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The (dis)solution of European cultural identities in the digital space: a critical reflection on small cinemas

Abstract

Drawing from the research project, “eDCINEMA: Hacia el espacio digital europeo. El papel de las cinematografías pequeñas en versión original”, which was financed by the Plan Nacional de I+D+i of the Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad (Ref. CSO2012-35784) and developed by the Grupo de Estudios Audiovisuais of the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, we set out to identify the principle barriers facing European identitarian cinema in the uncertain European digital arena, and make recommendations that will assist its promotion and circulation. Thus, in line with the quandary expressed in the title of this study, we will look at small cinemas’ role in both the recognition and the obliteration of the array of cultural singularities that make up the European identity. Concerning the Methodological Plan and its instrumental implementation, we decided on a four-party, multiphase format, that includes an extensive review of the academic, technical and institutional literature, a definition of the population under analysis, the design and execution of indepth interviews, the application of a Delphi questionnaire on a Panel of Experts, and the analysis and interpretation of data. As a conclusion to the research, we have drawn up a list of recommendations to be submitted to the pertinent institutions across Europe, which we hope will improve the circulation of European identitarian cinema and thereby consolidate it as a “smallecinema_OV” action proposal within the framework of Creative Europe 2014-2020.

Keywords

Small Cinemas, Original Version, European Digital Space.

1. Introduction and basis of the research

In this article, we set out to highlight some of the core issues that have arisen in the context of “eDCINEMA: Hacia el espacio digital europeo. El

papel de las cinematografías pequeñas en versión original¹”, a research project funded through an open and competitive tender from the Plan Nacional de I+D+I of the Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad (Ref. CSO2012-35784).

Developed by the Grupo de Estudios Audiovisuais of the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela over the course of three years, from 2013 to 2015, the project articulates both an operational investigation (OI) and an executive investigation (EI), in that the two-fold objective traced under its aegis is, firstly, to identify the problems intrinsic to European identitarian cinema (Celli, 2011) in the uncertain context of the promotion of digital technology; and secondly, to propose alternatives that might solve them. The idea, in short, is to define and analyse a complex social and technological context and make recommendations that will help to promote and circulate European identitarian cinema.

Therefore, in accordance with our defined objectives, the starting point of our project can be expressed as follows: specifically, the structures supporting the film industries of culturally and linguistically singular national entities – some of which are recognised as states while others are not – currently exploit tools that are key to the survival of said singularity (Ledo-Andión & Castelló-Mayo, 2013), on a par with other media agents such as the press (Prado, 2015). Consequently, it is vital to query those public policies affecting film in particular and the audiovisuals in general, about the place allocated to these identitarian singularities.

Such policies have been swamped by an ever-increasing globalised world in which, in step with the industrial demands of digitalization, the methods of producing, distributing and accessing film have been radically changed. The question arises of how these policies can succeed in reconciling the new model of economic growth, based on technological innovation, with the fomentation of the idiosyncratic cultural diversity of territorially small and politically invertebrate contexts as per the state model (Ledo-Andión, López-Gómez & Pérez-Pereiro, 2016).

At this point, we must turn our attention to a crucial question, as aprioristic and obvious in its formulation as it is convoluted in its resolution: Will the European digital impulse contribute to the recognition or to the obliteration of the array of cultural singularities that make up the European identity? Or, in other words, in line with the idea expressed in the title of the present study: Will it be possible to reverse this flagrant inertia compounding the dissolution of European cultural identities in the digital space by adopting alternative cultural initiatives such as those put forward by small cinemas? Do small cinemas have a part to play in the solution or are they contributing to the trend towards the dissolution of European cultural identities?

Indeed, these are not trivial questions, especially when formulated in a context as critical as the one currently facing the European project, which is showing signs of an alarming state of exhaustion (cultural, political, social...), made worse not only by its untouchable conception of “unique mercantile space”, but also by its manifest inability to forge an alternative space to the economic, or, in other words, act as a catalyser of integration for citizens through an effective and affective recognition of the extremely fertile mosaic of European identities.

¹ *Hacia el Espacio Digital Europeo. El papel de las cinematografías pequeñas en versión original (Towards the European Digital Space: the Role Of Small Cinemas In Original Version)*, reference CSO2012-35784, financed by the Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad. P.I.: Margarita Ledo-Andión. Research team: M^a Soliña Barreiro, Demetrio Brisset, Francisco Javier Azpillaga, Enrique Castelló-Mayo, José Gabriel Ferreras, Begoña Gutiérrez, Margarita Ledo-Andión, Antía López-Gómez, Miren Manias, M^a Ángeles Martínez, Amanda Paz Alencar, Marta Pérez, Francisco Reyes, Silvia Roca-Baamonde, Ana Isabel Rodríguez, Francisco Sierra, Javier Sierra, Xosé Soengas, Mónica Valderrama and Virginia Villaplana.

2. Antecedents and State of the Matter

2.1. The political and communicational dimensions of the identitarian

Lying at the heart of academic reflections on contemporary cinematography is, on its own merits, the cultural approach. Indeed, it is precisely in the field of Cultural Studies where the Canadian academic Scott Mackenzie (1999), in a study he would later develop into a wider-reaching work in collaboration with Mette Hjort (2000), identifies a significant paradox regarding the cinema of his country: the emphasis on the multicultural over and above any differentiated, genuine, Canadian identity that can be represented literally and etymologically – i.e. as an evocation of a presence. Any possibility of articulating a distinctive idea of Canadian cinema is due largely to the implementation of active policies of recognition of the cultural characteristics at play at any time in the country, reflecting a trend that Charles Taylor (1992) correctly identified years earlier.

This study aims to show how and to what extent the European case might be seen as the paradoxical flipside of the Canadian case; i.e. of a distinct identitarian diversity whose policies, at least at a supranational level, do not guarantee this unconditional and continuing recognition of the mosaic of features that define the European identity: a concept, that of the “national”, exemplified by Mette Hjort (2010: 12-33) in her conceptualization of “transnational cinema” as a heterogeneous product of human, financial, cultural and formal capital.

Elaborating on the need for a political dimension to the identitarian from a dynamic perspective, Flesher (2010, p. 4) considers collective identity as a construct that emanates from a particular historical context – the fruit of a process of interaction in which individuals recognise, rework and appropriate group-defining cultural elements.

Cultural anthropologist Aguirre Baztán defines identity as the “cultural nuclearity that coheres and differentiates us as a group, and as that which gives us the efficiency to accomplish the (legitimising) objectives of the group to which we belong. This cultural identity is open; it has need of the other and must seek communication, encounters and participation with the other” (1999: 74). Aguirre Baztán thus positions communicative mediation as the ultimate guarantor of the sustainability of identity.

Any exploration of the political dimension of the identitarian in the European cultural framework cannot fail to mention a document, this time operational in character: the *Libro Blanco del Sector Audiovisual en Euskadi* (White Book of the Audiovisual Sector in the Basque Country), published by the Basque Government in 2003. Far-reaching and eminently valid even today, it constitutes a systematic plan of intervention to bring of age a film industry based on a non-hegemonic language.

Specifically, this White Book puts forwards a novel proposal for the sector’s organisation, which includes, among others, the following institutional actions (Observatori, 2003: 88):

- a) Strengthen the sector by increasing the number of agents and bringing greater consistency to its public policies.
- b) Improve its business model by fomenting shared practical knowledge (synergies) and R+D+I projects.
- c) Potentialise the sector’s resources through training, the improvement of working conditions, and the promotion of shared infrastructures and production routines.
- d) Dynamise the market by creating a distinctive ‘brand’ of Basque audiovisuals, incentivising international promotion without neglecting local distribution, and encouraging co-production and knowledge of creative trends.
- e) Recognise the pivotal role of audiovisuals in the cultural development of the Basque Country, which translates as a guarantee of continued, quality production with

which to respond to the cultural needs and potentials of the region, as well as a firm backing of output executed in other formats and contents for cultural reasons.

To sum up, here is an eminently practical set of policies addressing this tricky hybridisation of cultural identity and cinematographic culture, whose plans for the development of the film industry rest on a solid cultural foundation.

These political and communicational approaches to the identitarian, however, must be understood in the context of an unparalleled consumption, exploitation and appropriation of culture. Let us begin with a reflection from Torterola and Lobo on the greatly changed conditions by which we access film: “against the collapse of the structures of early modernity (social class, family, unions, political parties) [...], film consumption has come to be defined by the diversification through the media of atomised subjects” (2012: 3). There is an atomisation of consumption that goes hand in hand with a trend towards the dismembering of the social corpus and a consequential diversification of the conditions by which we access the media.

Concerning the conditions of production, Torterola and Lobo (2012: 3) again assists us with a second unparalleled scenario: the eclipse of *high volume* (understood as large scale, low cost production and commercialisation), until now the more dominant, by an emerging *high value*, which advocates a production based on the importance of creativity, design and even the transfer of knowledge.

Torterola and Lobo (2012: 7) identify a third transformation: the taking over of the *studio system* by the *distribution system*, coinciding with the hegemony of distributors in the value chain of the digital content industry. Indeed, the weight of the digitalisation of communications and cultural contents in this value chain, with the corresponding development on a large scale of networks and structures, submits all types of contents – including cinematographic – to the constraints of a digital flow that defines new conditions of consumption that are representative of the pervasive ecosystems.

As a corollary of what has been said thus far, we must highlight the ongoing debate between the field of cultural studies and that of the political establishment. In this regard, and as Autissier (2013) mentions, one must try to prevent the inevitable discrepancy in the debate on cultural genesis between the more functional criteria and the more abstract ones from dragging the film industry into an all-too-familiar state of lethargy. While we have identified a carefully assembled set of policies put forward by the Basque Government, we must now examine the position of the European Commission, being the supranational entity that it is, on this long-standing conflict regarding cultural issues – a crucial position which we will spell out in the next subsection.

2.2. Community intervention in culture

Even a cursory analysis of the proposals put forward by the European Commission to the European Parliament and Council, notably its *Communication on a European agenda for culture in a globalising world* (European Commission, 2007: 8–12), affords a rather depressing glimpse of the European political perspective: its blatant indifference to the transformations listed in the preceding subsection – an indifference which is aggravated by an erratic implementation of strategies for dealing with linguistic complexities as a cultural fact, that go from grandiloquent declarations on the multilingualism of Europe to its more than modest implementation in European political practice.

Indeed, one cannot overlook the long list of reports sent out by the European Commission, which only corroborate their so-called “concern” for the minorised linguistic fact (to explore the difference between “minorised” and “minority” languages, we suggest the interested reader refer to López-Gómez, Castelló-Mayo & Arias-Iglesias, 2015) and its unremitting fight for survival. Four of these reports stand out particularly:

- *Report on Endangered European Languages and Linguistic Diversity in the European Union*, presented by François Alfonsi to the Committee on Culture and Education on 26th June 2013.
- Resolution of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, dated 18th March 2010, significantly entitled *Les langues minoritaires: un atout pour le développement régional*.
- Communication from the Commission, entitled *Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment* (COM (2008)0566), on 18th September 2008.
- *Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'protecting and developing historical linguistic minorities under the Lisbon Treaty'*. (DO C 259 de 2.9.2011) (Committee on Culture and Education, 2013: 3).

However much we might wish to believe that all these reports and resolutions are proof of a commendable effort to clarify and improve multilingualism in Europe, their operability is limited because of a long-standing problem: its own understanding of “endangered language”. Indeed, if we take Moseley’s theses put to the Unesco in his celebrated *Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger* (2010), a language is considered to be in danger of disappearance if it does not fulfil – or barely fulfils – one or several of the following criteria: intergenerational transmission, an absolute number of speakers, proportion of speakers in the whole of the population, use of the language in the various public and private spheres, with special consideration to the response shown in the face of the new communication media (Committee on Culture and Education, 2013, p. 5). Specifically, attention is given to the patrimonial contribution of the new media and formats to the protection of endangered languages, particularly with regard to future generations (Committee on Culture and Education, 2013: 10).

There is some indication of hope, a hope that has a stake in technological innovation and decentralisation which finds its echo in the *Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions – Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe (2015/C 195/04)*, whose opening words boldly state that the European Committee of Regions, in tandem with the World Forum of the Unesco on culture and the culture industry, accepts the need to respect the principle of subsidy in the field of culture and cultural heritage, which carries an implication of the support of a decentralised management of culture (European Committee of the Regions, 2015: 22).

However, it is worth asking to what extent the ultimate aim of this proposal is economic – after the Committee’s acceptance of launching the Internal Market Information System (IMI), created by the EU Regulation n° 1024/2012 – in the anticipation of a subsequent establishment of a module of the IMI System specifically designed for cultural assets. To endorse this measure, and in view of the scarce mention of cultural heritage in the framework of the 2020 Strategy, emphasis is put on the need to further integrate this strategy in the sector of cultural patrimony, culture, creativity and the associate emblematic initiatives, and ensure that the Strategy takes into account elements that show the contribution of cultural heritage to the economy (European Committee of the Regions, 2015: 25).

This perspective, which blatantly endorses the decentralised economic model discussed here, can, in turn, link up with a demand, prevalent in the academic world today, for the instauration of a new linguistic order (in the manner posited by Fishman, 1999) – guarantor of a fully multilingual and functional society, even one that is based on an interlinguistic dominance analogous to the present.

As far as the audiovisual field is concerned, just as obvious is the reticence of the community’s stance: that the film industry’s heritage is recognised as a source of historical information on European society (European Committee of the Regions, 2015: 27) undermines

its intrinsic artistic value. This is a functional approach to culture, which generates open discrepancies at the heart of the EU, as manifested by Aurélie Filippetti, French Minister of Culture and Communication: on the occasion of the 66th Cannes Film Festival in May 2013, Mme Filippetti advocated the development in the European framework of concrete schemes for artistic and cultural education in general, and for cinematographic education in particular (Lardoux, 2014: 7). The demand was set down in a report sent to the head of the CNC (Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée) and its European counterparts (convened in Cannes a year later, on the 18th of May 2014), the heads of the Creative Europe Programme, the European Commission, the Council of European Ministers for Culture, as well as the chief representatives of the European Parliament.

Said report began with an unequivocal declaration of the pre-eminence of the artistic condition of the cinematographic fact over any other aspect worthy of consideration (Lardoux, 2014: 7), a difficult declaration against an audiovisual panorama that defines itself as a business quantified by technological consumption multiplied exponentially by the pervasiveness and intensity of the consumption of the digital flow: mobile phones, computers, televisions, tablets, video games...

In such circumstances of intensive and extensive consumption, it is indeed difficult to uphold this condition of artistic fact defended in the report. A young French person, between 13 and 19 years old, will typically spend some 3.5 hours a day looking at a screen, or 1200 hours a year, as compared to the 900 hours they will spend on academic study – an intensive audiovisual consumption that has earned them the title of *YouTube Generation* (Lardoux, 2014: 12).

If we look at these figures more closely, the community database MAVISE of the European Audiovisual Observatory has been warning, in its comprehensive annual reports on childhood and teenage consumption of audiovisuals, that of the 309 channels geared at young viewers in the EU, 157 – 50.8% – are controlled by three US holdings: Time Warner, The Walt Disney Company and Viacom, a fact that demonstrates not only the uniformisation of programmes that children and youngsters consume, but also a worrying concentration of US businesses which leaves little room for European programmes (Lardoux, 2014: 12).

Furthermore, in the face of this omnipresence and accessibility of screens, the Observatory is also warning about a real generational breakdown in consumption habits, as is evident from the compulsive and vertiginous delight taken by children and teenagers, who absorb and metabolise the images more quickly than their elders, only to forget them just as quickly, “in a widespread zapping frenzy” (Lardoux, 2014: 14).

In light of the above, we are able to conclude that, if the EU's economic, monetary, and even democratic identity seems to be defined through its cultural identity, the shared aspects and differences have yet to be determined. In this regard, cinema, like other arts, is a space that builds identities, triggers the identitarian evolution, and defines the distinctive and the similar (Lardoux, 2014: 21).

Following on from this, it is worth mentioning the praise the sociologist and historian Carole Desbarats gives to the fictional nature of film: “Fiction, in the wider sense, when it takes on the task of interpreting the real, allows one to shift one's point of view and sometimes to discover a new one” (cited by Lardoux, 2014: 23). In other words, the displacement of the patterns of reality that we see in fiction paradoxically confers on reality the function of source of rationality.

Or, in more pragmatic terms (like those used by the European Audiovisual Observatory), a young German person, discovering Rumanian cinema, for example, or a young Latvian discovering French cinema, is broadening their cinematographic culture while learning how to tackle the world around them, beyond the frontiers, to put themselves in someone else's place. As individuals, they are thus endowed with morality and assisted in their integration as European citizens: “there will not be a solid European project without a

European consciousness, and to build this, it is necessary to invent representations and collective chimeras; and cinema – a preeminently popular art – is without doubt the best instrument we have to accomplish this” (Lardoux, 2014: 23).

So it is not all errors in the community’s actions on audiovisuals. Particularly commendable is its backing of exhibitors through the “Europa Cinemas” network, financed by Creative Europe and the French CNC, whose mission is to foment the circulation of European films in 33 European countries and in 554 cities. The organism groups together 923 European establishments, of which 615 are situated in EU territory. “Europa Cinemas” subsidises these establishments so they can carry out a European programme, alongside pedagogical actions in the audiovisual field, which absorb up to 20% of the subsidy.

These are, however, but modest sums: the maximum subsidy given goes from around 3000 euros for a one-screen cinema, to 5000 euros for a cinema with 5 screens or more. The pulling power of “Europa Cinemas” is high, however: in 2013 some 3 million 3–25 year-olds used the network, generating 1 million euros for educational purposes (Lardoux, 2014: 34).

Another commendable, although perfectible, strategy of European policymaking is the financial backing through Creative Europe MEDIA of film festivals with a markedly European programme. Aid packages enabling the exhibition of productions made in at least 15 countries around the Union encourage synergies that increase audiences even after the festivals have finished, as well as actions towards audiovisual literacy among highly disparate audiences (Lardoux, 2014: 34).

Lastly, it is worth highlighting, as an example, actions carried out at the heart of the sovereignty of the EU states, such as one studied by Bondebjerg and Redvall (2011: 24). “The Public Service Fund” is a Danish government initiative, which, since 2007, has been promoting documentary and fictional works of exceptional quality, both technically and creatively, by supporting distribution in cinemas and television channels throughout the world.

3. Methodological plan: subjects, tools and procedures

To articulate the objectives of our Project we had to draw up a Methodological Plan based on triangulation: evolving analysis of small, original language cinemas, a critical study of the European policies on film, and a synchronic and diachronic examination of the different European experiences in original language films. The Project’s objectives included singling out and systematising the main barriers affecting the circulation of small original language cinemas, identifying the keys for improving the visibility and accessibility of these films in the European digital space, and lastly, as an imperative of the transfer of results and knowledge, drawing up a “smallcinema_OV” action proposal within the “Creative Europe 2014–2020 Programme”.

In light of the above, we proceeded to draw up the Methodological Plan and its implementation, based on a multiphase, four-part structure that can be summed up as follows:

- Phase I: reading the literature – essayistic, technical and legal – (regulations, reports, framework programmes and subprogrammes), that was either directly or indirectly linked to the subject of our study, was deemed essential in order to inform the International Seminar of Experts, held in Paris, which would serve to ratify, refute and assess the topics resulting from this first phase and incorporate others. Furthermore, we recognise that we owe the design and temporal structure of our documentary prospection to the rich contributions of Bardin (2013), Krippendorf (2013) and López-Noguero (2002).
- Phase II: based on the technique of “Indepth Interviews” and specifically “Elites Interviews”, we designed a questionnaire (based on the topics covered in Phase I and

their treatment in the Experts' Forum) and undertook a careful selection of experts liable for interviewing. In the manner of Meuser and Nagel (1991), we approached the 'experts' as a cast of social actors which, when tackling any complex social manifestation, must be identified as primary sources of information based on their contributions to the phenomenon under scrutiny. We then prepared the interviewers, using the ad hoc "Interview Guide" (Ruiz-Olabuénaga, 2007) and often referring back to the general questionnaire before embarking on the final interview process. To draw up the initial questionnaire, we carried out semi-structured, focused interviews, to direct the vast baggage of knowledge the experts had of the objects of our research without restricting the flow of subjects or approaches that were not originally contemplated. In this regard, it is worth highlighting the indispensable collaboration of the experts towards improving the questionnaire (both structurally and content-wise), making use of their expertise in the themes of our study. Once we had overcome this phase of drawing up and verifying, and once the definitive list of experts to be interviewed was defined, we embarked on the next process of interviewing, recording – audio or video, whichever the interviewee felt more comfortable with. We were careful to make the interviewing team aware of their crucial role as transmitters of reassurance and motivation (Sierra, 2000: 317) in order to guarantee the quality of the information obtained. The raw material obtained from the many interviews was extensively tested for quality using the Atlas.ti software (version 7.5.11 Qualitative Data Analysis), which yielded a host of themes and topics for analysis ordered hierarchically according to their prevalence in each interview (Martínez, 2001).

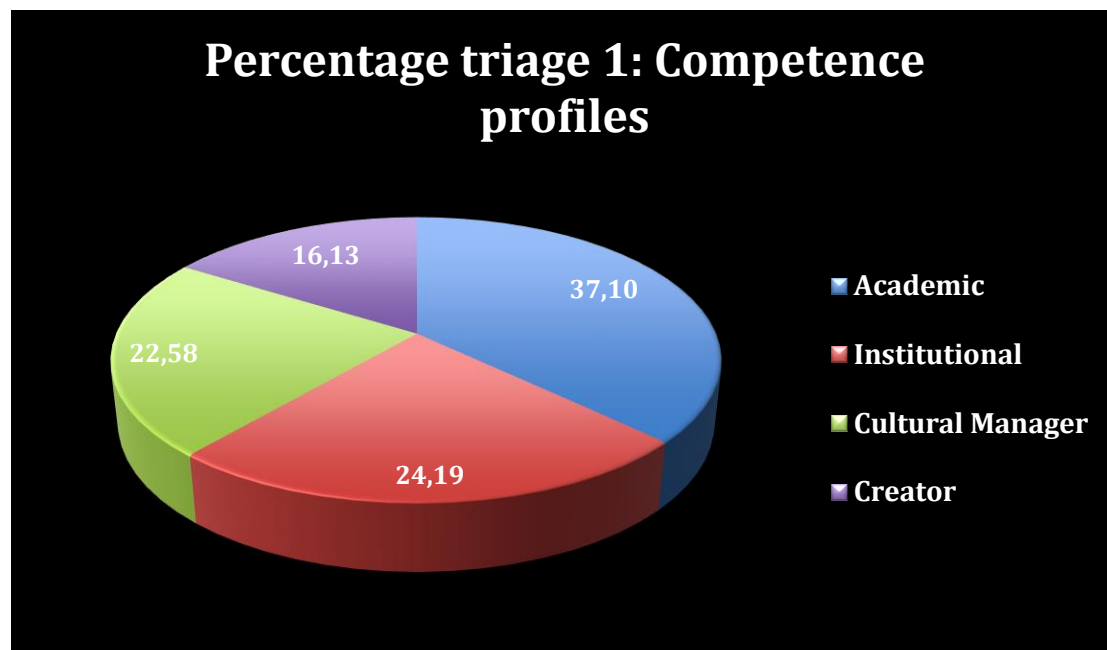
- Phase III: geared towards the selection of topics susceptible of informing the content of the Delphi questionnaire, as well as the ubiquitous online WCMS (Web Content Management System) itself, whose validity would be determined via the application of the Beta or Pretest as an essential preamble to its application on the sample of experts. In parallel to this, we chose the "Panel of Experts" from the total sample of interviewees, based on the substance of the declarations, eloquence and proactiveness shown during the first phase. As regards the actual design of the Delphi questionnaire, we drew inspiration from the abundant methodological literature, including the work of Mohedano (2013), Riaño and Palomino (2015) and San-Eugenio, Fernández and Jiménez (2013).
- Phase IV: the last phase of the project was taken up with the application of the definitive version of the Delphi questionnaire on our, by now, well-consolidated "Panel of Experts"; the analysis and crosschecking of data, its reduplication and the drawing up of conclusions. The application of the Delphi technique demanded two successive rounds of application on our "Panel of Experts" (with the aim of obtaining the degree of unanimity from the Panel that validates the prospective potential of this methodology), after which we proceeded to quantify the data obtained by using the software Pasw 19 (IBM SPSS Statistics) and its subsequent reduplication. Lastly, the resulting conclusions of the Project were thrown up for discussion and verification in a second International Forum of Experts which, with its headquarters in Cardiff (United Kingdom), and the analogous International Forum mentioned in Phase I, constitutes the best way to monitor and contrast the categories and results obtained by the international community of experts throughout the process.

Regarding the representativeness of the panellists, it is worth mentioning that a final configuration of 62 members was considered advisable, whose sampling representativeness, in line with the Delphi methodology, was based more on capability than size, to secure the degree of consensus necessary to guarantee the prospective character of all the assertions made in any future interviews.

Moreover, in line with Meuser and Nagel's postulates (1991: 449-450), when conducting the semi-structured interviews each component had to renounce their individuality and serve as a representative of a certain pool of established expertise. In other words, the methodological interest had to go beyond the expert, as opposed to what happens with biographical questionnaires and their customary objectives, to focus exclusively on their competence in a given disciplinary field.

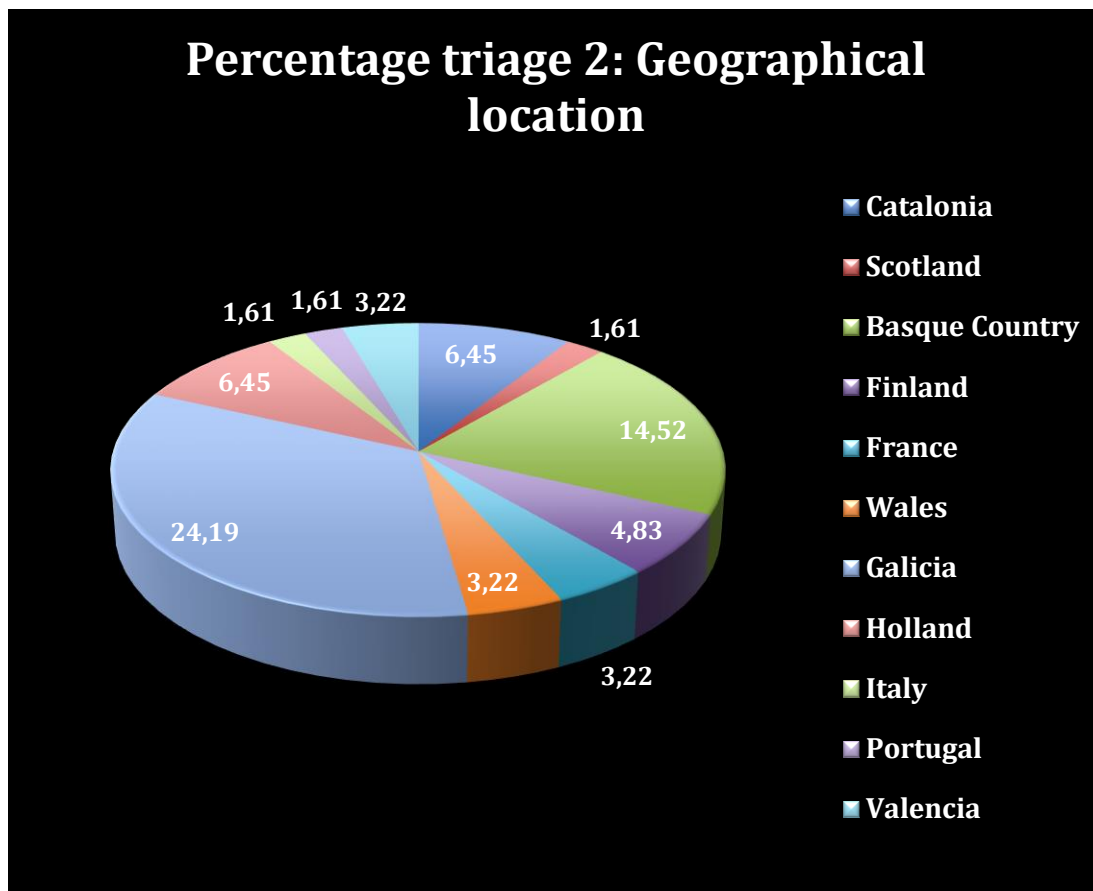
As a consequence, the representativeness of our panellists rested on two idiosyncratic characteristics: their level of competence and their geographical location. Starting with the first, up to four profiles of individuals were contemplated, defined by their professional status and their knowledge of the audiovisuals in Europe: academic profile, creators, heads of public institutions and cultural managers, depending on the percentage triage, as illustrated in the following graph (Fig. 1):

Figure 1. Percentage triage 1: Competence profiles



Regarding the geographical provenance of our panellists, as the accompanying graphs shows (Fig.2.), despite the fact that many members of the research team are based in Galicia – *fons et origo* from the Project we present here, as main office of the tractor group –, the Basque Country and Catalonia (45,16%), efforts were made to encourage a diverse and representative cross-section of panellists, from a wide range of European territories that had encouraged a normalisation of their respective minority languages, especially in the field of cinematographic diffusion:

Figure 2. Percentage triage 2: Geographical location



To conclude this section on the methodology, and as an objective and external validation of our work, we wish to divulge the assessment of the research project that informs the present study, as sent to us by the Subdivisión de Programas Temáticos Científico-Técnicos of the Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad (Ministry of Economics and Competitiveness): “In reply to the report on the scientific-technical monitoring referred by your organism last 11/04/2016, of the project reference CSO2012-35784 entitled ‘Hacia el Espacio Digital Europeo: el papel de las Cinematografías Pequeñas en Versión Original’, of which you are the principal researcher, I inform you it has been rated as: *Very Satisfactory*”. We therefore tender the Ministry’s assessment as the most objective proof of the appropriateness of the project and, by extension, of the semi-structured interviewing methodology, the Delphi technique, and the conclusions and final recommendations reached as a result.

4. Analysis and results of the investigation

In light of the aforesaid concerning the methodological design, we will devote this next section to the structured exhibition of the range of the panellists’ assertions that featured most commonly: all were chosen because they are representative of certain topics (in their etymological sense, “topoi” or “common places”) and lines of thinking:

1. *On an operational concept of identitarian cinema.* The interviewees mostly recognise it as a field of representation of diverse realities, and, as such, a trustee of a statue of non-material cultural heritage worthy of protection. This representational character is closely linked to their condition of multi-linguistic fact, in direct

reference to non-hegemonic languages, as understood by Roca-Baamonde, Pérez-Pereiro and Rodríguez-Vázquez (2016).

Similarly, its resistance to the imperatives of mainstream cinema and the use of English as the lingua franca explains both the exceptionalness of identitarian cinema in European cinemas, *per se* commercial in vocation, and the feeble state of cultural life in the European community at present.

2. *On the incidence of technological innovation and digitalisation in the development of identitarian cinema.* We aim to reflect on the consequences for small cinemas of their incorporation into the new European digital space. In this regard, one of the most commonly expressed topics among the Panel was that digitalisation has acted as a palliative to the concentration of European production and distribution systems. Nonetheless, this emancipating side of digitalisation is not directed at the capacity of digital technology for making filmmaking a sustainable cultural activity as much as at the fact of existing as a budgetary alternative to professional-quality productions. Digitalization, incorporated into the production process, lowers costs and facilitates accessibility to the filming's outcome, even though such a reflection cannot be extended to the screening process, to the technological versatility of incorporating multiple original versions and original versions with subtitles.
3. *On the specific problems of European identitarian cinema.* Evidence shows that most producers manifest their support, or at least an absence of reticence, to cinema filmed in vernacular languages. In fact, the main impediments, they say, to making films in non-hegemonic languages are the market requirements and the recent decline in the number of productions of medium-size budgets (between 2.5 and 4.5 million euros), which once used to be a common feature in the industry's fabric in Europe. Moreover, when it comes to exhibiting, there are few subtitled, original version films, due to the lukewarm commercial response to non-hegemonic language films. At the same time, the insufficient promotion of this kind of cinema would further diminish its competitiveness. But to claim that it is not language that is responsible for the languor of European cinema, but the quality of the productions and their narrative model, is again, to fall into a contradiction. Likewise, market fragmentation, clearly a result of diverse linguistic and cultural geographies, cannot be said to harm the interest and demand of European cinema. Lastly, the Panel identifies European showrooms as another of the obstacles adversely affecting identitarian cinema, because of their subservience to the interests of US majors. Generally speaking, European cinema's competitiveness is hindered by the oligopolies that these same majors created, which gives them control over the entire spectrum of values of cinematographic content – production, distribution and exhibition – but which is detrimental to free competition.
4. *Specifics of cinema in non-hegemonic languages in Spain.* Dubbing films into Spanish is identified as the single main obstacle hindering the acceptance of films produced and exhibited in co-official vernacular languages. This is aggravated by the truly meagre educational policies regarding the teaching of foreign languages, as well as the audiovisual policies that allocate insufficient screen time to identitarian cinema. As a consequence, the Spanish film industry – from the conception of a film to its consumption by viewers – is showing a growing resistance to identitarian cinema. Experts indicate that specifically in the case of Catalan cinema, the gaping absence of stable promotion strategies is behind the lack of appetite for films subtitled in Catalan, and does not reflect the financial aid invested by the autonomous region's administration and European institutions.
5. *The promoting role of autonomous state-funded televisions.* Another popular belief among the Panel is that autonomous state-funded televisions play a “tractor role” in

promoting vernacular language cinema, although only mild success is noted in terms of its local consolidation and awareness among non-local audiences. Therefore, although their status as financial promoters and distribution niches is fully recognized, autonomous state-funded televisions are not considered to have gained much of a foothold in the socio-cultural conception of identitarian cinema. Lastly, the panellists generally agree that local television channels are insufficiently involved in the promotion of original language identitarian cinema, even though, as local media, they would seem to be natural niches for its diffusion. This opinion is reflected in the interesting thoughts of Marzal and Zallo (2016) on the matter.

6. *On festivals as an alternative distribution channel for small-scale cinema.* Festivals are considered to be the most effective option for bringing small-scale cinema to commercial showrooms, whereby “type C” festivals are considered to be the most effective. However, it has to be said that most of them are not seen as channels for the greater visibility of identitarian cinema – at least not primarily – so much as vehicles for a certain kind of cinema that a festival is keen to promote. So, generally speaking, the panellists recognize their contribution to the forging of a cinematographic criterion in the viewer as a differential value, which could be strengthened through institutional collaboration between festivals, film libraries and universities. Lastly, regarding non-hegemonic language films, it is believed that their effectiveness could increase in proportion with the proliferation of the festivals that exhibit them, which would favour the assimilation of emerging brands into other much more recognized ones, such as Sundance, Tribeca, Eikon o Südwest.
7. *On the other platforms assisting the visibility of identitarian cinema.* Given that institutions such as the Instituto Cervantes, Institut Ramón Llull and the Etxepare Euskal Institutua are all equally suitable for divulging the cultural realities off which they feed, the last two should enjoy the same sort of projection as the first. Indeed, the Xunta de Galicia should spur the creation of an institute like this, with specific areas on cinematography. There is an institution, in fact, that already exists, of established renown – the Consello da Cultura Galega – which could well assume this task.
8. *On future lines of action for the survival of identitarian cinema.* As we have seen, the distribution framework is the preferred context for action, even though there is a demand for incentives capable of bringing identitarian cinema into the cinematographic mainstream. The experts also consider the use of combined exploitation systems, i.e. business modalities that involve multiple and varied channels of distribution and consumption: an innovative model that exploits the potential of pervasive technology, the expansion of digital platforms offering a vast choice of non-hegemonic language films, and the development of local promotional film campaigns in the context of a representative brand of European identitarian cinema. Our panellists insist that, particularly in the case of Spain, the involvement of the autonomous public administrations is vital – including local radio and televisions – to incentivise co-productions, distribution agreements, and exhibition networks among the various local film companies. Similarly, the possibility is raised of naturalising the practice of subtitling in various languages to increase and diversify their distribution market, in a first phase, and to modify consumer habits among the general public and children and teenagers in particular, thereby minimising the rejection of productions in the original language. In this regard, a firm commitment from institutions to back more and more European portals like Filmin – an online subscription service – would contribute decisively to the growth of new audiences likely to be interested in original version European cinema.

9. *On EU audiovisual policy-making, present and future.* The importance of redirecting the lines of action in the EU merits a section all to itself, given the prevalence of the Panel's comments on the subject. It is generally agreed that the European community's interest is mulishly circumscribed to the sphere of film distribution, both internal and external – a position that belies its strictly commercial vision of the cinematographic fact. It is also noted that *Creativa Europe*, despite being the programme of reference in community audiovisual policymaking, has been given a meagre and even non-existent diffusion in sub-state territorial entities. This is backed up by the abysmally disparate comments made by the Panel regarding the programme's goals: while some believe it is intended to encourage cinema made in the great countries/markets of Europe, others, paradoxically, see it as a vehicle to promote cinema from the smaller countries/markets of Europe. Although these are differences of opinion (and do not compromise in any way the unanimity that guarantees the prospective potential of the Panel's results), we do however note a slight change of direction in the diffusion of the MEDIA subprogramme, with consideration given to its contribution to the circulation of small-scale identitarian cinema beyond its frontiers. Certain other, more general, thoughts about Digital Agenda (a community framework housing the Creative Europe programme) point to a need to incentivise the creation of digital platforms (for HD streaming) from within this framework to offer cinema in non-hegemonic original languages.
10. *On the change of programming systems in showrooms.* All the aforesaid must, logically, contribute to a debate on the urgent need for change regarding of the programming systems used in showrooms. They are aging systems, both in terms of technology and potential audiences: based generally on the exhibition of a single version (in Spain, the dubbed one – always), at fixed weekly slots, even though, as we have already seen, technological innovation now allows for multiple tracks to be added to subtitles in several languages. This explains why the panellists hazard a strictly cultural conclusion (which we will discuss in more detail in the next section), which suggests that the community discourse employs a political concept of linguistic pluralism – that of grand institutional declarations – which does not, however, translate into concrete strategies to ensure its implementation.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

A close look at the conclusions arising from the comments made by the panellists shows an extraordinary coincidence with those found in academic literature, especially in Lardoux (2014), a much cited author in this study, despite the panellists' disparate profiles. They can be summarised as follows:

1. The creation of a European Fund for film studies.
2. The creation of a service offering European films to a young audience; contents accessible via conventional television channels and *Over the Top* channels (Apple TV, Google Chromecast...).
3. The mass development of educational actions to fuse artistic and linguistic approaches in filmmaking.
4. The creation of an online video catalogue with at least 20 European films from the past and present to facilitate their circulation around Europe during school term time, both in ordinary cinemas and in schools.
5. The development, nationally and in the rest of Europe, of online schemes to assist teachers, pupils and socio-cultural agents in the fields of film studies and multimedia.

6. A reorganisation of the allocation of European aids to distribution and exhibition that would allow for the schemes mentioned in the preceding point.
7. The encouragement and consolidation of networks and twinning partnerships among European associations, cities and regions around the theme of cinema and its educational possibilities.
8. The creation of a European Film Festival for children.
9. The creation of a true *European Lyceums Film Award*.
10. The endowment of a leading and markedly educational role to identitarian filmmaking in the European Capitals of Culture.

Having extensively read the abundant academic, technical and institutional literature and fittingly compared and contrasted this with the contributions of our Panel of Experts (while vocationally we may be on the side of the *Diánoia* and discursive reason, we have not eschewed the guidance of the more intuitive *Nous*), we proceeded to draw up a ‘decalogue’ of recommendations we hope will be submitted to the appropriate institutions across Europe to foster the circulation of identitarian European film and become a blueprint for “smallcinema_OV” policymaking in the framework of Creative Europe 2014-2020. This ten-point plan is summarised as follows:

- I. Firstly, as a dissociable principle and memorandum before the relevant legislative and executive bodies, it is necessary to remember that without political willingness it is not possible to maintain a film industry in Europe of any long-lasting activity.
- II. We insist on the importance of a European institutional recognition of film as an operator of a cultural service, and more specifically on its role in the shaping of the individual, that is, on its identitarian dimension.
- III. Inevitably, the third recommendation has to do with the appeal for a shared and consistent political project that involves both supranational and national authorities, and which is, to an extent, dirigiste; with the executive capacity to intervene in the industrial machinery responsible for materialising our cinematographic heritage. And, we might add, our dogged refusal to abandon said machinery to the whims of the digital market is precisely what constitutes one of the topics most consistently expressed in the interviews analysed in the preceding section.
- IV. One of the main shortfalls of European audiovisual policy is the unjustifiable delay in cinematographic education, which was once one of the main drivers of the MEDIA project: education understood as a mechanism for transforming the present, insofar as it is a catalyser for the circulation of film in Europe today; and also the future, since it is guarantees audiences in the showrooms and viewers via the video streaming platforms. An education, in short, understood as an inalienable and universal right and asset, in its most functional aspect, like an operative medium for developing film consumers and viewers (Reia, Burn, Reid, & Cannon, 2014). Again, to borrow the words of Lardoux: “To make the European cultural exception concrete and sustainable” (2014: 35).
- V. Motivated by a constructive attitude rather than a desire for subsidy, we propose that *showrooms* be reconverted into *proximity rooms*, to help naturalise the perception of identitarian cinema, transform its long-standing consideration as an exceptional cultural fact into a totally dependable and everyday source of enjoyment.
- VI. Our sixth recommendation refers to the reform – as controversial as it is necessary – of audience shares, which for us translates as the imperious and urgent need to increase the screen time of European original language films to ensure that at least 50% of projections every day are European original language films.

- VII. We also stress the need to bring out a line of aids specifically for production and co-production in non-hegemonic languages, where co-production in English is explicitly excluded given its already dominant and ubiquitous status.
- VIII. The eighth recommendation has to do with the efficiency of an aspect that has aroused the most interest among our panellists: distribution. The idea is to overcome the current situation of mere subsistence among distributors, especially of identitarian film, who are so few and far between, by capitalising on the potential of specialised festivals and local broadcasters. This would serve as a palliative to the scarce circulation of small-scale cinema. In this regard, we consider thoroughly proven the fact that the television business's repositioning towards an unchecked and mindless competition for audiences has hindered the normalisation of subtitling in its programmes.
- IX. Our ninth recommendation pursues the much-needed transformation of the distribution model of small-scale film, which this time rests on the accompaniment of the director through the circulation process, thereby realising a dynamic of proximity between distribution and exhibition.
- X. As the tenth and final recommendation, we underline the timeliness of distributing/exhibiting identitarian cinema via a showroom network based on an existing cultural statue: contemporary art centres, theatre-cum-showrooms, etc. The effectiveness of this network demonstrates its capacity for generating a local demand for identitarian film.

At this point, we feel we are in a position to address the issues alluded to in the statement heading the present study:

Yes, a well thought-out and co-ordinated plan that channels the digital upsurge in Europe can and must prevent the obliteration of all the cultural singularities that shape, enrich and render unique the richly fertile mosaic of European identities.

Yes, the culture industries of culturally and linguistically singular national entities, some of which are recognised as states and some not, are currently built on devices – of indisputably prevalent – that are key to the survival of identitarian uniqueness.

Yes, we can conceive an alternative model of economic growth; one which, through technological innovation, fosters the idiosyncratic cultural diversity of reduced territorially and politically invertebrate contexts.

And finally, yes solutions do exist with which to head off the dynamic of dissolution of Europe's cultural identities via the road of resistance to the imperative of a homogenised and homogenising mainstream: solutions in which consolidated small cinemas might play a transcendental role, thanks to their proven cultural alternative, creative and differential potential, as catalysers of the socio-cultural integration of their citizens.

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