinema where viewers became active participants, debating the film's content, unlike traditional cinema's passive audience (like in "apparatus theory", Baudry & Williams, 1974). NLAC opposed auteur "Second Cinema," advocating collective creation and reading instead of individual authorship.

Thirdly, NLAC confronted 'disinformation' with 'information', using documentary to represent the colonised's reality through testimonies marginalized by hegemonic forces. In this context, "the living document and naked reality are something more than a film image or a purely artistic fact: they become something indigestible for the system" (Solanas and Getino 1969, 10).

Fourthly, opposing what we today understand as an "ego-politic" locus of enunciation (Grosfoguel, 2006), NLAC unmasked how this serves power's "geopolitical" enunciation. Sanjinés (1979, 32; 1988, 1) proposed rescuing the indigenous worldview as cinematic language (in a dynamic that reminds us of what Walsh today calls, critical interculturality). This anti-ego-political stance had a body-political dimension. This "mass," anonymous, de-hierarchized cinema avoided Aristotelian narrative schemes. Sanjinés (1988, 2) noted that "the annihilation of intrigue in the narrative to give way to reflection, identification with a collective protagonist, or the rupture of the apparent logic of the continuity of time and space, were modes of violating western representation codes, not to be different, but to be ourselves".

Facing passive cinema, they advocated a cinema of violence. Rocha (1982, 2) stated that "the noblest cultural manifestation of hunger is violence, therefore, an aesthetics of violence is revolutionary", making the colonizer aware of the colonised. He exhorted: "As long as they do not raise their arms, the colonised remain slaves" (1982, 70), viewing violence as "a brutal act of love, the very transformation of hunger" (1982, 70).

Finally, NLAC can be seen as a Latin American utopian vanguard in a cultural struggle, similar to Gramsci's "war of position" (1971 [1929]). Solanas and Getino (1969, 20) stated "the decolonisation of the filmmaker and the cinema will be simultaneously done to the extent that

both contribute to collective decolonisation". They also propose that "the instrumentation of the scientific and artistic media, jointly with the political-militancy, prepares the ground for the revolution to become a reality and the problems that arise from the seizure of power to be more easily resolved" (1969, 47).

Its revolutionary power lies in its intertextual ability to express a continental collective unconscious. NLAC's strategies function as allegorical vehicles, constructing a new system of truth accounting for modern exteriority, hunger, and violence. "The camera expropriates the image-bullets and the projector shoots them at 24 frames per second" (Solanas and Getino 1969, 15), breaking with the oppressed's ontological disappearance: "I make the revolution. Therefore, I am" (1969, 11).

Within this rhetoric, filmmakers saw themselves as organic intellectuals. However, they were centred subjects speaking on behalf of the subaltern, reproducing the centre-peripheral scheme. They created collaborative but not inclusive structures, and their work did not reach subalterns' daily lives. This was representation of the other's knowledge, not from it, failing to achieve true counterhegemonic social changes. This had political impact. Because NLAC did not include the subaltern as producer, it lacked grassroots support and had few representative figures their leaders were the first exposed them to a political retaliation becoming targets for repressive regimes. Many NLAC directors and writers faced persecution, exile, torture, and disappearances. For instance, the Argentinean Liberation Cinema lost Raymundo Gleyzer and saw Solanas and Getino exiled.

This requires further consideration, but NLAC showed little self-criticism in this regard. They focused on the role of the "second cinema" filmmaker and intellectuals allied to coloniality, but not on their own modus operandi as producers of counter-hegemonic discourse reproducing coloniality. Two exceptions are Gutiérrez Aléa's *Memorias del Subdesarrollo* [Memories of Underdevelopment] and Rocha's *Terra em trase*. [Entranced Earth], both from 1968.

***Testimonio*, "Frontier Thinking", Verisimilitude and Empathy**

According to Vera León (1992), the emergence of Latin American testimonio (Testimony) as a literary discourse is an event of great complexity. This because it critiques the very contradictions of modernity in Latin America and relates to the politicization of Latin American discourse which revolutionary aim was to put producers in control of the means of production, to eradicate the domination and repression produced by capitalist modernity (184). Its political character and project of rewriting history placed testimonio in tension with humanist

historiography. As Achúgar (1992) states, testimony's enunciation is guided by the collapse of rationalist Modernity but carried out from a critical Modernity: "Thus testimony is the criticism of modernity and not its negation" (52). Beverley (1992) adds that "both in the Central American revolutions and in the civil movements for human rights of the Southern Cone, Testimony has been not only a representation of their forms of resistance and struggle, but also an [operational] means and even a way for these" (17). As a literary genre becoming a performative discourse of social reality, reflecting and constituting history, Testimony is a discursive configuration which resembles Jameson's prescription of the "symbolic act" (1981) as a postmodern political possibility.

A key aesthetic aspect of testimonio is the permanence of orality in its transcription, constructing verisimilitude and empathy. Achúgar (1992, 65) states "orality or the traces of such testimonial orality operates as an icon of experiential reality". This creates a "natural confidence" where the receiver accepts the narrated as truth (1992, 63). Under this convention, the viewer encounters a text where "fiction does not exist, or exists to a zero degree that does not affect the truth of what is narrated" (1992, 63). Testimony becomes a textual ideological construction with verisimilitude and empathy. Verisimilitude is inherent because the testimonial subject speaks directly. Empathy results from the reader accepting testimony as a real representation of individual and collective experience, leading to identification. Testimony pre-constructs empathic listening, promoting a favorable position and narrativizing the testimony as true. This carries an aporia of representation, accepted as its most relevant performative quality.

Although testimony is a "story from the other" (Achúgar 1992, 54), it only gains legitimacy in the power struggle when institutionalized as lettered discourse (1992, 53). While testimonial 'writing' aims to question modern epistemology by telling the story from "the voice of the other", the discursive construction reinforces the coloniality of power. Transcribing the "history from the other" through hegemonic channels, Testimony negates the referent's voice, reproducing the coloniality of knowledge and being. Discussing subaltern representativeness through an academic transcriber recalls Spivak's (1988, 91) words: "If the subaltern could speak – that is, in a way that really matters to us – then [he/she] would no longer be a subaltern".

Because testimony denies the real referent, appropriating real reference to construct a narrative authorized as true, we encounter a simulation (Baudrillard, 1994). This verisimilitude is its political potential. Circulating in hyper-real dynamics, testimony becomes a channel of ideological legitimation leading to a new representation of the real. The narrator's relationship with the transcriber is an ideologeme (Beverley, 1996, 31), synthesizing the intellectual's and

subaltern's voice. Testimony exists only as a simulation, and deconstructing it creates an aporia, losing its political power. If the oral stage (subaltern's voice) is the subaltern's image, and transcription (simulation) is its photograph, we should discuss the captured portrait, not the subject's self-image. The medium certifies reality, hiding discursive artifices. The crucial question is who focuses, frames, and shoots, and for what purposes is the image published? This simulation is political and utopian because the transcription — codified in the orality-truth convention — creates fundamental identification. The focus should be on the simulation discourse's political coherence with the testimony's interests, abandoning self-representation pretensions.

“New Argentine Cinema”; the Subjectivisation of the Gaze

As this is an auto-ethnographic research, these readings of the 1990s Argentine film scene are based on personal experience as a film student at the National University of Córdoba (a provincial, public university) who was a non-local student from an even smaller province. I speak from my perspective as a female student, whose socio-economical background was not of the comfortable middle class and whose politics standings aligned with those of the activist grassroots organizations. I recognise myself, and my then fellow classmates, as pioneers of a social committed cinema low budget production made collaboratively alongside economically vulnerable sectors. In the methodology chapter (Chapter 3), I mention several short films we made in this line of work. In fact, some of these fellow classmates are today referents of what now can be understood as community cinema.

Analysing New Argentine Cinema's (NAC) aesthetic influences is relevant because both movements belong to the same era of Latin American culture's epistemological shift from geo- to body-politics. Regarding NAC's strategies for narrativizing ideology (countering hegemonic discourse), its turn-of-the-millennium experience can be described as a progression toward the subjectivisation of the gaze.

NAC was an independent professional fiction production wave from the mid-1990s, mostly in Buenos Aires. Most NAC directors were trained by older Argentine directors, in major film schools, such as 'The University of Cinema' (private) and the National School of Experimentation and Cinematographic Realization (ENERC, state-run by INCAA). In the 1990s, film studies learning options increased. Though the Menemist government controlled ENERC's program, grants, and admissions, after 1996, ENERC intakes were federalized to incorporate diverse Argentine views. However, this scholarship was not always accessible to common people from the provinces, often allocated to families connected to Menemist power. Nonetheless, this measure did broaden perspectives previously exclusive to those from the

capital. Simultaneously, private film schools emerged throughout the country as alternatives to national universities. Private schools offered short, technical, advertising-oriented programs. National universities opened a line of thinking that led to a counter-hegemonic cultural force against neoliberal dominance, to which community cinema connects.

As described, film studies were primarily accessible to the middle class (especially private careers and ENERC). These groups had the economic capital for fees, materials, and living expenses, and the social capital of family connections with government officials (e.g., ENERC admissions) and communication businesses. They also possessed symbolic capital, managing a select social group and a middle-class lifestyle, allowing inclusion in metropolitan artistic environments and connections with actors, producers, and directors, facilitating cinematographic productions.

The future NAC director was formed as a critical observer but without abandoning their centred subject position, not presenting themselves as organic intellectuals facing the traditional ethical conflicts of bourgeois intellectuals. However, there was an enunciation shift. Such essential poetic displacement manifested in the NAC originated in its professional training stage, in the first place, because it was provided by filmmakers ascribed to auteur cinema. This means that their teachers were more interested in formal, non-commercial experimentation, than in a strictly political-militant position, unlike that of the New Latin American Cinema (whose referents were either, dead, exiled, or discouraged from filmmaking).

This generation appreciated NLAC's direct referent, Italian Neorealism, while considering other contemporary movements: French Nouvelle Vague, British "Kitchen Sink Realism," the American New Wave, and the German Neuer Deutscher Film. Influences from 1950s Japanese cinema such as Jazujiro Ozu's (already assimilated by American and German auteur cinema) are implicit (e.g., multiple narrative viewpoints, fixed cameras with internal movement, extended shots). NAC is the result of combining these aesthetic and narrative referents with local circumstances, echoing those rhetorical findings (e.g., facing post-war melancholy in Italian Neorealism and French Nouvelle Vague) in the context of Argentina's post-dictatorship melancholy. The 1990s Argentine group presented a postmodern statement, combining critical modernity's aesthetic proposals with local contingencies to generate an epistemic shift toward diverse scopes.

NAC's works echo "Kitchen Sink Realism," the "New American Wave," and the "Neuer Deutscher Film" more than NLAC's socialist cinema. The reference to "Kitchen Sink" is clear in constructing "angry young men" protagonists and an anti-romantic depiction of poverty and

alienation. NAC protagonists are dissatisfied young anti-heroes, not idealized workers. They are disillusioned, impulsive young people, seeking only survival, even though morally questionable behaviour. Like “Kitchen Sink” directors, NAC’s subjectivity does not stereotype its subaltern characters but shows the viciousness of contemporary life through singular stories, breaking with conventional aesthetics. This performative dimension uncovers the ethical and aesthetic canons produced by subalternity. In exploring socio-political controversies, both NAC and 1960s English realism omit moral judgment of ignorance, delinquency, or selfishness, leaving it to the viewer. Both use vulgar language, suburban accents, and subculture slang to suggest the reasons for marginality.

Regarding elements from the ‘New American Wave’, NAC retrieves countercultural themes with young anti-hero characters questioning the status quo beyond a historical materialist perspective. This breaks hegemonic moral organization through unbiased portrayals of drug use, sexual freedom, and violence, with an untidy aesthetic accompanied by rock music and humour. This implies an appreciation for anti-capitalist utopian influence, a response to the “American Way,” as the “North American wave” was its counterculture, originating in Beat literature⁷. This was essential during Argentina’s neoliberal complacency. Like the ‘New American Wave’, NAC uses travel stories with random characters, undefined destinations, and shifting goals, like *Easy Rider* (Hopper, 1969), *Paris, Texas* (Wenders, 1984), and *Stranger than Paradise* (Jarmush 1984), referencing aimless travel in neoliberal Argentina.

Like NAC, ‘New German cinema’ originated from young people focused on short films, merging fiction and documentary to address societal alienation. NAC also adopted German cinema’s use of sequence shots, especially long shots favouring actor improvisation, and portraying the city as a living entity. The German focus on characters evading personal circumstances resonates with Argentine scepticism, reflecting the European examination of the post-war period. Some examples are Rainer Fassbinder’s *Love Is Colder than Death* (1969), *The Outsider* (1969), and *The American Soldier* (1970). Also from Win Wenders, I see similarities in *Summer in the City* (1970), *Alice in the Cities* (1974), and *The American Friend* (1977).

As independent production, NAC shows influence from local underground cinema since the 1970s (e.g., *Coupe de Grace* (Becher and Mulet, 1969), *Mosaic* (Paternoso, 1970), *Alliance for the progress* (Ludueña, 1972), *A woman* (1975), *Tuning Fork* (1985), *Close-cropped* (1991), *Love is a fat woman* (Agresti, 1989), *Last Images of the Shipwreck* (Subiela, 1989), and *Fine*

⁷ The Beat movement was a group of 1950s/60s young anarchists united by poetry, sexual freedom, music, political passion, personal freedom, and drugs, to exorcise capitalism and shake up US conformism. Burroughs, Ginsberg, and Kerouac were key figures.

Powder (Sapir, 1993). The latter's sordidness, minimalism, and rejection of rigid scripts encouraged NAC experimentation. The 1990s saw a shift toward unpretentious formats and hyper-realistic aesthetics, summarized in Perrone's (1998) manifesto for independent film production, reclaiming austere production with real actors and scenes and deliberate untidiness. This reflects honest creativity without commercial interest.⁸

This metropolitan cinema's influence on 1990s Argentine youth is the aesthetic and thematic displacement to personal terrain, focusing on historical conflicts' impact on individuals. This subjectivization recalls 1960s Argentine realist cinema, especially Favio's work with marginalized characters (e.g., *The Friend* (1960), *Chronicle of a Boy Alone* (1965), *This is the romance of Aniceto and Francisca* (1966), *The dependent* (1969)). NAC rewrites this style through small stories of common people, lacking political demands or the intention to represent a totality, with austere production and apathetic young characters. This enunciation reacts to NLAC and early re-democratic cinema, especially testimonial simulation. Rather than a lack of social commitment, this cinema symbolically accompanies — rather than protects — the social dynamics of civic power recovery led by new social movements. This opens another intercultural possibility: beyond pseudo-organic intellectuals articulating subaltern voices (NLAC, Testimonio), another voice appeared from centred subjects facing hegemony discursively without masking their position. These are productions of "border thinking" (Mignolo, 2012 [2003]), creating a postmodern rupture in the critical modern Latin American ideologeme.

NAC takes a postmodern approach to NLAC references. While declaring NLAC's political-discursive failure, they used its rhetoric as a platform. The Santa Fe documentary school (Birri) prioritized the filmmaker and camera over reality to document underdevelopment, perceived as faithful testimony. NAC's fiction does not aspire to realism (imitation of the real) but simulates the NLAC's testimonial documentary's simulation of the real. NAC's hyperrealism, while acknowledging social injustice, is not directly appellative, as incorporating NLAC's aesthetics is a symbolic reference. The "dirty" aesthetics, imitating semi-professional production, is more credible, referencing "a camera in the hand and an idea in the head" (Rocha), NLAC's strategy against the urgent real. Filming in black and white or with grainy film, high contrast, dirty sound, and non-professional actors is perceived as more realistic than high-quality visuals and sound. NAC preserves the verisimilitude of Latin American critical modernity's testimonial discourse, transferring traces of journalistic orality to fiction's audio-visuality, exalting televised action's rhythm. The late 1990s' hyper-real discourse reigns over

⁸ The "Decalogue" of Perrone is in fact a single sheet of paper with a lot of handwriting notations. It is not published as such, but it is referred to his interviews act. I refer to Carbonari, P., & Perrone, R. (2015).

another referential order, penetrating deeper by invading less. This uses fiction to tell a personal story that could be many stories, without presenting the subject as a collective spokesperson (like testimonial writing) or encroaching on privacy (like documentary).

This shift from a geopolitical to a body-political position marks the beginning of narrative reconstruction. Individual stories are no longer ethnographic but moments in subjects' lives, linked by an epochal intercultural panorama. This interweaving rescue "other stories" from the periphery, reinserting them into a new intersubjective dynamic, as in *Bad Times* (1998). Incorporating the alternative short film format within the author's feature film is a symbolic shift from discourse to re-narration, moving from the intellectual-translator's discourse (seeking a total impression) to an ethical re-narration driven by pluriversity (expressed through subjectification of the gaze), later simulated and reconstructed by new artists to accompany, rather than manage, this organization from professional circuits.

This concludes the development of NAC's epistemic shift toward subjectivization of the social gaze, marking a moment when this creative attitude gained acceptance in national cultural policies, opening to independent and short film production. In the mid-1990s, INCAA implemented a subsidy system for 35mm short films. The first group of these films was presented in 1995 as *Brief Stories*, gaining critical acclaim. By the end of the decade, the Buenos Aires city government created Film Festival BAFICI, a platform for debuting directors who are now internationally recognized (e.g., Caetano, Stagnaro, Martel, Burman). This led to the 'New Argentine Cinema' (NAC), which split into two styles. An experimental, intimate style recalling the bourgeois criticism of Torres Nilson (e.g., Martel's *Dead King* (1995), *The Swamp* (2001), *The Saint Girl* (2004), *The Headless Woman* (2008)). And an underground realism echoing Favio's crude working class narratives: *Pizza, Beer and Smokes* (Stagnato and Caetano, 1998); *Bad Times* (De Rosa et al, 1998); Trapero's *Crane World* (1999), *The Federal Policeman* (2002) and *Bolivia* (2002), as well as, *The Southern Cross* (Reyero, 2002), *Suddenly* (Burman, 2002).

What are the distinctive characteristics built from community cinema that could separate them from the NAC works (with their lower class characters and marginal stories)? I will argue that community cinema is an ethical-aesthetic discourse, which develops from their social practices and resources as a logical result, not as an aesthetic choice or artistic tendency as in NAC. However, it is worth relating NAC with the latter, as this new wave development democratized the cultural field, redirecting the public gaze and state measures that would finally favour the processes of production–reception of community communications

Ethics and Aesthetics of Community Cinema

One preliminary framing approach is to propose community cinema as an audio-visual style that functions as a collaborative ethnographic testimonial simulation. Protagonists are represented not as actors in a fictional script (like NLAC), nor as a sample of their geopolitical position (like anthropological documentary or testimonial literature), but as performers re-enacting their own and collective history. They are community producers signifying their own message, aided by facilitators sharing audio-visual knowledge. The result is a consequence of the community's encounter with an exogenous factor, like collaborative ethnographic research (Clifford and Marcus, 1986). This interpretation adds the concept of simulation, as the facilitators' influence is embedded in the setting. The piece is the testimony of the acting subjects and the relationship between the facilitator, subjects' self-representation, and audience decoding. This relationship is "critical frontier positioning" (Walsh 2005, 30), with subaltern groups taking protagonist roles aided by dissident creative youth favouring intercultural work and managing distribution-legitimation dynamics. What are the historical as well as technical-rhetorical possibilities that allow this type of collectively made short films to be considered as a feasible expression of "critical frontier positioning"?

Short film production in Argentina has had a subordinate position due to poor conditions and limited circulation. Until NAC, there was little commercial circuit or prizes for short films⁹. It was seen as an essay before feature films. Within hegemonic audio-visual production, the short film is the 'poor cousin', the disrupter. Perhaps for this reason, during Argentina's late 20th century democratization, short films gained access to controlled spaces. As such, while subaltern access to short format production was presented as multicultural tolerance under neoliberal rule aiming to access discourses of difference (subsidies for technological equipment given to NGOs or cultural centres for instance), these experiences unexpectedly became their ricochet. The subaltern groups making their voices heard throughout what the market saw as naïve production, was an unexpected outcome for cultural politics intending to control newly organized social movements and avoid conflict aftermarket rule consolidation in the mid-nineties. This since short films in the hands of the subaltern, become eloquent testimonial simulations, with self-representation possibilities in their audio-visual construction, corresponding to orality conventions building empathy and verisimilitude. Community cinemas created "audio-visual orality" (Grosman, 2012, 2018a, 2023), generating intertextual and intercultural conversation within social dynamics aiming at ethical renewal.

⁹ Argentina's first short film festival was BAFICI in 1999, after which many others proliferated.

A key part of this semantic renewal (ironically triggered by neoliberal cultural policies implementing NGOs) was the inclusion of new filmmakers as audio-visual educators or facilitators, aiding subaltern sectors in familiarizing themselves with audio-visual practices. These individuals disseminated collective values beyond technical understanding, drawing on their knowledge of NLAC and NAC's aesthetic-rhetorical experience, which they reviewed with their communities, guiding amateur groups to produce audio-visual stories about their collective imagination.

These young filmmakers, with solidarity towards subaltern groups, were trained by public National Universities, where they learned that technique (aesthetics) should reflect humanistic commitment (ethics), fostering cultural resistance against threats to social justice and environmental well-being, prompting them to review neoliberal politics. These community cinema facilitators became "Trojan horses," indirectly sent by public universities to intercept neoliberal measures at the grassroots level. This explains why current neoliberal regimes seek to dismantle public education.

While these educational options were free and federalist, they were not accessible to all social classes due to the costs of living expenses and materials. However, these Young film, journalism, and social communication students, influenced by teachers or personal motivation, directed their theses toward social themes, addressing the country's crisis and using resources for communicating urgent issues. While public education was primarily an opportunity for middle-class students, their increased interest in studying cinema publicly (shifting from traditional middle-class careers) multiplied independent production and discourses of difference. A new ideological awareness entered the middle class, which had previously served capitalist power as an ideological reproducer. This configured community cinema with a vector linking new filmmakers and interest groups.

This "critical frontier positioning" (Walsh, 2005) constantly redefined its borders. Contact between filmmakers and grassroots organizations occurred at community houses, cultural centres, sports clubs, schools, women's rights associations, and neighbourhood associations. These groups were already fighting for their causes, not politically awakened by facilitators, but choosing self-representation. They were no longer satisfied with being represented (like in NLAC) but wanted to emerge as silenced voices using the audio-visual format. These directors' productions were imbued with these themes and impulses and knowledge of independent cinema. As community cinema advanced the use of audio-visual means as a link in representing interest groups' problems, tensions arose within aesthetics regarding the young filmmakers' influences. These filmmakers, also influenced by auteur cinema like NAC directors,

were more in touch with “reality” and everyday life. They knew and respected the 1960s Latin American generation but explored new avenues, tending toward generic hybridization between documentary and fiction.

The representational vector tensions between interest groups and filmmakers set in motion a circle from textualization (subaltern claims) to narrativization (collective production and its representation and circulation). When cinema production left academic or “cult” spaces, entering a new space with different audiences, works were disseminated and less regulated. Films with heterogeneous production became a celebration of heterogeneity, consolidating an aesthetics aligned with intercultural understanding. As themes and styles renewed, so did its production and circulation. Then fundamental questions arose, If the goal is interculturalism outside coloniality’s epistemic centrality, why aspire to the feature film format, a closed discourse? Moreover, why do a collective discourse should be decoded individually? An aesthetic-rhetorical emancipation was needed, so the budget and logistical restriction that made short film the only expressive possibility for the communities found a greater reason to be taking part in the process of critical interculturalism strengthening.

As such, this culture of short film festivals mobilized thinking from “difference”, opening body-political perspectives and representing viewers as part of that difference. This reconfigures a new inclusive paradigm, recovering viewers from the market narrative’s periphery. Films focused on LGBTQ culture, the working class, unprivileged children, women rights, those made with community resources, and those voicing concerns against resource exploitation interrelated in open-themed festivals, forming a collective oeuvre. These festivals call for participation inclined toward technical and rhetorical approaches without specific themes (e.g., cell phone movies, 24-hour movies, community resource movies) or those touching on human rights or ecology, putting interests under a larger ethical umbrella. As such free-theme short film festival installed a new discourse, that of pluriversity. Then, as the film festival becomes a collective work, eliminating the individual author’s ego and presenting diverse identity expressions. As a happening, the festival creates a meeting space for different audiences and ways of thinking, an intersubjective and supralinguistic process consolidating intercultural understanding, so that, as Mignolo (2003, 45) proposes, “in a world could exist many worlds”. As such, community cinema short film format is organic to the intercultural process from production to circulation forging a paradigm shift toward Decolonial Aesthetics.

Today, community audio-visual production arises from social transformation projects like social participation and popular education. As an alternative to market ethics and logics, community cinema belongs to a sector made symbolically and materially invisible by the state and other

legitimizing logics like university academia. This research would attempt to explore how community cinema's *poiesis* intended epistemological interventions on power reproduction dynamics. For instance, community cinema rhetoric has recently entered communication studies and film studies curriculum. By including knowledge of community cinema's agency and production, an ethical dimension that questions academic knowledge and university as its campus is brought forth, influencing in the student's habitus. The entrance of community cinema epistemology into the university classroom lay down completely new ethical foundations: students start thinking of collective and collaborative discourse construction, solidarity, exchange, mutual assistance, and collective authorship. This digs deep into the economical soul of coloniality of knowledge, these modes of collective production address social conflicts without fear of marketing failure, then the production process is itself group reflection and a healing tonic for individualism. Shortly this new paradigm of "other forms" of knowledge becomes part of students' cognitive universe, allowing them to contrast, combine, and choose how they view themselves as future communicators and creators of ethical-aesthetic synergies.

This chapter closes with questions raised by the National University of Córdoba Communication students in 2019 when they had the chance to converse with community cinema producers, during an academic activity in which the community cinema production groups attended a Faculty symposium. I use them to initiate the journey into their field.

- What is the function of community productions in this socio-political context?
- How do you experience the challenge of self-funded production in this context?
- Are public recognition/prizes important?
- What is your position on incorporating a production company?
- Was there community screening? What was the impact?
- How do you circulate films, breaking with commercial structure?
- What are essential keys to producing community cinema?
- What changes are observed in a community after the experience?
- How is the budget generated and divided?
- How did the audience evolve?
- What are your priorities when designing a production (objectives, values, principles)?
- Are there opportunities for community cinema?
- What is the predicted outcome if the communication services law is modified?
- Do you expect a greater role played by popular sectors?
- How do you see the future of cooperative organizations in relation to government and the New Media Law?
- Is the conformation of these organizations a factor of visibility for marginal sectors?
- Can this type of cinema unite different social classes?

CHAPTER 2

On Epistemology; Conceptual Constellation on Decolonial Praxes and a Paradigmatic Scheme

Introduction

This chapter proposes a new epistemological framework for analysing community cinema's dynamics as a device of Decolonial praxis. It revises a conceptual constellation to account for the reproduction dynamics of Coloniality of power: coloniality of being, knowledge, and seeing. It explores decolonial praxes — Decolonial aesthesis, positioning, and pedagogy — to evaluate community cinema's potential challenging aesthetic, epistemological, and ontological patterns of Modern/Colonial domination towards a paradigmatic change.

Latin American and Caribbean critical reflection on Modernity/Coloniality's historical domination, which persists despite independence, is led by the Decolonial turn (Escobar, 2003; Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel, 2007). This program departs from Anibal Quijano's (1999, 2000) concept "Coloniality of Power," framing Eurocentric articulations and mechanisms strengthened by modernity as a dominant paradigm in independent Latin America. This "Coloniality of power" is a network operating through the naturalization of hierarchies to reproduce domination and exploitation (Santiago Castro-Gómez & Eduardo Restrepo, 2008:24) of the populations subalternised by these epistemological operations.

Key notions underpinning this network are "coloniality of being," the lived experience of historical invisibility and minimization under colonisation (Mignolo, 2009: 30), and "coloniality of knowledge," the establishment of "eurocentrism as the only perspective for knowledge production and consequential exclusion of any other epistemic form" (Walsh, 2008:104).

The Decolonial turn fosters a global transformation of Modernity's presuppositions, involving diverse subjects (Maldonado-Torres, 2007:160). It critiques and resists Coloniality of Power by questioning logics and practices in "four demons of human experience: political-economical; social; epistemological and subjective/personal" (Mignolo, 2005). It also proposes acknowledging what Mignolo (2009) calls the "colonial wound" and reclaiming the perspectives of those historically disadvantaged.

The reciprocal dynamic between coloniality of being and knowing perpetuates Coloniality of power. They are, therefore, the territory and battlefield for Decolonial praxis. This thesis frames Argentinean community cinema as a decolonial fighter, considering its ability to combat "coloniality of seeing" (Barriendos, 2011), the visual machinery of racialization accompanying modern/colonial capitalism. This concept represents the scopic strategy of modern/colonial power (Barriendos, 2011). Mignolo and Vazquez (2015) identify this visual rhetoric as

consolidating imperial control by colonizing senses and perception. They view Eurocentric aesthetics as reproducing modern/colonial logic, recognizing the project's control over not only the economy, politics, and knowledge but also the senses. They identify "Decolonial aesthetics" as a semio-praxis revealing this domination. Eurocentric Aesthetics has historically enabled the rejection of other forms of aesthesis (ways of sensing). Mignolo and Vázquez state that Decolonial aesthesis critiques modern, postmodern, and altermodern aesthetics while making visible decolonial subjectivities in various practices (2013).

Decolonial aesthesis refers to a critical sensibility and artistic practices aiming to decolonize the senses from modern aesthetics. By challenging modern/colonial aesthetics, it creates awareness of coloniality's visual matrix. Barriendos argues that "the recognition of the coloniality of seeing must lead us towards the 'discovery' of adjacent, alternative and contesting scopic paradigms" (2011). Mignolo and Vazquez add that "Aesthetics became the western norm but every society has its own notion of aesthesis, these notions remain in language" (2013).

Decolonial aesthesis becomes an interesting framework for this research, particularly its focus on language in the subjectivization of power. This research examines cinema's language and production as means to disconnect modern/colonial domination, intervening in community education and visualization of identity through its own aesthesis. This suggests community cinema can become a tool for decolonial praxis, requiring a review of concepts in new paradigmatic relationships.

A. First Concatenation: Decolonial Aesthesis Facing Traditional Politics of Otherness Representation. The Supremacy of Culture in the Construction of Hegemony. The Role of Language in Consolidating Ideology. The Role of Cinema as Ideological Apparatus

Modernity, as an epistemological colonial mechanism (Lander, 2000), privileges principles sustaining coloniality: knowledge production aligned with universality, objectivity, and Eurocentrism. This knowledge is historically and geopolitically situated, anchored in power interests (Grosfoguel, 2006, 21). The "zero-point hybris" (Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel, 2007, p.83) describes how Western knowledge presents itself as a view on all views without acknowledging its own perspective. This "zero point" is the epistemic dimension of colonialism, a constitutive element, not merely a superstructural one (p. 88). The idea of knowledge production from a "no place," detached from historical and corporeal context (ethnic/racial/gender/sexual/epistemic location), is the "ego-politics of knowledge" (Grosfoguel, 2006, 20). All knowledge has a locus of enunciation and denying it is a "Western myth" disguising the speaker's position in power/knowledge structures.

Iris Zavala (1992) coined the term “Colonial Panoptic Gaze” to describe how visual regimes from 16th century colonial modernity continue to justify contemporary globalization (in Mignolo, 2003b, 2007). This gaze feeds the binary matrix of gender, class, sex, race, etc., and biopolitical structures. Barriendos (2011) argues this system reinvents an image regime that cyclically produces and devours the Other while hiding the sameness of the observer. The *ethnophagous matrix* of the Colonial Panoptic Gaze, the Eurocentric impulse to humiliate other ethnicities, is the narrative of coloniality of knowledge and being, informing Decolonial Aesthetics’s critique of modernity’s visual rhetoric — the aesthetic politics of otherness representation.

In Latin America, the National State has been a key postcolonial structure perpetuating coloniality of power at an onto-epistemological level. As Gramsci’s concept of “Integral State” explains, “the State is the entire complex of activities with which the ruling class wins the active consent of those over whom it rules” ([1926], 1971, 244), therefore, hegemony is constantly reconstituted by the apparatuses of the Integral State. Althusser (1970) explains how values are inculcated through “ideological state apparatuses” (ISA), influencing subjects’ ways of seeing and positioning themselves within class relations. ISA disseminates ideologies reinforcing dominant class control, achieved through hegemony over education, information, and moral systems.

"Coloniality of power" is a power/knowledge network strengthened by reproductive dynamics at the ontological and epistemological levels, carried by the coloniality of seeing. This network is the political-discursive battleground for decolonial projects. Hall (1980) emphasizes culture’s role in power and the formation of a socio-historical block, understanding hegemony as a discursive net identifying advanced capitalism, which involves the subject’s “imaginary life” influenced by the “distribution of the sensible” (Rancière, 2004). Late capitalism’s neuralgic point is its capacity for self-meaning reproduction, turning itself into culture (Read, 2003), producing subjectivity by accessing senses and perception. ISA can be understood as the onto-epistemological reproductive system of power, assimilating subjects into hegemonic discourse through the sequence of school, media, and morality. Culture is a network of certainties reproduction, but awareness of power/knowledge relations can reveal intervention points, potentially within language.

Since culture represents ideological and political articulation into hegemonic formations, cultural production is the territory for hegemonic battle. This allows marginal epistemologies to enter the centre. The visibility of heterogeneous subjectivities threatens the power’s discursive net (Hall, 1980). In cultural struggle, their presence can disarticulate the dominant narrative of representation. Hall (1997) explains late capitalism as a space where nothing is outside culture

and its representations. Discourse is a territory of hegemony, and class struggle occurs through language and culture production. Language is the medium of representation and ideological reproduction, but social relations can be differently represented (Hall, 1997, 36).

Althusser (1970) argues ideology precedes individuals, with language turning them into subjects. Its effectiveness comes from its tropological properties (De Man, 1997 [1980]). Language is not a superstructure but a symbolic battlefield (Hall, 1980). Hegemony is disputed in culture through language (Gramsci [1929-35], Bakhtin [1952], Althusser [1970], De Man [1997], Hall [1980], Jameson [1981]). The “Cultural Industry” (Adorno, 1947) enables bourgeois hegemony. If ideology represents the imaginary relation between individuals and their existence (Althusser), and ideology emanates from language (De Man), then the power of image language is significant, materializing the imagined more powerfully than written language, creating both vulnerability and opportunities for counter-hegemonic praxis.

This ideological introjection by images, as iconic language, has aesthetic and ethical dimensions. Through aesthesis — bodily perception and sensory processing — images access desires, emotions, memory, fear, and collective impulses before rational judgment and cultural valuation occur. This pre-rational access resonates with pre-modern epistemologies, aligning with Decolonial aesthesis’ distinction between aesthesis (the perceivable, Rancière’s “Sensorium,” 2004) and aesthetic (the modern/colonial gaze imposed on perception).

Jameson (1981) described this process as “the process of utopian narrativization of ideology within the political unconscious,” constitutive of the “symbolic act.” This act combines ethical (discourse of power, “ideological textualization”) and aesthetic (embodiment in conscience, “narrativization in the political unconscious”) dimensions. Advanced capitalism narrates itself into the political unconscious by stimulating desires through the senses (Hall). Decolonial re-narration occurs when art, as a symbolic act, uses its aesthetic power to contest modern/colonial aesthetics, accessing its poiesis.

Poiesis (Greek for “creative”) is a symbolic operation where form and content are a single performative agent (Nattiez, 1990:17). It merges the political/ethical and poetical/aesthetic) into one inextricable text, a single locus that acts beyond the rational operation of the political discourse by, appealing to the senses to connect with feeling, imagination, memory, and desire. This sensory connection, aesthesis, accesses pre-modern/colonial epistemologies untouched by capitalist reification.

Kusch’s concept of “occurrence” (1976) understands Latin American reality beyond Eurocentric frameworks, delving into lived experience and popular wisdom. Reality is seen as interconnected. “Pa’mi” is the primordial experience preceding reflection (Kusch, 1976). “To be being” (Kusch, 1976) links existence to land and history. “Occurrence” accesses this

understanding, recognizing individual integration within a larger whole. It's a direct encounter dissolving rational barriers, revealing a holistic reality (Kusch 1978). Popular wisdom is the accumulation of occurrences (Kusch, 1975). I believe art, especially collective praxis, can resort to occurrence to surface empathetic impulses, reinterpreting memory and history, acting as a counter-hegemonic force.

Debray (1994) reflects on the image's power for group identification, connecting people to symbolic correspondences and social order. Images mediated between living and dead, humans and gods, serving social survival. Western religion inherited the image's value from Greek theory of forms. The central image unites the community, existing between matter and idea. Images are the force of the unconscious, where pre-modern epistemology imprinted archetypes, making them crucial for both modern/colonial narratives and decolonial re-narration. Images establish viewer relationships, with a "symbolizing third" as the referent (Debray, 1994:79). "Without images, a discourse is an intellectual fact, not a political one" (Debray, 1994:79).

When looking at cinema, Morin (1956) links image and *imaginarium*. Cinema projects a reality viewers introject, creating a symbiotic contact between external and internal realities. Baudry's "apparatus theory" (combining Althusser and Lacan) analyses cinema as an institution. In his works (1974 [1970], 1975), Baudry examines the "reality effect." The apparatus is the ideological elements intervening in the film-viewer relationship. Cinema is a "dream machine" connecting viewers with fantasies and imaginaries, similar to a dream state (Baudry, 1975). Comolli (1980) states that while film is an ideological enunciation, its technical-rhetorical machinery conceals the cinematic mechanism as enunciator. Cinema, as an ideological apparatus, uses monocular perspective (replicated by the camera), creates the illusion of continuity, and gives viewers a sense of omnipotence (Baudry, 1985, p. 537). This passivity reinforces the "Colonial Panoptic Gaze" and its aesthetic strategies for ideological assimilation.

With this idea and considering the Deleuzian perspective (1992) of the dispositive (as a machine of disclosure and concealment to reaffirm the status quo), the cinematic apparatus is an operative expression of the colonality of power—its dispositive. The selection of what is seen and heard is the technical and rhetorical logic of cinema. From camera angle, point of view, shot type, movement, framing (what's included/excluded), to montage (creating spatial/temporal continuity and a sense of reality, including what is heard), there is a textual dynamic with an ideological subtext. Revealing these textual artifices allows for counter-hegemonic discourse. This positions film not just as a technology of the dispositif but also as its diagram (Deleuze, 1992), a "cognitive map" (Jameson, 1991) of its workings. Jameson (1991) suggested that a political postmodernism would involve designing global cognitive

maps at social and spatial scales (51), emphasizing that this map acts as a metaphor (in the political unconscious) for the irrepresentability of global power conditioning subjects' lives (1991, 44), functioning as a simulation or prosthesis to understand the subject's relationship with their existential conditions.

Baudry (1974 [1970]) argues that cinema maintains the dominant ideology within the viewer. Ideology is inherent to cinema, shaping audience thought. As Comolli and Narboni (1969) stated, "bourgeois ideology is affirmed by cinema's "depiction of reality," since "reality" expresses prevailing ideology" (60); therefore, reproducing "reality" reproduces bourgeois ideology. Only filmmakers challenging this depiction disrupt cinema's ideological function, stated these authors.

B. Second Paradigmatic Relationship: Decolonial Positioning, the Postcolonial Intellectual Project and the Philosophy of Praxis. "Frontier Critical Thinking"

The genealogy of decolonial thought and action, facing epistemological contradictions and developing into the Decolonial turn (forging Decolonial Aesthetics and Pedagogy), traces back to the 19th-century National State. During/after Latin American independence wars, connections emerged between Coloniality of Being and Knowledge, perpetuating Coloniality of Power. Dissident intellectual discourses sought Latin American geopolitical integration at territorial and ontological-epistemological levels, addressing subalternity and dependency as postcolonial illnesses. Figures like José Martí (1891) and José Vasconcelos (1957) explored "Mestizaje" as an alternative to relate ethnic/cultural backgrounds to a "New Latin American Man" inhabiting Latin America. These ideas were dismissed by Latin American National States compliant with "centre-periphery relations" (Wallenstein, 1979) within the Modern/Colonial World System. This necessitated continuing ontological-epistemic subalternization, denying indigenous/African cultural inheritances while promoting a homogenizing creole identity. An ontological centre-periphery identification within a fabricated nationalist culture, functioning within delimited national territories, pushed cultural competition between neighboring newly formed nations.

Similarly, Yúdice (1996, p. 158) argues that dependent economies and formal political societies were instituted in territories without established civil societies. Martín Barbero (1987) states this allowed emerging nations' cultural policies to define "people" in the Enlightenment style — an abstract construct excluding popular culture from national culture but including masses (only formally) for political hegemony. This instrumentalized "people" legitimized bourgeois power controlling the Nation-State, already prefixed within the world economic system. Torres Rivas (1981, pp. 87-132) explains how bourgeois universality adopted a national form to give its interests a national form, with the State appearing as a political expression of this

generalization. Rojas (1981, pp. 169-171) understands nationalism as a popular illusion containing the bourgeois fetish — the State as an ahistorical vehicle of power, autonomous in capitalist relations. This fetish (pp. 143-144) roots itself in the idea of the State's autonomy from capitalist relations. The belief that the political sphere is separate from capitalist production's coercive dynamics manifests in political-institutional relations securing capitalist accumulation and consent. This is a fetish Gramsci explained with the "Integral State" (1929-1935), followed by Althusser's "Ideological State Apparatuses" (1970).

In the mid-20th century, the Latin American postcolonial intellectual project advanced theory and praxis as counter-hegemonic tools, engaging in a socio-cultural arena where the dialectic between central/peripheral knowledge/identities redefined the Modern/Colonial paradigm. This struggle created an intellectual/artist-people's alliance in "semio-practical tension" (utopian critique/historical awareness and teleological action), a "Philosophy of praxis" (Sánchez Vázquez, 1967). This stream of thought, from Marx to Habermas, was introduced to Latin America by figures like Mariátegui, Mella, Fanon, Césaire, and Guevara — a tridimensional fulcrum articulating knowledge, critique, and emancipatory projects into goal-oriented activity. "Praxis" applies to all cultural fields, including art, as it is "the act through which the active subject modifies a given set of circumstances" (Sánchez Vázquez, 1967: 245).

Praxis, the synergetic aspect of a coherent textual postulate and the living territory of ideology, is essential to this research. Its social emancipatory program — subverting contemporary exploitative relations — depends on a reciprocal dynamic between concrete experiences transforming thought and thought transforming concrete experiences. This flux occurs within cultural practice, where social forces contest power relations. If culture is the infrastructural epistemological dimension of power, then counter-hegemonic praxis demands intervention in cultural practices. Following Gramsci's "war of position" (1971, pp. 177-181), the "organic" intellectual guides subaltern classes in using their cultural practices to gain power within social institutions.

This figure of the "organic" Latin American intellectual is prominent in 1960s counter-hegemonic movements, manifested as "ideas-in-act" — pedagogical, philosophical, theological, and artistic social action projects aimed at disrupting coloniality of power's epistemological and ontological reproduction ("coloniality of being" and "of knowledge"). Examples include Paulo Freire (1970) in Pedagogy, Enrique Dussel (1977) in Philosophy, Orlando Fals Borda (1968) in Sociology, and Fernando Cardoso and Enzo Faletto (1969) in Economics. This post-colonial epistemological intervention amalgamated institutional knowledge and/or socially respected cultural production with the knowledge of subaltern subjects, creating the intellectual-artist/people dyad — a precursor to Mignolo's "Frontier

thinking” (2003) and Walsh’s “Critical frontier Positioning” (2005). To understand Mignolo’s concept, we must examine the intellectual’s role vis-à-vis subaltern representation, revealing how community cinema functions as decolonial praxis.

The permanence of colonial discourse’s dynamics as a form of hegemonic concentration, even after colonial administration and within the “empire of Reason,” lies, according to Fanon (1964), in racism. “There is no colonialism without racism,” he states, because “racism is nothing more than an element of the systematic oppression of a people” (p. 40). The functional imposition of 19th century bourgeois nationalism — which reduced racial/cultural burden to a class problem — made the native/Afro-descendant what Fanon has called “les damnés” (the condemned) of the earth. Their emancipation was to be resolved through class struggle. Thus, at the beginning of the 20th century, while European immigrants propagated socialist/anarchist ideologies, revolutionary discourses focused on class equality as a utopian project. Subsequently, ideas like Freire’s (1970) and Dussel’s (1977) proposed that social structural change begins with the subaltern subject’s ontological redefinition — their awareness of the historical, political, and economic relationships determining their oppressed condition.

For Dussel (1977), the oppressed are on the periphery of the Modern/Colonial World System. These experiences, external to the Eurocentric totality, give the oppressed a privileged position for criticism. Dussel’s “Philosophy of liberation” affirms that to be radically different the discourse of the oppressed must have another starting point, it must think of other topics, conduct different methods to reach different conclusions (200). Freire (1970) similarly sees the oppressed not as passive, as oppression is a dialectical relationship where the oppressed internalize the oppressor’s logic. “Pedagogy of the oppressed” aims to recover humanity through discovering the oppressor, oneself as oppressed, and the internalized oppressor that can be replicated oppression through the action of the oppressed. This is achieved by overcoming fear of freedom, a consequence of domination’s domesticating function (26-32). Dussel and Freire agree that liberation is possible because the oppressed’s externality is a co-constitution, a relational, not absolute, condition. Both see exteriority as key to social class, aligning with “Liberation Theology,” which focuses on liberating the poor and denouncing capitalist exploitation. Dussel and Freire propose a dialectical answer in praxis: exorcizing the oppressor within. From here this dialogue about the “American being” developing its decolonisation connects to participatory research/action (Fals Borda, 1968, 157) and traces back to Césaire (1950), Fanon (1964), and even Gramsci (1929-1935).

The organic union between academic/scientific-social disciplines and concrete political purpose/participant action for revolutionary power change underlies “pedagogy of the oppressed,” “philosophy for liberation,” and “sociology of liberation.” These participatory

action/research strategies redefined the political meaning of social reality knowledge, aiming for a new scientific objectivity serving human rights. This requires intellectuals to break into colonial power's onto-epistemological dimension to intervene in its ideological reproduction through a decolonizing strategy affecting knowledge and identity at the educational, informational, and moral levels.

Regarding hegemonic reproduction concentrated on the epistemological field of education, struggles occurred in academia due to its role in imposing/legitimizing power relations. Ontological hegemonic reproduction was contested through less canonical forms — symbolic languages of cultural production. Many aesthetic-narrative strategies, employing symbolic-performative languages, accompanied the onto-epistemological deconstruction of coloniality of power from the cultural field via the intellectual-artist/people dyad. Examples include the “Boom” in literature, “The New Song” in Latin American popular music, National Rock in Argentina, and “The New Latin American Cinema” (NLA) and Testimonio in hybrid formats. While music and literature were fundamental, we will focus on NLA's relationship with this dynamic, especially its technical-rhetorical connection to testimonial literature as aporias — paradoxical manifestations of intellectual-artist/people cultural strategies in decolonial aesthetic praxis. However, our focus is on the rhetorical possibilities of this dyad encounter.

This connects to Mignolo's “frontier thinking” (2003, 23), which assumes a “place” of thought produced within the modern/colonial world system. “Frontier thinking” is that of “those disinherited by modernity whose experiences correspond to coloniality.” This thought “can be the product not only of the pain of the disinherited but of those who take the former's perspective” (2003, 27). This combination of enunciation place and perspective makes “frontier thinking” the source of critical cosmopolitanism (Mignolo, 2003).

Catherine Walsh highlights the limitations of Mignolo's “frontier thinking” in subverting Eurocentric logic and constructing a different social power project (Walsh, 2005, 29). For Walsh, interculturality is not simply relations “among cultures” (Mignolo, 2003, 28) but a political and epistemic project based on “other” knowledge, involving active subaltern participation in disputes over power, knowledge, and being with a different power purpose. This differs from multiculturalism, which, according to Walsh, is how neoliberalism (through hegemonic State use) appropriates and congeals genuine subaltern intercultural projects.

This is possible because, as Dussel observes, modernity's power to erase the “non-modern” has not been absolute. Different cultures produce “a varied ‘response’ to modern challenge and they burst renewed over a cultural horizon ‘beyond’ modernity” (Dussel, 2004, 201). Dussel's “transmodernity” is the pluriversity project fed by this unsubsumed exteriority (like Kusch's Latin American philosophy). From Dussel's perspective, this exteriority project is

analectics, questioning modern totality's monolectics through the Other's interpellation as an overwhelming totality by what was never inside. Dussel (2004) argues that critical consciousness's proper category is exteriority, accessed through praxis. Analectic differs from observing exteriority as subalternity/periphery (a dialectical force struggle); it is an alternative positioning — the theory and performative praxis of social reality — where the exterior subject expresses itself from exteriority, not as a conditioned object of representation (like in Testimonio or much of New Latin American Cinema).

To reconcile these proposals, we incorporate Walsh's "critical frontier positioning" as an evolution of Mignolo's "frontier thinking" (2003). With Walsh, we understand this knowledge frontier must not only refer to subaltern/modern-colonial thought relationships (which try to break hegemonic knowledge's logic while reproducing it) but also consider inter/intra-subaltern mediations/negotiations (Walsh, 2005, 29).

C. Third Concatenation: Critical Interculturalism and Decoloniality: Exploring Decolonial Pedagogy as a Form of Reterritorialisation

Modernity/Coloniality has permeated all aspects of life, devastating identities, knowledges, and existences "other" than those legitimized by Western, modern, capitalist power. This was achieved through cultural devices materializing power in everyday life. As stated, one such device was school, linking gnoseological and formative practices that circulated modern scientific monolectics and the ideals of reason, progress, and capital as the modern subject's horizon (Pineau, Dussel & Caruso, 2005). The education system's underlying historical concept is anchored in Coloniality of Power, which, through its dynamics (coloniality of being, knowledge, and seeing), has marginalized original peoples and Afro-descendant cultural identities, validating a Eurocentric world representation.

Žižek (1997) suggests present global capitalism operates with a multicultural logic that incorporates difference while neutralizing its meaning. Therefore, neoliberal respect for cultural diversity (multicultural/intercultural integration) is a new domination strategy maintaining colonial differentiations. These cultural processes, including those historically excluded, control ethnic conflict between State and society that could destabilize neoliberal economic imperatives (the contemporary praxis of the modern/colonial matrix). Capitalist functional interculturalism does not aim to build a more egalitarian society.

Walsh (2008) proposes a critical perspective on neoliberal interculturalism (functional to coloniality of power's reproduction), linking it to decolonial pedagogy whose praxis questions, transforms, invents, and creates radically different social conditions, allowing "other knowledges" to configure human existence. Functional interculturalism serves neoliberal

institutions, while critical interculturalism arises from those historically subalternised. Critical interculturalism is rooted in social movements questioning and transforming the structural colonial-capitalist problem. Walsh (2008), quoting Tubino (2005), distinguishes between functional and critical intercultural projects: functional interculturalism promotes dialogue/tolerance without addressing socio-cultural asymmetry, while critical interculturalism seeks to suppress it non-violently. Social asymmetry/discrimination makes genuine intercultural dialogue non-viable; therefore, true dialogue requires exposing the causes of non-dialogue through socially critical discourse explaining the conditions that made it impossible.

Walsh (2008) proposes critical interculturalism as a pedagogical tool to question power patterns of radicalization, subalternisation, and inferiorisation, while evidencing other ways of being, knowing, and living. This framework enables dignified, egalitarian, just, and respectful dialogue, encouraging “other” trans-frontier ways of thinking, being, learning, teaching, dreaming, and living. Critical interculturality and Decoloniality are conceptually and pedagogically intertwined, fostering ethical/moral self-agency involved in questioning, deconstructing, and rebuilding an “other” onto-epistemological project. These linked practices sustain what Walsh (2013) calls “decolonial pedagogy.”

Methodologically, decolonial pedagogy is manifested in Freire’s statement (1969, 18): “to critically read the world is a political-pedagogical doing inseparable from the political action that entails the organization of groups and popular classes to intervene in the reinvention of society.” Decolonial thinker de Sousa Santos (2014, p. 172) proposes that decolonial pedagogy “encourages the questioning of what is absent and thinking through the symbolic amplification of traces and signals” [of experience, particularly social movements]. Here, the method is again deconstruction followed by reconstruction/re-creation.

As an ethical, epistemological, social, and political project, critical interculturalism calls for a pedagogy — and appropriate praxis — that approaches difference historically and relationally (considering its political, social, and power implications) to create different conditions and generate new practices. This means thinking pedagogy beyond the traditional education system, where school learning transmits knowledge and reproduces a modern/colonial logos. This transmodern pedagogical approach proposes a socio-political practice where learning stems from people’s struggles to affirm their realities, subjectivities, and histories, initiating a transformation of that reality. This requires multiple pedagogies to open trails, trespass, interrupt, displace, and intervene in inherited concepts used to analyse and understand the world. Achieving this entails unlearning what we think we know to de-enslave the mind and enable different conversations toward a new onto-epistemological project. These pedagogies

dialogue with the critical-political background of social struggle to confront Western rationality's modern monologue from the side of praxis.

This project has precedents in Freire's 1960s critical pedagogy, attacked by South American military repression ("Condor Operation," 1975-1983) — a campaign of political repression by Southern Cone right-wing dictatorships involving secret intelligence operations responsible for kidnapping, torture, extortion, disappearances, and assassinations of left-wing sympathizers and dissidents. This process was justified by "necessary" coups to guarantee civil order by controlling the State apparatus, but its motive was economic: neoliberal politics¹⁰. Any surviving Freirean critical pedagogy after military repression was disempowered by neoliberal democracies (e.g., Argentina, 1983-present), replaced by demagogic appropriations portraying exclusion, racialization, and knowledge subordination as resolved by functional interculturalism. This manipulation lacks criticism due to the conservative wave in Latin American academic human sciences and their pedagogues/functionaries within the socio-cultural/educative system. Today, decolonial pedagogy's task is to build (or rebuild) a critical-practical structure within the formal education system and social organizations (neighbourhoods, communities, social movements, street practices) to reveal what multiculturalism hides — regenerating a network addressing critical-practical perspectives focused on the geopolitics of knowledge, topologies of being, and existential teleologies of colonial difference (Maldonado Torres, 2007).

Decolonial pedagogies find a referent in Freire (1970), who affirms that education is inherently political. Education can conceal alienation/domination or denounce it while showing other ways of becoming a tool of political emancipation. Recognizing the dehumanizing effect of oppression within the oppressor-oppressed relationship is one step toward liberation, but humanization/personal liberation requires a parallel social process connecting objective and subjective (Gramsci, Althusser, Jameson, Foucault, Deleuze). Freire (1970) emphasizes identifying dehumanization's perpetuating structures, creating socio-educational structures to equip "the oppressed" to unveil oppression's roots and act.

In this point Freire connects to Fanon (1964), for whom dehumanization is a consequence of colonisation, and humanization depends on decolonisation. For Fanon, decolonisation is social/individual unlearning of "the arsenal of prejudices developed by the colonial environment" (1964, 30). Colonialism aims for the colonised to accept the colonizer's supremacy, achieved after colonial discourse distorts/annihilates pre-colonial history. Thus,

¹⁰ Operation Condor (1975-1983) was a US-backed campaign of political repression by Southern Cone right-wing dictatorships, involving secret intelligence operations responsible for kidnapping, torture, extortion, disappearances, and assassinations of left-wing sympathizers and dissidents. Some estimates attribute at least 60,000 deaths to Condor, up to 30,000 in Argentina.

“the ontology of the colonised is the negation of his/her own humanity based in the disappearance of his/her own historical and racial existence” (1964). The oppressed’s adherence to the oppressor results from being placed outside themselves and configured to fulfil colonizer demands. While decolonisation is creating “New Men,” with the revolutionary organic intellectual providing aid, Fanon believes social transformation is the colonised’s own task.

To avoid misinterpreting this as an aporia of the Latin American intellectual project, we must review Fanon’s concept “sociogenesis.” As Maldonado Torres (2005) reading Fanon explains, “sociogenesis” is a pedagogy for the colonised’s self-determination/liberation (157-158), “training the sub-others to recognize and do things by themselves; act” (156). As a pedagogical strategy, sociogenesis has four approaches, reducible to two methodological stages for decolonial pedagogy’s praxis: awakening subjective formations/self-reflection (aligning with deconstruction/critical frontier positioning) and encouraging self-agency/action to foster “Other” ethical-political rationalities distanced from modern/colonial rationality (aligning with reconstruction/decentring pedagogical practices). The objective is for subalterns to act to transform existing social structures.

Following these and other referents from Latin American Indigenous philosophies, Walsh (2013) proposes crossing two conceptual streams for decolonial pedagogy: pedagogies that allow “thinking from” the coloniser’s ontological-existential/racialized condition to understand coloniality of power, being, and knowledge; and pedagogies built “thinking with” other sectors, recognizing colonial patterns. The deconstruction/reconstruction scheme reappears: the first leans toward critique, the latter inspires action — assuming responsibility for transforming the current situation and creating intercultural political, social, epistemic, and ethnic projects for communal coexistence. Decolonial pedagogy’s praxis has two steps.

The first step, “The critique over their own historical understanding,” is a discursive deconstruction of power by reviewing coloniality of power’s narration. Following Walsh (2013), this requires “thinking from” — conscious awakening of historical conditions. This implies locating themselves beyond immediate circumstances to conceive themselves within the power/knowledge relationships that historically made their identities/imaginary invisible. Transformation requires historical consciousness of their ontological relations, transcending the local context by highlighting critical signification networks and valuing other knowledges/identities, and expanding the perimeters of technocratic/modern scientific epistemology in education by including pedagogical approaches that privilege other epistemologies: the collective over the individual, cooperation over competition, and social critique over compliance. This stage (Fanonian awakening/self-reflection) raises questions:

Which educative practices materialize this value system? How to deflate colonial epistemology from learning experiences? How can emancipatory cultural production aid the epistemological shift? The answer is in the second proposed stage.

The second procedure of decolonial pedagogy's praxis is "the emancipation (decentering) of educative practices." These activities, framed within a counter-hegemonic network of power/knowledge relationships, strengthen the decolonial dispositive. Following Walsh (2013), its essential approach is "thinking with" by expanding hegemonic education's learning fields toward other social action contexts. These "other" practices create a wider context where experiential networks articulate counter-hegemonic projects of social transformation. These practices are pedagogies that think from genealogies, nationalities, life, and social systems "other" to modernity/coloniality. By "thinking with" those mobilizing to be heard, decolonial pedagogy's subjects decentre themselves from modern/colonial discourse that has placed them as "The Other." This repositioning capitalizes on knowledge from alternative collective experiences, distinguishing social struggle as a privileged pedagogic scene where participants learn through praxis — unlearning subalternity and relearning their right to resist power.

If the previous stage focused on identifying the problem, this stage focuses on effectively enunciating dissent and organizing intervention in the channels reproducing this condition. The first stage is deconstruction; the second, repositioning resistance and alternatives to power for meaning reconstruction (epistemological reconstruction). This repositioning redirect attention toward collective action that sets in motion political, epistemic, and existential practices transforming power/knowledge patterns (Foucault) that condition, control, and subjugate. Consequently, our pedagogies are practices/methodologies intertwined with oppositional resistance and the political, epistemic, and existential insurgence/resurgence of original national movements, Afro-descendant organizations, new social movements, and interest groups.

My perspective reads community cinema as a device for understanding decolonial pedagogy's specific practices and philosophy of praxis's reflection on counter-hegemonic discursive intervention, focusing on the objective world and its subjectivisation through Bourdieu's "Theory of social reproduction" (1979) and Foucault's "dispositive" (1977). Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) states that conditioning is associated with existential circumstances producing habitus, shaping body and mind within this campus, shaping individual social actions that reproduce this habituation. As an internalized process, habitus is part of identity, and as the habitus-campus relationship is dialectic, habitus can be modified by the campus or self-socio-analysis (Fanon's "Sociogenesis," 1967). Education (teaching/learning practices as knowledge communication/transfer) is a key part of this dialectical process, which can be

intervened in by counter-hegemonic impulses. This is my interest in community cinema as a device of decolonial pedagogy's praxis.

However, changes are not sudden, as habitus tends to persist even when social reality (campus) changes — Bourdieu and Passeron's "hysteresis" (1979). This is crucial for understanding community cinema as a decolonial pedagogy device. Even if it presents a fallacious scenario, these actions are changing the conditioning structure (campus) as a community transit route toward changing its habitus. We are betting on community self-representation movements while inciting said process from exogenous dynamics directed to the community in question; activities are opening a trail toward the moment in which no leaders or guidance will be needed for the construction of their self-representational discourses.

While transiting this route, we must consider Veron's (1993) thoughts on mass media discourses. Social communication is politically/economically conditioned, occurring within complex communicational orders (mass media, companies, cultural industries/politics), and its products result from technological interventions circulating within an ecosystem and appropriated according to personal/social trajectories. Some alternative new media and media convergence (like community cinema) can resist this, facilitating production for traditional recipients. I stress "some," because they operate from hysteresis; they can reproduce previous conditioning while using new media. This occurs in some community film productions I have explored (Such as the Cinema Made with Neighbours studied in chapter 4); media technology access has not guaranteed immediate epistemological change. If this relationship with social communication's complex order can be modified by campus changes, these alterations cannot be by assault. Education fulfils a political agenda for hegemonic reproduction (as suggested), so intervening in this dynamic requires subtle disruptive strategies, appearing institutionally pertinent to avoid being seen as disruptive. This returns us to Gramsci's "war of position" to infiltrate social reproduction apparatuses like education. How does community cinema take this position to question common sense and its belief system? This is a core concern of this research. One observation is that they have first co-opted more malleable ground, less guarded by state cultural politics: the informal education. Here, community cinema as a decolonial pedagogy praxis device can be studied through cultural production/circulation.

As Hall (1980) stated, culture is not merely another social practice or a description of reproduced habits/customs; it is through social practice that reality acquires meaning via community interactions shaped by ideological and historical conditions. Culture is not static but constantly constructed by everyday exchanges. In short, with Williams (1982), we can say culture constructs meaning. Community cinema is a cultural agent; its members, having abandoned their role as traditional receptors, become producers, constructing messages

(technical and rhetorical) that, when shared/decoded, construct meaning within society. This process also aligns with Decolonial Aesthetics. To connect these decolonial semio-praxes (Aesthetics and Pedagogy), I introduce the reproduction/production distinction for understanding community cinema's role.

Culture requires both auto-reproduction and production. Language, for example, "exists only as long as it can be reproduced" (Williams, 1982, pp. 176-191), which is how education uses languages to reproduce a concrete culture through a curriculum legitimizing a dominant ideology. Teachers can thus reproduce the system unknowingly. However, as the campus is constantly changing, education cannot remain solely reproductive. When the educative field incorporates changes from other fields (e.g., communication with new technology), it opens to production. For example, analysed in chapters 7, an extracurricular audio-visual workshop interrupts traditional hegemonic reproduction, enabling students to produce their own messages and become aware of their role as meaning producers. They then question reality narratives (e.g., media) and discover their position in cultural production-reproduction. These are essential steps towards decolonial consciousness. Student interaction with the communication field within the education system substantially modifies their traditional relationship with technologies and their languages, creating a new frame of reference and modifying their habitus. This is cultural evolution, a moment of cultural production, in this case, that of cultural democracy.

Martín Barbero (2009) states that education offers the most decisive sociocultural transformation opportunities for Latin America, as it's where oralities, new visualities, and cybernetic writings converge. The educational scenario is a cultural battleground where hegemonic cultural discourse operates through legitimizing actors: lettered culture resists citizen-driven performative mediation. Martín Barbero emphasizes the current importance, as subordinated oralities, visualities, and sonorities (previously surrogated/excluded) have gained unstoppable momentum, emerging everywhere due to late capitalism and new digital technologies' discursive production. Thus, communication, information, and languages acquire value not as mediation but as an ecosystem, as a new territory. This is something I address in Chapter 5.

This ecosystem is ruled by a discourse of the body — knowledge obtained through sensorial perception. Within this ecosystem, if experience is triggered by external stimuli and we learn through experience, then the audio-visual as sensorial provocation can incite learning. As it compromises the decoder's bodily experience, it is a body-political experience. This new dynamic allows majorities to appropriate the sensible (reception and production), exercising citizenship by producing messages reproducing their epistemological frameworks. As

education is where these aesthetic forces struggle, there's a place for pedagogical philosophy aiding social, technological, and knowledge appropriation — creativity/innovation in conceptualizing information, technical awareness, and interfacing with new visualities, oralities, and sonorities circulating within intercultural dynamics. This is a field I will explore in Chapter 6.

The key learning semio-practical process fostered by community cinema (with decolonial pedagogy/aesthetics) converges in “technological appropriation.” Rockwell (2004) defines this as practices where subjects — having elucidated hegemonic techno-media discourse’s social, cultural, and ideological conditioning — competently use those objects, creatively adapting them to their needs/interests within autonomous individual/collective frameworks. Within community cinema groups, non-formal audio-visual education mobilizes these technological appropriation practices:

- acknowledging available communication technologies
- reflecting on their relationship with technology/society (especially how this founds subjectivity/collective identities)
- acknowledging participants’ technological skills
- recognizing use/articulation possibilities between equipment and distribution circuits
- reflecting on becoming “producers”¹¹
- using techno-media to create individual/collective projects communicating social, political, cultural, educational, artistic, economic, and ecological concerns.

Technological appropriation can be read as a knowledge ecosystem where “living organisms” express sensorial perceptions through technological communication, relating interdependently (critical frontier positioning) to inhabit a physical territory — a body-political negotiation with lived space aiming to transform it through praxis. This is rooted in the soil (Kusch), carrying the territory’s singularities. Kusch (1976) sees a fundamental relationship between culture and “the ground,” rooting culture to “the here and now.” If culture is a strategy to live in a specific time/place, then culture is also politics; the awakening the Ethos of inhabiting the ground. As one cannot be indifferent to their inhabited place, cultural subjects face the need to operate change in/with the ground, recognizing its historical dimension. This has prompted decolonial pedagogy, with Kusch as a referent.

Another link to Decolonial praxis from the Kuschian Geocultural concept connects epistemologically to the spatial turn (Soja, 1989; 2008). “Geoculture” refers to a context structured by cultural and geographical intersection, implying that all geographic space is

¹¹ Alvin Toffler (1980) coined “prosumer” predicting producer/consumer roles, previously addressed in *Future Shock* (1970).

inhabited by a group's thinking, which is conditioned by the inhabited space. Thus, geography and culture form a geocultural unit.

Working with postcolonial theories (Said, 1978; Bhabba, 1984; Césaire, 1950; Fanon, 1952), which link economic themes to centre-periphery geopolitics established by capitalist modernity (seeing space as a fundamental power category), post-structuralist theory offers the Spatial Turn. This epistemological shift towards thinking of space as a social (political-economic and geo-historical) construction is a theoretical basis for the Latin American Decolonial Turn (e.g., Wallerstein, 1979).

This “genealogical” impulse requires mentioning Simmel's work on the sociology of space (1903), concerning the relationship between space and social interaction/socialization. This references earlier work on space and social morphology (Durkheim, 1895; Mauss, 1905; Halbwachs, 1938), where space is not merely a social container but a social form itself. Durkheim's social morphology implies a theory of intersubjectivity addressing social interaction's motional-relational process with built space's physical properties. Bourdieu's (1979) concept of field (campus) — a historical, non-hegemonic, socio-spatial arena where people dispute resources according to campus rules (objective), agent habitus (subjective), and capital (social, economic, cultural) — is also relevant. In this social space construction, habitus and campus are inextricably linked. The campus is formed by participating agents' habitus; the habitus is the transposition of the campus's objective structures into agent action/thought. The habitus manifests campus structures: the campus mediates between habitus and practice. The result, according to Bourdieu, is inhabited space (the doxa); our research focuses on cultural production in this space as a field in constant reconstruction due to these factors.

Lynch's (1960) work, where the city experience — the dialectic between immediate perception and the city's imagined totality — presents a spatial analogy of Althusser's (1970) ideology formulation (“the Imaginary representation of the subject's relationship to his/her Real conditions of existence”), is also helpful. Foucault's work (1967) on heterotopias — spaces with more layers of meaning than apparent — is another important contribution. These cultural, institutional, and discursive spaces are “other” — disturbing, intense, incompatible, or contradictory — worlds within worlds, reflecting and altering what's outside, affirming difference and offering escape from authoritarianism, promoting critical discourses on power relations.

Soja's late 20th-century Spatial Turn uses these influences, especially Lefebvre's trialectics (1968, 1974), which distinguishes physical, mental, and social fields—logical-epistemological (conceived) space, sensible phenomena (perceived) space, and social practice (lived) space. Soja focuses on “lived space” (the “third space”), considering the body an intersectional place

traversed by three moments. This links to the Decolonial Turn's reflection on body-political relations that have inscribed the subject's location in the "colonial difference's" power/knowledge structure. The subject is inserted into these relations by "lived space" within power's (ethnic/racial/gender/sexual) value scales.

Therefore, territory is a socio-geographic perceptual construction resulting from power exercise. Harvey notes that "power relations are always implicated in spatial and temporal practices" (1998: 250), both material and symbolic, resulting from differentially constructed space according to individual/group/class experiences, perceptions, and conceptions. Haesbaert (2004: 93-94) synthesizes this duality: Territory always involve a symbolic-cultural dimension, through a territorial identity attributed by social groups as a form of symbolic control over the space where they live, and a more concrete dimension, of a disciplinary political nature: an appropriation and organization of space as a form of domination and disciplining of individuals." This echoes Lefebvre's trialectics, with territory as "spatial practices" (Soja's "third space"), Haesbaert's symbolic dimension as Lefebvre's "representations of space," and the "concrete dimension" as Lefebvre's "spaces of representation."

Thus, as Rolnik and Guattari (1986: 323) stated, territory is synonymous with appropriation/subjectivisation. It's a set of representations leading to behaviours/investments in social, cultural, aesthetic, and cognitive times/spaces (Haesbaert, 2004). Territory creates "assemblages," and all assemblages are territorial, encompassing territoriality, expressing constant deterritorialisation/reterritorialisation fluxes.

A Paradigmatic Scheme

Since by looking at community cinema we are analysing concrete semio-praxes traversing production, distribution and consumption of audio-visual representations of the lived space (or the territory). Also, if these representations are put into play by collective body-politically situated expressions that are in permanent emotional and identifying negotiation with the geo-socio-historical territory. We need to understand these representations not only as reflecting lived territorial experiences (marked by the coloniality of power) but also as devices operating movements of deterritorialisation and as reterritorialisation through which Decolonial epistemologies are incorporated. To be able to justify community cinema as a potent device for Decolonial pedagogy and Decolonial aesthetics's praxis I have conceptualized its encounters, as 'occurrences' in three lines of potency where from said movements of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation are being propelled.

"Resilient communication" is a form of cultural enactment sustained in a critical frontier positioning relationship that opens possibilities towards critical interculturality. As such, Its operability dares "coloniality of knowledge" from within its channels of hegemonic legitimation.

These relational dynamics demarcate a line of potency I identify projected from territorial encounters among members of informal education of cinema workshops or community cinema production groups, community cooperatives and community activism. As counterhegemonic semio-praxis “Resilient communication” is a function of Community cinema for this one to act as a device for Decolonial pedagogy’s praxis. Its deterritorialisation/reterritorialisation field (its discursive battle ground) is in Lefebvre’s trialectics scheme’s term the logical-epistemological space (or conceived space) [the representation of space].

“Aesthetic performance” is another example of cultural enactment constituted by technical and rhetorical dynamics relying on the emergence of a reservoir of pre-modern/colonial collective sensitivity (we explained this as the sensorium or the Pa’mi). This occurrence makes the “distribution of the sensible” a feasible project. Hence, its operability challenges, “coloniality of seeing” within its networks of hegemonic legitimation. The line of potency I identify here springs from moments of collective symbolisms synchronized in their territorial occurrences during the processes of production, distribution and consumption of community cinemas’ representations of the lived space. As counterhegemonic semio-praxis “Aesthetic performance” is a function of Community cinema for this one to act as a device for Decolonial aesthetic’s praxis. Its deterritorialisation/reterritorialisation field (its discursive battle ground) is in Lefebvre’s trialectics scheme’s term the Space of social practice (or lived space), [spatial practice].

“Techno-aesthetical embodiment” is also a cultural enactment resulting from technological appropriations that redefine body political territorial relationships. This embodiment leaves a possibility for self-representative discourses since its operability defies, “coloniality of being” within its linkages of hegemonic legitimation (a process we approached looking at production and reproduction of Culture). These assemblages draw a line of potency I follow as ontological metamorphosis in which the techno-aesthetical appropriation creates body-political identification which are transformative of the lived space. Here we refer to a projection beyond of what happens in the production-circulation field of community cinema, it is in fact, its reverberations in daily territorial experience. As semio-praxis, “Techno-aesthetical embodiment” is a function of Community cinema for this one to act as a device for Decolonial praxis. Its deterritorialisation/reterritorialisation field (its discursive battle ground) is in Lefebvre’s trialectics scheme’s term Space of sensible phenomena (or perceived space)] [space of representation].

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Introduction

In the previous two chapters (on genealogy and epistemology), I historically and theoretically discussed community cinema as a decolonial device that recognizes, criticizes, and intervenes in hegemonic reality constructions through its own language — a socially performative text (or symbolic act) whose counter-hegemonic power derives from its technical and rhetorical qualities. These features exist in a dynamic ecosystem with its own meaning production, interpretative circulation, and socio-symbolical re-nourishment of the territory; this is what I consider its *poiesis*. As developed in Chapter 2, I suggest that community cinema's counter-hegemonic *poiesis* brings forth the possibility of intercultural relationships strengthening pedagogical and aesthetical decolonial praxes.

An exploration of the dynamics with which community cinema advances these possibilities begins by conceiving it as a socio-symbolical phenomenon — an artistic act involving concrete semio-praxes resulting from collective, body-politically situated expressions in permanent emotional and identifying negotiation with the geo-socio-historical territory of production-circulation. The artistic act we call community cinema is, therefore, a dynamic of social enactment permanently experiencing, interpreting, and re-nourishing conceptions of reality from its learning, creation, and circulation processes. In Chapter 2, while examining these complexities, I conceptualized three “occurrences” (Kusch, 1974) emerging within community cinema's relational dynamics as deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation fluxes through which decolonial epistemologies are incorporated: “Resilient communication,” “Aesthetic performance,” and “Techno-aesthetical embodiment.” This chapter describes and develops a methodology to approach this vast and multidimensional relational dynamic to demonstrate my proposed concepts' operability when analysing community cinema's dynamics. The following sections trace the methodological route I followed to create an analytic framework through which evaluations on community cinema's relational dynamics vis-à-vis their potency as decolonial praxis can be grasped.

I will begin by justifying my choice of a qualitative methodology against the Coloniality of Knowledge, Being, and Seeing, resulting in the need for a semio-practical approach from film studies. Advancing on community cinema's semio-praxis as a territorial dynamic and discourse, I recognize connecting Lefebvre's trialectic of space (lived space, space of representation, and represented space) to critical discourse analysis's tripartite concentric scheme (text, discursive practice, and social practice). These intersections demarcate three community cinema relational dynamics or campuses (Bourdieu, 1979) for observation and

analysis. When applied to exploring community cinema's ecosystem, these campuses appear as intersubjective dynamics conditioned by aesthesis.

From here, to put forward decolonial aesthesis as knowledge construction, I interpret this epistemological system in three meaning production moments corresponding to the campuses created by the other two models' intersection: First, the aesthesis experience, at the intersection of "the text" and "the lived space." Second, the aesthesis interpretation, connecting "the discursive practice" and "the space of representation." Finally, the aesthesis re-nourishment, linking "the social practice" and "the represented space."

Navigating the vast range of variables within this amalgamated three-dimensional approach, I needed a guiding research perspective. Therefore, I focused on aspects emerging from "occurrence" (Kusch, 1974). My data are "occurrences" within these three campuses of community cinema's intersubjective dynamics. Occurrences are aesthetic, aleatory, and present; therefore, data collection requires a subject to distinguish them as significant among other simultaneous events — the first framework to be decided. There must also be a strategy to aesthetically capture chosen occurrences for further observation/analysis. This is how I realized the value of merging visual ethnography for data collection/observation with an auto-ethnographic perspective to guide the path among occurrences and subsequent critical analysis through active writing.

The analysis chapters (4, 5, 6 and 7) portray different positions I took when applying this three-dimensional research approach to the case analysis. Data collection was carried out by participant observation and visual ethnography, mostly through video recording (and deferred observation) of group interviews, festival presentations, debates, symposiums, internal meetings of community cinema organizations, and individual interviews. Visual ethnography is also the lens to approach the artefacts (the text, the lived experience, the experiential aesthesis); their collections result from internet archives, direct observation in film festival premieres, and even participation in production. Data exploration focused mainly on participants' image of their work's worth (discursive practice, space representation, aesthesis interpretation). The critical analysis brings an auto-ethnographic perspective reflecting on these interpretations and the produced works as occurrences within the broader scope of social dynamics (social practice, represented space, aesthesis re-nourishment) against these collective expression's possibilities to constitute a device for decolonial praxis.

As guided by the occurrence perspective — and prompted by a series of case analyses related to a network of academic research projects through which I explored my partial hypotheses through active writing — visual ethnographic data collection, processing, and analysis became an ongoing (sometimes intermittent, occasionally overlapping) process. This ongoing dynamic,

from November 2018 to September 2024, pursued occurrences across three regions. From 2018 to 2019, I focused mostly on Rural Buenos Aires (using Saladillo town and its National Film Festival as an observation territory and showcase for other rural Buenos Aires producers). From 2019 to 2021, I focused on Greater Córdoba (ranging through the numerous collectives engaging in Córdoba's Social and Community Cinema Network). From 2022 to 2024, I centred on San Juan (first as an observer of local social cinema dynamics and later developing a community cinema collective linked to the National University of San Juan). However, this is only generally true, as all observed groups had varying work schedules as independent agents behind single projects and in simultaneous production, circulation, and debate activities with other production groups. This explains why I often had to attend data collection in one region while analysing another's production and exhibiting in symposiums about yet another region, group, or case.

Thesis conclusions will review the proposed theoretical concepts — “resilient communication,” “aesthetic performance,” and “techno-aesthetic embodiment” — as lines of force through which, as collective symbolic and territorial appropriation practices, community cinema can be understood as feasible praxis of decolonial aesthetics and decolonial pedagogy.

A. Qualitative Methodology and the Semio-Practical Approach

As clarified in Chapter 2, this research aligns with decolonial epistemology and, therefore, has been exploring concepts to contest Coloniality of Power's reproduction dynamics: coloniality of knowledge, being, and seeing. When finding praxis examples to strengthen this alternative paradigm's arguments, I realized that an epistemological change consequently involves a change in research methodologies. I must state firstly that my perspective refuses epistemologies that have traditionally legitimized Modern/Colonial knowledge production disguised as 'zero-point perspectives' lacking political-economic interests, such as positivist theories (Eurocentric, rationalist, structuralist, social Darwinism) and their concomitant methodologies (anthropological, quantitative, empiricist). In Chapter 2, I reviewed how such epistemological concealment is one of Coloniality of Power's devices to expel otherness from the Modern/Colonial paradigm's condition of possibility by building centre-periphery hierarchies based on ethnic, cultural, and epistemological differences. The everlasting hegemonisation process of Modern/Colonial knowledge (Coloniality of Knowledge) has justified the symbolic and material appropriation of colonised territories even after political emancipation. Ramón Grosfoguel (2007) referred to this self-legitimizing discourse, denying that knowledge is body-political and geo-political situated, as “the ego-politic of knowledge.”

Another assumption of the compartmentalized scientific perspective is that science is the only route to knowledge; therefore, art cannot be an academically recognized form of knowledge

construction. Consequently, shifting away from positivist epistemology implies several methodological displacements.

The first is choosing qualitative methodologies, through which we can recognize the social spheres, philosophical networks, and political/economic tensions giving rise to the subjectivities of community cinema collectives. This choice also fulfils the need to delve into subjects' experiences, perspectives, and problems interconnected to be represented in collective artwork and reflected upon during circulation. Studying community cinema as a social phenomenon calls for a qualitative methodological approach able to decipher these variables in a relational dynamic, including semiotic ones (choices made on audio-visual narrative styles, storytelling, intertextual references, representational identities, and symbology) and practical ones (human dynamics within the socio-cultural context and artwork production/circulation). The methodological challenge is elucidating/qualifying these variables by inquiring into their meanings for participants while attending to the socio-political context conditioning these appreciations and the discursive reterritorialisations resulting from audio-visual production circulating back into their production's social contexts. Facing this challenge to the broad range of qualitative approaches, I am inclined to explore semio-praxis, as this approach can answer how society assigns cultural-political sense to the film's text in its circuit from production to circulation and the text's potential consequences for social space.

Within film theories, the semio-praxis approach studies films based on the environment and social moment in which they are produced/projected (Cassetti, 2005). From a semio-practical perspective, film is a communication model with a double textual production process: in the realization space and in the reading/receiving space (Cassetti, 2005). Semio-praxis asks about how texts are constructed and their social effects. The starting point is the hypothesis that these textual production processes can be described based on a combination of meaning production modes. Semio-practical research aims to understand how these meaning production modes are put into practice, how they are hierarchized, and why this or that mode — or system of modes — is activated in a certain textual production/circulation context (Odin, 2006).

Another angle is that the semio-praxis approach aims at “understanding how the film-spectator affective relationship works” (Odin, 1998, p. 117), hence the need to understand film practice in its communication dimension and analyse the modes put into play in meaning/affect production in a certain context. This is important to conceive cinema's production/reception conditions and its narrative's technical-rhetorical dynamic as a territory sustained from a sensory epistemology belonging to the sensorium (Rancière, 2004) and the aesthetic process. We are talking about characteristics in the cinematographic fact perceived prior to aesthetic

reading (the ethical categorization of what is perceivable exerted/reproduced from a Modernity/Colonial perspective). Aesthetic process is a direct communication, through sensory stimuli, with individuals' emotional, instinctive, and unconscious life. This is why the semio-practical approach is methodologically competent to access the meanings we seek to study community cinema as a decolonial aesthetics tool.

From a semio-practical approach, we can follow different processes through which film text production becomes meaning production. For instance, from a Cultural Studies viewpoint, we contemplate the film's socio-cultural and historical-political production contexts, expanding on an interpretation of its intended symbolic representations. From a post-structuralist perspective, we consider how the film achieves intertextual scope, opening to multiple socio-cultural references and interpretations. When framing it through a neo-narratological viewpoint, the film is seen as a warp through which a weft of dynamics and relationships (modes of production, distribution, consumption, and interpretation) is drawn. Critical theory is another semio-practical access, emphasizing cinema's role as a significant cultural practice that can become an ideological apparatus (Solanas and Getino, 1969; Althusser, 1970; Comolli, 1971; Baudry, 1974), linked to revealing and transforming the dynamics introducing and reproducing dominant ideology signals. This perspective, understanding film's clarifying power as an illuminating tool to make evident the oppression of concealed power/knowledge structures, has described cinema as a cognitive map (Jameson, 1981) or a diagram (Deleuze, 1992). Both authors refer to these schematic expressions' ability to surface the power/knowledge relation signals sustaining the dominant dispositive (Foucault, 1977) in which the film has been produced and will be deciphered. The configuration of cinema as a map or diagram is interesting since, in community cinema, its schematic power could become a liberation tool, identifying and displaying practical examples, setting social transformation goals.

Summarizing, from the semio-practical perspective, cinematic text is read as inserted into its production-reception context, performing as a symbolic act (Jameson, 1981), capable of reflecting and simultaneously constituting not just the ability to account for social transformations but also to bring them about. Following this semio-practical perspective, I refer to this semio-practical dynamic as "a cinematographic fact" instead of "a cinematographic text," because "cinematographic fact" embodies the socio-political conditions, intersubjective interpretation practices, and technical-rhetorical strategies determining production-circulation conditions.

B. Semio-Practical Trialectics: Critical Discourse Analysis, Lefebvre's Representation of Space, and Decolonial Aesthesis

Another alignment with decolonial epistemology (and distancing from positivist methodologies) is based on the idea that art produces a form of knowledge (Augustowsky, 2017). Its acknowledgment reveals that Eurocentric aesthetic imposition has been a form of Coloniality of Power excluding other knowledges and identities from History's narrative and, consequently, from their material and symbolic existence possibilities (Mignolo, 2013). As explored in Chapter 2, this colonial power reproduction has been defined by Barriendos (2011) as "Coloniality of seeing" and by Mignolo (2013) as "Coloniality of the sensible." The authors have highlighted that contemporary visual and performative arts generate praxes that are now an important counter-cultural pole, read as sites of Decolonial aesthesis.

The semio-practical approach conceives the cinematographic fact as a dynamic ecosystem between collaborative sign production, intersubjective interpretation, and socio-cultural context and appropriations. As a discourse crossing the fields through which Coloniality of Power reproduces (seeing, being, knowing), its poiesis becomes a political contestation within the power device. To describe this ever-changing intersubjective and symbolic territorial re-appropriation, we understand that the cinematographic fact's multidimensionality (its semiotics, agents, practices, processes, enunciation/interpretation dynamics, and cultural insertion) requires synchronized analysis of textual and extra-textual elements as defining elements, including uses (practices) and processes in their contexts' uniqueness.

To attend to this complexity, I searched for a semio-practical model to elucidate three aspects: First, the technical-rhetorical narrative strategies used for the audio-visual work as the artefact crossing the sensible territory. Second, the meaning production surrounding the intersubjective dynamics involved in the artefact's creation, appropriation, and circulation, traversing the ontology territory. Third, the socio-political production/circulation context transiting the epistemology territory. This pursuit led me to three semio-practical models that can be connected to address the complexities.

Initially, the tri-concentric model of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2001; Wodak, 2001). The three aspects previously delineated are conceptualized as: a, the text ("the textual artefact"); b, the discursive practice: text production/interpretation ("the discursive image"); and c, the sociocultural practice (greater context, "the sociocultural paradigm"). This multidisciplinary approach — drawing from Critical Theory to examine ideologies and power relations in discourse — analyses how language connects with the social through being the primary ideology domain and a site of and stake in power struggles. The CDA concentric model comprises three interrelated levels:

The Text: The most internal level, corresponding to linguistic/semiotic text analysis as an aesthetical-narrative artefact with woven words, images, structure, techniques, rhetoric, and symbology, encoding meaning within itself and as a link to other cultural artefacts. Post-structuralism can be useful here.

Discursive practice: Includes text production, distribution, and consumption. Analysis focuses on how the text is interpreted/used by creative participants, their image of the created text. “The image” embodies the ideas on making/consuming these films left in community members’ lives as recollections of individual experience. The films are an artefact the community offers as an “imago” of themselves. This level connects text characteristics with social processes and can be read from Cultural Studies and Neo-narratology.

Sociocultural practice: Refers to the broader social context in which the discourse is situated, including power relations, ideologies, and cultural paradigms. Critical Theory is relevant here.

Next, Henri Lefebvre’s 1974 trialectic of space model seems necessary when another aspect needs attention concerning community cinema as a geoculturally situated discourse: their intersubjective dynamics as a form of territoriality, approached from space epistemology and space representations. I connected CDA categories with Lefebvre’s 1974 trialectic of space, realizing they refer to similar socio-cultural interaction and meaning production fields.

Lefebvre understands territory as socially constructed through a process linking history (and its economic, political, and cultural dynamics) and the product — the produced social space — into a single inseparable element. Territory is a geo-socio-historical phenomenon organized based on relationships established by those inhabiting, configuring, and giving it meaning/identity. Lefebvre (1974) emphasized that each society produces a space at each historical juncture in a perpetually unfinished process, not dialectical (as we understand history’s advance) but trialectical. In that trialectic, territory representation is negotiated at three levels:

- A. “Spatial practices,” manifestations of everyday life in which subjects act determined by experience in power value scales (ethnic/racial/gender/sexual). Lefebvre refers to this as “the lived space,” corresponding to “The text” in our CDA scheme, as their lived space experiences become tangible through this representational artefact.
- B. “Spaces of representation” refers to instances where subjects express an emotional link with space by objectifying its social meanings while intersubjectively redefining it. Lefebvre also called it the space of sensible phenomena (or perceived space), corresponding to “discursive practice” (the image) in our CDA format.
- C. “Represented of space” are spatial relationships derived from paradigmatic circumstances, the logical-epistemological space representations taken for granted in power discourse. Lefebvre also called it “conceived space,” corresponding to “social practice” (the paradigm) in CDA.

Finally, my own model observes how community cinema, as an artistic enactment, encompasses praxes of decolonial aesthetics functioning as artistic embodiments of knowledge production and political contestation. I identified these actions as three performative levels where participants' sensorial system is involved in experiencing, interpreting, and contesting reality through audio-visual art learning, making, and circulation. This reading, incorporating Lefebvre's trialectic and CDA's tri-concentric scheme, can be explained as follows:

The "Aesthesis experience" is the outcome of critical frontier positioning (between community cinema facilitators, involved activist communities, and other actors) generated within decolonial pedagogy. Through this process, they learn the technical and rhetorical aesthetic tools to create their narrative representing their everyday life experiences. Analysing relational dynamics at the "Aesthesis experience" stage can be placed at CDA's textual artefact level, corresponding to Lefebvre's "lived space" representation. Here, we look at audio-visual piece production as an act of presentation. This is the communities' empowerment moment, as their lived space experience has found a sensorial expression vehicle, becoming visible, present, tangible — an aesthetic artefact.

The "aesthetic interpreting" stage is where, through sensible appreciation and semiotic interpretation of their created narration, participants become conscious of sociocultural conditions affecting their lived space experience and how, by triggering aesthetic stimuli, their collectively authored piece acquires political discursive power among other viewers. The interpretations originating through this ontological self-perception relate to Lefebvre's "representation of the perceived space" and, in CDA terms, correspond to "discursive practice" (the image). Their influence is centrifugal, becoming a negotiation moment with the sociocultural production circumstances, the space of representation.

The "aesthetic re-nourishment," involves the most abstract dynamics between the collectively created artistic piece and the unknown public. Here, the relational dynamic is purely symbolic; the text's semiotics trigger sensorial appreciations that, by embodying communicated feelings, modify sociocultural certainties apprehended by viewers as subjects of a hegemonic paradigm. The film provides a critical account of this represented space (territorial relationships taken for granted by power discourse), and the symbolic confrontation appeals to each subject's psyche, then to intersubjective dynamics, and finally to a change in social perspectives. Therefore, this aesthetics re-nourishment creates new meanings and contests perspectives instituted in the "represented space" (Lefebvre's trialectic) or, through CDA, a form of social practice intervening in the dominant paradigm.

C. On Autoethnography and Visual Ethnography

As explained in Chapter 2, decolonial thinking revolves around the problematics of coloniality of knowledge, being, and seeing — the socio-symbolic structures sustaining and reproducing ego-politics of knowledge and centre-periphery subjectivity based on Eurocentric epistemological and ontological standards embodied in intersubjective cultural praxis. As Social Science aims to provide an interpretative reconstruction of societies' ways of life, the world's meaning reconstruction finds its theory-practice dialectic in the methodological procedure, implying taking a position regarding the other/Other. Autoethnography reminds us how social sciences (tacitly or expressly) take a position on how society is made in one way and not another concerning diversity and power relations.

In decolonial epistemological terms, autoethnography approaches a body-political perspective (knowledge rooted in contextual conditions and subjective/socio-historical forms of enunciation, production, and values). Decolonial thought authors (Castro Gomez and Grosfoguel, 2007) define this as exiting a hegemonic Modern/Colonial discourse sustained by a "Sight of God" or "Hybrid of zero point" perspective characterizing the ego-political position (a coloniality of power pattern disguising its ideology behind a supposed universal, neutral, and scientific knowledge structure).

Looking at how ego-politics of knowledge has observed, written about, and systematically analysed people and their cultural practices shows a need to offer naturalistic "realist tales" (Van Maanen et al, 1988, 45) emphasizing objectivity. Pioneering ethnographers, for instance, observed events from an outsider's perspective, but this method brought the problem of locals being conscious of and adjusting to these "outsiders." Another problem was the researcher's role as a human actor (and human factor) influenced by their cultural background when observing traditions, symbols, meanings, premises, and rituals, unable to offer purely objective accounts of cultural practices and other social engagements.

Evolving from Lévi-Strauss's (1963) and Malinowski's (1967) published journals, anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) further championed and popularized "thick description" as a personal perspective for observing and describing human action and interaction by excavating meaning construction created in the behavioural observation context where the researcher is an active agent. Geertz's thick description tried to lead the reader to deeper understanding by inserting commentaries, context, and interpretation of observed phenomena through evocative writing drawing the reader into the scene.

Following Geertz, Van Maanen (1988) distinguished three approaches to ethnographic narrative. (1) "Realist tales," aiming to give an objective third-person account of social interactions (p. 45). (2) "Confessional tales" (also called self-data), where the ethnographer

examines their own first-person reactions to the phenomena (p. 73). And (3) “impressionist tales,” referring to ethnographic accounts where the ethnographer aims for a more metaphorical version of their participant-observation by fashioning “striking stories” (p. 101). Some pioneering experimentation on the latter two can be found in more evocative ethnographic narratives now called “autoethnography” (Behar, 1996; Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Goodall, 1989).

Nowadays, autoethnography is a qualitative research method used by academic researchers interested in narrative portrayals of complex lived experience within the research encounter of a particular phenomenon. In “Conceptual foundations of autoethnography,” Poulos (2021) describes autoethnography as “an autobiographical genre of academic writing that draws on and analyses or interprets the lived experience of the author and connects researcher insights to self-identity, cultural rules and resources, communication practices, traditions, premises, symbols, rules, shared meanings, emotions, values, and larger social, cultural, and political issues”. Poulos also states that autoethnography involves crafting creative narratives shaped from personal experiences within a culture and addressed to varied (mostly academic) audiences.

From an autoethnographic position, there is no linear form, single way of proceeding, or single recipe for investigation. This makes it a more dialogic, flexible, and permeable technique to intersubjective criticism, taking methodology outside the field of scientific method as we know it. Following Adams et al. (2015, p. 2), autoethnography is a qualitative research method that:

- Attempts to re-centre the researcher’s experience as vital in the research process.
- Uses a researcher’s personal experience to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences.
- Acknowledges and values a researcher’s relationships with others.
- Uses deep and careful self-reflection — typically referred to as “reflexivity” — to name and interrogate the intersections between self and society, the particular and the general, the personal and the political.
- Shows people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles.
- Balances intellectual and methodological rigor, emotion, and creativity.
- Strives for social justice and to make life better.

I believe Decolonial epistemology would find autoethnography’s premises agreeable as a research method, especially the fact that it requires those involved with (and in) the research to be open to perceiving different “possible worlds” and to make the researcher’s “immersion” effective through cognitive-affective self-reflection, turning the exploration’s perspective into a subject-to-subject dynamic.

Autoethnographic self-reflexivity, which, in Sarah Tracy's words, "refers to the careful consideration of the ways in which researchers' past experiences, points of view, and roles impact these same researchers' interactions with, and interpretations of, the research scene" (2019, p. 2), has several implications for the research process. Firstly, it allows recognizing the potential and diverse subjectivities appearing in dialogues suppressed, repressed, and wasted by technical (and academic) doxa (coloniality of knowledge) and by cultural reproduction's quotidian praxis (coloniality of being). Secondly, it accepts that since the researcher's affective and cognitive perspective can influence research results, this influence is its main potential. The autoethnographic strategy takes advantage of — and uses — the affective and cognitive "experiences" of those developing knowledge about a reality aspect based precisely on their participation in the world where that aspect is registered. Finally, within this framework, the researcher is an active participant capable of narrating the scene in which they work, knows, and has privileged access to the observation field shared with other subjects. Focused on relationships with others, incorporating individual experiences of being part of a group (social space, institution, or collective), the researcher is part of the "culture" they investigate and in which they are socialized. Sharing the same language practices and knowing the field's rules are autoethnography's advantages, as the researcher can perceive potential research scenarios invisible to an outsider.

Following Paulos's (2021) view, "practitioners of autoethnography actively use writing about the self in social and cultural contexts to illuminate the contours of human social-cultural life practices" (4). The researcher using this methodology writes in the first person to incorporate reflexivity on aspects where other views cannot be or are limited. Autoethnography means giving an account of what one hears, feels, and one's commitment not only to the subject but also to the action, by reconstructing one's experience. For Richardson (2000), autoethnographers invoke and use the discovery available in the writing process, using writing as a research practice driving inquiry rather than a "mopping up" activity after research. My autoethnographic approach to community cinema used active writing as a mode of self-reflection on research progress, manifesting in a communicable form. My active writing attended aspects present on the three levels of the trialectical semio-practical approach — for instance, Chapters 5 and 6 observed the third level (aesthesis re-nourishment): the relationships between community cinema's social dynamics and phenomena in the sociocultural production/circulation paradigm.

To maintain continuity, I got involved in research groups, book publications, and conference presentations whose topics and methodologies would contribute to my overall research goal. I used these commitments as opportunities to deliver autoethnographic written outputs delving into partial hypothesis explorations case by case. My journey through cases and problems, as

well as academic research involvement, proceeds from my early immersion in social filmmaking as a film student and junior lecturer in communication and film studies faculties in the 1990s. Remaining social relations among colleagues from those creative activist years facilitated networking with referents of different community cinema groups, organizations, and research projects.

To inform these written outputs, data gathering followed a guiding “occurrence” principle (Kusch, 1974). I later found the main gist of this concept stated in Bochner and Ellis (2006) when they reflected on the relationship between autoethnography and communications: “Instead of talking about communication, autoethnography shall show people in the process of using communication to achieve an understanding of their lives and their circumstances” (p. 111). Data gathering tools were designed to attend to communications at their very moment of occurrence. Within the trialectical semio-practical model, these dynamics are apprehensible through the first two fields: the text (the artefact, the lived space, the aesthetic experience) and the discursive practice (the image, the discursive practice, the space of representation). Consequently, these tools were required to provide at least two types of visual data: the fictional texts created by community cinemas and the intersubjective production/circulation dynamics. This is why my autoethnography methodology, guided by the occurrence perspective, trusted visual ethnography to conduct two procedures:

- A. Textual exploration: conducting visual archival research and further narrative analysis of collected audio-visual artefacts (publicly available, presented at film festival premieres, or provided by their authors). As previously stated, these collected community-produced short films are analysed as artefacts with at least three discursive possibilities: First, in the experience territory, as it is sensibly perceived through audio-visual language. Second, in the ontology field, as its intersubjective value generated and transformed through various individual interpretations linked to its production-circulation matters here. Third, in the epistemology ground, its performance as a symbolic meaning reconstruction form for its production-circulation paradigm counts.
- B. Analysis of discursive practices: through video recordings of participant observation, individual and group interviews, conversational engagement, focus groups, conference debates, seminars, and public presentations, and festival openings. This procedure also embraced deferred observation of publicly accessible material through streaming platforms like YouTube, including online-recorded interviews, recorded open chats by community cinema referents, editing of past festivals/conferences, and promotional audio-visual content on social media. The occurrence perspective (Kusch, 1974) on the auto-ethnographic approach also allowed data collection in collaborative research

environments: from physically videoing my own interventions in debates after festival screenings, in workshops, press conferences, and public conservatories, to virtually participating in group Zoom calls and cell phone chats.

Reflecting on the many procedures, strategies, perspectives, and methods I used to produce active writing through auto-ethnographic methodology, I maintained a Kuschian emphasis, conducting “occurrence research” as a method to access popular wisdom and understand reality from lived experience (Kusch, 1974). This occurrence dynamic justifies my decision to “move with the flow” of the communities I was involved with, to be open to new knowledge, and to be flexible in adapting my goals and method to what was feasible and agreeable in each instance. Their order in this monograph follows a chronological order, and their visual descriptions organize the corpus of images collected through visual ethnography in three fields correlated to the three-dimensional analytic model. Each chapter may organize these three fields according to its narrative logic or prioritize one to emphasise one aspect. As an example:

- I. The images I recorded of community cinema groups’ praxes within their production-circulation context. Their reading aims to visualize power relation and ideology traces embedded in architectural, landscape, objectual, proxemic, and kinesic relations. A thick description of these images offers descriptions of social practices that normally reproduce the hegemonic paradigm and that the collective film practice challenges or restructures. The images illustrate community cinema’s intersubjective dynamics playing in “the represented space,” “the social practice,” and “the aesthetic re-nourishment [of meaning].”
- II. The images of individual and group video-recorded interviews, debates, and presentations about their production experience. Here, the images document “the discursive practice [on the production, distribution, and consumption of the textual artefact],” “the space of sensible phenomena (or perceived space) [the space of representation],” and the aesthetic interpretation.
- III. The actual images of the collective audio-visual production (textual analysis: the artefact, the product). Here, the images, in a closed system, also symbolically express themselves as a presentation of their lived space, their spatial practice, and their aesthetic experience.

Another aspect Paulos (2021) emphasizes is that autoethnography is also about crafting creative narratives (compelling, striking, and evocative) shaped from personal experiences within a culture, bringing forth tales showing strong images, memories, or feelings of human

social and cultural life. Concerning this, my chapters' writing format was also a research/creative decision involving meaning construction. When communicating, in chapter format, my observational, participatory, and reflexive experience vis-à-vis the intersubjective dynamics within community cinema's production-circulation processes, I realized that my audio-visual data collected through visual ethnography were not only my data feed for observation and analysis but also my expression mode. I decided to use audio-visual language to write about myself in contact with others to illustrate the many layers of human social, emotional, theoretical, political, and cultural praxis emerging from the collected images. For instance, in Chapter 4, I resorted to scriptwriting as if this were a documentary script. The analytic chapters describe images and sounds linked by my inner voice in a chronological and self-reflective fashion, like a documentary montage.

D. On the Pertinence of Auto-Ethnographic Method: Re-Centring the Researcher's Experience as a Vital Factor in the Research Process

Autoethnography involves a researcher writing about a topic of great personal relevance, situating researcher experiences within the social context. I consider community cinema a significant part of my human realization. From my early years as a community-based audio-visual producer in the 1990s until the end of this century's first quarter, I have worked on framing social collective's production as a counter-hegemonic meaning reconstruction territory—a symbolic act with socio-cultural performative power.

Regarding research, my first international output on community cinema is from 2010; however, I have two previous auto-ethnographic outputs theoretically approaching my background as a cooperative audio-visual producer (1999 and 2003). Counting my involvement as a field producer, the first reference is from 1997. I will describe these two forms of involvement (community-based audio-visual producer and community cinema researcher), separately and diachronically to attend to them in detail, starting with my time as a member of what I call the 1990s Córdoba's Frontier Cinema and advancing towards my academic research, also part of this auto-ethnographic research as it represented self-reflexivity and meaning construction for framing community cinema as a social phenomenon.

1. On the Nineties and the Frontier Cinema...

My experience as a filmmaking student and cultural activist in 1990s Argentina directly links to today's community cinema facilitators, producers, and communicators, as I share their studies, cultural activism, and ethical-aesthetic discursive production background. Throughout much of the 1990s, I belonged to a generation of film students interested in research-based creation and composition of short fiction films and documentary video productions as a form of research/action contesting neoliberal systemic violence.

Today, writing from an Argentina subdued by the most devastating socio-economic system ever seen in democracy, I am saddened to realize that the governing neoliberal logic of the 1990s has not changed compared to today's political situation. In the 1990s, economic coercion was the most effective hegemonic strategy; democracy maintained its fetishized practices while co-opting power decisions among the same elites who promoted the 1970s military coup and were then, in democracy, the neoliberal state managers. What facilitated this symbolic gap (as presented by Néstor García Canclini in 1995) was the transformation of citizens' role; under persuasion or economic coercion, they surrendered personal and civil rights to acquire a private consumer identity and ensure survival in a market-driven world. Under this logic, any radical criticism of neoliberal "democratic" procedures was an attack on the installed ideal of freedom; consequently, neoliberal discourse made discrepancy either an absurd proposal or a statement confronting general well-being. Therefore, neoliberal laws, such as "flexible" labour contracts, privatization of state-owned companies, zero tolerance of suspected crime, and pardons/release of ex-torturers and human rights criminals causing social welfare deterioration captured our urgent analytical attention. As a response, by the second half of the 1990s, Argentine semi-professional audio-visual production, in which I was involved, focused on revealing such violence in everyday social situations.

Reflecting on those days, I recall many aspects of our work traversed by several teleological, aesthetic, technical, and discursive aspects. Awareness of this territorial intersectionality sustains my realization that we may have carried out a production explicable as "Frontier Cinema." Let me unfold this idea:

The first frontier or territorial intersection I recognize could be described as discursive-teleological; our independent cinema production as film students involved moving from aspirations for a beginner's place within metropolitan large-scale documentary or fictional productions to addressing film work as a collaborative political endeavour alongside local community organization referents and other vulnerable social sectors. The common denominator of these productions is that many young, middle-class film students—also from journalism and social communication — began focusing their degree research on social vulnerability issues. This was our way of dealing with the country's economic-moral crisis, using resources invested in learning and completing our degrees to communicate urgent issues and contribute to social change. This phenomenon was intensified by the contemporary multiplication of newly opened film education schools throughout Argentina.

Another intersection fostered through our "frontier cinema" activity could be defined as aesthetic-teleological. As a younger generation of emerging filmmakers, we were inspired by the 1960s intellectual-artist generation — the intellectual-artist/people dyad referents — but as

1990s inhabitants, we explored new avenues to represent and read their legacy. These works could be characterized by a technical-rhetorical tendency toward generic hybridization between documentary and fiction. Although combining both registries in one film text was also a trait of New Latin American Cinema in the 1960s, in our 1990s work, this proposition acquired its own format — a sort of simulation of New Latin American Cinema docu-fiction that kept their teleological aura while turning their paternalistic discourse into a collaborative and bold approach to social problems by exploring self-representation and collective production. This brings us to the next borderisation form, which I recognize as a 21st century community cinema antecedent—a trait that may have remained from those days' praxes and emerges in today's community cinema facilitators' working strategies (many are my ex-colleagues).

The frontier I refer to when recalling our youth cinema practices is a border between our research/action and our role as community educators. Our methodology was experimental and eclectic. Our documentaries started with visual ethnography, but as we gained familiarity with the groups, a strong collaboration element developed among the represented group. In return, we shared audio-visual language and technology knowledge in a community education fashion until they fostered self-representative outputs. After that, we returned to fiction and gave these materials a narrative form. What was rewarding was that, during reception (collective screenings), the audience felt represented by these fictional audio-visual works, as if they “were telling their own stories.” They later used these films to negotiate better living conditions with government functionaries and other social welfare decision-makers. The work had no scientific rigor but can be seen as a collaborative creation process at the intersection of communication and education, ethnographic research and action, fiction and testimony — a precedent of community cinema as a decolonial pedagogy praxis.

Another boundary crossed by this film production was the ontological and epistemological; our encounter brought a lasting human transformation, while for the collectives, it meant social recognition, a form of existence within the market's hyperreal logic focused on visibility — under a neoliberal imago-addiction that justified (and still does) imposing identities to be shown, promoted, desired, and exalted, and identities to remain hidden, muttered, and quiet. Our proposition became a “repartition of the sensible” (Rancière, 2004) that, today, could be understood as challenging the coloniality of seeing.

Some films I was involved, which could be included within this “frontier cinema” idea, include: *The Glow Worm* (2000), a documentary of the second Latin American encounter of working children; *Underheaven* (1999), a fiction film narrating a child's social expulsion and fall into criminality due to neoliberal social welfare politics; *Eulogy to the Wind* (1998), an animation using children's songs and literature as metaphoric language to expose neoliberal imposition

on working-class morale and the resulting welfare state destruction; *Southern Wind* (1998), a documentary on the first national encounter of working children; and *New Sunshine's Tales* (1997), a national TV series with a hybrid style combining traditional tales with an audio-visual pedagogical strategy to instruct grassroots organizations in self-agency using NGO benefits and logics.

Briefly, and to close my auto-ethnographic retelling of my personal participation in the pre-community cinema production field, I reflect on a final fraternization form looking at my 1990s experience, describable as temporal-historical and discursive — a reflection on the double testimonial value of what we recollected from reality then, interpretable in the present as a testimony. Those pieces are a testimony of that moment's social problems and the power dynamics hiding (making invisible) these problems. Our works portrayed a moment when people had no cell phones to show their circumstances, and all mass media communicational resources had a price and rhetorical intent not concerned with supporting grassroots organizations and vulnerable sectors to gain visibility. Putting our cameras, microphones, time, and capability into disseminating this content among middle-class peers, accustomed to ignoring their presence on the streets, fulfilled an important contemporary testimonial function. Our work became part of a larger discursive turn influencing hegemonic formats like New Argentine Cinema and renewed cable television formats, compelling them to create visibility space. The experimental, hybrid, and testimonial style we fostered alongside other groups across the national territory permeated main communication channels and the so-called New Argentine Cinema. Today, we see traces of those testimonies in a new filmmaking form. The problems we portrayed were warnings for what came toward the late 20th century. Our experiences set a precedent later recalled by the social struggle whose impulse enabled the "New Media Law." Our frontier cinema, in its small way, was a big part of what followed. Today, community cinema has won territory; it speaks from an established field and negotiates socio-symbolically from that place. Our frontier cinema crossed a temporal boundary and became a testimony of those collective struggles and early explorations of what we now call community cinema.

2. My Preliminary Concepts towards Community Cinema as a Research Territory

By the end of the 1990s, as a recent Film Studies graduate, I was already conscious of my participation in transformational research/action and its contemporary and forthcoming testimonial power. I embarked on self-reflection about our filmmaking experience for the short film *Subcielo* (Underheaven, 1999), covering the representational dialectics enacted when working cooperatively with a subalternised group under representation. In this auto-ethnographic paper, I described a visual ethnographic research case that became a fiction film

supervised and curated by the subjects we represented. The essay became my first academic output, presented at the Third Conference on Alternative Communicational Expression and its Social Response, organized by CEICOS (Centre for Study and Research on Social Communications), Córdoba, Argentina, 10/11/1999.

In 2003, my paper “The Journey of Representation: ethical-aesthetical representational problematics in ethnographic documentary” was presented at the symposium “Visual Anthropology: New Dilemmas in Representation,” organized by the New Zealand Centre for Latin American Studies (NZCLAS), The University of Auckland, New Zealand. The essay presented an auto-ethnographic comparative perspective on two filmmaking experiences: *Southern Wind* [Córdoba, Argentina, 1998, Video Documentary, 25’], which I researched and directed, and *Underheaven* [Córdoba, Argentina, 1999, Digital Video, Docu-Fiction, 35’], where I was researcher, scriptwriter, and sound director. This paper later informed an article on New Argentine Cinema, which I published in the first year of my PhD at AUT as a preliminary territorial observation (Grosman 2018b).

In 2009, while writing my PhD thesis in Latin American Cultural Studies at The University of Auckland, *Crisis y Reconstrucción de la Utopía en el Cine Latinoamericano de la Era Neoliberal* [Crisis and Reconstruction of Utopia in Latin American Cinema of the Neoliberal Era], I first contacted 21st-century Argentinian community cinema. That year, with a contested research scholarship from the Faculty of Arts (“Vista Linda”), I returned to Argentina (after nine years) to conduct ethnographic field research called “New audio-visual production and new cultural citizenship in Argentina.” I first contacted the community group “Cinema made with Neighbours” from the rural city of Saladillo, Buenos Aires province. I spent a week there observing their production-reception social dynamics and video-interviewing their referents¹².

I even had a cameo in one of their advertising short films promoting the Sixth National Festival of Cinema made with Neighbours held in that city in November 2009. This festival has sustained and expanded for 28 years, becoming the congregational instance for many community cinema groups to display their work and debate their field. These observations were later presented at the IX Biennial Association of Iberian & Latin American Studies of Australasia Conference: The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia, 8/7/2010. My paper “Short Films going Long Distances: Interculturality as a Form of Epistemic Independence” set a precedent in contextualizing community cinema as an expression aligned with the decolonial turn’s research/action. I explored the symbolic process through which

¹² In Argentina, we call “referentes” those members of collective praxes who speak or act on behalf of the group because they were founders or leaders and are trusted and respected by the whole community in that role. Due to the collective enterprise’s nature, they are not presidents, directors, or any hierarchical figure; they present as the person you can refer to if you ask about the collective’s standpoints or projects.

alternative perspectives were incorporated into Argentine daily life during neoliberal market system consolidation (from 1995). I proposed that these “other views,” invigorated in intercultural relations and introduced into mass communication’s hegemonic dynamics, interacted socio-symbolically and intersubjectively in the collective negotiation of ethical values, challenging the dominant paradigm’s status as the only possible social life system. I stated that they used neoliberal democracy’s discourse of tolerance toward difference as a ricochet hitting their own domination form (homogenizing identity and epistemological differences). My study highlights the performative role this non-commercial, amateur, and collaborative short film production-reception plays in this dynamic as critical interculturality expression (Walsh 2005). I presented the case of “Cinema with Neighbours” from Saladillo (Buenos Aires) as a paradigmatic example.

As the cultural democratization and pluriversity fostered through independent short film festivals’ socio-cultural dynamics interested me further, I decided to research a second PhD in Film Studies at Massey University, New Zealand, called “Short films fests; on Argentinean Independent Cinema.” The proposal was accepted at the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Media and Communication, as part of the International Research program supported by a New Zealand Royal Society’s Marsden Fund 2013–2015, “Geographies of media convergence: Spaces of Democracy Connectivity and Reconfiguration of Cultural Citizenship,” directed by Senior Lecturer Dr. Kevin Glyn. Personal circumstances prevented me from finishing that program, but by the end of 2014, I had consolidated and submitted a first full research proposal mapping Argentinean independent film festivals. Within the analysis framework, I also explored reception fields beyond independent film festivals, introducing digital media circulation and public television direction under the New Media Law as a privileged moment and scenario (if the reader considers its democratizing measures a positive environment for community communication to thrive, as I do).

Regarding previous reflections on non-hegemonic cinema’s role as symbolic mediation for cultural democratization, I add my 2006 Master of Arts thesis for The University of Auckland, “Post-dictatorship Argentina Cinema as a Re-narration of Collective Memory.” This monograph draws from research on popular culture, subaltern studies, memory and trauma studies, and cultural hegemony to further analyse the first decade of non-hegemonic cinema made in re-democracy (1985–1996) as a post-dictatorship poetics with which cinema productions acted as symbolic agents within collective social trauma memorialization. This work was later published in Spanish in Argentina (2020), receiving a literary award, and in English in 2023, titled *The Spectrum of Absence. Post-dictatorship Argentina Cinema as a Re-narration of Collective Memory*. This book has been re-edited by the same publisher in 2024 (Grosman, 2023).

I also count on antecedents reviewing critical approaches to modernity/coloniality as a philosophical inquiry into the political-ideological role of symbolic languages, particularly the image and representation theories applied to Latin American Cinema's socio-cultural performance. Using Critical Theory and Decolonial thought, I analysed audio-visual texts of millennial Argentinean, Mexican, and Cuban cinema, proposing a transdisciplinary model for Latin American cinema analysis considering production-reception processes and contexts as part of their corpus, where socio-political tensions crystallize within the text. This is the focus of my first PhD thesis (2012), "Crisis and reconstruction of Utopia in Latin American cinema of the neoliberal era" (later my 2018a book *Utopia and Neoliberalism in Latin American Cinema*. The allegory of the motionless traveller, re-edited in 2024, also published in Spain in 2018).

Following this, I have used socio-semiotic, semio-practical, and critical-symbolical analyses to approach Argentinean cinema production as a cultural democratization agent since 1999 (2003, 2006). I have helped forge the research field on community cinema as a social phenomenon since 2009, reading it as an epistemologically and ontologically performative form of production-reception, conditioned by and conditioning macro-structural contexts.

In 2017, with these antecedents, I resumed this exploration in a Communication Studies PhD program at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) (funded by the AUT Vice Chancellor Doctoral Scholarship 2017-2020) under the supervision of the Associate Professor Vijay Devadas; the present monograph is its thesis. As this is my second PhD thesis exploring the socio-performative role of Latin American cinema, now from the perspective of community cinema and Argentinean cultural democratization processes, quotes from my first PhD thesis will be included as part of my auto-ethnographic perspective, reviewing preliminary concepts toward constructing Community Cinema's dynamics as a research territory.

As we explore community cinema's audio-visual production in its entire signification process (its social context and production modalities, the film text as a communicational artefact, and its multiple reception-circulation contexts and forms within a historical-political and socio-cultural interpretation framework), the research required in situ examination. Therefore, in November 2018, after PhD candidature confirmation and ethics approval, I relocated to Argentina.

E. On my Autoethnography Guided by Occurrence through Field Research Active Writing

In Argentina, I began by returning to the production group I met in 2009, conducting visual collaborative ethnographic research, archive collection, and individual and group unstructured video-recorded interviews. I stayed two weeks before, during, and after the 15th National Festival of Cinema made with Neighbours, performing participant observation of their

circulation dynamics. This timing allowed encountering other producer groups for interviews and focus groups to discuss their production modality and practical experiences. From this first approach, I also obtained a general idea of the national production state and forged connections with producers from other towns and provinces. The camera was essential to recover an image-idea of the town's everyday life, history, and original population traditions. Recordings included visits to the local historical museum, an immigrant association house and library, and other local sites with historical relevance. Interviews reached community members involved in various capacities with the production-reception of cinema made with neighbours. From this trialectical semio-practical approach, I understood this production as a form of solidarity.

At the 15th Film Festival, I also contacted exhibiting directors and producers from other areas of Greater Buenos Aires. Group and individual video-recorded conversations with referents of Buenos Aires' Audio-visual Cluster, The Culebron Timbal, and The rural-western were particularly interesting. However, due to thesis space restrictions, I have kept these agents' dynamics for a further research article deepening Buenos Aires' community cinema as a re-designer of a socio-symbolical frontier. Nevertheless, these interactions opened collaboration possibilities in divulgation and production activities during my fieldwork.

For instance, in 2019, as a visiting lecturer at the National University of Cordoba's Faculty of Communication Science, I organized, alongside the Department of Audio-Visual production III, debates, exhibitions, and television interviews with Audio-visual cluster founder Jose Campusano. During the 2019 COVID pandemic, I interviewed director Ezequiel Sans and community cinema participants about his educational community cinema experience at a rural secondary school in Henderson, Buenos Aires. In 2024, Sans was invited during the production and circulation of the community short film created during the Socio-Educative Practices experience I led as a Lecturer/Researcher at the National University of San Juan's Faculty of Philosophy, Humanities and Arts. I address the full experience, including his production and debate participation, in Chapter 7.

After my first field research approach to Saladillo, I realized that much of the epistemological and pragmatic activity concerning academic research on cultural democratization in community communications occurred within national universities' academic research projects and other research/creative university associations. Therefore, I joined several across different provinces to establish dialogue and networking to draw theoretical and methodological approaches and paradigmatic studies to put my subject in conversation with theirs.

Therefore, without abandoning participant observation on community cinema dynamics and their documentation through visual ethnography (except during COVID-19 restrictions), from

2019 to the present, I have been running my case analyses before these academic research (and research/creative) groups. As a group member (in person or online during COVID-19), I have shared perspectives through peer review and colleague debates in seminars, conferences, symposiums, courses, group editorial projects, and artistic transdisciplinary productions. Through this activity, I could test my perspectives while reflecting on my analysis' applicability and its possible interdisciplinary contribution to these projects' fields and vice versa. As a result, in the auto-ethnographic method fashion, I used the discovery available in writing and producing as research practices driving the inquiry through many observational scenarios.

My main research method defines a territory through interdisciplinary conversations, explained here diachronically (though mostly simultaneous). As a 2019 visiting lecturer at the National University of Cordoba's Audio-visual production workshop (run and directed since 1998, by Dr. Elizabeth Vidal), my initial approach to community cinema was from Communication Studies. I joined their project: "Imaginaries of software: social appropriations of new technologies from identity communities" (co-directed by Vidal). Beyond technological appropriation as use practices (including symbolic/representational aspects), this project considered technological appropriation as a paradigm. Individually, appropriation links to identity empowerment; collectively, it acquires a political dimension, elucidating social/ideological conditioning attributable to media/technologies, allowing actors to adopt/adapt devices based on constructing individual/social autonomy projects. My work applied this notion to interpreting community cinema as technological appropriations that, in informal/community education, could become praxes of Decolonial pedagogy. Using visual ethnography, I video-recorded group interviews and participant observation (meetings, pre-production, workshops, debates, screenings, open chats) of community cinema projects. Incorporating community cinema epistemology into graduate communication studies was my focus, testing tensions between academic/community/activist knowledge and possibilities for epistemological feedback. This informed Chapter 5.

In 2020, I became a lecturer-researcher at the National University of San Juan's Institute of Visual Expression. Through the project "Conceptual and categorical Modulations between Postcolonial critique and Poststructuralist Philosophy" (directed by Dr. Alejandro de Oto), I situated my community cinema ideas in historical/epistemological discussion to examine its relation to Decolonial praxis. Based on bibliographic/filmographic archive examination, my output considered New Latin American Cinema's discursive proposal for subaltern emancipation (sustained on the intellectual/artist and "the people" effort) as a representation aporia characteristic of the coloniality of knowledge, being, and seeing, which delayed postcolonial emancipation fundamentals. These conceptualizations inform Chapters 1 and 2,

considering community cinema as a praxis of Decolonial Aesthetics, a discursive manifestation that, from its intersubjective/sensorial dynamics, can face the coloniality of the sensitive (or seeing), which conditioned the aporia. At the Institute, I also explored community cinema's socio-historical references to Argentina's social cinema tradition and State Constitution aspects permeating cinematographic production, such as cultural hegemony and cinema as an ideological apparatus. Joining the project "Cinema, State and Constitution. Regulations on Argentinean cinematographic (1914-1955)" (directed by Dr. and Lawyer. Gerardo Tripolone), my outputs reviewed how an iconology of main political forces has been forged as Argentinean social cinema's most representative trait and how community cinema is its heir. The legal aspects determining Argentinean cinematographic production-reception's regulatory system are also of interest for understanding community cinema's emergence as a cultural battle phenomenon in the 21st century. This exploration informed Chapter 1.

In 2023, this same group approached the next historical period with "Cinema between the war and the constitution; State regulations over cinematographic production and exhibition in Argentina 1955-1973." My outputs, following bibliographic/journalistic/filmographic archive explorations, attended to Argentinean Third Cinema's aesthetic-rhetorical platforms, particularly its anti-colonialist discourse and performance as a frontier of critical thinking on political/symbolical praxis. This is addressed in Chapter 1 as an inquiry into community cinema praxis's production-reception genealogy.

From mid-2019 to mid-2021, I attended to community cinema's production-reception processes nationally, aiming to establish cartographies of production-reception ecosystems, their geo-political/body-political conditions, and semio-practical continuities nationally/internationally. I joined the project "Cartographies and historical study of Argentinean cinematographic processes (1896-2016)" (conducted by Dr. Ana Laura Lusnich) at the CLYNE, Institute of Argentinean and Latin American Art History, Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, UBA. My investigation followed a thread from researching Cinema made with Neighbours: their community cinema model (circa 1997) has been replicated in other contexts. I considered their strategic use of community cinema production as a model reproduced in the national itinerant project "Cinema express" (supported by the National Institute of Cinematography's extension program, 2013-2015, covering 151 cities/towns). In early 2020, I video-interviewed Cinema made with Neighbours' main producers and a National Institute of Cinema officer coordinating community activities, also exploring pieces exhibited through this project's internet channel. This contributed to my perspectives on community cinema production-reception as a means for critical interculturalism advancement, re-emergence of epistemologically concealed identities, and territorial boundary renegotiation. These concepts reach during this

investigation informed Chapters 1 and 2, leaving a reflection used in Chapter 4 to analyse Cinema Made with Neighbours.

From mid-2021 to end-2023, this research group conducted “Modalities of production and representation in Argentinean regional cinemas: production diversification and debates around regional identities,” in which I also participated. I brought my semio-practical preoccupation over territorial identity representation in San Juan youth cinema. As a researcher settled in San Juan province and working at San Juan National University, I explored aspects informing Chapter 6:

First, I analysed newly opened ENERC film schools (branches of the National Institute of Cinema’s school) across the national territory, mapping them as distributed in regional areas with specific local production systems and flows establishing differential relationships with productive process fields coloured by each region’s social, economic, and aesthetic specifics. This review allowed examining the socio-economic impact of ENERC’s creation as a decentring of Film Studies access nationally and informed Chapter 1 on community cinema’s genealogy.

Second, during the 2020 pandemic, I focused on textual analysis of ENERC Cuyo’s (the local film school depending on the National Institute of Cinema) film production. Observing 2019 thesis films, I recognized a general sign manifested as a symptom of social unrest generated by the risk to large population sectors’ lives due to local mining exploitation. I argued that the films, without direct allusion to the immediate context, created a “corporeality in danger” feeling to pronounce the daily tension and stress of living within the institutional moral duplicity characterizing San Juan society’s imaginaries. This is the research that informed the first section of chapter 6.

Third, from 2021 to 2023, I focused on community cinema involved in community resilience activism by exploring community communication strategies aimed at mitigating social consequences of San Juan’s 2021 earthquake and 2019 flood. Through participant observation, group interviews, and photographic/audio-visual archive exploration, I analysed how community cinema production signalled political controversies surrounding necessary state actions for infrastructural refurbishment. I discussed community cinema’s possibility to act as a performative agent during in situ political negotiations, especially in socially vulnerable areas traversed by territorial conflict with the State, heavily misrepresented by complicit mass media that twist social perceptions of community activism into “endangering social behaviour” to support private land rights interests, normally justified by political corruption. I argue that these community cinema production dynamics become critical epistemological frontiers

bringing forth performance's semio-practical power as political praxis. These comprised two case analysis I address in Chapter 6.

Still as a Lecturer/Researcher in the Institute of Visual Expression, Faculty of Philosophy Humanities and Arts, National University of San Juan I designed an integrative coda for this auto-ethnographic research which would inform Chapter 7. At the end of 2023 I proposed to the Faculty's academic board to conduct a Socio educative practice on community cinema to be executed as University curriculum in 2024. Its aim was to produce and observe a foundational onto-aesthetic and epistemological encounters that I believe can be used as a semio-practical pattern with which to approach community cinema, not only as a research field, but also as a field of cultural production (and battle). As such, this project attempts to stimulate the reunion of heterogeneous and crucial parties that in cohesion may produce a fecund work. This experimental dynamic includes, firstly, a group of university students studying Epistemology, Ethics and Citizenship (Faculty of Philosophy, Humanities and Arts, National University of San Juan) which later got extended to the participation of students of other faculties and careers (for instance, Communication, Design, Theatre and Education). Secondly, some national audio-visual producers previously involved as facilitators in community cinema works. Thirdly, local members of a civil association working on non-formal education literacy programs supporting youth from socio-economically vulnerable territories towards school progress. Fourthly, the young ones who are part of this literacy programme and who live in those territories. Finally, the research/lecturers (myself included) from the Institute of Visual Expression, which hosts this project. My intention of leaving this intersubjective and social configuration laid as an example of a community cinema project, responds to this thesis's intention of laying semio-practical patterns applicable to the research and the activism of community cinema as a device for Decolonial praxis.

CHAPTER 4

Cinema Made with Neighbours (Saladillo, Buenos Aires) as a Praxis of Decolonial Consciousness.



Figure 1: Photos retrieved by the Cinema Made with Neighbours Foundation Webpage <http://fundacinevecinos.com>

Introduction

“*Cine con vecinos*” (Cinema [made] with Neighbours) is a community artistic movement launched in the city of Saladillo, Buenos Aires province, in 1997. It has been active to date, making more than thirty films that were written, produced, directed, and featured by local residents. I believe this form of horizontal representation, where the community organizes itself to actualize their own collective imaginary, reflects the traditional socio-cultural practices of community care, born from their immigrant rural-cooperative mode of production. From that, it follows that their position outside the individualistic forms of production, which are typical of large urban centres, configured a territory in which solidarity is necessary to survive and laid down the ethos for this community cinema to emerge.

In this chapter, I argue that as a dynamic of the collective, Cinema made with Neighbours’ film productions reactivated solidarity networks which, in Argentina, had been taken away by the instauration and consolidation of neoliberalist politics since the late seventies. More importantly, I suggest that by multiplying spaces of social reinsertion of personal and collective representation, this movement endorses the atmosphere of civil power recovery that became active in Argentina at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and that advanced in actions of cultural democratization. While I consider the former statement to be true, I also believe its ethical and aesthetical performance did not exhibit, at its core, a conscious intent to contest neoliberalism cultural politics. Therefore, new questions arose: could Cinema Made with Neighbours’ mode of production be useful as a praxis of Decolonial Consciousness? Is so, under which geocultural circumstances is this possible? In addition, is this socio performative function of community cinema production still relevant for the participants of Cinema Made with Neighbours?

To consider these questions I carried out an auto ethnographic field research, guided by an occurrence perspective through the practice of visual ethnography on Cinema made with Neighbours’ 15th National Film Festival, held in Saladillo City, Buenos Aires Argentina, as my

territory of inquiry. This methodology set out to search for signifying events that emerge from territorial and discourse intersubjective dynamics, which reveal symbolic geocultural meanings. I conducted this exploration through the three fields of intersubjective dynamics proposed in my methodology as the tripartite analytic scheme (aesthesis re-nourishment, aesthesis experience, aesthesis interpretation). The first being the represented space where the social practices respond to the hegemonic power-knowledge relations and where social practices can infer influence. The second, by looking at the spatial practice, where an artefact is created as symbolic enactment of the lived space. And in third place, I observed the represented space in which we encounter the image the subjects involved have made of their own participation in the construction and operability of this artefact. This is the moment when their discursive practices could ripple either to challenge or strengthen the hegemonic paradigm, the represented space.

I am coming back to Saladillo town after 9 years to do what I rehearsed in 2009 when I spent a week there, in the same season, also accompanying the National Festival of Cinema made with Neighbours. In 2009, they were preparing the sixth edition of the Festival and had recently premiered *The Good in Others*; now in 2018, they were celebrating this National Film Festival's "Sweet fifteen" with the premier of a remake of *The Good in Others*, now called *Autumn Green Leaves*. This time around I have not travelled alone, my old cinema schoolmate and collaborator, José Peluc, has travelled from Córdoba, Argentina to accompany me, doing camera work. Therefore, in my description I will refer to my role as an observer with a video recording camera as "we" because most of the time, he is taking images and sounds of what I considered important of each event. The creative dynamic is documentary making: a director (in this case, me) leading the sense of the observation, and a cinematographer (in this case, José) producing the images requested by the director. At that point, the role of the camera was essential to recover an image-idea of the town's represented space, the population's history and original traditions that conform it as territory. Thus, the recordings also involved visits to the local historical museum, immigrant association houses and library, as well as other local sites with local historical relevance. All the data collected has been incorporated into my observations, but it is not described as I wish to focus on this chapter's relevant themes: the collective intersubjective interaction revealed as occurrences of a paradigmatic tension nestled in social practices; the border between a communitarian and individualistic ethos. I follow this tension which I observe sometimes strengthening, and in other cases shaking, the foundations of this mode of community cinema.

The think description contained in the interviews and my own reflections of each interaction with the members and scenarios attended within this socio-cultural environment have been left

out of this chapter too as its depiction would require a larger space than the one here available. As many of my statements heavily rely on these focus groups conversations, I am presenting an annex, which comprises these conversations described in detail. When including in the chapter precise information contained in the annex, I refer to it as “Annex” followed by page number in which said part of the conversation is transcribed. Let us now approach each of the three fields of autoethnographic research: I- Aesthesis re-nourishment: The represented space; II- Aesthesis experience: The spatial practice; and III- Aesthesis interpretation: the Representation of space.

A. On Aesthesis Re-nourishment: The Represented Space. Defining Social Tensions in the Borders

1. In the Borders of Historical Landmarks



Figure 2: 1929, Saladillo Council's Palace (https://cedh.saladillo.gob.ar/?q=palacio_municipal).

In the beginning, I established the hypothesis that Cinema Made with Neighbour is a form of semio-praxis which main possibility condition is given by the practice of solidarity. I also suggested that said dynamic of mutual aid is what has sustained the community in which this movement emerged. As such, Saladillo town is an immigrant-based rural community, which has relayed in cooperativism, associations and collective organization since its foundational days. This means that a non-individualistic telos is at the centre of this town's ontological constitution. However, such independent telos has cultural and historical ties with Buenos Aires City's bourgeois dominance and therefore they are materially and socio-symbolically in a constant ethical and economical tension. I will enquire into this paradigmatic tension as I gather determines also the nature, the development and the decay of Cinema Made with Neighbours. Let me start by considering that this is a tension dwelling on their bordering condition with Buenos Aires city.

It is important to start looking at Saladillo's community cinema as a collective work produced from a border geopolitical tension since Saladillo itself historically represents a key cultural intersection marked by oligarchic postcolonial re-territorialisation. This town, located 180 kms north-west of Buenos Aires city, was the first town placed on the other side of the *Salado* River,

which up to the mid-nineteenth century was a natural limit that separated what, in Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's terms could be understood as "civilization" from "barbarism". This is, in fact, white European descendants from an indigenous population. From a decolonial perspective, we could reword that distinction as the division between the national oligarchy's domain and the original people's territories conquered by the "desert campaigns" (national militarised territorial expansionism) carried out by military and politicians, who violently seized the *Ranquel* people's lands to be used for their own stock and agricultural exploitation.¹³ Through this bourgeois euphemism, disguised as a civilizing action, a process of expansion absolutely driven by profit was established. This is how, commencing with this "impulse of progress", towns as Saladillo were founded, immigrants were given lands to re-populate the area, and transport networks were built. During in an interview with the Saladillo historical museum's director, I got to know that even today, the train stations of the Saladillo region (each of which configured a small, populated area around it), are named after the owners of the different large states. Each of these estancias (today little towns) was conveniently crossed by the train network to facilitate the collection of their grain and stock production for commercialization in the cities and mainly for export through Buenos Aires shores. Considering that each large state owner was at the beginning someone associated with the "desert campaign", such genocidal memory overshadows the identity of this town as coming from a strong-minded immigrant population that pioneered these "bare" lands bringing up also the culture of cooperation within an agro-productive society. This is the unacknowledged border that I consider at the base of this Community cinema movement. A border that I did not see they are able to move outside of. There are no acknowledgements to the original people of the land, no discussion of State reparatory actions, no concept of injustice over that matter. All is locked up in the museum, and outside, the town of hardworking immigrants strive with healthy cooperation and pioneer spirit.

¹³ With the Conquest of the Desert, begun in 1878 by President Julio Argentino Roca, the Ranqueles were defeated and, furthermore, the first to suffer exile and distribution among the wealthy families and haciendas of Buenos Aires and the north of the country. The Conquest is the culmination of previous campaigns started by the Spanish crown and continued by the independent national state.



Figure 3: Blanes, J.M. (1896), Oil painting. National Historical Museum Collection. [Military occupation of the Río Negro during the expedition led by General Julio A. Roca].



Figure 4: Pozzo, A. (1879). Photography in Argentine History, Volume.I, 2, p.72 [The Army on the Banks of the Río Negro]



Figure 5: Morelli, P. (1883). Photography. [Chief Villamain, "Golden Vulture", in December 1882, next to his family and women of the tribe in their tent camp near Ñorquin].



Figure 6: Author and date: Unknow. [Native women and children, captives of the army during The Desert Campaign]. Oldest file using the image: <https://agassaganup.wordpress.com/tag/isla-martin-garcia/> 2013



Figure 7: Author and date unknown. [Image: Native Habitants of the Desert. Credits: La Tinta <https://latinta.com.ar/2023/09/11/los-12-castigos-sarmiento-el-criminologo/>]



Figure 8: Author and date unknown. Immigrant Museum. [Immigrants arriving at the port of Buenos Aires]. Archive <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/interior/migraciones/museo/galeria-de-fotos>



Figure 9: Author and date unknown. Italian immigrants. <https://cuidatecultura.com.ar/inmigracion-en-argentina-la-vivienda/>



Figure 10: Author and date unknown. Immigrant Museum. [Common Dining Room for New Arrivals] Archive <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/interior/migraciones/museo/galeria-de-fotos>



Figure 11: Author and date unknown [Railway Station in Trelew, Argentina, with the harvest ready to be shipped]. Source: Argentinaxplora.com

2. In the Borders of Original Media Representation



Figure 12: Yacellini, (2025). Documentary's Photogram. [Scene from *Ceux de Saladillo*, documentary on CMWN]

Demarcating this territory as the geocultural site in which the collective production and exhibition dynamics of Cinema Made with Neighbours is ingrowth in Saladillo's social life, I am looking at attitudinal signs. That is, how the people of the town conceived and interacted with this new form of expression, not only as a form of acquiring knowledge of its technique but also as a new form of perceiving themselves as social actors in relation to this production form. A good start is to focus first on the remote memories, for instance, what was recovered and

broadcasted the national television (*Telenoche*) reports made to the group *in situ* in 2004 and 2008,¹⁴ and by the documentary *Ceux de Saladillo* in 2005.



Figure 13: TV program *Telenoche*, (2004) [Covering Cinema Made with Neighbours works]

2004, during a national television podcast on the phenomenon of Cinema made with Neighbours prepared by *Telenoche*, a community actress was asked about her participation, and she answered that it was like a game, a recreation after a whole week of rushing about; an activity she was able to do because her kids and husbands came along. Another actor declared that he had other activities and that they did not live from acting; he stressed that this is a vocational activity only. From these declarations I sensed that they wanted to emphasize that while they do this, this does not define them. They implied this was not a serious matter after all, and in no way threatens their status quo as respectable functional adults belonging to respectable families. The TV host suggested that the shooting sessions resemble a “family picnic in the countryside” where kids are playing as a backdrop sound, family and friends supporting and a BBQ going. The reporter emphasizes, no without condescension, that this cinema does not lack action, drama, passion, and special effects, “just like in Hollywood”, that the activity could not be carried out without the support of the townspeople “that had stopped laughing at the ‘crazy ones’ and now anxiously awaited the screening of the next film in the only cinema theatre in the town”. The whole tone was patronizing, cataloguing it as a cute curiosity particular to that town and as the sort of rustic art craft you can find around “the provinces”.

However, when director Alberto Yaccelini in the documentary *Ceux de Saladillo* (2005) approached the movement, the portrayal of the phenomenon changed. For instance, in this documentary they interviewed Cacho Sardinari, a retired grandfather actor who stated: “The country is torn in pieces, the only thing they [corrupted politicians] left us is this (referring to the cinema made with Neighbours’ experience)” and continues “at least doing this we don’t think

¹⁴ *Telenoche* is an Argentine TV news program. It gets broadcasted from Mondays to Fridays at 8:00 pm on [eltrece](http://eltrece.com.ar) channel since 1966. For links to the coverage done on CMWN, see the following: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DyeaNEO_cnk (2004); <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h2H7CHBgQH8> (2008)

about the crisis” (*Ceux de Saladillo*, 2005, 15'.00). Another woman, who by then was the director of the community library, emphasized that this cinema project managed to unite the community and that unity was something the community naturally did not have. She noticed that this project managed to embrace the social class that had been most affected by the economic crisis (post 2001) and that they were this project's main followers and supporters (26' 40”). Another community actress manifested that this movie making was a kind of therapy and even referred to it as “an escape” (23' 30”).



Figure 14: Yaccelini, (2025). Documentary 'Photogram'. [Scene from *Ceux de Saladillo*, documentary on CMWN interview to Cacho Salinardi]

3. In the Borders of Participant Observations



Figure 15: Thesis' visual ethnographic team, (TVET) (2018). Photography [Protagonist of *Green Autumn Leaves* (2018) outside the Marconi Theatre, Saladillo, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 18/11/18]

While focused on the represented (instituted) space as a field of research, my participant observations were carried on in Saladillo town, Buenos Aires province, Argentina during the 15th *Festival de cine con vecinos*, “*Quince años*” (Cinema made with neighbours’ film fest, “sweet fifteen”), in November 2018. I stayed in town for 2 weeks covering the preparation, the performance and the proceedings of the festival. The physical space I covered were the festival sites as well as some historical landmarks, public libraries, immigrant association houses and museums. At this level of visual ethnographic observation, I am going to share with the reader a description of a series of short audio-visual shots, presented as if I was referring to them in a documentary script, making for the reader a sort of verbal editing of these evocative images. My purpose is to accede to how their logical-epistemological space is represented in their time and place to arrive at the paradigmatic tension of the border. This is important because, as I

will argue in the campus of the “artefact”, the films adopt a simulation of testimony that includes the everyday use of physical space and a temporality based of present time.

i. Sequence 1: The Arrival

It is daybreak of 18 November 2018 and refocusing from the drops in the long distance bus’s window to the wet route, a memory comes to mind: it is always raining in “las pampas” (the Argentinean plains). It is nearly summer, but it is still cold. The highway is well kept and busy. Judging by windmills and small silos placed on their small farms we are passing through a self-sustainable dwelling area, so this explains their isolated placement. Beside the route, these flatlands are also wetlands, cows pasturing and a heron flock flying over. The corn waves in the fields. We enter the town under a wooded tunnel; we pass an electric plant, industrial cooperative granaries, trucks and tractors parking, petrol stations, agricultural warehouses, electric cables along and across the route, and a roundabout with a Virgin Mary (Virgin of the Ascent) in the centre that from the heights welcomes the arrivals with the open arms. We finally approach the bus terminal through an urban road, with 7 to 10 level 1970s buildings; there are urban vehicles and buses. The terminal has about 25 platforms with buses departing and arriving from all corners of the country. Saladillo seems to be a developed town propelled by a collective effort towards progress.



Figure 16: TVET, (2018). Photograms from video recordings. [Arrival to Saladillo Town, Buenos Aires Argentina].

ii. Sequence 2: The Town as Theatre



Figure 17: Postcard: [Teatro Marconi Av. Rivadavia 2315]

It is the afternoon of the 18th of November, and the town shows excitement for the coming event. We meet at the Marconi Theatre, with Fabio Junco and Julio Midú (the founders and directors of CMWN's movement). They had just arrived from Buenos Aires, bringing with them the protagonist of a film they are going to premiere, a thirteen-year-old boy, Bautista Midú (Julio's nephew) who plays "Dante" in the movie. It is not surprising that they could organize most aspects of the Film Festival with just a phone call taken from the car on-route from Buenos Aires. It is because there is a local team responding, that is the Neighbours. Roberto Ninni, Héctor José Gramajo (Pepe) and Eduardo Morales are some of the old friends arriving at the theatre. This group of retired men seem to know everything; what to do, where to start from, and what we are going to do. After all, they have been doing this once a year for the past fifteen years and supporting the CMWN's filmmaking for the past twenty-one years.

Julio and Fabio do not stop to chat with us; they are busy cleaning the theatre's windows with dedication and detail. While Roberto starts the *mate*, they are preparing the front French doors to stick big posters advertising the film they are going to premiere *Autumm's Green Leaves*. The poster shows a close-up of the 13-year-old protagonist, who is there, with us, at that very moment, sticking the posters. It is important to emphasize that Julio and Fabio are today also well-known industrial directors and that while they are plastering the posters - which in the cinema industry is left to the lowest ranked workers – they are discussing matters related to the executive decisions over this week's Film Festival production.

The other poster contains the advertising of the complete festival highlighting that it is the 15th anniversary of this event. Let us remember that in Latin American tradition, the 15th birthday of a young woman is the presentation in society for this girl. The unspoken meaning is that she is ready for marriage, and this party would be a wealth display for the family to relate with other

families in possible marital alliances. Here the festival turns fifteen and they are remaking a film they shot in the infancy of the movement, a remake that will open the industry's doors for the "parent of the movement". The symbology is evident. The idea of the CMWN's Film Festival becoming independent and, in a way, 'ready to marry' with big production scenarios is worrying for me as a motivated follower of community lead counterhegemonic forms of film productions. Also, note that the CMWN turns 21 years old as a creative collective movement, this is another important date in our culture because this is considered the age becoming an adult with independence and autonomy. This reflection on the full age of the movement is important as occurrence of the paradigmatic tension of the border since, at this time the founding directors started to shift into more commercial, professionalized and corporative modes of production while handing this movement conduction to emerging groups. This is the moment in which the movement should take off on its own, but in my perception, they are not ready. Following at least three long focus groups conversations I can firmly suggest that through these 21 years, the running of CMWN has been centralized in the figure of its founders (Julio Midu and Fabio Junco) and that the collaborators have never felt or been treated horizontally. This is a cinema made *with* neighbours not *by* neighbours, confirms Fabio Junco in our interview of 27/11/18 [a whole conversation on the implications of this expression can be explored in Appendix 1 section "E" interview with Fabio Junco and Julio Midú].



Figure 18: TVET, (2018). Photographs from video recordings. [Setting up the Theatre for the 15th National Film Festival of CMWN]

Back to the set of the 15th Festival we keep following the directors and collaborators into the theatre's screen hall, a hall I have already seen in the large black and white picture exhibited in the foyer. It portrays a large banquet circa 1930s where men, all of European descent, are seated having a celebratory dinner; on the stage plays a "*Tanguillo Napolitano*" band (judging

by the vertical piano, the trumpets and the bass formation). What are they celebrating? What was this place before? I read on the commemorative inscription of the photo: “Italian Society of Mutual Aid”. As we have already mentioned, back in the years of this town’s foundation in the mid-nineteenth century, this was a territory re-populated by immigrants. As in many of Buenos Aires’ towns, the Italian collective was the strongest in numbers. Here we encounter yet another date to call our attention; the Italian Society of Mutual Aid, founded in 1874, with the cooperation of all their members, had inaugurated the town’s theatre in 1917. It is the 19th of November 2018, the theatre is 101 years old, and a group of local Neighbours are scraping the windows in preparation to a new ceremony of collective effort. It did not say in the photo’s foot inscription but judging by the dress code and other male fashion displayed, this could have been the dinner of 25 September 1937, when the theatre adopted the name “Ingeniero Marconi” in homage to the inventor of radio broadcasting.



Figure 19: Roberto Nini (2024). Photograph. [Framed picture exhibited in Marconi Theatre circa 1937]

I follow this group of Neighbours to the projection booth where they are about to test the presentation of the 15th film festival and a teaser of their remake movie. I think of time concatenating meanings: these neighbours using the town’s theatre (named after an Italian inventor of the radio communication) to celebrate fifteen years of community film festival, a festival that was since the beginning held there since when the community joint efforts to recycle it with this Festival in mind. I see CMWN’s collaborators still amazed by the magic of old projects and I see twenty-one years of sustained collective action straddling on more than one hundred years of community commitment with cultural production and promotion. The light bin on the projector is turned on now all these concatenated meaning is shifted into the screen: the teaser of the film festival summarizes twenty-one years of their activities.

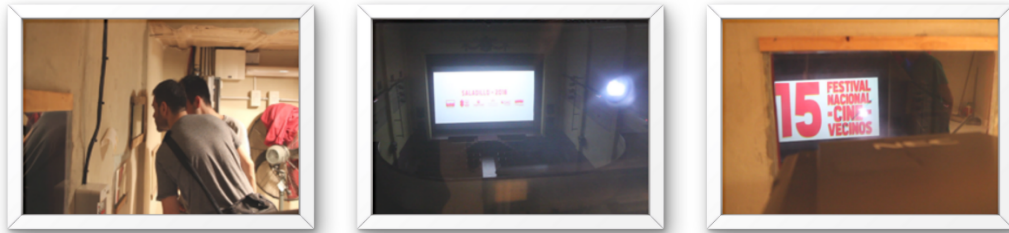


Figure 20: TVET, (2018). Photograms from video recordings. [Checking projection quality]



Figure 21: TVET, (2018). Photograms from video recordings. [CMWN collaborators in the Projection Room]

Suddenly the testing of the projection on the main screen of the Marconi theatre emerges as an occurrence. A photo brings this collective geocultural, historical and symbolic meaning to the surface. The face of the young protagonist (of a remake) lightens by the light bin of the projector looks at his own image projected on the screen. We don't see what he sees as all this concatenated times and meaning are now off frame, turned into light, crossing the dark hall and to be projected on the screen as an Imago of their historical relation.

I keep looking for the metaphor where the occurrences in the social practice evidences the border between reality and representation, theatre and town, past and present, the individual and the collective. For that we follow these subjects outdoors.



Figure 22: TVET, (2018). Photograms from video recordings [Saladillo town square]

The first thing you notice going out in Saladillo town is how comfortable people are with the presence of a camera. After all, it has been twenty-one years since CMWN first started using the public space as the scenario for their films. People walking by in the central square and the walkways know not to walk in front of a camera while shooting, and to not to look at the camera when they are being filmed walking by. If someone with a camera asks them, for instance, “could you please ride your bike here and turn left afterwards”, people just naturally do it, they know eventually this will be part of a short film they will watch at the next festival or on *YouTube*. Parents cooperate, holding their children and older children take this opportunity to show off their skating or biking talents. Everyone seems to feel part of an ongoing process of collective creation and there is no questioning or interruption. Cinema *occurs* there, cinema making is part of the everyday life of Saladillo town. On occasions, you can even see people shooting their own adventures on their mobile phones. The central square is an example of that social theatrical enactment, with the national flag in the centre, waving for all to see.

Elegant, nineteenth-century buildings, a grand cathedral, the stylish council palace and the Spanish house surround the square. The latter is another strong cultural imprint for the immigrant representation, with the Spanish flag still flaunted alongside the Argentinean one. Such a statement expresses a third form of self-perceived citizenship particular to the Italian and Spanish immigrants’ descendants; a dual identity that has impregnated their socio-

economic practices (mutual aid, for example).¹⁵ I had the opportunity to interview their president and later to visit the house of the Vasque society and interview a group of members too. A marked quality of these identity groups is that they do not question the coloniality of power, at all. The colonial difference and the power relations that come attached to this form of social organization are not in their horizon; they simply do not see them [or perhaps chose not to see or talk about this]. I will not add their comments as it would extend this chapter too far. For now, it suffices to acknowledge that the sense of belonging to a collective identity for which they feel obliged to show cooperation became an essential attitude nurturing a movement such as CMWN.

Now let us follow our protagonists in search of more occurrences on the border. Commercial windows surrounding the square and the main roads are the target for the director Julio Midú and the child protagonist who have taken it upon themselves to plaster the whole town with the posters of the 15th Film Festival. We see them entering the shops and asking for permission and the owners all agreeing on sharing their window space with them. This is, again, a symbolic moment in the chain of resignifications, they are finding consensus on the shop owners to use their exhibition outlets to multiply the views of CMWN message. Simultaneously we see the protagonist of the remake film, soon to be premiered, sticking the posters in his own town, wearing the same clothes, as if he had walked off the poster to greet the real people of the town, or, as if a real person had walked into the poster of a film. I believe this to be another foggy border of CMWN, which in social practices has laid down a multilayered area of representation where fiction and reality are in permanent interactions with the represented space. The photo sequence of director and protagonist plastering posters exhibits these layers of representation and emerge as an occurrence, as a *mise en abyme*, in the last photo. A testimonial camera (ours) photographs a photographer taking a picture, simultaneously showing the content of this photographer's camera monitor. Through it we can see how that picture is framing a real subject (the boy) posing alongside the poster of the remake movie in which his character is portrayed looking at the camera. From the perspective in which the

¹⁵ It is still a common thing to say that Argentines came off the European Ships. It is ingrained in Argentinean culture to carry a cultural identification with the country of the grandparents, this has passed from generations, and they see themselves as Spanish or Italian, even though they may be 4th generation of Argentinean born. For them being in Argentina is just a circumstance, not a condition that tied them to a local culture. Each town, each city is full of Immigrant Association. They have cooperated and built great common spaces, developed common causes, opened common opportunities, understanding such communality as mutually beneficial within the circuit. This is even stronger in Argentinean 'pampas' (the plains, the fertile lands), where Italian and Spanish immigrants settled down to farm at the end of the Nineteenth Century. They were escaping famines; they just wanted a place to settle down. They were unaware of Argentinean exterminations; all they found was bare land that was given at a very low cost. Maybe because of ignorance or because they were too busy plowing the land, there was never time to reflect on the original people genocide. The descendant of European immigrants, today wealthy after their grand parents' hard work, are not interested on reviewing the past either. With no physical or cultural presence of the original nations, and with no historical records telling the story of the dispossessed It is easy to believe we are in a Mediterranean countryside.

general photo is taken, the character of the poster seems to be looking at our camera, as if the character is aware of our presence. That is its metaphoric dimension: from the depths of a staged representation, a character reveals the role of the visual ethnographer as the witness of the multiple fiction writings present in their simulations of testimony (I will elaborate on this in the next section: “the artefact”).

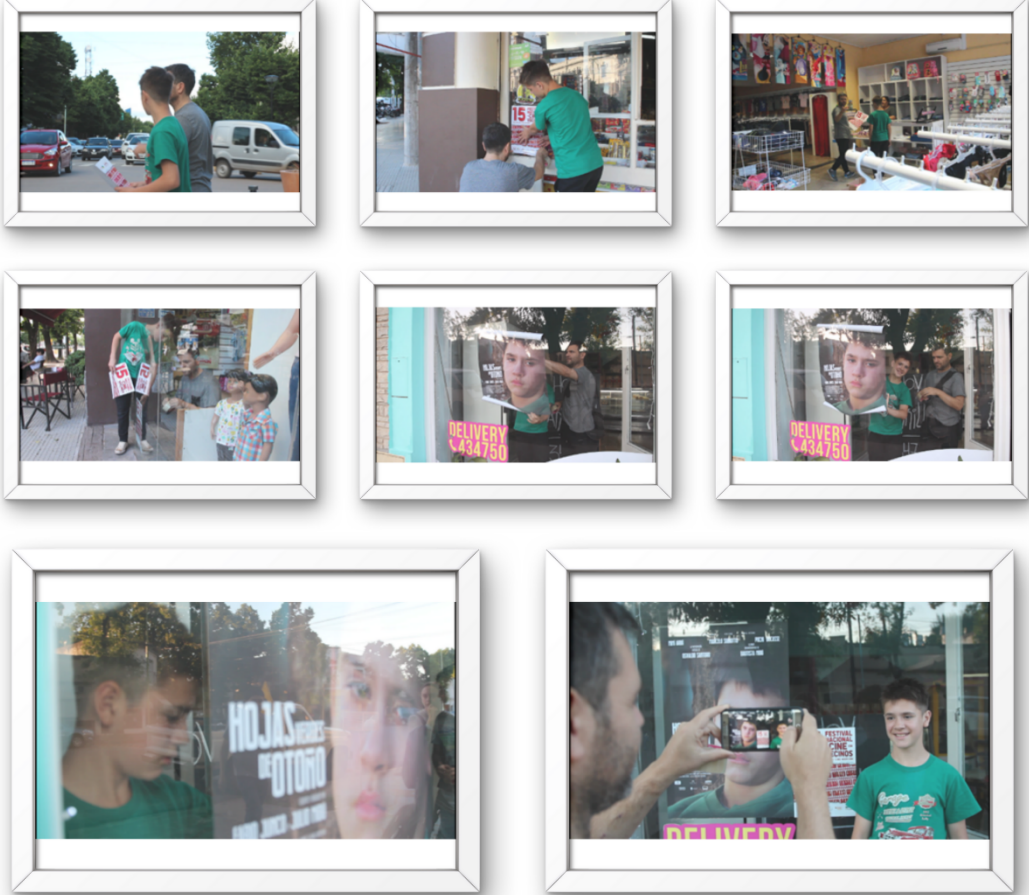


Figure 23: TVET, (2018). Photograms from video recordings. [CMWN director and protagonist advertising the Festival]

iii. Sequence 3: The Opening Night



Figure 24: TVET, (2018). Photograms from video recordings [CMWN's directors opening the 15th National Film Festival]

It is early on the Film Festival opening night, 19th of November and the members of the movement have arrived to set up the reception. Some of them are folding the programs, others organizing the tickets and sorting out lighting. There is a red carpet at the entrance, the front of the theatre is filled with life, lit to the fullest, with the posters on the windows. Some people arrive early too; they are wearing casual attire and so is their attitude. They enter the hall as one does in public spaces, with no ceremony, no inhibition and total familiarity. In the ticket booth is Eduardo, who carefully places the Film Festival prizes on the counter. It seems to be a secret or a surprise, we, with our camera, are not allowed to reveal. The prizes simulate a 35mm film reel and have the denomination of the prize. They show a female and a male name, named after two of the original CMWN community actors who have recently passed away René Regina and Cacho Salinardi. Again, in this occurrence we can read the tension between collective and individual, the prizes recognize these actors as relevant figures that will represent them all as a collective movement. In this case the group, has socialized the meanings of this individual's names and turned in a group Imago. This symbolical construction involves also an historical operation in which past experiences live on the days of these actors, actualize their telos in the present.

Bellow we see a photo of Sergio Martín, winner of the “Cacho Sardinardi prize” 2018. In an interview held at his farm, he expressed the pride of earning this prize as throughout his life he has accompanied this community cinema movements and other cultural spaces of the town. He sees this prize also as a recognition of and to his father (an Italian immigrant descendent) who has worked hard for the wellbeing of Saladillo's community. The prize therefore exceeds the acknowledgement of acting skills and turns into an emblem of their community ties.



Figure 25: TVET, (2018). Photographs [Left. CMWN collaborator Eduardo Morales, showing the festival prizes. Middle: Best neighbour actor prize CMWN's Film Festival 2018 "Cacho Salinardi". Right: Sergio Martín winner of the Cacho Sardinardi award in 2018.

A sense of belonging and the enactment of community ties, manifest all through the opening night of the 15th Festival. Observing each action, we can see traces of a community spirit underlying their social practices. For instance, Pepe, Roberto and Eduardo sort out last-

minute problems; the table where the programs ought to sit is too old and untidy; they start improvising a cover with an old festival poster, which they allocate using the reverse surface. They seem used to debating to reach an agreement and to improvise solutions; they decide everything as a group. Now the presenting table looks nicer, and they seem pleased with themselves. They start handing the tickets to the public as they line up to enter the exhibition room. The public is heterogeneous, there are octogenarians as there are toddlers, children, teens, young families. The directors of the CMWN's movement are at the entrance receiving everyone with hugs; the collaborators welcome the arriving public also with hugs as they cut their ticket and lead them into their seats. Some of the publics are flustered with our camera and greet us directly. The original supporter group request to be acknowledged as such with a group photo from our recording team. They pose relaxed, happy, hugging each other while they call themselves "the primitives", which is a double joke: they are the original people on this project but they are also mocking our anthropological approach.¹⁶ In the hall some journalists are interviewing the directors who acknowledge being happy and proud to have spent 15 years exhibiting cinema made with Neighbours produced in all corners of the country. They also recognize the effort of managing the national crisis as collectives never giving up the passion of production regardless of the lack of support and opportunities. Now the foyer is bursting with people all in transit to their chairs. Pepe hands out the programs, people carry them into the exhibition room.

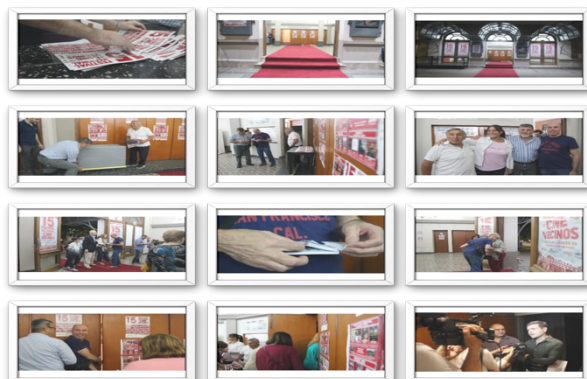


Figure 26: TVET, (2018). Photograms from video recordings [Original members involved in the reception]

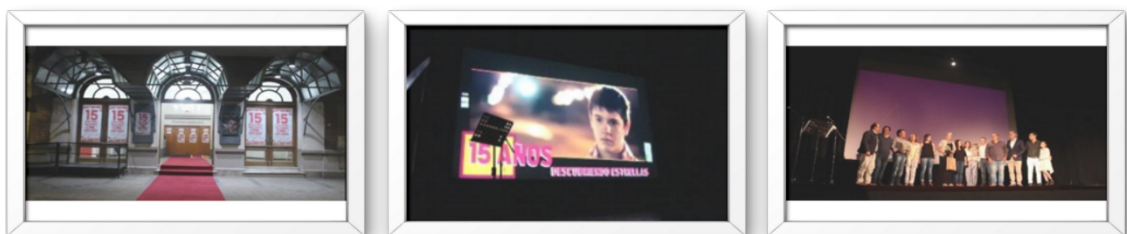


Figure 27: TVET, (2018). Photograms from video recordings [15th Film Festival of CMWN acknowledges the Festival's trajectory]

¹⁶ The joke sadly finds itself falling into irony when read from the historical perspective: Argentinean common sense has naturalized the idea that immigrant descendants are as settlers (the original inhabitants) but we know they are not.

The program states that this Film Festival has the institutional support of INCAA (National Institute of Cinema and Audio-visual Arts); the Council of Saladillo town; The Argentinean Cinematographic Directors Association, *Argentores* (National Author Rights Board) and the company MIDUJUNCO Productions. The exhibition is programmed as a mixture of productions from MIDUJUNCO Productions (advances of its documentaries); documentaries on prominent town personalities and short fiction films produced by the Cinema made with Neighbours' foundation. The program also contemplates the exhibition of several feature films made by other alike group productions from other sides of the country.¹⁷ The program presents the panel of Neighbours who officiate as an honorary jury to select the best neighbor actress and best neighbor actor and thanks the council of Saladillo who subsidized the prizes as well as the Saladillo artists that designed and made them. At the closing of the first day, emotion and gratitude are expressed during the prizegiving while remembering the figures the prizes were named after and acknowledging the local trajectory of the awarded neighbor actors.

In all it seems to be a rooted presence of neighbours' participations (from the agency as pre-opening collaborators until they roles as judges of the Festival and even symbolically by having prizes named after them). However, this Festival now differentiate between productions: the "Cinema made with neighbours" local and visiting, and MIDUJUNCO production. Here is where the occurrence at the level of the represented space emerges, and they are in the printed program, in the sections of exhibitions, and on the titles in their films. The excision is evident in all the possible exhibition devises. Consequently, even though we are celebrating this now legendary Film Festival's 15th edition, there is an undercurrent murmur about to erupt: the collective collaborative movement is losing its leaders as they shift into a commercialized authors driven form of production.

As previously mentioned, in this Film Festival there was a big expectation around the new MIDUJUNCO productions *Autumn Green Leaves* that as a commercial re-make this time around counted on the participation of professional national cinema figures. However, the directors made use of a collective cooperative structure to produce this film in Saladillo and as

¹⁷ To keep the focus on the case of Cinema Made With Neighbours I have decided I am not going to include in this chapter my observations on these productions as well as the comments raised during my interviews and focus group conversation with this exhibiting visiting directors. These data must be addressed in further publications. I make however a parenthesis to emphasise that at this point I met the director Ezequiel Sans, from the city of Henderson, Buenos Aires, who presented his film "Golondrinas" obtained the *opera prima* prize. Sanz and I kept in contact since then. During pandemia months, I conducted a full online interview with him and his community cinema collaborators from the city of Henderson. Even though I have not included this collected data in this chapter, these interviews sat the foundations regarding modes in which could collaborate. We brought these understandings into praxis when he came, as an invited director, to participate in the Socio-educative Practices in Community cinema, a project I designed and directed is described in the Chapter 7 of this thesis.

in the times of CMWN productions involved the whole town. Its relevance, for my observation, is that it constitutes a remake of an original Cinema Made with Neighbours film from 2003 called *The Good in Others*. I believe this calls for a comparative contemplation of these two texts and modes of production separated by 15 years (opening and crowning the Cinema made with Neighbours' National Film Festival). In this comparative analysis I expect to find occurrences that are significant to understand what was in tension at this border (individual/collective; reality/fiction). To do so we need to explore aspects concerning the construction and operability of "the artefact".

B. On Aesthesis Experience: the Artefact as a Symbolic Enactment of the Lived Space



Figure 26: Photos retrieved from CMWN Foundation's You Tube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@CINECONVECINOS>. [Left: Film *The Good in Others*, 2003. Right: film *Autumm's Green Leaves*, 2018].

1- Sequence 4: *The Good in Others* (2003)



Figure 27: Photos retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/@CINECONVECINOS> [Film *The Good in Others*, 2003]

A preliminary observation is that *The Good in Others* (2003) is the first international success of CMWN's mode of production as a cooperative, that is, as a joint effort that, among other collective productions, consolidated the movement and propelled the beginnings of the

National Film Festival of CMWN. What made this movie so remarkable? I argue that in works of cinema made with Neighbours such as this one, there exists a “testimonial simulation” (I discussed the discursive trace of *Testimonio* in Chapter 3). The story that is told is the recreation, within the diegetic context of fiction, of a real story, of something that happened to a local resident or in their everyday lives. In this way, the development of leading characters is based on real people from the community, so that everyone in the town knows the original referent, although the fact that he/she is represented fictionally assures the referent a certain degree of privacy. Secondary characters in the narration are people who exist in the daily life of the community (the police officer plays a police officer, the paramedic a paramedic, the teacher a teacher). The same is true for settings. Filming takes place in real settings, and their use in the diegesis respects the daily function of such space in real life. Moreover, its fiction format is a transcription that transfers concrete community conflicts into personal and partial stories. I reckon that such non-aspiration to the totality of truth allows the stories to circulate amongst the community’s social relations. Their testimonial annunciation in which the film conveys just one out of many possible perspectives on the subject, ensure the harmonious and cooperative coexistence of its residents and open access to themes that would otherwise be collectively made taboo (in this case the alcoholism of the father of the protagonist). This simulated testimonial strategy is persuasive, as it immerses the spectator in the drama that goes on in the story: the same tables, same squares, the same settings of their collective and personal stories. Also, the relationship established with the spectator is a sort of *anagnorisis* (acknowledgement), since viewers leave the projection room acknowledging that what they have seen on screen happens too in their own lives and that of their Neighbours.

It is worth emphasising that even though *The Good in Others* served the purpose of purging said local issues, it simultaneously involved an effort to distance itself with respect to its form of production, which is, ultimately, a performative mode of social mourning. Within this context, the script based on a neighbour’s personal experience involved the effort of the whole community to be taken to the big screen. During such a process, two things occurred.

First, community members that have shared their story must now emotionally detach from it to produce a cinematographic representation. This aids in dealing with their trauma as the person can project the pain, the loss, through an object, in this case, the story told by the movie. In psychoanalytic terms, the person turning their personal traumatic memory into a tale would be progressing on her/his own process of mourning.

Secondly, the Neighbours’ participation in this production implied the community’s commitment with the personal problem of the other. This is so because, by actively listening, the group that

collaborates with the production of the story creates, at the same time, the audibility conditions to make room in the collective memory to accommodate the other's traumatic story. With this, an "exemplary memory" (Todorov) is built socially, which is, ultimately, an ethical re-narration because it contributes to the re-conquest of their status as political subjects. This is so because it has promoted a collective repair of the concept of individual survival, a notion that has acted as the guarantee for the reproduction of the market logic (this is exemplified by Cacho Salinardi's interview in the documentary film *Ceux de Saladillo*, 2005).

This process of ethical re-narration was completed at the moment of the film screening in several ways. Firstly, with this movie as the foundation stone, their films screened at the town's traditional cinema theatre. Unlike many other theatres from small towns that in the nineties and early two thousand were turned into parking spaces, flats, or multi-room theatres for commercial cinema, this one was given prominence by the Neighbours who claimed it as a historic space in their community. The Festival's exhibition venue is, then, a symbolic space as it stands for resistance to the logic of the market and for the resilience of memory and local identity. Secondly, at the moment of projection for the residents that have come to watch the fruits of their community bonds, the audio-visual work becomes a token of collective significance and belonging, the group's *imago*. In such context, the spectator is no longer an individual consumer but becomes a producer member of a community of meaning. Thirdly, the *Festival Nacional de Cine con Vecinos* (National Festival of Cinema with Neighbours) invites annually other community filmmaking groups from other towns of the country to take part in the event. The festival serves as promotion of intercultural understanding and the celebration of empathy and solidarity, performed in this town as a symbolic epicentre of a network of collective efforts that through the production of community cinema have found a social bonding mechanism of self-representation and identity claims. *The Good in Others* ignited all of that.

This dynamic is even more meaningful when their films were screened at international festivals in the 'low-budget' or 'poor-cinema' categories. In this regard, its pioneers Julio Midú and Fabio Junco affirmed at the closing of the 6th National Film Festival with Neighbours (2009), that although this is a low-budget cinema, it is also a cinema with a significant number of human resources. With that, they defied the logic of the market that places supremacy of the budget over authenticity and identity. Let us stop here to make a mark of those commentaries, as well as of all those collective significances emerging from their mode of production- exhibition. Back in 2018, The National Film Festival of Cinema Made with Neighbours had become the referent for the exchange and displayed and acknowledged national film production made by amateur directors and actors' collectives. It is meaningful to note that the fifteenth edition of this film

festival closes with the premiere of *The Good in Other's* remake and several of the 60 independent films made with Neighbours coming from all sides of the national territory.¹⁸

The Good in Others was the pinnacle production for a community that had been working hard since the turn of the millennium, when the now well-known directors were just amateurs and beginner. This is how the French 2005 documentary “Ceux de Saladillo” (Those of Saladillo) by Argentine director Alberto Yaccellini begins, “Once upon a time, in a far far away land, there was a little town called Saladillo and what the Saladillo people liked most was to make movies”.¹⁹ The film narrates the first years of this phenomenon emerging in a small town 180 kilometres from the capital of the country that amidst the economic collapse of 2001 could be found in ceaseless production of movies shot *in situ*, and that was acted and consumed by their own Neighbours . Even though international researchers (I was one of them in 2009-2010) classified this case as a sociological phenomenon, I have come to realize that the initiative was always singularly driven by their main directors. I think this is an important detail to consider for the comparative work I am proposing here.

“I was a youngster that needed to make films on my own as I could not go to Buenos Aires to study so I found a lot of people that wanted to join the project of filming here alongside me”, said Julio Midú (our interview on Appendix 1-E). Midú, started shooting soap operas with the people of the town at the age of 20. His first soap opera had 20 chapters and was aired by the local television.²⁰ Beyond the sentimental tone of the traditional melodramas, what made them appealing was that the Neighbours of the town saw themselves on screen. This captivated the public by satisfying the wish to belong to this fantasy world. In 2000, Midú went as far as to win a *Martin Fierro* (the Argentina’s highest national professional television award) for the series *Life Chances* involving twenty-five Saladillo actors. This same year, Fabio Junco (a Saladillo-born journalist working in Buenos Aires) joined him and they have been a creative pair since then.

So, in fact, the movement is constituted by these two strong figures scripting, producing, directing and editing stories they take from their own lives and the lives of the townspeople.

¹⁸ The first festival in 2003 counted 12 films and closed with the screening of “The Good in Others”. Back at the beginning, the following film festival doubled the quota of films shown as the neighbouring towns, pushed by the example of Saladillo and access to new technologies, started developing their own cinematographic identities, starting new film festivals as in the case of the Comedy Short film festival of Maipú (from 2008 to 2017)

¹⁹ See: https://youtu.be/g16XwwH0KuY?si=Ci7bl8JBjtW4Ts_m

²⁰ I had a long interview with Natalia Gramuzio, the protagonist starring alongside Julio Midú in the soap opera *She is in Love*, who informed me, with colourful anecdotes, about the beginnings of this movement when producing that series and how every day the personal lives of people in the towns was intertwined with fiction.

The stories are acted and supported in production by the Saladillo people. Originally, they used a single, domestic analogue camera and needed the support of everyone. On the shooting day, they would convene many Neighbours who supported them with refreshments, doing their small parts in front of or behind the cameras. They all considered this to be a vocational activity and an ongoing dynamic with which the townspeople coexisted comfortably. Therefore, we must admit that, as Fabio Junco emphasized in a 2018 interview, from the beginning, the identity of this cinema was clearly a cinema *made with* Neighbours, and not, a cinema *made by* Neighbours. It was not an equally involved collective production but an author's production with the collaboration of the community. With this formula and the minimum of resources, both authors started to shoot feature films involving the contribution and participation of all Saladillo town. This is the era of *The Old Woman* (1998) was their first film, after that came *The Prisoners*, *Gemma*, *The Bear* (1999).

By 2001, the crisis had taken by assault not only the economic security of the population but also its moral health that was submerged in great social depression. The cooperative spirit of this movement offered a degree of relief. *The Heir* (2001), *Hidden Passions* (2001), *Fugacious Day* (2002), *The Good in Others* (2003), *Let Me Breathe* (2003), *Poor women* (2004), *The Teacher* (2005), all made in the span of five years. "Midú and Junco's films tell family stories, generational conflicts and social injustice, looking at their production conditions, these films have a strong documentary component", commented in those days legendary French film magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma* (2006: 51-52).

In the process, the local actors acquired experience, and the films added narrative complexities. This is the era of *The Last Errand* (2007), *Chrysalises* (2010), and *Withered Flowers* (2014)



Figure 28: Photo retrieved from <http://fundacinevecinos.com> [Julio Midú (camera) Fabio Junco (boom) with the local actor Cacho Sardinardi]



Figure 29: Photo retrieved from <http://fundacinevecinos.com> [Julio Midú (camera) Fabio Junco (boom) with the local actress René Regina on the shooting of *Withered Flowers*, 2014]

2- Sequence 5: *Autumn's Green Leaves* (2018)



Figure 30: Photos retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/@CINECONVECINOS> [film *Autumn's Green Leaves*, 2018]

The first certainty that comes to mind is that the remake is made under the expectations and uses of the cinema industry; it has been directed by contemporary well-known commercial directors; developed with the production system of industrial standards; and professional actors in the leading roles. Only the background and secondary actors are the Neighbours of Saladillo and the Saladillo town scenario. Unlike their previous productions, the film was not grown on the ground, among the Neighbours; it arrived “precooked”. Because of the independent production agency and the collaboration of the people of Saladillo town, the movie could be considered an “independent film”. However, when seen as an independent film, we would have to change specs looking for authorial signatures, experimental aesthetics, cult topics and styles, iconic actors, political or moral controversies, but unfortunately, this movie does not challenge us in that way. The film is a repetition of the ‘original’ simulation of testimony but is no simulation of testimony of any present day collective conflict. Originally, their narrative fitted into the Cinema made with Neighbours’ social dynamics as a melodrama characteristic of the cultural consumption of the townspeople and as a continuation of their traditions as soup opera producers. However, when transposed to a professional production, something does not yield. In short, we have here a technical-rhetorical quandary. Because of its generic qualities, the movie could not enter for instance, the hall of New Argentinean Cinema (contemporary

auteur cinema) or an international independent film festival (Sundance, San Sebastian, Cannes or the Latin American iconic Festival of La Habana, for instance). Moreover, since its industrial cinema standards marginalized the people of the town to a colourful background, the film is no longer representative of a collective as a Cinema made with Neighbours' production. Therefore, something has been lost in translation, and I think what is missing is what Rodolfo Kusch (1974) calls "the relationship with the ground". A quick example is that of the character of the protagonist's father who in the original film plays the role of a cobbler. This is so because the actor was in fact the cobbler of the town. Much of the film's photographic planning for the sequences that describe the father's work are thought around the idea of showing his natural abilities sewing and manipulating shoes. Then on the remake, they had to teach the professional actor a few movements around the shoemaking skills while they had to avoid the camera shots that detailed his manual actions. That is how the first film offered a testimonial simulation while in the second there was only copying a formula.

It may seem peculiar that I have signalled an example of what I consider to be not entirely an artefact of community cinema to highlight what it ought to be. Perhaps access to this artefact conception resides in that "documentary component" *Cahiers du Cinéma* referred to, and that in my understanding I denominate as "testimonial simulation". That is, a willing representation of their everyday lives given by the local to be seen as fiction among known countrymen only to trigger the idea of the high degree of realism this story has when related to their everyday lives. This is so from the production stage that used local places and actors and local stories, to the moment of screening, in which local viewers recognize themselves and their territory in said narratives while sited in their own and collectively recovered theatre, their very own territory. Note that no one ever would dare judge the quality making of these original narratives, because it does not matter. This is not what cinema made with Neighbours is about. However, things may change when this narrative is enacted, for example, from an industrial mode of production or through the participation of well-known actors from the capital in the leading roles. Something seems out of place then because somehow the myth of collective action has faded away.

However raw this change may be, directors are in their right to do this as this was something they generated from their own hard work, to which the Neighbours added effort and support. It was always "cinema made *with* Neighbours" and not "cinema made *by* Neighbours". It is remarkable, however, that in doing so they left a positive impact in the community. Taking these two moments represented in time by each film production context that we were comparing (2003-2018) we can observe that the transition from one social dynamic to the other has been a slow process towards emancipation of their own discourse. Since, the Cinema made with

Neighbours foundation has conducted several actions with which to expand its project. Some of them are training new agents to continue with the project of cinema made with Neighbours, and advising nearby towns on producing their own work, while offering their festival to display the results (up to 2022). Territorially, they are expanding the project across the country, the latter by relocating the festival to a southern province (away from the Capital territorial influence) and by applying the model of cinema made with Neighbours to an itinerant national project, pairing with state driven programs. Of all these projections, I feel it is important to highlight the itinerant venture as its functioning intervenes more clearly in the channels of onto-epistemological reproduction of the coloniality of power. I study this aspect as a form of aesthesis interpretation, made on the image of the artefact. This is the idea that of the Cinema Made With Neighbours formula has left in society as a collaborative mode of production based on bordering knowledge and exchange skills towards the communication of a message that comes as an urgency from their own living circumstances; emerges from the soil. I do so, hoping to recover the profound relationship this project had with its collective roots and that has lost in the last years. Fortunately, looking at the many interpretations other community actors can make of CMWN's format, I find hope.

C. Aesthesis Interpretation: The Representation of Space: Sequence 6: “Express Cinema”, Expanding the Project



Figure 31: Photos retrieved from the Cinema Made with Neighbours Foundation Webpage <http://fundacinevecinos.com> [Cinema Express Workshop]

In 2009, while benefiting from the new possibilities opened by the sanction and enactment of the Law of Audio-visual Communication Services, (Law N°26,522), the founders of ‘Cinema with Neighbours’ Julio Midú and Fabio Junco started to work on the program “*Talleres Exprés de Cine con Vecinos*” (Cinema made with Neighbours’ express workshops). This project basically, condenses in just one day the whole experience and dynamics explored by Cinema with Neighbours since 1999. The INCAA (National Institute of Cinema and Audio-visual Arts), from

Coordination of INCAA Spaces and Special Programmes, supported the implementation of these creative workshops throughout the country which implied the participation of different cities, towns and/or neighbourhood residents. This brings the opportunity for regional communities to participate and disseminate their stories in as many locations as possible. “Historias de un país y su gente” (Stories of a Country and its People) is the slogan of the Express Cinema workshops, which echoes the intention of the Cinema with Neighbours Foundation. The working methodology of these series of workshops is as follows: admission is restricted to sixty participants, whose age range can go from youngsters to elderly people. The workshops are divided into three stages. First, everyone puts forward ideas and then, they vote democratically for one to be filmed. Second, film shooting starts (inside or outside the meeting place) with those participants willing to do the acting. Finally, the Cinema with Neighbours Foundation coordinators edit the material, and, later in the evening, the short film is screened for all participants, their friends, relatives and Neighbours.



By

Figure 32: Photos retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/@CINECONVECINOS> [Film Regresar, 2014]

In 2017, when changes in cultural policy introduced by the new government started to have a negative impact on Express Cinema, eight editions of the program had already taken place, one hundred and sixty short films had been made and the same number of locations

throughout the country had been visited. The short films were uploaded to their own YouTube channels, and some of them were exhibited annually at the National Festival of Cinema with Neighbours, INCAA TV and *TV Pública* (Public TV, Argentina's national public broadcaster). These works also went through independent circuits at national and international cinema exhibits and festivals. The model was even replicated in Ecuador, Spain, France, Paraguay and Uruguay. I consider that this series of workshops is the closest CMWN has been to a decolonial pedagogic experience in several ways, even if their facilitators are not fully aware of this function.

In the first place, participants learn about the production process of a communicative object (the construction of a fictional tale accounting for real life facts, spaces and materiality). Here, a delinking of the reproduction logics of the coloniality of seeing is produced; learning the codes for discourse construction and, by extension, knowing that what is represented audio-visually is not reality but a manufactured representation of it, becomes a form of decolonial aesthetics. As such, the participants of this experience come to realize that reality can be performed and beautified: people and places can be hidden or made visible at will, voices can be heard or be silenced, images can reveal memories, identities, idiosyncrasies.

Secondly, as a logical consequence of the first, participants learn about the discursive possibilities of such a message (the story can serve as influence, denunciation, complaint, unveiling or cover-up of facts and ideas). This aspect leads to a meaningful learning experience, for those who are re-educating themselves as meaning-constructing subjects who, empowered by such capacity, can relinquish the role of passive consumer of a model of reality and truth that has been imposed on them by the market. Here we have yet another instance facing coloniality of knowledge; the moment in which they re-learn their role as citizens and no longer consumers. Decolonial pedagogy here is linked to learning the political implications of being a discourse producer.

Thirdly, depending on the circulation conditions of such communicative objects, participants learn about the possibilities of having their own place in the world. Members of a community can tell their own stories, which can then be shared with audiences from distant communities, who feel related not by a strict geographical belonging but by a form of sensing, and experiencing life which creates a new territoriality. This becomes a new way of approaching difference from the other; humanity in the other's alterity is put forward as a value. In this manner this activity implies also a fragmentation in the hegemonic dynamics that reinforce coloniality of being based on participating communities' ontological re-positioning. That is, these people learn that they can inscribe their subjectivities into a new intercultural paradigm

where their stories are valuable, and where the stories told by others resonate with their own experiences. On the basis of this intercultural interweaving created by multiple *Express Cinema* experiences in different communities, and of the online circulation of their productions, such workshops contributed to the value of cultural diversity, the “equality in difference” that Mignolo (2003) proposes.

The result of this communicative experience (the workshop itself, but also its insertion into the collective of films produced across the country as a knowledge ecosystem, as a new territoriality) is a taste of a decolonial praxis in which this community cinema’s model of production-reception becomes its operative artefact. This is so since, in a more spontaneous and less premeditated way, this process bears similarity with what Paulo Freire (1970) presented as “educational works”. This is the action whereby the culture of domination will be culturally confronted by a change in the oppressed’s perception of the oppressing world. Such realization eventually would help them to question their own acceptance of their own subaltern status assigned by the world system as a part of the ontological order articulated, within the national boundaries, by the cultural politics of the creole-bourgeois state.

In this sense, I believe that Cinema made with Neighbours’ Express Workshops is not political cinema, strictly speaking, but its own form of production-circulation that emerges as a political form of making cinema. This is so with respect to its *poietic* function, as it makes use of its symbolic language’s productive power not only as a critical-descriptive act of represented ethical meanings, but, at the same time, as a creative-performative act of renewed ones. Thus, I argue that its educational project is a challenge to hegemonic ethics, from a new symbolic system of dynamics of the collective.



Figure 33: Photos retrieved from <http://fundacinevecinos.com> [Cinema Express Workshop in Port Madryn, Chubut, Argentina]

Closing

I have briefly considered the mode of production of Cinema Made with Neighbours as a model of collaborative creation which when manifested as an expression of residents' territorial practices can serve (though in different degrees) as an onto-epistemological decolonial agent. That is, looking at the film *The Good in Others* and the experience of *Cinema Express* across the country, respectively, from promoting identity confirmation and the ethics of mutual care, to pedagogically encouraging the self-discovery of their role as meaning builders in an intercultural ecosystem. As such, their mode of production became a valuable artefact to intercede (in different capacities) among the coloniality of being and coloniality of knowledge reproduction channels. This exploration has shown that when the mode of production is separated from its soil (its geocultural condition) the artefact becomes hollow (such in *Autumn Green Leaves* and their following production of MIDUJUNCO).

I have also emphasized that a good aesthetic interpretation, on the image of CMWN's artefact has been taken up by the itinerant project *Cinema Express* which has preserved what is essential to the artefact. The connexion with the soil expressed in residents' territorial practices. *Cinema Express* takes this artefact, -as mode of production-, visiting new soils and expands the consciousness that arise from this connexion with the soil stabilising identity networks.

This chapter's exploration has shown us too that the remake production "intended 'for export'" (sic by its own director's joke), has been conceived outside the resident's territoriality (as the intersubjective dynamic within a geocultural circumstance). I can identify here the occurrence exhibiting the ethical border (of pugnacious paradigms: that of the collective project longing to stay and that of the individualist gest in a rush to break apart). As such, *Autumn Green Leaves* replicated an organic and historical (territorial) production of this collective but using the logic, strategies and formats of the industrial cinema. From that production onwards, we can identify a process of de-territorialisation of CMWN's original project. This is so at the level of its production (from cooperative to industrial) and at its technical-rhetorical aspect. This, since this last facet corresponds directly with the relationship the collective producers have with 'the soil'. Technical faults and narrative naiveté could be overlooked in the original CMWN format, as it was the expression of an amateur low budget production format created collectively by rural subjects. However, the same story, told by the remake (even when its narrative proposition was enhanced in its technological confection), had lost its substance (there is no magic); it has nothing which would enable it to be placed as an independent arthouse movie, it is

uninteresting as a commercial proposition and it becomes inconsequential for the history of auteur cinema.

The de-territorialisation started by this production as this remake has been made by overlapping both modes of production: it uses the logics of the industry but still supports itself on the traditional cinema made with Neighbours' cooperative infrastructure. This, since the latter is the one with real power to concentrate the townspeople's efforts and cooperation under the umbrella of the collective endeavour. This is why, in my perspective, a silent communal representativeness pact breaks here, and what remains is the directors' original impulse of supporting their own careers as producers, which, at the beginning relied on the collective efforts of community social dynamics but, as they acquired strength, they needed this connection less. The case of *Autumm Green Leaves* is the first of this new form of production MIDUJUNCO developed since, and whose settings were taken elsewhere, except on a couple of occasions in which the crew came back to Saladillo with similar production propositions. Nevertheless, CMWN's production as it was (one to two films a year) was discontinued forever. The National Film Festival as hosted in that town with footlights and red carpet was no longer operative by 2023. The Cinema Made with Neighbours Foundation (of which Midú and Junco are directors) has diversified the Festival's venue, moving one portion of it online and the other to other southern provinces. In 2023, the 20th Festival of Cinema Made with Neighbours only provided one single outdoor projection in Saladillo town. Yet, the project has many other ramifications, for instance it is now no longer a National but a Latin American Film Festival and has highly recognized 'stellar' judges.

Through the three-dimensional aesthesis approach, I used to read the examples I identified the territoriality of CMWN (in Saladillo and in its itinerancy) as based on making the quotidian magic. I think that what made the everyday mundane matters of life become magical; what today make its original participants reminisce those days as their golden days (when they were happy because they were together), is to have discovered in the collective creative act the occurrence of solidarity as a form of human bonding that created something bigger than themselves. Unfortunately, there is no re-make of that.

CHAPTER 5

Social and Community Cinema Network of Córdoba as a Praxis of Decolonial Pedagogy

Introduction

Faced with the interrogations caused by my approach to Cinema Made with Neighbours, I decided to move around the country in search of successful experiences that do not cancel the possibility of community cinema as a device for decolonial praxis. This chapter recapitulates into two studies, the observations and conclusions of a series of interdisciplinary outputs I produced through active writing strategies from 2019 to 2021. Said works are the result of my involvement in an academic research/pedagogic project while on a one-year visiting lecturer/researcher position at the Faculty of Communication Sciences, National University of Cordoba, Argentina. During these explorations framed by Communication Studies, I developed answers to the partial hypothesis regarding Cordoba's Community cinema dynamics as forms of technological appropriation. The focus was on how said collectives' intersubjective dynamics constituted a praxis for Decolonial Pedagogy. My purpose in sharing these two case analyses is to contemplate the teleological and strategic continuities and emergences in Cordoba's community cinema production-circulation in search of sine qua non functional aspects (the territories, the dynamics, and the agents) for the conceptualization of this medium as a device for Decolonial practice.

The data collected through visual ethnography comprised in this chapter attends the second level of my tripartite analytical model identified in the methodology chapter as "aesthetic interpreting". This is the stage in which participants become conscious of both the sociocultural conditions affecting their experience of lived space, and the political discursive power their collectively authored work acquires in circulation dynamics. The interpretations originated at this level relate to a representation of the perceived space. This explored dynamic is a discursive practice in which the subjects depict an image of their own role and that of the audio-visual piece they helped to create) within the production-circulation dynamics. I continue this series of interpretations by observing the influence of this image's refractions as instances of negotiation with -and re-nourishments of- the sociocultural circumstances of production.²¹ Here is where the discursive practices challenge the paradigm with new counter-hegemonic meanings. In other words, here is how community cinema's dynamics reterritorialize the hegemonic representation of social space by introducing decolonial representations.

²¹ I imagine the influence of these interpretations as a stone thrown into still water. As such, the impact and repercussion that meanings created by community cinema practice have for the social practice are the refractions, like ripples in the water.

Let me begin by detailing that before the mentioned academic engagement carried out at the Faculty of Communication Sciences had three main areas of activity: teaching, research and divulgation. Reflecting upon these undertakings, I realized that through their mutual intersections, occurrences emerged creating territories of observation and analysis, which I framed in two case analyses. Case one observes the intersubjective dynamics at play when the notion and practices of community cinema enter the academic realm through pedagogical praxes. Case two explores an ecosystem of meaning production created by the active interaction of producers-exhibitors of community cinema during their organization as a Network of Social and Community Cinema of Cordoba. Both cases share actors, goals and development sites while my attention shifts points of observation. As this autoethnographic examination derives from my triple commitment at the Faculty of Communication Sciences, I will, in case one, elaborate on those roles to further detail their intersectionality. In case two, where I took a more decentralized approach to conversations with referents, the intersectionality I explore emerges from categorizing their multiple roles as complex actors within an ecosystem of meaning production.

I. Case One: Knowledge Legitimacy Tensions between Community Cinema and University Curricula



Figure 34: TVET, (2019). Photographs. [Debates on Córdoba Community Cinema with Invited Director Jose Campusano at the Audio-visual Workshop and Language III, directed by Elizabeth Vidal, Faculty of Communication Sciences. National University of Cordoba]

A. Context

1. Teaching

Even though I returned to my university of origin (where I studied my BA Hons in Film Studies and later taught for some years), in 2019, after eighteen years away, my place in the Argentinean academy, was that of the outsider. This caused difficulties for networking with researchers related to my field of interest. This is why the invitation to be a visiting lecturer at the Faculty of Communication Sciences' Audio-visual language and production workshop directed, from 1997, by its founder Dr. Elizabeth Vidal, came to be this thesis' lifesaver. The offer was founded on trust and mutual respect, based on our history as teacher-student (in the early nineties) and as colleagues since I departed this workshop's pedagogical team from 1997 to 2000. The teaching expectations for this post were that I would bring into the curricula notions and practices of community cinema, a subject the director found timely considering that in 2019 the New Media Law had been in place in Argentina for a decade. Through the first part of the year, I shared some of my community cinema research findings, exhibited community cinema work examples, and proposed bibliographic scholarship in the specific field plus related matters which I consider are influencing the territory of community cinema such as theory on cultural hegemony, debates on cultural representations and the framework of decolonial studies.

2. Researching

For my research activities I joined the project: "Imaginaries of software: social appropriations of the new technologies from identity communities" also co-directed by Vidal. Their viewpoint interested me because, beyond the conceptualisation of technological appropriation associated with use practices, which certainly include symbolic and representational aspects of technologies, this project considered the notion of appropriation as a paradigm. Under this perspective, appropriation as an individual practice is linked to identity empowerment, and collectively, it acquires a political dimension. It involves an elucidation of the social and ideological conditioning attributable to the media and technologies that allow actors the adoption and creative adaptation of these devices based on the construction of individual and social autonomy projects. The aim of my work as a member of such research group was to apply this notion to the interpretation of community cinema's activity as technological appropriations that, in the context of informal/community education and of university's curricula, could become praxes of Decolonial pedagogy.

3. Divulging

Among other divulging events, surrounding the problematics of Cultural Democracy that, as visiting research/lecturer, I helped to organize, I consider the following activity to be the most relevant for the case of community cinema. I refer to my experience summoning previous contacts in the field of community cinema to participate in a conversation panel called "Community audio-visual production experiences in the process of Argentinean cultural democratization". I coordinated and took part in this panel, in the name of the Audio-visual workshop, the Faculty of Communication Sciences' Second Biennale of Journalism and Communication, called "Make a Testimony during hard times". This panel brought together researchers, producers and exhibitors of community cinema to debate with our student community. Some of the invited groups and associations were The Buenos Aires Audio-visual Cluster (represented by its founder, the director Jos Campusano); the Social Cinema Film Festival "INVICINES" (represented by its founder Rodrigo del Canto and Carolina Rojo). Unquillo Community Cinema (represented by researcher and community cinema referent Matias Deon) and Cine Comunitario of South Punilla (represented by Martin Jacuto).

B. The Intersection

As before stated, Case One's exploration delves into the intersubjective dynamics at play when the notion and practices of community cinema go into the academic curricula and their pedagogical activities. The moment of the debate between the Audio-visual workshop's students and the visiting community cinema referents emerged as the territory of observation in which my three tasks (teaching, researching and divulging) found an intersection revealing the tensions existing between academic and community/activist knowledge as well as the possibilities for their respective epistemological feedback. To capture such dynamics through visual ethnography, I used video recordings of the debate and deferred observation. The latter with special attention to the students' questions concerning issues related to benefits and drawbacks for Community cinema in the framework of the New Media Law; opportunities, challenges, topics, interests, modes of production and circulation of community cinema; identity and experiential motivations for the conformation of community cinema groups. From the conversation these questions prompted, the students to draw interesting insights, the reading and marking of said outputs provided significance for my following observations.

I develop the debate as the intersectional site in which the three campuses (teaching, researching, and divulging) coincided, opening a window of "occurrence". The campus of teaching actualized itself in the debate because the previous reflexion on the subject (filmography, bibliography and the advances of my own research process) made available to the students during our classes, awoke in them enquiries regarding this field of cultural production and a self-reflexion about their own social role as communicators. This is the

intense matter that inspire them to raise questions during the encounter with local and national producers and exhibitors of community cinema.

The research aspect manifested at the moment of the debate, since the very presence of the invited community cinema producers and exhibitors resulted from previous fieldwork where I established links with such referents. Another form in which my research presented itself during the debate was on my coordinator's role by guiding the direction of relevant themes and by conciliating different points of view to draw answers to the main topic of our encounter.

The divulgation created was a site of meaning construction in the moment of the debate too. First, because the wide call the debate had among students (from this and other careers), and from the public, broaden the socio-cultural reach of the topics at stake outside the walls of the Faculty of Communication Sciences. Second, because this was an activity inserted within a greater event. Such insertion was intended to epistemologically install our debate within the current discussions in Journalism and Communication Studies, that is, as a field of research or gnoseological arena. Third, the repercussion of the debate topics was installed chronologically by the Biennale's timeline. This was because, as a recurrent encounter, this national event keeps a book of proceedings where retrospective consultation reveals a history of topics and events, and therefore, this debate entry on the Biennale's records becomes chronologically referential as a testimony of new emergent concepts and epistemological turns in the field.

C. The Occurrence

From this intersectionality, what I observed as brought forth by occurrence is the actualization of an intersubjective dynamic in a process of knowledge legitimation. Understanding 'legitimacy' as 'social acknowledgement' of the discourse of knowledge as it holds true content, we speak of a type of legitimacy that is accepted by the academic and cultural communities based on a taken for granted nod to the authority that dictated so. What the debate showed was that at that very instant there were two forms of knowledge circulating: that carried out by the academic curriculum of audio-visual studies in national universities, and other forms of knowledge found in the agency and production experiences of the community cinema groups. This raises the following questions: how does community cinema legitimate its own practical knowledge within academic curricula of audio-visual studies? Also, in what way does academic training in audio-visual studies legitimate the experiences of community cinema productions? Answers can be found understanding this moment as a tension between emergencies and continuities.

1. On Continuities

We speak of a paradigmatic distance between our students' vital circumstances and the production models taught by university curricula, where knowledge about narrative strategies and ways of production are those belonging to a hegemonic system of production. The fallacy faced by students in developing countries such as Argentina is that even though they/we may learn the specifics of this model they/we do not have access to practice it, as a result they/we remain as its consumers which unfailingly means that we are also its epistemological reproducers. What the pedagogical reproduction of this model brings forth too is an ethical dimension related to profit and efficiency over content, which is typical of a commercial production. In the end, this dimension conveys ontological values that, at the level of creation promotes in the student's ideas of individual success, competition and the existence of an exceptional genius that rules the work and input of other members involved in the creative process. At the level of the message, these values prompt the notion of that content only matters as a competitive product in the entertainment market. And at the level of the subject's representation, these values endorse that representation is inclusive of centred individuals only and that there is no responsibilities for the other great part of the population traditionally made invisible by socio-economic, aesthetic, ethical and gender related power patterns of inclusion/exclusion. All in all, the ethical background of this knowledge so far legitimated by academic instruction on audio-visual production reproduced not only a dominant aesthetic but also, inevitably, ethics of the coloniality of power which, from within the legitimated circuits of academic institutional knowledge, has been colonising knowledge and the construction of being.

Thus, the curricular inclusion of knowledge about the agency and production processes of community cinema groups brings forth a paradigmatic change (a new campus, following Bourdieu, 1994) that questions also the students' habitus (Bourdieu, 1994). This is so because other possible modes of production are opened to their attention, which are materially and symbolically based on different ethical foundations: those of collective and collaborative discourse construction. These production modes are based on solidarity, material and symbolic resources exchange, mutual assistance and collective authorship. They deal with social conflicts without fear of unsuccessful marketing or hegemonic media's ideological political censorship. Therefore, they address controversial topics, while the production process of the message itself constitutes an ethical re-generation. This is so because the intersubjective dynamics at play at the moment of message production and circulation entail a process of group reflection and collective healing regarding the represented topics as they are approached through collective strength. The exposure to 'other forms' of knowledge entering the students' cognitive universe, may constitute a change in their ethical horizon which in turn

influences their future discursive praxes as communication professionals. Hence, the opening to the new knowledge brought by community cinema offers the students the opportunity to choose a way of viewing themselves as future communicators and creators of ethical-aesthetic synergies that can ultimately legitimate another project for society, a decolonial paradigm.

Questioning the campus in which power is reproduced through hegemonic technical and rhetorical strategies, would be impossible in an academic scenario which has no ethical porosities, such as private schools of media studies, or other more orthodox university's platforms. Fortunately, the classroom experience which includes the production and agency of community cinema groups to the Audio-visual workshop curricula maintains its pedagogical tradition sustained since 1998. As such, in the 1997's foundational program of this permanent workshop, Vidal and Loyola (1997) declared that their teaching strategy revolves around the following axes of meaning.

Firstly, the deconstruction of the audio-visual universe and its stereotypes (one which is a substantial part of students' habitus) which allows for critical viewpoints with the potential to become original representations. Also, emphasised the authors, these new viewpoints can hopefully free the students from repeating hegemonic narratives and encourage them to create stories that can be alternatives to those which constitute, every day, the self-legitimizing frame of power.

Secondly, a link with local production stems from the first axis of meaning. That is, since the students have shifted away from the role of consumer/reproducer of hegemonic discourses, they can start to put their acquired knowledge into use in their immediate environment. As such, my pedagogical approach to reflecting upon community cinema's forms of production-circulation, with its occurrences as a construction of new meanings and idiosyncrasies that are able to attend the immediate surroundings of the producer subjects, certainly found in the Audio-visual workshop of the National University of Cordoba, an institutionalised forum of legitimation. This is so, because not only my visiting teacher/researcher activities have coincided with the original premise of this paper, but also since such epistemology manifests in the community cinema producers' population, when observing the imprint this workshop had in democratizing communications throughout the past 22 years. I am a witness to that as I was part of these foundational conversations in 1997, then a teacher until 2000 and, twenty years after, as a practice-based researcher studying the dynamics of legitimization from my role as a visiting lecturer/researcher in 2019-2020.

So, as I stated in Chapter 1, community cinema from Córdoba has been boosted by the University of Cordoba's advanced students and graduates. Thus, by asking former students, who today are representatives of community cinema, to return to the classroom, the Faculty of

Communication Sciences generated a space to enhance the visibility of community cinema. This is a strong acknowledgement of the direct impact a public university can have on the legitimation processes of other forms of knowledge. This could be its potential for transforming society and it is something the students feel empowered about as they recognize themselves within a transformative learning environment. This is a form of decolonial aesthetics, because by pulling away from hegemonic aesthetics in audio-visual production this pedagogical dynamic has triggered awareness of the ethical repercussions associated with such a model. The reflexive process shows the students a path to use the learned audio-visual language and techniques to engage in current social issues (collective claims and identity endeavours) occurring in their own territories of influence. This tension shown by the debate as “occurrence” reveals a dynamic of continuity with the Faculty of Communication Studies Audio-visual Language Workshops’ pedagogical project.

2. On Emergences

Briefly, I believe that what emerges from this tension with academic knowledge, for the benefit of community cinema as a field of meaning production and as a discursive device for paradigmatic change, is a renewed power of hegemonic negotiation. As an occurrence, such emergence was present in the debate because the public appearance of the different community groups of Córdoba can be counted as one of the first in the process of consolidation of what came to be called *La mesa (red) de cine social y comunitario de Córdoba*. I believe that this civil association, whose name translates, as Córdoba’s table (network) of social and community cinema, can be best understood (as per its functioning and relationships) simply as a “network”²². I have dedicated ‘Case two’ of my autoethnographic active writings to delve into its intersubjective dynamics and occurrences in the dynamic of hegemonic struggle, now as an ecosystem of meaning construction sustained on the critical borderisation of knowledge.

II. Case Two: Social and Community Cinema Network of Córdoba, an Ecosystem of Meaning Production

Introduction

In this case I examine an ecosystem of meaning production created by the organizational interaction of producers-exhibitors of Córdoba’s community cinema to form Córdoba’s Network of Social and Community Cinema. As stated in this chapter’s introduction, the focus of this

²² “The table” as a space for debates and negotiations, as a horizontal decision-making territory relates to Argentina’s unionist tradition, also during the redemocratization process “tables” were relevant as such. I am not certain if this translate to English in the same way, therefore I call it “the network” because its mutually dependable interrelation dynamics is self-explanatory

exploration was on the interpretation of such network's activities as technological appropriations operating as praxes of Decolonial pedagogy

Let me start by agreeing with Walsh's concept (2005) of "critical borderisation of knowledge" as an approach to socio-political praxis in which academic knowledge (as well as the technical/artistic expertise of a given field) is put to the service of emancipatory actions of subaltern groups. The epistemological rationale for these forms of borderisation, has been described by Walsh (2005) as "critical interculturality" and it can be adopted to define the discursive practice of community cinema. As such, Critical Interculturality is an enhancement (by the very subaltern subjects once they become producers of meaning) of their knowledge, identities and aesthetics, which have been made invisible by the onto-epistemological channels of reproduction of coloniality of power (coloniality of knowledge, being and seeing). As this exploration has taught me, such enactment is the result of an onto-epistemological process through which the subaltern becomes a producer of meaning. Such process involves the political-pedagogical task of intercultural facilitators (agents able to create cultural and knowledge bridges of mutual understanding). Such dynamics of critical borderisation of knowledge is in turn inserted within the network of material and immaterial relations that work towards the realization of a Decolonial paradigm.

In the previous section I autoethnographically analysed another case through the perspective of the political-pedagogical task of community cinema acting from the perspective of the frontier critical thinking. I am advancing in this case study to concentrate on the network of material and immaterial relations set to work among groups celebrating this form of borderisation of knowledge towards the realization of a Decolonial paradigm. The intersection among community cinema's networking dynamics in which I see a window of occurrence opening highlights the multiple roles of intercultural facilitators within an ecosystem of meaning production.

As I proposed at the beginning of the chapter, the conversations I review are being analysed at the tripartite analytical level of interpretative aesthesis and corresponds to the discursive practice and representation of space. These are my lenses to observe dynamics of debate and inter-organizational networking towards effective changes in Cordoba's community cinema condition of production/circulation. As a refraction of this discursive practice, I will also look at the Network's impact on social practice (represented space, aesthesis re-nourishment) concerning the paradigm. So, my data at the "interpretation aesthesis" are the group and individual interviews. For the observation through the aesthesis re-nourishment, (the social impact of their doings), I will comment on events in which I have been a participant observer between 2019 and 2020.

These field of examination have been accessed through video-recorded non-structured interviews and participant observation. Another site of exploration, (especially during the pandemic restriction of 2020-2021), has been their online meetings, debates and festivals, their social media profiles and film database.

A. Network's Basic Structure, Objectives

When carrying out my field research on the Network of Social and Community Cinema from Córdoba (2019-2020), the first observation was that the connected organizations focused on different areas of community cinema's production-circulation process. The second was that all these different activities responded to the same teleological motive: to strengthen, from the field of the cultural production, resistance against the neoliberal rationale by contributing to the process of visibility of alternative knowledges, experiences and narratives. After my video recordings, I realized these cultural producers were aware of their own synergy contributing to a renewed ethical-epistemological ecosystem. I followed then the route in which this groups' performance reterritorialized socio-symbolical praxes, up to then, co-opted by neoliberal rationale.

Starting with their practices, it can be observed that the organizations connected to the Network were established independently between 15 and 10 years ago and that they have been active since then. In 2019, I witnessed the process in which they consolidated as a network to carry out coordinated activities that ensure the fulfilment of the four specific objectives.

1. To install the Network as a social actor in relation to the State and other institutions, organizations and guilds by generating mechanisms of sustainability of community cinema as a territory of meaning production.
2. To conduct audio-visual training, creative and reflective practices as a political-pedagogical action that supports "other" knowledges (coming from identity, ethnical and social minorities) as well as emergent activism fostering social justice claims against the State.
3. To encourage the social inclusion of "other" knowledges (coming from identity, ethnic and social minorities) by opening showcasing instances in which their production becomes visible as a form of socio-historical vindication.
4. To theoretically and practically form human resources that can reproduce and advance their teleology (an activity linked to objectives #1 and #3)

To achieve these objectives, they follow four courses of action:

1. First Course of Action:

I observed that the Network's activities were carried beyond its inner functioning to ensure community cinema's sustainability as a territory of meaning production. Here I recognize four main activities:

- i. Getting involved in the State's decision-making process that acknowledges community cinema as a field of cultural production (therefore, worthy of funding).

An example is the presentation of the project "Province's grant to the integral production of community produced audio-visual content" submitted in 2020 to the Institute of Audio-Visual Production (Polo Audio-visual), Cultural Agency, Government of Cordoba. The project was approved in July 2021, so far it has had four editions and supported the possibilities of production of almost 35 projects, which make visible diverse stories and identity perspectives, strengthen community endeavours of sovereignty over their voices and territories. This new cosmos of meanings is already part of the corpus of Argentinean national cinema. This experience has served as a precedent for an even larger conquest that has been reached through its insertion into Cordoba's Network into the RACC (Argentinean Community Cinema Network). As such the last few years of RACC institutional movements have, in a project presented through the National Institute of Cinema and Audio-Visual Arts (a National Government body), to develop a national funding program for the strengthening of community cinema. The authorities launching this program have acknowledged the successful public policies developed in provinces such as Cordoba, which foster community cinema production and that the National State, through INCAA, now makes the commitment to sustain and continue. Therefore, as per March 2023 this program is effective and carries the name of the pioneer of community cinema, also known as "the father of the Latin American Cinema", Fernando Birri. I see how practically and symbolically Cordoba's Network carry out their actions within a meaning ecosystem that also recognizes its genealogy as well as its contemporary goals toward democratization of culture and the perceptibility of diversity.



Figure 35: Images retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/mesa.csc/?hl=es> [Network of Social and Community Cinema representatives signing contract with “The Audiovisual Pole” (Government support fund to community audiovisual content production)].

- ii. Expanding the reach of their meanings constructions by linking with other local and national associations to strength their pledges.

The example at this level is undoubtedly Cordoba’s Network insertion into the RACC (Argentinean network of community cinema) since such positioning has expanded their legal possibilities (as observed in A) but also, enriches learning, exchange and collaboration. For instance, the Network’s participation in RACC’s yearly event: “Plurinational Encounter of Community Cinemas” offers the local community cinema referents, the chance to reach conversations in depth and training in the specific approaches they may locally be working on, such as, indigenous cinema, mental health, diversities, feminism, interculturality.²³ There are national debates where local producers can bring up issues on production-circulation, as well as projects for the betterment of visibility, social impact, and representation of minorities. This

²³ Plurinational refers to a state where multiple nations coexist and is often advocated for by Indigenous peoples.

space opens the screens to the production of the whole community cinema sector of the country and is therefore a fantastic avenue for intercultural exchanges and collaborations.

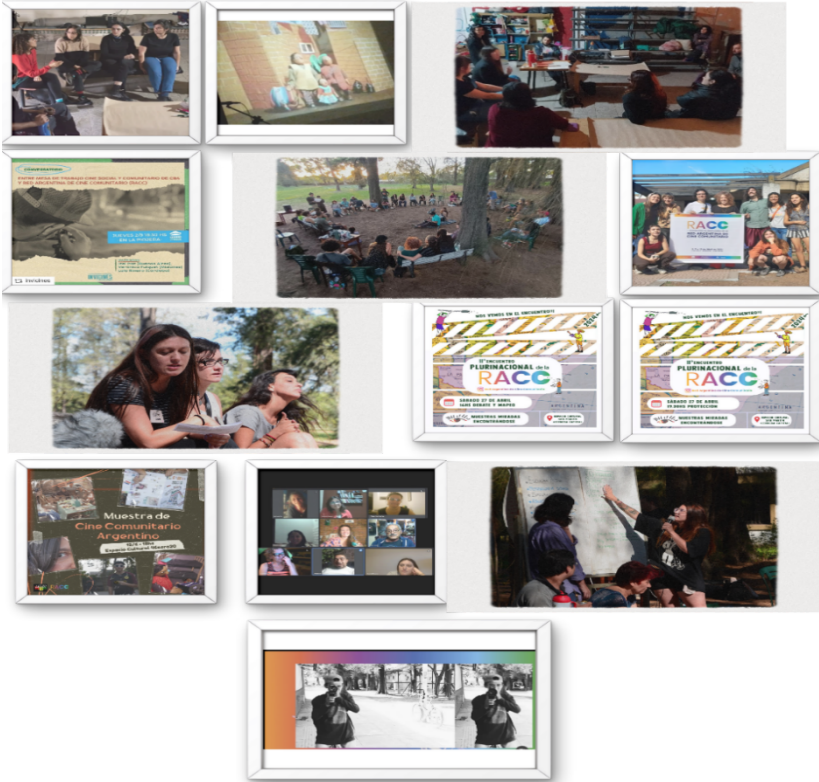


Figure 36: Images retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/mesa.csc/?hl=es>. [Regional meetings, National encounters and Exhibitions carried out by Cordoba's Network of Social and Community Cinema as part of the RACC (Argentinean Network of Community).

RACC also offers a yearly encounter for youth participating in workshops, collectives or Institutions involved in community cinema. A meeting is held in a different city each year and young participants in local workshops (among whom are some of Cordoba's organizations) also have the chance to take part in audio-visual production workshops, screenings and debates to reflect on their own territorial praxes. Cordoba's Workshop also collaborates with the RACC as this organization links with national universities in other provinces to organize, through their network of television channels, the circulation and exhibition of national community cinema productions. As per their institutional local connections it is worth emphasizing that, as each organization in the Cordoba's Network has, in the most part, a producer profile, they have reached the state of production, of being community cinema, and have already collaborated and linked with many institutions. This is true even when counting on the Province's grant referred to in A (as Polo Audio-visual). It is common to see their films promoted as an invitation extended by the participant foundations, guilds, associations and organizations that have contributed to its production. These institutions link by proxy with Cordoba's Network and become part of their ecosystem of meaning. I state an example of a

flyer circulating in Cordoba’s Network’s social media profile to demonstrate the interconnection of values, endeavours and practical collaborations put in play within such ecosystem: “Moving Mountains’ Foundation and Carlos Mujica’s Mutual invite you to the presentation of the film *The Strength*.²⁴ The film, produced by the Community Cinema Workshop, and conducted with the youth participating in the priest, Mariano Oberlin’s therapy centre in the Neighbourhood of Muller, Cordoba. The piece counted on the support of the Polo Audio-visual grant. The screening location was: “The Centre for Communitary training and promotion”, The collective (the youth, the organizations involved and the audio-visual the facilitators) stated the following in their post:

In this Cinema workshop we learnt the importance of teamwork for the divulgation of our beliefs and wishes about the reality that surrounds us. It allowed us to debate and think about other possible representations of the world that involve our position towards social conflicts and social imaginaries. Community cinema facilitates processes of social transformation and enunciates new positions as forms of resistance” (Participant My translation)

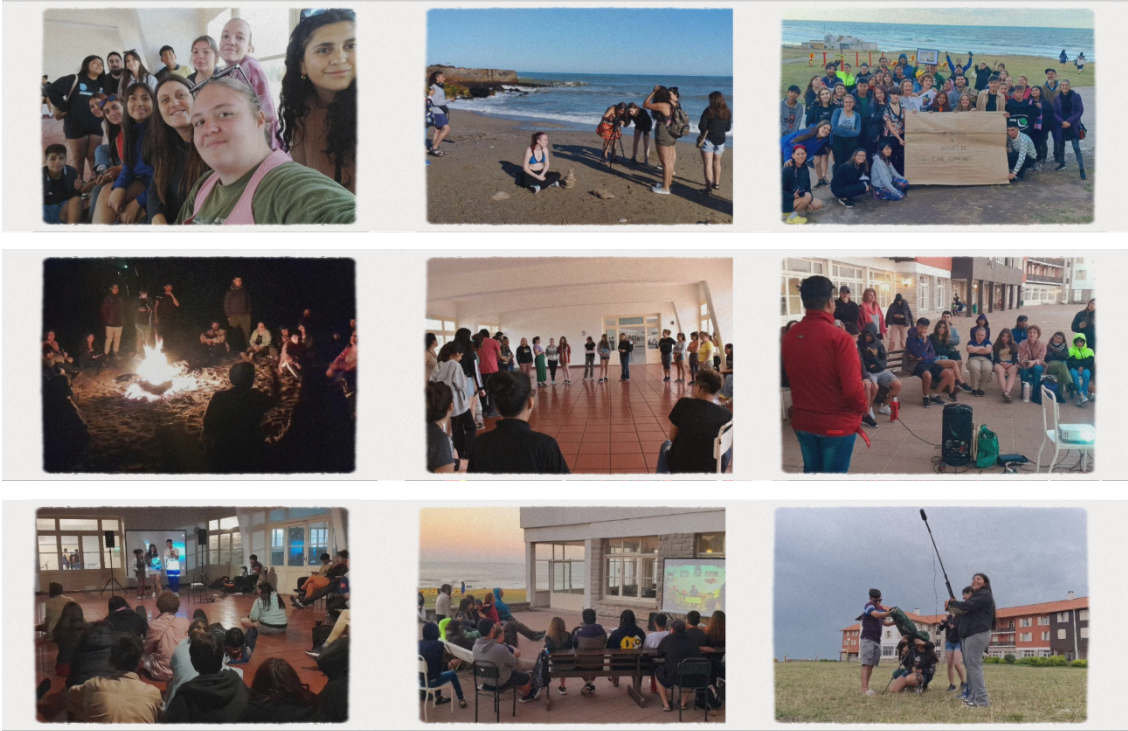


Figure 37: RACC Images retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/mesa.csc/?hl=es>. [Argentinean Network of Community Cinema’s National youth encounter, Mar del Plata, Buenos Aires]

²⁴ There is a meaningful reference in the name of the Mutual “Carlos Mujica” (1930- 1974) who was an Argentine priest founder of the Third World priests’ movement that practiced the Theology of the People. He was an activist in the popular struggle from the 1960s to his death at the hands of the Triple A (Anti-communist Argentinean Alliance which used paramilitary assassination squadrons as the armed hand of the extreme right).

- iii. Connecting with the Public University as a field of epistemological legitimization of their field of production.

One example is Córdoba Network's institutional relationship with the Public University, especially through their connection with the Faculty of Arts. The Network links with this academic territory by: iii. a) making the Faculty's premises their point of reunion; iii. b) cooperating with the Faculty towards the launching of an online platform to broadcast community cinema's audio-visual production (comunacine.artes.unc.edu.ar); and, as per year 2023, iii. c) training qualified human resources through a Diploma in Community Audio-visual project management and design. The Extension Secretary of the Faculty of Arts highlights in the presentation of the website and the Diploma that it is paramount for the public university to articulate with these community-based modes of artistic productions as they exist and resist in society. The Faculty acknowledge this by linking their socio-symbolic territories to its own careers and teaching-learning processes. This is the University's contribution to the diversity, visibility and legitimacy of community-based productions. From these bases, there have been many other interactions such as the Socio Educative Praxes in Community Cinema, sponsored by a Chair of Audio-Visual production at the School of Cinema (Faculty of Arts), in coordination with the extension secretary of the Faculty of Arts. The activity was a debate based on three socio-educational praxes on community cinema's experiences carried out in other provinces. Another ongoing link is the yearly assignment on community cinema placed by the same Chair, which challenges the students to 'take to the streets' and commit to work alongside minority collectives. I see here how community cinema knowledge and praxis keep nurturing university-led learning and as feedback to university knowledge, keeps strengthening the community cinema's meaning ecosystem.



Figure 38: TVET, (2019). Photographs from video recordings. First meeting of consolidation of the Córdoba's Network of Social and Community Cinema. Faculty of Arts, National University of Córdoba, August 2019.



Figure 39: Images retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/mesa.csc/?hl=es> [Graphics from the online community cinema platform housed at the Faculty of Arts, National University of Córdoba's website]



Figure 40: Images retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/mesa.csc/?hl=es> [Activities in the 2024 Diploma in Community Cinema programme at the Faculty of Arts, National University of Córdoba]

2. Second Course of Action

Within Córdoba Network's activities devoted to audio-visual non-formal education in community settings, I find two groups of actors I distinguished by similarity of objectives, methods and production dynamics:

- i- Community cinema organizations conducting audio-visual teaching and production workshops aimed at children and youth residing in slum dwelling conditions (villas).²⁵

Within these working dynamics, film and media facilitators' efforts synchronize with those of the non-profit organization that hosts them. These workshops, therefore, in keeping with the organizations' values and goals, which basically focus on social equity, communication democracy, the promotion of popular culture as well as the awareness of a territorial and communitarian identity. The Audio-visual workshop tutors help youths to make objective -and later, to portray- their own living circumstances within a socio-cultural scenario. In their production, while representing their quotidian stories and surroundings, what emerges in the youth is an awareness of the conditioning power relations that rule their living circumstances. They learn also about the technical and rhetorical power of audio-visual language, in preparation for a future self-representation. Within this group, I recognize the following examples:

- Workshop for children of "Villa el Libertador"
- School of Visual Arts of "Campo de la Ribera"
- Community cinema Rimbombante
- Joint hands in "Villa Baquita Echada"
- Cinema workshop of "Villa La Maternidad"
- Filming community art at "Villa La tela"
- Ojotropo

²⁵ "Villas" designate a form of slum dwelling neighbourhoods established through decades as a territorial occupation of public lands located on the periphery of big cities. The settlements lack electric power, drinkable water or sewer services. Being illiterate and unemployed, complete families (including children) survive poverty by begging or working in the unstable informal sector. This lifestyle conditions and reproduces family and social violence as well as criminality and substance abuse. Since the seventies non-profit organizations (coming from political or religious backgrounds) have worked in situ to better these life circumstances by fostering literacy programs, and encouraging the conformation of cooperatives and civil associations to defend their civil rights.



Figure 41: Images retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/mesa.csc/?hl=es> [online presentation of community cinema groups discussed in 2.i]



Figure 42: Images retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/mesa.csc/?hl=es> [Audio-visual production process of the Community cinema group 'Ojotropo' for the film Here comes the train (2023) funded by "Audio-visual Pole"]

ii. Production groups in which audio-visual specialists and activists advocating for existing social and identity causes, collaborate by situating the social claim as a theme of the audio-visual creation.

In the praxis, the audio-visual specialists are also organizers and agents of social demonstrations, which they record and later use for audio-visual claims. Some examples attending problematics around ecology, economy and identity are:

- The Colective (*La Colectiva*): Seeking to reduce gender inequality, the production teams involve mainly women's cooperatives and other gender diverse participants.
- South Pinilla Documentary Network (*Red Documental de Punilla Sur*): formed by journalists and audio-visual makers reporting events related to police violence. They accompany the victims' families supporting their claims from audio-visual production.
- Kaleidoscope Cooperative of Audio-visual Work (*Caleidoscopio Cooperativa de Trabajo Audio-visual*): LGBTI discourse activists with a photography and cinema making background approaching gender-sensitive topics through audio-visual production workshops in underprivileged neighbourhoods.
- The Agora (*El ágora*): A civil association that advocates social transformation aimed at equity, solidarity and the deepening of democracy. They use community cinema's production workshops to document and validate social practices that actively struggle to lay down their core values.



Figure 43: TVET, (2019). [Documentary Network of South Punilla led by Martin Jacuto preparing their demonstration in protest of Police abuses, Carlos Paz, February, 2019]



Figure 44: Images retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/mesa.csc/?hl=es> [online presentation of community cinema groups discussed in 2.ii]

- I elaborate briefly on the next group to exemplify the work pattern common to all the organizations mentioned above in this category: “Community cinema Unquillo” (*Cine comunitario Unquillo*) is a group of residents from different towns in the mountainous ranges (Sierras Chicas) of Cordoba, involved in fictional and documentary productions-circulation and networking to denounce misappropriations of natural resources. This group amalgamates Human Science researchers, film and media studies graduates and Neighbours with non-academic or audio-visual experience). On a regular basis they learn about the rudiments of audio-visual language and discuss the pertinence of social themes to be approached by their production. In general, their productions revolve around the consequences of corrupt patrimonial administration, which allows deforestation (and resulting flooding) by turning a blind eye to forest fires, as they are intentionally provoked to secure millionaire real-estate deals as part of a gentrification process in the area. Through Cine comunitario Unquillo, local environmental activism made a political appropriation of audio-visual technologies to discursively intervene in the

market representations of space that portray the area as a 'golf course' for privileged commuters in Cordoba's city.



Figure 45: TVET, (2019). Photographs. [Community Cinema Unquillo during workshop activities led by Matias Deon]. Last two pictures, retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/mesa.csc/?hl=es> from film exhibitions.

3. Third Course of Action

I find the Network's activities are focused on guaranteeing the exhibition of social and community cinema productions in collective, cooperative and associative contexts. This means for the most part, creating new avenues of circulation beyond commercial circuits of cinema and television. By virtue of their specific characteristics, I divided these activities into four sub-groups:

i. INVICINES International Film Festival of Social and Community Cinema:

INVICINES (a *portmanteau* for *el cine de los invisibles*, the invisible ones' cinema) is a cinema festival that, for ten years has been exhibiting national and international social and community audio-visual work. This festival provides, as well, a space for debates and plenaries aimed at collective reflection and social action. What is powerful about this festival is its collective and heterogeneous exhibiting conditions, which conjugates, within the same space, the different

perspectives (gender, social class, human rights, ethnic) community productions take to speak about their living conditions. This is its intercultural potency, because it is precisely that diversity that they all have in common, beyond being productions made out of the communities' human and material resources. INVICINES is, therefore, a space to negotiate and legitimate the representation of "other" identities with the hegemonic discourse but also among diversities or otherness. For the spectator who attended in support of or by belonging to one of the exhibiting groups, this festival opens other body-political perspectives that are, like them, also made invisible. This acknowledgement brings these viewers back from the periphery of meaning where the market had cast them, moreover, it returns to them a sense of belonging to a diverse collective where they are no longer alone. The above mentioned intersubjective dynamic also ripples out into an inter-organizational one. This has to do with the debate or plenary format of the presented movies, because it occurs at the moment in which production groups exchange experience with the public. They also communicate the objectives and values shared with their hosting or partner non-profit organizations where their audio-visual projects were conceived. Such dynamic facilitates the sharing of experiences and outlooks among organizations; this provides a platform for the visibility of common issues and for the collective planning of solutions. Finally, it serves as a criteria-unifying space for counter-hegemonic action and political-collective practices.

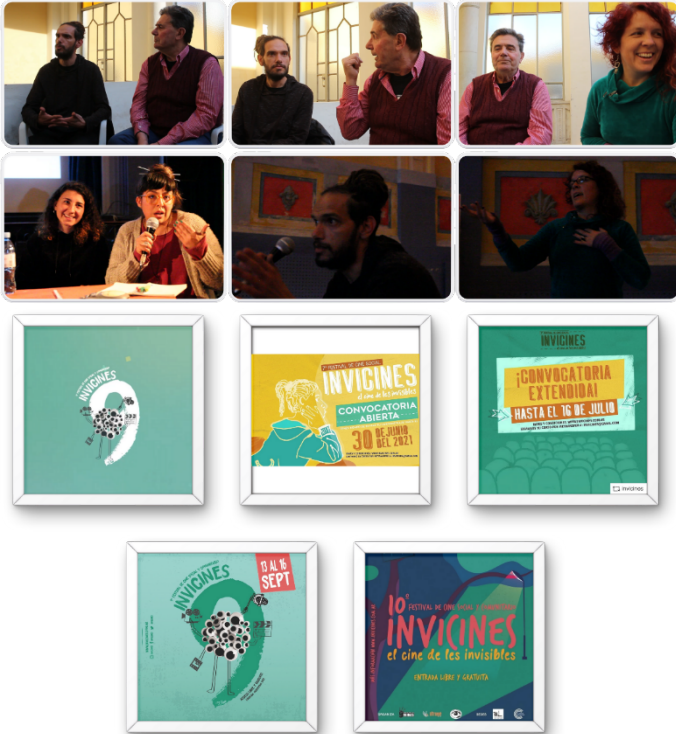


Figure 46: TVET, (2019). Photograms from video recordings [interviews with Festival directors Carolina Rojo, Rodrigo del Canto y Juan Jos Gorazurreta, and public presentations during the 8th INVICINES Film Festival, September 2019.

ii. ACCOR, Asociación de Cineastas de Córdoba (Filmmakers' Association of Córdoba):

ACCOR is a group that has been working towards the promotion and dissemination of Córdoba's independent filmmaking since the seventies. The octogenarian members were in the seventies cultural agents involved in left wing filmmaking endeavours, until the dictatorship persecuted, censored, exiled and incarcerated them. On the return of democracy, the survivors rejoined the association as ACCORD, established in 1984 and it has been active for 40 years. Its platform sets out to promote audio-visual activity by the development, production and exhibition of local projects. Moreover, it works in association and collaboration with other actors from the audio-visual sphere in Córdoba (professionals, semi-professionals and amateurs). Although some of their work overlaps with that of community cinema groups, ACCOR does not exclusively deal with community cinema. Yet, it is a member of the Network of Social and Community Cinema and, in my opinion, a fundamental ethical-historical figure for the existence of such.

ACCOR is, indeed, a true banner in the re-territorialisation of a counter-hegemonic discourse with which to intervene in the cultural battle (Gramsci, 1971 [1929-1935]) from the performative possibilities of audio-visual language. Firstly, the association was behind the re-opening of the Cinema and TV Department of the Faculty of Arts after it had been closed during the de facto civic-military government (1976-1983). Secondly, many of its members configured the faculty staff that educated those who today are teachers at National Universities' Cinema or Communication programmers, which is my role. They also raised the number of Córdoba's professional directors, producers, scriptwriters, photographers, curators that today work nationally and internationally carrying out their ethical foundations. Some of them are, too, the audio-visual facilitators and coordinators at most of the community production groups. For instance, influential exhibitors and documentary maker such as INVICINES' creator/director, Carolina Rojo; or Cine Comunitario Uniquillo's referent, Matías Deón, are among them. Thirdly, ACCOR was influential in the enactment of the Ley de Cine (Cinema Law) of the province of Córdoba. Today, such law still regulates and allows for the material development of many cinematographic projects. This law is a precedent for the new conquests made in matters of funding community cinema production. Finally, ACCOR has had a political agenda from the very beginning, since it was created by a group of filmmakers associated with leftist political activism during the 1970's. Thus, within the Network of Social and Community Cinema, ACCOR is a leading figure with regard to political, institutional, pedagogical and legal matters of independent cinema. As a member in the Córdoba Network, it is not a paternalistic authority, but an entity still horizontally working in current affairs. Their presence endows Córdoba's

Network with a genealogical and epistemological reference strengthening with that its capillaries, extending not only to a present struggle for the configuration of a meaning ecosystem, but also, towards the memory of a territory already ploughed by historical resistance.



Figure 47: TVET, (2019). Photographs from video recordings [Formative activities during the National Encounter of ACCOR, School of Film Studies, Faculty of Arts, National University of Cordoba. Arturo Borio, Raquel Claramonte, Marta de la Vega, Luis Imof

iii. “Cinema takes up the square”

It is formed by workers from the audio-visual artistic sphere, in coordination with National University of Cordoba’s Faculty of Arts to exhibit national cinema in underprivileged neighbourhoods (squares and halls). Their work is to bring together national cinematographic productions and subaltern sectors that, for economic or personal reasons, do not usually go to cinema theatres where this type of cinema is exhibited. I suggest that, both in a critical and practical sense, such an itinerant way of exhibiting national cinema “door to door”, constitutes a praxis of decolonial pedagogy.

As independent and non-commercial productions, the exhibited films do not cover up their political stance nor do they. As such, “cinema takes the square” brings sensitive content that, in many cases, concerns the social sectors to which the subjects-audience belong. The interventions of “cinema takes the square” can derive into audience interest for the production of meanings through audio-visual production. This, in turn, can prompt spectators to join other

production groups of community cinema with which Cinema takes the square is associated within the Network of Social and Community Cinema or try to organize their own enlarging of the network. Re-nourishments of meanings in the sphere of represented space or paradigm is therefore a matter of intervention of the reproducing dynamics of Coloniality of knowledge, being, and seeing. For instance, when observing the kind of cultural consumption of these audience: news programs, commercial films, TV series, and soap operas, I realize they are all uncontested hegemonic representation of space, they unconsciously and passively reproduce. What "Cinema takes the square" does is to break that dynamic by introducing another universe of meaning which awakens critical representations of space and therefore of their own onto-epistemological mapping. In other words, it provides an opportunity for the audiences to critically revise their own subaltern situation as a geo-historical path embedded in a web of power/knowledge relations. Such conscience turns them into active critical thinkers and the very existence of the itinerant exhibition announces to them their possibility of becoming content producers.

This takes us to the semio-practical aspect by which I argue that this group's activity assists in the praxis of decolonial pedagogy. The practice of meaning production, which results from the decentralisation of hegemonic pedagogical practices, derives from the very exhibiting conditions. This is so because exhibition takes place in public squares, and, as such, these exhibitions and consequent debates become an appropriation of public space to install a new universe of meaning. Let us remember that public squares are traditionally, -and in Argentina even more, given the historical Human Rights discursive appropriations of public squares as territory of memory's resistance, a turf for ideological-political struggle. "Cinema take the squares" is therefore tapping into the geo-historical political potential of public squares as territories of cultural battle. This is the decolonial semio-practical instance because, since the moment of conquest of public space, the film themes, the topics arising in the debates as well as their own collective presence acquire altogether the status of social performance as powerful as a political demonstration. This intersubjective re-construction of collective meanings is twice as meaningful if the exhibiting film has been produced by a local community cinema group, which frequently occurs.



Figure 48: Image retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/mesa.csc/?hl=es> [online presentation of “Cinema take the squares”]

iv. Córdoba Network’s own circulation avenues

Since 2019, The Network has organized numerous instances for the circulation of its own organization’s production. I can differentiate three different types of activities. First, those that take thematic axes and summon the public around a subject (for instance Community cinema and Mental Health; Community cinema and Feminisms). These exhibitions normally take place within other collective events surrounding the topics of interest. For instance, in the Encounter of Feminist organizations, Córdoba Network presents an exhibition curated as “Community cinema, feminisms and territories”. In these cases, the Network expands its links to other organizations committed to specific causes that are not necessarily involved in community cinema but agree with their teleological objective. Therefore, this encounter raises the attention of these other organizations and perhaps the community cinema productions are invited to exhibit at their organizations or even a new project or new production workshop arises from this new epistemological exchange. This is how the Network extends its territoriality and with that enlarges the margins of the ecosystem of meaning that it professes.



Figure 49: Image retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/mesa.csc/?hl=es> [Cordoba’s network involvement in other organizations’ events and exhibitions move to participate teleological kinship]

Second, those that engage in online distribution for the sake of enlarging the audiences, by creating its own platform or by outsourcing curated selections to be exhibited through other university platforms or by other online national or international festivals. Another online engagement emerged as an occurrence during the pandemic when social confinement prohibited presential exhibitions and debates. Therefore, complete film festivals were undertaken in this modality. One example was the sarcastic cycle “Get infected by Cinema” that ran editions in 2020 and 2021. The online film exhibitions were also territories for debates that strengthen the relationships with members from remote provincial locations, and even with referents from other provinces. This format allowed the Network to continue with the process of meaning production involved in screening and debating works, as well as in setting the basis for production conditions (funding, coproduction, new creative ideas). Online formatting was also a moment to export the collective works to other latitudes by opening YouTube channels. Returning to the purpose of decolonial pedagogy and decolonial aesthetics, these new circuits of online community cinema permeated the hegemonic platforms such as YouTube with new alternative content and created new intercultural and inter-institutional connections and activism among communities.



Figure 50: Image retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/mesa.csc/?hl=es> [Cordoba's network involvement outsourcing curated selections to be exhibited through other university platforms or by other online national or international festivals]

Third, the last form of production circulation relates to The Network’s teleology at large. This is the level at which the Network uses its collectively produced corpus to support cultural causes with which to reterritorialize the represented space (or paradigm) with alternative meanings. The case I use is The Network’s involvement in the reopening of the historical theatre *La Piojera* (the lice nest) located in the legendary neighbourhood of Alberdi. Alberdi has been since the turn of the nineteenth century a student neighbourhood, in which the world relevant University Reform of 1918 was conceived. Alberdi has been since the territory of working class

struggles and social conquests, scenario of revolutions, legendary demonstrations, sites of political struggles. Its theatre was its emblem, one that the neoliberal state cut off and managed to throw into oblivion and decadence. The theatre was abandoned and as a part the twenty-first century's new movements of civil power recovery, the project of returning the theatre to its former glory was a collective goal not without a fight that lasted 15 years. The historical struggle of Alberdi's neighbours for the government's economic support to reconstruct the traditional theatre finally paid off and in August 2019 the theatre was inaugurated. The Córdoba Network of Community and Social Cinema celebrated the first group collective exhibition there, and since, *La Piojera* has become a recurrent site for their cinema cycles, debates, festivals and workshops. This is yet another example in which The Network spreads teleological roots over other processes of re-territorialisation with which they share a teleology. Such rooting is another semio-practical expansion of its ecosystem of meaning.

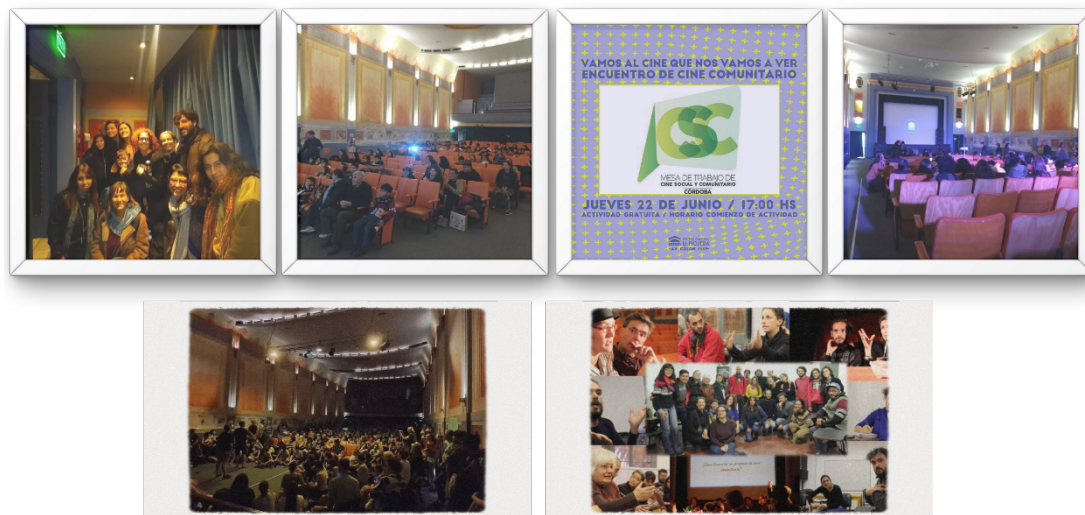


Figure 51: TVET, (2019). [First exhibition of the Córdoba's Network in La Piojera, Alberdi, Córdoba July 2019] this compilation also shows Image retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/mesa.csc/?hl=es> showing how La Piojera has become a recurrent site

4. Fourth and last course of action

I identified activities of technical/theoretical training for the formation of community cinema group coordinators in the first and the third course of action: formal education, as in the Diploma in Community Audio-visual project management and design carried out alongside the Faculty Arts of the National University of Córdoba, or, in shorter more informal settings, such as the ones offered during INVICINES' Film Festival, the RACC, or by the symposiums organized by my ACCORD, these trainings have a political-pedagogical potential, since they help social workers as well as media enthusiasts to take a critical stance towards the emancipatory possibilities of their work as non-formal teachers of audio-visual language.

B. Integrated Observations

For an overview on Córdoba's community cinema as a territory of meaning production and reproduction of the relations and practices of power/knowledge that we refer to as the Decolonial paradigm, I have emphasised The Network of Social and Community Cinema of Córdoba as an exemplary agent of Decolonial pedagogy. In my exploration, I noted how their praxes interweave alternative and dissident territories into an ecosystem of meaning which is in a permanent process of expansion. To identify the generative forces that sustain this ecosystem as a territory of the decolonial paradigm, I see The Network of Community Cinema intervening, in the three forms of Coloniality of Power's hegemonic reproduction (coloniality of knowledge, being and seeing). I believe they operate such intervention through decolonial pedagogy by undertaking practices that boost the following dynamics on their communities of influence: 1) the questioning of hegemonic knowledge and identities (the "thinking from"), and 2) the decentring of hegemonic pedagogical practices (the "thinking with").

These two dynamics appeared throughout the different activities described in this chapter as "courses of action". They are present, for instance, in the praxes of community cinema production's circulations or those instances of The Network's human resources development. Therefore, even though they may be explained as functioning in a single instance, these two steps of decolonial pedagogy are not exclusive of an obvious learning environment such as the audio-visual workshop for youth. This is because what matters the most is the transition of these dynamics through the capillaries of the entire ecosystem of meaning. That is how these dynamics playing in one corner impact on the other sectors of the ecosystem. This is a way to understand how while cinema practices find meaning within the ecosystem, the ecosystem nurtures itself from these same practices. Let us revise this through the two steps of decolonial pedagogy.

1. Thinking From

As Walsh (2013) set forth, "*el pensar desde*" (thinking from) designates the raising of one's awareness over one's own geo-historical conditions. I believe The Network of Community Cinema addresses this step by intervening in the processes through which subjects are ontologically incorporated into the device of power. This would require subverting the dynamics of coloniality of being, knowledge and seeing conveyed, as we studied, by the apparatuses of ideological reproduction of the State.

For instance, within the framework of youth audio-visual workshops, such questioning or calling into crisis of hegemonic knowledge and identities can be accomplished by promoting the following two realizations among the participant subjects. First, a critical-historical reflection on their own subalternity founding conditions (which occurs when they set out to tell a story,

the “what to tell”). Second an unveiling of audio-visual language as a tool for the reproduction of the prevailing power and as an instrument for their own epistemic emancipation (the “how to tell the story”).

This is possible because artistic education and production, as an interdisciplinary learning process, aims to bring out the knowledge that is already embodied in the learner in the form of the sensory perception. Communication between art and subjects does not take place in the field of rationality, norms, objectivity – i.e., the field of knowledge taken over by modern logics and their scientific and Eurocentric epistemological hierarchies of reproduction. Instead, it occurs in the field of the unconscious, which hosts the instinctive, the irrational, the repressed, the desired, the imagined, the memory, the emotions and ancestral identities. Because of that, art turns out to be the best medium of conveying claims related to the environment, social justice and the recognition of one’s own identity and cultural knowledge. This, since such claim, denouncement or struggle, always goes through the art producer’s sensorium, travels as perceivable/sensible data, and reaches the body’s perception system of the decoder. The art message is a sensorial stimulus before being a thought, therefore, the message gets incorporated (and re-cognized) as one’s own feeling before becoming a rational idea.

I believe that said transition from body to body (from the producer who creates to the receiver who - by recalling internal feeling- re-creates) gives birth to an intersubjective synergy of epistemological renewal, which is crucial for a change of paradigm. I trust this to be true since during such process, one’s own psycho-physical experience (our sensorium, recalling Rancière, 2004) is also involved in recognising oneself within the situation expressed and, sometimes, denounced by the work of art. Such an aesthetic way of production/embodiment of knowledge establishes the connection between the location of one’s own body with respect to the world surrounding it. Thus emerges, within the subject, a body-political awareness, It is at the moment of the “thinking from” that the interdisciplinary nature of art and its body-political aspect are fundamental to the process of ontological decolonisation.

I see Cordoba’s Network making use of the potency of this process of artistic production/embodiment of knowledge as a territory of dissent towards the logics of onto-epistemological-aesthetical reproduction of power. In The Network’s meaning ecosystem, art is used to acknowledge, criticise and intervene in reality by means of its own language (what is simultaneously technical and rhetorical, form and content, ethical and aesthetic), so that personal experiences of the world become integrated into the collective.

Artistic language’s interdisciplinary nature questions - or calls into crisis- hegemonic knowledge and identities by causing a “consternation within the institution of knowledge in order to facilitate an encounter with alterity” (Augustowsky (2017: 64). That is why I consider

that the intersubjective practice of community cinema production-circulation put forward by The Network as multiple instances of decolonial pedagogical praxes is, following Hall and Jefferson (1976), an instance of cultural production, not one of cultural reproduction. This is so because The Network's strategy actualizes (presenting more than representing) synergies which uncover the supremacy of culture as an area of struggle for hegemony; theirs is what Gramsci called "the war of position" (1971, [1929-1935]). By encouraging visibility of other synergies, The Network's dynamic produces and revitalizes other meanings. Is by interweaving these other grids of power/knowledge relations, that The Network challenges the dynamics that reproduce coloniality of being, knowledge, seeing. Such is the case of its relationship with the public university, for instance, in which based on continuing with the public university's traditions of social justice, the network introduces epistemological shifts based on the ontological re-consolidation of difference, of alterity and of other knowledge forms.

As examined in this chapter, The Network's praxis continues a pedagogical tradition of university Chairs (such as the Audio-visual Workshop of the Faculty of Communication Sciences) that, for almost three decades fostered critical deconstruction of hegemonic audio-visual language and pedagogic objectives focused on student involvement with popular cultural production. By exchanging knowledge and praxes, there has been a process of mutual legitimations; the campus of the popular culture's production was endorsed by academia as a field of knowledge production worthy of respect and to learn from. The campus of academia actualises its curricula with practical knowledge and experience of cultural production that have put theoretical learnings into the practice of the everyday life experience. Such validation added weight and substance to the academic field that, since the turn of the new century, has been losing touch with current affairs and could now offer the students a teleological project. As we may also appreciate, the semio-practical relations among community cinema's production-circulation system and the extension programs of the Faculty of Arts are in constant flux of meaning production/legitimation by fostering collaborative activities that offer public visibility of their epistemological re-nourishments and insert their activities into larger frameworks of knowledge/legitimation dynamics. Therefore, the Faculty of Arts' extension program is present in almost every one of the objectives delineated by The Network. Together they run pedagogical activities (from a diploma program to the assignments requested by the Cathedra of Audio-Visual Language at the School of Cinema). They also foster debates and exhibitions (usually inserted in other socio-cultural endeavours or discursive activities such as encounters, symposiums conferences). As partners, they also coordinate actions towards production funding (endorsing and hosting meetings for de-development of founding programs, for example). In all, the relationship of The Network with the Faculty of Arts is that of continuity. What persists is the esthetical-political standings of Cinema School pioneers (incorporated into

the Network as ACCOR), and even further, the National University of Cordoba's one-hundred-year commitment to fundamental values of the University's reform, which promised university extension for the

2. Thinking With

The second step, which Walsh (2013) describes as "a decentralisation of hegemonic pedagogical practices", is a dynamic that echoes what the same author refers to as "pensar con" (thinking with). This implies expanding the boundaries of the area of learning, which hegemonic education has constricted, into contexts of identity and community social action where "other" epistemological systems made invisible by Modern/Colonial processes, re-emerge. This draws my attention, to another relevant feature of the organizations that make up the Network; their communal, intercultural and solidary relations and practices which constitute a decolonial territory that expands by permeating the different apparatuses of ideological reproduction of the state that had, until now, hegemonized identity and knowledge. I believe such "re-territorialisation"; (Deleuze and Guatari, 1987) extends both in space and in time.

i. First reterritorialisation is spatial

Decolonial Pedagogy proposes to decentralise hegemonic pedagogical practices and take them to other territories where socio-cultural activity with a decolonial telos is already being carried out. Workshops on community cinema production as well as the circuits of exhibition take place at spaces where subjects learn and reflect alongside (or within the action framework of) other social groups with the same counter-hegemonic impulse (organizations, foundations, associations, NGOs). These praxes of community cinema occupy, therefore, spaces that were already conquered and that are already trenches of dissent: neighbourhood communities, workers' and neighbours' associations, cooperatives, trade unions, among others. These workshops, which take place after formal school/working hours, present alternative knowledge in a dynamic that questions epistemologically the monolectic and monolithic curricula of official education by emphasising the horizontality and plurality of knowledge forms, especially through the praxis of art.

Another step towards re-territorialisation is taken when these projects start to be developed at spaces that have historically and culturally been controlled by power, such as cultural centres and universities. Indeed, regular coordination between the Network of Social and Community Cinema and the Arts and Communication areas from the national university have been important in imbuing the institutional legitimacy of these institutional bodies with a decolonial epistemology that displaces the Coloniality of power logic as the only episteme. In turn, this stimulates a new mobility in the praxis of both university and community cinema. As, previously

in this chapter, we have gone through this dynamic, what is here left to say is that such re-territorialisation occurs, then, in a spatial but fundamentally symbolic dimension, since an instance of epistemic decolonisation is taking place.

Another instance of decentralization of hegemonic pedagogical practices is the understanding of the learning territory as a symbolic space, as an epistemological space where the same telos is shared. That is, besides the buildings with which modern formal education has justified the legitimacy of hegemonic knowledge, what is truly essential is the very space as the location of knowledge. This is so in a symbolic and material way. Symbolically, the alliances, agreements and meetings that build the idea of a community of meanings of struggle between subjects and groups with similar motivation (of teleological meanings) do not necessarily share the same the space. This is the case of groups such as the feminist, LGBTI, human rights, among others. Materially, because with the territorialisation of such symbolic spaces other territories can be re-territorialised. This means that the sole presence of such collective (which has constituted a teleological territory) can pour its values and meanings into other territories previously co-opted by hegemony. An example was given when I described how The Network (whose territory is symbolic) helps other collectives to reterritorialize the Theatre “La Piojera” as a space of cultural resistance and cultural production. Other forms of expansion are those of The Network coordinating exhibitions in high arts museums, or government community centres traditionally serving official activities. The peak of these chains of dematerialization of territories by the symbolical re-territorialisation can be seen in the taking of Internet platforms and community or public TV channels. Here the symbolic reterritorialisations ironically cover a great space reaching long distances and far away publics.

ii. Second reterritorialisation is temporal

A temporal dimension is necessary for epistemological re-territorialisation, since the pedagogical practice of community cinema involves an ontological-historical inquiry (which enables subjects to recognise the historical conditions that shaped their subaltern situation) and another epistemological inquiry which is implied in their future projection: the desired transition from the subject’s subalternity to his/her epistemic emancipation. Therefore, although it cannot be said that the learning and practicing subjects are ready to produce their own self-representation, it can be assured that these pedagogical activities initiate a process towards that goal. This is so because the Network is a seedbed where children and youth can cultivate an awareness of their own subaltern condition and knowledge about the channels of power reproduction, which include the techno-medial, as ways of representing, having influence on and modifying the real. By means of the workshops, children and adolescents can realise the potential utility of audio-visual language for their self-representation, and they can recognise the potential of a collective-political dynamic, the decolonial telos of which includes

workshops on community cinema production-reception. Thanks to the temporal sway (past-future) of the workshops, even adults acquire critical tools to recover their “other” knowledge and make a social imprint by becoming producer of messages (cultural producers).

iii. Third reterritorialisation is symbolical

This future projection of the workshops, as technology for the reproduction of the knowledge/power relations of the Decolonial device, relies on an (ongoing) onto-epistemological re-territorialisation of collective-political dynamics. On the basis of such dynamics, its participants will project intersubjective synergies that permeate critically and performatively some of the apparatuses of ideological reproduction of the State. Thus, the epistemic re-territorialisation resulting from the pedagogical practices of community cinema production-reception intervene in the following hegemonic reproduction apparatuses:

- The information one. The workshops would facilitate the subjects’ technological appropriation. This process involves the learning not only of techniques, but also of the logics of circulation and power that govern the production of techno-medial images: formation of public opinion, political influence, unveiling and covering up the truth and, above all, ‘framing’ of the real by means of technological technique and narrative.
- The hegemonic culture one. By presenting an alternative dynamic of meaning production, the former individual consumer becomes a collective producer of content that can be disseminated through alternative channels. Culture is then produced, not reproduced, and therein lies the synergetic change that will eventually displace the power of the hegemonic device and establish the decolonial one.
- The religious system one. The contents, intersubjectively produced and received, reproduce a criticism of the colonial and bourgeois religious morality with regard to matters related to administration of bodies and their collective efforts to improve their material lives. Into the first category fall the claims by the LGBTI community and feminist groups (the right to gender identity and the voluntary termination of pregnancy, for instance). Within the second one, we find the questioning of Catholic charity against the class struggle to claim what is theirs, or, in other words, the popular uprising against the acquired resignation to suffering on earth to get a place in heaven.
- The political one. The workshops propose a decentralisation of the relation of politics in that they promote a type of learning that constitutes a re-positioning against ego-politics in pursuit of a collective-political awareness. Such learning, furthermore,

involves unlearning the habits of individual submission and, instead, re-learning the pathways towards both regaining civic power through collective efforts and the cultural battle which enables the spread of “other” knowledge forms. For instance, in the context of exhibitions, the festivals of social and community cinema are a framework that reconstructs the meaning of the collective. This is so because attendees (neighbours or members of a community of social struggle who produce community cinema works) see in the exhibition of their audio-visual work the moment when their bonds as a community materialise into the images on the screen. An audio-visual work exhibited before the filmmaking teams becomes, then, a token of collective significance: the group’s imago. The exhibition of community cinema at festivals or plenaries is another feature that renders it a political type of cinema. It is not ‘political’ strictly speaking, but its own mode of production-reception emerges as a political form of cinema. This is so in two ways. First, through the exhibition dynamic in which the meaning of the communal message is reconstructed, the filmmakers’ dissenting position as citizens is asserted. Thanks to the semantic community that assistants/producers set up, the spectator is no longer an individual consumer but becomes a producer member of a community of meaning. Secondly, we must consider that the festival invites community filmmaking groups of similar characteristics based in other towns throughout the country. Such event promotes intercultural understanding and diversity since the audiences of one or another film become reciprocal receivers of each film’s message. Thus, a level playing field is created for all producers, and equivalence is guaranteed in terms of the subaltern role that they take on within the meaning system centre-periphery with respect to colonality of power as hegemonic discourse. From such mutual collaboration emerge interaction synergies among collective-political actions that constitute ways of weaving knowledge/power networks in pursuit of strengthening the Decolonial device.

CHAPTER 6

San Juan Emergent Community Cinema as Praxis of Decolonial Aesthetics

Introduction

After my immersive involvement in the relational dynamics that conform the Córdoba Network of Social and Community Cinema as a praxis of Decolonial Pedagogy, I moved to San Juan city where I decided to explore the possibilities of community cinema as a device for Decolonial Aesthetics. My methodology resembles that carried out in the Córdoba experience. That is, actively to write about community cinema's production-circulation dynamics by using tripartite analysis of video-recorded participant observations and interviews. As in Córdoba's case, the methodology in this chapter keeps the framework of autoethnography as guided by occurrence to find cases and events that, when interconnected, create a site of observation. Concerning activities and strategies, these writings are likewise the result of my engagement with an academic research/pedagogic project developed from 2020 to 2023 as a public university's lecturer/researcher. This time my appointment was at the Institute of Visual Expression, Faculty of Philosophy Humanities and Arts, National University of San Juan and the field was Cultural Studies. In the Institute of Visual Expression, I joined two projects to approach the epistemological and socio-historical perspectives that have informed Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis. Also, from this lecturer/researcher position I established inter-university links, this time, with the National University of Buenos Aires's federal project "Modalities of production and representation in Argentinean regional cinemas: production diversification and debates around regional identities". My attention working with this research group was on community cinema resorting to decolonial aesthetics as a form of resilient communication (Hyvärinen and Vos, 2015; Rogers et al., 2016) and intercultural bridging.

It is important to add that, just as in the chapter dedicated to Córdoba, my outputs concentrated in the second level of the tripartite analysis identified in the methodology chapter as "aesthetic interpreting". This explored dynamic is the discursive practice in which the subjects depict an image of the own role, -and that of the created audio-visual piece-, within the process of production-circulation in which they participated. The perspective from which I read their influence, facing a dominant paradigm (or the represented space), is not that of a network made of fluid interweaving and re-nourishing social exchanges (as it is for Córdoba's Network). It is that of the opposite; three working dynamics that indeed are isolated, however, when interpreted through an occurrence perspective I found them to be connected by an aesthetical

praxis. The individualized approach to each group's work is not an aleatory decision but the evidence of a disconnection which, as occurrence reveals a socio-cultural trait rooted in San Juan intersubjective traditions, challenges the very emergence and continuity of community cinema as a field of cultural production. There is a lack of cooperative conducts based on mistrust and fear.

This is why my analysis has resorted to the body of their language, their audio-visual aesthesis as an observational site to conduct the cultural studies. Interviews and observations were directed at their image grammar, working strategies and chosen symbolisms. I later read these answers as their discursive practices (space representations) with which they independently challenge the dominant paradigm (the hegemonic represented space). Even when these counter-hegemonic discursive practices rely on aesthetic praxis as a challenging tool, my idea is that said strength in their aesthetic negotiation is located at both ends of the creative process. One group operates at the level of the presentation, where the *in situ* construction of the audio-visual narrative is the operative factor that a priori negotiates meanings with the hegemonic discourse; and the representation, in which the critical idea, mediated by the represented narrative, is an a posteriori meaning negotiation with the hegemonic discourse

A chronology of my journey through these three cases in search of aesthetic praxes can be followed below:

Firstly, I analysed how film schools' ENERCs were recently opened across the national territory as branches of the traditional National Institute of Cinema's school (ENERC). The exploration mapped them as distributed in regional areas, where specific local production systems and social flows established differential relationships across the productive fields, now undoubtedly coloured by the social and economic systems and aesthetics specific to each region. In my perspective, ENERC's schools, as a nation-wide democratizing government program thought of as a project for the decentring of Film Studies, is an oxymoron. Unlike the public university's cinema and communication schools, ENERC schools do not have humanistic formations that add orientations in sociology to their curricula. At the ENERC there is no teacher, no extension program, no symposium that encourage students to use these learnt tools to attend social justice motivation or to voice their social discomfort. By focusing only on the acquisition of technical and narrative skills to emulate commercial and auteur cinema, this program keeps students separated from the representation of public conflicts and involvement. Therefore, while the ENERC schools are created and supported by the state to democratize the access of the Argentinean population to the production of cinema, the schools' exclusive focus on technique means political paralysis for the subjects in training. The result is a legion of well-armed photographers, directors and editors with no social awareness to apply their learning to

the fostering of democratic praxes in a cultural arena. One indicator of this conjecture is that even though San Juan has had an ENERC school since 2016, among the 5 cohorts there are no graduates who have attempted to work cooperatively with social organizations in projects like those of the community cinema we saw, for instance in Cordoba.

The lack of obvious examples makes me think that this is, after all, a collective that, as any other cloistered community, may have in its own language, a secret code. I believe that the exploration of its aesthetics may reveal an underlying critical thinking. This is how, in 2021, I focused my research efforts, as member of the “Modalities of production and representation in Argentinean regional cinemas” group, on the textual and interpretative analysis of ENERC’s thesis film productions for 2019. Aided by recorded interviews with some of the directors, I recognised in them a general sign manifested as a symptom of the social unrest generated by the risk placed over their lives (and that of a large sector of the population). In my output I argued that the films, without a direct allusion being necessary to the immediate context, created a feeling describable as “corporeality in danger” to pronounce the daily tension and stress of living within the institutional moral duplicity that characterises San Juan society’s imaginaries.

Secondly, in 2022 and 2023, I dedicated attention to community cinemas involved in the dynamics of community resilience activism by explored community communication strategies aimed at the mitigation of the social consequences of San Juan’s 2021 earthquake (in the case of the community radio “The Owl”) and 2019 flooding (in the work of the collective “Maricarmen Visuals”). Through participant observation, group interviews, photographic and audio-visual archive exploration I analysed how community cinema production signalled political controversies surrounding the necessary state actions for infrastructural refurbishment. In my active writings, I discussed the possibility of community cinema to act as a performative agent during in situ political negotiations, especially in socially vulnerable areas traversed by territorial conflict with the State, which are heavily misrepresented by complicit mass media. That is, mass media communicational interventions are there to twist social perceptions of community activism into “endangering social behaviour” to support private interests on land rights, which are normally justified by political corruption. With that, I argue that these community cinema production dynamics become critical epistemological frontiers bringing forth the semio-practical power of performance as political praxis.

In the first case, observing ENERC school students’ theses, I saw their collective dynamic as an isolated community with enough resources and knowledge as to construct a message, but their self-perceived centrality makes them epistemologically unable to put such technical rhetorical knowledge into messages for counter-hegemonic actions. In this case, I had to resort

to deferred intertextual analysis of their works to read a latent controversial image symbolically permeating the texts, as a matter of common sense that surpasses the intentionality of each individual enunciator; as a performance of the representation itself. In the second case (which comprises two examples of emergent community cinemas), I found almost the opposite production circumstances: groups that are aware of their peripheral conditions and who need to communicate a counter hegemonic message, must use their technical and knowledge resources to intervene in the hegemonic dynamics that are there to stop the production of such counter hegemonic messages. I concentrated then on their work modalities focused on presenting the here and now of their bodies at the very moment of producing their audio-visual work as an unavoidable proof of truth, which forces hegemonic media representations and exposes political manipulations. This is a performance of presenting (even the audio-visual making itself) which may or may not result in a film, because what matters is the camera taking the moment of systemic violence playing itself.

I. Performance of Representation

In line with what Ana Laura Lusnich argues, since the end of the 19th century to date, the region of Cuyo is embedded in a diverse and versatile paradigm of cinematographic production “in terms of the agents and institutional and social forces that gave birth to it, as well as, of the activities carried out in relation to cinema” (2018: 86).²⁶ The author also points out that, in view of its historical path, this field has been shown to be intervened by forces that come from inside and outside the region. In this respect, it is worth noting the growing participation of the national State since the 1940’s (barring two dictatorships in 1966 – 1973 and 1976 – 1983), according to Lusnich. The State’s role in the cinematographic production from Cuyo is a crucial point of the present section, which aims at establishing socio-semiotic and political-cultural links between: a) the State’s intervention and those of private interests in the region’s cultural policies (which ensure the training of filmmaking professionals who made the studied films), and b) the socio-environmental costs of such policies (which, I argue, translate into an epochal feeling that permeates the aforementioned professionals’ cinematographic production).

Last decade, cinematographic production from San Juan flourished as never before. This was due to cultural policies introduced by the State that recognise the value of this local production and stimulate it with federal promotion programmes such as Historias Breves (INCAA²⁷)[Short stories], Nosotros [We], Telefilm, Polos Audio-visuales [Audio-visual Poles] and TV Digital. A result of this process of decentralisation of audio-visual production is the opening of an ENERC premises in San Juan. The creation of such premises resulted from a dispersion introduced by

²⁶ San Juan is one of the three provinces of the Argentinean northwest región of Cuyo.

²⁷ Instituto Nacional de Cine y Artes Audio-visuales (National Institute of Cinema and Audio-visual Arts).

INCAA, of audio-visual production, which had been traditionally concentrated in Buenos Aires. Thus, it became imperative to train professionals from the field on a federal level, with the focus on several strategic regions within the country where ENERC premises would be opened. In 2015 and in order to meet the educational needs in Corrientes, Chaco, Entre Ríos, Formosa and Misiones, the ENERC NEA (Argentinean North East) premises in the city of Formosa was opened and in the same year, another ENERC NOA (Argentinean North West) in San Salvador de Jujuy, making it possible for students from Catamarca, Jujuy, La Rioja, Tucumán, Santiago del Estero and Salta to be trained in audio-visual production. As we have already mentioned, in 2016 ENERC Cuyo was opened to train professionals from San Juan, Mendoza and San Luis. Lastly, in 2017, the ENERC Patagonia Norte (North Patagonia) in San Martín de los Andes was opened to welcome students from La Pampa, Neuquén and Río Negro, whilst The ENERC Patagonia Sur (South Patagonia) in Trelew took on the training of students from the provinces of Chubut, Santa Cruz and Tierra del Fuego.

From my point of view, the political and economic interest in basing the ENERC Cuyo premises in San Juan has to do with a programme of promotion of the cultural industry framed within the economic policy of the province. San Juan has been experiencing, since 2005, socio-economic growth derived from the opening of the gold and silver industry conceded to the company Barrick Gold subsidiary in South America. Such economic restructuring has boosted the local market, mainly in areas of real estate, finance and (essential and leisure) services. Consequently, a portion of the benefits brought by this activity has been capitalised on for the development of the cultural industry.

The above-mentioned economic policy is very much questioned by environmental groups. They consider that the foreign concession not only pay minimal salaries to the local mining industry, but they also exploit through open-pit operations, tons of our gold, thus causing natural disasters such as the destruction of high-mountain glaciers and pollution, with cyanide and other metals, of snow-melt streams that supply water to nearby communities and the region's flora and fauna (Trofelli, 2021). There are, furthermore, several complaints about cases of cancer among the inhabitants that consume that water and live in those environmental conditions. Thus, there is a moral discussion on this contradiction; on the one hand, San Juan has acquired a solid position (in terms of its cultural offer, at least) as a area diversified, complex and highly professional area, with quality infrastructure, capable of satisfying the needs of "high" and the popular cultures. However, on the other hand, such growth has come at the expense of the environment and in favour of the profits of multinational companies', who then regulate from the informal economy the real estate and service markets, thus highly increasing the cost of living of local inhabitants. Attention must be paid, then, to the safety of the inhabitants' lives whilst we experience, a sort of socio-economic 'gold rush'. These tensions

are the sores under the smooth surface of the discourse of regional economic progress. This complex network of both material (the source of funds) and immaterial relations (a vision of professionalisation and excellence pervaded by the discursive interests of the material means of production) is what underpins the agency logics of San Juan's Tourism and Culture Secretariat, on which ENERC Cuyo is administratively dependent.

Against such background, we can then acknowledge that the films produced at ENERC are framed within complex socio-cultural dynamics. A reading of such representation as socio-symbolic productions connected to social imaginaries (Castoradis, 1975), can reveal much of the unspoken intersubjective constructions that sustain the hegemony of a paradigm.

The present analysis of the six theses developed between 2018 and 2019 (the only two cohorts by the beginning of this study in 2020) approaches such works intertextually. After this analysis, in a cross-sectional way, a latent image emerges. That is, although the films differ with respect to genre, theme and temporality, these representations constitute what Deleuze (1996) calls 'percepts', in that they bring forth artistically and collectively an array of perceptions and sensations that outlive those who first conveyed them and persist as an epochal sign. Therefore, I understand that the percept would be the active effect of what we know as social representations which symbolically reinstate something absent, or which draws close something from afar. They are not a mere reproduction but a complex construction that creates meaning within socially constructed and shared knowledge. The metaphorical potential of social representations allows us to express, in an amalgamated way, what is socially established, its critical idea and its nature as image. They are meaning configurations that constitute, from the metaphor, a social manifestation of what Castoradis (1975) calls the social imaginary.

To unravel these meaning configurations that constitute expressions of the social imaginary I must briefly review the epistemic constellation that I presented in Chapter Two regarding aesthetics as a territory of meaning production.

Following Stuart Hall's Cultural Studies (1980) and post-structuralist author Fredric Jameson's (1981, 1991) reference on advanced capitalism running a domination system whose logic of capital accumulation points to the space of human conscience (Read, 2003), we observed that hegemony is disputed in the territory of culture where ideology and politics are articulated into social formations and transformations. Gramsci (1971, [1929-35]) formulates these relations in the concept of the "Integral State" that he describes as "the complex entirety of practical and theoretical activities whereby dominant classes not only justify and maintain their dominion but do so with the active consensus of those who are dominated" (244). Louis Althusser (1970) incorporates into this notion the idea that our values, desires and preferences are instilled into

us through ideological practices that constitute individual subjectivity. These practices are imparted by means of several institutions (the ideological apparatuses of the state) among which we find the systems of morality, information and education. This is in a persuasive and ubiquitous discursive network that produces subjectivities that abide, and in their interaction, reproduce the dominant narrative. Ideology, as an “instituted imaginary” (Castoradis, 1975), is reproduced in narrations, accounts and discourses. Then, it is a matter of language, from where the illusion of what is real is built. The point just made reveals that the circle of self-reproduction can be intervened and or diverted through artistic cultural production as a practice with counter-hegemonic force, that is, as “instituting imaginary” (Castoradis, 1975).

Following Althusser (1970) ideological and political effectiveness of the work of art comes from art’s ability to create an inner distance in relation to the ideology underlying it and with respect to the ideology that it presents, reveals or denounces (118). The aesthetic operation that creates this inner distance, between what is represented and the spectator’s consciousness, implies making visible what was not. Rancière (2011) claims that the politics of art involve reconfiguring the apportioning of the sensitive which defines what is common in a community, which is to reach for “the community of sense”.

The intertextual exploration made on the reviewed films sets out to find the imagined image (making visible what is not) because I consider that it serves as a percept in a community of sense. The search is that of the epochal sign of a life endangered by natural disasters instigated by a neoliberal state that prioritises immediate earnings from the mining industry over the deterioration of the environment and the health and well-being of the inhabitants. The proposed interpreting strategy to intertextually read these school films follows a concept of Althusser’s (1970): “symptomatic reading”, through which we can critically unveil the dominant ideology underlying the psycho-social constructions of reality that reproduce and affect the subjectivation of individuals to its dominant narrative. Such unveiling is the search for that which has been left out of the text and that critical analysis can detect. The latter notion evokes Freud’s thinking, as it refers to the unconscious of the text (and, consequently, the language of symptoms), that which has been concealed or repressed. The methodology informing my symptomatic reading (which identifies what has been left out of the denotative expressions) is where the ideological element can be identified (as representation), since it is ideology that hides elements from sight. The presence of this community of sense in the six films that we studied conjures up that latent image: the percept of a corporality in danger. I unveil this construction by asking the texts about how they represent the socially established and how a critical idea on that status quo is expressed and what is its nature as image.

A. The Socially Established

The six short films observed for this commentary resort to a wide frieze of genres, styles and topics. Approaches such the historical-political sustain the film *Sunchos van* (2018). A costumbrist narrative underlines *Tiempo de Cosecha* (2019), *Los mares calmados* (2018); and *La extraña* (2019). Even the post-apocalyptic tale and horror-mystical legend are present in *Siesta* (2018) and *Villicum* (2019), correspondingly. It is noticeable how, one way or another, these movies' representations of the social space refer to isolated contexts (geographically or idiosyncratically speaking) whose atmosphere is epistemologically closed. For instance, said social interactions follow their own established order of social coexistence that suggests harmless normality (the social traditions and customs that configure the subjectivities embedded within a given social order). Thus, the representations of patriarchy, *caudillismo*²⁸, conservative morality and ethnic class determinisms, are framed in these films in a way that manifests what Castoradis (1975) calls "the established social imaginary". What we present in our tripartite analysis as the represented space or discursive paradigm.

B. The Critical Idea

The critical idea in these films, recurs as the revelation that a given social order is preceded by the collective agreement to conceal their social perversions so as to keep the established order. Under these circumstances the protagonist's body is in danger due to the double standard by which they live and which, in order to save themselves, must help to replicate. It is possible, then, to think of these short films as social representations that, through their narrative plot, call into tension the array of meanings that reinforce what is established. Moreover, they allow for a new understanding of the nature of social and historical phenomena, on the basis of which it is possible to establish new social orders. Thus, such social representations contribute to creating what Castoradis calls "instituting social imaginary" and we frame it in our analytical model as a space of representation or discursive praxis.

C. The Image

From the point of view of aesthetics (the sensitive, visible and audible) these metaphors call into crisis the spectator's contexts of decoding, where the meanings represented in the instituted imaginary are reproduced. However, what creates a fissure in the established imaginary, thus opening for the individual and collective psyches new ways of seeing and thinking about reality (that is, what facilitates an instituting imaginary), or what critical distance stimulates, is the representation of that which is not visible. For that purpose, we had to widen

²⁸ From *caudillo*, which usually translates into 'warlord' or 'strongman'. According to a Wikipedia article, "in 19th-century Argentina, *caudillos* were the chiefs of the armies of Argentinian provinces that fought against each other, but especially those who fought against the centralism concentrated in Buenos Aires" ("Caudillo", 2022).

the frame, relate these metaphors with each other, and read their plots intertextually. It is there where the “imagined image” (Narváez et al, 2015) emerges, or, in Deleuze’s words, a percept as an epochal sign reveals itself. In these films, such imagined image or percept is the idea that one’s own body is under the threat of the social context of belonging, and that, since we are subject to it, we are also destined to reproduce it. Any kind of refusal immediately puts our body in danger. As such, the plot of the films is always at the moment of realization of this moral dilemma. Such is the ethical questioning: the moment of anagnorisis when both protagonist and spectator simultaneously acknowledge each other to be accomplices of the reproduction of a context that oppresses them and others. Since we cannot expand too much here, I will present a few succinct examples from the films that account for such anagnorisis.

Anagnorisis or acknowledgment is a narrative device whereby a character makes a critical discovery about his/her identity, loved ones or environment, information that was unknown to him/her up to that moment. Such discovery alters the character’s behaviour and urges him/her to build up a more accurate picture of him/herself and his/her surroundings. This term first appeared in Aristotle’s *Poetics* in connection with classical Greek tragedy, and the crucial moment for it to take place is the *peripeteia* or peripety (a twist of fortune), which, almost always, has a drastic impact on the development of the story. The revelation of such truth (which was a fact already, but the protagonist [and sometimes the spectator, too] had ignored it all along) changes the hero’s perspective and reaction, who then adapts his/her behaviour and accepts his/her destiny, which he/she contributes to realise. I identify three instances of anagnorisis in the thesis short films reviewed here.

Sunchos van (2018), is set on the eve of the assassination of San Juan’s governor Amable Jones by conspiracy orders of a mafia politician Federico Cantoni (November 1921). This is the story of of one of Cantoni’s rural tenants, who must execute the crime even when he disagrees. He is committed to it under his employer’s subtle but forceful coercion which threatens the life of his family. The film’s audio-visual treatment constantly plays with long establishing shots to show the character undertaking the task alongside other complicit parties and inserts that reveal the protagonist’s discovery of a truth about himself. Such acknowledgment is approached by close-up shots in mirror reflexions that show him looking at himself as the moments in which he answers to his own conscience, to his own moral dilemma. The shots’ point of view of the mirrors coincides with the eye level of the viewers, this is a rhetorical invitation to empathise with the character and to incite a self-reflexion over the viewer’s similar position facing everyday life decision-making as moral dilemmas.

La extraña (2019) tells the story of a male shop attendant, who by following an attractive female co-worker ends up a victim of abduction. This short movie uses ‘Film Noir’ as the narrative

technique for a discovery that the protagonist makes about other people's truth. Through such visual and narrative tools (chiaroscuro contrasts, foreshortenings, harsh shadows, ellipsis) the film can depict a rarefied social atmosphere and uncover political perversions. It also incorporates a spirit of suspicion about the apparent reality, an atmosphere of uncertainty about what is normal and established, and what has been concealed. Indeed, the action begins at a shopping centre, where in daylight people walk every day, and ends underneath it, with flashing neon lights and severed mannequins hanging all over the labyrinthine hallways that stand as stages for the circulation of the perverse.

Tiempo de cosecha (2019) illustrates a third way of using anagnorisis in a film, which consists of the realisation of the consequences of past actions. This film narrates the story of Don Eduardo who is a labour boss at an *estancia*²⁹. He is disrespectful of his labourers' hard work, and addresses them in an abusive, violent and lascivious way. Furthermore, he withholds their wages and is neglectful of their basic needs and working conditions. The labourers, who seem to take the abuse without much resistance, have decided to murder him during a barbecue dinner in which they manage to get him drunk and sacrifice him by marinating him as an edible animal. The main scene takes place during the barbecue, the moment of dinner when they will orchestrate a charade to ultimately murder the boss. All the planning of shots for this sequence is intended to highlight its representational nature, that is, to make it evident that it is a hoax, a fictitious construction. Thus, the choosing of a static camera portrays the group of diners with all the actors' facing forwards and following a choreography as if dancing to a *zarzuela*³⁰. Through this theatrical strategy the film unravels Don Eduardo's anagnorisis as a metaphorical dimension of the social, which reveals a sort of smug conscience that has made use of and has abused human and natural resources but has not yet realised that his actions are self-destructive.

In *Siesta* (2018) the story describes a situation which is either an alien invasion or an authoritarian regime (it is not clear). Survivors are wary of going out and cautious about constant surveillance. Naturally, the film uses aesthetic and narrative resources from horror and science fiction to create an atmosphere of uncertainty and anarchy. What is outstanding is the choice of time of the day in which the diegesis is set at naptime³¹. The setting during *Siesta* has a metaphorical meaning, especially in relation to the geocultural setting, the Cuyo region. This is so because, due to high temperatures, napping during the afternoon is an adult customary practice that we as children used to dislike (I say we as I was also a '*Sanjuanino*'

²⁹ An *estancia* is "a South American cattle ranch or stock farm".

³⁰ *Zarzuela* is a Spanish theatrical genre combining popular song, and dramatic performance including dance

³¹ Hence the name of the film, *La siesta*, which translates into 'the afternoon' or 'nap time'.

child). As we are permanently trying to get out to play whilst adults are sleeping, many horrors folk stories have been created about popular creatures or real life dangers. Siesta time is the ideal moment to situate a story that discusses fiction-reality ambiguities as it has been traditionally our make believe time to play in defiance of such warnings, which we later learn are there to build obedient, disciplined and fearful subjectivities. In this film siesta time is both temporal background and a metaphorical device that incites empathy with the film's characters, who are a couple of adults secluded in a gloomy house, besieged by intermittent lights and noises (coming from monsters, airships or patrols that we cannot see) and sheltered from a hostile, dangerous and devastated territory. Thus, the representation of reality as a space for self-preservation as goal has impelled the couple to defend themselves against a stranger who has come, as they once did, looking for food and shelter. In the face of this fact and although they believe they are the only survivors, the protagonists realise they are not alone and that maybe outside there are other that need help. Such is the moment of anagnorisis: the acknowledgment of the existence and the truth of others in danger, like us.

In *Los mares calmados* (2018), the moment of anagnorisis is the revelation of the truth about oneself as a subject conditioned by an environment where decisions about one's own body are made by a group that sets the rules of morality. This film depicts how the parents of the female protagonist go to the ultimate consequences to keep their daughter's pregnancy secret to preserve the family's name and reputation. They maintain the social rules to the point of forgetting about their humanity and the physical and emotional care of their own kin. The film allegorically speaks of how human life is again pushed aside to maintain an economic and social status quo that benefits the current life of this 'family', which, in metaphorical terms, can be regarded as a whole society.

In *Villicum* (2019), the moment of anagnorisis is the acknowledgment that man's actions (which, in this film, are represented by the territorial battles between *unitarios* and *federales*³² in the 19th century), sooner or later, are challenged and even punished by the indomitable force of nature (a force which, in this film, is allegorised by the *Villicum* witches). The unveiling of nature's superior power takes place because the film will subtly deconstruct the expectations of what we traditionally know. Thus, two armed men force their way into the house of three defenceless women, but the women eliminate them with supernatural methods. The idea of nature's unquestionable logic develops when it becomes certain that even when these men try to run away, they are already doomed to succumb. The constant use of fire's incandescent colours, lighting techniques such as chiaroscuro, haze and hard lighting and the sequence

³² *Unitarios* and *federales* were the two main political parties or ideologies, during the 19th century, following Argentina's independence process. Whilst the former advocated a centralised administrative system for the country, with all the power concentrated in Buenos Aires, the latter, instead, championed a federal system where each province could have a voice and vote.

shot camera style, contribute to increase an ambience of uncertainties and ubiquity of the power of nature. The Dutch-angle frames and ellipses reinforce the idea that the men have been ambushed, that they do not have a handle on their surroundings and that they have been outsmarted by a reality over which they have lost control. The whispering of spells becomes louder and louder to the point where a whole atmosphere of noises entangles the protagonists as if in a cobweb.

This unveiling of perversity and duplicitous social standards departs from circumstances that, in many forms, are linked to San Juan's everyday life. I believe all these films have a connection and a conversation with the territory, being historical as in *Villicum* and *Sunchos Van*, or by tapping into cultural customary practices such as Saturday afternoon shopping arcade strolls as in *La extraña* or the social convention of napping in *Siesta* and all its implicit divergences. The territory is also a condition in *Los Mares Calmados* and *Tiempo de Cosecha* when traditional power relations regarding morals and the economy bring social practices into crisis.

To seek elements of performance in representation, I conducted an intertextual symptomatic reading of 2018-2019 ENERC Cuyo's film production. The pursuit across the text was a question placed on the technical and narrative construction of the films as strategies of distancing the viewers from the ideological framework that constitutes their everyday life perspective to be able to visualize such ideology as a factor of their own suppression. The elucidation metaphors used by these films provide elements to 'see' in a different way what has been naturalised in the instituted imaginary. The percept or common sense these production share and manage to convey through representation in a performative way, is that neoliberal discourse (as heir to colonial capitalism), and its moral forms of reproduction, has endangered our bodies and atomised our collective efforts towards solidarity and goodness.

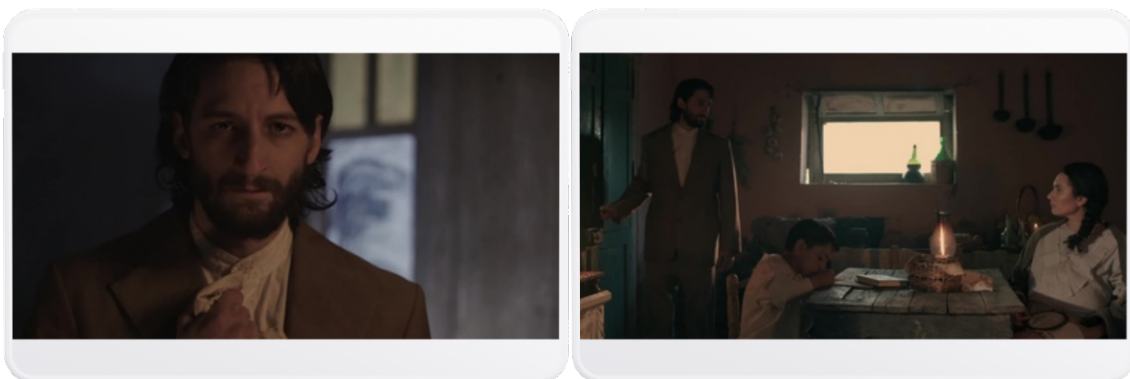


Figure 52: *Sunchos Van* (2018). Director: Carolina Costa Fernández. Source: CINE.AR



Figure 53: Tiempo de cosecha (Harvest time) (2019). Director: Pilar R ger Alonso. Source: CINE.AR

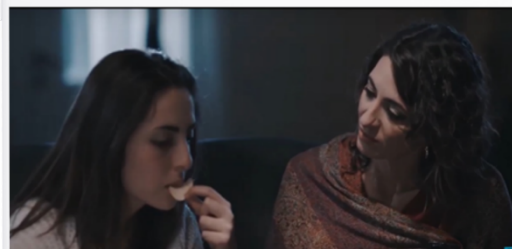


Figure 55: Siesta (2018). Director: David Chac n Source: CINE.AR

Figure 54: Los Mares Calmados (The Calm Seas) (2018). Director: Emanuel J. Morte. Source: ENERC-YouTube



Figure 56: Villicum (2019). Director: Mat as Alday. Source: CINE.AR

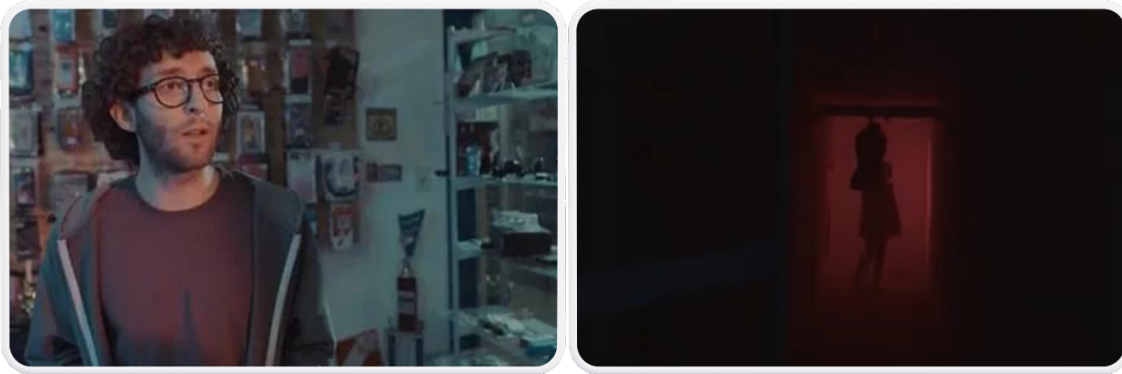


Figure 57: La Extraña (The Strange) (2019). Director: Mariano Martín. Source: ENERC-Youtube- Letterboxd

Cortometrajes de tesis e imaginario social

2018

2019

La metáfora, como manifestación social del imaginario social tiene aptitud para expresar de un modo amalgamado, lo socialmente establecido, su idea crítica y su carácter de imagen imaginada

Figure 58: Images retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/enerc_cine/?hl=es. [the image compiles the posters of analysed movies and summarizes that the discussed idea of the metaphor as a social manifestation of the social imaginary]

II. Performance of Presentation

The following two cases will draw from the former study the contextualized description of contemporary San Juan power relations and moral double standards. Its reading is sustained also on the epistemological reflexion on aesthesis praxis as a cultural production, and tensions in the represented space (the status quo representations) versus the critical interpretations offered by the community cinema producers to use the space of representation as a site of hegemonic struggle. The focus of the following is on the use of aesthetic praxis to give an account of the endangered body (now a body that speaks for others, for the collective). I must emphasise the interest in aesthesis praxis because it would be at the very moment of praxis

in the realm of the sensible that the socio-performative power of sensorial stimuli emerges. In these following cases we can see the how the space of representation as a discursive territory modifies the represented space in the very moment of its production-circulation. Therefore, we will explore the possibilities of aesthesis praxis to intervene and transform at the very moment of representation, mostly erasing the borders between the fields (space of representation and represented space)

A. “Radio station La Lechuza (The Owl) and Resilient-Community Communication. Mass Media and Audio-Visual Ecology when ‘the Foundations’ are Shaken”

On 18 January 2021, San Juan experienced a tremor measuring 6.4 on the Richter scale, which caused great damage, mainly in the departments of Sarmiento, *El Abanico* (Pocito) and Rivadavia among a population that resided on fiscal lands in precarious housing situations. In the aftermath of the event, 2,025 families were left homeless or with their houses severely damaged. The hegemonic mass media claimed that the provincial Government had immediately initiated mitigating actions and started working on short-term housing solutions. Activist groups from the earthquake’s epicentre argued, via their resilient-community media, that this was not the case, and created slogans such as “It’s not the earthquake – it’s inequality”, or “It was an earthquake, but civilian solidarity isn’t enough”. The slogan emphasised the epistemological problem of referring to the event either as “tremor” or as “earthquake”, as the choice of one or the other word has deep economic and political implications for the measures to be taken by the State to alleviate the affected population.

This writing reviews how the community of *El Abanico* was in the position of intervening in hegemonic media misrepresentations, by discursively applying, in the arena of audio-visual communications, resilient communication strategies that revealed infrastructural violence at the very moment of its practice. Some of the defining factors were:

Firstly, because the organizational skills of this community to collectively face the aftermath of the earthquake is a social construction built throughout two decades of community dynamics derived from the territorial work done by the Civil Association *Retamo*. This association runs as an open democratic body since 2001, and it was created by neighbours of this area as a response to the social atomization and economic crisis of those perilous days. In two decades, the association has grown to be a community that sustains itself and is in the position to form human resources and develop social projects articulating with public funding and other associations and institutions such as The National University. *Retamo* has its premises in *El Abanico* where it organizes art workshops, popular eateries, community gardens, literacy support, as well as training and education in matters of gender violence and environmental

sustainability. The *Retamo* association is the founder of the first community radio in the province called *La Lechuza* which was established in 2010 at *El Abanico*'s premises, with the slogan "communication without bosses". The earthquake of 2021 found the Neighbours of this community very well organized and with experience in collective endeavours. This was the foundation for what we are to attend: their practices, performances and outputs as a resilient communication post natural disaster.

Second, *La Lechuza* constitutes an influential example from which to elucidate the concept of 'resilient communication'. To start with, since this community radio station was created under the process of democratisation of broadcasting licenses initiated by the New Media Law, the station has been the voice of the local community by exposing issues related to ecology, institutional and gender violence, corporate exploitation and other subaltern stories not covered by local or national hegemonic mass media. It is very important to remark that this community radio was formed by residents, many of whom were from low income families. Their children grew up alongside *Retamo*'s actions. These new generations are part of this community project from a very early age, as children participating in art workshops, as teens collaborating with the community radio and as young adults by professionally learning the trade of radio production and becoming operators, announcers or researchers in the community radio. Some of them have followed university careers in communication or social work and have been the link to introduce this project to fellow students who later have taken part in this multi-sectorial project. Here is a social project with continuity and the ability to be self-sustainable, and even to reproduce.

Third, another aspect that *La Lechuza* highlights as a form of resilient communication is that the radio's headquarters were located at the very site where the epicentre of the earthquake occurred. Therefore, this building located at *El Abanico* and the multiple social dynamics that were activated around it, constituted a territory of community resilient activism for the betterment of the earthquake victims. This means that beside the community communications that this territory put in motion, there were concrete actions towards the residents' wellbeing. One of them was the *Ollas populares* (collective pots) sustained by the contribution that of civilians that use the premises for the drop off and storage of the food donation. *Ollas populares* are a traditional gathering of collective organizations that is present, not only as a means of physical sustenance, but also as a political standing, in all sorts of resistance or in crisis environments, such as social manifestations or collective evictions. *Ollas populares* often involve political discourses, invited musicians, dancing, children's entertainment. In the aftermath of the earthquake the *ollas populares* in *La Lechuza*'s premises meant a weekly gathering 'epicentre' from where to 'vibrate' together. During the *ollas populares* Neighbours embrace the collective, use that time to comfort the children with art and ludic workshops, get

involved in the assemblies run for the assessment and planning of reconstruction and claims. Overall, it is a moment to relieve each other of the anguish of having lost it all by singing, dancing and drinking mate among friends. *Ollas populares* are a community resilient strategy to have a place to call home and to have hope and to be embraced by the community during such a fateful moment, because, as the radio La Lechuza would repeat every morning: “no one is saved alone”.

It was in this same universe of meaning created by the community resilience in the aftermath of the earthquake that audio-visual praxes emerged carried out by the young members of the radio. As resilient communications, the clips created by La Lechuza’s youngsters played a fundamental role in configuring a media ecology that harmonized with all the other resilient activist action. Their main purpose was to intervene in the hegemonic media’s narratives to unveil that the derelict building conditions were caused by the Government’s negligence towards a community that suffers endemically from precarious housing. The community station’s videos also expressed that the government’s indolent attitude when it came to providing the affected families with a concrete solution was, in fact, the renewal of such instability.

This enabled me to observe the strategies of production of community-resilient communication, especially the joint efforts between activists in communication and community action aimed at making visible, by means of audio-visual texts, the discursive controversies surrounding the State’s actions needed to ensure the reconstruction of their homes. The sources informing this section of the analysis were retrieved from interviews with members of the community-resilient communication group through the following research methodologies: participative action (Kindol et al., 2007; Chevalier and Buckles, 2013), group semi-structured interviews based on free conversation, and audio-visual and photographic footage collected at the affected areas with the families who offered us their testimony. Lastly, I analysed the videos they recorded and posted in their social media.³³

On the composition of their visual system and the discursive audio-visual strategies put in place for the advancement of the resilient communication as a form of decolonial aesthetics, I have observed two interconnected aspects: the effects and the affects.

³³https://www.facebook.com/watch/?extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-AN_GK0T-GK1C&v=4192113380817344 (Solidarity brigades); <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=781291322731655> (We need collaboration); https://www.facebook.com/watch/?extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-AN_GK0T-GK1C&v=419895769226428 (Solidarity is still standing); https://www.facebook.com/watch/?extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-AN_GK0T-GK1C&v=3765146383547965 (So you keep on smiling); <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=434958314262067> (Solidarity is not enough); https://www.facebook.com/watch/?extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-AN_GK0T-GK1C&v=255430959382300 (No more families living in the open); https://www.facebook.com/watch/?extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-AN_GK0T-GK1C&v=885076292343323 (earthquake and feminist movements)

1. The Effects

Here I would like to reflect on their discursive practice, and on how this intent reflected on the composition of their visual system. For that, we should state that their discourse accompanies the *Abanico* community's resistance. In the physical world, by being there to build temporary shelters to defend the families from the storms and concurrent floods, the blazing sun and heat as well as the danger of living among fallen houses and the many aftershocks. In the discursive arena, their support is shown by presenting audio-visual messages in direct response to the misrepresentations by the hegemonic media of their communities. Their visual system involved a reinterpretation of the same kind of images published by local hegemonic media and by imposing their own voice. They realised that if hegemonic mass media, through their graphic and audio-visual platforms, distorted the data that proved the tremor had the socio-economic consequences of an earthquake, they should themselves, as members of the community and representatives of the community radio station, be the ones to undertake the task of audio-visual self-representation. For instance: while the hegemonic mass media reproduced the government's narrative that mitigating actions had been initiated, community-resilient audio-visual media recorded the sites of their neighbourhoods still waiting for government attention or working with their own material and human resources to resolve the essential without help from the state. As such, the composition of their visual system is to appeal to the status of evidence that has the photographic image as a document of truth. Their discursive litigations are, therefore, for the power of the image as founder of a historic present, for its capacity for presentation. They stepped up to the media game, where the image is no longer a representation but a fact that make up history. What does this counter-discourse set in motion in an epistemologically different way so that it allows putting up resistance? I think it is a displacement from using the image as a discourse about the other (as hegemonic media proposes) to using image for the presentation of the own experience (as it is in the case of the young video makers from *La Lechuza*); this is a definite trace of resilient communication.



Figure 59: Images retrieved from newspaper Diario de Cuyo, 24-07-2021: "There is no more earthquake victims without a roof: they have all received houses, modules or materials / the last week the government finalized setting up emergency housing module"



Figure 60: Images retrieved from La Lechuza's Facebook page on 08-02-2021, [the pictures show the victims protest because of the lack of government solutions to their housing emergency after the earthquake]

2. The Affected

Presentation of personal experience is also an appeal to the emotions. For instance, the young *La Lechuza* communicators turned into activists of resilient communication when they used their mobile phones and the radio station's two cameras to make their way through the debris and present almost in real time, the affected people's testimonies. They manage this by taking advantage of two things: the bond already established between them by being members of the community, and the fact that they, too, were affected by the earthquake. They sought to use audio-visual technological means with knowledge of the territory, and to build a common language marked by the affections of belonging. A completely opposite dynamic is set to that of the hegemonic mass media, which build an image of the affected as victims without the means to represent themselves and who must consequently take the epistemological violence with which they are represented to ultimately sustain the hegemonic discourse.

The video footage produced by community-resilient communication groups gave an account of their community's experience from their role as sentient, thinking and speaking subjects. Such audio-visual images circulated on social media and were shared on various digital platforms. Thus, the information reached aid agencies and, ultimately, the regular social media user, who started to have a different view of the affected ones. Therefore, it is safe to claim that, from the dynamics of message construction up to those of reception and consumption, the practices of community-resilient communication constitute an instance of media ecology. This is so because such ecology involves a digital prosumer who operates horizontally, intervening in and feeding back meaning networks that reinforce a different epistemology from the monolithic and monolectic one characterising hegemonic mass media. As message dynamics typical of the latter are unidirectional, they do not allow for the re-use of sources to create new meanings. Instead, prosumption (Islas-Carmona, 2008; Carrero and Pulido, 2012)

subverts the epistemic injustice of the verticality just described, and, thus, constitutes a dynamic of empowerment of the grassroots.

In summary, the narrations in their videos create a testimonial environment that appeals to the credibility of their demands by generating sympathy with the affected. This was made possible by bringing the audience together with deep-rooted values in the local collective imaginary and affections, and by suggesting a re-connection with feelings associated with family, work, home, the feminine role, and with images generally related to folkloric songs. In that way, their account of facts places the audience into a universe of belonging sustained by emotion. Ultimately, the message can reach a large audience who are in a state of receptivity and productivity, typical traits of social media users. Altogether, as can be seen, this dynamic allows for the possibility to appropriate content, express one's opinion, feedback ideas, support causes, add text and reproduce the message that emerges from the digital prosumer's emotional sympathy with the affected. Thus, the videos become part of networks of causes associated with their cause and enhance a media ecosystem that brings truth to such cause. Therefore, they put pressure on the government

I claim, then, that the success of counter-hegemonic, community-resilient communication depends upon its rhetoric potential to enable the transfer of meanings from effectivity (the document as proof of the truth) to affectivity (a narrative where people take part as witnesses of the truth). Indeed, the latter point implies that truth is an effect of the presentation of actors and not of their representations.



Figure 61: Images retrieved from La Lechuza's Facebook from January to March 2021. [Assemblies, 'Popular pot' and meetings to organize collective actions of visibility and reconstruction, El Abanico, Pocito, San Juan, Argentina]

B. Cinema of Cornice

In this last writing I present some reflections that arose from conversations with referents of a social cinema group from San Juan Maricarmen Visuals. We talked about the role that this form of filmmaking should assume as a technology for the reproduction of onto-epistemologically emancipatory practices carried out by the new social movements, who seek to recover civic power aimed at discussing the forms of hegemonic reproduction of the coloniality of power. Given the quasi-larval state of community cinema in San Juan, it seems a good opportunity to talk with - and focus on- the production practices of this group, since I consider that they articulate the hegemonic discussions of social movements in a form of discursive production based on frontier critical thinking and the socio-performative possibilities of the production-reception of audio-visual language as their weapon.

1. Under what socio-economic and environmental circumstances do you carry out their activities?

I spoke with the audio-visual production group that work in accordance with the parameters of the Autonomous CTA (*Central de Trabajadores/as de Argentina*, Argentine Workers' Central Union), San Juan headquarters. This organization, which is now 25 years old, is a union of workers that promotes the direct enrolment of each worker. According to the description of the identity and objectives of the CTA made by Juan Carlos Giuliani on the organization's official website, they are a union of workers, not a confederation of union organizations. They promote the direct enrolment of each worker to this new type of collective experience. This implies that it is not necessary for the worker to be a member of a union to be part of the CTA.

The organization places emphasis on the worker's class identity as a social subject regardless of his or her employment status. Also, workers from the public and private sectors; active and retired; formal; precarious; self-employed; self-managed; those enrolled in union organizations with union status or simply registered – all of them participate in its internal life throughout the country. Also, part of the CTA are activists from various organizations: neighbourhood, social, community, youth, disabled, migrant, indigenous peoples. Furthermore, we find the federations of Energy Workers, Retirees, Teachers, the FeNaT³⁴, Health, Culture and Communication, and more. The CTA is not neutral – it aims to fight for a New Argentina that, as in much of Latin America and the Third World, can promote an institutional framework of popular power capable of breaking the mould of formal democracy.

They value thoughts and forms of organization from the indigenous communities and from the unionism of the first anarchist, socialist and communist immigrants. They represent the

³⁴ *Federación Territorial Nacional*, National Territorial Federation.

continuation of the Peronist Resistance and the *Cordobazo*³⁵ as well as the revolutionary postulates that emerge from such movements to this day. They acknowledge the 30,000 people who were disappeared during the last dictatorial regime. They campaign to make visible the hunger and needs of vulnerable sectors.

The CTA is autonomous from the State, political parties, business unions and employers. Faced with high rates of labour informality and the lack of union freedom and democracy imposed by neoliberal logic, the organization emerges as a social reaction to transform such situation and prevent the perpetuation of super-exploitation and neo-colonial capitalist exclusion. It is important to highlight this to understand that the origins of their discourse lie in this context.

2. What are the characteristics of their material and discursive production as community cinema?

In the case of Maricarmen Visuals, there is strong leadership on the part of one of its founders, Ramón Gómez Mederos, a self-taught journalist and political scientist, a political activist and audio-visual artist who defines his works as “edge cinema”: on the edge of the legitimised uses of language and the unspoken conventions of what can be represented. He positions his work at the hegemonic dispute of material and symbolic territories by means of critical and hyper realistic documentary, from a ‘presentation’ logic as distinct from a re-presentational one. In this sense, the subjects who are interviewed or filmed are the producers of the content themselves, as they decide what to show and where to show it. They decide on locations from their intrinsic knowledge of the space and how the problem is reflected in the space they inhabit.

Analysing the production of this community film group through the lens of frontier critical thinking, their works seek to transform politically the presented subjects through their own intervention as producers of audio-visual content. To do this, the audio-visual artists led by Gómez Mederos go to places where collective conflicts are taking place and settle there for the duration of the crisis. This creates bonds of trust and mutual learning about ways of life. For example, young people who collaborate with the project and sympathize with the group’s ideology, but are not part of it, can experience first-hand what it is like to live under such precarious conditions. This opens new possibilities of empathy for the collaborators, which is reflected in the realism of the documentaries and in the collaboration provided by the residents, which is encouraged, in turn, by the film-making group’s empathy and commitment. We must not forget that, on many occasions, the claims that these documentaries are recording include

³⁵ The *Cordobazo* was a general strike that challenged the military dictatorship of Juan Carlos Onganía between May 29 and 30, 1969.

hostilities with police forces, and with violent groups hired by private parties interested in evicting them or in ensuring that these images do not come to light. The film-making group take this risk with the inhabitants of the territory and puts its cameras at the service of guaranteeing negotiations with the State that would otherwise be much more brutal and unequal and without a communicable trace of what has happened. In this sense, the camera is, according to Gómez Mederos, “a *piquetero* camera”³⁶, since it plays a very important role of intervention in the demagogic dynamics of power. That is, it makes evident the false State consensus regarding what should and should not be shown in relation to the big problems of a capitalist society. Therefore, the very presence of the group at the site of the conflict influences the terms of the political negotiation. This is, from our point of view, the cultural battle (Gramsci, 1929-35; Hall 1972-79) in its most crude, explicit and material form.

Thus, this filmmaking group covers the conflict drawing on their ideological identity as part of the CTA. From such activist epistemology, what is shown is decided collectively by them and the inhabitants of the territory. For this reason, their works have an eclectic character. Many are under permanent making as they address long-term social conflicts and constant political negotiations, all of which change and affect the circumstances of production or reach different territories and times, thus demanding other periods of production. Under this production logic, it is understood that only the images at the service of political praxis would come to light. That is, only those specific images at the service of the current conflict resolution are broadcast, as they release only what is convenient to be shown to achieve political progress in the conflict, saving the other images for a more appropriate crucial moment.

3. What themes, topics and social imaginaries do their productions deal with?

i. *La Paz inundada* (Flooded Peace) (2019)³⁷

La Paz inundada depicts the aftermath of a heavy flood in a slum west of the Province of San Juan between the end of 2018 and the beginning of 2019. The disaster destroyed 40 precarious homes. It also sparked a series of protest actions, which consisted of street closings, blocking the garbage recycling plant of four provincial departments, but also the *viralisation* on social media of the situation of the 185 families in the area. The visibility of the conflict was such that even the bishop of the province had to intervene. The Autonomous CTA, together with *Contraplano* Cine Barrio and *Maricarmenvisual*, participated in an assembly to build a collective strategy that ultimately resulted in a proactive intervention by the provincial

³⁶ The word *piquetero* is a neologism in Argentine Spanish referring to a member of a group that has blocked a street with the purpose of demonstrating and calling attention over a particular issue or demand.

³⁷ The title appears to be a play on words. *La Paz Inundada* could be translated as ‘Flooded Peace’. At the same time, La Paz is the name of the locality/neighbourhood affected by the flood.

government. Today, those 185 families have anti-seismic, clean and decent houses. The local boys and girls, the elderly, the disabled and everyone in La Paz today live a little more in peace.

ii. *Desalojo* (Eviction) (2022)

This audio-visual work portrays the attempted eviction on the part of the state of two slums in the Rivadavia area west of greater San Juan: *Asentamiento Evita* and *La Defensa*. The conflict has its origin in the residents' demand for decent housing after the floods and the consequences of the last earthquake. August-September 2022 was the moment of greatest tension and demand for the enactment of Law 27,453 (which prohibits evictions in slums that are within the perimeters established by the registry of working-class neighbourhoods). Thanks to the community defence of this law, passed in 2018, residents in those two settlements were not violently evicted. From that moment on, the collective strategy voted on in the assembly was the fight for housing for 230 families from both places. As the neighbourhoods built by the IPV³⁸ had been already granted, the residents obtained 230 rental subsidies for AR\$50,000 a month and the subsequent allotment of a house in the next neighbourhood to be inaugurated through an advance payment, which was done through the payment of a bond of AR\$1,300. The filmmaking group were part of the fight to solve the conflict, both in the assembly organization and in the strategic use of clips and teasers for the negotiation with the state, which sought to ignore the protection of the law.

4. What forms of circulation-reception do they adopt?

"Edge/cornice cinema" is then also on the edge of its own technical-rhetorical convention. Although such works are audio-visual productions, they do not comply with a traditional production-reception circuit but are intended as tools of struggle in political praxis. For this reason, they can sometimes serve to train the inhabitants of a territory undergoing conflict by supporting their arguments in assemblies. Other times they are used to make this conflict visible to the public based on a discourse that breaks with the aesthetics (approved by the system and hegemonized by the media) that directs the image and the word towards the ideological vector to which it responds economically. For this reason, it feels like an affront to hear the interviewee saying what he/she wants, without reservation, showing from her own present corporeality the destitution in which he/she lives, without veils. Furthermore, the images created are, sometimes, used so that the inhabitants of the territory themselves can circulate them on their social media to achieve immediate objectives. Also, and very frequently, images are used in direct negotiations as evidence of institutional abuse and negligence. In

³⁸ *Instituto Provincial de la Vivienda*, Provincial Institute for Housing.

short, *Maricarmen Visuals's* audio-visual production is not separated from political praxis – they are a means, a tool for an end.

In keeping with the use of images as a tool of political praxis, it is comprehensible that products – those that are finished, not those permanently following up the evolution of specific conflicts – should have non-formal forms of distribution. Thus, the medium by which they will be redistributed will depend on the tone, the urgency and the specific use that the images are going to have. For example, sometimes, clips and teasers taken from works in the pipeline go viral on WhatsApp because, if they circulate on other platforms such as YouTube, they run the risk of being taken down. On such occasions, the very neighbourhood protagonists have begun to circulate those videos in their social media. Under other circumstances, the group have used platforms such as the production company's YouTube channel to distribute its materials. There are also instances of internal film display for the residents, many times to reinforce the arguments raised in the assemblies as fields of discussion and direct participation. This is because the filmmaking group, as political activists, often aim at encouraging and guiding the inhabitants of a given territory to organize themselves, to seek collective leadership, to study the laws that protect them and to construct the messages that help them communicate their needs.

5. Do they have a vocation for continuity or are their productions purely contingent?

Although they are a group that address contingent situations, if one observes the semio-practical continuation of their project, which has led to an intertwining of conflicts such as water shortage, eviction or the inequity of possibilities for trans identities, we can determine that the project is larger and has a global, spatial and political purpose. For example, the approach that documentaries have on poverty is that such issue is framed within global problems. Similarly, the housing problem is structural and political. Furthermore, the problem of water shortages in a given town is a water problem in the mountains. That is, they view water as a natural resource that has been appropriated by capitalist profit-making groups linked to the international exploitation of gold reserves that destroy the ecosystem and, therefore, the flow of water available without protection from the complicit State.

Another aspect that accounts for the continuity of their project is that the filmmakers view it as a maturing dialectical process that aims to guide the possibilities of community communication but leaving direction and production to the inhabitants of the territory and protagonists of the conflicts so that they themselves can show the problems they are experiencing. The filmmakers are critical of community media appropriated by intellectuals even if done with good intentions. This is something that resonates with the criticism that we have been making of the

discursive construction of the NLAC projects, as aporias of representation of subalternity (Grosman, 2020). That is, this group aims at a cinema of presentation through participatory action and not of re-presentation. For this, they are committed to the training of human resources, which involves teaching audio-visual language to the inhabitants of the territory. The process begins during the documentary production days. It is then when the inhabitants begin to recognise the value and importance of mastering this language, which is the one that represents them on the hegemonic media and, thus, oppresses them. Therefore, in the praxis itself, and with the group collaborating with the specific technical needs of the audio-visual production being carried out, an audio-visual learning in situ emerges concomitantly for the collaborating residents. In other words, an impromptu workshop emerges, where, by collaborating, they catch up with the operation of the equipment, the aesthetic decisions of planning, framing, angulation, camera movement, sound levels and aesthetic use of microphones, etc. This spontaneous workshop takes on a more planned and formal format when, once the filming days in the territory have concluded, some of the collaborating residents continue to deepen their knowledge of this language in the photography and video workshops conducted by this filmmaking group at the headquarters of the autonomous CTA in the city of San Juan.

In relation to the work of this audio-visual group as a discourse framed within frontier critical thinking, we conclude that it has built a balanced relationship with the protagonists of the social conflicts, generating an active social memory based on the exemplification of cases in which the neoliberal system, as a hegemonic discourse and collective utopia, breaks down monumentally. This is because their activist³⁹ praxis is, ultimately, an ontological (body-political) re-narration of the subjects involved since it helps these meaning-producing subjects, now empowered by such capacity, escape from the role of the passive consumer of the model of reality and truth to which the market narrative has condemned them. It is a reconquest of their condition as political subjects, as it has promoted a collective repair of the concept of the individual as an audience that guarantees the policies and logic of the market. From the Decolonial perspective, we could say that this is the breakup with the Coloniality of Being not only at the individual but collective level. Their works intervene in the dynamics that reinforce the Coloniality of Being through the participating communities' ontological repositioning. Given the conditions of production and circulation of that communicative object, participants learn about the possibilities of having their own place in the world. These people learn that they can inscribe their subjectivities into a new intercultural paradigm where their stories are valuable,

³⁹ A blend between 'activist' and 'artist'.

and where the stories told by others resonate with their own experiences because such issues derive from the same structural problem.

It is also an epistemological re-narration because the modes of production and circulation of their works are materially and symbolically underpinned by other ethical foundations: that of the construction of a discourse within a collective and collaborative dynamic, those of a production based on solidarity, exchange and mutual help. Those of the collective author; those that reveal themes of social conflicts without fearing unsuccessful marketing; those that aim to develop conflictive themes whose production process is itself a process of group reflection and healing with regard to such themes merely because they are approached and communicated by the group. That is, to *presentise*: to make it present, current, urgent, inescapable. In this regard, Gómez Mederos says: “We must not allow images of inequality to become naturalised. Cinema must contribute to a conflict being politicised and resolved.”

This refers to its ‘poietic’ function: it makes use of the productive power of its symbolic language not only as a critical-descriptive act of ethical meanings, but, at the same time, as a creative-performative act of those meanings. In this sense, we argue that its educational project is a utopian re-narration, a challenge, based on a new symbolic system of dynamics of the collective, language zones and construction of what is real, all of which have been damaged, in our political unconscious, by the “mythological individualistic account of capitalism” (Jameson, 1981).



Figure 62: Maricarmen Visual (2019) Photographs. [Process of production of La Paz Inundada/Flooded Peace (2019)]. The presentation is in PPT format for a conference and teaching purposes.

CHAPTER 7

Socio-educative Practice: Techno-aesthetical Embodiment. Praxis; Knowledge and Territory

Introduction

Reaching the end of my auto- ethnographic journey through the territory of community cinema in Argentina, and after analysing regional community cinema's successes and flaws at becoming devices for decolonial praxis, I have some certainties as to how a positive experience of decolonial pedagogy/decolonial aesthetic could be practiced through community cinema. For example, by 2023 I understood the great importance of working on various borders of a knowledge framework such as the cooperation between specialized audio-visual facilitators and territorial activism. I had also grasped the significance of a public University's seal for the social legitimation of community cinema discourse, as well as the benefits brought to university education by incorporating the semio-praxis of community cinema as a research and practical assignment for students seeking to apply their knowledge back in society. At that point, I had to become familiar with the importance of community cinema networking when negotiating with other agents and institutions, as well as the value of sharing the workload among different players, assigning areas of expertise and responsibilities. Likewise, at that point I understood networking and seeking community cinema's institutional legitimation would favour the consolidation of the decolonial telos. I had observed, as well, that all these epistemological processes are sustained on territorial intersubjective dynamics, that is, body-political relations built outside institutional logics and based on collective ethics such as trust, affect, empathy and belonging. It is at this level when plural ideals of common wellbeing search for identity cohesions in territorial standings from which political resistances emerges. The observations also showed me that, by far, the most powerful intersubjective exchange towards the consolidation of identity politics is education, especially non-formal education positioned as one of the territorial dynamics. Finally, my research affirmed that art productions in the context of collective creativity, non-formal education and political activism is an extraordinary tool to bring forth truth, justice, empathy, self-consciousness, and the image of those that Modern/Colonial subsidiary discourses such as Neoliberalism, explicitly left out of representation, of their all-encompassing yet unhealthy narrative. With all of this in view I realized that this was my call to merge research into praxis; this meant to put these learnings and realizations as the fundamentals of a proposal for a community cinema experience with definite social performative aims.

In this chapter I will describe my experience designing, conducting and evaluating a project of Socio-educative Practice in Community Cinema by using my tripartite analytic scheme as

described in the methodology chapter. There will be three fields of critical observation: firstly, regarding established social practices demarcating a conceived (hegemonic) space or paradigm in which my project is designed to intervene. Secondly, I approach the lived space in which the project is developed, with my focus on the praxis operating this project, which can be told by following the preproduction, production and postproduction stages of the short film created by the community as our artefact. Finally, I attend to the representations of space, the discursive practices with which the participants create images of the creative experience and how this image has reverberations that modify the conceived space we set up to intervene.

A. Social Practices in the Conceived Space; Changing Paradigmatic Designs

With all these evidence in mind, by the second half of 2023, I decided to design a practice-based research project with which I would conclude my PhD. thesis by conducting an a posteriori reflecting upon a praxis in community cinema. The project departed from the premise that my position as autoethnographer is geo-historically situated and had roots in the soil on which I was standing. Such location was my position as lecturer/researcher at the Institute of Visual Expression, Faculty of Philosophy, Humanities and Arts, at the National University of San Juan. As the territory I was standing on was university education, I planned the project to expand its reach starting from its very status as an elective seminar for the Faculty of Philosophy Humanities of Arts' students. As such the project "Community Cinema: Praxis, Knowledge and Territory" was proposed as an interdisciplinary Socio-educative Practice which fulfils a curricular assignment for the final year honours students at the University. This is a compulsory number of hours in which students must exercise their learnt skills while involved in practice based academic activities framed in university's extension programs. As an academic extension project, my project justified the need for a multi-sectorial character proposing to welcome in members of popular sectors, of social work civil association, of independent communication agencies, of cultural government offices, and it offered to enrol students of other faculties, as well as from other universities and tertiary institutes.

This is the first step of discursive legitimation for this project of Socio- Educative Practices in Community Cinema, as it was welcome into the curricular activities of the Department of Philosophy and Educational Sciences on the basis that we shared similar perspectives and theoretical pursuits. Some of the topics of mutual interest were Philosophy of praxis, Decolonial Pedagogy, Psychology of Groups and Institutions, Ideological reproduction in language, Ethics and Citizenship, and Counter-Hegemonic Epistemological Praxes such as community communication in the process of knowledge production. I had a background of working with this department as a member of the research project called: "Metaphors and Epistemology: On the role of metaphor within the main epistemological trends of the Twenty first century".

During my collaboration with this Philosophy's research project, I reflected upon the practical-conceptual intersections that involve cinema, epistemology and citizenship. From this framework, my Socio-educative Practices project proposed to bring such intersection to the praxis where popular subjects' representations face their cultural-political contexts of possibility. This linkage therefore assured another objective: to pursue new possibilities of self-representation of socially vulnerable sectors by supporting community resilient strategies (its ethics and performances) throughout the borderisation of knowledge in their process of audio-visual language appropriation.

Another discursive legitimization factor was that this proposal originated from my involvement at the Institute of Visual Expression, Faculty of Philosophy Humanities of Arts. This interdisciplinary art institute is well known for its relevant research and production concerning the representation of reality throughout image and sound. They regard image as a production of body-political and geocultural knowledge and as testimony of an inhabited territory. As one of this Institute's research creators, I felt my colleagues, who immediately signed up to participate as workshop coaches, backed up my project. Others offered to participate as support agents by caring for the logistics, recording and publication of our daily progress, as well as for the organization of concurrent activities such as the convention with community cinema directors and the screening exhibition we carried out alongside all the involved parties to end these Socio-educative Practices. The colleagues offered to teach, developed interesting propositions in response to my request of leading workshops in story boarding, body expression, and scenography. From this articulation and in agreement with my colleagues and the Institute's director I proposed the following objective: to raise awareness among the university's community and socially vulnerable communities about community cinema as a positive confirmation of popular identity and as a discursive vehicle for their epistemic emancipation and social assertiveness.

The discursive legitimation of an academic project that aims to join community sectors to engender a socially performative synergy, must always think from the roots and gradually expand, networking with players that are already bridging university and territorial praxis for social betterment. This is where I realized I should include the "Education Brigades" into the project, because this organization is formed by volunteer university students involved in territorial social work, particularly in supporting the school progress of children from socio-economically vulnerable families. Their activities are educative, recreational and supportive of the legal and state bureaucratic matters requested of civilians, which they cannot undertake as this sector of the population is often partially illiterate, undocumented and afraid of facing government bodies, even if it is in their own benefit. We can assume, then, that the Brigades' work only on a micro-political level, but their ability to create social change has a macro political

affiliation too. They belong to a larger organization called “Our America” (recalling José Martí’s geopolitical concept)⁴⁰. For the purposes of discursive legitimation, I found relevant that the Socio- Educative Practices project establishes cooperative work with a civil association whose structural platform is founded the same principles of decolonial semio-praxis; we coincide at an ideological, theoretical and pragmatic level. This since from the name to their activities the “Education Brigades” recall the 1960’s Cuban Literacy Brigades that expanded the telos of the Cuban revolution in and outside Cuban territory. In a less symbolic and more pragmatic way the organization “Our America” represents the cultural battle of a left-wing political party Patria Grande Front. This is an alliance created in 2018 with popular leftist and Peronist tendencies in which several political and social organizations that stand for the “critical vindication of the popular cycle in Latin America and Argentina”(Piscetta, 2019), particularly youth, feminisms and impoverished sectors of the population. In turn, this party conforms a greater alliance “Everybody’s Front” as the biggest opposition party to the neoliberal tendencies and governments that came after.

Within this macro political network, the Brigada’s mission is to foster the believe that education is a transformative tool that reduces social inequalities. The micro-politics of this civil association run at the level of non-formal education and community organization for their social projection, we can say, from a critical frontier position. This is why the Socio- Educative Practices I proposed found a great coherence with the association’s platform since the planned activity fits as one the dynamics of cultural production with which they achieve intercultural projection. Therefore, with their agreement and support I developed another objective for my project: to encourage children and youth from socio-economically vulnerable sectors to incorporate audio-visual language. This was to participate, with their audio-visual productions, in the intercultural meaning constructions emerging from media sphere dynamics. This implied support for their search for a self-representative voice by learning and using a socially shared communication code to avoid the processes of discursive invisibility traditionally undertaken by hegemonic media. The Brigades accepted the proposed goals, and we agreed on working in one of the neighbourhoods of influence in which they have been doing territorial work for over 5 years: The neighbourhood called *Villa la Esperanza* (“The hope”).

One more legitimating aspect that contributed towards the viability of my project was the agreement of the neighbourhood’s residents through the endorsement of the Brigades. This

⁴⁰ Briefly, “Our America” is a philosophical and political essay published by the Cuban, José Martí, in 1891. In it, “the father of Cuban revolution” produces a critical analysis of the determining circumstances of oppression carried out by Hispanic America as a result of Colonialism and United States neo-colonialism. The essay proposes social change based on embracing a “Latin American being” as a geopolitical identity against onto-esthetical-epistemological dynamics of colonialist symbolical perpetuation. All throughout the twentieth century this essay has been used as an emblem for postcolonial and decolonial praxis as it pioneered the critical analysis of aspects we now understand as coloniality of knowledge, of seeing and of being

was a delicate matter for all, since the Brigade members have spent five years building trust, empathy and community ties with the residents and they were entrusting to my project and team to conduct an activity that entailed the representation of these subjects and the involvement of outsiders, such as our students, teachers and support personnel. Therefore, we signed agreements on image consent and ethical approaches. The agreement between the resident community and the Brigades was added to the project proposal as an annexe.

The next players to join this team were the audio-visual specialists; in my proposal they constitute the part of frontier critical thinking that brings in the know-how of audio-visual production and education. Simultaneously they were invited because of their background working with minorities, peripheral communities and under critical conditions of conflict-resolution. Such is the case of the audio-visual collective *Maricarmen Visual*, whose territorial approaches we studied at the end of chapter 6. Their director and I have been collaborating in creative productions and the recordings of my previous seminars in Latin American Cinema and Ideology. We have shared interviews, seminars panels and projects. The development of these Socio-educative Practices was a continuation of that. Their participation was planned in three modes: as workshop facilitators, by running *in situ* lessons on audio-visual techniques dedicated to the neighbourhood's children and youth and supported by the University students and Brigade agents. A second task was to aid in the recording and editing of the material. The third was to become spokesperson for this type of audio-visual production in online promotion, radio interviews, community cinema directors' encounters, etc. The latter as a form of creating a social reception of this type of work and divulge the main traits of this mode of production first hand from their producers.

Another community cinema maker invited as a special guest was Buenos Aires Rural community cinema director Ezequiel Sanz, whom I had interviewed in the National Film Festival of Cinema Made with Neighbours and later online and with whom I developed interactions related to the praxis of community cinema conducted in territory. Sanz has over ten feature films produced with this modality, also teaches Theatre and is a post graduate researcher working on systematizing his own strategies of acting direction with no professional actors in the context of community cinema. His designated roles were as above: workshop facilitator, in this case acting in front of the camera and script writing; artistic director for the short film collectively created and spokesperson in social and media divulgation of the project's goals and achievements. The series of activities planned for his visit contemplated the screening of his previous work and a panel conversation with local community cinema directors.

An extra task for these audio-visual producers was to offer educational contributions which we organized and planned as a seminar with university students scheduled to precede the territorial work. The sessions were proposed to be carried at the Faculty of Philosophy Humanities and Arts as well as through a Google classroom we designed for virtual interactions in which I had prepared a package of reading and audio-visual material. Its content comprises critical literature on community cinema as well as on other relevant concepts such as problematics in cultural production and the representation of subalternity, decolonial thinking and praxis, apparatus theory of cinema as a form of ideological reproduction, etc. This reference material also included my own recorded classes on this topic as well as interviews with community cinema referents and movies illustrating the scope of this field. As director of the project, I proposed to officiate as debate coordinator and as tutor in theoretical and methodological matters as well as the possible approaches to the production of community cinema. The project expected the students to participate horizontally with freedom to question planned schedules, pedagogic strategies and educational approaches. The project was prepared to give the students the chance of planning activities of social interaction in territory. The project also contemplated a practice-based research output written by the students reflecting upon the applicability of their career skillset in the practice of community cinema and making suggestions as what other possible contributions their line of expertise can offer to future socio-educative practices of community cinema. Another alternative output they could select from was the production of audio-visual essays with observations on the community issues. During the field work the students would support workshop facilitators in their teaching of handling audio-visual technology; they will also be involved in supporting acting, audio recording and editing as well as sorting production logistics.

The proposal also manifested awareness of other socio-educative projects with territorial reach currently operating within our university. The proposal stated that these projects, together with other culturally independent actions in civil society, could enlarge the range of collective sectors committed to developing community cinema as a territory of identity and resilience. For instance, among civil society associations, the activity could include grassroots organizations, public libraries, NGOs, community radio and TV stations, neighbours' cooperatives, cultural centres, identity groups, secondary school parent associations, journalists' guilds, etc. We could include as actors also secondary school teachers and students covering subjects such as technology, communication, humanities and arts. We could also invite visual and performance artists, cultural agents, writers and members of the community at large interested in participating in community creative projects. For that, the project offered a continuity in future years together with involving other faculties, which will

broaden the scope of content and methodologies to offer interdisciplinary and diverse opportunities in knowledge production.

This platform of legitimating sectors (and potentially expanding fields) secured a good reception for these projects within the Faculty's pedagogical direction. This was a positive start which encouraged me to present (by the end of 2023) the proposal to the Faculty's academic assessor committee with the following general objective:

To offer participants a space to think about contemporary pressing matters such as social inequalities, the political conflicts as a result of institutional violence, the socio-cultural applicability of new technologies, the representability of minority identities, the digital economy, new forms of power, social and economic relations, the changes in contemporary cultural democratization processes, among others.

Even though the process of institutionalizing the project through the circuits of academic councils and ethics committee, took over 6 months, its approval in July 2024 meant the seal of the National University of San Juan to consolidate agreements with government cultural bodies for their support. This is how the National University formed an alliance with the Council of Rawson, the second biggest city in the province, to join efforts to guarantee the resources to conduct this project. The government body that signed up to articulate with us was the Council's Centre of Community and University Linkage. Unfortunately, as I will evaluate in the section dedicated to the praxis of this project, this commitment fulfilled only the interest of political propaganda, but did little to nothing for the projects' development, creating frictions among the university students who considered this move as one more of the government's demagogical acts.

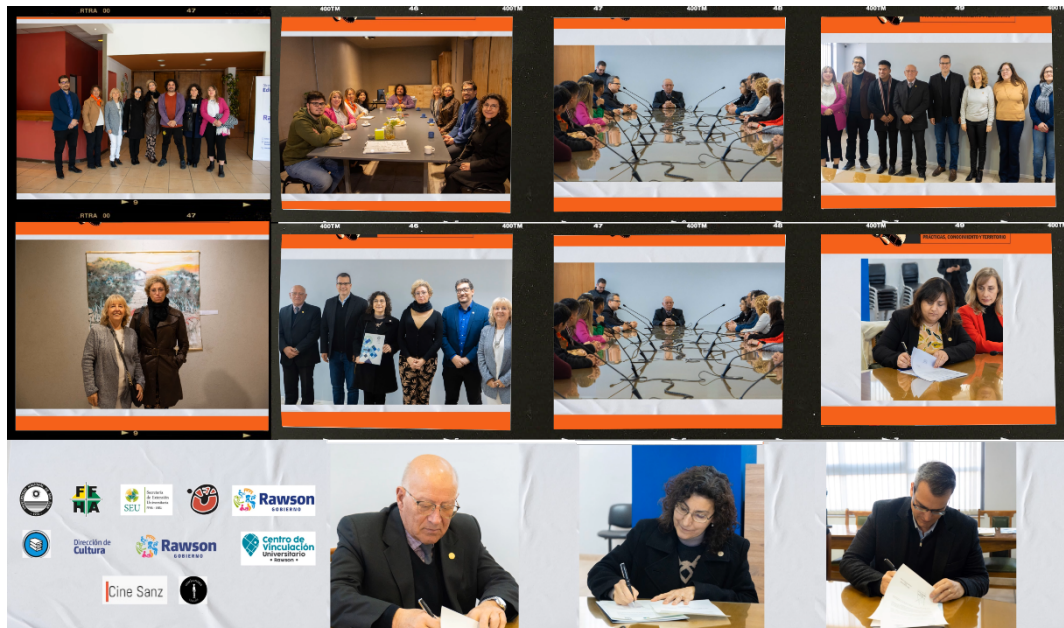


Figure 63: Images retrieved from the UNSJ official web page, <https://www.unsj.edu.ar/> [Agreement signing between National University of San Juan (UNSJ) and San Juan's Government (Council of Rawson).to collaborate in the production of the Socio-educative



Figure 64: TVET (2024) Preliminary encounters with Students, Department of Philosophy and Education Sciences, Faculty of Philosophy, Humanities and Arts, National University of San Juan

B. Praxis in the Lived Space. Experience Operating the Artefact

1. Preproduction (late July to late August 2024)

The objective of this stage was the continuation of the process of social legitimization of the project to obtain community support and participation, as well as help with the logistics of its realization. To carry out this task I formed six working teams through which I managed preproduction matters simultaneously coordinating their own networking.

The first one, linking the Faculty's official in charge of decision-making: the Faculty Vice Dean, the Faculty's secretary of extension, Philosophy and Education Sciences, the Head of Department, as well as the Director of the Institute of Visual Expression. Through this group, we agreed on several protocols related to the Faculty's commitments with this project: for instance, we were invited to participate with the lecturers of the faculty for them to encourage their students into enrolling. In addition, we obtained permission for the enrolled students to skip classes during the work on territory. We worked on the transport and security for the students' outings to attend work in territory. We secured the permissions and consent of the families residing in our working territory. The logistics around the visit of the invited lecturer was organized (booking for flights, hotel accommodation, daily transport and stipend). Another task undertaken was to divulge the activity within the faculty channels of communication (newsletter, website, university TV channel). Finally, we attended the University's rectorate for the signature of formal agreements between the National University of San Juan's Chancellor and the Mayor of Rawson City. The big table summoned representatives from the Education Brigades, the Council's Centre of Community and University Linkage, the Secretary of the University's Extension and that of the Faculty's Extension as well as other government and university officials. At the signing of that deed the City of Rawson committed to provide refreshments for the whole team and the children of the community during the four days of work in territory, they also agreed to provide temporary toilets for the group, a temporary gazebo for 50 people and the lending of some technological equipment. The Mayor also agreed on hosting the final exhibition of the community's audio-visual work at the Council's theatre. This included their promise to transport the participant children and their families to and from their homes by using council transport. The University provided the human resources (teachers, drivers), some equipment coming from the Institute of Visual Expression (camera, tripod), transport for the students (using the Faculty's van), insurances, the transport and accommodation for the invited lecturer and the delivery of valid certifications of attendance for the students and other participants at the end of the Practices.

The second team I formed was among lecturers of the Faculty of Philosophy and Education Sciences that have agreed to include the topics and problematics of community cinema into

their papers. We collaborated on the pedagogical strategies and the topics their papers would share with our socio-educative practices and decided to validate the theoretical-practical outputs produced by their students during the socio-educative practice as curricular achievements within their papers. With them, I coordinated activities such as the delivery of two introductory sessions, one for the class of “Psychology of Groups and Institutions” and the other in the class of “Epistemology in Ethics and Citizenship”

The third group was among my colleagues from the Institute of Visual Expression who signed up to support the logistics of the workshops. At this stage we prepared the online platform for our virtual classroom, updated the Institute of Visual Expression’s website with daily developments of this project, organized the enrolments and produced a divulgation campaign that contained short videos of each member of the team explaining his/her role and inviting the community to participate. The Institute’s website and social media (Facebook and Instagram profiles), also showed the interviews I was offering through the National University of San Juan TV channel (*Xama*) and to the nationwide radio networks (LAV 10).⁴¹ The work of this team was assisted by the digital marketing agency Owl Digital that designed logos, flyers, and other communication graphics as well as composing the daily progress videos we then uploaded to social networks and website. The collaboration with this group was all through the production and post-production of the practices (I will return to our work done here when I cover those sections of the development of our Socio- educative Practices).

The fourth group summoned enrolled students with whom I maintained online interactions via emails to clarify data related to their enrolments. I also formed a WhatsApp group through which we communicated last minute matters related to the daily development of our activities. I also opened a Google classroom account to convey protocols of work dynamics, schedules, roles assignments, insurance titles, transport seating and the feedback with activity planning, as well as the final output guidelines. The Google classroom also contained bibliographic and filmographic material for their consultation as well as my own-recorded lectures about community cinema and the recorded conversations I had done during research with the invited community cinema directors. This team also held online meetings with the members of the Education Brigades and the Invited directors. The Google classroom and the WhatsApp group continued as our form of remote interaction even during production and postproduction stages.

⁴¹ UNSJ TV Channel Xama Interview with SEPC director Carla Grosman
<https://iev.ffha.unsj.edu.ar/2024/08/22/cine-comunitario-entrevista-carla-grosman-en-xama/>
And Radio Interview LV10
https://iev.ffha.unsj.edu.ar/2024/08/10/entrevista-a-carla-grosman-acerca-de-las-practicas-socio-educativas-cine-comunitario-practica-conocimiento-y-territorio/?fbclid=IwY2xjawHgbWJleHRuA2FibQlxMQABHfumvETTgem5TDk7pw6Aljhcpm6pMGORwxPwH4PwfohP5WwXR4-x4TWzqQ_aem_w5BZWPPoksZUp3cFvowNcQ

A fifth team was consolidated with the community cinema directors and me as the three heads in the actual production of the audio-visual work. We managed online video call meetings to include our director from Buenos Aires and held several meetings in San Juan with the local community director from *Maricarmen Visual*. This team was important to determine production conditions such as which technical resources were needed for the work in territory and the social dynamics, we should be aware of when working in the territory. Concerning the first, this collective of social cinemas was committed to provide professional cameras, tripod, lighting, microphones and audio recorders, as well as the editing and mixing technology together with the audio studio to record original music. We also discussed work modalities for the shooting in territory and planned the logistics for the delivery of the audio-visual workshops. Regarding the second, we explored the location and met the residents of the neighbourhood, we also observed the interactions among the *Education Brigades'* literacy workshops facilitators and the children. It is important to clarify that our socio-educative practices fitted within the authorization protocols the *Education Brigades* had to work with in that community and with those children. Moreover, close to the date of territorial work, while sponsored by the Brigade's members, I met with the neighbours in territory to explain the nature of our project and answered all their questions and I signed in benefit of the *Institute of Visual Expression* (as sponsor of my project) an authorization of image use on behalf of the parents. While in "*Villa la Esperanza*", we also met the officers of the Council's Centre of Community and University Linkage and observed their interactions with the local community. With them, we arranged the travelling permissions the children would need on the day of the final screening of the community audio visual production.

The last group I formed was with the workshop facilitators, some of whom are my colleagues at the *Institute of Visual Expression* and while other are my links from previous research work on this PhD thesis. With them –through in-person meetings and via the WhatsApp group-, I discussed the design and coordinated planning for four workshops in territory. First, to share some of the audio-visual language basic concepts and to handle audio-visual recording equipment. Second, to approach body language Third, to be able to perform in front of the camera; Fourth, to develop ideas for the writing of a short film script. Fourth, to create a storyboard to apply the scriptwriting into image planning.

2. Production (Last days of August to 10 September)

The objective of this stage of the process was to bring the proposal, and the strategies set forth during the pre-production stage, into practice. The goal was to interact as a critical frontier positioning dynamic, towards the consolidation of a space of reciprocal learning to get to know each other and exchange our skills and identity traits. The aim was therefore to bring to life an

interdisciplinary team to learn and execute production strategies of community cinema. The format of these territorial practices was planned as four full-day sessions in which a team of students, teachers, audio-visual specialists, and education brigades would arrive to a slum dwelling territory to work alongside the residents of this settlement, with their children. The proposed activities were a series of six 2-hour workshops to be conducted on the first two days. And two 6-hour sessions of film shooting. The workshops, aimed to introduce children to audio-visual production, were managed in groups of three simultaneous workshops per day. They ran in different stations as the children circulated from one to the other, which allowed teaching-learning to be focused on small groups at a time. This strategy benefited children who were able to participate in all. The subjects on the first day were: audio-visual technique; body expression in space and improvisation acting in front of the camera. On the second day, they explored sound recording, script writing and storyboard design. A backstage was being shot while we worked on the workshops, containing interviews with the entire group of participants and recording scenes of our daily work. In the following 2 days we shot the short film. The plot was drawn from the children's input in the workshops and from the situations observed by the students within the surrounding circumstances (territorial experience of the lived space).

Due to the territorial conditions in which we were going to work and our minimum budget, the decision for the development of the project in the neighbourhood "La Esperanza" was to create a heterogeneous environment with representative agents from all groups but reducing their numbers to the minimum. We were at five groups in territory bringing into this encounter our own intersubjective relationships and body-political identities. The exercise was to merge all the network of relationships into one collective activity we were all excited to take part in, the practice of community cinema. Let us review the characteristics and inputs of each group representatives for this collective experience.

i. The Community of "La Esperanza":

As many of the slum dwellings located on the outskirts of San Juan City, "Villa La Esperanza" comprises 20 precarious houses, lacking shade and safe, clean common ground; the houses do not have electric power, running water or septic tanks. The settlement is situated in the centre south of San Juan Province, 20 kilometres south of San Juan City and it has been built over government lands. This is a rural area that has recently been gentrified; private neighbourhoods, holiday clubs and golf courses are now surrounding this "villa" and they seem to be the only part of the area that has not yet been negotiated by the government to develop country clubs or luxurious commuter homes. In this neighbourhood the electricity is illegally taken from the street line, but the council pretends it has not noticed that because acknowledging it would force the government to invest in running a proper connection which

involves granting them the lands they have been occupying for the past twenty years. Instead, government pretends this is not happening while also ignoring the lack of running drinkable water, as the installation of reticulated water would incur in the same grants of property. Therefore, while the government speculates with the possible revenues they may get from the sales of these lands soon, the families receive monthly medium size water tanks to take care of their cooking, washing and hygiene and are unsafely 'hooked' to the street light, all of which represents an inhospitable environment particularly for families with young children.

Its residents are mostly young couples with children, their economy is based on the informal sector: the women stay home minding their homes and doing sewing or ironing jobs, the males get out to work (I have no specifics of location or the nature of their work). Even though they belong to a socially and economically vulnerable sector, we observed that the traditional conflicts and risks concomitant with these social circumstances (infantile prostitution, drug addiction, family violence as well as criminality and parent imprisonment) do not occur here, at least not in an obvious way. It may be the case that they are being visited weekly by the Education Brigade's agents who, beyond supporting the children's school development, help them also to navigate government subsidies and access to grants often offered as economical palliatives. The place we had assigned to work in the neighbourhood was a cane-roofed area with a concrete floor of 4 x 5 metres built by the Brigades in the middle of bare land. We asked the council to install portable toilets in order not to disturb the residents' privacy and brought our own water for drinking purposes.

During our four days visiting we had little participation with the adult occupants. Only two mothers supported us directly with boiling water and running an electric cable for our television monitor and battery charging. The rest of the parents kept to themselves indoors but were attentive if we requested anything or their kids went back home to change clothes or pick up items such a bike or a ball. The lack of adult involvement could have many motives; even though they agreed with us running the workshop in their settlement and signed permissions for the children to participate, they could still feel invaded, intimidated, exposed or threaten. Alternatively, they may have felt shy (thinking this is only for the children), or disappointed that this is a kind of "poverty porn" hegemonic media of the type that runs from time to time there and decided not to want to be part of it. Another possibility is that they simply wanted to take advantage of our presence minding their children, to get on with house chores and other jobs pending. In any case, even when we invited the entire community, our participants in the settlement were solely the children.

By the time we arrived, we had twenty children of the community enrolled through the Brigades' organization. Children ranged from 5 to 14 years old, so we constantly had to be adjusting the

strategies to captivate their attention and their interest keeping everybody involved. The oldest seemed to be more reluctant to participate so our audio-visual team invited them to officiate as assistants and apprentices, then they liked that position and stayed. From the first moment we arrived, they treated us with affection and respect. I believe this was due to the weekly contact with the Brigades and the fact that the Brigades' agent and their parents have already introduced this project to them.



Figure 65: Photos rights Socio-educative Practices in Community Cinema (SEPCC). Dir. Carla Grosman. [SEPCC team and community members mingling, Villa La Esperanza, El Medano, San Juan Argentina, August 2024]

ii. The Students

As this was a University extension activity as well as an academic assignment, enrolment of in the program was open to students of other faculties, universities and institutions. As such, we consolidated an interdisciplinary group comprising firstly, university students from Faculty of Philosophy, Humanities and Arts' careers, such as Education, Philosophy and Theatre. In addition, the project welcomed Design Students from the Faculty of Architecture, Urbanism and Design, as well as communication students from the Faculty of Social Sciences. Moreover, as this was an open curricular activity, the project received students from ENERC Cuyo (the regional school of the Institute of Cinema and Audio-Visual Arts; INCAA).

As we tried to keep an even proportion among the groups' representatives while maintaining a modest total number of visitors when in the settlement and, since the territory was remote and the Faculty's transport had restricted seating, the maximum number of students we agreed to enrol was ten. They enrolled online and attended the preliminary introductory classes before mentioned. There, we introduced each other and expressed our interests, doubts and explored the possible working dynamics and scenarios ahead. Later, via online sessions, we thought about who best would fit different roles ranging from supporting the workshops tutors in technical issues, guiding recreational activities or designing pedagogical strategies. This responsibility agreement was already clear when we arrived at the location. The teams were interdisciplinary: students from Education, Philosophy and Theatre joined in designing strategies to manage group dynamics (children's attention, participation, inclusion) They resorted to songs, sports and distributed old cell phones and outdated cameras for the children to play with while getting familiar with photographing and with being photographed). Students from Design, Communication and Audio-visual arts teamed up to register and document the event while interviewing all the involved parties, reflecting in real time, the impact and implications of this exercise on each of the participants. Practicing alongside their interdisciplinary team formed by photographer, sound specialist and journalist, the children had the chances to interview the visitors with microphones, monitoring sound with professional equipment and being coached in photographing with high-definition cameras. As part of their exploration with the interdisciplinary teams, the children created their own sounds with bark, stones and sand lying in their environment. From the start, the students were shown to be incredibly empathetic going out of their way to support the community. For instance, even though the council committed to send refreshments and afternoon tea for the whole group involved in the Socio-educative Practices (including the children), and despite their smiles in the photos at the moment of signing the agreement, the food promised by the council was not what they promised. They sent six packets of biscuits for forty people to last a week. This made the students angry but also proactive; by the next day they had organized to bring milk powder, cocoa and bakery products. I want to emphasize that most of our public university students are on student allowances and have a very low income, though they kept bringing these contributions during the four days of the activity. What the council did do, was to send some of their authorities to be present (guarding the television they lent us) but they seemed unaware of the flaws in their own commitment and of the needs of the community. While benefiting from the positive exposure for being associated to our genuine project, we regret to say they left yet another promise unfulfilled. They signed to provide a gazebo requested for 50 people; we received a garden size gazebo for 5 people, so we did not use it. To reconcile with the students' discontent, I asked the students to keep notes and to be extremely critical of these developments to have a good ground in future to re design this experience in better terms.

This included reconsidering “handing out” a project that had been conceived and legitimized and finalized with the greatest of efforts and honesty, to a government entity that may use it, as it did, as a demagogic tool. I do regret my naivety on trusting my superiors who suggested this agreement was a beneficial deal. In turn, the students felt let down with this inter-institutional pact and their dissatisfaction increased with the days. Their only defence tool was to write down their criticism and turn into a proposal for the future improvement of the project. So, in the praxis, while they were fully involved in the activities, they also kept a notebook aiming to track current issues with which to inform a critical essay or audio-visual output they were bound to hand out, as their final assignment of the Socio- educative Practice.

As student had this double role: being in constant active interaction with the children while note-taking their participant observations, they were also able to offer insight at the very moment of the praxis. This since what they spotted, beyond being excellent material for the critical assignment, also functioned as a plot towards the writing and production of the community short film. It was by exercising such a double role that they detected some alarming circumstances that the neighbours were facing. Said situation opened a reality window into their lives and became a telling indicator that was later turned into a metaphor and a plot for the film we were all seeking to create. I will elaborate this point later when referring to the metaphoric status of this film.

It is worth emphasising the commitment of the students who, after a whole day of work in territory, then went home and kept working. For instance, by editing the daily recording to be shared in their social networks as well as the student associations’ blogs and websites. They even produced a photo montage reading a poem with their own voice that could give accounts of the great impact this encounter had in their hearts and minds.



Figure 66: Photos rights Socio-educative Practices in Community Cinema (SEPCC). Dir. Carla Grosman [Students learning, interacting and guiding the children, Villa La Esperanza, El Medano, San Juan Argentina, August 2024]

iii. The Brigades

Due to our transport and visitor number restrictions, and the members of the Brigades being numerous, we decided they should take turns to accompany the Socio-educative Practices. As such, each day we had four Brigade members in territory. The Brigades, as an organization, was our key player as they had developed 5 years long connection with the community of La Esperanza. They have earned their trust accompanying their children's development since infancy and have become valued collaborators for the adult residents. Their presence in territory was invaluable, for us; they held the children's trust, they related to them with familiarity, patience and love, but also with leadership. For the community it felt as if our presence there was just another of the Brigade's weekly activities, which strengthened our practices enormously as we, by extension had their trust and their respect (something we would have spent years trying to achieve). At our request, the Brigades arranged portable tables and the art supply for the children, they were the ones knowing everybody's name, what family they were from, if anyone skipped the activity they knew where they were, what time they would return, what they were doing. They handled all small frictions among the children and were in general not involved in the tutoring of the workshops but participated as attendees, also giving the children the certainty that the activity was worthy of their time. It is very interesting, the figure of these agents, as they have a political commitment, an affiliation to the organisation (as explained before) but most of them are also students, so they benefited from

attending these practices also for their own career path as the certification enrolled them in the character of student. Regarding the divulgation of the Socio-educative Practices on their social media circuit, they run their own visibility campaign. They produced their own videos for Facebook and Instagram and put forward their own agenda as this being an activity from their own doing. As a creator and coordinator of this project, I embraced this as part of the several appropriations implied in the making of collective art. They even brought their own political leader for a half hour to run a TV note for him to present their work in the community cinema project. They did so without consulting me, or without including the rest of the team. I understand this as I stand by the conviction of this experience being a collective activity, and that everybody should have the opportunity to use this for the betterment of his or her own endeavours, especially because despite the colour of their flag we all pursue the same outcome, the benefit of the underprivileged ones. I feel they deserve that recognition, as we owe them the possibility to work in the territory they established.

iv. Invited Directors

As has been advanced, the directors were summoned as audio-visual specialists because of their unique abilities and background in community cinema.

Ramón Gómez Mederos who is the director of the audio-visual collective Mari Carmen Visual is a self-taught political scientist and environmental journalist. Gómez Mederos has devoted his life to political activism, always present in the popular riots, demonstrations, occupations and all forms of collective protest. He has experience working in literature and audio-visual workshops in slum dwellings, his audio-visual collective is formed by young people who he met when conducting social activism in socioeconomically vulnerable neighbourhoods and he invited us to his studio where he and other collaborators run workshops on audio visual technique, editing, acting, elocution and modelling. Equipped with these new skills, these young adults find better horizons but always stay around to collaborate in documenting their neighbourhood living circumstances. For the past two years, Gómez Mederos and I have been collaborating in seminars and poetic productions and reflecting on ways to develop a project of community cinema. Therefore, in this project, I asked him to lead the audio-visual workshop in territory. Under his tutorship, the children commanded the camera, monitored sounds and were able to see their framing and recording practices as they were working on them thanks to an *in situ* television. He explained to the children of La Esperanza about the lighting, and the camera movements, he attended the older kids who practised camera movements and learnt about frames, angles. This small team, which he formed with the older children, advanced some coverage shots of everyday living in the settlement that later were included in the film. Regarding the shooting, he shared director roles with the other invited director and with the children that had signed up for assisting directors, clapperboard operation and camera

assistants. This means the children kept each other aware of the many re-takes, the continuity in clothing and accessories, the poses and direction of walking and sights. The children knew the lines each other had to say, who should and should not be in each frame, etc. It is fair to say that the kids worked collaboratively with the directors as in the professional work structures.

Ezequiel Sans was the second invited director; he is from a rural town in Buenos Aires where he is a primary school theatre teacher. Professionally, he writes and directs films made with neighbours, he finds the stories in the everyday life of the people he is working with. In this project he conducted acting workshops in front of the camera, encouraging the children to improvise the small daily conflicts they may have had. From those dialogues he drew some of the plot element. The next day he conducted another workshop on script writing, trying to bring to the surface some of the improvised dialogues and the circumstances detected by our students, which relate to the real-life problems of the community. There is where the plot emerged, a plot that was there with us and that the film lifted to the level of a metaphor.



Figure 67: Photos rights Socio-educative Practices in Community Cinema (SEPCC). Dir. Carla Grosman. [Workshop in storytelling, led by Ezequiel Sanz, Villa La Esperanza, El Medano, San Juan Argentina, August 2024]



Figure 68: Photos rights Socio-educative Practices in Community Cinema (SEPCC). Dir. Carla Grosman. [Workshop in audio-visual technique, led by Ramon Gómez Mederos, Villa La Esperanza, El Medano, San Juan Argentina, August 2024]



Figure 69: Photos rights Socio-educative Practices in Community Cinema (SEPCC). Dir. Carla Grosman [Shooting of the community film Beyond the Hills, Villa La Esperanza, El Medano, San Juan Argentina, August 2024]

v. Institute of Visual Expression

Here I acknowledge the work of my colleagues from the Institute of Visual Expression. Two of whom were workshop tutors by integrating their expertise into the learning process of audio-visual language and three who work in supporting logistics of the Socio-educative Practices. The workshop facilitators came in turns, one a day. Ada Valdez, who is a contemporary dance teacher and choreographer working in creative projects at our Institute, collaborated with a body language workshop. We had spoken about the objectives for this activity in the framework of the practices as a build up from everyday circumstances into representation. Consequently, in her workshop she aimed for the children to acquire awareness over their own body movements and the magnitude these movements have on space when they interact with the bodily expression of other children. The next collaborator was Sonia Parisi, who is a painter and a teacher at our Institute. She developed a program we created to integrate the learning opportunities brought by these practices to the children's visual expression. As a workshop activity, Parisi asked the children to create cartoon-like sketches of the story they all wrote in the narrative workshop with Sanz. She asked them to apply the image composition ideas they got from Gómez Mederos' workshop. This was the chance, especially for the young ones, to materialise their ideas and identities while applying the learnt narrative and audio-visual tools received before. The children drew the story the way they imagined it by choosing different frames, camera angles and focal points to narrate the one situation they chose. Therefore, at the end of this workshop we were certain they understood the notion of narrating with images.

The other colleagues collaborating in the logistics came also in turns of one a day to support and record our activities. They used this recorded material to update our everyday news in the social networks. Simultaneously they advanced on the logistics for next day and carry on the following steps towards events planned for the postproduction (conference with the directors, editing needs and exhibition of the recorded data for the public screening of our film; and the sharing of experiences of the participants).⁴²

⁴² Socio Educative Practices in Community Cinema Interactions in territory. Villa La Esperanza, El Medano, San Juan Argentina, August 2024.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FgYs3LpGobVfomygCqf1wT2_aLxaOGR7/view



Figure 70: Photos rights Socio-educative Practices in Community Cinema (SEPCC). Dir. Carla Grosman. [Workshop in storyboard, led by Sonia Parisi, Villa La Esperanza, El Medano, San Juan Argentina, August 2024]



Figure 72: Photos rights Socio-educative Practices in Community Cinema (SEPCC). Dir. Carla Grosman. [Workshop in body expression, led by Ada Valdez, Villa La Esperanza, El Medano, San Juan Argentina, August 2024]



Figure 71: Photos rights Socio-educative Practices in Community Cinema (SEPCC). Dir. Carla Grosman. [Workshop in performance (in camera), led by Ezequiel Sanz, Villa La Esperanza, El Medano, San Juan Argentina, August 2024]

On the Operability of the Artefact. Shooting “Beyond the Hills”

Observing this stage of production of the Socio-educative Practices in terms of the actual praxis of a critical frontier positioning, I would like to state that, from the perspective of our tripartite analysis, the praxis we explored has been the operability of the artefact and the artefact being the practices in action, in the present time, in the territory. Therefore, the exercise, of the community cinema film production is considered here as a part of the intersubjective dynamics at play in the internal functioning of the artefact. From my perspective, the shooting of a collective film is a sort of excuse to bring forth the relevant intersubjective

relations at play that can be considered as knowledge border sharing. I would like to demonstrate that our project functioned as an artefact for the practice of Decolonial Pedagogy by exemplifying its two main stages through the process of collective creation of our movie.

To start this exemplification, I need to describe briefly what happened on the first day of our practices which brought to the surface most of the real-life problematics this settlement experiences daily. "El negro" (Backie), an adult dog of the community appeared wounded early in the morning. It had a hole produced by what it seemed to be a rubber bullet. The children of the community said to us that it is quite common that their dogs get closer to the "rich houses" in search of leftover food and get shot by their owners. The children's worry about the dog overshadowed the whole set of activities planned for that day. When it was time for us to leave, the students were not keen on leaving the wounded dog abandoned; someone had to take the dog to the veterinarian. That day we had the Council's Secretary of Culture supervising the lent equipment, but, as we all knew, she was also supervising that no spillage about state negligence went into the recording cameras (in fact, we had been previously gently reminded not to turn this piece into a protest message, "showing people getting water from the blue water tanks"). Therefore, as we had in territory a council representative fulfilling its commitment with this university project, we approached her to take responsibility for territorial situation, unfortunately, but somehow predictably, she did not agree. My car was carrying the technical equipment for *Maricarmen Visuals*; therefore, I had no space for the dog. Then the last hope was the Faculty's van. Here is where the driver (a working-class man like the parents of these children) stepped out and, despite risking sanctions for taking an animal into the vehicle and for making a detour from his official itinerary, he agreed. So, we all took the dog to the vet where it received antibiotics and dressing on its wound. I, as responsible of the project, faced the bill. We took the dog back to the settlement very late that night. The next day the children decided to introduce the anecdote into the narrative of the film.

Back to the Decolonial Pedagogy platform. It is important to highlight its interest in decentering hegemonic knowledge (and its concomitant hierarchical social order based on the subjects' inclusion or exclusion on such knowledge structure). The first epistemological priority that Decolonial Pedagogy proposes to overthrow is the ego-politics of knowledge which has been used by Coloniality of Knowledge as an otherization discourse causing the invisibility of peripheral subjects. From the perspective of knowledge production ego-politics thinks of subjects as dehistoricised, disembodied, reterritorialised, that is, separated from their body and geopolitical locus and in isolation. What decolonial pedagogy intends to retrieve for the learning process is exactly that; the awareness of each subject's particular position, to incite self-reflection about where the subject is situated: ethnically, socially, geographically as well as in

terms of gender, ideology, age and identity. It also sets out to find out the awareness of subject of these conditioning circumstances.

I will continue with the example of this film that, from its very title, gives us a clear epistemological location of the subject. The film is titled "Beyond the Hills", as if declaring that something exists passing beyond physical limitation, something out of sight, something just over and above what we consider a limit. This is a title that definitively states a position in relation to the soil; a geocultural location. "Beyond the Hills" starts with a voice over of our child protagonist looking at the sunset behind the mountains: "Today it was a long day, some way different... Blacky, the great explorer dog, appeared this morning with a hole in its chest". He looks up to the pic of the mountains, and we hear "and over there, the mountain ranges, closer, the hills". Now he looks at the level of the eyes and around him and we hear "and here, my house, all our houses and that of the dogs..." The voice over with which the movie starts has been drawn from the conversations we had with the children when asked where they lived. In their responses they made no explanation of what they do not have (water, electricity, clean grounds to play) they spoke of the sunset behind the mountains and of their lives alongside the many stray dogs they have adopted. The description to the adult viewers gave us many situational data: they live in an isolated space, they survive in community, and they consider the dogs part of their families, therefore their families are in danger.

As we have already stated, when epistemologically revising Decolonial Pedagogy, we know that for this approach, the subjects are the main producer of new knowledge, even when this new knowledge exists in them as part of their culture. Decolonial pedagogy is the process to make these epistemologies visible to them and to others. For the process of community cinema in a scheme of decolonial pedagogy, it is paramount to identify the occurrence. The occurrence emerges when the soil talks through the inhabitants' live actions. Then the occurrence, for the film narrative becomes the metaphor. A metaphor we all understand from the senses, aesthetically.

During the short film, we follow these children in their search for a black puppy that apparently is lost because they are afraid the puppy can find itself in the same predicament "Blacky" did when being shot. The metaphor is dense; I explore it by following the two stages of Decolonial Pedagogy's two stages of epistemological emancipation.

The first is critical praxis: this stage aims to encourage in the subjects the critical acknowledgement of their own history (which corresponds to a discursive deconstruction of the colonality of power's narrative). Walsh (2013) has described this moment as a "thinking from". That is to reflect over their own historical condition, which implies awakening the consciousness of their own location within the relational network of power and knowledge, a

construction that has historically made these subjects “invisible” to the status quo. Community cinema’s role here is to encourage them to choose what to tell because in this narrative the sociocultural conflicts always appear, the structure of power/knowledge that conditions their existence.

This is why the second movement of the strategy of “thinking from” is to introduce them to the status quo discourse’s main tool of ideological reproduction: the world of communication through audio-visual language. So now, they have knowledge to think from and to communicate from. As they are children their consciousness over their place in power relations was not a conscious one, but it was present in every story they told us, in each of the anecdotes they communicated, such as the shooting of their dog in the hands of a “rich” neighbour, “just because he wanted to find bones in the rubbish bags”. This is when the metaphor emerges (as occurrence, as the soil speaking through their daily live actions).

As a slum dwelling their parents live from the leftovers of the middle-class neighbours that surround them. This appears in the film without the effort of a fictional construction, for instance, one of the children is wearing a sweater with the logo of the most expensive and exclusive college in the city. We know the parents leave to work on precarious daily jobs and get paid below the minimum wage under the table. This is something that benefit the middle-class families living around: the men are their gardeners, their builders, the women are their maids, their seamstresses (in the best of cases). As residents of the conservative province of San Juan, which is an excellent example of how a postcolonial society subalternised their “internal others”, we know the cultural connotation of the word “*negro*”, that is the name of the dog. A “*negro*” for San Juan social imaginary is someone beneath aesthetic and socioeconomically middle-class standards. “*El negro*” o “*La negra*” are those people “bad mannered”, “badly dressed”, “badly spoken” and therefore for centuries San Juan’s middle class has felt entitled to treat them with abuse and disrespect. The word is a term traditionally used by this aspiring middle class to refer contemptuously to people like the neighbours of this settlement. It seems now quite revealing that the dog that went to get bones from the rich’s rubbish bags and got shot in the process by one of the middle-class neighbours, is called “*El negro*”.

Nevertheless, there were other more positive identity callings emerging from the soil that seem to be above all this spurious talk, and which appeared in the film when they joined forces, by getting above their personal differences to find this puppy. They show care and empathy, determination and resourcefulness, they even shown hope, as they are certain they will find it. They constantly think of a better future in their dialogues, one example is the opening scene when the children are being told off by the oldest, most bossy girl of the group. She complains about them not taking good care of her basketball and then one of the kids says, “why is all

the fuss about if we don't even have a basket ring", and the girl rapidly answers "Very good, but one day we will". The resourcefulness appears all through the short story, even when the children are nursing the wounded dog (which is bleeding) while singing to him a rap song that reveals again the metaphor of their lives (and that of the dogs) as one living organism. The song he sings is called "Tear it off me" by WOS (an Argentinean rapper that despite talking "their same language" comes from an educated middle-class background). The children listen to him, they identify with his music that represents peripheral youth experiencing violence, exclusion and institutional abuse. I see in their choice of music a positive case of critical frontier positioning, especially because they appropriated this song to talk about their own life situation. As such, our child protagonist sings this song in situ while caressing the wounded dog. This is not acting; it is a documentary registration of the boy caring for the wounded dog while singing "and I don't plan to sink lying here/ and I don't plan to bleed to death/ and don't ask me not to try again/ Let things return to their place"

The directors edited this singing in combination with the images of the children celebrating the finding of the puppy. This counterpoint between reality and fiction, between the connotations of the song's lyrics, as diegetic music (source music sung by the boy), and as non-diegetic music (incidental music mounted over the children celebrating the finding of the community's puppy), incites another realization. This consciousness brought forth by the Socio-educative Practices itself, is the very occurrence in this territory. Located in the ambiguity between reality and fiction, this occurrence is the symbolic act with which our praxis manages both: to place the metaphor of the wounded dog as the community in danger, and to signal the very moment in which the children realise they belong to a greater ecology of meaning; that of the surviving as a community.

The second stage of decolonial pedagogy this practice of community cinema committed, is what Walsh (2013) describes as the "thinking with". This is the practical action directed to emancipate educative practices (which corresponds to a re-construction of meanings by the installation of a decolonial discourse). The role of Community Cinema in this moment is to help in the process in which the subaltern subjects find their own voice, this implies a support for the whole process of technological appropriations beyond learning the audio-visual language and shooting the film. This is to help them transit the onto-epistemological channels of power reproduction that have been placed there, precisely, to prevent them from advancing their voices. Such endeavour involves first, to help them become aware of the great step that has been taken to articulate an audio-visual communication within an alternative logic dynamic of production-circulation; one in which they are already prosumers. To explore its praxis, let us state then, that "thinking with" happens through the process of production-circulation. At the moment of production, they can look around and recognise that those others beside them, (the

Brigades agents, the social community cinema directors, the students of Humanities and us the academic practice-based researchers) were their primary network, but so were their own parents supporting our activities as they support many of the other activities the children do growing up. This stage of creating the awareness of what we were all doing ‘ here and now and among ourselves”, was also a form of education, one that by distancing itself from the verticality of formal education, created a territorial frame where they belong, and where the “thinking from” naturally occurs. As such, that cane-roofed area in the middle of the “wasteland”, even when it did not keep us sheltered from the rain and wind, gave the learning activity a symbolic place. This “thinking with” encouraged them to realise that we are not so different, we all have knowledge to share, we are connected and acknowledge each other as part of our collective belonging. The symbolic location meant that the situated knowledge produced there has a temporal projection because the next activities they do as a community, the next Brigade interaction, the next games they play, would all extend this meaning of hope and togetherness they had expressed through the workshops and the film. This is a first step towards reterritorialisation with new decolonial meanings.

“Thinking with” is completely relevant to reflect upon the film circulation stage; this is the moment in which the children, as well as the students, made themselves aware of the span of this experience, in terms of transforming reality. This is something I will address in the next section: on Postproduction in which I describe how this Socio-educative Practice, as an artefact, articulates with other fields of discursive strengthening of the decolonial project.



Figure 73: Photographs of the film Beyond the Hills (2024) Produced by the Socio-educative Practices in Community Cinema (SEPCC). Dir. Carla Grosman. This production has collective authorship, Artistic Direction by

C. Discursive practices representing space. Reverberations of the image

The objective of this stage in terms of the praxis of a critical frontier positioning was to consolidate a series of communicable outputs with which we would present our activity to the greater community and with which we expected to interact, at different levels, with the institutions of the status quo. They are five formats: first, the actual short fiction film created by the interactions that emerged during the Socio-educative Practices. Second, those productions made by the students to fulfil an academic request in their careers' path but that, as outputs of a socio-educative practice, also served as a testimony of the experience. In this context some of them reflected philosophically, others stood by a critical-propositive pedagogical position; they even went as far as systematising and archiving interviews and other audio data to contribute to new projects following similar approaches. Regarding their format, some were made in teams, others individually, some used audio-visual registers and others were presented as essays. In third place, I list the outputs that had a divulgative intent either for the social network, for the Institute and Faculty's website, or, for the presentation of the Socio-educative Practices' dynamics when publicly exhibiting the film. Fourth, a community cinema encounter intended to engage San Juan's students and audio-visual producers in debates on community cinema issues and further territorial directions. Fifth, the final exhibition of the short film opens to the community in general and with the presence of the children of Villa La Esperanza.

I will develop this list by offering a brief description of each instance, still as occurrences within a stage of Decolonial Pedagogy defined as "thinking with". This means following the possible networking these outputs pieces may knit as symbolic acts throughout the territory of discourse intervening and reshaping the represented space, that is, also influencing the social practices in the cultural arena of hegemonic battle.

As already discussed regarding the fiction short film *Beyond the Hills* in the previous section and as it has been linked for the reader to watch it online.⁴³ I start directly with the second group of outputs created by the students while working in interdisciplinary teams.

⁴³ *Mas allá del Cerro* (2024). Collective audiovisual work resulting from the Socio-educative Practices in Community Cinema (SEPCC). Dir. Carla Grosman. Artistic director Ezequiel Sanz; Audio-Visual Director Ramon Gomez Mederos. Villa La Esperanza, El Medano, San Juan Argentina, August 2024. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xm9jVpIhkw&ab_channel=INSTITUTODEEXPRESI%C3%93NVISUALFFHA

3. “Back stage of the Socio-educative Practices”⁴⁴

The short documentary offered their collective perspectives on the importance of the university and community relationship and that of community cinema within this dynamic. The documentary starts with a voice over of one of the students: “When the university is thought of as a projection of community, emancipatory practices emerge” I think it is remarkable the way they frame this, they are not talking about the university extension, as a hand extended to bring some charitable help to the community, they are talking about university being a hand of the community, an extension of the community’s body. They continue talking about the work dynamic university must assume when working in the community: “this is not about deeds of presentism, it is about sharpening listening, and a listening that involves the body, a kind of listening linked to sensitivity”. True to this premise they show the heterogeneity of participants: their skills, their contributions and their motives to be there. In the documentary we hear the children saying they are video recording their own dreams to be shown to others, we see the children familiarising themselves with the use of technology and the production of audio-visual content. The interviews with students in the documentary highlight students’ commitment to empathy and learning about other realities and with letting said realities permeate their own. In this audio-visual testimony, the interviewed participant students celebrate community cinema as a vehicle to transit across reality; a form of reflecting reality but also a mode of transforming it. They stress they are not the same people that arrived on the first day of the field work, because they have grown in togetherness with the children and they have conceived themselves within the idea of collective construction. As such, the audio-visual raw material utilized for this production, has been authored by many actors: the children when guided by the interdisciplinary teams, the students with the professional equipment, the youth assisting the directors. In this context, we made authorship disappear; the photos and videos were deposited in a common cloud space for each of us to use as we saw fit. Therefore, we can appreciate different outputs using the same images intending to communicate different things to different audiences. Student also left written testimonies in the format of essays. For instance, an essay written by students of theatre, philosophy, and education say: “after this very moving week of territorial work, we are certain community cinema is not only an expressive tool, most importantly, it is a bridge to connect hearts, and to create a space where we can meet, -never mind where are we coming from-, to learn, to grow and to dream together”

⁴⁴ Back stage of the Socio-educative Practices in Community Cinema (SEPCC). Dir. Carla Grosman. Directors: SEPCC’s students Manuel Gimeno and Paula Farias. Villa La Esperanza, El Medano, San Juan Argentina, August 2024.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Auj20pgOxek&ab_channel=INSTITUTODEEXPRESI%C3%93NVISUALFFHA

(September 2024). And they continue, “thank you for making available these encounters between university and the community, that confirm our conviction that all teaching-learning praxis is a collective construction forming a community in which we all should fit”. Another group formed by students of design and communication wrote: “these were days of intense work but also of intense emotions, those that emerge when the body is traversed by a territory”. This is what in their opinion led them to look other forms of thinking themselves, other logics through which to democratise human encounters and which they found in affective availability within intersubjective dynamics. In their essay, they commended the university for proposing this activity since in their opinion the university must get into the street and be interpellated by the territory. Communities are not expecting to be ‘interpreted’ and stripped, in the same move, of their own knowledge. They believe that knowledge must be produced in the place where they emerge and the university should make them available to others. Hence, they conclude, “we are being challenged from the position each of us occupies, to continue building networks of affective affinities with a projection towards new socio-cultural horizons of inclusiveness”.

Another of the student outputs made as interdisciplinary teams was a public request they made to the wider community on the occasion of a big flood experienced in Villa La Esperanza just a few days after we finished our practices in territory. That day, we were scheduled to show the audio-visual work at the council’s theatre, and we counted on the children’s presence. However, the previous night, a big storm caused a damaging inundation at the settlement; they lost most of their belongings and, of course, were not in the state to attend a cultural function, neither were we as we considered it inappropriate, therefore the exhibition was cancelled. The Brigades started a collection and our students followed with an audio-visual call by using the same networks we had been using to present our activity. To compose this public request the students recycled some of the collectively made footage and composed an audio-visual plea for supporting Villa La Esperanza. On that day community cinema was pure praxis, with no fiction, the students and teachers collected blankets, mattresses, pillows, warm clothes and shoes and headed for the collection points, which were other neighbourhood organizations

networking with the Brigades. That day we did not show fiction, but community cinema was a reality.

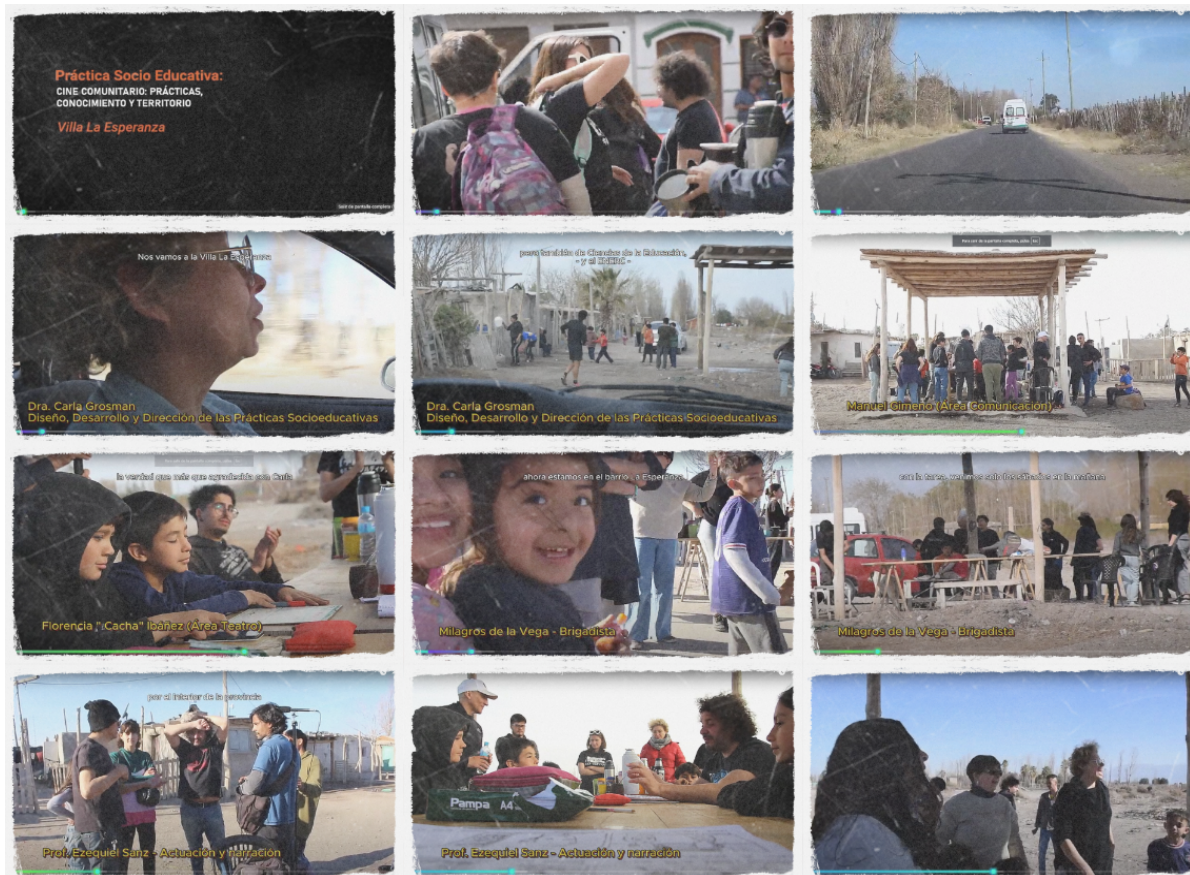


Figure 74: Photographs of the documentary Back Stage of the Socio-educative Practices in Community Cinema (SEPCC). Dir. Carla Grosman. This production uses collective audio-visual data and is directed by SEPCC's students Manuel Gimeno and Paula Farias. Villa La Esperanza, El Medano, San Juan Argentina, August 2024. Link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Auj20pgOxe&ab_channel=INSTITUTODEEXPRESI%C3%93NVISUALFFHA

4. Divulgation

The third groups of outputs that had a divulgatory intended to fulfil different functions: one was to inform the community of our experience. This included several social network video editing and photomontages of our experience in territory. These productions were also compiled alongside a series of summaries describing our objectives, work methodologies and philosophy to compose a background during the short films' public exhibition. The rest is in a repository in the Institute of Visual Expression's website containing video productions, interviews, promotions material, public presentations, symposium presentations, an audio-visual archive and the students' written material. The aim of this repository is to serve as a

reference for future community cinema projects yet to be developed by our students or any other member of the community that may find our experience useful.⁴⁵

5. Public Conversations with Directors

Fourth, I highlight the encounter with community cinema directors, a conversation scheduled for the participant students and audio-visual producers of the province interested in making questions and listening to the invited directors' appreciations of the last experience. In this instance, I officiated as a panel coordinator and we covered subjects related to the nature of community cinema, its backgrounds in the province, its different formats and modes of production-circulation, its socio-political responsibilities, its relationship with identity and minorities activism, as well as the projection for the future of community cinema in the province.⁴⁶



Figure 75: Photogram from the video recording. Video recording rights: Socio-educative Practices in Community Cinema (SEPCC). Dir. Carla Grosman [Public Conversations with Directors Ezequiel Sanz (Buenos Aires), Ramón Gómez Mederos (San Juan) and Marcelo Herrera (La Rioja). Provincial Museum of Fine Arts, San Juan, Argentina

6. Open Exhibition ⁴⁷

Fifth, after being postponed by the floods, our open exhibition to share our work with the wider community was finally possible. We all gathered at the Council of Rawson's Theatre (Teatro

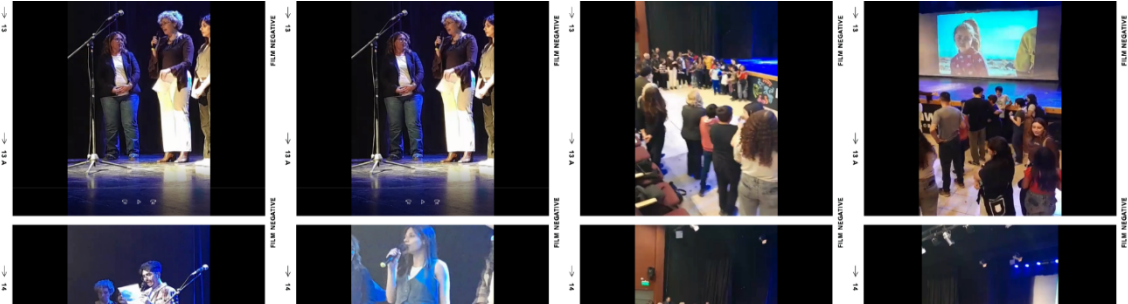


Figure 76: Photogram from the video recording. Video recording rights: Socio-educative Practices in Community Cinema (SEPCC). Dir. Carla Grosman [Socio-educative Practices open exhibitions results. Students, Children of Villa La Esperanza, Brigade agents and Teacher speeches]

⁴⁵<https://iev.ffha.unsj.edu.ar/2024/09/23/registro-practicas-socio-educativas-cine-comunitario-practicas-conocimiento-y-territorio/>

⁴⁶ Full public conversation at the Provincial Museum of Fine Arts 30/8/2024 https://youtu.be/O_LLmFOxBEQ

⁴⁷https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R7MzygLEwg&ab_channel=INSTITUTODEEXPRESI%C3%93NVISUALFFH

Kummel), except a couple of students that felt disgusted by the Council's lack of commitment and did not attend in protest. The children of Villa La Esperanza came in the council buses, accompanied by their parents, to publicly share their work in front of the Mayor, the Secretaries of Culture, the Dean of the Faculty and the television reporters. We shared the short film on the big screen among the laughter and the comments of the children; we also presented the backstage and offered a graphic summary and a photomontage as a background for the many speakers that followed the activity with comments regarding their roles in the project. Our students chose a representative to bring their voice to the stage and spoke about hope and the university's responsibility with social change. The Brigade agents also offered their inputs, talking about the importance of civil society's networking and about taking personal responsibility for the betterment of the disadvantaged ones. We invited also to the stage the coordinator of the Council's Centre of Community and University Linkage who spoke about their commitment to creating articulations between university and community. We also had the word of the Dean of the Faculty and The Council of Rawson. I must add for total transparency that this government official's speech was something I disagreed with when planning the protocol of this ceremony, however they organised it in a way in which he could show himself supporting the project and the community with it. When it was my turn to speak as designer, developer and director of this experience, I highlighted the incredible job of the entire group of participants, ranging from professional filmmakers, workshop teachers, students, parents, children of this settlement. I also emphasized this project as an exercise of Decolonial Pedagogy and resilient communication. I also expressed my desire to see the collaboration between university and the government bodies more and better articulated and responsive.

At the end, all the children walked onto the stage and spoke of their experiences, their mothers and fathers did too and manifested their gratitude for the experience. At the end something happened that I consider shadowed this moment of joy. Something that at that point came across as a blessing: the Mayor of the City of Rawson, who was happed up on the love, care and hope we were all exhibiting, informally conveyed to some of the neighbours of La Esperanza that he was prepared to build homes for all the 20 families. They were so happy and grateful because without this experience they would never have been given a home. We started to believe in the power of art as a socially performative device and the students felt less betrayed by the council. However, a few months after, when I enquired of the council about the state of the housing project, they did not bother answering me. I insisted but they would not reply, they even excluded us from the Council's Centre of Community and University Linkage's 2024 projects exhibition.

Up to this point in this section we have consider what in our tripartite analysis is described as "the image". In this case, these were the discursive practices put in play by the participants of

these Socio-educative Practices in community cinema. They all offer an intentional point of view about the experience and an ideal telos that considers their individual input as making a difference when joined to the effort and commitment of the other parties involved. For a minute, when we heard the offer of houses from the demagogic mouth of the Mayor, we thought we had changed the community of La Esperanza's circumstances directly. That moment was like a climax of faith in the pure power of art as a performative force for social change. However, nothing is that direct or that manageable. Nothing is either that romantic or pure, and I say this not without a heavy heart. There was a moment after all our formal handling of our output presentations in which we had to let this discursive experience ripple its own waves, make its own echoes back into the sea of society. We had no more control over these pieces as they had entered the realm of the symbolic. At least this is what I did. I took a back seat and observed the many ripples an action and its image can have as socially discursive practices.

The last consideration and as a manner of conclusion is an evaluation over the reverberations of the "Image" in the territory of social practice, the instituted space, the paradigm. I read them as the conversation between these pieces and the paradigm as symbolic acts.

Further Reverberations

I believe that what happened after the formal presentation of our project that was inclusive of all participants and in which everybody had the opportunity to talk, was what we have been lightly calling the cultural battle. I have learnt now that this is a hegemonic struggle with a life of its own played at the symbolic level, since after this point the practices to be described here are not descriptions of the image participants made of their own work, but a moment in which this image enters the territory of social practices at large, the represented space. I am calling this moment "the reverberation of the image" (in the dominant paradigm). I feel lucky to have seen in real time and moreover, while following the course of an idea I forgot and developed while collecting many collaborators on my way; contributors that enriched the project a great deal. I list here the reverberations with little judgement, they are after all, the reflection, the ripples, the reverberation, of an image made over a collective praxis that conjugated multiple subjectivities of which I am only one.

The first refraction was an amazing happening organized by the Brigades to receive the visit of their national political referent: a person still holding political and ethical credibility and respect and that many of us would follow to election when the time comes. What felt totally out of my reach, that of the students, the invited directors and the Institute of Visual Expression, was that the Brigades did not ask permission to use this material, they simply communicated to me they would use it in their presentation. When the moment came to introduce this work in front of a political assembly of 2000 people, they did not mention any of the coordinators or

audio-visual makers or the input of the students. They simply presented it as one of their acts. I feel this is a rightful appropriation as they were a fundamental piece of the puzzle, yet I do not consider them to have respected the interdisciplinary, multi-sectorial and inter-institutional character of our practice. Thus, the movie was shown, the people applauded and the discourses started while the practices were ignored or dissolved into the political action, I prefer to believe it was the latter. I consider this event to have used the experience of community cinema as a social discursive ripple, which strengthens counter-hegemonic political activism. Its reterritorialisation is therefore at the level of coloniality of being, because the identity of subaltern voices had achieved visibility and joined the right networks of contesting collective actions.

The second ripple was the presentation of some of us at a conference on education, art and territory held at the National University of San Juan last October. In it, some of the participant students narrated their experience, offering an overview of the social benefits of this activity and some used this opportunity to make strong points about the university's obligation to the community in a way that made, some moderate academic, feel that it was too extremely political. I did this presentation online as I was already back in New Zealand and presented from the angle of the Decolonial Pedagogy. Unfortunately, technical problems prevented me from participating in the debate, but this again offered me the observant position. From this passive perspective, I realized the strength of this project found yet another ripple in the hegemonic discussion entering current academic debates in which they discuss the level of political Involvement. The university should have given the present pseudo-authoritarian circumstances dictated by the extreme right wing neoliberal government. On this occasion the experience of community cinema became a socially discursive ripple evidencing the ideological and politically performative character of art education, reterritorializing, with that, the reproduction dynamics of a pretended de-ideologised knowledge production which in fact is the perpetuator of coloniality of knowledge rooted at the base of university cloisters.

The third wavelet was the occasion in which The National University of San Juan had its symposiums on visibility of extension programs. I must say that our project had a big reception among the university community, and that it made a good reputation for itself. As director of this project, I was invited to participate but then again, as I was in New Zealand, I offered my presentation online. In it, I stressed the relevance of this project's multimedia repository (comprising audio-visual productions, audio interviews and photographic archive, as well as theoretical-methodological productions). I highlighted this source for its intention as future reference in coming extension projects. In accordance with the circumstances, our Institute for Visual Expression's Director attended the meeting in representation of our project and framed it as a noticeable contribution from the Institute as a whole. This is another reterritorialisation I

am happy to contribute towards, since such contextualization of our project as a proposition of the Institute of Visual Expression, has strengthened the Institute's articulations with the University extension program forging legitimacy for further emerging projects under its canopy. Therefore, even if this project does not have another edition because I as the director am away, other alike propositions will be able to build from our documented experience. In this context the Socio-educative Practices execute a social discursive ripple reterritorializing the hegemonic channels of knowledge production which, within the university's curricula (and thereafter in the rest of society), reproduce perspectives aligned with the ego-politics of knowledge.

The last reverberation was during the Institute of Visual Expression's end of 2024 exhibition. Annually, this institute exhibits the work of their research creators using the format of a Kermess as an exhibition mechanism. As in the traditional kermes, in the yearly Institute of Visual Expression's exhibition the public wonders about exploring the attractions and stops to listen and to watch what it is offered. Often the stands have a presenter conduction the viewers through the experience. This year's Kermes focused on Techno aesthetics (Simondon, 2009) and it included the result of the Socio-educative Practices as an example of this performative concept. Simondon states that the technologies are cultural mediators that mould our ontological relationship with the territory and influences our aesthetic sensibility to elucidate such territorial relationship. As such, technology as mediator of the aesthetic act uses its own expressive techno-aesthetic resources to reveal the dynamics in which its techno aesthetic realm reproduces power relations. Our project pertains to this exhibition as a techno aesthetic example was given by the contribution of this work to the "redistribution of the sensitive". Our project related techno-aesthetically with the community by securing the democratisation of learning and handling of audio-visual technology and aesthetics to make visible what power techno-aesthetics left out in the territory of discursive representation. Our practices in community cinema offered access to this complex concept by publicly exhibiting its functioning through a real-life experience of a collectively created production-circulation which was introduced by one of our participant students. In the contexts of this exhibition and the epistemological territory established by it, our project could be considered a praxis of the Decolonial Aesthesis. This is so since our Socio-educative practices have ripples of reterritorialisation in the dynamics of coloniality of seeing.

CONCLUSION

Since, by examining community cinema we approached concrete semio-praxes traversing production, distribution and consumption of audio-visual territorial representations, and, because these representations are put into play by collective body-politically situated expressions which are in permanent emotional and identifying negotiation with the geo-socio-historical territory, I acknowledged the socio-symbolical performative power of said dynamics. This meant the need to understand these representations not only as reflecting lived territorial experiences (marked by the coloniality of power) but also as devices operating movements of de-territorialisation and as reterritorialisation through which Decolonial epistemologies are incorporated. To be able to justify community cinema as a potent device for Decolonial pedagogy and Decolonial aesthetic praxis I have conceptualized its encounters, 'occurrences', in three lines of potency propelled from said movements of de-territorialisation and reterritorialisation: "resilient communication", "aesthetic performance" and "techno-aesthetical embodiment". I see these three semio-practical processes of technological and territorial appropriation prompting a discourse of critical interculturalism capable of challenging the three most important pillars of coloniality of power (coloniality of knowledge, of seeing and, of being). Below there is a summary of my findings vis-à-vis said framework.

"Resilient communication" is a form of cultural enactment sustained in a critical frontier positioning that opens possibilities towards critical interculturality. Its de-territorialisation/reterritorialisation field (its hegemonic ground, to appropriate and maintain control of) is, in our tripartite analysis, the dynamic of the Aesthesis re nourishment, which involves dialogic dynamics in social practices played out in the instituted space, both responding to a dominant paradigm and therefore able to be intervened by resilient communication. The hegemonic battleground is fought, therefore, directly over the represented space, on the dominant paradigm. As such, resilient communication involves the relational dynamics occurring at the territorial encounters among members of informal cinema education workshops, -or community cinema production groups-, with those of endangered or silenced communities that have already initiated emergent actions of cooperative or community territorial activism. Its line of performative potency is then the challenging of "coloniality of knowledge" (which has maintained peripheral knowledge atomised and subalternised) since it is being operated as a borderisation of knowledges which balance each other while symbiotically working towards a common decolonial goal. Types of action, discourse and production emerge as occurrences of a greater ecosystem of meaning, a new intercultural epistemology. This type of collective representation of space in networking dynamics expands the ecosystem of meaning, achieving a de-territorialisation of the hegemonic paradigm and the reterritorialisation of alternative epistemologies, such as the decolonial paradigm.

Looking at our analysed cases, we could trace this type of occurrence (as emerging and networking cases) in the following chapters. In Chapter 4 it emerges from the exercises of “Cinema Express” in the program led by Cinema Made with Neighbours in association with the INCAA (National Institute of Cinema and Audio-Visual Arts), which produced 151 short films touching upon local conflictive circumstances and initiating an online network of films made through the Cinema Express’ scheme. Their resilient communication framework served as an intercultural networking of new geoculturally situated community cinema productions and political interactions. In Chapter 5, we mentioned cases such as The Documentary Network of South Punilla, when the production group organized a collective manifestation against the cases of police abuse and later recorded such protests while having all the victims in an active role, publicly making their claims). I also detected these working dynamics as part of the environmentalist activism of Uniquillo Community Cinema. Especially when, beyond the short films made in complaint of the fires, -orchestrated by the real estate industry to get rid of council protected areas of native forest-, Uniquillo Community Cinema becomes a protester at -and a documentary maker of- collective regional demonstrations against such mismanaging of patrimonial defence. I also analysed how these emergences of resilient communication networked with other examples of counter discursive activism (feminism, diversities, grassroots resistances) into an ecosystem of meaning sustained in a similar telos, re nourishing each other’s causes. In these examples the line of potency of Decolonial pedagogy has a centrifugal direction, springing from the union of art and activism and verging its connotations into a greater meaning ecosystem which also links with a greater paradigm.

In Chapter 6 I went deeper into the working strategies of the resilient communication groups as forms of resistance drawn from the very quality of the audio-visual language. Then, I explored how their formats and working dynamics challenge and dismantle the conventions of audio-visual representation by putting forward an aesthesis of presenting. This means, to bring into the consciousness of the parties under representation their awareness of being represented. By synchronizing the audio-visual time of representing the space with the represented space, they achieve direct, immediate intervention on the latter. Such is the power of presentation, which is comparable with that of the performance or interventions (if we use the language of Contemporary Arts). This is when art becomes a symbolic act (with agency to represent but also to intervene in reality). Resilient community cinema, resorting to presenting as strategy, resists with meanings from within the audio-visual language by generating an occurrence that make the invisible ones present and turns their presence into an agent of in situ political negotiation. This has been the case of *The Owl* Community Radio (during the counter-discursive audio-visual campaign in covering social consequences of January 2021’s earthquake). It was also the strategy of the Audio-visual Collective *Maricarmen Visual* when

using the recording stage of their documentaries as an instance of political negotiation to in situ intercede in the political conflicts that had arisen among evicted residents and police forces, or between victims of floodings and the visits of demagogical government representatives' negotiation. As a resilient communication strategy, these dynamics admit also a perspective as Aesthetic performance, since here we are talking of a performance of presenting. Let me introduce "Aesthetic performance" to later return to these examples from that perspective.

I acknowledged "Aesthetic performance" as another example of cultural enactment constituted by technical and rhetorical dynamics relying on the emergence of a reservoir of collective sensibility (we explained this as the sensorium or the Pa'mi). This occurrence makes the "distribution of the sensible" a feasible project as its operability challenges, "coloniality of seeing" within its aesthetic networks of hegemonic legitimation. The line of potency I identify here springs from moments of collective symbolism synchronized in their territorial occurrences during the processes of production, distribution and consumption of community cinemas' representations of the lived space. As counterhegemonic semio-praxis "aesthetic performance" is an occurrence of community cinema to act as a device for decolonial aesthetic praxis. Its deterritorialisation/reterritorialisation field (the hegemonic ground to appropriate and maintain control) is, in our tripartite analysis, the aesthetic interpreting, the intersubjective dynamics interpreting and representing the lived space as an Image of this collective interpretation. The hegemonic battleground of this line of potency is fought at the level of the representation of space. This instance can be manifested either as the territorial practice symbolically encapsulated into the audio-visual piece, or by audio-visually turning the present experience of the lived space into a scene of self-reflexivity. In Chapter 6, I have explored both possibilities as performance of representation and performance of presentation.

Regarding the first, by symptomatically and intertextually analysing ENERC Cuyo's six theses produced between 2018 and 2019, I argued that there is a performance of representation constructed as a percept (Deleuze) or common (metaphoric) sense that these productions share. This is a performance of representation because the discursive practice is played intertextually and symbolically. As such these films, without a direct allusion being necessary to the immediate context, -or explanation of the director being required or given- created a feeling describable as "corporeality in danger" to pronounce the daily tension and stress of living within the institutional moral duplicity that characterises San Juan society's imaginaries over the lived space. This dynamic, played at the level of discursive practice, is not operating as a verbal debate, but as a performance of representations. This, since it is such collective imagery which symbolically networks and reveals the critical idea of this cluster of movies; the portrayals of lived space as an endangering territory. For my tripartite analysis, it is also a

centrifugal force played at the level of the senses, as a repartition of the sensible, emerged through the metaphors of each film's text, heated in the networking dynamic of intertextual relationships as a product of the school of cinema and poured into the hegemonic represented space or paradigm, as burning lava.

Concerning the second form, I looked at "aesthetic performance" also as an intervention presenting audio-visual making as a priori in the intersubjective negotiations of the lived space and argued that such performance of presenting turns the current experience of the lived space into a scene of self-reflexivity and a political arena. We are talking about a performance of presentation because by evidencing its own linguistic conventions at the moment of constructing a documentary scene, the makers of the audio-visual message, while negotiating what can and cannot be represented, realise what is truly the cause of their subalternity. Who decided what and who to represent in front of the cameras and why? That brings a self-reflexive consciousness of the present circumstances; what is happening here and now? and why? This is the present moment in the flesh, revealed as the intersubjective conflicts at the lived space. For instance, in *Eviction* (by Maricarmen Visuals) the camera is recording the eviction scene: the police officers fulfilling the tasks and the contractors operating the machines ready to run over the precarious housing; they all know they are being recorded doing that. This stops them from doing so and calling to the council to warn them they are being recorded. Later, a council officer comes to negotiate, and the camera is again there mediating the conversation. The questions start: Who are you recording for? Where is this going to circulate? "Put the camera down, this is not your problem". Now the residents realise that their exposure matters and that their representation is being manipulated; they had been invisible until now, invisible to representations and invisible as subjects with civil rights. The camera is with them to witness their geo-historical links to that soil, their body-political territorial presence. Because of the camera, they are present at the moment of representation of the lived space and therefore they are not to be moved outside of their territory. *Eviction* (a movie in permanent making as the conflict continues) is not here to be understood as a final product with a message, but as a challenge on epistemological and representational constructions of otherisation, and as an example of the political aesthetic power of presentation of the endangered bodies.

"Techno-aesthetical embodiment" is also a cultural enactment resulting from technological appropriations that redefine body political territorial relationships. This embodiment leaves a possibility for self-representative discourses since its operability defies, "coloniality of being" within its linkages of hegemonic legitimation (a process we approached looking at production and reproduction of culture). These occurrences draw a line of potency I follow as ontological metamorphosis in which the techno-aesthetical appropriation creates body-political

identification, which is transformative of the lived space. Here I refer to a projection beyond what happens in the production-circulation field of community cinema, it is in fact, its reverberation, that is, the transformation in the body of their participants when interacting in daily territorial experience. As semio-praxis, “techno-aesthetical embodiment” is a function of community cinema for this to act as a device for decolonial consciousness. Its deterritorialisation/reterritorialisation field (its hegemonic discursive battle ground) is, in our tripartite analysis, the Aesthesis experience, the lived space, the origin of the text and also its incorporation into socio-symbolic assimilation in the body of the community, and of its residents.

In chapter 4, I looked at “techno-aesthetical embodiment” as the possible semio-praxis used in the territory of Cinema Made with Neighbours. What I found out was that such occurrence is only possible in the context in which the production-circulation dynamic is organically connected to the specific geocultural circumstances of their participants. As such, when it was an expression of residents’ territorial practices (in the first decade of this group production and during their venture as Cinema Express), CMWN’s mode of production served as an onto-epistemological decolonial device. It promoted identity confirmation and intercultural understanding as well as pedagogically encouraging the self-discovery of subjects as meaning builders. At that point, their mode of production-circulation became a valuable artefact to intercede among the coloniality of being reproduction channels. However, when its techno-aesthetical sinews intend to reproduce past circumstances in which there is certain organicity between territorial practices and techno-aesthetical embodiments, the project fail, it loses its poietic power.

In Chapter 7, I described the experience of Socio-educative Practices conducted in 2024 as a fully immersive experience on community cinema making and circulation in which I tested my own concepts of “resilient communication”, “aesthesis performance” and “techno-aesthetical embodiment”. For that, the practice was planned as an onto-epistemological and aesthetic social encounter on community cinema as territory of convergence of some collective forces; the group of local neighbours, the political activists collective, the university students, the teachers, and the independent social cinema makers as well as a number of institutions (NGOs, University, City Council bodies) were involved as negotiating parties.

The chapter explores using the tripartite analysis of how these occurrences (lines of force) are manifested in the three fields of intersubjective dynamics defined within the territory in relation to “resilient communications”, the tripartite analysis identified actions during the three stages of interaction, (at the level of preproduction in the design and negotiations among the groups about the nature of the work and the role of the participants). At this stage, I got to know that

the settlement's stability was at risk as it occupies government lands that are being part of government opportunistic negotiations with private groups. In fact, the community of "La Esperanza" was told on the days prior to our experience that a lawyers' association had purchased this land and that soon the field in which the children play would be fenced only leaving them a driveway beside their homes as common areas. The brigades, students, teachers and filmmakers knew that; therefore, the production stage (workshops and movie making in territory) was focused on hearing what the children had to say about their experiences in territory. By building the narrative of the film from the territorial practices and anecdotes of the children, the audio-visual piece metaphorically managed to condense the complexities of the social relationships. Resilient communication was an occurrence at the time of post-production too. At that time, the social discursive practice of community cinema's amalgamated forces had to negotiate political-institutional meanings. As such the audio-visual work and learning experience entered different circuits of social discursive practices where they were used by political parties, by the government, by the university, to modify the current situation in each field. The neighbours made use of these productions too; when the children and neighbours used the public exhibition instance to establish their vulnerable situation and acknowledge their collective force as an organized endeavour. This involved their own self-perception as a collective that is 'thinking with' other sectors of society that accompany their onto-epistemological emancipations.

Regarding aesthetic performance, we can refer to the moments of collective creativity in which territorial practices, memories and current territorial tensions, became an aesthetic matter; this is perceivable through the senses in forms of images, dialogues, sounds, songs, voices, story (plot). There is also the aesthetic performance played out on the editing table by the artistic and audio-visual directors in which they interpret again the territorial practices, emerging in these sensorial fragments into a symbolical narrative able to make present said territorial experiences to other viewers immersed in other socio-cultural circumstances. The third stage of the aesthetic performance is when the piece emerges from the screen in real time connecting symbology and territorial praxes and placing them into the present of a greater field of social practices. Here is where aesthesis realizes its socio-performative power.

Concerning techno-aesthetical embodiment we have transited the workshop instances that nurture themselves from a previous body-political relationship of the children with the Brigade agents. The presence of these agents in the activities led to developing the workshops while "using" the a priori corporal memory of the children with regard to this type of non-formal education activity and the relationship with the ludic and safe aspect of it. This was an excellent frontier critical thinking development in which our practices socio-symbolically linked to that of the Brigades, and to the five years history of intersubjective dynamics. Hence, by building on

the experience of the workshops, in which they managed camera, sound and monitors; experienced their human relations at play when acting (performing); explored the space of their own body language when moving around their territory; and, reflected on quotidian stories about their lives on the settlement, the children brought into their creative writing (and dialogue improvisations) a consciousness of their geocultural location. This meant also awareness of their own historical circumstances and of audio-visual making as a place “to tell us their dreams”. This is, as a proactive symbolic territory in which they can project their ideals of a better life. It is hard to evaluate what could have been the impact of this techno-aesthetical embodiment; however, I recall some words from their mothers. “I want Leonel to study acting; he will never forget this experience”. Another mother who sat beside the Mayor and the Dean of the Faculty during the exhibition of the film, said: “who knows what these kids may turn out to be, we can take our lawyers or engineers from here”. What I realize reverberating in the lived experience is the delinking of their ontological perception of having been made invisible and forgotten by all. They can now proudly see themselves and say: “We made a film, therefore we are”

Closing

I believe my contribution to Studies on Community Cinema are at least three:

- I- Epistemological, aiming to probe community cinema’s political-poetical potential, not in the traditional form of frontline activism but as a surreptitious force that regenerates social networks by re setting onto-epistemological programming installed as part of the Modern/Colonial paradigm. In this research, I highlighted contemporary community cinema in Argentina as a technical-rhetorical agent of cultural democratization manifesting itself as a collective creative process (from the idea of origin to its circulation) that constitutes a social-symbolic act with political-cultural performative power. I claimed that said agency constitutes its operability as a device for Decolonial praxis. This since, at an onto-epistemological level, Community cinema becomes a promoter of critical interculturality and identity confirmation aiding representation of memory, idiosyncrasy and activism from the subaltern sectors. To develop this position, I constructed an epistemological framework distinguishing intersubjective dynamics in production-circulation of community cinema in three lines of force or geocultural occurrences: resilient communication, aesthetic performance and techno-aesthetical embodiment.
- II- An analytic framework that combines established analytic schemes of Space (Lefebvre), Aesthetics (Mignolo) and Discursive (Fairclough) practices into a tripartite framework that collide the relationships among spatial practices and their

representation with their discursive uses while still looking at their aesthetic expressions and sensorial manifestations. The tripartite scheme proposes then the following fields of analysis:

- Aesthetic re-nourishment: these are sites of represented instituted space and concomitant discourses expressed in territorial social and space practices) this field, as a territory of hegemonic battle is in a constant process of reterritorialisation, hence the denomination.

- Aesthesis interpretation: these are sites of representation of the lived space given by the collective interactions of participants in community cinema's production-circulation dynamic. Here a collective image of the common telos is formed and negotiated, and it is that image that affects the territory of aesthetic nourishment.

-Aesthetic experience: these are sites of spatial practices that the subjects decide to transform into an audio-visual artefact. It implies negotiations in the representation of the self and of their experience of the lived territory. This production as well as the experience of its construction process moves to the Aesthesis interpretation to be renegotiated as a cultural production and as a meaning expression.

III- A practical model of frontier critical thinking applied to community cinema dynamics. This framework has been developed after my observations on the achievements and flaws of several practices of community cinema throughout the country. This practical scheme has been designed under the geocultural circumstances in which the researcher (as auto-ethnographer) and the communities involved (the practitioners) are immersed. It is structured to be a socio-educative practice for university level Humanities students, it has pedagogical, community building, creative, and research components and it aims for the following goals:

-To contribute towards the construction of the self-representative strategies for the communication of collective memories and idiosyncrasies of socially vulnerable sectors by encouraging access, skills and an understanding of the process of technological appropriation. For instance, the development of audio-visual teaching-learning opportunities in the process of production and circulation of a community cinema collective oeuvre

- To link academic teaching, research and extension through an interdisciplinary semio-practical teaching-learning activity to foster the university's commitment to the satisfaction of the concrete needs of socially vulnerable sectors.

- To mediate creatively and collaborate interdisciplinarily in the work of audio-visual specialists, Humanities students, social work organizations and community members

towards the realization of a community-made audio-visual narrative

To close, this researcher wishes to offer her full support to the many social organizations and cultural producers that presently resist neoliberal attacks on our civil rights to communication and media representation.

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APPENDIX 1: Space of Representation. Video Interviews with the Participants of Cinema Made with Neighbours' Collective. Conversations informing Chapter 4

Introduction

Haesbaert (2004: 93-94) states, “the territory always involves, simultaneously, a symbolic, cultural dimension, through a territorial identity attributed by social groups, as a form of 'symbolic control' over the space where they live (therefore also being a form of appropriation). In this appendix, I offer edited transcriptions of what I believe to be their representations of the territory, like an image of their social relations and their social space, which emerges in the conversations, according to the particular experiences individuals tell in relation to their perceived space within the territory. Going back to the tripartite analytic created for this thesis this section concentrates in “Aesthetic Interpretations”, that is, their perceived role within CMWN’s production-circulation intersubjective dynamic, which I see manifesting through their recall of experiences as part this territory’s geocultural dimension.

This appendix attempts to provide to the reader a sample of my non-structured conversation strategy. It also offers my own reflexions as a part of the conversation with the focus groups or individual interviewees. Also creates meta-conversation with the reader. The writing transposes to paper in italics my comments to the reader as if I was talking directly to the camera (breaking the forth wall) without the interviews listening. As presented in Chapter 4 my territory of exploration is the movement of Cinema Made with Neighbours (production and exhibition dynamics within Saladillo town) during the development of the 15th National Festival of Cinema made with Neighbours in Saladillo. I chose that moment because my intention was to see the whole Cinema made with Neighbours movement at play, this includes interviewing collaborators. Regarding the chronological framework, this section manages two temporal levels: One is the interviews made mainly after the festival’s end in November 2018 which comprises the present evaluation the interviewees make of the community social dynamics that contextualize the production-circulation of the films exhibiting in this festival. The second is an evocative time brought up by their memories about their shared experiences as members of CMWN’s movements for the past 21 years.

The orientation or axle idea that foster the conversations moves around the main questions: Is this community cinema format (as a social production-reception process) completely organic to a certain set of geocultural circumstances? And, are their formats of production-reception transferable? Following this main interrogation, interviews deliberated the relationship of the participant with “the soil” by asking about their perception of the lived space (their territory) and of their interpersonal relationships before and after the community cinema movement. I also discussed their territorial practices by looking at their “techniques of the self” (Molfetta quoting

Foucault) in order to uncover their perceived identity within the territory.⁴⁸ When needed I have added comments of agents interviewed in the 2005 documentary *Ceux de Saladillo*.⁴⁹ As is possible in a documentary script, I also include the voices of other referents of the production field collected during my interviews and activities during the 15th National Festival of Cinema Made with Neighbours. For instance, the interview with Hayrabet Alcalahan, a 14th time programmer and curator of the festival, which is useful to illustrate the complexities and fluid borders of the CMWN movement.⁵⁰

A. Territory of Memory: The Mate Round



Figure 77: TVET (2018) Interview with Adriana Salinardi, Franco Midú, Guillermina Páez, Miriam Junco (original actors) of *The Good in Others*, 2003. Saladillo, November 2018

The last considerations about the therapeutic role of this activity relates to what I proposed in 2010, 2012 and 2018: “cinema made with Neighbours can be instrumental as a collective work in the process of social mourning”:

“The very act of taking part in the making of said film turns the common neighbour into an active listener, and the whole group of Neighbours into a new referential framework where a

⁴⁸ Molfetta puts forward the hypothesis that narrating oneself, telling one's own stories and using the filmic device as a "technique of the self" (Foucault, 2003) is an act of resistance (Comolli, 2009), empowerment and liberation of socio-cultural diversity, in a context of globalizing domination exercised by the entertainment and information industry. For Foucault (1988, p 18), “Technologies of the self” are the various 'operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being' that people make either by themselves or with the help of others in order to transform themselves to reach a 'state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality'. In other word, a form of transforming oneself by changing attitudes and behaviors with which we endorse power domination strategies we have introjected and naturalized, but now we can identify them to free ourselves from them.

⁴⁹ Some of my general observations are also informed by other interviews with Junco and Midú before and after this Festival (2009, and 2021). For instance, the online interview done as a researcher for the Centre for Investigation and New Studies on Cinema (CiyNE) at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA) with Julio Midú y Fabio Junco during Pandemic crisis, and other audio podcasts interviews these producers have aired which I have located to illustrate some aspects of the topic. <http://www.ciyne.com.ar/entrevistas/#16>

⁵⁰ There are interviews that have been deleted as they add nothing about self-perception of the movement and only give general information that has been incorporated into the previous section. Such is the case of the interview with Damian Laplace, made in San Juan in 2019 during an official visit he did in his capacity as INCAA's Coordinator of Inclusion Cinema. His involvement here responds to the part he played in Cinema Express workshops' production between 2009 and 2015, but he did not offer personal insights worth mentioning.

traumatic memory could be communicated because it has been believed by the others. They are both fundamental instances in the process of elaboration of grieving” (2012, 2018a).

I recall this appreciation to deepen into this process of social construction of collective memory by trying to find out what the participants I encountered in 2018 think about this. Though my question does not ask this directly, what I wanted to know was if the story of ‘The Good in Others’ is autobiographical of a traumatic memory, and, what happened when the group of Neighbours got together to represent that story.

It is the week after the 15th National Film Festival of Cinema made with Neighbours. We are at the community library where I have organized a series of small focus groups conversation. The first one is with three actors who are sitting at a round table drinking mate, Eduardo Morales (a CMWN collaborator is doing camera support).⁵¹ I have invited these three as I gathered, they were linked either to the original film *The Good in Others* (2004) and/or to its remake, *Autumn Green Leaves* (2018). Guillermina Páez talks about their beginnings and how Julio Midú called her to be part of it. “He organized a meeting and asked us (his friends and colleagues) to accompany him into making audio-visual productions, so we started with soap operas”, she said. The actor emphasized that at that time “the whole town used to watch it, even the shops would close during the hour of watching the soap opera”. She recalls participating in the four soap operas, and that later *they* (Julio Midú and Fabio Junco) started with the films.⁵² “I had a part in *The Good in Others* as in *The Bear* and *Poor Women*. These were all good and amusing experiences, as we have fun just being together”. She also tells me she has theatrical experience but that this filmmaking is different: “They would call you and once you got there you would get to know about your character and what do you have to say and do”.

Franco Midú (brother of Julio), who is today an established playwright and theatre director is at this table too. He states that his interest in acting comes directly from his experience in

⁵¹ Mate is a tea like beverage, popular in many South American countries, brewed from the dried leaves of an evergreen shrub or tree (*Ilex paraguariensis*). It is a stimulating drink containing caffeine and tannin. In Argentina it is customary to drink it in a round sitting situation while taking turns to sip from the same container typically made from a calabash gourd (also called the *mate*). The tradition comes from the South American original people from the tropical jungle (Guarani, Tupi) where it had ceremonial uses. It passed to the Colonial Spanish in the sixteenth and seventeenth Centuries and remained in vogue during gaucho times of the nineteenth century, especially in the independence territorial wars and the national expansion desert campaigns. In the busy and modern twentieth century mate accompanied social turmoil and working class struggles. Mate keeps current in the twenty-first century social reunions denoting and promoting a relaxed and trusting friendship-like atmosphere.

⁵² Through the sections of interviews, I have decided to use italics on the pronoun ‘they’ to differentiate it from any other reference to a third person in plural. This is because the interviewees talk about the directors of CMWN as if they were absent but ubiquitous deities looking over their actions. A sort of univocal and indefeasible institution to whom collaborators owe a sort of adoration

Cinema made with Neighbours. He recalls how he started helping behind the scenes (with logistics) but quickly found out that acting was his vocation. He went to study theatre in Buenos Aires and started to participate in *their* (Julio's and Fabio's) productions. "In 2004 when *they* were preparing for the first Festival of Cinema made with Neighbours and Fabio wrote "The Good in Others", *they* offered me the role of 'David', which I got to play again in the remake", Franco adds. For him, despite the major production and the increment in the budget and logistics of the remake, the 'magic' of Cinema made with Neighbours remained intact. Franco suggests that even though 15 years have passed the motivation and the emotion are still there: "I have put my 15 years of theatrical experience to try to conceive this character again, I have even followed up the steps of this movement and directed cinema with Neighbours too (he has directed about 7 short films to date)". He concludes: "today I write and produce theater, we even tour in Europe with our performances, but I do not forget I discovered all this because of this cinema movement".

Adriana Salinardi (daughter of Cacho Salinardi, the actor after whom the CMWN's male actor prize is named) tells me she had no artistic formation. She is a computational system analyst who joined the movement inspired by her father's full involvement in it. She tells me her father acted in almost all the movies made by Cinema Made with Neighbours and that her parent's house was one of the most used settings. Adriana remembers that because she lived where the movies were made, she started to get interested and one day *they* offered her a role. Again, she confirms that "who you are going to interpret, name, and the character's traits, was something you will get to know on the spot, the very day of the shooting", "you did not know the story, *they* were the ones telling you what you have to say". However, she remarks, with the years you get some training, Adriana states. "In all, I have been in about ten films; in one or two I was a protagonist, in others, I was a secondary character". "Later, when Franco (Midú) opened his Drama School, I was one of the first students", she said. She emphasizes that today, like her teammate Guillermina, she is part of the Theatre professional group directed by Franco Midú. She also joined Franco's statement by saying that it was through Cinema made with Neighbours, that she found out acting was something she loved to do too. Adriana appeared in *Autumm green leaves* and she is very happy to have been part of that project where she could go back to ask: "what do I have to say?" She goes further to state: "Cinema made with Neighbours traversed all my life in Saladillo, my father, my mother, my late husband and my children participated too". She added, "even a CMWN's movie has been dedicated to my husband after he passed and a prize to the best neighbour actor of the National Film Festival of Cinema Made with Neighbours carries my father's name". After a sigh, she tenderly states "with Julio we are family, my parents always saw him as one more child of the family; the son they did not have".

Franco adds that, as teens, his brother Julio and he used to review all the shooting in Cacho's house (Adriana's father), "we would stay there until three am hanging as if this was our own home" declares Franco. On those weekends, skyping parties and friends outings, Franco and Julio would come back from Cacho's house to edit and stay working until dawn. Franco recalls that as a child, Julio would take a shoebox for a camera and take his brothers and sisters to the garden and play that they were shooting a soap opera. With his sister they would prepare a musical duet all afternoon to be shown in the evening in front of the family. He remembers that when he created the first soap opera, he built the set emulating a poor settlement neighbourhood in the back of their house. "Go grab the broom from Choly's house", Franco's and Julio's mother would often say, ('Choly' was a fictional character who in the show lived in that precarious house they built in the set in the back yard. Choly's broom in the show belonged, for real, to Julio's and Franco's mother). That was how cinema filtered itself into every crevice of everyday life and vice versa. "My family stories ended up in the cinema as *The good in Others* did Fabio's family"; "It is unavoidable that family breaks through the stories and gets into the scripts we write", says Franco. "We have even taken CMWN to the doorsteps of our work", said Guillermina, "we snuck in on the weekends to shoot office scenes".

On the subject of the cinema filtering into everyday life, Guillermina said: "we all had a job and a family to attend, so to find time to work in CMWN, and in order to maximize our available hours, we took shootings into our own homes so we could carry on with our everyday lives in between scenes". Guillermina concludes by saying that "we did not take this lightly; for some of us to be included in one of these film productions was a way to overcome the pain of a miscarriage or the loss of a loved one because participating alongside friends was a healing process"

I was getting nearer now to my main questions regarding community cinema, autobiographies and collective mourning. A positive contribution to the situation was that Miriam Junco (Fabio's sister) arrived at the library and joined the round of mate...

When Miriam joined the table, they all acknowledged that she had taken it upon herself to be the archivist of the group. She collected every newspaper note, every TV review and kept them safe all these years. They all joked about her catchphrase "I want a copy of that" and she commented that with that request she had filled up eight albums, eight volumes of scrap books. Miriam confirms: "I have recorded the TV soap opera from airing on TV, the movies on VHS and floppy disks, behind the scenes photos, newspaper articles. Set photos were archived with dates and participants, name of the movie they were shooting, even the scene number in which they were taken", then she adds: "I keep all of this because Fabio always dreamt of building a Museum of CMWN".

The conversation with Miriam very naturally shifted towards the autobiographic character of the two films (*The Good in Others* and *Autumn Green Leaves*) as they are Fabio's family story, that is, her own too. Miriam started by joking and saying that "thanks to her nice character, she did not need to go to therapy as she had this movie" (the remake) to cry over". "I cried a lot before and after it was made because even though this is fiction there are parts that are 'real'" (she emphasized) "and, as this is a remake, we already knew the plot". The first one (*The Good in Others*) I lived it as one more of Fabio's dramas where I acted a part of what I am in real life, a teacher. Then, when I saw it, I started to feel compelled by the other actors that played my family members in the film. For instance, when I encountered in the street the local actress that played my mother, it reminded me of my own mother and the figures started to shake inside my memory. "This woman even wore the same kind of clothes my mother used to wear!" she told us. "Another thing was", added Miriam, "that I always asked myself why Ruben (the eldest) and I (the only female sibling) were in Fabio's life the most, and even though we took parenting roles toward him to overcome the dysfunctionality of our family, we were not portrayed in the script. Instead, Fabio (in the movie played by the character of Dante) chose to create the character of David (who resembles our other brother Walter). The curious fact is that Walter was always the most distant and disconnected from the family predicaments. Later I realized Fabio did that to call attention to the lack of time Walter gave him (and the family) when they were young. Even in the premier of that film, Walter was very dry and distant in congratulating him at the end of the production. So, the character of David (Walter) is the one that cannot express his feeling as he has been permanently damaged by the family's dysfunction.

Guillermina, who played the lover of Dante's father in the film, (Fabio's father in real life), added a weird fact to the conversation. She tells us that, on the premier of *The Good in Others* (2003), an uncle of Fabio approached her to clarify something referring to Fabio's father's moral behaviour. She says he spoke as if he felt compelled to excuse the portrayal of his own brother made on the screen by a fictional character and by a fictional film that had not yet openly declared itself to be someone's life story.

What is interesting to me at this point is that this is something the actors are now realizing in the very moment of talking about it in front of our research camera. I then saw the chance to ask them about how they handled what was revealed two days ago in the CMWN's Festival remake premier. I meant the moment in which Mimí Ardú (one of the professional actresses hired to be a protagonist in the remake) took it upon herself to disclose, in the middle of the public event, the fact that the argument was based on the director's family history.

"In that moment I felt like dying", confessed Miriam, "not because of me, but because of my brother Fabio". I felt shocked as we were not prepared to share that in the movie there are

scenes that are taken directly out of our lives. Mimi Ardú was not authorized to openly speak about this!” emphasized Miriam.

The actors in the *mate* round agreed that even though among the actors and the first viewers of *The Good in Others* there was a rumour that this was Fabio’s story, such fact was never openly accepted by the scriptwriter (Fabio). Franco states that as per his experience, during the remake, the film being based on Fabio’s story was not an open topic: “I was working with the professional actors and there was no talk about who of the real-life members of Fabio’s family they were playing”. However, he adds: “I recognized from knowing Fabio and for being in the original film that this was autobiographical”. Miriam says that the friends that went to the screening of the original movie are old time friends who were aware that this story is the story of her family. Also, continues Miriam, “when my auntie played ‘the auntie’ in the original film “for less than a minute in the film” and the movie was released in the festival, she brought two vans full of people from her nearby town to see her part in it.

So, I gather the whole family had embraced the fact that this was an autobiography in the first version but was not used by the directors as a motivation when they made the remake. Again, this is what I was referring with being a Testimonial simulation first and only a simulation later.

Franco states that, “as an actor of both films, I could empathize with Fabio’s story who actually lived this”... the difference in my acting was that, this time (talking about the remake), I could understand the relationship of my character with all the others and I studied and analysed that a lot, and, in the first movie this was spontaneous, pure empathy”. . . I guess, from knowing all the siblings, -those turned into a character like Walter, and those that are tacit in the script like Miriam and Ruben, - that I played a character (‘David’) who condensed the other three siblings into the composition of just one character”. Miriam reflects: “I feel it is good that Fabio could achieve catharsis writing this and that my parents are no longer alive, because he was very strong in doing so”. Franco highlights that “now that all is in images everything is lighter” (*This is the transposition to an object of mourning, I thought*).

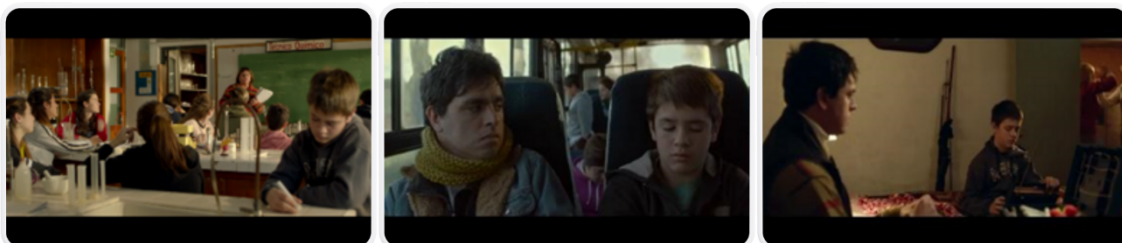


Figure 78: Scenes of Autumn Green Leaves (2018) portraying the interviewed actors. Photograms retrieved from CMWN Foundation’s You Tube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@CINECONVECINOS>



Figure 79: Scenes of *The Good in Others* (2003) portraying the interviewed actors, Photograms retrieved from CMWN Foundation's You Tube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@CINECONVECINOS>

The actors then reflected upon the fact that many films we watch are based on real life stories. Franco for example has written a theatre piece inspired in a family drama of his own, the oeuvre ends with a real family video bringing reality and fiction close again. In addition, a film he directed and CMWN produced *The Unbearable Speed of Things* (2016), is an autobiography of his and his wife's relationship written by his wife. Guillermina insists that for that (putting your own story in image) "you need to be brave". Adriana fears revealing her life in front of others if she gets to write and that she is not convinced that she is ready for that.

They remarked that this is a bit of the essence of *Cinema Express*: they feel that when *Cinema Express* goes to the towns, people explode via this medium, talking about scarcity, flooding, social issues. In the beginning *Cinema Express* was to get fun, said Franco, but as the dynamic of cine express is to democratically vote on one story, they often ended up choosing to tell those stories that talk about their pain, the people that had the experience chose to tell their own sorrowful story. "This is a catharsis people do through the short films", Franco states. "This is where the wounds start showing up while the people themselves perform the stories" Miriam tells me. The actors agree that *Cinema Express* production has many short films performed by the very people that had the traumatic experience as if they needed to put the pain outside, "this is the form in which they live it captured in a format that can be shared" says Franco.

Bingo! I say to myself, the process of transference from a traumatic memory to the storytelling via the vehicle of collective filmmaking made by community cinema, is an interesting device for the elaboration of social mourning. It amazes me to realize that they are aware of this process of healing as happening to them and their peers. So, I feel interested in what they see as a projection for what they have already achieved, therefore I asked: What other avenues are open for CMWN to attain community expansion -and expression?

The actors agree that the presence of the collective sometimes resides in the stories they tell, "Sometimes they are popular legends that have 'incarnated' in the townspeople's lives, and they tell the story not knowing if this happened or not" says Guillermina. "Also in these cases, each person adds a new ingredient to the original story". It is like the fish tale told by the fishermen: "In their tales", says Guillermina "the fish keeps growing after it's been caught".

Adriana states that what she finds the most powerful of Fabio and Julio's actions is that *they* installed in the collective imaginary that one can achieve the things that one desires and set oneself up to achieve. "*They* have proven this with *their* own journey from the first soap opera to professional production by studying, constantly producing and involving themselves with all the cinema related organizations, to create a network". Guillermina adds about the contagious spirit of this idea, and how its enactment forged a sense of belonging. She remembers how hard it was for Julio to get people involved, and how, in a few months, he had people knocking on his door wanting to be a performer. She remembers: "In the beginning they would laugh at us, they would say, 'I saw you last night on the TV doing this or that', (that means they watched it then), and in a few months they were working with us". She reflects upon the naivety of the town's viewers; anecdotes are many, for instance when "people would scream at us (the actors) in the street to announce something the character we perform is not supposed to know in the soap opera and they already know as told by its narrative".

Then I asked: why do you think people want to "appear" in the movies?

Miriam jumps "we all like to see ourselves on the screen", Adriana adds: "there is a ludic aspect of ourselves that when we act it is like playing a game; to play to be someone else". She thinks that in childhood we share by playing role games; we play to be 'the teacher', 'the mother', 'the doctor', we play 'police and thieves', and continues, "as adults we rarely have this opportunity to play, so this (CMWN) becomes the chance to open that game again with another". "This is why" (say Franco) "everybody wanted to belong, if you weren't included in front of the cameras, you were 'behind' the scenes, pouring mate or helping as necessary, holding the lights with your hands if you have to". Moreover, he recalls, "on Sundays" (*it seems to have been the day for CMWN shootings... a day dedicated to spirituality and collective communion in Christian terms*) "there were three lucky enough to be acting and seventeen behind supporting" (*like in the bible I replied to myself*). Adriana remembers her mother: "even if she acted in a little part, she would always prefer to stay 'behind' serving some food or supporting with dress ups" (*mandatory family roles repeating here*). Franco nostalgically adds (*and confirms my speculations*): "we were a big family and we still are, after twenty years, we get together to shoot a film and we keep remembering and laughing at the films we made" (*as in a Sunday family table siblings recall childhood anecdotes*).

"Because Fabio and Julio do not live in Saladillo any more we don't see each other that much, but when Cinema made with Neighbours calls us, we are there. We are always waiting to be called, concludes Adriana (*so again there are these priest-like figures that appear to encourage the community to re-join, like a religious event without whom it could not be celebrated*).

This puzzles and worries me. Do they need the directors to come from Buenos Aires to join them to “play at making movies”, to be together? So, I asked: is there a history of the community and CMWN between these two films?

For the actors there have been no major changes in the treatment of their work dynamics from one type of production in *The Good in Others* to its remake in *Autumn Green Leaves*. For them the feeling of confraternity among Neighbours has not been modified. “We gained in quality and in exposure and we incorporated ‘the famous’, but knowing they are just like us” said Franco, “I consider the professional actors (of the last movie) *vis à vis* the local actors (also playing in this remake) were very similar” he concludes.

Up to now, it is clear that for them there has been a technical improvement, but it still feels like a movie like the others of Cinema made with Neighbours.

“Those like us that were in the very beginnings”, says Guillermina, “and saw the precariousness of *their* production would be able to remember funny circumstances in which *they* had to produce cheap and fast, so they could not do it better, so having this budget has been a way of ‘redemption’”. “This new production is a point of evolution for them”, says Miriam “we come from going in a cart and this is like going in a car; we are very lucky to have a history, because we can enjoy this success”. Franco laughs remembering when they were portrayed in *Cahier du cinema* (2005) or on the front cover of the cultural magazine of *Clarín* (2004) they did not even know what the meaning of that was, this cultural value. Franco continues “these things were just happening to us, today, I am amazed this could have been us in the early 2000s”. “This was our way, if there is nothing, then you need to produce something, you need to put yourself out there, show your ideas and let the others come to you once they can see you and this is what Julio did”, concluded Franco. In this last production Neighbours were paid for their jobs (technicians and actors), they brought business to the people of Saladillo, to hotels and restaurants. Local cinema was kept alive. “Today technicians have the skills to be professionally employable because they had the chance to develop said skills since the beginnings, since the times of the cart” says Franco.

So, I enquired: now that Fabio and Julio have moved towards industrial production, how is CMWN going to continue?

There is now a new generation of CMWN, the actors agree, the two actresses acknowledge Franco’s new role as CMWN short film director. Adriana also noted there is also Federico Stagnaro “who in the beginning of CMWN used to wait for us while swinging on a swing wearing his kindergarten outfit” and now studies social communication and also trains as a Radio and TV director. He produces and assists Franco in his theatre pieces in Buenos Aires. “He could be a good director in the future” says Adriana.

Reading between lines these members of the CMWN group are still awaiting another head to take on the leading role and that does not give me the sign of a continuity and corroborates the idea that this was a movement evolving around the mentors Julio and Fabio.



Figure 80: Cultural magazine of the Clarín newspaper cover posing at 03/10/2004

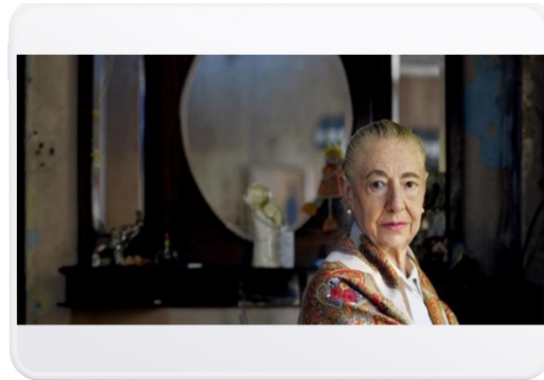


Figure 81: Shot of René Regina (69) her own living room where they were shooting *Poor women*, 2005. Photo retrieved from <http://fundacinevecinos.com>

B. Territory of Memory: The Faithful Five



Figure 82: Left: TVET (2018) Interview with Eduardo Morales, Miriam Junco, Marta Gatti, Roberto Nini and Pepe Gramajo. Saladillo, November 2018. Middle and Right: Archive photos from the XI National Film Festival CMWN, in the picture appear our interview

The second group invited to the library were the five long time CMWN collaborators. My question is how long have they been involved, how did they get involved and, what is their perceived role within the movement, that is, what do they think they bring into the group, what is their own contribution to the movement?

Eduardo Morales (55) is a retired bank officer who met Fabio Junco as a co-worker on Radio “Continental” and he has been contributing from the first festival of CMWN for the past 15 years. He always comes from Mar del Plata (where he lives now, some 6 hours away, in a very popular seaside destination) to stay in Saladillo during the festival. “For me”, continues Eduardo “to take part acting is as good as being behind the scenes, then, sitting in the *Gaumont* (*prestigious national cinema exhibitor in Buenos Aires*) when I watched the film’s scene where I helped to point the light with my own hands, it makes me feel very proud.” He confirms: “My role is to assist in whatever *they* ask me to, for instance at the moment I do some production”. *In fact, at the request of Fabio and Julio, Eduardo has been transporting me to*

and from the different interviews, sightseeing, and events I have wanted to attend since I arrived to do the participant observation of the film festival. In the second week (after the festival) Eduardo also supported me as a camera operator. This very interview has the camera sat in position and looked after by him. So, we can consider his production work at that time was, actually, to cater for the invited researcher's needs. That is, to help me develop my visual anthropological research.

Miriam Junco (60) said that she has been linked to Fabio since 1967 (they all laugh) as she is his older sister. Miriam adds: "I have always been supporting him and Julio in front of and behind the cameras". "I took it upon myself to archive the audio-visual and graphic material related to their work. I act in little roles or support their specific requests for their movie-making or by minding their kids while they shoot the movie".

Marta Gatti, 65 is a therapeutic support worker and has been Fabio and Miriam's neighbor and friend since they were kids. She counts 40 years of friendship. "With Julio we have a profound friendship, I do what it takes, I let my house be the set, I cook for the invited actors, I am also behind or in front of the camera". She said that her job as elderly therapeutic companion relates to CMWN. "In my work I forge emotional ties, I support people, and I exercise my patience and in CMWN you have to be patient too". And now she confides: "*They* may call you to be in set at 10 am, and then you end up shooting your part at 5 pm", she laughs. Marta states that she has also been from first to last of the Film Festivals, always preparing the mate kit and the refreshments to shoot in the countryside, reminding people to bring warm clothes as a backup for the actors. "CMWN is like the holidays, you enjoy them during and after (when it comes to the prize giving and the clapping)", says Marta, "Also because we are friends, later and with respect, we bring up the critics and comment about things that can be better done next time". Marta admires how far Fabio and Julio have gone. For her '*they* have arrived where they wanted to be"

Roberto Ninni (60) is a spiritual healer who knew Fabio and Julio before the CMWN movement. "I collaborated in the beginning and then there was a hiatus, and I returned to the production to be behind the scenes, to be in every detail to support, from the food preparing to the technical assistance behind the camera... I was a very introverted person and CMWN helped me to come out my shell. . . Recently I have even taken part in a small collaborative group through which, among other friends, we attempt to do comedy... Life is a performance, and this helps me to perform in my everyday life", he states. "In my involvement with the CMWN support I am a perfectionist, I feel the activities of the movement as something personal, therefore, I am always focused on preventing mistakes and getting ahead of obstacles".

Hector Jose “Pepe” Gramajo (70) owns a gardening shop and played a small part in a film 10 years ago. He has been supporting the movement since. “*They* made me do things I never thought of, like dressing like a woman, painting my nails or walking around in my underwear... I reckon I’ve had so much fun I will only leave if *they* kick me out . . . For my contribution, I offer my place as a set, I lend them my truck for transporting equipment and people, I support them in the organization and in the logistics. *Autum green leaves*’ set is in my place, my house is the protagonists’ home in the movie. . . This is thrilling for me: seeing my father’s garden portrayed on this film is very moving as my father promoted my love for plants and created this garden”.

Eduardo talks about how contagious the impulse was that they ended up inspiring a group in another town to create their own short film festival of CMWN and that they support each other and communicate through the year. They visit each other and help in each other’s productions, Pepe recalls having a lot of fun during those exchanges and co-productions: “Saladillo’s people went there and vice versa, we met people that also collaborated in those other productions, we stayed in their houses . . . They opened their doors to us just because we were from CMWN”, Eduardo points out while remembering that the first contact came out of the *Cinema Express* activities. Eduardo is certain that “by going to the different towns with *Cinema Express* *they* helped people that are just like us: people that want to express something and don’t know how”. And he confirms that “by running *Cinema Express* in other towns, *they* join them, *they* inspired them and now these people are producing together because of those workshop impulses”. Marta adds on the amazing things Fabio y Julio have achieved with people’s acting, “for instance the shooting of an 82 year old woman making a topless, in a town where the opinion of others and their rumours still have control over our conduct”. Marta considers that *they* break the mould of social behaviour with the things “*they* made them/us do”.

There is a kind of blind faith in Fabio and Julio’s doings among these people that started to puzzle me; they seem to be very happy and satisfied with this kind of subalternity, so I ask: Why do you say they “make you” do this or that, are you being forced to?

Marta answered, “when Fabio calls from Buenos Aires saying that in a month he will be in Saladillo and that he needs me for an afternoon, I never know if *they* want me to do the dishes, to cook for the crew, to offer my house as shooting set, or to wear a bikini on front of the camera!” “When that happens”, she adds, “I think to myself, just hold your horses girl, because it is like a tornado . . . For instance, if you let your house”, Marta confirms, “you open the door and you have 50 people coming and going around the rooms, they just take over the place, they use your room, your kitchen, the studio; that day it is certain that your husband does not come home for lunch”, she says so gleefully. “It feels really like these collaborators of CMWN

enjoy that game”. “You have to be prepared for anything when ‘the kids’ come over”. Then she goes into a solemn tone and says to me “this is what it takes to be *their* friend, you have to give everything the day they ask you to . . .In occasions”, she concludes, “other people just have handed them the keys to their house and left. We all just trust them”.

Miriam says that “even though we are not forced to, because of their friendly personality you cannot decline their invitation or the favour request. As they are the directors they do not ask: ‘would you like to perform as They tell you: ‘you will perform as...’” Miriam states with conviction “You have no idea what the movie is about or what part of the movie you are in, they just say, “you enter this door, walk that direction, sit, say your line, stand up and then exit”.

Marta says, “they are daydreamers and we are waiting to be called to make our dreams come true”. And adds “If we are not summoned because our profiles are not what they need, we go anyway to support behind the scenes”. Marta also thinks they are like a family and that the relationship does not end with the movie making. Eduardo stresses how pleased he is to support in any capacity, acting or guiding people (*like me*) that come to research about the phenomenon. “I am there for what it takes,” he says. Timidly he says he likes to write and they are together with Pepe and Roberto forming a small group to be “ready for when *they* call us to shoot a long film”. Eduardo adds that he designed a T-shirt with the CMWN’s Film Festival inscription to wear at the Mar del Plata International Film Festival (a very prestigious international film festival active since 1954) and was able to relate to international filmmakers, producers and film enthusiast because they associated him with CMWN movement.

That says it all, making his body a walking promotional board of the CMWN movement is a very telling image of what these collaborators are doing by unconditionally relating their lives (their bodies) to this project, which in return gives them a sense of belonging and an ascent of their cultural and social capital. Such extreme devotion without self-appreciation of their essential role starts to worry me; I keep my incisive questions running and ask them: If Fabio and Julio were not involved, would you count on the CMWN community to support your own project?

Roberto says that people put their names down for the castings he organized once. but Marta’s face denotes doubt; in her opinion Julio and Fabio are the only ones capable of convoking that kind of commitment and support. Now Marta talks about belonging only to Fabio and Julio’s team. Miriam and Marta agree that they would feel unfaithful towards Fabio and Julio if they moved to support another production group. Apparently, the issue is a lack of trust in their own abilities: “acting with Fabio and Julio we know they will not expose our lack of professionalism, other groups might”. They fundamentally trust Fabio and Julio’s experience as the only ones to choose what to show and what not to show of themselves; “they are the ones with the critical

perspective here”, says Marta. Miriam and Marta only entertain the idea of working with other leadership if that person would be Franco “because he is Julio’s brother and has been part of CMWN since forever,” concludes Miriam. Marta corroborates, “he is a part of the team”. So, she speaks of a “team”, not of a collective movement. Now they talk about the respect they owe to Fabio and Julio, which prevents them from taking part in other community cinema groups (*something entirely self-imposed, I sense*). When I ask about their own artistic aspirations, Pepe suggests that they would do it should Junco and Midú offer them the freedom to direct. Roberto tries to soften the tone by saying that “*They want us to make things on our own; this would relieve them a bit*” (as if by doing their own creation they are not betraying the production power couple but still serving them somehow). Pepe concludes by stating that after all Saladillo has a culture of filmmaking.

However, in what I am gathering here, their actions are not thought of as community making but just as a bunch of religious-like followers, finally making contributions towards the success of Midú-Junco productions. Let’s explore what happens with those producing on their own now...

C. Territory of Memory: Are We ‘Always Laughing’?



Figure 83: TVET (2018) Interview with the community group “Always Laughing” led by Patricia Pallaro. Saladillo, November 2018

I must admit by now I am fighting against my own prejudgments. The previous day I had encountered the community around CMWN productions, and I had felt disappointed by the realization that the social and creative dynamics of this phenomenon are extremely centralized in the figures of Midú and Junco. Observing that I feared the movement is no more than a support group that lives vicariously through the success of its directors but does not perform as a community project with a future projection and collective goals. The disappointment is doubled now I saw the production from the group that was born from CMWN and is now independent. We are talking of a crowd of one hundred plus members that is, in appearance, more decentralized than CMWN. This creative group whose film was shown the day before at the CMWN film festival, is, under my perspective, not an alternative either. I felt like this because I was pursuing ideologically committed and aesthetically challenging collective

alternatives and now, I realize I have to compromise my expectations. There is not so far, an alignment in the CMWN universe between the collective narrative, the aesthetic challenge and an ideological awareness of themselves within the mechanisms of power. So, it is hard for me to conduct the following interview with this collective; the group “Always laughing artistic productions”, whose film I hardly endured because of its stereotyped characters and narrative and their lack of self-awareness.



Figure 84: TVET (2018) complete cast of the film Town Soul (2018). Saladillo, November 2018

It is the second afternoon at the town’s library doing group interviews and we are now congregated in the garden. The round is formed by members of *Always laughing artistic productions*, there is, of course, a *mate* going around. Eduardo Morales and I are behind the camera.

The first one speaking is Judith Succonni; she introduces herself as an actress (by signing in the air the quotation marks) “I do any role so the director can place me in different characters”. After Judith, Patricia Pallaro, director of the group, continues. She introduces herself as a scriptwriter. She mentions that she specializes in education, communication and technology and that she is a literature and social communication teacher. She also teaches civil rights and history. She understands herself to be a scriptwriter, a playwright and a fiction writer (short stories and novels) *all too much I thought*. Third is Marta, who is a special needs teacher at primary level, “I do small parts”, she says; her children and husband are also involved in the movement. Then it is the turn of Sonia, who is also a teacher in many level from kindergarten to secondary, she is also a librarian, music teacher and a special needs teacher. She states, “This helps us all as a therapy to disconnect from the problems we encounter in the teaching environment”. In this group, she is the manager. The last woman is Alicia, a secondary school geography teacher, “I cooperate in many capacities, I sometimes advise on historical and geographical accuracy”. There is also a gentleman in his late seventies, Julio Andreolo, who is the commission president, he says he is an author and composer *and immediately tries to speak about his music on You tube, but the director asks for the microphone*. Patricia, the director, stresses that they have professional musicians producing original music for their

movies and performances. She stresses that things are done in Saladillo and that their pieces are themed for children and adults. They try to join the pieces so that all the talents are shared collectively.

I see an interesting line there related to their role as educators and community cinema makers, so I ask: How do you integrate the artistic experience into the teaching and learning experience?

They answer that having a connection with the education environment inspired them to produce works for children. “We work the psychological side of childhood; we work with their stories, their vulnerabilities, their taste, and their fears.” Says Marta, “The movies for children are interactive; in the music section the film’s performers get from behind the screen and appear in the scenario to dance and sing” adds Patricia. There is a constant production of two films a year, one for adults and one for the whole family. They say the movies are based on research, for instance in costumes and history. Their arguments are rooted in oral history compilations which they produce themselves. They emphasize that they try to translate traditional regional tales to the screen and the particular sense of humour of their town (in-jokes), “this becomes a connecting point with the viewers who remember their childhood or the tales their parents used to tell”. They all agree that their audio-visual and artistic production style is linked to the everyday life of the community and is strongly based on the formal education of childhood and youth. They believe their interaction and mode of working can serve also as an alternative form of education and as an incentive for students to get involved in researching and producing.

Patricia tells me that as they passed one hundred members, they had to become a legal entity as a society of common wellbeing. Within this legal framework, they could welcome underage members so they can invite their students to be part of the organization. I see how this kind of inclusion and thematic could ensure them the widespread support of the townspeople. The Saladillo people like to see their Neighbours, their friends, so the projections are multitudinous: the last film counted over two hundred people involved in its production, between actors and collaborators. So, for the film’s release there were the two hundred people involved plus their families and neighbours. This sum easily surpassed the 1000 viewers on the release of their film in 2018 *when I was there at the National Film Festival of CMWN.*

My question is how can they please so many people without entering into social friction? And unfortunately, the answer is what I feared, they have not taken any ideological or political position; however, we must agree that this kind of lukewarm attitude starts appearing when the production is collective; a cinema BY Neighbours

They tell me they look for humour “but nothing too over the top with gestures or language . . . it can be cheeky but not gross so it is apt for general public”. The style of dress is looked after, “not to wear things that can be seen as indecent because of their teacher roles” The script is also very constrained: “it was based on elderly citizens that tell us stories and anecdotes; songs they used to sing; there are even stories of these elderly people’s grandparents’ superstitions”. “Now people know we do this kind of research, and they send Patricia (the director) their stories via WhatsApp”, says Judith. Patricia tells me that “Neighbours feel they have a part in the creative process because, even if they are not acting, they know there is an anecdote which they have told to the scriptwriter and that she has collected the story and collaborated in how it is being told”.

Political neutrality must be due to the fact that they cover all the production costs, and they are always asking for funding. “Under the new legal figure”, the manager adds, “they can allocate their product commercially and be hired from other neighbouring councils and states”. They agree in communicating to me that they avoid political remarks to care for official susceptibilities and to be sure of being funded by politicians. They even invite them to do cameos. With no controversies, and to fundraise, they are always welcomed by the council to produce artistic festivals (presenting amateur musicians, actors, and artists’ exhibitions from the surrounding areas), or to mount a commercial stand (selling lottery tickets or food) during the local religious or national festive days’ fairs.

It seems to be a clockwork model. My concern is with the territoriality of their work. Would the volume of public change once their audio-visual work exits the borders of the self-reflecting mirror, they have created within Saladillo town? so I asked: Have you tried showing the film outside this circuit (where the people that do not know the actors or that have not contributed with anecdotes)?

They say they will do it soon as they have been invited to go on a tour among other towns. “The neighbouring towns share the same idiosyncrasies; therefore, the movies provoke the same effect as here” explains Sonia, the manager. They add that they have travelled to other towns to produce their films and caused a commotion by appearing all dressed up on the beach to shoot the scene, calling the attention of everybody. They say that on these travels, they made new friends and that now these people from other distant towns want to come to Saladillo to be part of the filming.

I contemplate how, instead of feeling like strangers (due to the lack of connection with foreign soil), when they go out their area of influence they will expand their territory of effect, attracting a focus on themselves and therefore a desire by foreigners to become part of the local movement. That is commendable, I think, in terms of territoriality, therefore, I feel I would like to see what projection they achieve in the short term.

They comment that there are children and young ones that want to continue with the project; the young ones are more involved with technology, and they help to improve the technical aspects of the making and distribution on social networks.



Figure 85: Scenes of Alma de Pueblo (The Town's Soul) an Always Laughing artistic production premiered in the CMWN's National Film Festival 2018. Images retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aU5dRFFJdxk>
D. Territory of Memory: The Incurable Curator



Figure 86: TVET (2018) Interview with Hayrabet Alcalahan (RIP), November 2018 during the 15th CMWN National Film Festival, Saladillo.

Hayrabet Alcalahan, Hayra for short, was an Armenian film collector, researcher and presenter who had lived in Argentina since his youth. Hayra was the CMWN National Film Festival curator for the past 18 years. He died in July 2023 in the middle of programming the 20th edition of the CMWN Film Festival when the project was expanding towards a Latin American scope.

Hayra starts by telling me about when he first became involved with CMWN: "I met Fabio in Buenos Aires after the first National Festival of Cinema Made with Neighbours (2003) and he invited me to select and program the next festival; I have been with them the last 14 years". He continues by stating how he regards the festival: "Looking at the festivals in Argentina, I believe this is the most important festival in the country even if its own organizers are not aware of it". He adds: "I firmly believe the role this festival fulfils should be taken up by our National Institute of Cinema (INCAA); the institute should have fulfilled this function many years ago . . . luckily now the INCAA hire *them* (Julio and Fabio) so they can take the project to different areas of the country.. This festival gives space to pieces that are the fruit of creativity, improvisation and spontaneity coming from people that have had no audio-visual production training". He added: "It is true that at the beginning it was a shock for me, as I did not know how to approach the selection criteria . . . Of course, on the screen one can realize all the technical and narrative 'faults', however, as the productions are the result of amateurism, the technical can or cannot be achieved; this is why I focused on the argument". I ask then about his involvement with this kind of cinema production and he says that since he came to know this world of the low budget amateur cinema and its possibilities, he is no longer interested in commercial cinema. He also told me he works to divulge it beyond this film festival by circulating the films in Buenos Aires film club circuits and recommending them to other film festivals inside and outside the country. "For instance," he emphasized, "we made an exhibition of amateur Argentinean film in Brazil showing 100 movies that came out of this festival".

I try to grasp his statement and say: "So you are saying there is not a movement of money but there is a movement of human resources that organize and through solidarity channels become material resources, so there is the acting, the education even the food for the production members but none of it is purchased with money. Is that one of your main selection criteria?"

"No", he declares, "for me, as I said before, it is the content that matters the most . . .and this is why, at one point we had to separate the cinema made with Neighbours to other cinema made with low budget but high technical and rhetorical quality, so we made space also for a prize for independent cinema". He firmly accentuates "But right up to the last two years, all our effort was in community cinema even though the independent production was more aesthetically appealing, because they have other opportunities to go to other festivals. Those making community cinema do not have that possibility and come here looking for a refuge. Some of them have more than one film, others have 10 films but keep coming because they feel identified with the style of this film festival".

Hyra makes another important point about his selection criteria and his liking for this cinema: “the productions I favour show characteristics of the communities they are coming from or in which they have been created. I mean, even if this is the tale of a love story, they still portray reality (the real people, the real scenarios) of everyday life. They show a natural culture, away from the intellectualized perspectives of independent cinema; It is a testimony of social coexistence.

So, I continue, “I gather that what you are saying is that another relevant point in this film festival selection is the film’s ability to express its own territoriality”.

“Exactly”, he says: “Rarely do they create a fiction that is not telling their real lives, that is how I understand the film keeps the soul of the space it comes from”.

I keep this track going back to his own example given earlier about the film made by the collective: “El culebrón Timbal”: “For example *Mnemora*, even though it is fiction with many special effects, this does not stop it from telling the story of their people.”

“Yes” he agrees, “and you heard that it is a movie inserted into a cultural collective that do community theatre, music, poetry. They do everything there, they dance, play candombe. They contribute doing what they like the most” He points out that in this group many of the members know about digital animation and have made all those animations free. He also states that this would cost a lot of money if it were to be outsourced to commercial providers. He is excited to state that “*Mnemora* cost less than 1000 dollars, but all you see there is worth millions”. He proceeds with the same enthusiasm: “Another thing I find meaningful about this group (talking about the *Culebrón Timbal*) is that it is a militant group (talking about having a political/ideological position).” So, he emphasizes, “there are many theatre collectives, but what makes them singular is that they are involved in the reality of the country and on making a change.”

*I share with Hyra that I had spotted that and that I had recently interviewed *Mnemora*’s director Alexis Fusario who told me of their involvement in the drafting on the New Media Law or about their connection with the New Law project on community cultural production funding. A law that applied to receive 0.1% of the total national production funds for community cultural production. (more about this interview is taken up in Chapter 6).*

He adds that he values that impulse for social change through cinema a lot, whether it is in a community cinema or in a big budget production. “That intention is a must for me.”

He states that the festival promoted a cultural democratization movement by fostering training that would help the visiting exhibiting groups to acquire an idea about the national public audio-

visual funding and production system. The festival organizers encouraged the visitors, who came from distant and unconnected sides of the country, to take information, graphic material and other data to show to their own council and cultural secretaries what can be done with community cinema. “Unfortunately,” he protests, “the government sees culture as entertainment not as a vital source of reflection. *I think that government sees culture as a threat; there is no innocence in their politics of overlooking and underfunding culture, especially this kind of cultural production made from the grassroots*”.

Hyra continues by saying that “cinema made with neighbour tells about life without grandeur or pretensions; people do not feel traumatized after shooting a film, everything is smooth and natural around making the film”. This is why beyond the content “I choose also looking at the non-professional actors’ performance. Sometimes I see amateur actors that have nothing below professional ones” For this Festival’s curator the films unveil little worlds inserted into an apparently larger world, “and this forces me to change my perspective and reframe my criteria every year: sometimes a movie comes, and I do not know how to face it. Where does it fit; I ask myself?”

Then on that subject of arriving at some categories on the functionality of community cinema I elaborate this question: Apparently the fascination with participating in community cinema could be explained by its ability to access places that were previously a matter of privilege. I mean that having your own face in gigantic dimensions for all to see or to walk up onto a stage above everybody else is a form of political appropriation. Now in my preliminary observation I gather there are differences in the direction such appropriation is directed towards: there are those that use it to communicate a need, a situation of exclusion, or injustice suffered by a group, that is, it is utilized to communicate a collective concern. Then there are others that want to reach the screen just to appear visible as a form of naïve narcissism of the common people that never enjoyed attention, but they do not see that as a commitment to demonstrate a political agenda. So, I ask Hyra: if he considers community cinema as having a socially transformative mission. He answers that the “committed cinema” is the one that is not backed up by INCAA. He believes it is not true that technology democratizes culture: “Maybe it made it more accessible for the production and the expression of the organized minorities but when it is time to exhibit, they do not get anywhere: not the state owned nor private exhibitors want to know about this type of cinema”. *I reckon that is community cinema’s infrangible border. One in which neoliberalism has mighty power over; the rules of the market.*



Figure 87: Julio Midu, Hayrabet Alcalahan (RIP) and Fabio Junco in Cinema with Neighbors Festival. BS. AS.

I think it is time to find out what the mentors of this movement have to say about all of this...

E. Territory of Memory: What they say and what we really are, Interview with Fabio Junco and Julio Midú



Figure 88: Left: TVET (2018)). Interview with Fabio Junco and Julio Midú, 15th National Film Festival of CMWN, Saladillo, November 2018. Right Cultural Supplement, Clarin, 2004

The first thing Fabio Junco emphasized was that this is a cinema *made with* Neighbours and not a cinema *made by* Neighbours, “because we knew”, he says, “that the ones directing and producing and manipulating what occurred were us. We take what the neighbour, as actor improvising, has to give, but we decide if it stays or it doesn’t, we do not expose the neighbour’s work if the take does not have the quality of what we expect”.

Another clarification in which they are not always in agreement with common sense and it is worth discussing is on the very nature of the festival. Fabio says that even though in the beginning they created a festival to showcase other people’s work in the same line of theirs - expecting the festival would last just a few seasons because of a lack of productions- they

realized there were many people doing some independent audio-visual work that later came to be called community cinema, cinema with Neighbours or such. “So, even though by then we thought ‘yes let’s show this’ from a few years back we are seriously shifting” stated Fabio, “and we would not like to feel self-censored: if someone wants to go and do an industrial film; go and do it. If you only want to use Neighbours; go and do it. If they like to do it with Neighbours and actors as we like it; go and do it, yet, we have decided to shift toward the industry, so we acknowledge that there is no coincidence between the origins of the CMWN and our current interest”.

Julio agrees that nothing of what happened in CMWN and how people’s lives changed was something they sought after. “It started as a personal need of mine, the urge for doing something to keep me alive as I had no money to go to Buenos Aires to study cinema and as I was ‘buried’ in this town. It would be a lie if I say I started this movement thinking of changing the Neighbours’ lives”. “It was only my need, and all of a sudden I found a lot of Neighbours jumping into my crazy dream and they were longing to have someone organizing and leading, as they felt they did not have the means nor the knowledge to do so; I didn’t know either but I knew what I wanted to do”. Fabio continues, “Then the academic studies and journalism saw this as a social phenomenon, but this was just a crazy boy that convinced other crazy Neighbours to do this, and they put themselves at the service of this project”. Now, Julio adds “later, when we started, one could realize what this was actually provoking in others, so by the time we became aware of what we had done, we had already made 3 soap operas and 2 films, so overnight we found ourselves involved in a phenomenon not even we knew we had generated”. Fabio argues: “The idea of looking at our work as a social phenomenon was more the perspective of the researchers, journalists and the outsiders than ours”. And then Julio concludes: “For us it was more like: we want to do a movie and write, but we don’t have the resources, so we get the resources we do have here in the town, we make it and we screen it here in the local cinema, so the world took that as the guys that do this awesome social work”.

Fabio referred to journalism as “the makers of the idea” as for instance the cover of the magazine of *Clarín*, a very relevant publication in Argentina, which romanticized their activities by trying to set them as an example of social survival in the middle of an economic crisis. Julio says *they* started nothing of that sort, that as the Neighbours put themselves at the service of the projects, they made it their own and that is how *they* started changing their lives. Fabio contributes: “Cacho Sardinardi, for instance, worked all his life in Buenos Aires, he retired and came back to Saladillo to see his grandchildren grow up, to have a coffee every morning in the town square café and come back home to make dinner, and suddenly, he saw himself carried away by this, and this changed his life. His entire family started to take part and he changed

from being a neighbour doing parts as a neighbour to interpreting important roles; from a grandpa to recognized prized actor. That changed his life, and he acknowledges that." *Let's note now how symbolic this gets when we realize that the best male actor's prize in the CMWN National Film Festival is called "Cacho Sardinardi".* Julio reflects: "So in cases like this I can say that by doing and playing and enjoying with people I ended up changing some people's lives".

In *Autumn Green Leaves* it looks as if the Neighbours rose to the level of the professional actors, and not as if the actors would lower their performance. In what way do the neighbor actress who is not an actress and the professional actress differ? They seem to be at the same level to me.

"Who is and who is not an actor is what gets discussed frequently around CMWN, if you are performing a role in which you played someone else and I get convinced by it, then you are acting" says Julio. Then he adds, "In *The Good in Others* (2003) a boy played a role of a child whose father was an alcoholic and this was not how his life was". Fabio illustrates: "The role of the father in that film was played by a real-life cobbler and his character was created not to be the drunkard's stereotype and the character achieved verisimilitude without being a professional actor. That original actor was in the screening of *Autumn Green Leaves* (the remake) sitting in the back, hiding from public sight, because he is still very shy. That neighbour actor made his character without much analysis, more like by intuition, just playing a good man who gets drunk and when he does, he is no longer a good man. In addition, while the original actor was himself a shoemaker and a cobbler, the character was built around his everyday actions, so it was highly relevant. When the professional actor takes this character in the remake, he had to learn the cobbler's mechanical actions that would be believable for the public".

I noted that at the beginning *they* also were just Neighbours and that with practice and training *they* acquired the technical and rhetorical knowledge. What changed? I asked.

"Well", says Fabio, "we had made 15 movies when we entered the ENERC (the school of the INCAA) in Buenos Aires. In the school they would laugh at us." Julio says that he is always very proud of what he has done, not because he would not recognize that it was badly done, but because he did it, when he did not know better, and he did it all the same. And he adds, "So when we enter the school, I gave myself the goal of not losing that ingenuity of the creative act, the amusement of going from ignorance to discovery. I took upon myself not to let the school kill that fire". Fabio recalls how their ENERC's teacher thought CMWN was "a virus in

a process of expansion". *I think this is said because such a movement involves the appropriation of something that just a few lucky ones, those from elitist backgrounds, had had access to until then. Such selective access could also ensure a high aesthetic result and the most exquisite arguments coming from high literary backgrounds.* Fabio continues, "The Argentine Association of Actors also look at this with disgust, as if this was a festival of cinema 'without actors', they felt threatened until, after a while, they realized that this is something ultimately communitarian".

Julio says that they were always self-critical that they did not do better, not because they were playing "to the popular", but because they did not have the capabilities to do more. "We knew we had to go to the school, as we would have reached 20 films without overcoming recurrent mistakes. We realized something new needed to come, but we committed to keeping the passion for doing but with a technical improvement" added Julio. "Such professionalization moved us to industrial cinema and to collaboration with professional film and audio directors", Fabio contributes: "The movie (*Autumn Green Leaves*), for instance, acquired a body, a spatiality because of the delicate care placed on the sound and that has been done by people of Saladillo that started with CMWN and also went into professionalization".

I am now trying to recover some of the undeniable impact these producers had on the life of the town, as while they are in their own right to move away from community productions, they have ignited a fire that is worth keeping alive. "What are they going to do with that?" I enquire.

"We want to be on both flanks: the communitarian and the educational (which depends upon cooperative and public funds) and on the industrial side, (that is subsidized also by the state and private companies)" says Fabio. But they acknowledge the situation is hard on both sides as the politicians and the industrial business council do not see this activity as an industry that could push internal consumption and production. On that subject Fabio states: "The business council and the state are permanently asking culture to be self-sustainable and sometimes culture like health, is not there to be self-sustainable as both guarantee the wellbeing of the people.

Another circle of participation in CMWN we were not discussing, and it becomes necessary to talk about is the circle of collaborators that made catering, transport, scenography, prompting, locations, and general logistics possible and that is where the "with Neighbours" tag comes from, is there a position for the Neighbours"?

“Well, we have a developed relationship with them, they are not disposable or interchangeable as with other facilitator providers, we can disagree and then make up because we are close”, says Fabio. Julio says this took time, and it is due to the evolution and the trust developed along their journey. “Today the Neighbours trust we will do something serious out of the story they share. That we are not going to disrespect a story that could be someone’s personal story. They trust us because they can see our trajectory through the years. In fact, the story we saw last night (referring to *Autumn Green Leaves*) is the story of someone (*he does not refer to the script being based on Fabio’s life, but we know that already*) but it has been treated with a lot of respect and empathy.”

The catch here is that the example is personal; it is about themselves, I reckon. But what would happen if a neighbour brings you a script they wrote, as they saw the films here and want to make a film of an idea they have? I ask them.

“This has happened at times, but we do not do a personal appropriation of the characters, we distance ourselves to be able to build the universe the film requests and this is something we learnt in ‘the school’” (referring to ENERC).

Before we end the interview, I would like to make some questions about where is CMWN National Film Festival going, so I elaborate the following reflection: The CMWN National Film Festival congregates the filmmaking of many other authors, however the theatre is full only if a movie made in Saladillo as CMWN is shown. If that happens then they all go and they all support the opening of the new film with their presence. However, they are not present in the exhibition of other films that are also a product of community cinema from elsewhere, why do you think that happens?

Fabio is eloquent on this answer: “We should not force something that does not occur naturally. We make the effort to exhibit other things thinking maybe this could be useful for someone. But, in all honesty, the exhibition is a need of the film producers, the common neighbour does not have that need, that interest. They can even want to participate in one of our films and then want to go and see themselves on the screen and bring all their family along but these members of the family are not particularly interested in movies made with actors they do not know. The festival ends up turning into a conference-like experience that caters for the invited directors and actors, exhibiting for them to exchange experiences in conversations and formative activities, but hardly ever does this interest the people of the town”. Julio adds; “For the cinema directors that came to exhibit, their gain is on submitting the film to a jury formed by the industry’s big-name directors and producers. These ‘celebrities’, under these particular

circumstances (that of this festival), would give time and thought to their movies. So, an exhibitor filmmaker can think his/her movie made in a faraway town with no budget might get seen by Oscar directors Juan José Campanella, Luis Puenzo or a renowned director such as Lucrecia Martel and they will give them feedback”; that is a prize for the directors.

So, at the end, the film festival seems to be a formative instance for film groups, for filmmakers on a professionalization path, but is that the purpose of a festival that is portrayed as a community cinema film festival? I ask them.

There are some avenues the Foundation of Cinema Made with Neighbours would like to explore as community extensions, says Fabio: we dream, for instance, of building a museum of CMWN where we would try to support the community education of cinema at a childhood level. Our museum would be focused on teaching cinema as if it was history: the history of cinema, with old projectors and showing the backstage of filmmaking. It is to be visited by children in school excursions. That could be the seeding for new filmmakers. The kids would be involved in learning and making a short film.

They seem to be on a quest of demystification of the movement as a phenomenon, so I asked about it as being a therapy for the Neighbours.

Fabio tells me he is afraid of this journalistic note in which the idea they have is that CMWN is “occupational therapy made by crazy Neighbours”. They think there is something higher than that, “we are not a playground”. Julio corroborates that Neighbours have joined through the years for many different causes: maybe you are a doctor because your father wanted you to be and at 50 you say, I want to act and then get involved in acting. Then, you join CMWN as you do not have to leave your profession to become an actor, and you are just happy being the doctor and a vocational actor or a cinema technician: “In fact the mega sound studio we made in a professional sound truck for the last movie belongs to a Saladillo doctor”. “As you know”, Julio tells me, in the last movie the actors guild paid all actors for their participation, including the neighbour actors. Then one neighbour returned the money because he did not feel this is his job. The finding, in working with people that have no interest in the charm and prestige of professional cinema, is that they show no fear of being themselves, they show no aspirations to be other than themselves.

I try to go deeper and question the meaning of this in more socio-political terms: I am thinking about how the collective *Always laughing* (that is somehow a sprout of CMWN) seems to be neutral to any of the possible social claims. What I observe is that they carry the philosophy of

"I appear on the big screen therefore I am", never mind why, in what way or if this is good material. What is your perspective on this?

Fabio replies: It is like an orchestra played by Neighbours, a multiplicity of views, perspectives, styles and interests. An orchestra with Neighbours then is something that needs a conductor if it wants to achieve some coherence. It is hard to work as a democratic assembly in a creative process if you want to reach continuity. Our films were always directed, scripted, produced and guided by us; never a collective creation. We think having a head is important to protect the Neighbours. The neighbour went and put themselves at the mercy of your camera and do not know what they have done until the day they see themselves in the movie, and that is a great responsibility we have acquired with them. In our experience, the process of making a film, regardless of the meaning or its objectives means something for their lives and that is what we care for.

There are other senseless approaches if you want, adds Julio: the utilization of technical tools and techniques just because we have said instruments is also part of this lack of criterion without narrative proposals. The pest of the drone, the pest of the zoom, the pest of the travelling; they are viruses that expand, just like the cinema made with Neighbours (they laugh remembering their teacher's comment). Now on a serious note Fabio state: It is true that cinema made with Neighbours could be also used to propagate religious messages, for instance. It can be done also by appealing to community cooperation and collective effort in order to propagate a religious message, and no one could stop that, no one can put the standards and qualify it or set the values over what is a meaningful creation and what, and for what reason, another is not. "Community cinema is like a sling shot, it can be ornamental, it can shoot stones on the river and make beautiful ripples or it can be used to kill birds".

APPENDIX 2: Ethics Approval



Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology
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T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

18 October 2018

Vijay Devadas
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Vijay

Ethics Application:18/313 **Cinema made with neighbours: Amateur community cinema in neoliberal Argentina**

I wish to advise you that the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) has **approved** your ethics application at its meeting of 15 October 2018.

This approval is for three years, expiring 15 October 2021.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Review and edit the Information Sheet so that the copy that goes to participants contains information that is relevant to them only (not details of what the researcher is doing);
2. The committee suggests that it might be useful to produce a brief one-page observational Information Sheet to give to passers-by who might enquire about what is happening;
3. Please advise AUTEC of the exact storage location of the data and Consent Forms once the researcher returns to New Zealand.

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC before commencing your study.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>.
2. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form: <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>.
4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval for access for your research from another institution or organisation then you are responsible for obtaining it. If the research is undertaken outside New Zealand, you need to meet all locality legal and ethical obligations and requirements. You are reminded that it is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz

Yours sincerely,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Manager
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: carla.grosman@aut.ac.nz; Thomas Owen