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

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Chapter 3
Venice and the Value-Adding Process: Segregation and Agenda Setting on the Lido
"...the editors placed a medium close-up of Clooney on the front page..." p. 138

Figure 5: George Clooney attends the Venice Film Festivals. © 2003, The Times, AP, Luca Bruno.
Chapter 3
Venice and the Value-Adding Process: Segregation and Agenda Setting on the Lido

3.1 Introduction

On Thursday 5 September 2003, a large picture of George Clooney covered two thirds of the front page of The Times. The picture was accompanied by the following lines: ‘George Clooney was in Venice yesterday for the premiere of his latest film Intolerable Cruelty, in which he stars with Catherina Zeta-Jones. In the film, which is not in competition at the festival, Clooney plays a divorce lawyer and Zeta-Jones a ‘serial divorcée.’ Still single, the actor was asked by an Italian journalist to marry her. ‘Finally,’ he joked.’

George Clooney attended the film festival in Venice for the promotion of INTOLERABLE CRUELTY (USA: 2003), written and directed by Joel and Ethan Coen. The female Italian television journalist made the highlighted proposal during the well-attended press conference for INTOLERABLE CRUELTY in the festival palace on the Lido. It turned out to be not some casual remark, but a carefully-planned joke, complete with wedding attributes such as rings, rice and a veil. The act itself is not surprising. A lot of the press conferences during that 60th edition of the Mostra were freely put into the service of personal interests issues: at the end of each session, groups of journalists flocked to the stage to obtain autographs from the stars present. Anthony Hopkins was asked for his favourite football team. One journalist bluntly took the press conference as an opportunity to express the wish to have his picture taken with Sir Hopkins and simply justified this request with the statement that his mother was a big Hopkins fan. What is, at first sight, a little surprising about the Clooney picture, is the decision of The Times to put precisely this information, in this format, onto the front page. The format of the picture on the front page of The Times, a combination of an oversized photograph of a celebrity with some juicy details printed in a concise subtext, is reminiscent more of gossip magazines or tabloids than of the quality newspaper that The Times still claims to be. Even more surprising is the fact that the Clooney picture was the only festival topic covered by The Times that year. There were no reviews of the films in competition, no background articles, interviews or festival analyses to be found in the paper during the festival.
The example underlines the fact that “art cinema” is not the only reason that media and press are interested in film festivals. Festivals are not confined to act as institutions for the promotion of cinematic art. They can present both “high” and “low” cultural works and help generate media attention that is equally valuable for artworks and popular products. The example thus also shows that the distinction between “high” and “low” culture is not a very productive one when trying to assess the cultural role that film festivals play in the larger festival network. In the previous chapter, I pointed at the 1990s trend towards what one could call “Miramaxisation;” the use of festival exposure, marketing strategies, stars and controversies in order to make the “better” films with cross-over appeal successful at the box-office. At the same time, genre films and “art cinema” moved closer together, freely appropriating each other’s narrative conventions and formal styles in the new brand of world cinema. As a result, it became easier for directors and (star) actors to move between Hollywood studio productions, independent projects and international co-productions. The oeuvre of the Coen brothers is a case in point. With INTOLERABLE CRUELTY, Joel and Ethan Coen have made their most commercial feature to date. They bring to bear a touch of their characteristic dark humour on the smooth performances of Hollywood stars George Clooney and Catherina Zeta-Jones. Produced by Brain Grazer’s Imagine Entertainment (instead of their regular choice Working Title) and distributed by Universal, the movie is foremost a Hollywood product that awaits a wide release in commercial cinema theatres world-wide and support from a marketing campaign based on the star actors. At the same time, however, INTOLERABLE CRUELTY is “the new Coen brothers’ film” that can play on its value of being the next feature in an already successful oeuvre of the established directors. Presenting the film in Venice, out of competition, has the double advantage of tuning into the traditional attention for “auteur cinema” at film festivals, while also using the glamour of the event to promote the film via its main stars George Clooney and Catherina Zeta-Jones. Like the film industries, journalism has been subjected to major transformations in the 1990s. Human interest, popular entertainment and “mood” pieces have gained in prominence. If before The Times readers of the arts pages would have expected sufficient attention for the “serious” side of the festival in Venice (the competition films, established directors, trends, discoveries and awards), nowadays this type of festival coverage is predominantly kept in honour by The Guardian. The Times does not mention the fact that INTOLERABLE CRUELTY is made by the Coen brothers, let alone review the film within its oeuvre. Instead, the editors placed a medium close-up of Clooney on the front page in which we see a beaming star raising his hand as if in defence of obtrusive fans or – as implied by the subtext – an indecent proposal. One could criticise this trend as “popularisation.” However, one could also emphasise that the Clooney picture not only plays on the popular interest of readers, but also forms a powerful photo report of the important function that Venice has in the marketing strategies for
commercial movies. The picture shows the glamorous side of the festival on the Lido that is very real indeed.

In this chapter I want to move beyond the old high-low or art-entertainment dichotomies and investigate the complex interrelations between the quality press and popular media at film festivals to understand which role the various media play in the value-adding process. I examine the relationship between film festivals on the one hand and the press and media on the other. Some historical events will be recounted as they are vital for our understanding of the present day, but the main focus will be on an analysis of that contemporary situation. The case study for this chapter is the Venice film festival, in particular the 60th edition of 2003. The leading argumentation concerns the value-adding process performed and produced by press and media at film festivals. After assessing the high/low culture distinction as untenable for characterisation of the mediation of film festivals, the process of value addition is reworked for the specific conditions of the film festival system. This reworking starts off by investigating the nature of the film festival as mediated event. I observe that, on a spatial level, value is added through various mechanisms for distinction and spectacle. On a temporal level, I see the influence of agenda setting that predominantly determines the selection of objects for value addition. The benefits of the value addition at film festivals, then, can be collected in a global arena that crosses over from the cultural zone into the economical realm.

3.2 The Value-Adding Process

Film festivals and media are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Both parties benefit from the other and, in this way, the preservation of the larger festival network is supported. Media representatives continue to travel to film festivals because they find ample material to report on. The quantity of films, filmmakers and actors at major international film festivals is impressive. The advantages of the events are clear: many films are screened in (world) premiers; there are competition programmes for which prestigious awards are allotted; and attending directors and actors are usually available for interview sessions. The festival format allows the reporters to work efficiently and guarantees costs made for travel and expenses. The premiers put reporters in a vanguard position through which they secure authorisation for their profession. The competitions and awards provide newsworthy occasions that demand coverage. Although costs for festival visits are high, the benefits surpass the investment, especially thanks to the opportunities for interviews. For directors, actors and major stars, visits to film festivals are an (obligatory) part of promotional tours. In the case of Hollywood movies, the decision to attend film festivals is made by the production companies as part of the marketing strategies for these movies. Stars are contractually compelled to accompany their movies and give interviews to the international press. Journalists approach press agents to enter one of the interview junkets held during the festival. Although it is true that, outside film festivals,
sufficiently similar interview sessions are organised, these occasions are much less cost-effective. They are dispersed in time (spread over the year according to release dates) and space (interview junkets normally take place in Los Angeles, New York or London) and thus carry expensive price tags per interview for the news and media companies. At film festivals, on the contrary, reporters can run a marathon of major interviews for the fare of one festival visit. They thus depend on the international film festival circuit to both collect information for big budget releases later in the year and remain up to date on the latest trends and discoveries in world cinema.

Film festivals, in their turn, are dependent on the media. With the global spread of the film festival phenomenon in the 1980s and 1990s and consequent coarsening of competition between festivals, the format of premiers, awards and stars has become obligatory in a festival that wants to keep attracting large numbers of media representatives (see chapter four for the example of Rotterdam that decided to introduce an award in the 1990s in order to remain competitive). The higher the number, so much the greater is the success of a festival on the international film festival circuit evaluated. Some festivals proudly display the number of accredited journalists on their websites. Festivals thus try to meet the demands of journalists. Media are indispensable to film festivals, because the various forms of media coverage constitute the tangible links between the local event of the festival and the global arena of media networks. The effect of media exposure can hardly be underestimated. What happens within the confines of the segregated festival space will remain unknown in the public sphere without mediated coverage. One could apply the riddle of whether a tree falling in the forest makes a sound if it is not heard by anyone, to film festivals; if nobody reports on the festival events it is as if they did not happen. Festivals depend on mediation and the global collection of second-order witnesses this generates. In this subchapter, I will argue that such mediation is not merely a neutral confirmation that the occurrences did, indeed take place, but that it plays an important role in the value-adding process for films and filmmakers. First, I will distinguish between three stages in the process of value addition. Then I return to the question of high-low divisions and argue that value can be added to various films and different markets at festivals.

### 3.2.1 Value Addition and Tripartite Selection: entries, awards and mediation

Film festivals, in particular major international film festivals, are prestigious cultural events. Films that participate in a festival program acquire – in varying degrees and depending on the standing of the programme for which they are selected – some of the prestige that the festival is associated with. This effect is even greater when a jury selects a film for an award. The award symbolically represents the higher value of a (certain aspect from a) film with regards to other films in competition. In addition, the accredited media representatives engage in an evaluative process of (re)construction of the festival. Their selection of specific titles, topics, and themes is privileged by
media exposure and attention in the international public sphere. This tripartite selection for entry, award and mediation adds value to particular films, directors, actors and new waves or national cinemas. The added value is initially of a cultural order. In order to frame the value-adding process conceptually, one can rely on Bourdieu, who elegantly explained that capital (value) can take other than economic forms. Bourdieu’s theory of distinction (1979) linked taste preferences for cultural objects to class position and argued that status can be generated and maintained through cultural capital. Bourdieu emphasised the parallel between the social hierarchy of the arts and the social hierarchy of the consumers. He presented a system of differences (habitus) that is both structured by the division of social classes and that structures cultural practices and the perceptions that sustain that division. He argues: “The habitus is both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgements and the system of classification (principium divisionis) of these practices. It is in the relationship between the two capacities which define the habitus, the capacity to produce classifiable practices and works, and the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these practices and products (taste), that the represented social world, i.e., the space of life-styles, is constituted.”

Despite Bourdieu’s focus on taste preferences in consumption structures, the concept of habitus opens up possibilities to consider the first two steps of the value adding process, namely the position and role of film festivals. Festivals can be seen as an institutionalisation of Bourdieu’s system of classification; a practice that should be differentiated from other film practices, especially commercial film exhibition, and during which the film products are appreciated according to standards in taste. This cultural appreciation is divided in two phases. First, films are selected at the festival gates and – if selected – classified into festival programmes using cultural criteria of quality, aesthetics and subject matter. Secondly, some of the films enter into competition with each other. Juries congregate to pass official judgements and select the final festival winners. Similar to Bourdieu’s institution of family and educational system, film festivals are specifically designed to pass judgements, to give grades and impose classifications. In addition, there is a hierarchy within the international film festival circuit; some film festivals have higher status than others. The cultural value-adding process at film festivals is thus closely related to the relational status of festivals on the circuit and not so much to the class position of (potential) consumers.

The third step in the value-adding process is shaped by mediation. Writing on the role of critics at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival (theatre), Wesley Monroe Shrum Jr. bases his main argument on a reworking of Bourdieu, whose concepts remain among the most important starting and reference points in our thinking about cultural practices. Shrum argues that the social hierarchy of the arts is based on the difference in the nature of participation instead of the (social) characteristics of the people that participate: “[T]he difference between high and popular art is not fundamentally a difference in the institutions that promulgate their products.
or in the class background of consumers but a difference in the process of mediation. The relation between producers and consumers of art is not constant. It entails different levels of expert involvement. The higher a work is in the cultural hierarchy, the more important is discourse about the object to its status. Taste in high art is mediated by experts, whereas taste in low art is not.\textsuperscript{217} To underline the importance of mediation for high art, Shrum introduces the concept of the status bargain. The status bargain is the symbolic exchange of opinion rights for prestige, which characterises the mediation between critics and consumers. Shrum's study is relevant to my research on the relationship between press, media and film festivals, because he tries to explain the role of critics in a festival environment. However, my interest in the value-adding process concentrates not on a decontextualised mediation between critics and consumers such as Shrum's, but on the dynamics between critics and film festivals, both in a historical context and as contemporary realisation. The audiences will return as subjects in chapter four. I argue that if one seeks to understand the cultural importance of major European film festivals – and thus also the festivals that are not open to the public – it is necessary to investigate the value-adding process that is, on the one hand, intrinsic to the festival system (selection for entries and awards) and, on the other hand, is formed by means of mediation shaped by the interdependence between film festivals and media representatives.

Where Shrum concentrates on the different roles of critics in high and popular art, I want to emphasise the similarities. All films, from Hollywood blockbusters to experimental shorts, seek media attention at film festivals. Irrespective of the taste categories that the films appeal to and that may or may not be influenced by the contents of critics' writings, films hope to be noticed and compete for media coverage. The films that are not selected for competition or that do not win an award may also still acquire symbolic value via mediation, such as \textit{Intolerable Cruelty}. At film festivals, media representatives are purposefully on the lookout for input that may translate into newsworthy items, irrespective of high or low cultural status. Later in this chapter I will give examples of how the selection for mediation takes place and proceeds. By means of mediation, films are able to acquire value addition without official coronation in closing ceremonies. In fact, travelling to different film festivals and accumulating mediated attention with or without topping this in awards has a snowball effect on the value adding process. The amount of mediated attention, then, is correlative to the degree of value addition. A rigid distinction between high and low culture overlooks this quintessential characteristic of the value-adding process at film festivals. Film festivals are nodal points, where the concentration of material and media inevitably implodes into festival buzz, which, in its turn, may explode into global media attention. The initial festival value may evolve into media value if picked up and passed on in various national media networks. Media value, in its turn, can be transformed into economic value such as sales for distribution, television rights and DVD/VHS releases, and user value like
popular and cult followings. This is the moment when Bourdieu’s concept of
cultural capital proves to be convertible into economic capital.

3.2.2 Value Addition for Various Markets: beyond the high/low distinction
The relationship between European cinemas and Hollywood has been
abusively equated with a high/low cultural distinction. Festivals have, on the
one hand, contributed to this opposition, because they emphasised “cinema as
art” from the beginning. The first film festival in Venice was established
within the Arts Biennale. By explicitly adding cinema – the seventh art – to
Abbé Batteau’s category of fine arts, it became a cultural practice worthy of
use as national legitimisations. The high status of the festival was
underlined by its luxurious organisation and selection of expensive hotels on
the Lido, the leisure resort for the elite, as festival locations. Cannes followed
Venice’s example in choosing a festival format that corresponded with these
high-society standards of international competition. If one looks closer at the
actual participation of Hollywood in these early events, it is clear that the
opposition is not as black-and-white as one might assume. The presence of
Hollywood stars did not contradict the high society standards that were
needed to make the early festivals into respected institutions for cultural
legitimatisation, but confirmed them, as stars were seen both as respected
members of the international community of the rich, famous and beautiful,
and as central icons of cinema. Moreover, Hollywood studio productions
prominently competed in the European festival programmes. With the
interposition of the Nouvelle Vague, the festival format changed. The
proponents of the French New Wave differentiated cinema and considered
some aesthetic forms superior to others. They evaluated films on their
compliance with new standards for film as art and replaced the star with the
auteur. The effects of the Nouvelle Vague can be summarised as a temporary
dichotomisation of the distinction between “high” and “low” forms of
cinema, which were equated with “good” and “bad” cinema, and a change in
the standards of definition for high cinema art. This is the moment when the
idea of festivals functioning in the service of good, artistic cinema really
touches ground. The spectacle, stars and starlets of film festivals and the
growing market activity were considered as a deviation from the festival’s
core business of art cinema in the eyes of new wave proponents that needed
to be opposed. Hollywood productions, in itself, were not denounced as long
as (popular) movies showed sufficient signs of directorial signature. With the
global spread of the film festival phenomenon and the growing competition
between festivals in the 1980s and 1990s, the festival format goes through
another important transformation. The boundaries between art and
entertainment, distinction and spectacle, blur again. Various types of film use
film festivals for value addition in a global market, whether targeted for a
mainstream or niche audience. The presence of major stars and spectacle,
moreover, is a sure attraction for international media representatives, which,
in its turn, is a marker for the festival’s ranking on the international film
festival circuit.
What this comprised version of historical relations between (European) film festivals and Hollywood shows, is that the rigid distinction between high and low culture is untenable. Throughout festival history, different types of films have benefited from the value-adding potential of film festivals. Today, the added value can be beneficial in the art-house circuit as well as in the commercial context. The festival events, themselves, can therefore be seen as flirtatious encounters between art and entertainment. Distinction and spectacle – high cultural prestige and popular attraction – are the two pillars on which the major European A festivals continue to rest. Prestigious competition programmes with high critical standards of taste are joined by glamorous parades of stars from the latest Hollywood vehicle. For example, at the 2003 Cannes Film Festival, Gus van Sant’s intelligently-composed account of the Columbine high school shooting, ELEPHANT (USA: 2003) – crowned with the Palme d’Or – is combined with the circus of the world premier of THE MATRIX RELOADED. In addition, films that fuse different film traditions, such as the Coen brothers’ INTOLERABLE CRUELTY, are increasingly available. The film festival paradox is that, despite reoccurring objections to the conflation of hierarchical cultural orders, the structure proves persistently successful. The prestige of these festivals as cultural events is constituted in their relation with spectacle and popular attraction. On the one hand, festivals revolve around the cultural legitimisation of films that fall outside the commercial film circuit because they do not fit its spectacular and generic cinematic aesthetics. Festival participation allows them to acquire the necessary value for a niche art market. On the other hand, festivals present gala premiers of commercial features, for which the global media attention helps to boosts (continental) releases or an Oscar profile.

3.3. The Film Festival Event

In order to explain the value adding process, I will look at the film festival event both from the perspective of social anthropology and of network theories. The former is necessary to conceptualise the performances of the media representatives and festival organisation, the latter to connect the local events to the global network. The only anthropologist to date that I am aware of to study the festival phenomenon, is media anthropologist Daniel Dayan. His work on the Sundance Film Festival is of particular relevance to my study and therefore worth discussing here at some length. After having investigated media events in the early 1990s, Dayan turns to the case of the 1997 Sundance Film Festival resulting in the article “Looking for Sundance: The Social Construction of a Film Festival.” The article reflects the inadequacy of merely applying (traditional) anthropological categories to film festivals. Dayan’s starting point for analysing Sundance is an anthropological interest in the audience (dispersed media spectators) and in the rules of a temporary event with a short duration (in-between permanent structures such as kinship and brief enactments such as face to face encounters). His initial hypothesis regards the festival as a collective performance, in which norms settle in
behavioural sequences. The article, however, turns into an account of how his observations forced him to adjust his hypothesis and, conversely, edit the methodological approach to the festival. Dayan assessed that the festival consisted of divergent performances: "The unity of the festival was a fragile equilibrium, an encounter between competing definitions; a moment of unison between various solo performances. Rather than taking harmony for granted, I would watch it in making, stress its processual nature, explore rival scripts," he explains. In addition to his observation that there were different groups of participants (audience, journalists, organisers, buyers etc.) at the festival, Dayan realised that these groups were notably engaging in a definitional process, dominated by printed material: "Festivals turn out pages by the million: pamphlets, programs, photocopies, postcards, maps, essays, and excerpts. Ironically, film festivals live by the printed word, they are verbal architectures." Unexpectedly, he was forced to include reading in his intended methodology of observations and interviews. Referring to Roland Barthes’ study of the fashion system (1967), in which he turns to fashion magazines rather than to fashion shows, Dayan argues for recognition of a double festival: the visual and the written festival. He realised that, as ethnographer, he could not ignore the latter. If an ethnographer has to acknowledge a written component, the media scholar must take care not to exclude other influences. With Media Studies’ roots in linguistics, media scholars can easily turn to the written or printed word to study the value-adding process of film festivals. Festival journalism, however, comprises more than a written component. The context of the festival highly influences the activity of journalists and media representatives. The proximity of many fellow reporters and the pressure to evaluate a large number of films in a short time are no neutral conditions. In this subchapter I will start by investigating the hybridity of performances that take place during the festival event and support its value-adding function. Because, however, neither the productivity nor performativity of media representatives alone is sufficient for understanding this process, I will turn, in the second section, to the question of how the local performances translate into global value. The international film festival circuit is presented as a travelling sequence of events that, together, are more than the sum of their parts.

3.3.1 Hybridised Performativity
The film festival event is a temporary social concentration during which performances of various agents are enacted in a cohabitation of public and segregated space. In his attempt to dissect the social construction of the Sundance festival, Dayan was forced to change lanes after the observation that the performances at the festival were divergent. In other words, he discovered that performances at festivals are driven by various agendas. In this chapter, my interest concerns those performances that are structured by and that structure the value-adding process. Consequently, the actors that I emphasise here are, in the first place, press and media representatives, and, secondly, festival juries. By concentrating on the value-adding process, there
is sufficient orchestration between the relevant performances to analyse their construction. However, this does not mean that film festivals neatly correspond to traditional anthropological definitions of social constructions such as the spectacle, ceremony, and festival. On the contrary, film festivals are dynamic hybrids. Let’s return to the George Clooney wedding proposal to illustrate the point. The setting is a press conference. The official festival press conference hall is furnished with an elevated stage that is placed in front of a fence covered with the festival logo and geometrically lined seats for the audience. The imposed format is strict. The audience gathers before starting time in the room and anticipates the arrival of the interviewees. Some collect an audio device for simultaneous translation. When the interviewees arrive, they take their by brass-plates appointed seats. A moderator opens the conference and the floor is taken by interviewers who, one after the other, receive a microphone to make themselves heard in the crowd. Upon receiving the microphone, one typically stands up to ask his/her question. Within this format, the respective roles of interviewers and interviewees are clear. The former ask questions (serious or not) and the latter answer them (sincerely or not). The unity of the press conference performance is broken when the female television reporter seizes the opportunity to ask George Clooney not a question, but for his hand in marriage. Clooney plays along and a fake wedding ceremony takes place with rings, rice and a veil. The aim of the counterfeit ceremony, however, is not marriage but the construction of a media item. The scheme is carefully registered on camera. The ceremony is thus actually a concealed spectacle.

Value addition at festivals is a complex tripartite process in which all steps are accompanied by various appropriate performances. These performances do not fit one category, but, in their diversity, contribute to the value of the festival, films and visiting guests. Films that enter film festivals are met with ritualised honours such as different type of screenings, a press conference and photo call. The standard format in Venice comprises of three days for visiting guests. The first day is filled with a press and industry screening and the premier in the Sala Grande of the Festival Palace and its red carpet ritual. At night, a party, dinner or reception may be dedicated to the film and/or visiting guests. Between 10:30 am and 2:30 p.m. of the second day, there is a press conference followed by the photo call on the Terrace and a TV and radio call (new in 2003 and specifically added for the festival’s official broadcast partner Rai Sat). If there are public screenings, these also start on the second day. Directors and actors are usually available for interviews and photo shoots. The third day may be used for additional interviews and an early departure. The closing ceremony offers additional honours for the films and people selected for one of the awards. Again, the format of this public ceremony is highly structured and ritualised. The third step of selection, mediation, is formalised in the press conferences, press screenings and opportunities for interviews, but is also open to external influences from less-official performances. Everybody and everything competes for attention at film festivals. Billboards are plastered throughout the Lido and monitors
continuously loop fragments from press conferences in the casino. Spectacle is used in various forms and shapes to attract attention. Distorting or subverting performances, such as the fake wedding, is one of the strategies. Film festivals cannot be captured in one existing category, because they are visited by people with diverse agendas. Even if one zooms in on one festival function, such as value addition, the sum of performances does not break down into a neatly identifiable classification. Value addition is, on the one hand, achieved in pre-planned occasions and ritualised ceremonies. On the other hand, it is attained in the elusive process of selection for mediation and guerrilla endeavours of various actors. When concentrating on the value adding function of film festivals, it becomes clear that the hybridised performances, competing for attention, are an essential element of the festivals that contributes to the right atmosphere in which news items may be born and value can be added through mediation. The hybrid performances lead to a suspension of "normal" life. Following Victor Turner's study on the phase of liminality, I argue that it is necessary to the marking of a transition in the cultural order that festivals place themselves outside normality by means of cultural performances (see introduction 0.3.3).

3.3.2 The Mediating Network: a travelling sequence of events

It is important that the film festival event is understood as being embedded in a global network of festivals. The international film festival circuit can be, at the same time, drawn on a world map and set out on a calendar. Combined, these dimensions present the circuit as a travelling sequence of consecutive and overlapping events that is structured in an annual rhythm. Individual festivals occupy a position in the circuit in relation to the other positions. In addition, they are framed by events outside the festival circuit that do belong to the larger festival network. Examples are film markets, such as AFM and MiFed, and award ceremonies like the Oscars. The profundity of the embedding of festivals is best demonstrated by the observation that small variations in time slots can cause a chain reaction of repositions (see also 1.3). Reporting on Dieter Kosslick’s completion of his third Berlinale, Charles Mueller writes: "Re-positioning the European Film Market remains the only major Berlinale task left for Dieter Kosslick. With the American Film Market moving to November to compete head on with MIFED, Kosslick has been given, in his words 'a historical opportunity' to enhance the Berlinale. A minor consideration is shifting the dates for the Berlinale possibly by one week to adjust to the new February slot of the Oscars. The new guiding concept for EFM and its changes will be revealed in May during the Cannes Fest."222 The rescheduling of the Oscars from late March to late February in 2004 (29-02-2004) pushed the British Academy Film and Television Awards for film (the film BAFTA’s) a week forward to 15 February (2004).223 This meant a frontal collision with the Berlinale award ceremony on 14 February (2004) and thus poses a threat to the strategic use of Berlin on the film festival calendar for building Oscar profiles. Awards ceremony fatigue lay in wait for the public, the press, as well as the indispensable stars. If the Berlinale
responds by moving its event a couple of days forward, the expected knock-on-effect on the International Film Festival Rotterdam, scheduled tightly before Berlin, is a following of the forward move. What is important here is the identification of the sequential interdependency of positions in the network. The film festival circuit in this respect differs significantly both from contemporary information networks that are formed by permanent organisations and their continuing competition and co-operation, such as financial services or multinational retail corporations, and from temporary cultural events that are unaffected or unchallenged by comparable events, such as the Olympic Games.

In order to understand how the structure of the international film festival circuit as a travelling sequence contributes to the value-adding process, it is important to conceptualise in what way the individual festivals events “talk” to each other. In the introduction, I presented my concept of the “sites of passage,” which alludes to both cultural performances (the importance of the anthropological state of liminality) and the interdependence between festivals (the ANT notion of obligatory points of passage). The concept can be used to show how, for example, films with a prestigious festival prize travel along with the sequence of festivals and accumulate more value in the process. What I want to add in this chapter to my earlier discussion, is an investigation of the role of mediation between the local event and the global network. Most contemporary network and system theories account for a type of mediation. Marc Augé, for example, differentiates between place and non-place and deems the non-places of our contemporary worlds instrumental in, what he calls “extended ritual set-ups” that construct compromise meanings between individuals and networks. 224 Augé specifically connects the extended ritual set-ups to the performance of spectacle and the mediatisation of our relation to reality. His conceptualisation aligns with my observations in the previous chapter on the degeneration process that is affecting the city of Cannes while its spectacular festival-image flourishes in the media. Like all festivals, the Cannes Film Festival is a non-place that uses rituals, spectacle, ceremonies and other performances to establish the connection between the local and the global. The hierarchical relations within the international film festival circuit, however, cannot be addressed with Augé. For this, Manuel Castells’ distinction between “spaces of flows” and “spaces of places” is useful. According to Castells, “the space of flows is the material organization of time-sharing social practices that work though flows.”225 This means that the space of flows is defined, on the one hand, by social exchanges within the network and, on the other hand, by the spatial organisation of managerial elites. The space of flows offers a model for understanding how local spatial forms, such as film festivals, are used to mediate information in global functional networks. Castells regards the world as a network in which no place exists outside of its position created by exchanges of flows. According to Castells, the space of flows consists of personal micro-networks through which people transfer their interests into functional macro-networks by global interactions.
These interactions are communicated by strategic nodes, which are located in segregated spaces, accessible only to elites. Not all nodes are equally important; some are more privileged than others. This description reminds one of Latour’s obligatory points of passage and, as such, is applicable to the international film festival circuit. The embedding of film festivals in the circuit is inevitable. The festival events are (temporary) spatial forms created by the elites in the film world. During the period of a festival, the festival location is temporally transformed into a segregated space for film professionals and film critics. The festival event, thus, can be seen as a node where these professionals meet in personal micro-networks, such as the film market or the press community, and from where they exercise influence on the proceedings in events that follow. The inclusion of the role of “personal micro-networks” is of particular important for film festivals, because it – like Augé’s concept of the non-place – allows for conceptualisation of performativity, and, as an extension, of mediatised spectacle and ritual. In the next two subchapters I will turn, specifically, to the effects of the festival circuit’s structure as a travelling sequence of events on mediation. Following Latour I will not only focus on the divergent performances of human actors but also on non-human actors. Both will be set out in what follows on, firstly, the spatial and, secondly, the temporal axis of the film festival grid.

3.4 The Spatial Axis

The spatial axis of the film festival event has a global and a local component. The embedding of individual film festivals in the international film festival circuit results in competition between the events. In the previous subchapter I referred to Castells’ “space of flows” when describing the festival network. Castells’ theory can be used to explain why “distinction” is an intrinsic element of the festival network. The international film festival circuit is a nodal system that has no “natural” hierarchy. In competition, festivals distinguish themselves from other festival nodes. Privileged nodes, identified by their location, have more status. Following Castells’ network theory, one can identify two qualities that enable a node to occupy a privileged position in a network: suitability for function demands and historical specificity. The first reason – suitability for function demands – explains how hierarchical relations between festivals can shift. The function demands may change and film festivals can improve their suitability. In this way, newcomer festivals like the Sundance Film Festival in America, the Toronto International Film Festival in Canada and the Pusan International Film Festival in South-Korea acquired high status rankings in the festival circuit. Sundance was a small festival when it was established in 1978 in Salt Lake City as the US Film Festival. Its purpose was threefold: 1) attract the national film industries to Utah; 2) screen old movies and organise high-profile discussions around them; and 3) offer a competition for small regional films made outside the Hollywood system. This last function would become central, after the festival’s fortunate affiliation with Robert Redford’s Sundance Institute and
its move to Park City in winter time in 1981. The festivals offered a platform for American independent production and became Hollywood’s outlook for new talent. The successful metamorphosis of the Toronto International Film Festival took a little longer. The festival had started as a festival of festivals in 1976. Under director Helga Stephenson (1987-1993) the festival was transformed into a high-profile event capable of attracting big stars and top films as well as large numbers of buyers, distributors, producers and media representatives. The festival provided a professional film market in North America and became the ideal premier spot for both Hollywood studio productions and international or independent films. The international film festival in Pusan belongs to the most recent success stories. Founded in 1996, the professionally-organised festival tunes into the surge of global attention for Asian cinema. Located in the centre of Asian film nations, it provides a focal point for cinema in Asia.

The second reason for occupying a privileged position in a network – historical specificity – points to the intertwining of the temporal and spatial axis. Cannes has such tremendous historical importance that everybody who is anybody in the film business will come to the Riviera in May. The historical value is, as it were, locked into the specific spatial forms of the historical festival location. In this case, the festival location also shows characteristics of Castells’ space of place, in which the socio-historical specificity of a location is predominant. Historical specificity explains the persistent high ranking of the first European festivals on the festival circuit. Festivals like Cannes, Berlin and Venice were recognised early on as internationally important festivals. The FIAPF allotted these festivals the A-status, which meant an official recognition of high ranking, certain privileges (such as the right to form an international jury) and protection from newly-organised festivals. New festivals, by definition, lack historical advantages. As a result, many newcomer festivals on the festival circuit turn to spatial (and meteorological) advantages; new festival locations are scouted on exoticism, exclusivity or current (political) relevance to attraction attention. The move of Sundance to Park City and wintertime pointedly placed the festival in the attractive position of being a film festival in a ski resort. Another good example is the Midnight Sun Film Festival in Finland founded in 1986 by Finnish filmmakers, among whom the Kaurismaki brothers. Each year in mid-June the most northern festival in the world takes place in the town of Sodankylä (11,000 inhabitants). This is the period of the midnight sun, when the sun never sets above the polar circle. Thus, the only place where you can find darkness during the festival is inside the cinema theatres. Screenings continue 24 hours per day, which gives the festival visitors a unique kind of experience that is proudly promoted with the festival’s name and on its website: “The village of Sodankylä is located in the heart of Finnish Lapland, some 120 kilometers above the Arctic Circle, where the sun doesn’t set at all in the summertime. The Lappish nature and the nightless night provide the Midnight Sun Film Festival a setting no other festival can compete!” Another striking example is the Sarajevo Film Festival, founded during the war in former Yugoslavia in
1995. Screenings were organised despite or in defiance of the bombings of the city and Bosnian people. Pushing this further, the festival organisation erected an open-air cinema on the city’s main square in 1996. In addition, an international and politically-engaged board was formed to support the second festival. Ingmar Bergman, Francis Ford Coppola, Milos Forman, Richard Gere, Susan Sarandon, Martin Scorsese, Susan Sontag, and Nagisa Oshima attached their name to the festival. On the festival website the organisation emphasises the continuing relevance and recognition of the initiative after the end of the war: “Despite the relative normalization of life in Sarajevo, the media gave a lot of coverage to the festival again in 1998. The traces of war were still present and the process of reintegration was worthy of being watched and reported. More then 40 international journalists covered the Festival and its various side events in 1998, and more then 40 hours of daily feature stories, reports etc. were broadcast nationally and internationally.”

These examples can also be understood with Julian Stringers concept of “festival image.” The physical location of the festival is very important for the festival’s image of cultural difference and used in festival marketing strategies to compete with other film festivals. Location, the element most central for a festival image, is usually reflected in the name. By and large, festivals are named after the city where they take place.

3.4.1 The Mostra and the Cultural Memory of Space

Let us return to the case study of the Mostra Internazionale d’Arte Cinematografica and examine how the spatial axis is constituted. On the circuit, the Mostra specifically enters into competition with the festivals in Locarno, just before Venice, and Toronto, beginning towards the end of the Mostra. The winner of the Golden Lion in 2003, Andrey Zvyagintsev’s debut film THE RETURN/VOSVRACHENI (Russia: 2003), was the object of fierce struggle between Locarno and Venice. Both festivals wanted to include the film in their programme. The Mostra won. In the international film festival circuit the Mostra occupies a prestigious position, which is particularly important in the European context of art cinema. In the case of the highly-anticipated new film by Jane Campion, IN THE CUT (Australia/USA/UK: 2003), Venice lost out to Toronto, where the movie had its premier. Screen International reports: “Pathe UK, In The Cut’s financier, has pitched it as a cross between David Fincher’s seminal chiller Seven and Campion’s Palme d’Or-winning The Piano. But it would still rather downplay Campion’s arthouse pedigree, a tactic apparent from its decision to shun this year’s rarefied Venice film festival in favour of the more generalist Toronto. Pathe says it managed to pre-sell all international territories by treading a fine line between emphasising the project’s genre credentials and not alienating Campion’s core audience.” When business considerations prevail – as in the case of IN THE CUT – Toronto has better stakes than Venice. In Castells’ terms, the function demand of the festival as market place is best covered by Toronto, whereas the historical specificity of the Mostra gives Venice the advantage of high cultural status that is
important for a first feature director. I want to argue that the advantages of historical specificity are locked into the spatial forms of the Mostra.

The history of the oldest film festival in the world continues to generate value for its contemporary events and position in the festival circuit through its locations. Festivals are what Pierre Nora named “lieux de mémoire,” usually translated as “memory sites.” Festival memories are lost times that go through a Proustian retrieval each year during the festival because the historical locations trigger the past. Embarking on one of the vaporetti’s or water taxi’s between the Lido and the mainland, one remembers earlier festival visits, just like seeing the geometrically-lined beach houses on the south side of the island evokes recollections of former festival experiences. Moreover, not only one’s own memories are retrieved in an annual rhythm, also collective memories of the festival’s rich history surface in the rituals and material surroundings on the Lido. When you enter the terrace of the Hotel Excelsior you realise that it was here that the first film of the Mostra, Rouben Mamoulian’s DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE (USA: 1931) was shown. You may set foot in the hotel for the first time and may or may not know the exact date and time of the birth of the mother festival – which was Saturday 6 August 1932 at 21:15 hours precisely – but, at any rate, you will notice the atmosphere of festival nobility and authenticity that pervades the activities and attitudes on the terrace. The historical value of the Venice film festival is based on cultural memories of unforgettable occasions and the numerous classical masterpieces, directors and stars that were discovered on the Lido. The Mostra organisation supports this historical advantage of the festival by, on the one hand, deploying the various locations and buildings in its segregation practice and, on the other, actively celebrating the glorious moments of the past. During the 60th edition of the festival, the latter strategy is visible in at least three forms. The first is the photo exposition in the Casino entrance hall entitled “diamonds are forever” The exposition shows a collection of photographs of celebrities visiting the film festival and wearing diamonds. It offers snapshots of memorable moments that the festival is keen on being remembered for. The second form is the presentation of a book on the history of the film festival. Enrica Roddolo presents her La Biënnale. Arte, polemiche, candali e storie in laguna on the Terrazza Martini at Hotel Excelsior. The book is available from the festival bookshop and a tribute to the public’s knowledge of the festival history. The third form is what can be described somewhat inelegantly as the recycling of an old star. Gina Lollobrigida is included in the Open 2003 exhibition. Open was founded in 1998 as counter initiative to the art exhibition of the Biënnale. It concentrates on arts and cinema and exhibits sculptures and installations during the film festival at various easily accessible locations. Gina Lollobrigida presents a selection of her bronze sculptures and is feted with a personal press conference, open discussion, a dinner and a great deal of media attention. As the quality of Lollobrigida’s work is questionable, the decision to include her as leading guest in the exhibition is clearly related to her iconic representation of the glamorous days of the Mostra in the 1950s.
The former strategy entails a careful planning of the differentiation in use of locations. The main historical locations of the festival are Hotel Excelsior, Hotel des Bains, the Casino and the Palazzo del Cinema. Consequently, these locations are used for prestigious activities and guests. Hotel Excelsior accommodates important guests, facilitates receptions and presentations and is used as meeting point for jury delegations, film professionals and film critics. On the terrace, the Terrazza Martini is erected where accredited guest may attend discussions, presentations or have a drink.

Hotel des Bains is the most luxurious hotel on the Lido, whose atmosphere is brilliantly captured in Thomas Mann’s *Tod in Venedig*. The hotel is the most prestigious location, where stars take residence and hold their interviews. Like the Hotel Excelsior, Hotel des Bains facilitates receptions and dinners. Across the street, the beach club Pagoda houses many of the nightly parties. The Casino is another relic of the times when the Lido was a retreat for the Venetian upper classes. It serves as press centre during the festival. Press conferences, photo calls and other media facilities are offered in this building. Downstairs, the industry lounge offers a quiet environment for the accredited film professionals and entry to a sunny terrace where the Wella Interview Space is located. The Casino is located next to the Palazzo del Cinema. This festival palace was built specifically for the festival and first used in 1937. Francesco de Bono writes:

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Fu solemente nell’inverno 1936/1937 che la Biennale avviò fattivamente i lavori di costruzione per un palazzo del cinema – comprensivo di una grande sala di 2.500 posti e altre minori, oltre agli uffici della Mostra – per il quale il 18 novembre la commissione esecutiva aveva scelto il progetto dell’ingegnere Luigi Quagliata. All’opposto di quanto prospettato da Maraini nel 1932, quale ubicazione del palazzo fu individuata l’area occupata dall’ex forte Quattro Fontane al Lido, a pochi passi dall’albergo Excelsior: scelta che fu il risultato di un intrecciarsi di interessi tra il commune di Venezia e la Compagnia italiana grandi alberghi.\textsuperscript{xiii}

De-entwining some of the interests of the Venice community and the CIGA (Compagnia Italiana Grandi Alberghi), a chain of luxury hotels including Hotel Excelsior, the Festival Palace became the heart of the organisation and

\textsuperscript{xiii} It was only in the winter of 1936/1937 that the Biennale actually [started] the construction works for the Palazzo del Cinema – including a big theatre of 2500 seats and smaller theatres, as well as the Festival offices – for which, on November 18th, the executive commission has chosen the project of engineer Luigi Quagliata. Contrary to the project proposed by Maraini in 1932, in which the location of the Palazzo was to be in the area occupied by the ex fort of Quattro Fontane on the Lido, very close to the Excelsior hotel: a choice that was the result of the combined interests of the Venice municipality and the Italian hotel company grandi alberghi. Bono, Francesco. “La Mostra del Cinema di Venezia: Nascita e Sviluppo nell’Anteguerra (1932-1939).” *Storia Contemporanea*, vol. XXII no. 3 (August 1991): 513-549; 539-540.
Although the hotels retain their prestigious role in the festival, the premiers and ceremonies with their accompanying rituals on the red carpet (which is blue in Venice) henceforth take place in the palazzo. The segregation behind the deployment of the various festival locations becomes most clear in the observation that entry to the four most prestigious locations named above is restricted to specified accredited guests and, on occasion, subjected to invitation. We can argue that the cultural capital of the Mostra is to a large extent locked into the historical locations and buildings on the Lido. One of the main problems of the present festival, therefore, is how to deal with the restrictions posed by the small capacity of the locations. The festival suffers from a severe lack of screens with sufficient technological standards. The cinema theatre Palagalileo has been erected as a permanent building in-between the Casino and the Palazzo del Cinema and offers 1299 seats. The building is used for press screenings. The only other large permanent cinema theatre is the Sala Grande in the palace, which may contain 1016 viewers and is used for the official premiers as well as for its opening and closing ceremonies. Smaller cinemas are Sala Perla (451 seats), Sala Volpi (161 seats), Sala Pasenetti (128 seats), Sala Astra 1 (225 seats) and Sala Astra 2 (136 seats). To meet the demands for more screening space, the theatre Pala BNL is erected each year at walking distance from the festival palace. This rather uncomfortable location is used for public screenings. It adds 1700 temporary seats to the total of 3416 permanent ones. But this is not enough. Industry screening, in particular, remains a big problem. Discussions frequently return to the question of how this problem can be solved. Among the possibilities is the reconstruction of the old airport on the Lido for festival purposes. This option, however, costs money, which is not in sync with the cuts imposed by the Berlusconi government on the festival. Another option is the relocation of the entire festival to the Arsenale area, the old shipyard, on the main Venice island. However, leaving the Lido is hardly conceivable without cultural capital destruction. The roots of the festival are on the Lido and its continuing occupation of the environment, locations and buildings that were also used in the past is one of the main generators of its present prestigious position in the international film festival circuit.

3.4.2 Spatial Segregation through Accreditation
The status of the film festival event is also obtained by the use of segregative practices. The segregation in the organisation of festivals is normally carried out by systems of accreditation. Not everybody can access film festivals equally. Some are excluded completely and access to specific places is reserved for people with the right type of accreditation. The Mostra applies strict rules for accreditation to film professionals, film critics and representatives from cultural institutions. In order to be recognised as press representatives, applicants have to produce documents for verification, such as coverage of previous or other festival editions, a press card and a letter of the editor in chief confirming their festival reporter status. The festival press co-ordination then decides on approval/dismissal and categorisation of the
applicants. In Venice there are four categories: daily, periodical, media and technician. Daily accreditation is reserved for journalists writing for the daily, top national newspapers. Less important daily newspapers fall under the category periodical that also contains – as the title suggests – periodical publications, such as Screen and Variety. Smaller magazines as well as Internet sites and miscellaneous organisations are covered under the umbrella of media. Daily, periodical and media are the three major categories that are used to regulate entrance to screenings, places and press facilities. The fourth category, technician, is distributed among cameramen, sound technicians, photographers and other technical crew. It provides them with access to places – e.g. the “red” carpet and areas for interviews and photo calls – but not screenings. Two observations have to be made regarding the distinction between four press categories. One: it is pre-eminently hierarchical. Two: it is based on the written press. The hierarchical nature of the distinction becomes apparent in the differences in privileges between the various cardholders. Most importantly, daily, periodical and media cardholders have separate lines for appointed press screenings. This structure guarantees daily press cardholders access to all these screenings. Periodical press representatives, too, are pretty sure to find a seat for those films. Media cardholders, on the contrary, have to make sure they stand at the front of the line for certain screenings if they want to have a fair chance of getting inside the theatre. For popular screenings during the 60th Mostra, such as INTOLERABLE CRUELTY and ZATOICHI (Japan: Takeshi Kitano 2003), this implied an investment of up to two hours queuing. The logistic explanation for this hierarchical division is that journalists who publish daily reviews in newspapers have to be able to see the films in their premier screenings in order to do their job. Journalists who publish one festival report can also use later screenings. However, apart from being based on practical considerations for job facilitation, the division also comprises an act of differentiation. Daily journalists – who publish more often (daily) and often in culturally more acclaimed media (top national newspapers) than periodical journalists – are categorised as elite guests to the festival. Periodical journalists, in their turn, are categorised above media journalists. This classification, at the same time, attributes to the A status of the festival and influences the relations between film critics. The journalists in the hierarchically lower category of media press – granted access to screenings after industry cardholders, who are equivalent to periodical cards in this – receive few possibilities (deficiency of timely information) and little legitimisation (low categorisation) for assuming leading positions in the meaning making and agenda setting activities. The low category of media press also becomes visible in the provided festival facilities; whereas daily and periodical press have press boxes that professionalise their channels for communication and information, the media press do not have this facility at their disposal. The hierarchy of the accreditation system can be understood as part of the mechanism of segregation by which the festival consolidates its top cultural status. The hierarchical accreditation of press and media representatives favours the journalists that represent “high cultural capital”
media companies and “serious” film criticism, which both supports the prestigious image of the festival and legitimates the dominance and influence of daily journalists, who “seriously” cover the competition programmes.

The second observation is that the category division is based on the written press. Talking to Michela Lazzarin, head of foreign press coordination, during the festival, she confirmed that “television is a problem.” Though it would, of course, be technically possible to broadcast daily items on the festival, in reality no television station other than the festival’s official partner RAI Sat can do so, because the Mostra has sold the exclusive rights for press conferences, opening and closing ceremony and other special events to RAI Sat (which broadcasts them via satellite). Other television companies have the (legal) right to show a maximum of three consecutive minutes from any of these events — offering, for example, sufficient time to broadcast the staged proposal to George Clooney — but depend on additional services otherwise. Many of these services are offered at the festival, but not all of them are offered by the festival, such as the distribution of audio-visual material and the organisation of interviews. The former is facilitated by the audio-visual counter at the casino, which serves as the press centre during the festival. The latter has to be organised via the various press attachés for the films. Other than the press conferences in the casino, the consecutive photo call at the Terrace and the TV/radio call in the RAI Sat lounge, which are organised by the festival, these services are merely facilitated by the festival. It offers locations and provides the contacts, but does not actively select or organise. Production companies, instead, are responsible for the distribution of audio-visual material and organisation of interviews. This way, they can influence media exposure by the selection of specific fragments and the inclusion and exclusion of particular reporters. A common precondition for being allowed into one of the press junket interview session (20/30 journalists per session) with an actor or director is, for example, that the movie must have been distribution in the country where the programme will be broadcast or a report published. The medium specific reliance of television on audio-visual material partly explains Michela Lazzarin’s statement that television is a problem. Whereas written film criticism may more easily transcend the level of description or infotainment and move into critical evaluation, televised film reports concentrate on fragments of the films and/or interviews and thus have less space for analytical comments. The categorisation of television reporters by the festival, then, is “dependent on the type of program they make” as Lazzarin explains. The more interest is displayed in star behaviour and juicy facts, the less likely a reporter is to receive high press accreditation. For this type of coverage, essentially, does not include the role of the festival as composer of several programmes and may also be obtained without following these programmes thoroughly. Moreover, this is not the type of coverage that supports the festival in an A status profile. The low cultural connotation of the medium television is not unimportant in this respect. The festival specifically concentrates its accreditation system on the written press.
3.5 The Temporal Axis

The temporal axis of the film festival event is relevant to all phases of the tripartite selection in the value-adding process. Festival programmers are depended on the timing of filmmakers and productions companies to finish a product. Cannes (May 2003), Venice (August/September 2003) and Berlin (February 2004) all eagerly awaited the new Wong Kar-Wai project 2064, but had to let the honours pass, as the film’s completion was delayed several times. Directors can, of course, also choose to manage a project’s post-production prior to a favoured film festival or simply hold a film back. Numerous filmmakers maintain a loyal relation with specific festivals. Roderick Conway Morris, film critic for the International Herald Tribune, comments to the opening film of the 60th Mostra: “For many years, Woody Allen chose Venice as the venue for his European premieres, but last year deserted to Cannes, to the general dismay of the lagoon dwellers. But de Hadeln enticed him back to Venice this time with his latest ‘Anything Else,’ which was the opening, out-of-competition film of the festival.” Moreover, in the period between the outset of the festival and the closing ceremony, juries deliberate on the official awards. The Venice film festival consist of various programmes: the Competition (Concorso), Short Competition (Corti Concorso), Our of Competition (Fuori Concorso), Special Screenings (Proiezioni Speciali), Side Events (Eventi Collaterali), Upstream Competition (Controcorrente Concorso), New Territories (Nuovi Territori), Retrospectives (Retrospettiva), and the International Critics Week (Settimana della Critica), in which the independent selection of films chosen by the National Society of Italian Film Critics is presented. Three of these programmes share the format of a contest: the Competition, the Short Competition and Upstream. Besides, there is a contest for all first features participating in the festival. In total there are three international juries that decide on the various awards. The Competition jury selects winners for both the long and short films. The selection process of the various juries is blocked from in- and output channels as much as possible. Jury members are not allowed to speak on films in competition or any incidents related to jury discussions. Nobody except the festival director is allowed presence during the jury deliberations. The aim is to reach an independent judgement that is revealed during the apotheoses of the closing ceremony. The second important selection process that develops during the outset of the festival and its closing night is at the same time a segregated and public activity: the selection for mediation. What films and what directors receive how much coverage is decided sometime, somewhere among the accredited film professionals – in particular the press representatives – and media companies during the film festival. The ten days of the festival are not only filled with screenings and production of reports, but also leave ample time for discussions and gossip. Published items may boomerang back into the evaluative process of the festival programmes and influence the evaluation of other films or the assessment of the film festival as a whole. Opinions, articles and judgements accumulate during the festival.
Where at the beginning of the festival film critics operate more carefully by writing predominantly in a descriptive instead of evaluative mode, towards the end of the festival there seems to be an overall consensus on the festival highlights and general the quality of that year’s festival harvest.

Especially the latter two phases of the value-adding process, selection for awards and selection for mediation, are susceptible to agenda setting forces. The idea of agenda setting has been used to discuss the steering role of news for public opinion or behaviour for decades. In 1963 Bernard Cohen argued in *The Press and Foreign Policy* that: “the press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion. It may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.” Early (empirical) research initially concentrated on the correlations between the media agenda and public agenda. The concept of agenda setting developed out of interest in the public opinion process, in particular regarding political issues. In this context, it was used to explain the first stage of public opinion formation, namely the emergence of issues and their saliencies. In the 1990s some scholars shifted their attention to other aspects of agenda setting, such as the media agenda itself. The question “Who sets the media agenda?” revived interest in news sources, hierarchical influences between media companies and the gatekeeping role of editors. It is also the question that is particularly relevant to the film festival situation. By adding the interrogative pronoun “how” to “who,” and including the jury delegations, my interest in the agenda setting process at film festivals is covered. Both juries and media representatives embark on vaporetti or water taxis to the Lido with clear objectives in mind. They participate in the film festival to pass judgements on the programmes or individual achievements and convert these evaluative selections into awards, publications or broadcast items. The process by which these selections are made can be analysed using the concept of agenda setting. In this context I understand agenda setting as the dynamics between unequal opinion-makers and their products that results in the transfer of opinions into dominant topics. Value addition, then, is achieved when these dominant topics are credited with awards (juries) or mediation (press and media). It is important to note that the value addition of mediation is not dependent on the positive content of the reports. Negative exposure, as well, contributes to the worth of films, directors and actors. It is also important to remember that the context of the jury agenda differs from that of the media agenda. Juries set the agenda of official festival winners and losers. Through its selection of award winners, the juries contribute to the current image of the festival (or other associations they represent). The public opinion is not a primary consideration. The media, on the contrary, are directed at the general public. Film critics do not represent a larger body, but give more or less independent and personal information that is supposed to be consumed by the public. They set the agenda of favourites, scandals and hot topics. Their general public is a varied assemblage of cinephiles, film buyers, distributors and festival programmers. The issues set on the agenda may be transferred onto the public agenda of
film lovers (as in traditional theories of agenda setting is dominantly researched), but they may also influence the decisions of film programmers to in- or exclude certain films in their festival, distributors’ plans for timing and scale of releases and buying behaviour. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the agenda setting practices further by taking specific examples of a festival winner, loser, favourite and a scandal.

3.5.1 The Winner: THE RETURN

There are many criteria that juries may use to decide which entry in a competition is most eligible to win what award. The Mostra categories of “Best Film/Director/Actor/Actress,” “Grand Jury Prize,” and “Outstanding Individual Contribution” do not define how quality is to be measured. This is the task of the festival jury. Since jury deliberations are strictly kept from the public eye, it is difficult to trace the actual considerations in the process that led to the announced list of winners. It is not known who acted most influential among the jury members and neither is it clear what the most important differences in opinion were. What can be said, however, is that there are two privileged positions: that of the jury president and the festival director. Both have the authority to set the agenda. The jury president is the appointed day-to-day leader of the jury deliberations, who, in theory, has decisive power in setting criteria for the selection process. For the 60th Mostra this chairman role is undertaken by Mario Monicelli (1915), the established Italian director and screenwriter. The second influential position is held by the festival director, who is a continuously looming presence and whose views on the festival, its films and film culture in general, matter a great deal. Festival director Moritz de Hadeln phrases his viewpoints on the 60th festival edition in the festival catalogue. He begins by naming the Mostra a meeting place for world cinema and, later on, continues to characterise its programme: “Two type of films come together: those using Venice for promotion at the beginning of a commercial career, and the new-comers who are waiting to be discovered. So Venice becomes a meeting forum for both established and new filmmakers, actors and actresses appearing for the first time under the limelight knowing that Venice could be the turning point for their career. Among the many themes emerging from this rich selection, we should underline the large number of European films, which includes an interesting Italian presence. From Portugal to Poland, Italy to France, Great Britain to Germany, a geographical unity is being created beyond language barriers, in which our common past becomes a binding source of vitality.” In retrospect, we can assess what the issues have been that were put on the agenda during the jury deliberations.

The official Venezia 60 jury awarded the Golden Lion for Best Film in 2003 to THE RETURN by the Russian director Andrey Zvyagintsev. THE RETURN was screened towards the end of the festival. The press screening was held on Tuesday September 2 at 1 p.m. in the Palagalileo. The public premier took place the next day, Wednesday September 3 at 6 p.m. in the Sala Grande of the festival palace. Three days later, during the closing and awards ceremony,
Zvyagintsev accepted both the Golden Lion and the Luigi de Laurentiis award (for first features) for *The Return*. The film did, indeed, stand out in the competition programme, because it was the only first feature film in a compilation that was dominated by award winners and festival habitués, such as Takeshi Kitano, Margarethe von Trotta and Manoel Oliveira. Zvyagintsev (1964) graduated as an actor from the Moscow State University and worked as an actor until his debut as TV director in 2000. His film debut tells the story of two young brothers who are unexpectedly confronted with the return of their father. After a 10-year separation they embark on a journey together. The purpose of the trip is cast in shadow for the brothers and the growing tensions between them and their returned father unfolds in a drama. Zvyagintsev himself remarks on the film: "It sounds like a valid question, what is this film about, but I think this question should not be asked. The strange thing is how easily we are prepared to rid ourselves of our own vision, replacing it conveniently with someone else's interpretations, even with that of the author...When I was shooting the film I did not see the story as an every day or a social one. To a great extent the film is an intent mythological look on human life. This is probably what I would like the audience to keep in mind before they enter the screening room." The director's preferred ambiguity in message places emphasis on the film's atmosphere and (religious) symbolism. *The Return* is beautifully shot by cinematographer Mikhail Kritchman, who enables the rough lakes and landscapes to play a part in the contemplative, but suspenseful narrative. It puts the film in direct opposition to the politically-engaged films in competition such as Marco Bellocchio's *Buongiorno, Notte* (Italy: 2003), Paolo Benvenuti's *Segreti di Stato* (Italy: 2003) and Christopher Hampton’s *Imagining Argentina* (Spain/UK/USA: 2003). Choosing the visually stunning debut of a Russian filmmaker over the political message of Italian directors playing a home match, or the latest projects of established filmmakers, the jury presents a clear statement of their perception what the Mostra is all about: cinema as art and space for fresh talent. Peter Zander from The Welt writes, on the day of the closing ceremony: "Es gab auf der 60. Mostra internazionale d'arte cinematografica nicht, wie in Cannes oder jingst in Locarno, das eine große Werk, das alle anderen überragte (und doch unterlag). Wenn heute Abend die Löwen vergeben werden, ist im Grunde alles offen. Die Frage wird nur sein, an welche der beide P-Fraktionen sie wanderen: an die private oder die politische. Es gäbe natürlich auch noch eine dritte Variante: die eine große Ausnahme auszuzeichnen, die ein keine der Schubladen passt – Takeshi Kitanos ironischer Samurai-Film "Zatoichi". Oder aber die Kompromisslösung: ein Werk, das beide Fraktionen gleichermaßen abdeckt. Das wäre dann Manoel Oliveiras 'A Talking Picture'.”

**XXIII** Unlike Cannes or Locarno, the 60th Mostra internazionale d'arte cinematografica did not feature one great work which outshone all the others (and yet did not win). When the lions are handed out tonight, anything could happen. The question is, which of the two parties will win the trophies: the political or the private. There is, of course, a third option: to
RETURN, the jury opted for Zander’s private party and the a-political notion of cinema as (visual) art form. The secondary prizes are divided between the other categories: The Grand Jury Prize is given to a film that fits the other party, Randa Chahal Sabag’s LE CERF-VOLANT/THE KITE (Lebanon/France: 2003), which deals with an impossible love between a Lebanese girl and an Israeli soldier and is situated at one of the politically-loaded checkpoints; Takeshi Kitano wins the Silver Lion with his ZATOICHI; the Coppas Volpi for Best Actor and Actress account for both America’s – Sean Penn for 21 GRAMS (USA: Alejandro Gonzales Inárritu 2003) – and Europe’s – Katja Riemann for ROSENSTRASSE ((Germany/Netherlands: Magarethe von Trotta 2003) inclusion; finally, the Italian contributions are represented with the award for outstanding individual contribution for the scenario of Marco Bellocchio’s BUONGIORNO, NOTTE. During the festival, rumour had it that Silvio Berlusconi would prefer an Italian victory. Combined with the Italian presidency of the Venezia 60 jury and the nationalist sentiments of the Italian public, the expectations were high for Bellocchio. Roderick Conway Morris writes in the International Herald Tribune: “The Russian film’s brace of prizes was an almost universally applauded choice, except among a section of the Italian film and media establishment, who had pinned their hopes on Marco Bellocchio’s ‘Buongiorno, notte’ (Good Morning, Night). Although this film was awarded a special prize for ‘an individual contribution of particular note’ for its script, the director and a cohort of sympathizers decamped, apparently in a huff, back to Rome before the closing ceremony, leaving one of its hapless stars, the popular Luigi lo Cascio, to collect the award.”

BUONGIORNO, NOTTE became the widely-recognised loser of the 60th Mostra.

3.5.2 The Loser: BUONGIORNO, NOTTE
Ironically, it can be argued that BUONGIORNO, NOTTE, although bravely treating the abduction and execution of Italian Minister Aldo Moro in 1978 from the perspective of the Red Brigades, fell victim to the politicised nature of the festival and the influence of the Berlusconi government. These anti-political sentiments, on the other hand, incited the jury members to select the a-political film THE RETURN for the Golden Lion. The right-wing Berlusconi government has been extending its influence over the Italian peninsula by replacing people at key positions with straw men and passing legislations that allow favoured monopolies such as Berlusconi’s own media empire to thrive. Berlusconi’s project to tighten his grip on Italy’s cultural institutions did not pass over the Biënnale and the Mostra. In 2002, the highly-acclaimed Mostra leader Alberto Barbera was dismissed. When Pierluigi Celli and Piera Detassis declined the offer to lead the festival together – allegedly because the political influence was too great, Moritz de Hadeln was found willing to

hock the big exception, which does not fit into either pigeonhole – Takeshi Kitano’s ironic Samurai-Film ‘Zatoichi.’ Or there is one possible compromise: to select a film which covers both categories. That would be Manoel Oliveira’s ‘A talking Picture’.” Zander, Peter. “Der Zuschaure als Mittäter.” Die Welt, 6 September 2003.
lead the world’s oldest festival. Initially, the appointment of Moritz de Hadeln is received with suspicion. Is De Hadeln a straw man for Berlusconi? In various articles journalists speculate on Berlusconi’s intentions, ranging from revitalising the Italian film to bringing more glamour and stars to the Lido. The latter intention is often used to frame De Hadeln's appointment. Just before the opening of the 59th Mostra, Bianca Stigter writes: “De Hadeln is de opvolger van Alberto Barbera, die vorig jaar werd ontslagen en moest worden opgevolgd door iemand die beter past bij wat de reëring Berlusconi onder cultuur verstaan. Onder Barbera zou het festival niet genoeg glamour geleverd hebben. De benoeming van De Hadeln was een meesterzet. De Hadeln was juist ontslagen bij het filmfestival van Berlijn, dat hij 22 jaar leidde. De Hadeln werd juist verweten dat hij teveel Amerikaanse glamour naar het festival haalde.” However, the 59th and 60th festival editions of the Mostra under De Hadeln’s leadership convinced most critics that he was not only capable of attracting stars to the Lido, but also of cherishing serious cinema and artistic achievements. The Golden Lions for the MAGDALENE SISTERS (UK/Ireland: Peter Mullan 2002) and THE RETURN (2003) played important roles in the international acceptance of De Hadeln as independent festival director. As most eye-catching markers, they assured that the contemporary festival image of the Venice film festival was not contaminated by political pressure and prevented the Mostra from having to write another episode of blasphemous political interference into its annals. It is more than likely that the widespread opposition to the political interpositions with the festival led to a reactionary favouritism for a-political films and an unwillingness to award the Golden Lion to an Italian film dealing with its political history. De Hadeln, who repeatedly complained about the bureaucratic inefficiency of the Italians, the small size of his team and the lack of financial support to revitalise the festival with better facilities, might very well have played a part in keeping the festival from an easy retreat into nationalist onanism. In retrospect, his agenda for the Mostra was different from the political line of the government. This helped him to win over the international press, but, at the same time, complicated his relation with the political powers. When the Berlusconi government prevents the reappointment of De Hadeln for a third term a couple of months after Mostra 60, FIPRESCI indignantly sends out an email of disapproval:

“FIPRESCI Deplores the Failure to Appoint Moritz De Hadeln to the Direction of the Venice Film Festival. FIPRESCI (the International Federation of Film Critics), which includes thousands

xxiv “De Hadeln is Alberto Barbera’s successor, who was fired last year and had to be substituted by someone who would be more appropriate to what the Berlusconi government considers culture to be. It was said the festival did not have enough glamour under Barbera. The appointment of De Hadeln was a superior move. De Hadeln had just been fired from the Berlin Film Festival, which he had led for 22 years. De Hadeln was reproached precisely because he attracted to much American glamour to the festival.” Stigter, Bianca. “Nieuwe Baas Past Beter bij Berlusconi.” NRC Handelsblad. 28 August 2002.
of film critics from 62 countries all over the world, expresses its strongest disapproval of the recent developments which led to the dismissal, by the Minister of Culture Giuliano Urbani, of the President Franco Bernabé and of the directorial board of the Biennale of Venice, which were about to confirm Moritz de Hadeln as head of the Venice Film Festival for 2004 in a meeting set for today (December 22nd) and then cancelled. FIPRESCI, through its President, the celebrated French film critic Michel Ciment, and its General Secretary Klaus Eder, stated - even though it does not wish to intervene in the internal affairs of the Italian government - that it deplores that political reasons have intervened once more in the cultural and administrative autonomy of one of the most important and prestigious cultural bodies in the world, which international critics have always considered very highly.251

In an interview with Die Welt on January 10, 2004, De Hadeln explained that the Minister of Culture, Giuliano Urbani, takes on the artistic independence of the festival by turning it into a foundation. When interviewer Hanns-Georg Rodek asks De Hadeln: “Nun sollen sich Firmen offiziell in den Vorstand der Stiftung hinein kaufen können, z.B. Medienfirmen wie sie Signore Berlusconi besitzt.”xxv De Hadeln answers: “Bis zu drei Sitze sind "kauflich". Der Präsident und ein weiteres Mitglied werden vom Kulturminister ernannt, dazu kommen drei Repräsentanten der Stadt Venedig, der Region und der Provinz. Interessanterweise hat sich der Regionsvertreter für mich ausgesprochen, obwohl er der Ministerpartei angehört. Es ist keine Frage von links oder rechts. Ich habe den Eindruck, dass sich kleine Clans mit Privatinteressen bekriegen. Dieses komplizierte Netz von Intrigen ist sehr schwer zu durchblicken.”xxvi The Minister of Culture, Giuliano Urbani (Forza Italia), is repeatedly recognised as the culprit in the debates that follow on De Hadeln’s dismissal.252 Urbani demanded a reorganisation of the Mostra that consists, on the one hand, of attracting more Hollywood stars and glamour to the Lido, and, on the other hand, of a strong incentive for the Italian film industry. In early March 2004, the Rome-born Marco Müller is appointed the new festival director. Müller already led the film festivals in Pesaro, Rotterdam (1990-1992) and Locarno (1992-2000) and, at the time of his appointment, worked as independent producer in Bologna.

xxv "Now, businesses – like the media businesses which belong to Signore Berlusconi – are supposed to be officially allowed to buy themselves into the Foundation’s Board.” Interview with Moritz de Hadeln in: Rodek, Hanns-Georg. “Ein Kompliziertes Netz von Intrigen.” Die Welt. 10 January 2004.

xxvi “Up to three seats are „up for sale”. The President and another member are nominated by the Minister of Culture. In addition, there are three representatives of the City of Venice, the Region and the Province. Curiously, the Region’s representative has voted for me, although he belongs to the Minister’s party. This is not a question of left or right. My impression is of small parties with vested interests fighting each other. This complicated web of intrigue is hard to see through.” Interview with Moritz de Hadeln. Die Welt. 10 January 2004.
BUONGIORNO, NOTTE became the loser of the 60th Mostra. Its embrace by the Italian media and public had created a buzz that was picked up by the international journalists during the festival. For example, *Le Monde* publishes: “Lors de sa projection de presse, le 3 septembre, le film a été accueilli avec un respect inhabituel à Venise (on n’a pas entendu un *telefonino* sonner) et salué par des longs applaudissements. C’est qu’il y a quelque chose de cathartique dans le démarche de Bellochio.”

When the high expectations were not converted into a substantial award – apart from the consolation prize for an outstanding individual contribution – it meant that BUONGIORNO, NOTTE would have a much harder time to hold on to its emotive potential beyond the national borders. The film did embark on a festival journey after Venice, including a gala screening in Toronto and participation in the Berlin Market, but failed to collect more than one additional prize: the European Film Award of the Critics for 2003.

Thus the film remained foremost a national hit, that was sold with moderate success on the European continent - namely in Belgium, Croatia, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Russia and CIS, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Yugoslavia – but failed to make it in the United States.

THE RETURN, on the other hand, was much more successful on the festival circuit. It swept a collection of grand prizes at mostly Eastern European film festivals such as Gottbus, Zagreb and Thessaloniki. In addition, it won the Prix Fassbinder in the European Film Academy Discovery 2003 (awarded in Berlin), received nominations for the Golden Globe (USA) and Cesar (France) in the category Best Foreign Film, and won awards in Palm Springs and Iran.

Moreover, being the winner of the Golden Lion 2003, THE RETURN could count on widespread attention and curiosity. In an early empirical study on the effects of nominations and awards, John C. Dodds and Morris B. Holbrook support the premise that “Oscar nominations and awards can provide a boost to demand in the form of additional distribution (number of theatre screens where the film is shown) and incremental revenues (total box office receipts).”

The effects of the Oscars cannot be equated with those of Golden Palms, Golden Bear and Golden Lions, but do point in a similar direction. Imagine what would have happened if the 60th Mostra jury would have preferred the political to the private. Would THE RETURN still have received all those other awards and nominations? Would BUONGIORNO, NOTTE have been more successful? Despite difficulties in empirically measuring the exact effects of an award or nomination, it is clear that selection for an official award at a major film festival (the grand prizes, that is) instantly adds value to the prize-winner.

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XXVII “During its press screening, on September 3, the film was received with respect not common in Venice (not one mobile phone rang during the screening!), and was saluted by a long applause. One would say that there's something cathartic in Bellochio's approach/way of doing/ project.” Sotinel, Thomas. “Deux Morts Obscures de l'Italie Teintent la Mostra de Violence Politique.” *Le Monde.* 6 September 2003: 32.
3.5.3 The Favourite: LOST IN TRANSLATION

When Suzan Vahabzadeh from die Sueddeutsche Zeitung describes why she likes film festivals, she uses a powerful metaphor that can also be used for my arguments on agenda setting and value addition. She writes: “Das Schönste an Filmfestivals ist vielleicht, dass die Filme, die man dort zu sehen bekommt, noch rein und unbefleckt sind – wie eine Schneekugel, die einen Berg hinunterrollt, und bei jeder Vorführung bleibt ein wenig haften, Erwartungen, Sehnsüchte, erfüllte und unerfüllte Hoffnungen. Bei den großen Festivals aber treffen sie noch in Stand der Unschuld auf ihr Publikum, können Emotionen wecken, die keiner im Saal erwartet hat.”

The metaphor is not entirely correct. When films have their premier at a film festival, they are not always pure as the undriven snow. Takeshi Kitano’s ZATOICHI was eagerly expected by the Mostra (professional) audience. It was not only the new feature by the established Japanese film director “Beat Takeshi,” who won the Golden Lion for HANA-BI (Japan: Takeshi Kitano 1997), but also his first costume film. Based on the well-known and often recounted story of the blind swordsman Zatoichi, Kitano produced his first popular genre tribute. The interest in ZATOICHI during the Mostra was overwhelming; there was a run on tickets and the queues for the premier press screening were a daunting sight for those with low accreditation. In this case, expectations were clearly set before the actual premiers on 1 September 2003 (press) and 2 September (public).

Vahabzadeh’s metaphor, however, is strikingly accurate in its portrayal of possible sequential accumulation of value. Most major international film festivals will bring forth some (premier) films that travel along various festivals and accumulate positive receptions; these are also called festival hits. What interests me, is how these journeys add value to films. I see this process as mainly driven by the agenda-setting powers of accredited press/media representatives. They follow the festival programmes closely and evaluate the achievements. Favourites then arise out of the local dynamics between these opinion-makers when a majority applauds the same film. Journalists have the authority to translate the favourites of the festival agenda into dominant issues on the media agenda and thus capture the volatile festival buzz in retrievable documentation. The value of media coverage is also constituted by the global reach of the public. This part of the value-adding process runs independent from the official festival award deliberations, but can contribute to nominations and awards given by other institutions or associations such as the Oscars and BAFTAs. An example of such festival success is LOST IN TRANSLATION (USA/Japan: Sofia Coppola 2003).

XXVIII “The best thing about film festivals is perhaps that the films being shown are still pure and immaculate – like snowballs rolling down a hill – and with every screening something sticks to them: expectations, longings, fulfilled and unfulfilled hope. But at the big festivals, they still meet their audience in a state of innocence, and are able to rouse emotions which no one in the auditorium has expected.” Vahabzadeh, Suzan. “Standardsituationen.” Sueddeutsche Zeitung. 1 September 2003.
LOST IN TRANSLATION is Sofia Coppola’s second feature. Like ZATOICHI, the film was not completely immaculate when it entered the Upstream (Controcorrente) Competition of the 60th Mostra. Coppola’s debut THE VIRGIN SUICIDES (USA: 1999) premiered at Cannes and was well-received by public and press, raising curiosity for her new film. In addition, she could benefit from the famous family ties that guaranteed at least minimal attention from media and press. Francis Ford Coppola had signed on as executive producer for his daughter’s second feature and nephew Nicolas Cage, who attended the Venice International Film Festival for the promotion of MATCHSTICK MAN (USA: Ridley Scott 2003), affectionately expressed the family’s happiness with Sofia’s success during the packed press conference. A day before LOST IN TRANSLATION’s press premier (which was on 30 September 2003), the Guardian already ranks the film second in a list of films that are expected to make a splash: “Sofia Coppola, the daughter of you know who, appears to have conquered the second-film syndrome with her follow-up to The Virgin Suicides. Set in a Tokyo hotel, it includes a much-lauded performance by Bill Murray.”

LOST IN TRANSLATION is set in Tokyo. Bob Harris, a middle-age movie star visiting Tokyo for a whiskey commercial, meets the young Charlotte, a Philosophy graduate who accompanies her photographer husband on a business trip. Both suffer from jetlag and find themselves contemplating their lives. The luxury hotel where they stay, and other estranging Japanese environments, support them in the development of a mutual gentle affection. The rhythm of LOST IN TRANSLATION is slow, with occasional eruptions of burlesque humour; Bill Murray towering high over the Japanese crowd in an elevator; confusion of tongues when a translator repeatedly abbreviates streams of director’s indications into short adjectives; self-regulating curtains that open when the jetlagged protagonists just manage to doze off. When laughter does not take over, the tone of the film inclines mostly towards the blues. The events do not build towards a closing climax. The affectionate chance encounter between Bob and Charlotte is the central narrative line, but when they share a bed midway the film, they do not kiss or sleep with each other. Neither does Bob’s adultery with the tacky jazz singer from the hotel lobby result in a confrontation with Charlotte. Only at the end of the film, when Bob leaves for the airport and turns back to repeat his goodbye to Charlotte, do we see them openly expressing their mutual affection. Bob’s words whispered in Charlotte ear, however, remain unheard for the bystanders and audience.

The original form of LOST IN TRANSLATION motivated its selection for the Upstream Competition. This competition was added to the festival by De Hadeln’s predecessor Alberto Barbera. The second prize list is reserved for feature films that are selected on their “innovational intent, creative originality and alternative cinematographical qualities.” During the festival, De Hadeln repeatedly emphasised the equality of the competition programmes and urged reporters to take both into consideration. His encouragements were in vain. Although the various competitions are important events for the press, due to the fact that the format makes the
participating films more newsworthy to write about, not all competition programmes are considered equally important. Measured by press coverage, the Official Competition is the superior contest. Most articles that appear in the daily newspapers are dedicated to films screening in the official competition or to the Out of Competition films (with famous directors and stars giving act de presence in Venice). When Thomas Sotinel from Le Monde reviews one Upstream film and two from the New Territories (Nuovi Territori) section, he significantly chooses a headline and chapeau that emphasise the hierarchically lower position of these films in the festival programme. “Quelques héros ambigus croisés aux marges de la Mostra de Venise. A l'écart de la compétition officielle, de bonnes surprises hantent les sections parallèles. Rendez-vous avec un quinquagénaire argentin, un officier allemande et un policier russe du FSB.” The festival categories, in general, direct the attention of media and press representatives. Lack of time is normally to the disadvantage of the films participating in the lesser categories. Attention is then more easily given to those films that do not come to the competition immaculate; for example, Jorgen Leth’s DE FEM BENSPÆND/THE FIVE OBSTRUCTIONS (Denmark/Switzerland/Belgium/ France: 2003), Hana Makhmalbaf’s LEZATE DIVANE/JOY OF MADNESS (Iran: 2003) and Sofia Coppola’s LOST IN TRANSLATION. When films exceed the categorical expectations and are recognised for their potential, journalists do not shun denouncing the appropriateness of such distinctions and draw attention to these films by means of their articles. For example, Susan Vahabzadeh writes: “Die Zweite Reihe der Filme, für's junge Kino gedacht, geht zwangsläufig unter in der Flut. Es ist irgendwie nicht zu erklären, warum Filme wie Schorr’s „Schultze“ und Sofia Coppolas „Lost in Translation“, die unbedingt zu den Highlights gehörten, nicht um den Goldenen Löwen mitkonkurrierten... Zum einen wird es lange dauern, bis die Reihe Controcorrente, die es erst seit ein paar Jahren gibt, zu einem festen Begriff wird....Zum anderen stellt das Festival mit den zwei Wettbewerben uns vor ein unlösbares Problem: Zwanzig Filme liefen unter dem Banner von Venezia 60 in zehn Tagen, die Knaller außer Konkurrenz nicht mitgerechnet: Woody Allen, Bernardo Bertolucci, die Coens – das will ja dann auch jeder gesehen haben. Schon ist Schluss mit der Gleichberechtigung.” LOST IN TRANSLATION was the film of the Mostra 60 par excellence that did not disappear in the flood.

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**XXIX** “Some ambiguous heroes encountered in the margins of Venice’s Film Festival. Separated from the official competition, good surprises fill the parallel sections. You can meet there an Argentinian 50-year old, a German officer and a Russian FSB policeman.” Sotinel, Thomas. “Quelques Héros Ambigu Croisés aux Marges de la Mostra de Venise.” Le Monde. 5 September 2003: 30.

**XXX** “The Second Series of films, intended for a younger audience, is of course drowned in this flood. You really cannot explain why films like Schorr’s „Schultze“ und Sofia Coppolas „Lost in Translation“, which are definitely among the highlights, are not competing for the Golden Lion...Firstly, it will take a long time before the Series Controcorrente, which has only existed for a few years, will be established as a category. Secondly, the festival confronts us with an insoluble problem: Twenty films were shown at Venezia 60 within 10 days, excluding the
**LOST IN TRANSLATION** screened in the beginning of the festival and was unanimously embraced by the media and press. The modest buzz that had surrounded the film before the festival went allegro after its premier. The film was discussed on the Lido and appeared in reports from major newspapers. Scheduled at the beginning of the festival, the first remarks on **LOST IN TRANSLATION** are concise and concentrate on praise for Bill Murray and/or Scarlett Johansson's performances and Coppola's ability to sustain her success from *The Virgin Suicides* and direct comedy. A couple of days later, when the end of the festival is in sight and reporters have had a chance to recapitulate the state of affairs, **LOST IN TRANSLATION** surfaces in articles that attempt to lay bare a meta-theme for the 60th Mostra. Thomas Sontinel from *Le Monde* writes: “S'il est une tendance qui saute aux yeux à Venise, c'est la prédominance des couples réunissant hommes mûrs et jeunes femmes.”


Gansera does not give an answer to his own question. And the answer, in fact, is not very relevant. What is relevant is **LOST IN TRANSLATION**'s ability to make a grand first impression and, consequently, hold that attention over the time-span of roughly half a year that stretches to the Oscar Night. If we look at the media


xxxii “One asks oneself...why do so many films this year tell the tale of a liaison between an old man and a young woman, and – most importantly – why do these old gentlemen come across as such likeable and touching characters? It all started with Robert Benton's film version of Philip Roth's novel "The Human Stain": a tragic love-plot between a 71-year-old professor and a 34-year-old cleaner. Then, Jacques Doillon's "Raja": a compelling, subtly-stirring almost-love story between a 60-year-old Frenchman and a 19 year-old Morrocan domestic help. And finally two films directed by women which, amazingly enough, put an even more positive emphasis on the male characters: Sofia Coppola's „Lost in Translation“ and „Les Sentiments“ by Noémie Lvovsky.” Gansera, Rainer. “Paschas, Pappas, Pantoffelhelden.” *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*. 4 September 2003.
coverage, we can see what different elements of the film are addressed to keep the media agenda occupied. During the festival it is predominantly Coppola's mix of tranquillity and humour and the May-December romance between Murray and Johansson that draws the attention. Both Murray and Johansson are applauded for their acting performances and Johansson wins the award for Best Actress in the Upstream competition. The film's setting hits a sensitive chord with the accredited festival journalists, who are accustomed to transit locations, to jetlags, to feeling out of place as well as to the pleasures of short-chance encounters far from home. The Japanese setting is also in tune with the contemporary interest in martial arts and Japanese remakes, although Coppola is taking a completely different and original take on the country. After Venice, LOST IN TRANSLATION embarks on a successful all-embracing festival tour, starting with market wonder Toronto. The film is both a festival hit and a commercial success. It opens the Viennale (Vienna International Film Festival), generates sold-out signs far and wide, and sweeps an impressive list of prizes. There are at least four elements that keep LOST IN TRANSLATION on the media agenda. Firstly, there is director, producer and screenwriter Sofia Coppola. She is blessed with glamour and personal style. Articles and interviews linger on her riches, famous family and friends (among whom Kevin Shields of My Bloody Valentine, who did the soundtrack for LOST IN TRANSLATION), and the unlucky acting adventure on replacing Winona Ryder in THE GODFATHER: PART III (USA: Francis Ford Coppola 1990). LOST IN TRANSLATION is a film that invites journalists to read Coppola's history into it. In interviews she admits getting her inspiration partly from her multiple stays in the Park Hyatt Hotel in Tokyo and the experience of feeling alienated abroad. Extending the biographical take, journalists read Charlotte as Sofia's alter ego and the troubled relationship with the photographer husband as an indicator of the state of Coppola's marriage to director Spike Jonze. Others concentrate on her filming style and define it as sparse, feminine and personal. Secondly, there are the performances of the two protagonists. Scarlett Johansson, who also stars opposite Colin Firth in GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING (UK/Luxembourg: Peter Webber 2003), is presented as having her definitive breakthrough. Bill Murray is an agenda issue, mainly because his widely-applauded performance makes him a favourite for the Oscar for Best Actor, which, at the same time, has always been considered unlikely to be awarded to a comic actor. The third element that kept the media attention tightly focused on LOST IN TRANSLATION was the accusation of racism. Coppola was reproached for mocking the Japanese and resorting to racist stereotypes. Both the US anti-racism group and the Asian Mediawatch campaigned against the film, lobbying with members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts to vote against the film. Finally, then, being nominated for four Oscars as well as four Independent Spirit Awards, five Golden Globes and eight BAFTAs, guaranteed a constant stream of media attention. LOST IN TRANSLATION appears on many journalists' list of favourites for the Oscars, which is the award that generates by far the most media attention. The four nominations it
receives are for Best Film, Best Director, Best Actor and Best Screenplay. Sofia Coppola is third in an impressive small list of female directors being nominated for an Oscar, and the first woman to be nominated for three Oscars. Female journalists react by putting the feminist issue on the media agenda. On Oscar night LOST IN TRANSLATION loses out to the overwhelming fantasy movie LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING (USA/New Zealand/Germany: Peter Jackson 2003). Sofia Coppola does win the Oscar for Best Screenplay.

3.5.4 The Scandal: TWENTYNINE PALMS

LOST IN TRANSLATION was a favourite of the journalists during the Venice International Film Festival. The positive buzz translated into the film’s frequent recurrence in articles and reviews, which continued to accelerate down the media hill like a snowball growing bigger with added values. A different journey altogether is transcribed by Bruno Dumont’s TWENTYNINE PALMS (France/Germany/USA: 2003). Like LOST IN TRANSLATION, the film does not enter the Venezia 60 competition of the Mostra immaculate. TWENTYNINE PALMS is the third feature of Dumont, who was applauded for LA VIE DE JESUS (France: 1997, Camera d’or at Cannes) and HUMANITÉ (France: 1999, Grand Jury Prize at Cannes). When Cannes rejected his third film, the Frenchman resorted to the Mostra. Where LOST IN TRANSLATION entered the Upstream competition in an atmosphere of high expectations, TWENTYNINE PALMS carried the success of Dumont’s previous two films as well as the burden of his rejection by Cannes. The story revolves around an American photographer and his French-Russian girlfriend. They scout locations in the Californian rugged landscape around the town of Twentynine Palms. They love each other. They hate each other. Nothing important seems to happen until the narrative takes an unexpectedly violent turn. In Venice, TWENTYNINE PALMS was quickly sentenced to a provoking scandal without substantial body for neglecting to live up to expectations. Bianca Stigter (NRC Handelsblad) writes: “Dumont, who had won prizes in Cannes prijzen with La Vie de Jesus and Humanité, lijkt met Twentynine Palms een antwoord te willen geven op Gasper Noë’s Irréversible, die film die een jaar eerder in Cannes een schandaal veroorzaakt. Met het schandaal rondom Twentynine Palms wil het niet zo lukken. Tijdens de persvoorstelling werd er wel boe geroepen en liepen er mensen weg, maar de grote voorstelling in het festivalpaleis werd gisteren matig bezocht. Ook het schokvermogen van verkrachtingen en vreugdeloze seks is aan inflatie onderhevig. Dumont bezwoer het publiek zijn film niet met het hoofd te bekijken, maar met de buik. Simpele dingen moeten hallucinerend worden, hoopt de regisseur, door de manier waarop hij ze gefilmd heeft. Een fotograaf en zijn vriendin rijden daarom auto, eten Chinees, zwemmen in het zwembad van het motel en neuken. Vervreemding is hun en ons lot.” Scandals are formed by controversial aesthetics,
contents or related issues, but are also dependent on the willingness of journalists to make these qualities and conditions into a scandal. On the Lido, TWENTYNINE PALMS did not succeed in convincing the accredited journalists. Instead of drawing media attention to its film, Dumont incited journalists to contemplate on the futility of scandalous festival films. A comparative-analytical article on the common failure of festival scandals to achieve box-office success appeared in Corriere della Sera. Ranieri Polese compares TWENTYNINE PALMS to other scandalous festival films such as — again — IRRÉVERSIBLE (France: Gaspar Noé 2002), THE BROWN BUNNY (USA/Japan/France: Vincent Gallo 2003), ANATOMIE DE L’ENFER (France: Catherine Breillat 2004) and O FANTASMA (Portugal: João Pedro Rodrigues 2000). What is most remarkable about TWENTYNINE PALMS’ reception is the fact that it was immediately marked as a scandalous film that did not succeed in being truly scandalous. The frame of reference of its evaluation was what can be called a festival genre of films that contains explicit and unglamorous sex, usually depicting inner frustrations, destructive relationships or sheer sexual violence, and that are appreciated for their intellectual complexity and strong iconic visual representation. TWENTYNINE PALMS indeed fits the category, but failed to convince the journalists at the Mostra of its intellectual depth. In a Guardian poll listing the “Candidates for Lions...and dogs” the film is promptly put at the top of the “worst” section poking fun at Dumont’s “intellectual” objections: “[T]his two hours of tedium crowned with a male-on-male rape and a stomach-churning stabbing was booed. The critics have it wrong, Dumont says, who urged them to “take their clothes off [like his characters] and go out into Mother Nature.””

Leaving Venice without awards and with a bad reputation, TWENTYNINE PALMS embarks on a festival journey. Interestingly, the original condemnation is subjected to erosion. Like THE BROWN BUNNY, booed at Cannes and moderately well-received in later festivals after cutting half an hour from the original, the benevolence to appreciate Dumont’s feature increased with its extended exposure on the international festival circuit. At the International Film Festival Rotterdam, TWENTYNINE PALMS received an average of three (out of five) stars from a selection of international film critics. How is it possible that value assessments by film critics change over a short period of time? Most importantly, the original reviews are made under the time constraints and the pressure of the premier festival. Film critics have to give their opinion directly after the first screening of a film. There is no

caused a scandal in Cannes a year earlier. But the scandal around Twentynine Palms is not as successful. Although during the press screening some people called bo and others walked away, the main screening in the festival palace last night was only moderately. Also the capacity to shock with rape and joyless sex is subject to inflation. Dumont swore the audience not the watch his movie with the head, but with the stomach. The director hopes that simple things have become hallucinating by means of his way of filming. A photographer and his girlfriend are driving a car, eat Chinese food, swim in the motel pool and fuck. Alienation is their destiny, and also ours.” Stigter, Bianca. “Clooney en Zeta Jones Flossen Elke Dag.” NRC Handelsblad. 4 September 2003.
time for long reflections, because the festival machines keep rolling out new premiers that await evaluation. A common fear for film critics is the possibility that they might miss or misrecognise a masterpiece. This fear results in susceptibility to influence from their peer group: the other accredited journalists. Film critics form a sub community at film festivals. They know each other and follow similar routes through the film festivals; they meet in press screenings, press conferences, junket interview sessions, the press room, where they write their pieces and all other press facilities and events at the festival. Before journalists write their individual pieces – especially the late-festival wrap-ups – there is abundant opportunity for talk amongst each other. Although all film critics are opinion-makers, not all of them are equally influential. As in every group, there are those with more authority, more capacity to influence the agenda. Due to the hierarchical order of the accreditation system, daily journalists are most likely to act as influentials, because they have the most and the best access to information as well as an official festival recognition of importance. That the agenda is set for a collective during the development of the festival is most clearly evident in the fact that, despite initial reservations of journalists to give clear judgements in their early articles, festivals end with a clear (media) image of what the highlights were, what were the favourites, and which films disappointed. Between the major newspapers there is a striking general agreement on these dominant conclusions. Once a film travels the festival circuit there is more time to consider the achievement outside the pressure and comparative nature of competitions. TWENTYNINE PALMS could take advantage of this opportunity for reconsideration. Although maybe not welcomed as top example of the festival genre of scandal films, it was appreciated as such and consequently viable at the festival circuit.

3.5.5 Agenda Setting and Media Exposure

Within the festival context, I understand agenda setting as the dynamics between unequal opinion-makers and their products that results in the transfer of opinions into dominant topics. Agenda setting is especially important for the selections for awards and mediation. The former process takes place in the insulated environments of jury delegations. The latter is both a segregated and public practice, in which film critics talk amongst each other and interact with the festival buzz that is manifested in public. Both types of agenda setting are correlated to media exposure; indirectly when the decisions of juries determine what journalists write about and directly when they themselves choose topics. When the dominant topics on the critics’ agenda are translated into media exposure, value addition occurs. The accounts above have given examples of the practice of agenda setting. What I would like to do now is see how these examples can help us recognise patterns for agenda setting and media exposure at film festivals.

I should start by mentioning that a different type of agenda setting is deployed in the months preceding the festival. Various programmers, among whom the festival director as leading figure, select which films are allowed to
enter the festival and decide in which programme they will be shown. The festival image is taken into consideration when composing such programmes. For the major European festivals that means making sure there are enough established auteurs participating, enough premiers of big commercial movies out of competition, and preferably a strong national presence, as well as sustaining the more elusive identity markers such as political awareness (Berlin), artistic accomplishments (Venice), and groundbreaking quality (Cannes), and reacting to current and/or global issues. The festival image can be identified as one of the major influences on the agenda-setting process of the official juries. Although jury members are asked to give an independent, international and professional judgement (juries are composed of directors, actors, producers, critics and festival professionals), the festival image influences the criteria they set to make evaluations, not in the latter stance under the weight of the festival director, who is not only supervisor of all festival selections, but also the authoritative haven for the newly-appointed jury members. The film critics, on the other hand, seem at first sight to be more independent in their evaluations. They do not represent the official festival choice nor are they treated with the corresponding courtesy. When we look closer, however, critics appear to respond according to fixed markers. They follow the categories of the festival. As said at the Mostra, they concentrate on the main competition programme and report on the big productions that are screening out of competition. Running up to the closing ceremony, critics start speculating about who will win an award. Festival coverage normally will end with an overview of prizes allotted. Critics, moreover, read and evaluate the various aspects of the festival programmes along recurring lines. Firstly, they look for newness: new talent, new genres, new waves, new styles etcetera. Dogma was, among others, so successful because it combined the staged launch of a new wave with the introduction of a fresh talent, Thomas Vinterberg, who participated with FESTEN at Cannes in 1998. Discoveries are quickly categorised as belonging to the new mainstream art cinema or to more off-beat film cultures. Secondly, critics favour films that deal with the topicality, preferably from a left critical perspective. Examples are IN THIS WORLD (UK: Michael Winterbottom 2002, Berlin 2003 – Golden Bear), on the troubled journey of two Afghan refugees to London, and PANJÉ ASR/AT FIVE IN THE AFTERNOON (Iran/France: Samira Makhbalhaf 2003, Cannes, 2003 – Special Mention), the fictional account of the election of the first female president in Afghanistan. Thirdly, established directors and acclaimed stars are put in the spotlight. The category of stars partly overlaps with that of the directors, as the latter is based on profession and the former on success and popularity. Directors can be stars when they have an acclaimed status and popular following. Mostly, however, stars are actors. The journalistic interest in these stars exceeds their performance in a festival film. The proposal to George Clooney by an Italian television journalist is reported on by various newspapers. Corriere della Sera adds: “Insieme, alle conferenza stampa, sono pronti allo scherzo, come se fossero ancora impegnati nei duetti della loro commedia. Lei è al Lido con i genitori, lui ha lasciato la sua villa sul Lago di
Como per venire a Venezia.\textsuperscript{xxxiv} The fact that Clooney is single and owns a large villa in Italy is also mentioned by other reporters, usually in a tongue-in-cheek tone. A light-hearted approach to stars in festival reports is common. Aside from serious evaluations of performances, interviews, or biographical background information, journalists feel free to expose human interest, gossip or plain adoration.\textsuperscript{272} The red carpet is the ultimate star moment. Scandals are the other occasions when popular interest crawls into serious festival coverage. Finally, critics display special interest in the accomplishments of their national filmmakers, actors and actresses. National presence at the festival is watched more closely than unrelated entries: more background information on story and production is given; previous accomplishments of the director are often explicitly considered; and national celebrities can count on lengthier exposés than in the international media. Thus, while most other newspapers ignore the negatively-received \textit{IMAGINING ARGENTINA} by the British Christopher Hampton at the 60th Mostra, \textit{The Guardian} uses a feature article flanked by a large photograph and movie still to relate the disappointment to the comeback of leading actress Emma Thompson: “Emma Thompson came out fighting yesterday after her emotional comeback film, Imagining Argentina, was booed and jeered at the Venice film festival.”\textsuperscript{273} Three days later, \textit{The Guardian} publishes a lengthy profile on Emma Thompson, reworking her contribution to \textit{IMAGINING ARGENTINA} in the light of previous accomplishments, personal situations and political beliefs.\textsuperscript{274} Similarly, German newspapers expose a keen interest in the new Margaretha von Trotta, \textit{ROSENSTRASSE}, in-competition at the festival and awarded a Silver Bear for leading actress Katja Riemann.

Media exposure is, however, not only dependent on the codes critics use to process the overload of information at film festivals. Editors also have a large say in what gets published. Whether a review is published or not can depend on a variety of factors, such as personal preference of an editor, assumptions about reader’s interest, and competing newsworthy items. Wesley Shrum argues that “favourability is not as important as the sheer appearance of the text in a widely circulated newspaper, so editorial decisions are often more important than the evaluations of the critics. A critical notice may not appear because it is not commissioned. It may be commissioned and rejected. And it may be altered in form or occasionally even content before its appearance in print.”\textsuperscript{275} The notion that media exposure, irrespective of the nature of the reviews, adds value to the films and their makers is supported by various researches.\textsuperscript{276} This makes film festivals highly beneficial events for a variety of films, because the concentration of media representatives, films, stars and juries in segregated and prestigious locations will inevitably lead to a lot of attention in international media. Who and what gets that attention, and thus acquires value, is determined by the agenda-setting process that

\textsuperscript{xxxiv} “Together, in the press conference, they are ready to joke, as if they were still busy with the duets of their comedy. She’s on the Lido with her parents, he has left his villa on Lake Como in order to come to Venice.” Grassi, Giovanni. “Io il Nuovo Cary Grant? Rubo un Po’d’a Tutt.i”\textit{Corriere della Serra}. 4 September 2003: 28.
translates the volatile festival buzz into recognisable items on the global media agenda.

3.6 Conclusion

The staged marriage proposal during the press conference for *INTOLERABLE CRUELTY* plays upon the insincere intentions with which Marilyn Rexroth (Catharine Zeta-Jones) gets married in the film. She considers a marriage to a rich man as her “ticket to freedom” and intends to acquire at least half of all the assets when filing for divorce. When Miles Massey (George Clooney) successfully defends her first ex-husband, exposing her as a gold-digger in court and leaving her empty-handed, she takes up the ultimate challenge; making Miles believe she loves him, marrying him and stripping him of his possessions. For Marilyn, the institute of marriage is but a performance and a method to reach her goals. She marries a fake oil baron, divorces him and rents an expensive dog in order to make Miles believe she has earned her fortune and could not possibly be after his money. The fake marriage proposal at the Venice film festival should be seen as a tongue-in-cheek parody on the film, a staged performance with hidden agenda: in this case, the construction of a media spectacle.

In this chapter I have shown that one of the most important functions of the film festivals is their ability to add value. In the value-adding process, media and press play a vital role. Following Manuel Castells’ concept of space of flows it becomes possible to account for the influence of locally-gathered elite groups (such as the media representatives) in the global network and understand how performances and products (reviews and reports) relate the local film festival event to the larger network. During a festival, a multitude of performances competes for attention. There are abundant pre-planned ceremonies and rituals, but at the same time there are also more uncontrolled expressions of spectacle and outright distortions of existing formats. I defined value addition as a tripartite process in which selection for entries, awards and mediation befall. All types of films and filmmakers may use this process to acquire value in the global market, whether targeted for a mainstream or niche audience. In fact, major international film festivals depend on the format of premiers, prizes *and* pop idols to attract the necessary numbers of international media representative and thus create a successful profile on the festival circuit. The picture of George Clooney on the front page of *The Times* was valuable promotion for the film, as well as for the festival. Instead of focusing on high/low culture distinctions I have therefore chosen to analyse how the festival network generates value. It became clear that the spatial and temporal dimensions of the network lead to practices of segregation and agenda setting that are indispensable to value addition.

The agenda setting on the temporal axis and segregation on the spatial axis amount to the highly successful formula for adding value through film festivals. On the international film festival circuit only a few festivals can occupy a privileged position. Suitability for function demands allows new
festivals to jump forward in ranking when they succeed in answering current needs of film professionals. Historical specificity explains the persistent high ranking of the first European film festivals. I have argued that the advantages of historical specificity are, to a large extent, locked in the spatial forms and environments of festivals. The Mostra purposefully segregates the use of its locations – *lieux de mémoire* – to contribute to the prestigious image of the festival. The spatial segregation is facilitated by the system of accreditation and controls the access of people to locations. The most prestigious locations are reserved for renowned occasions and important people. A close analysis of the accreditation rules and practices for media and press showed that the written press and daily top national newspapers assume the top hierarchical position. The seriousness and reach of daily festival coverage contributes to the cultural prestige of the film festival event. This hierarchy also, however, has an effect on the temporal axis. It makes daily film critics more likely to assume leading positions in the agenda setting process that occurs during the duration of the festival. Agenda setting plays a role in the selection of films for entry to festival programmes, but is especially important for the selection of awards and for mediation. Both juries and media representatives travel to film festivals to pass judgements on the programmes or individual achievements and convert these evaluative selections into awards, publications and broadcasted items. I explained that, in the festival context, I understand agenda setting as the dynamics between unequal opinion-makers and their products that results in the transfer of opinions into dominant topics. The jury deliberations result in the conversion of these topics into awards, which – as institutionalised cultural legitimisation – add positive value to films and filmmakers. Interestingly, my analysis of a festival winner, loser, favourite and scandal showed that it is not as important whether media exposure is positive or negative. Media coverage is always valuable because it puts films on the agenda. Film critics, on the one hand, have the power to set favourites on the media agenda, independent of the competition results, and thus contribute to the buzz that will help the film to travel the festival circuit successfully. On the other hand, films that are initially badly received may still accumulate value when visiting more festivals. The added value that is acquired at festivals can also be of value outside of the festival network. It can be translated into additional sales, cult followings or prizes for aligned awards such as the Oscars. At the end of this chapter, I touched upon the issue of review patterns. Journalists process the overload of information at film festivals according to fixed markers such as newness, topicality, (popular) interest in established directors, acclaimed stars and scandals, and national accomplishments. Similar patterns may be discerned in the programming practices of festivals. This will be one of the topics of the final case study on Rotterdam.