



## Utrecht Workshop in Comparative Cinema History: Film exhibition in Europe

Utrecht University, Department of Media & Culture  
Date: 26-27 November 2010  
Location: Utrecht, Netherlands

The department of Media & Culture of Utrecht University launches a bi-annual series of workshops in comparative cinema history focusing on film exhibition in Europe since the early days of permanent movie theaters until today's multiplexes. The first workshop will be organized in collaboration with the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and the Fondation maison des sciences de l'homme (« Ville et cinéma/City and cinema » program).

Over the past two decades, a growing number of film scholars have turned to film exhibition as a key field of investigation as it offers an excellent starting point to write what Richard Maltby recently defined as "a cinema history from below," that is, a history that is concerned with understanding the place and function that the cinema has in the lives of its audiences. This has not only opened up new ways of thinking about the social and cultural experience of cinemagoing in relation to broader societal developments (e.g. cinema as an agent of consumerism, assimilatory force or gatekeeper of national culture), but also introduced methodologies from social history, social geography, economics and communication studies. While these "imported" qualitative and quantitative approaches facilitate transnational comparison, we have not seen much of that actually happening. Despite continued and successful efforts to organize the field internationally (e.g. HOMER, ECREA Film Studies section), much of the research that is done remains confined within national boundaries, both academically speaking as in terms of the object of study. By creating this workshop-platform we hope to stimulate small-scale international collaborations on sharply defined research questions, so that we can move beyond the localized case study approach and lay the foundation for comparative histories of cinema as a social, cultural and economic institution.

The organizing committee invites about fifteen senior scholars to summarize and explain research results on a specific question linked to one of the three themes

listed below in a short presentation (15 minutes max.). The workshop explicitly addresses colleagues whose work is firmly grounded in empirical research (historical as well as contemporary). Moreover, for the time being, the focus is strictly on Europe. We first want to build bridges between the different academic clusters within Europe before enlarging our comparative perspective. Too often film scholars evaluate their own findings with studies regarding the United States, despite obvious asymmetries between North-American and European patterns and practices in film production, distribution and exhibition. Moreover, rather than taking once again the United States as the "Other," we simply would like to try to find out what is happening next-door (which may be across the Channel of course).

For junior researchers (including PhD students) and other scholars who would like to participate there is a limited number of places available.

### Three central issues

For the coming years we have defined the following themes for further exploration from a comparative perspective:

- Economic dynamics of film exhibition: modes of entrepreneurship, management strategies, independent theaters versus corporate chains, monopolistic practices (horizontal/vertical integration, cartel agreements).
- Socio-cultural geographies of cinemagoing in cities, suburbs and small towns: demographics, cultural infrastructures, programming practices, consumption patterns, architecture etc.
- The impact of national film production (or absence thereof) on programming practices, box-office results, dynamics of film culture etc.

During the first workshop scholars who are already working on these themes will not only share their findings, insights and questions but also define together a narrower research agenda for the next two years. Hence, a lot of time is reserved for discussion.

### Cost

We have a limited budget for this workshop and hence will not be able to pay for your travel expenses or accommodation. However, there will be no conference fee and we will offer you free lunches and a conference diner. The workshop starts on Friday at 10.00 am and ends on Saturday around 3.30 pm.

### Abstracts

The deadline for abstracts (400 words in either English or French) and a short biography with your latest publications is **1 August 2010**. Please note that all presentations will be strictly limited to 15 minutes.

### Contact

For further questions and information please contact Judith Thissen, Utrecht University. Email [j.thissen@uu.nl](mailto:j.thissen@uu.nl) (you may write in English or French)



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