Film festivals: history and theory of a European phenomenon that became a global network

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Introduction

Sites of Passage: Film Festivals, Europe and the Network of International Film Festivals
“...Film festivals are yearly highlights in the agenda of film lovers.” p. 16

Figure 2: Visitors select their program at the International Film Festival Rotterdam © 2006, ANP, Robin Utrecht.
Introduction

Sites of Passage: Film Festivals, Europe and the Network of International Film Festivals

0.1 Beginnings

I have not been raised in a cinephile environment, but shared an interest in film and television with my sister from an early age. My parents keep a series of photographs on slide in the family collection that is a wonderfully accurate representation of the comfortable viewing pleasures of our suburban childhood. It shows my mother, sister and me curled up on the couch in the living room. We are seven and nine and completely immersed in THE SOUND OF MUSIC (USA: Robert Wise, 1965). Our cheeks are flushed with excitement, eyes wide open from a mix of fascination and fatigue. We must have repeated this ritual over forty times, knowing the lyrics by heart and having developed a habit of fast-forwarding through the parts we, at the time, considered boring. The love for cinema did not diminish at the end of our childhood. On the contrary, as adolescents we would often persuade our father to drive us to the out-of-the-way video-store at the weekends. Our preference was to watch the tapes twice; within the family setting at night and, again, with just the two of us the next morning, before returning them to the store. Our shared interest evolved from browsing the video-store shelves with popular entertainment to a passion for discovering “other cinemas,” in the mid-1990s. We were the first in our family and circle of friends to visit art houses and the “better” cinema theatres. Gus van Sant’s MY OWN PRIVATE IDAHO (USA: 1991) and Jane Campion’s THE PIANO (Australia/New Zealand/France: 1993) come to mind as particular strong revelations during that period, leaving us yearning for more. This craving for “other” films was satisfied, above all, when we began visiting the international film festival in our hometown of Rotterdam.

My first memory of the festival is the feeling of being pleasantly overwhelmed by the many unknown cinematic forms, the intelligent, unconventional stories, and the exotic cultures of which the films allowed a glimpse. I remember watching my first Egyptian film at the festival. At the time I experienced it as an absolutely incomprehensible story filled with
ghosts, illogical superstition and characters with extravagant, unfamiliar acting styles. The incomprehension, however, went hand in hand with utter fascination for the discovery of an unknown universe. The festival proved that cinema was apparently unlimited in the ways it could be used to tell stories and convey emotions. I vividly remember the thrill of recognising personal taste preferences when attending the screening of Todd Haynes’ SAFE (UK/USA: 1995) at the festival of 1996. The alienation of LA housewife Carol White, her faltering immune system and search for a safe environment resonated in my loosening fascination for Hollywood dreams. It felt like these new preferences had been there all along, lingering in my subconscious and simply waiting for a first exposure to come to full bloom. It made the film festival into a magical place, a Labyrinth in which I could wander endlessly, stumbling across discovery after discovery. My experience is one shared by many cinephiles worldwide. Film festivals are yearly highlights in the agenda of film lovers. Only later did I realise that festivals are also frequented by film professionals and government officials with business agendas and political purposes, and that the critical commitment of programmers and press is necessary for any festival event to prosper. Despite their obvious importance in these various areas, film festivals have not often been chosen as a topic for academic research. Press coverage on film festivals is omnipresent, but fails to provide us with an encompassing cultural analysis of the phenomenon, both historically and for the contemporary situation, that transcends the individual festival editions. My initial interest in film festivals can be captured in two simple questions, in which the broad and basic character is a clear reflection of the lack of research on the topic: 1) what exactly is the film festival circuit? and 2) what function do film festivals have within the contemporary global media-economy, or in other words, why are they so relevant for the different parties involved? When I started my dissertation, the agenda of the “Cinema Europe/Media Europe” research project (launched by Thomas Elsaesser at the University of Amsterdam in 2001, see 0.3.1) added to my personal curiosity. The project’s concern with mapping European cinemas in the rapidly changing international situation helped me to focus my initial broad interest and formulate a concise objective and clear research questions for the dissertation that now lies before you.

0.1.1 Objective and Research Questions
The objective of this research is twofold - to investigate the historical development of the phenomenon of film festivals and to analyse the contemporary international film festival circuit as a “successful” cinema network (with particular attention to Europe)². It has been my contention that the study of film festivals can offer a new perspective on the intrinsically heterogeneous state of cinema in Europe by investigating film festivals as a global network with systematic tendencies. The hypothesis of this research is that film festivals are the nodal points in a successful cinema network that originated in Europe. If my expectations are verified and film festivals are the points where many of the issues defining contemporary European cinemas...
intersect, then the study of these events can become central to a new understanding of European cinema. In this project, the international film festival circuit will be approached as a cinema network that operates both with and against the hegemony of Hollywood (which can be regarded as another cinema network itself). For my argument it will be important to point out that the circuit was devised in Europe, but, at the same time, operates as an open network in which Hollywood and other entities take part. I will move away from traditional European film theory and regard, for example, dominant labels such as "art" and "auteur" not as intrinsic qualities of European cinema and film culture, but, instead, treat them as part of the strategic discourse of the international film festival circuit. In the agenda underlying this move – the attempt to make film festivals central to a new approach to European cinema – the influence of the "Cinema Europe/Media Europe" research project is most clearly visible.

Europe is the cradle of the film festival phenomenon. It was the specific European geopolitical situation in the period anticipating World War II and the immediate post-war era that brought together the necessary incentives to start a development, which would later expand to a global phenomenon. However, throughout the historical development of film festivals, the United States, and Hollywood in particular, has been highly influential. This makes it impossible to consider film festivals outside of the dynamics between the condition of cinema in Europe and in Hollywood. European cinemas have often been understood in relation to Hollywood. If I were to follow the frequently evoked dichotomies in my perspective on European film festivals, I would repeat a series of, what seem to be, at a first glance, relevant oppositions: between the art of European cinemas and the pop culture of Hollywood; between high culture in Europe and mass entertainment produced by Hollywood; state (subsidy) in Europe versus studio (box-office) in Hollywood; Europe’s fascination with pain and effort and Hollywood’s reliance on pleasure and thrills; the European auteur versus the Hollywood stars; between the festival hit for European cinemas and Hollywood blockbusters; discoveries for European films instead of the marketing for Hollywood movies; or, to bring it closest to my research topic, between the international film festival circuit for European films and the Oscar night for Hollywood movies. If these oppositions have any value it is not as description of the (combination of) national film industries in actual geographical locations, but as popular conceptions of different sets of film professional values. They, however, fail to do justice to the complexity of all forces at work. When one considers, for example, the history of the festival in Cannes, the fact remains that the initiative was taken by the French, British and Americans together, who joined forces against the Fascist dominance of the film festival in Venice. Moreover, the festival used the transatlantic connection, somewhat opportunistically, to put itself on the map as the most important cinema event of the year. Cannes has been eloquently described as "Hollywood’s licentious French mistress.” What this characterisation alludes to, is an effective translation of the Hollywood celebrity system by film
festivals. Hollywood stars, glamour, scandals and an enchanting location were main ingredients for Cannes' success in the 1950s and Hollywood's presence continued to influence Cannes in the years to follow. The example proves that cinema in Europe is, in fact, intertwined with Hollywood and part of a larger complexity of influences. For such broader understandings of European cinemas it has become necessary to develop approaches that can grasp the interplay of forces at work in the contemporary international, dynamic environment of cinema. Elsaesser suggested the presence of another binary Europe – Hollywood scheme that is "no longer based on the art versus commerce opposition, but structured around the terms we now associate with globalization: space/place, mobility/ubiquity, mapping/tracking etc., but where the pairs do not line up on a positive/negative scale, and instead represent different modalities, aggregate states of varying intensities." These are precisely the modalities that can be put to work in the network approach revolving around film festivals that I want to propose in this dissertation: the international film festival circuit allows for a mobile line of inquiry, moving from systems of state support to production deals and audience reception, from global patterns of circulation to Hollywood interference and local initiatives. When one follows the aforementioned lines on a virtual infrastructural map of the world of cinema, one finds that the point where they come together is the international film festival event. At festivals issues of nationality or political relations are negotiated, economic sustainability or profitability is realised, and new practices of cinephilia are initiated.

Film festivals, in other words, play a role in multiple areas. They accommodate culture and commerce, experimentation and entertainment, geopolitical interests and global funding. In order to analyse the network of film festivals, it is necessary to investigate all these different areas on which the festival events operate. In this research I distinguish four broad areas: geopolitics, business, and culture, which is subdivided into media/press on the one hand and audiences/cinephiles on the other. Consequently, four case studies are presented that revolve around a different area on which the network of film festivals operates while simultaneously addressing the modalities that are shared between them. In each of the case studies I will focus on a different interest group and specific film festival. Theoretically the case studies are not completely separate. Each area and interest group brings along specific theoretical emphasis, but themes will also reappear throughout the entire work and, thereby, relate to the different cases studies on a conceptual level. Chapter one on geopolitics will offer the opportunity to zoom in on the festival organisation. In the second chapter on business, the film professionals will be at the core of attention. Chapter three (culture) will take a closer look at the involvement of the media, while chapter four (culture) focuses on the experiences of the festival public and festival programming. Why then did I select Berlin, Cannes, Venice and Rotterdam as case studies? The first three have been selected for historic reasons. They are the world's first accredited ('A') film festivals that, moreover, have retained their nodal position in the festival circuit over the years. The international
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federation of film producers association, the FIAPF (which was founded in 1933) decided during the Berlin film festival of 1951 that the boom in national and regional film festivals had to be channelled to prevent festival (award) inflation. Cannes and Venice received immediate FIAPF accreditation. Berlin followed in 1956. Over the years the FIAPF system of classification was expanded to include more festivals and different categories. Today, there are eight other film festivals that are recognised under the original category of Berlin, Cannes and Venice. The FIAPF has accredited the following festivals as “competitive feature film festivals:” Mar Del Plata (Argentina, 1954), Shanghai (China, 1993), Moscow (Russia, 1959), Karlovy Vary (Czech Republic, 1946), Locarno (Switzerland, 1946), San Sebastian (Spain, 1953), Tokyo (Japan, 1985) and Cairo (Egypt, 1976). In addition, there are festivals accredited with the labels of “competitive specialised feature film festivals,” “non-competitive feature film festivals” and “documentary and short film festivals.” Because one part of my research objective is to identify key moments in the historical development of film festivals, it was important to include those festivals that have had a major influence on the phenomenon’s transitions from the very outset. The institutional embedding of this dissertation in the “Cinema Europe/Media Europe” research project of the University of Amsterdam, moreover, encouraged me to prolong the historically motivated focus on European film festivals for the entire project. Furthermore, the interest in the complex relation between European film festivals on the one hand and Hollywood on the other, led me to those European festivals with the most prominent Hollywood presence: Cannes and Berlin (with Venice recently moving more and more in a similar direction). The festival in Rotterdam was added to the selection as counterweight to the first three case studies on old and accredited festivals. Its investigation broadens the perspective on the international film festival circuit, because it brings up issues that are not relevant to the major “A” festival events (e.g. the tension between specialised programming and the need to attract a mass audience).

The project’s scope might be controversial to those who prefer to study micro-issues. However, when they consider this research more closely they will see that it combines an ontological objective – “to investigate the historical development of the phenomenon of film festivals and to analyse the contemporary international film festival circuit as a successful cinema network (with particular attention for Europe)” – with a clear four-part structure that zooms in on specific film festivals, interest groups and research questions. It has been my conviction that in the case of the overlooked and understudied phenomenon of film festivals, the specification of research questions could only emerge in the process of the research, when I would be more familiar with the interrelations within the network. Because there was little known about the functioning of film festivals at the moment that I began this project, it felt unnatural and counterproductive to make too specific research restrictions a priori and, instead, I started with a rough distinction between the different areas on which the film festival circuit operates
(geopolitics, business and culture). Once the conceptual idea of the network had proven to be constructive it became self-evident which elements were vital to the network of film festivals and which questions, therefore, should be studied in more detail in which of the individual case studies. Below, these research questions are specified.

Case study 1: Berlin
The first case study examines the historical development of film festivals, in particular the geopolitical interests that shaped the process. The goal is to identify and analyse key moments when the development of film festivals took decisive turns. Theoretically, the study aims to conceptualise the transformation of the film festival phenomenon. It reframes traditional (European) film theoretical notions such as “the nation” and “auteur” as discourse strategies that dominate in specific periods and may return in adjusted form in later stages of festival’s development. In addition, it explores how globalisation theories (Hardt and Negri 2001; Virilio 1997; Sassen 1991, 1996) can clarify the modalities that define the international film festival circuit of today. More specifically, I am interested in the intersections between macro- and micro-politics. How do global geopolitical strategies relate to the local spatial practices of contemporary festival organisations? The case study concentrates on the Berlin International Film Festival, also known as the Berlinale, because its foundation and development have been intertwined with Cold War politics.

Case study 2: Cannes
The second case study examines the festival as marketplace. The goal is to formulate a model for the international film festival circuit as an “alternative” cinema network. The research explores how existing studies after the Hollywood hegemony (e.g. Dale 1997; Ulff-Møller 2001; Wasser 2001; Wyatt 1994) and the state of European film industries (e.g. Finney 1996; Jäckel 2004; Kreimeier 1999; Nowell-Smith and Ricci 1998) can be reinterpreted to explain the rise and success of film festivals. The framework of this reinterpretation is based on the concept of the network, as elaborated in Latour’s Actor-Network Theory. The study pays special attention to the interconnections between Hollywood and the film festival system. The business perspective prompted me to concentrate the case study on the festival with the most influential market and highest economic impact: the Cannes Film Festival. I ask why Hollywood presence is indispensable to the film festival in Cannes and how “glamour and glitter” affect the business in “le Marché du Cinéma.”

Case study 3: Venice
The third case study examines the festival as media event. The goal is to analyse the value adding process that is performed in the media discourse on film festival editions. It shifts attention away from conventional distinctions between high and low culture to an assessment of the actual practices of selection and segregation that precede the production of reviews and reports.
The research combines participatory observation at the Venice Film Festival (also known as Mostra) with an in-depth analysis of festival reports written on the 2003 edition in European quality newspapers and a series of interviews with film critics and festival press staff. I use the concept of memory site (Nora 1989) to explain why the Mostra continues to attract media attention despite the continued popularisation of newspapers and consequent reduction in number of festivals that are covered. I am particularly interested in the spatial and temporal dimensions of the value-adding process and use these dimensions to address the question of how some films can travel the circuit and accumulate value, whereas others fail to transcend the local event. Theoretically, Bourdieu’s theory of “cultural capital” remains the canonical vantage point through which to conceptualise the value addition accomplished at festivals, among a set of other important references (e.g. Bono 2001, 1992, 1991; Castells 2002; Dayan 2000; Shrum 1996; and Van Gennep 1977 [1909]).

Case study 4: Rotterdam
The fourth case study examines festival programming and festival audiences. The goal is, on the one hand, to generate insights on the emergence of specialised and themed programming and to investigate the effects of the global spread, institutionalisation and popularisation of film festivals on such programming (Czach 2004; Stringer 2003b). On the other hand, the aim is also to relate these trends to new practices of cinephilia (De Valck, and Hagener 2005). The case study concentrates on the International Film Festival Rotterdam, because it is both an internationally acclaimed specialised festival (focusing on art, avant-garde and auteurs) and the world’s second largest audience festival. The success of Rotterdam beckons a further historical analysis of the emergence of specialised festivals, their contemporary position on the circuit, and the influence of subsidies and sponsorships. Why do festivals pursue growth – more films for more people? What happens to the interests of niche markets when such growth is realised? The research presents a shift from festival programmers in the 1970s, driven by cinephile passions and an ideology of political participation, to the festival director of the 1990s, who has become a professional cultural entrepreneur that manages the various constituencies of the festival network.

With this selection of four case studies I do not claim to cover all corners of the festival network. Although I do aim to map some of the regularities of film festivals and thereby make future festival analyses easier, my assessment of the international film festival circuit and its success as a network will be unable to capture all of the network’s ramifications and by definition remains partial. My selection of case studies presents a Western cross-section of the European film festival phenomenon that is balanced with discussions on Berlin’s relation to the East. My fieldwork, moreover, has also given me insight into Eastern and Southern festivals. Having visited international film festivals in Karlovy Vary, Istanbul and Thessaloniki as well as the European
Festival on Wheels in Bursa, I draw on a geographically diverse set of observations and experiences to reach the analyses and research results in this dissertation.

0.1.2 Academic and Social Relevance
The academic relevance of the research is threefold. Firstly, it responds to the lack of academic research conducted on the topic of film festivals. Until now there are few publications on film festivals that are the result of systematic, academic study. The most common type of festival publication recounts the history of one selected film festival. These publications are often realised in co-operation with the festival organisation – for example on the occasion of an anniversary – dedicated to an influential festival director and/or tend to focus on the glamour, scandals and stars (e.g. Bart 1997; Beauchamp & Béhar 1992; Billard 1997; Ethis 2001; Heijs & Westra 1996; Jacobson 1990, 2000; Roddolo 2003; Schröder 2000; Smith 1999). A second type of publication, less common, addresses a specific (often historical) question, such as on festivals and national identity (Czach 2004; Hofstede 2000a and 200b, Bono 1991; Fehrenbach 1995); festivals and Hollywood (Jungen 2005, Stringer 2003a and 2003b); or festivals and cinephilia (De Valck 2005; Kim 1998). Like the comprehensive histories, these studies tend to concentrate on one festival. Little work, on the other hand, has been done on the universality of the festival experience or the international film festival circuit as a series of related events. This research builds in particular on the few works that do try to make a more universal argument on international film festivals: Nichols (1994a and 1994b) investigates the effect of the film festival experience on the perception and interpretation of new cinemas; Dayan (2000) and Turan (2002) distinguish between the experiences of different groups of participants (e.g. directors, sales agents; audiences; journalists) and different festival agendas (business, geopolitics and aesthetics) respectively; Stringer (2001) analyses the international film festival circuit as part of the global space economy; Harbord (2002) also uses the spatialisation of network discourses to approach the festival phenomenon; and Elsaesser (2005) draws attention to various festival consistencies, such as their potential to add value and set agendas. By conducting four case studies as part of a larger analysis of the international film festival circuit, this research sets a first step towards understanding the festival circuit as a network. More specifically, the research introduces the socio-economic tradition of studying the economic effectiveness and marketing value of trade fairs (e.g. Holtfrerich 1999, Bello 1992; Kerin and Cron 1986; and Shust 1981) or the effects of cultural events on tourism, regional development and cultural communities to the discipline of media studies (e.g. Arnold 2000; Landry 1996, 2000; and Nurse 2002). The aim is to elevate the ubiquitous and important phenomenon of film festivals above the realms of journalism and popular history, to add a new (type of) object of study to the media studies research agenda and to inspire other scholars to pursue specific research questions that will support, modify or contradict the preliminary schemata proposed in this dissertation.
Secondly, by introducing new conceptual parameters to the study on film festivals, the research gives a new impulse to the discipline of media studies. In addition to building on the aforementioned publications on film festivals by media theorists, the research can be seen as running parallel to emerging traditions in sociology and contemporary anthropology. Nick Couldry, for example, has conducted groundbreaking empirical research on questions of media power, media space, the mediation of social life and the complexities of everyday taste and reflexivity (2003 and 2004, Couldry and McCarthy 2004). Various anthropologists have responded to the transformations of modern societies by suggesting new concepts and methods to study the fragmented social networks, in which people are ever more mobile. As Nigel Rapport outlines: “A growing body of literature emphasizes the global mobility of contemporary life: its synchronicity (Tambiah), compression (Paine), massification (Riesman), creolization (Hannerz), deterritorialization (Appadurai), inter-referencing (Clifford), hybridization (Bhabha). Here is a world no longer divided into a mosaic of cultural-territorial segments but conjoined by a complex flow of people, goods, money and information, including even the most isolated areas in a cosmopolitan framework of interaction.”

Marc Augé already indicated that such changes in our contemporaneous worlds (what he refers to as the “acceleration of history” and the “shrinking planet”) not only affect anthropology, studying historical place, but also history, investigating anthropological time. In this research I will use insights derived from various theories on social interaction to rethink media history and theory. I will do so not by adjusting the canonical study of “author” and “national cinema” to the demands of contemporary transnational film practice, for example by studying diasporic filmmakers or accented cinema (Naficy 2001), but by taking an unexplored angle: by investigating the film festival event, where complex configurations of spatial and temporal dimensions are essential in channelling flows in contemporary cinema cultures. More specifically, the aim of the “Cinema Europe/Media Europe” research project has been to bring perspectives from outside of the Humanities to bear on the already interdisciplinary field of film studies. Like its mother project, this research on film festivals continues to move away from the literary tradition, semiotics, structuralism and psychoanalysis and explores the usefulness of various network and system theories for the investigation of cinema in the era of globalisation (see 0.3.1 ‘Cinema Europe/Media Europe’). The mother project’s theoretical objective to create a new spatial paradigm for cinema studies fits the “spatial turn” in the Humanities (see e.g. Rennen and Verstraete 2005). This research does not engage with space and place in films (challenging textual analysis) but concentrates on the spatial and temporal dimensions of a specific environment in which films circulate. It shows how the international film festival circuit combines the local and the global, the city and the nation, and the space of the media with the place of the event in a network configuration that is complex and self-sustainable by offering a variety of film cultures (products and people alike) different ways to plug in. The research uses
spatio-temporal parameters to extend cultural analysis to a critical assessment that includes political and economic agendas. The four case studies conducted for the dissertation may, therefore, also serve as examples of "the spatial turn" in film studies.

Thirdly, the study contributes to a better understanding of how cinema culture functions in both a historical perspective and the contemporary culture economy by including concepts such as "attention," "spectacle" and "experience." Jonathan Crary has persuasively shown how "ideas about perception and attention were transformed in the late nineteenth century alongside the emergence of new technological forms of spectacle, display, projection, attraction, and recording."¹⁶ One of the consequences of these shifts, according to Crary, is that attention acquired a central position in modern subjectivity. Whereas previously perception was considered an unproblematic, immediate and a-temporal human capacity for sensing the "self-presence of the world," this notion was contested by the late nineteenth-century discourse that realised such self-presence was impossible due to physical and psychological restrictions. Technological progress and discourse together ushered in a period of far-reaching social reform. Institutional power started to control perception in order to create disciplinary, docile bodies (see Foucault, for example 2000, 1977 and 1970) while artists and bohemians experimented freely with subjective temporalities in their creative works. It is important to note that the spectacular culture that arose at the turn of the nineteenth century was not only based on new technological forms but also depended on the modern model of a fragmented world in which leisure time was separated from work hours and subjects negotiated between the external control and self-management of their free hour attention. As Walter Benjamin argued in his seminal essay on the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction, the transformations led to a new type of value; exhibition value was added to cult value.¹⁷ Photography and film, in particular, relied on the new exhibition value. In other words, their importance lay not in being, but in being perceived, to attract attention and solicit emotional and cognitive responses from the spectators. In this thesis I link the exhibition context of the cinema of attractions to the phenomenon of film festivals and argue that "spectacle" is important to hold (or discipline in Foucauldian terminology) both the audiences' and media's attention. From the perspective of perception, the growth of film festivals then can be explained by referring to the increasing importance of "experiences" in contemporary culture (see Pine and Gilmore 1999). Not simply the artwork itself, but more specifically its spectacular exhibition has become a commodified product in the culture economy. Festival visitors not only decide to devote their attention to watching a particular film, they also choose to experience that film as festival screening. This insight can be used to explain why certain films attract full theatres (and audiences' interest) at festivals whereas seats remain unfilled (and box office revenues disappoint) when the same films are released in the art house circuit. Most importantly, the focus on "attention," "spectacle" and
"experience" offers ways of framing institutional decisions and cinephile practices without being caught in high-low culture dichotomies.

In addition to its threefold academic relevance, the research has social relevance. Different interest groups benefit from studies that can enrich their insight in the phenomenon of film festivals and their role in diverse film cultures. Young film talent, for example, is predominantly trained in scriptwriting and directing. Aside from aesthetic training, however, it is of vital importance that these beginning film professionals acquire knowledge of the systems in which they have to operate. It is not enough to create an attractive artistic product. One also has to know how to sell an idea, use networking skills, and – if applicable – comply with the unwritten rules of the international film festival circuit. As a rule European filmmakers have to start outside of the studio system, in television, advertising or the festival circuit. Because the complexity of film festivals is hard to fathom in one festival visit, the broad and conceptual framework provided by this research may serve as addition (or introduction) to the short excursions to film festivals that are regularly organised by film schools and institutes, and on the job trainings that are already provided by several international film festivals (e.g. the Berlinale Talent Campus and Cannes' Cinéfondation). But more experienced festival-goers may also use the overview of festival history and logics to refresh or adjust their business relation to the international film festival circuit. I trust the passages on global competition, national interests and city marketing will be particularly relevant to policymakers, cultural institutions and subsidy bodies across levels (e.g. MEDIA, national institutions for film promotion, national/regional film funds and city councils). The analysis of the value-adding process may be relevant in the discussions on the popularisation of the media. On the one hand it subscribes to the observation that the media time and space devoted to in-depth critical reviews is slacking and being overtaken by the attention for stars, personal interest stories and background reports on festival experiences. On the other hand it shows the persistence of the role of quality newspapers in signalling trends, applying high aesthetic criteria and mediating "good taste." Finally, festival organisations can benefit from the insights on the competition between festivals and the demands of local (finance) partners to position their event on the festival circuit and national (local) culture agenda.

0.2 Historical Framework

The first part of the research objective of this thesis is to investigate the historical development of film festivals. A careful consideration of the history of the phenomenon of film festivals will contribute to an understanding of the contemporary international film festival circuit (of which the theoretical analysis is the second part of my research objective) as it places the success of contemporary festivals in historical perspective. It will be history that helps one understand why film festivals succeeded to develop into a successful
network whereas the cinematic Avant-garde, originating in roughly the same period and subjected to the same field of antagonistic forces, failed to do so. The historical foundation of the thesis is directly laid out in the first case study on the Berlinale. In chapter one I outline the key moments when the development of film festivals took decisive turns. The result is a distinction between three main phases. The first phase runs from the establishment of the first reoccurring film festival in Venice in 1932 until 1968, when upheavals disrupt the festivals in Cannes and Venice, or, more precisely, the early 1970s, when these upheavals are followed by a reorganisation of the initial festival format (which comprised film festivals as showcases of national cinemas). The second phase is characterised by independently organised festivals that operate both as protectors of the cinematic art and as facilitators of the film industries. This phase ends in the 1980s when the global spread of film festivals and the creation of the international film festival circuit ushers in a third period, during which the festival phenomenon is sweepingly professionalised and institutionalised. Throughout the chapters that follow, the three-tiered transformation of the film festival phenomenon will serve as guide to elaborate on the historical position of film festivals in the larger (cultural, socio-economic and political) context and to deepen the knowledge of specific cases and periods. The themes that reoccur in this historical elaboration and deepening are politics; the condition of European film industries; the European film industries vis-à-vis Hollywood; New Hollywood; the Avant-garde; video; digitisation; and city history (in particular city marketing and tourism). In this introduction to the historical component of the case studies, I will first clarify my historiographical position, in particular in relation to the New Film Historicism. Then I will address an issue that is particularly relevant to the film-historical paradigm at large; namely, the question mentioned at the beginning of the paragraph: why the (European) pre-war film Avant-garde failed and film festivals succeeded to survive as trans-national film network. I will investigate the position that film festivals occupy between Hollywood and the Avant-garde before World War II and, in the final section, discuss the influence of post-war Avant-garde, especially with regard to the emergence of a new type of programming, partly based on the avant-garde ideology, at (specialised) film festivals.

0.2.1 Film Festivals as New Object of Historical Research
Given the lack of a tradition of academic research on the topic of film festivals, it is not surprising that the small number of works that have been published date without exception from the 1990s and after. That film festivals have been the blind spot of film historical research for such a long time highlights the classical preoccupation of film historians with filmic texts. Until the 1980s, film history was conducted as a collection of facts, as a teleological account of new technological inventions and daring entrepreneurs, and as the creation of a canon of great masters and masterpieces. The New Film Historicism and its leading film historians (among whom Richard Allen, Douglas Gomery, Thomas Elsaesser, Tom Gunning, Noël Burch, Kristin Thompson, Janet
Staiger and Charles Musser) introduced theory to the historical practice.\textsuperscript{18} They, moreover, shifted the attention away from the filmic texts and their relation to the novel and theatre plays, to the films’ intertext and context. Whereas film festivals were unlikely objects of historical research for traditional film studies because of the reliance on intrinsic filmic evidence in the 1970s, this incompatibility was cancelled in the 1980s by the growing interest in socio-economic, political and cultural factors that was raised with New Film History. It is interesting to note, however, that film festivals remained understudied until the late 1990s. Much of the early New Historical research concentrated on early cinema and aimed to frame its deviating film form, while also including the specific circumstances of early film viewing, production and distribution practices. If early cinema was the preferred research object, perhaps because the chronologically clear-cut corpus of early cinema films made the transition between traditional film historians (focusing on films) and the new generation (extending that interest to intertext and context) an easy one, then the new research areas that were opened up simultaneously provided perspectives that would become relevant to the study of film festivals at a later stage. As Elsaesser argued: “It [the emergence of new research areas] showed, for instance, that the study of the exhibition context could be the key to answering questions about production, as well as the development of film form...The result was a revision of what counts as evidence in film history.”\textsuperscript{19} This insight was supported with studies after film viewings at fairs and carnivals as well as chronicles on early stationary cinema theatres. The early recognition of the importance of exhibition sites oddly enough did not lead directly to the investigation of that other major deviating exhibition site, film festivals, along the lines of the New Film History. Instead, much of the early work on film festivals ignored the developments in film history and showed traditional tendencies, such as the emphasis on great achievements and discoveries. Two cases in point are publications that followed in the wake of Cannes’s fiftieth anniversary, \textit{D'Or et de Palmes: Le Festival de Cannes} (Billard 1997) and \textit{Cannes, Cris et Chuchotements} (Pascal 1997). This persistent reliance on the tradition of great masters and masterpieces is all the more surprising because the temporary structure of film festivals, in fact, resembles the pre-distribution area of the early cinema (also see chapter two). Just like the exhibition context of the cinema of attractions, film festivals are temporary events of short duration, where films are shown in an atmosphere of heightened expectation and festivity. The creation of the international film festival circuit has strengthened the resemblance to the early cinema context even further as many films travel from festival to festival in anticipation of (or preparation for) access to distribution in permanent cinema theatres. If the study of the exhibition context of early cinema could generate knowledge on film aesthetics as well as the larger context of the cinema, would it then not be likely that equally revealing insights on historical issues such as the “auteur” and “art cinema” could be found through the study of the most prominent alternative exhibition context for film: the international film festival?
Taking film festivals as a new object for historical research is not without its difficulties. Film festivals are transient events of which the intensity and activity is only partly represented in festival catalogues, newspaper reports and media coverage. Like research after early cinema, the study of film festivalsbeckons a careful reconsideration of what counts as historical evidence. Wolfgang Jacobson’s excellent and detailed history of the International Film Festival Berlin is a model example of conducting historical research for the purpose of festival chronicles (Jacobson 2000). He draws from a variety of historical documents, correspondences, letters, festival publications and speeches which are kept in the festival archive in Berlin and supplements the evidence found here with material taken from the Federal Archive in Berlin. Many of the key documents are photocopied and inserted as figures to enable the reader to study the texts in full. The result is a complete history, which is orderly structured as a collection of annals with ample dates, numbers, names, prizes, decisions, highlights and background information. In addition, filmmakers and festival directors were invited to contribute to the project and entrust their memories to paper. These accounts prove to be rich sources of personal experiences and anecdotes that nonetheless are powerful means to put the festival into historical perspective. The prerequisite for “thick” historical description is an extensive, well-kept and accessible festival archive that may be complemented by information derived from oral history. When such an “ideal” archive is missing, the film historian is forced to explore other forms of historiography. The example of the Internationales Forum des Jungen Films that lost precious parts of its archive in a fire, shows that this can have refreshing results. Nicolaus Schröder edited a historical account (2000) in which interviews are alternated with historical newspaper and catalogue clippings, and a selection of contributions by filmmakers. The result is a multi-vocal reflection on the importance of the festival for independent cinema. The publication, moreover, displays a level of self-reflexivity that is rarely reached in festival chronicles and that transcends its surface of historical evidence compilation. This self-reflexivity is pointedly captured in the title “Between Barricade and Ivory Tower” (Zwischen Barrikade und Elfenbeinturm, see chapter one, paragraph 1.4.2). In its combination of historical evidence and analytical understanding, both Jacobsen’ and Schröder’s work have been key examples that guided me in devising a historiographical model in which film festivals are the main object of research. My model relies on historical evidence (both collected from primary sources and secondary literature, see paragraph 0.4 on methodology) that is presented with an analytical understanding of its intertext and context, the cultural implications as well as socio-economic or political conditions.

0.2.2 Film Festivals and the Pre-war Avant-garde
After some years of experimentation with the film festival format the “first film festival” was established in Venice in 1932. The event stood out from its predecessors because it was (indeed) the first festival to be organised yearly (until 1934 biannually). Other elements that would become characteristic of
the festival phenomenon of the early period were also already in place in Venice; aside from the allocation of fixed annual calendar dates, the festival was presented as an international and glamorous event attended by an elite audience of film professionals and beau monde. The year 1932 marks the beginning of a phenomenon that would develop into the successful network of international film festivals. 1932 also delineates the end of the transition period from silent to sound film. Sound-on-disc technologies had been surpassed by the superior synchronicity of sound-on-film and cinema theatres could be equipped with a standard sound installation. The period between the successful commercial introduction of sound film on October 6th 1927 with Warner's screening of The Jazz Singer (US: Alan Crosland 1927) and the conversion to sound (completed in 1932) can be characterised as a period of crisis. The crisis was ubiquitous due to both the aesthetic dilemmas posed by the addition of a separate sensual mode of perception and the high costs that were involved in wiring production facilities and cinema theatres, but it was felt particularly powerfully in Europe, where the introduction of the spoken word and its consequent extolment as main storytelling device introduced the problem of language. Whereas the intertitles of before could easily be substituted by different language versions, complete soundtracks proved more difficult to adapt. Multilinguals (films recorded in different language versions) soon gave way to a practice of dubbing and subtitling. The crisis that was the result of the coming of sound to cinema has often been used to explain the downfall of the European Avant-garde. In the 1920s, the European film Avant-garde flourished as an international network of creative individuals that challenged the aesthetics of the cinematic medium while engaging in subversive political discourse and activism (roughly corresponding with the Communist agenda). The problem of language in European film production, distribution and exhibition – resulting from the introduction of sound – was intensified by the nationalist feelings that were the lingering remnants of World War I and a forerunner to World War II. Nationalism threatened the adroitness of the Avant-garde cosmopolitan networks. Due to the utopian nature of its political underpinning that did not allow for anything but a rejection of the petty national concerns of the powers that be, the Avant-garde was unable to respond adequately to the crisis. The Venetian film festival archetype, on the other hand, did provide an answer that would be able to hold up in the situation of crisis. The film festival combined the “international” with the “national” by inviting nations to participate in an international showcase where they could present a selection of the finest films of that year. The festival was created as a new space where language was not an obstacle for export and exhibition, but considered an unproblematic “given” in the cultural competition between film producing nations. As showcase for national cinemas, film sound in fact contributed to the objective of cultural distinction at the festivals. By working explicitly with the nationalist sentiments that divided European nations at the time and simultaneously addressing the necessary international dimension of the film industry, the international film festival instantly became a factor to
take into account. A second characteristic that upheld the festival phenomenon against antagonistic forces was its relation to Hollywood, defined by its double bind. On the one hand, Hollywood was embraced. The MPPDA (Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America), Hollywood's trade organisation, was accepted as America's national representative among the various National Film Funds of the other participating countries, although its main objective was the protection of economic interest rather than national film promotion. Moreover, Hollywood stars were invited to the events and the glamour, scandals and paparazzi that followed in the wake of their visits became an integral part of the festival formula. On the other hand, Hollywood was subtly opposed. The film festival worked with a logic that fundamentally differed from the economically-dominated Hollywood agenda. Films were not treated as mass-produced commodities, but as national accomplishments; as conveyors of cultural identity; as art and as unique artisan creations. Whereas the Avant-garde had a clear subversive ideology, against the commercial film system and Hollywood hegemony and for a new utopian order with matching alternative aesthetics, the film festivals did not show one face. They co-operated with Hollywood's commercial film system, while simultaneously re-purposing its merits for the more ideologically-coloured purpose of cultural enlightenment, in which respect the film festival phenomenon is again more similar to the European film Avant-garde. Both the Avant-garde and the phenomenon of the international film festival have roots in the European tradition of political hierarchies (royal and ecclesial rule), social class distinctions and cultural taste elites. This tradition implies influence of a certain normative position, an intellectually motivated vision of what has value (not only economic, but also political, social or cultural) and what, therefore, ought to be realised and maintained irrespective of economic gain.

The success of the international film festival might be best explained in terms of this peculiar position, sandwiched between the diametrically-opposed antagonists Hollywood and the Avant-garde. The festival has one foot planted in the model of avant-garde artisanship, while the other strides forwards on the beat of market demands within the culture economy. Another factor for the Avant-garde failure versus film festivals' success can be found in the differences in temporal orientation. For the European film Avant-garde, the realisation of ideological ideals has been mainly projected into the future. As Malte Hagener argues: "By anticipating a future order, by presenting a utopian promise the avant-garde also robs itself of its own place in that future society because the avant-garde has to exceed all limits of the present society in order to make the future come true." The incapability of the pre-war European film Avant-garde to respond to the crisis of the time is closely related to its dogmatic rejection of the present and utopian orientation towards the future, where true salvation is to be realised. The international film festival, on the other hand, balances between an acute awareness of the present and a preoccupation with the past. Like Hollywood, which is most clearly focused on the demands of that present in order to sustain its lucrative
position in the film world, the international film festivals have been capable of adapting themselves to transformations, such as the technological developments (e.g. film sound, video and digitisation) and globalisation. Yet a nostalgic longing remains in Europe. The European film festivals hark back to a time before the Hollywood hegemony when the arts were supported by enlightened elites. This nostalgia is reflected in the selections of old European spas and beach resorts to found the first festivals (e.g. the Venetian Lido, Cannes, Karlovy Vary - see chapter three for a discussion on the festival as memory site) and would result in a reworking of the tradition of artisan craftsmanship to fit twentieth century demands: the genius director aka the creative author. In the next section I discuss what transformations took place in the relation between film festivals and the cinematic Avant-garde in the post-war period.

0.2.3 Film Festivals and the Post-war Avant-garde
The national and trans-national networks of the pre-war cinema Avant-garde contributed to the emergence of the phenomenon of film festivals. The film clubs and societies that had been founded by avant-garde intellectuals and artists in Paris, London, Berlin, Amsterdam and other European cities offered non-commercial exhibition opportunities for all kinds of “artistic” films from roughly 1919 onwards. The screenings were organised in order to nurture an intellectual vanguard and more or less directly interfere in the film industry business by promoting alternative products and places of exhibition. Likewise, an intellectual discourse countered trade press writings in specialist magazines such as the Swiss-based Close-up, the English Film Art, American Experimental film, Dutch Filmliga, German Film und Volk and French Le Film and Le Journal de ciné-club. The pre-war film Avant-garde also gathered at specialised festivals and conferences. These events could have “closed” formats, such as the famous gatherings of independent filmmakers in La Sarraz (1929) and Lausanne (1930), or be “open” like the “Film und Photo” Exhibition in Stuttgart in 1929. If the energising spirit of the 1920s and early 1930s European film Avant-garde helped to give rise to film festivals, the relationship was turned around after World War II. Instead of the ciné-clubs and film societies, film festivals flourished. Avant-garde films, experimental movies and political cinema would re-emerge at these events as “specialised” and “themed” programming, in particular from the late 1960s onwards. After the war, New York replaced Paris as the Avant-garde capital. The American art scene witnessed the rise of Abstract Expressionism in painting as well as new waves of experimental filmmaking in the early 1940s. A.L. Rees comments on the shift as follows: “Many currents ran together to produce this extraordinary period. They comprise the wartime presence of modernist writers and artists from Europe, a new self-confidence, a need to emerge from Europe’s shadow (once European modernism had been absorbed into the bloodstream), an economic boom, the availability of equipment and cameras, a generation of artists prepared by the public funding and commissioning of the Roosevelt years, and of course the model
Film festivals

(or counter-model) of American Hollywood cinema as the leading homegrown industrial and cultural industry.\textsuperscript{28} The American underground film movement of the 1950s and booming 1960s challenged Hollywood’s hegemony and commercialisation by foregrounding social, non-interventionist documentaries and spontaneous, “rough” films, such as John Cassavetes’s \textit{Shadows} (US: 1957). Like the members of the pre-war film societies, the individuals in the underground film movement deployed a range of activities to support the circulation of avant-garde films. Amos Vogel founded “Cinema 16” (screenings between 1947 and 1963), Maya Deren led the “creative film” circle, and John Mekas founded the magazine \textit{Film Culture} (later to be devoted to experimental film) in 1955 and the Mekas’s Film Makers’ Cooperative (Co-op), a distribution outlet and archive for avant-garde films.\textsuperscript{29} The Co-op was founded in reaction to Vogel’s rejection to screen Stan Brakhage’ \textit{Anticipation of the Night} (US: 1961) at Cinema 16. The dispute centred on the issue of selection and would bring forth two opposing, but equally influential institutions: the Co-op, where filmmakers were free to deposit their works, on the one hand, and, on the other, the New York Film Festival – founded in 1963 by Vogel and Richard Roud – whose main task would revolve around selection and programming. In the 1970s the efforts of the Co-op to create an alternative circuit for avant-garde film were complemented by screenings by Anthology Film Archive (with key figures like Mekas, P. Adams Sitney, Brakhage and Peter Kubelka), Millenium Film Workshop and Film Forum as well as the acceptance of the Avant-garde in museums such as the Whitney and the MoMA (which had already begun collecting and exhibiting films in 1935).\textsuperscript{30} Moreover, the political climate of the anti-Vietnam demonstrations and the film festival upheavals in Europe (see chapter one) had led to a new phase in which more attention would be given to the political engagement and formal experimentation of avant-garde cinema within the context of the international film festival circuit.

Between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s cinema had become entangled in critical political projects. It supported the anti-colonial struggles and revolutions in so-called Third World countries, anti-communist attempts at liberalisation in Central and Eastern Europe, and left wing movements in the West and Japan. “Radical politics entered daily life. As was often said, the ‘personal’ had become ‘political,’” Bordwell summarises the changes.\textsuperscript{31} Film festivals were effective means within the political struggle to make underrepresented cinemas visible and Third World filmmakers heard. In Northern Africa the biennial Carthage Film Festival (Tunisia) was founded as early as 1966. The Pan African Film and Television Festival, FESPACO, in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) followed in 1969. In addition, from the late 1960s onwards, Third World filmmakers and their critical political cinema would slowly find representation in the West and receive their first critical praise at the established European festivals. Consider, for example Ousmane Sembene, a Senegalese novelist and communist who learnt the filmmaking trade in Moscow and received the Jean Vigo award for \textit{La Noire de...} (France/Senegal: 1966) at the Cannes Film Festival in 1967.\textsuperscript{32} At the same time,
moreover, filmmakers and (new) film festivals in the West were drawn to left-wing political agendas with intense conviction and dedication. Let me briefly consider Jean-Luc Godard and the Pesaro Film Festival as emblematic figure and event for the developments towards political cinema within the West. Godard’s “political period” began in the years running up to the May 1968 riots in Paris. His intention was not merely to make “political films” but “to make films politically.” The contours of his political agenda were already visible before 1968, for example in his criticism of capitalism and Western civilisation in Masculin-Feminin (France/Sweden: 1966), 2 ou 3 Choses Que Je Sais D’Elle (France: 1967), La Chinoise (France: 1967) and Weekend (Italy/France: 1967). Godard’s left-wing ideas culminated in activist interventions in the Spring of 1968: as a leading figure of the “Nouvelle Vague” movement he heralded the protests against the dismissal of Cinématheque director Henri Langlois and the subsequent disruption of the Cannes Film Festival. Godard, among others, demanded the reformation of the festival that, in his opinion, had become a straw man in the hands of the commercial film industry. They travelled to the festival to claim solidarity with the labour strikers and the premature closure of the festival (see chapter one). After the Cannes upheaval, Godard broke with the less politically-committed Nouvelle Vague filmmakers and entered a period of what Robert Low described as “overtly political and revolutionary cinema, intensely radical and rebellious in structure and intention, motivated by Maoist thought, anti-consumerism and anti-Vietnam.” In this period (1969 to 1974) Godard collaborated with Jean-Pierre Gorin, calling themselves, in an obvious flirtation with Avant-garde tradition, the Dziga Vertov Group.

The premature closure of the 1968 Cannes festival edition also influenced the position of the Pesaro Film Festival. Since its inception in 1965 the Pesaro Film Festival had been the major platform for “both feature and documentary films of an experimental and invariably political nature” and “an alternative to the ‘First-world,’ established cinema of Hollywood and Western Europe.” The festival showed “uncompromising solidarity with class struggles all over the world” and introduced the revolutionary New Latin American Cinema to Europe. Besides, it developed a radically new festival format with ample opportunity for discussion, lengthy publications and a productive combination of cinephile, political-activist and academic input in both (Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Milos Forman, Christian Metz, and Pier Paolo Pasolini were among the contributors to the famous Pesaro debates). Thanks to its alternative structure the festival was able to respond swiftly to the Cannes crisis that affected festivals world-wide; Pesaro immediately dedicated an edition to “Cinema and Politics” in 1969. As Don Ranvaud argued, the festival’s model of cultural intervention was highly influential in “the manner with which other festivals in Italy (with Venice above all others) have gradually incorporated what perhaps may be termed a ‘Pesaro factor’ in their programmes.” Pesaro led the way in a new type of programming. Festival directors and programmers started to select films thematically instead of nationally from the late 1960s onwards. Festival
editions and sections became mechanisms for intervention, institutionalised ways to put issues on the international cultural agenda and, after the worldwide spread of the festival phenomenon, signboards for competing festival images. With “specialised” and “themed” programming, festivals could participate in world politics and cinema culture (for instance by contributing to debates on New Latin American cinema and facilitating the canonisation of experimental Feminist cinema). In this way, part of the traditional Avant-garde project was taken in by the film festival network after World War II.

If the success of the international film festivals, both before and after World War II, can be explained by referring to the complex negotiation of antagonistic forces that is operational, then the question that needs to be addressed next is how film festivals can be conceptualised in this forcefield of contradictions. A major shift in conceptual theory is necessary because the old notions of “auteur” and “nation” seem insufficient in construing the transformations. Frameworks based on either personality or ideology remain encapsulated within the classic sociological distinction between human agency and structure, while film festivals, on the other hand, seem to thrive thanks to a variety of relations. I will therefore turn to network and system theories by means of which hybrid connections can be described. This approach allows for an inclusion of Hollywood and the Avant-garde as antagonistic and constitutive influences on the development of the international film festival circuit. In the next subchapter I will elaborate on my use of the concept of the network and show how, in particular, Bruno Latour and Actor-Network Theory provide insights that help me formulate the required theoretical framework to answer my research questions.

0.3 Theoretical Framework

Network and system theories have gained in popularity since the 1990s. The development of globalisation in general and the boom in information and communication technologies in particular have stimulated the interest in the investigation of societies, subjects and objects and their global interrelation. The widespread use of the Internet and the success of movies like THE MATRIX (USA: Wakowski brothers, 1999) in the 1990s have, moreover, familiarised the larger public with the network metaphor. The danger of this, as Bruno Latour argues, is that “[n]ow that the World Wide Web exists, everyone believes they understand what a network is. While twenty years ago there was still some freshness in the term as a critical tool against notions as diverse as institution, society, nation-state and, more generally, any flat surface, it has lost any cutting edge and is now the pet notion of all those who want to modernize modernization. 'Down with rigid institutions,' they say, 'long live flexible networks.'”

Latour’s lamentation on the alleged inflation of the increasingly popular notion of the network should not, of course, keep anyone from exploring the rich theoretical insights that were developed under its wing. In the post-structuralist paradigm, various critical perspectives on the modern worldview were formulated; instead of relying on transcendental
(hierarchical) structures and clear (dichotomic) distinctions, attention was re-directed towards the immanence of ramifications and hybridity of relations; instead of fixating on human agency and logocentricism, the presence of non-human models and post-rational flows of exchange was explored; instead of describing the stability and unity of things, theorists began to analyse processes of transformation and translation. Aside from the current popular connotation with the Word Wide Web, the notion of the network is also representative for these post-structuralist paradigm shifts and will be applied as such in this study.

The popularity of the term does emphasise the need to clarify and substantiate how one uses it. In this subchapter on the theoretical framework of the thesis, I will explicate the theoretical tradition that I am building on and specify my conceptual application of “network” and “system.” From the various network and system theories that I allude to the work of Bruno Latour (1947) has been most influential in my thinking on circuits, networks and systems. His rejection of any conceptual distinction between human and non-human actors has helped me to understand and relate the various entities that are present at film festivals; e.g. film professionals as well as cinema theatres, stars and cinephiles as well as trade magazines and newspaper reports. Following Latour, I understand the festival network as being dependent on a variety and varied set of relations between such entities. This perspective is very productive when one is – as I am – interested in the successful transformations of film festivals and their survival as a network (compared to the dispersal of the pre-war network of the European film Avant-garde), because it allows for a non-hierarchical study of the different agendas that are pursued, acted out and undermined by film festival events. I will start the subchapter by placing my research in the context of the “Cinema Europe/Media Europe” research project. From within this broader theoretical framework, which elaborates on the academic agenda underlying my project, I zoom in on my application of Latourian thinking, Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and some key studies on film festivals. I also introduce other theorists where ANT falls short in understanding film festivals. In the third section, in particular, I return to well-known anthropological and sociological concepts to complete my conceptual approach to the film festival network, and in this context, coin the notion of “sites of passage.” Finally, I will discuss the position of the city in my theoretical framework and elaborate on my attention for spatial and temporal dimensions.

0.3.1 Cinema Europe/Media Europe

The “Cinema Europe/Media Europe” research project was launched by Elsaesser as impetus for the relatively young Department of Media Studies at the University of Amsterdam and received full funding from the university’s governing body. Elsaesser has contributed to the debates on European cinema since the late 1960s. He is, in particular, renowned for his books and articles on German Cinema – such as the prize-winning New German Cinema: A History (1989) – and can be seen as one of the leading theorists on the intricate
relationship between European cinema and Hollywood – e.g. European Cinema: Face with Hollywood (2005). The “Cinema Europe/Media Europe” project is not only a continuation of the expertise and interest of its initiator, but also an attempt to crystallise out a new approach to European cinema. The initiative takes its cue from the sensed inadequacies of the notions of “nation” and “auteur” to describe European cinema. These notions have spurred studies on “national cinema” that concentrated on the cinematic texts produced in a territory and “auteur-cinema” in which the text is analysed as the creation of an artist with unique vision. In addition, the project’s aim is to do away with ideological agendas, such as the high/low culture distinction that opposes European cinemas as “art cinema” to Hollywood as “entertainment,” and beware of paying lip service to the economic interests at stake, in particular cultural protectionism of the European film industries. In the programme description, Elsaesser concludes: “What is needed is a broader understanding of the forces at work, their interplay in a rapidly changing international situation, in which the different audio-visual media, their makers, but also their respective national audiences undergo pressures of economic and technological convergence (‘globalisation’, ‘digitisation’), at the same time as they find themselves interpreted in a newly differentiating cultural field, between public spectacle and home-entertainment, international film festival and museum exhibition, videotheque and gallery installation.”

The “Cinema Europe/Media Europe” research project has studied the forces at work by means of individual case studies and joint conceptualisations for which theories and methodologies are brought to bear on the cinema that are more adapt at dealing with crucial contemporary factors such as “globalisation and [the] European expansion, digitisation and the move to knowledge societies, [and] trans-national networks of funding and financing” than notions like the “national” and “auteur” or distinctions such as the one between high and low culture. The new conceptual model, which has been jointly developed by the members of the research project over the course of four years with their separate research drafts as moments of verification, indicates a spatial move away from geopolitics and “the nation” towards the global economy and “the city,” and an ideological shift away from agendas that dichotomise artistic categorisations – subjecting them to hierarchical value judgements – toward concerns with the interconnections between the multiplicity of technologies, institutions and markets in the contemporary global media culture – paying attention to difference and practices of translation. This perspective enables the project to shed new light on previous issues such as new waves and the author by reframing them within their economic-cultural context rather than deploying them as tropes for the cultural analysis of films as singular creations as expressive of national/artistic essences.

The theoretical backbone of the project moves in two directions: network and system theories on the one hand, and, on the other, political theories. The network theorists discussed in the context of the “Cinema
Europe/Media Europe” project include Howard Becker (1928), Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), Manuel Castells (1942), Bruno Latour (1947), Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and Felix Guattari (1930-1992), Ulf Hannerz (1942), and Niklas Luhmann (1927-1998). More specifically, the project aimed at assessing the value of their broader sociological, anthropological and philosophical perspectives on networks for media theory, in particular cinema. Could network theory explain successes and failures in the cinema? Why, for example, did the cinematic Avant-garde fail to become a system, both before and after World War II? And why did film festivals succeed? If we apply Luhmann, then a closer historical investigation of the channels and codes will point to a central role for festival awards in their success story. Prizes are a highly effective protocol to include and exclude people and artefacts from the system that has been lacking in the Avant-garde; they contribute to the preservation of the system (what Luhmann calls “auto-poiesis”). If we follow Castells’ concern with the technological revolution, then our attention shifts from the information – which is merely raw material in the Castellian network society – to an infrastructural, spatial analysis of the global economy. The global economy is seen as an abstract system, which is also always linked to concrete places (what Castells calls “space of place”). Unlike the Avant-garde film festivals, which have been very successful in sustaining their links with concrete places by means of combining cultural agendas with tourism and city marketing. The network theories point to the usefulness of what Deleuze called a “grass” model instead of a “tree” model for mapping the contemporary world of cinema and media. Globalisation, digitisation and trans-national networks have led to a multitude of heterogeneous systems that do not operate completely independent from forces of territorialisation, but nonetheless thrive to such extent, by virtue of their instability and hybridity, that these forces have to be included in conceptualisations. The various theorists offer alternatives for the Modernist opposition between agency and structure, but disagree on the extent to which the Postmodernist preoccupation with difference and fragmentation resists the academic labour of producing metaphysical theories. Emblematic is the use of the concept of the “black box.” For Luhmann the black box represents the self-sustainability of closed systems that are blind to the outside environment, apart from standardised input and output channels. This black box can be studied as a system. For Latour the black box is the unproblematic representation of a scientific process, where input and output channels are not visible. This black box conceals its creation and it should be broken open so that the networks of controversies, competition, people at work and decisions that led to the creation of the scientific fact can be studied. Thus, whereas Luhmann works towards one meta-theory that explains systems, Latour denounces such metaphysical language and starts with descriptions on the lowest level that amount to an “actor-network theory.” The “Cinema Europe/Media Europe” research project has walked the tightrope between the contradictory theoretical and methodological positions of the network and system theorists.
by continuously referring back to the reality of practices of European cinema and assessing the usefulness of the various perspectives accordingly.

The second theoretical backbone has been formed by political theories and discourse. The expansion of the European Union spurred the political quest for a shared European feature as thickener between the people, be it something as elusive as a “soul” (identity), something historically coloured as “blood and soil” (ethnicity) or a recourse to the pre-Enlightenment centrality of Christianity (religion) – a position which ignores the diasporic communities and has the hidden political agenda of opposing the entry of Islamic Turkey to the European Union. The “Cinema Europe/Media Europe” project has been concerned with the applicability of the political Europe debates to strategies for European film industries and representation in European films. The political Europe debates inevitable extrapolate to issues of world order, as the EU should be conceived as a power in relation to other powers. Likewise, it becomes increasingly difficult to talk about European cinema without, at the same time, addressing the transnational interconnections that plant European cinema firmly within the globalised (multi-)media environment. Elsaesser has suggested that the key between the political agendas of various models and the practice of European cinema could be space. Ever since the FIAPF provision not to replace individual festival events with one yearly “Olympics” for film (1951), the spatial dispersal of film festivals has been a defining characteristic of the phenomenon. This dispersal brought about a series of political interferences: national politics recurrently prevail the independent, cultural function of the festivals; international relations are often decisive in matters of programming and prizes; and festivals have become media hubs where tax-incentives and other local subsidy schemes for the audio-visual sector can be hawked to media industries world-wide. The continuous growth of festivals, moreover, poses the question of for how much longer the international film festival circuit can expand. What if the point of saturation is near? Will there be an implosion, from which the festival phenomenon can be resurrected?

0.3.2 Festivals: circuits, networks and systems
In order to answer such questions, it is necessary to develop a “network” approach for film festivals. For my hypothesis on film festivals as key sites in an alternative film network/system, it is particularly important to liberate one’s habitual thinking in terms of dichotomic oppositions between national cinemas and, instead, discuss, for example, the relation between festivals and Hollywood simultaneously as antagonism, as dependency and as reciprocal aesthetic and discursive influencing. Some of the early film festival research has already made clear that film festivals are complex phenomena, operating in various areas and frequented by different visitors, that are hard to tackle with mono-disciplinary approaches. In his article “Looking for Sundance: The Social Construction of a Film Festival” Daniel Dayan, for example, starts out by investigating the 1997 Sundance Film Festivals with an anthropological methodology and hypothesis on the festival audience, whose collective
performance he seeks to define as norms settling in behavioural sequences. Halfway through the article the author, however, has to assert the inadequacy of his hypothesis and methodology. At the festival Dayan observed the simultaneous activity of different sets of participants at the festival – journalists, sales agents, distributors, filmmakers, audience – who were acting out divergent performances rather than a collective script which could be identified and unravelled as a continuity. Instead, Dayan realised that these groups were engaging in a definitional process, “In a way, a film festival is mostly spent answering questions about self-definition, identity, and character. This definitional activity is on the minds of all involved: organizers, jury-members, candidates, audiences, buyers and storytellers of different sorts, those who write catalogs [sic], those who write reviews, those who script buzz, and those who write wrap-up essays.” The festival, Dayan continues to argue, should be seen as an encounter between competing definitions, which, to his surprise, is dominated by printed material. Although he had expected to follow the lines of anthropological inquiry using observations and interviews, Dayan decided to include reading to his methodology when confronted with the complexity of Sundance’s social construction. In other words, he combined different forms of criticism to describe the hybrid film festival and, in this way, implicitly, applied the idea of the network to film festival research.

Latour has theoretically developed this idea of the network as a solution in order to connect modalities that are usually analysed separately by modern theorists. In We Have Never Been Modern (original French version published in 1991, translated into English in 1993) he poses a challenging rhetoric question in response to what he calls the “critics’ habitual categories...[of] nature, politics or discourse.” He asks: “Is it our fault that the networks are simultaneously real, like nature, narrated, like discourse, and collective, like society [italics in original]?” The publication is one of Latour’s most theoretical works, in which he lays out the framework of his theoretical thinking that already informed his early ethnographic studies The Pasteurization of France (1984/1988 revised and English edition) and was further elaborated in Aramis, or the Love of Technology (1992/1996) and Pandora’s Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies (1999). The quote on the simultaneity of networks’ different modalities – comprising at the same nature, of politics and discourse – is formulated as the beginning of an answer to what Latour refers to as “the crisis of the critical stance,” a crisis in academic theory. According to Latour, academia is in crisis because it seems unable to connect various forms of criticism. For Cinema Studies such separate critical reflections have, for instance, taken the form of textual analyses, e.g. formalistic readings of a body of selected films (Discourse), or consisted of quantitative-empirical research using film industry statistics (Nature), or concentrated on representations of the power relations of race, gender and ethnicity (Society), or, finally, tried to grasp the ontology of the cinematic image (Being). Latour acknowledges that these forms of criticism are powerful in themselves, but at the same time criticises them for being
inadequate in understanding phenomena that depend on interrelations between various constituencies.

Dayan is not alone in his observation of the festival as site where different groups of participants meet and compete. Another festival publication that distinguishes between coexisting festival modalities is Kenneth Turan’s *Sundance to Sarajevo: Film Festivals and the World They Make*. Turan describes the international film festival circuit as clusters of festivals where, respectively, business agendas (Cannes, Sundance and ShoWest); geopolitical agendas (Havana, Sarajevo and Midnight Sun); or aesthetic agendas (Pordenone, Lone Pine and Telluride) dominate. The most interesting contribution to his informed but essentially popular festival guide is to be found in part four on the politics of festivals, in which he discusses the example of “the festival that failed,” the Sarasota French Film Festival in Florida (1989-1995). Without abstracting from the local specificities or providing theorisations, the case study suggests a parallel with Latour’s study after the failed public transportation project “Aramis”; about whom the professor in *Aramis, or the the Love of Technology* remarks: “There’s no point in deciding who finally killed Aramis. It was a collective assassination. An abandonment, rather.” Likewise, film festivals are fragile networks that will readily fall apart when the interconnections – the collective network – that secure the stability of the network are disrupted. After having discussed several of the frictions that disturbed the festival’s equilibrium from its foundation onwards, Turan concludes in unintentional Latourian phrasing: “it was only a matter of time until the French pulled the plug on Sarasota, which, for a variety of reasons, they did in June 1996.”

The work by Dayan and Turan makes clear that film festival events are not unified, closed phenomena, but, in fact, open up to an assemblage of performances and agendas. When taking into consideration that these are constituted both in the implosive boiling pot of the festival event and in relation to year-round presences such as Hollywood, national film strategies and municipal policies, it becomes clear why the idea of the network is so useful for the study of the international film festival circuit. What this particular object of study incites – more than most other areas of Cinema Studies – is an approach that allows for a mobile line of inquiry between the various performances, agendas and year-round presences. As I argued in the beginning of the introduction, this approach should allow the researcher to move away from systems of state support towards production deals and audience reception, from global patterns of circulation towards Hollywood interference and local initiatives. ANT allows the researcher to map these lines onto the cinema world and assert how they come together at nodal points; at international film festivals. Applying Latour’s idea of the network to film festivals has two main advantages: it assumes *relational interdependence* and includes both humans and non-human actors as objects of study. Let me explain.

My theoretical framework takes the Latourian network, and in particular the new conception of agency that flows from the idea of relational
interdependence between entities in the actor-network, as point of departure in the study of film festivals. Relational interdependence implies that there is no hierarchical opposition between the actors and the network. Despite the misleading hyphen, ANT does not distinguish between actor and network, between agency and structure or between micro and macro level. Instead it focuses on processes as circulating entities, on movements and interactions between various entities that are produced within these relations. For film festivals this idea of mobile agency is very instructive, because it elevates the necessity to distinguish between the “festival” as abstract super-structure and various types of visitors and events as carriers of change. By understanding film festivals as a Latourian network I can do away with these oppositions and engage with a radically different view in which, for example, the sales representatives, film critics and filmmakers meeting at film festivals are not considered separate from the event, but whose congregations, performances and products are understood as necessary links that make up the event. In a similar way it allows me to study Hollywood multimedia corporations and New Independents as actors also belonging to the festival network, instead of positioning these companies as antagonistic entities that operate, as a whole, outside of the festival circuit, for example by investigating their strategic exploitation of major film festivals (Cannes, Berlin, Toronto et cetera) as media events.

Another important advantage of working with Latour and ANT is that the actors in one’s study can be human as well as non-human. Latour does not distinguish between subjects and objects, but describes the hybrid links between them (what he calls “practices of translation”). The rejection of human agency and call for attention for non-human actors is highly relevant when studying the film festival network, because not only the performances by the various festival visitors matter. Non-human objects, like press facilities and accreditation systems, are also objects worthy of study. An examination of these actors can generate insights on vital flows within the actor-network configurations. By looking closely, for example, at the accreditation system for press and media representative in Venice, I could assert how different types of reporters are segregated spatially. Only top accreditations provide access to all areas and premier screenings, which gives these journalists a competitive advantage over lower-accredited colleagues: they can initiate buzz and have more time (they do not need to queue!) to conduct interviews and write reports. It is particularly interesting to see who are granted high accreditation and what this implies for the nature of the process of value addition (see chapter three). Throughout my research special attention is devoted to the spatial and temporal organisation of film festivals. I study, for example, how festival locations, cinema theatres and shifts in the festival calendar affect a festival’s image and position on the international festival circuit. At the point of connecting local festivals to the international film festival circuit, ANT, however, offers less appropriate viewpoints. The festival circuit is unlike a Latourian network in the sense that the combination of singular festival events can be more than a sum of its parts. Because ANT does not
discriminate between scales, it becomes impossible to use its framework to account for a vital characteristic of the festival network: the phenomenon of value addition. By travelling the circuit, films can accumulate value with a snowball effect. The more praise, prizes and buzz a film attracts, the more attention it is likely to receive at other festivals. I will complement Latour's simple levelling out of the micro – macro distinctions with Manuel Castells' concepts of the "space of flows" and "space of place." I will return to the position of spatial and temporal schemata in my theoretical framework in paragraph 0.3.4.

First I want to address a second "problem" when applying Latour's notion of the network to film festivals. This problem revolves around Latour's emphasis on the instability of actor-networks. He sees them as being in a constant circulation, in which every movement may result in changes to connected networks. Latour's idea of the network is thus essentially anti-systemic and resists conceptualisations; instead there is a focus on descriptions – just follow the links of the network, Latour seems to argue. I, however, see the international film festival circuit first of all as a successful network (or "stable network" as Latour would say), because it shows systemic tendencies and offers continuity. In order to conceptualise film festivals as a "system" I turn to Luhmann, whose system theory has the advantage of offering a concept for the self-preservation of a system (autopoeisis). Like Latour, Luhmann (1927-1998) did not work with hierarchical oppositions nor started with subjects, but, instead, used the idea of the network and examined the "unmarked spaces" outside labelled categories to develop his theory. Unlike Latour, however, he did work towards one, all-encompassing theory. "Autopoeisis" was the term he used to refer to the ability of system to secure their survival. Systems, Luhmann argued, use a few in/output channels to feed upon and dispose of the environment but remain otherwise closed off and inwardly concentrated on their own preservation. My hypothesis, however, is that the film festival network is successful, capable of self-preservation, because it knows how to adapt to changing circumstances. In this way film festivals take position somewhere between Luhmann's and Latour's opposing conceptions of the black box: like Luhmann's black box, festivals are self-sustainable. They can, however, remain self-sustainable not because they form a Luhmannian autopoeitic system that is closed off to outside influences, but because they, in fact, operate as an open network in which Latourian controversies and irregularities can be translated. It is the capacity of translation that secures the preservation of the network. The historical question, then, of why European film festivals were able to develop into a widespread and successful circuit whereas the European film Avant-garde failed to sustain its project, beckons a theoretical framework that also dares to go a step further than the descriptive level common to Latourian thinking. The question of what we may call preservation, self-sustainability or survival is, ultimately, not descriptive ("how"), but analytic ("why"). Fortunately, there are also "escape routes" in ANT. One of the paths that may lead us back to the powerful analytical potential of concepts is the notion of "obligatory
points of passage.” In the next paragraph I will use this notion to introduce my concept of “sites of passage” and explain what I regard as the central element in film festivals’ historical self-sustainability.

0.3.3 Sites of Passage
ANT theorists (such as Michel Callon, John Law and Latour) use the notion of “obligatory points of passage” to refer to the most powerful actors in a network. Obligatory points of passage are the nodes in the network that have made themselves indispensable to its practice. I argue that film festivals can be seen as obligatory points of passage, because they are events – actors – that have become so important to the production, distribution and consumption of many films that, without them, an entire network of practices, places, people et cetera would fall apart. These actors are of vital importance and constitute obligatory stops for the flows in the network. Film festivals are particularly important for the survival of world cinema, art cinema and independent cinema, but Hollywood premiers also rely on the media-sensitive glamour and glitter of the festival atmosphere to launch their blockbusters. Especially the leading film festivals – such as Cannes, Berlin, Venice, Toronto, and Sundance – are bustling nodes of activity where people, prestige and power concentrate. Within the concept of “sites of passage” I combine the ANT notion of “obligatory points of passage” to point at the network configuration of the festival circuit with the “rites of passage” coined by the Belgian anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (1837-1957) in 1909 in order to clarify its most consistent and successful method of preservation: cultural legitimisation.

In order to move from the descriptive level – how can one understand film festivals as a network – to the analytic – why are film festivals capable of self-sustaining the network, why are they successful – it is necessary to complement an Actor-Network Theory approach with more conceptual perspectives. For this I briefly return to a key structuralist work in anthropological theory: Rites of Passage. In his seminal book, Van Gennep coined the term “rites of passage” to refer to a specific type of ritual that is formed by three stages (separation, transition and reincorporation) and is used by societies to mark changes in the social structure. During a rite of passage an individual is subjected to a series of ritual and symbolic performances that represent his/her transition to another social position. Already in its original, structuralist formulation the parallel with film festivals forces oneself on the casual observer. Festivals display a variety of rituals (e.g. red carpets premiers) and symbolic acts (e.g. allotting awards) that contribute to the cultural positioning of films and filmmakers in the film world. The work of followers, in particular Victor Turner (1920-1983), shows how Van Gennep’s ideas on the ritual marking of social transitions can also be of use beyond functional analysis. Turner was particularly interested in the transition phase, in which a person could exist in a liminal state that was located outside of society (what he called “communitas,” anti-structure). By stressing the inter-structural phase of liminality in ritual, Turner moved
Film Festivals beyond British and French structuralism and towards American cultural anthropology. He was fascinated by liminal periods because they displayed a suspension of normal relationships, time and societal structures and applied his analysis of ritual as cultural performances of a processual nature to tribal communities as well as complex Western societies. The idea of a necessary suspension by means of ritual performance to mark a transition is relevant to the study of the film festival network, because it explains why festival events are indispensable for the creation of symbolic value; each festival is an extended cultural performance during which "other" rules of engagement count and the commercial market rules of the film world outside are suspended. It is my understanding that the survival of the phenomenon of film festivals and its development into a global and widespread festival circuit has been dependent on the creation of film festivals as a zone, a liminal state, where the cinematic products are critically evaluated as expression of culture and not measured in terms of box-office results as they are in the commercial cinema industry.

If one, in addition, takes Pierre Bourdieu’s idea of cultural capital, it becomes clear where the festival network offers opportunities for the translation of symbolic value into economic value (e.g. prestigious competition programmes, premiers and awards). The ritual marking that occurs at the end of the transition period is specified as a cultural recognition of artefacts and artists that acquire cultural value in the process. They may consequently rise to a higher cultural status in the festival network and improve their chances of distribution and exhibition in the circuits of art-houses and commercial theatres. Once a film has been selected for a festival programme, screened in a competition or perhaps even honoured with an award, it becomes easier for that film and filmmaker to be programmed in cinema theatres and for ancillary markets, because of an increase in cultural value (see chapter three for an elaboration of Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital for film festivals). Although festivals are also trade fairs, tourist attractions and city marketing – and it should be reiterated that the self-sustainability of the festival network has depended on a willingness to facilitate such “secondary” interests (whereas the European Avant-garde persisted in an utopian ideology) – the primary success-factor of the festival network is its ability to use these diverse forces to preserve a complex system that generates cultural value. By changing the parameters of evaluation from economic to cultural (aesthetic as well as political), the contours of a new type of culture industry were set by film festivals as the obligatory points of passage for critical praise. Film festivals, in short, are sites of passage that function as the gateways to cultural legitimisation.

Why then choose for the formulation “sites of passage?” I choose it because it alludes to the spatial dimensions that are vital to the international film festival circuit. The festival nodes are, in the first place, defined by their spatial qualities. As Julian Stringer argued, the festivals compete with each other on the terms established by the global space economy. Festivals are organised
in cities that use these events to build their urban image and compete with each other for attention and funding. The importance of “space” to film festivals is, however, not only an effect of globalisation. From the beginning of the phenomenon it has been important that film festivals are concentrated in specific sites and take place over a short period of time. The proximity of activities immerses visitors into the event and makes it easy to meet other guests and conduct interviews, promote work, and negotiate deals. Cannes can be and will remain the world’s leading festival, because everybody who is anybody in the film business will gather in the small area around the festival palace and the short strip of beach in front of it every single year in May (see chapter three). The term “sites” refers to this centrality of location. The rituals that accompany the cultural transitions at film festivals also have a strong spatial character. Because there is a hierarchy within the international film festival circuit and some film festivals have higher status than others, the cultural value-adding process at film festivals is closely related to the relational status of festivals. Thus, although the red carpet ritual in Cannes might be similar to the ritual in Karlovy Vary (Czech Republic), the cultural transition that is symbolically represented in the performances is not. Because Cannes holds the most powerful position in the international film festival circuit the red carpet that is located at the site on the Riviera brings additional value to the ritual.

“Passage,” in its turn, refers to temporal dimension; the hierarchical task division between festivals allows filmmakers to “mature” within the network over a certain period of time. Since the global spread of film festivals in the 1980s and 1990s and the creation of the international film festival circuit the phenomenon has become more and more institutionalised and therefore less open as a network. Despite the proliferation of festivals, the network/system, however, has not collapsed. The reason for this is that there is a strict task division between festivals: a small number of major festivals have leading positions as marketplace and media event and the remaining majority may perform a variety of tasks ranging from launching young talent (e.g. International Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg) to supporting identity groups such as women (e.g. Seoul’s Women Film Festival) or ethnic communities (e.g. Arab Film Festival Rotterdam). For newcomers on the circuit it is difficult to acquire a leading position, though some, such as the Pusan International Film Festival, do succeed. This hierarchical task division, on the one hand, protects the cultural value of prizes and competition programmes. It allows (some) filmmakers, on the other hand, to go through (series of) lower level discoveries and encouragements before reaching global inauguration by winning an award at one of the major festivals. Likewise, the international film festival circuit forms a chain of temporary exhibition venues along which films can travel and accumulate value that might support theatrical release or television broadcasts.
0.3.4 Cities and Sites
Both spatial and temporal dimensions are indispensable to the theoretical understanding of the festival network. We need to pause for a moment to elaborate on the incorporation of the spatial dimensions into the thesis' theoretical framework. Because Latour’s idea of the actor-network purposefully disentangles micro/macro and local/global oppositions and, moreover, dissolves distinctions between knowledge of things on the one hand, and human politics on the other, ANT can become a problematic instrument with regard to power relations and inequalities in the network (in particular when using Latour’s earlier thinking). In the recent exhibition “Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy” (ZKM Center for Media and Art in Karlsruhe, 20 March – 7 August 2005), the curators Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel put forward the idea “that politics is all about things. It’s not a sphere, a profession or a mere occupation; it essentially involves a concern for affairs that are brought to the attention of a public.” In terms of this view, politics can be everything, from scientific research to supermarket sales and from anti-globalist critique to Sunday masses in church. It is the possibility for networks of propositions that prompts the curators to talk about “atmospheres of democracy” and “a parliament of things.” The perspective reminds us that, for the study of film festivals, it is necessary to include both human and non-human actors. The weaker side of Latour’s philosophy of a parliament of things is that it remains fixated on the complexity of the network – “you begin to consider them [parliaments as complex technologies] with great respect because of their delicate set of fragile mediations” – and fails to convert this observant admiration to a critical consideration of power relations between the various mediations. As Stringer has pointed out, it is important that we bear in mind that the international film festival circuit is no neutral assemblage of sites and events, but that it “suggests the existence of a socially produced space unto itself, a unique cultural arena that acts as a contact zone for the working-through of unevenly differentiated power relationships [my italics] – not so much a parliament of national film industries as a series of diverse, sometimes competing, sometimes cooperating, public spheres.”

With one of the first comprehensive articles on the topic of film festivals (2000), Stringer is also the first film scholar to point out the importance of space in studying how power is exercised at and between film festivals. In the abovementioned article, Stringer identifies film festival events as part of a global space economy. Since the global spread of festivals and the necessity to compete with each other on a global market for funding, cinema resources and media attention, festivals tend to foreground the (cultural) specificity of their location. In Stringer’s words: “What many festivals actually now market and project are not just ‘narrative images,’ but a city’s own ‘festival image,’ its own self-perceptions of the place it occupies within the global space economy, especially in relation to other cities and other festivals.” Janet Harbord followed Stringer’s argument on festivals and
global cities – a discourse that gained widespread recognition through the work of Saskia Sassen – with an additional allusion to Manuel Castells:

The “network” of global commerce creates linkages between sites, creating centres and peripheries, eclipsing other spaces altogether. More than the hybrid mixing of goods and cultures, the festival as marketplace provides an exemplary instance of how culture, and cultural flows produce space as places of flow, in Castells’s terms. One part of the argument...is then that the film festival is a particular manifestation of the way that space is produced as practice (as opposed to inert materiality). Festivals advertise cities, set them in competition, region against region, global city against global city. More than this, festivals are implicated in the structure, design and use of cities, are part of the fabric of city life and its annual calendar. Festivals set a beat to the rhythms of city living wherever they occur, in competition and connection with other festival events.

The references to Sassen and Castells are somewhat sloppy, but nonetheless open up perspectives that can deepen our understanding of the power relations and spatial configurations in the film festival network that are difficult to discern with Latourian thinking alone. Sassen’s work on world cities emphasises the element of global competition that also exists between festivals, and can warn us, for instance, not to underestimate the power of municipal policy makers and city marketers in the foundation of festivals (e.g. Rotterdam, see chapter four); their relocation (e.g. Berlin, see chapter one); and the regeneration of urban space (e.g. Palais de Festival as year-round conference centre in Cannes, see chapter two). Castells, in his turn, offers concepts for understanding the flows between the local event of the festival and the global spaces of the festival network as practices of power. He acknowledges the existence of managerial elites that dominate strategic, nodal spaces for social exchange on the local level (such as festivals) and therefore also control the interests that are transferred to the global level (see chapter three). In the case studies of this dissertation, the spatial and temporal dimensions are further explored to assert how power relations on various scales are constituted (e.g. the hierarchy of festivals in the international circuit; geopolitical agendas on the national level; and local practices of segregation). In the first chapter I will specifically discuss how the global spread of the festival phenomenon has not diminished the power of the original – European – film festivals, but created more complex, mobile practices of cultural domination.

0.4 Methodology

Latour has argued that ANT is more a methodology than a theory. In a contribution to the recent anthology *Actor Network Theory and After* (1999), he
laments the confusion caused by the inaccuracy of the term ANT. He writes: “As Mike Lynch said some time ago, ANT should really be called ‘actant-rhizome ontology’. But who would have cared for such a horrible mouthful of words – not to mention the acronym ‘ARO’? Yet, Lynch has a point. If it is a theory, of what is it a theory?” He answers subsequently: “For us, ANT was simply another way of being faithful to the insights of ethnomethodology: actors know what they do and we have to learn from them not only what they do, but how and why they do it.” Because Latour sees the entities in a network as being produced by relations that are unstable and constantly circulate, he does not care to define them. Instead of definitions, he prefers descriptions. It has been my contention that the complex network of film festival is served best with a Latourian methodology of description for its (historically diversified) analysis. Definitions, in their turn, can be used to draw clear terms for exclusion of similar events, such as the Oscars. One could, for instance, provisionally define a film festival as a yearly or biannual event that programmes clustered screenings of a large number of films in a defined time and space that may or may not have an element of competition and may or may not be open to a general public. With this rough “definition” in mind, the Oscars does not qualify as a film festival, because it is an award ceremony without film screenings that is nowadays broadcast worldwide as a major four-hour media event instead of taking place over the course of several days in a fixed location. The definitional exercise highlights the difference between the two events: whereas a festival is not only a medium space but is also defined by the actual festival site were the event takes place, the Oscars’ main purpose is to be a mediatised space-time compression that can be broadcast integrally around sets of highly profitable commercial blocks. It is, however, even more interesting to apply an ANT methodology and consider the interconnections between the Oscars and film festivals, for example by analysing how the rescheduling of the Oscars in 2004 caused a chain reaction of adjustments on the festival/awards ceremony calendar and negatively affected Berlin’s position as a strategic media event in the period running up to the Oscars (see chapter three). The great advantage of an ANT methodology is that it instructs the researcher to consider the complexity of these interconnections instead of aiming at definitions that inevitably simplify or reduce reality, because they cannot capture movement and transformation. By describing the actor-network relations and not distinguishing between human and non-human actors, I will deploy a Latourian methodology in this dissertation. I will allow all actors to “speak” for themselves and “explain" why they do what they do. Moreover, my network approach enables me to work in an interdisciplinary fashion. I collect data and combine the evidence by closely listening to the signification that is immanent in the actors (data) and their interconnections. Below I will specify what such methodology entails in terms of the practice of conducting historical research and collecting current data on film festivals.
0.4.1 Collecting Data, Combining Evidence

The objective of this dissertation has both an historical and contemporary component. The process of data collection, therefore, includes the study of historical documents and secondary literature as well as the collection of contemporary material. For contemporaneous research this implied an ethno-methodology of participant observation at film festivals, interviews, and more text-based media analyses. Information on the film festival histories has been gathered from festival publications (both in print and online), festival catalogues, archives and secondary sources (both academic and non-academic) in which relevant historical documents from archives and interviews with key parties involved had already been chronicled. If we add to this the overload of festival reports that are available from newspapers, television shows, radio programmes, websites and specialised film and entertainment magazines on each festival event separately, it becomes clear that not every piece of documentation and commentary could be included in the historical research. In the subchapter on the historical framework I suggest a model that relies on historical evidence and an analytic understanding of the intertext and context of this evidence, “the cultural implications as well as socio-economic or political conditions.” In ANT terminology this model should be specified as a methodology that proceeds with descriptions, follows their links in the actor-networks and reveals nodal connections. Although the objective is to be as complete as possible in describing the actor-network, one necessarily has to cease making links at some point.

One way to mark out a work field was by concentrating on obligatory points of passage as powerful nodes in the actor-network. Selecting specific film festivals for the case studies, therefore, has been a first step in narrowing down my dissertation topic. The international film festival circuit can be an intimidating phenomenon that researchers judge too vast and irregular to consider as object of research. For me these characteristics have been part of the challenge. It might have been an easier research project – at least easier to defend – had I narrowed myself down to one festival and specified the research question to fit one of that festival’s many functions and modalities. My interest, however, was in the phenomenon as a whole, in festivals’ interdependence on one another, and in the “success formula” that allowed the phenomenon to survive situations of crisis and then to mushroom in the 1980s. These interests led me to the network approach that I formulate in this dissertation. The idea of the network helps me to address “large” issues from the perspective of immanent interconnections (what I called “letting the actors speak”) without losing sight of the network dynamics. In other words, the network approach allows for the analysis of a globally comprehensive topic without falling into transcendentalism. Having assessed the appropriateness of ANT in studying festival events in their interconnections, and having subsequently chosen it as main source of theoretical-methodological inspiration, I at the same time distance myself from ANT “rules” in order to explain film festivals’ self-sustainability (e.g. also studying the systemic tendencies in the festival network). Another deviation can be found in my
Film Festivals

selection of case studies. Scholars who use ANT typically choose one event, occurrence, failure, institution, debate or discovery to unravel. I have chosen four case studies. The selection of more than one case study can, firstly, be explained as a complement to the existing writing and literature on film festivals. These publications tend to concentrate on one festival or even festival edition in the case of journalism and present teleological tales of discoveries and successes without addressing the universality of the festival phenomenon. My aim was to complement such studies with an alternative history of festivals, in which their development and growth could be understood as adjustments and reconfigurations of a successful festival network. The study of one central festival would not have been sufficient to reach this objective; the singular sample would not be representative of the festival circuit. A second explanation is the intertwined histories of film festivals: the foundation of Cannes cannot be addressed without discussing the Fascist agenda of Venice; Berlin’s rescheduling to winter should be analysed as a strategic move away from the powerful Cannes film market held in spring; and the foundation of Rotterdam can only be understood if you consider the rise of specialised festivals and the upheavals at major European festivals in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Secondary lines of marking the film festival research were formed with the identification of multiple fields of influence in the network. In the beginning of the research I discerned four important fields and devised a case study for each of them: the first chapter deals with the festival in Berlin and focuses on the geopolitics and the festival organisation; Cannes is central to the second chapter that works on the economic field and film industry; the third chapter deals with the cultural processes of value adding and meaning making (discourse production) turning the spotlight on the festival in Venice and film journalists; finally, the fourth chapter on Rotterdam further explores the cultural field of festivals by means of a focus on programming and festival audiences. The fields vary significantly in their perspective on the object of study. Conversely, the methodological approach has different emphasises in each chapter and the researcher is led to follow different kinds of actors and interconnections. Below I will specify central aspects of the methodology for each case study and foreground some key data.

Case study 1: Berlin

Being the most historical of the four case studies, the primary methodology for Berlin involved the examination of historical literature on festivals in general and Berlin in particular. Authoritative publications had appeared on Berlin and the Forum before (notably Jacobson 1990, 2000; and Schröder 2000) which offered highly valuable shortcuts to examine key historical documents from the festival archive as well as other primary sources. Among the additional documents studied in the archive were those relating to the Cannes upheaval in 1968. The interpretation of all material was supported by a series of exchanges and interviews with festival staff (e.g. Ulrich Gregor) and visitors. During my 2003 festival visit, special attention was reserved for the
spatial organisation of the festival; the map of the festival area at Potsdamer Platz, the cinema theatres in the West and the East, the system of accreditation, and the logistics of the red carpet.

*Case study 2: Cannes*

I visited the Cannes Film Festival in 2004 as a guest of the Maurits Binger Film Institute. This Amsterdam-based training institute for young film talents offered its students master classes by film (industry) professionals at the festival. I attended sessions with sales agents, producers, marketers, media lawyers, festival and television programmers and other experts on Cannes, festivals or the film industry and its ancillary markets in general. One of the interviews that should be mentioned in particular is the one with Marché director Jérôme Paillard on his vision on the position of the Cannes market in relation to major non-festival markets (e.g. American Film Market – AFM and MiFed, the International film and multimedia market in Milan) and competing film festivals. The participant observation in Cannes concentrated on the activities and events that are relevant to the business side of the festival: the Marché, the national pavilions, receptions, parties and the rituals surrounding red carpet premiers in the Palais du Festival. Valuable information was furthermore acquired from the various daily business publications (e.g. *Variety* and *Screen*) and the Marché du Cinema website and database.

*Case study 3: Venice*

The study of written material was a central part of the methodology for Venice. The focus on the role of media and press prompted me to collect all reviews and reports written on the 60th festival in Venice (2003) from a selected sample of European quality newspapers (see chapter three). At the festival, the accreditation system was analysed – as media-accredited guest of the festival – by attending press screenings, frequenting press facilities (press conferences, computer centres, lounge areas etc.), talking to journalists and interviewing the festival staff responsible for media matters. The investigation of space on the Lido especially considered the use of historical buildings and sites.

*Case study 4: Rotterdam*

Having been born and raised in the city of Rotterdam, my knowledge of the International Film Festival Rotterdam was already substantial before starting the dissertation. I was moreover already familiar with the city’s cultural policies, its aspiration to be the Netherlands’ first “cinema city,” and its historic tragedies. The work on cinephiles is therefore not only based on close observations of festival audiences during the years of my research, but also bears traces of my festival exposure over the years and familiarity with the experiences of friends (with varied levels of cinephile engagement). Empirical data are added by using the results of two comprehensive audience surveys. The practice of programming has been studied by means of festival
catalogues, newspaper reports, and a series of interviews (with René van der Giessen, Hester Barkey Wolf-Lambooij and Sandra den Hamer). I also rely on facts, figures and historical details that are presented in the annual reports and the biography of the festival’s first director Hubert Bals.

More methodological details will be provided in the chapters that follow. Before I concede the floor and let the case studies on Berlin, Cannes, Venice and Rotterdam make concrete and specify what I have laid out in the introduction, I briefly want to look back on my object of study, the nature of film festival research and my theoretical and methodological choices.

0.4.2 Looking Back at Beginnings

Looking back at the past four years, a parallel has forced itself on my mind. To me the process of conducting research has been awfully similar to the cultivation of an organic plant. At the beginning came ideas that I, the researcher, decided to sow and cultivate. The research germ grew over the years according to patterns that were predictable to a certain degree, but that nonetheless did not forecast fixed outcomes or exclude the possibility of the premature (crop) failure of the project. The cultivation was subjected to disadvantageous conditions, which the research-crop fortunately was strong enough to resist. Moreover, it has benefited from the introduction of a theoretical fertiliser, Actor-Network Theory, that enabled the research to ripen and flourish. Although I reached my aim and now present you with a fine dissertation harvest, the job was not an easy one. The work of research cultivation has been highly labour-intensive, requiring continuous nurturing of my plant, swift responses to external influences, and up-to-date knowledge of the newest means and methods. It is not the correspondence between agriculture and academic work alone that prompt me to use the cultivation metaphor for describing the cycle of Ph.D. research. Nor should it be seen as a merely poetic expression of the inevitable glorification of physical labour that is the symptom of any anxious Ph.D. candidate who suffers from a theoretical overspecialisation and a lack of immediate gratification in his/her daily practices. The word central to this metaphorical comparison is “organic.” I have experienced my research subject as an organic, living entity that has its own immanent will and reasons. This is the organic material that I as researcher interact with, that I fuse with the conceptual constructions derived from data analysis and theoretical reflection. I do not see myself as a theoretical architect who has used inanimate materials to build a construction, solid and stable, that offers shelter against the forces from the outside, although my central concept of the network might prompt one to make precisely this initial association. Rather, I regard myself as the cyborg-farmer who used “organic,” technological and conceptual ingredients alike to offer food for thought. It has been my contention that the most tasteful academic food will be organic or, in other words, that the most thought-provoking research will be based on the interaction with ideas and objects that are germinative in themselves. The discovery of a theoretical validation for this
belief in Actor-Network Theory and, more specifically, the work of Latour, has been particularly welcome and gratifying. One lesson that I learned from ANT was to acknowledge the complexity of the film festival phenomenon and use close examinations of the various links in the network to come to a closer understanding of its practices. ANT helped me understand why, at essential moments, it felt as if film festivals themselves determined what turn my research would take next and, consequently, accept that I should not impose preconceived theoretical frameworks or apply favourite concepts in order to impose control. In retrospect I can assert that my main role has been to assist the phenomenon in presenting itself in all its intertwinements and interconnections. The case studies that follow represent what I consider the vital links in the understanding of the film festival network.