

Branding Central America for an International Market: Practitioner Networks in the Region's Film Production

Luis Fernando Fallas Fallas

Doctor of Philosophy
Film Studies

School of Modern Languages
Newcastle University

September 2019

Abstract

This dissertation studies Central American Cinema's (CAC) role in the creation of meaning and belonging in the 24 winners – fiction, documentary, long- and short-format productions – in the category 'Best Central American Film' at the Ícaro Film Festival between 2009 and 2014. This is the first festival to use Central America as its organising logic for validating and distributing films, which in fact bear varying degrees of affiliation to the region. This deployment of CAC is closer to a marketing strategy for targeting global audiences than a useful taxonomy for understanding the region's filmmaking.

My methodology uses Actor-Network Theory to track those instances where 'Central America' participates in the interactions and translations involved in a movie's end-to-end production process. The resulting map presents each film as a heterogeneous network of affects, hardly bound to notions of the isthmus's territoriality or its cultural imaginaries. Instead, these exchanges perform a field – in the sense that Bourdieu gives this term. Cinema's production, reproduction and validation within this field rely on cultural and economic capitals of a global and deterritorialized character.

In this relational perspective, cinema is thought of as existing on a symbol-commodity continuum since, within this field, films interconnect local, non-territorial, for-profit and non-commercial possibilities. I argue that these motion pictures perform the extraction of value through exoticization, matching Beller's notion of the cinematic mode of production and its promotion of capitalism. Such actions coexist with sincere intentions of self-representation or militancy with regards to subaltern concerns. However, CAC is a label that obscures the diversity of these films' interactions by imposing the historical, economic and symbolic preconceptions of the isthmus upon them. Such strategy depends on, and nurtures, a revived colonial perspective, reproducing structural/societal inequalities and asymmetries. The main beneficiaries are individuals with easy access to worldwide exchanges and transnational mobility.

Branding Central America for an international market: practitioner networks in the region's film production

Luis F. Fallas

Newcastle University - 2019

Acknowledgements

This thesis was done thanks to the scholarship that Universidad Estatal a Distancia, Costa Rica, granted me. I sincerely appreciate the trust and support of this institution for developing this academic research.

I also want to thank my supervisors, Philippa Page and Nick Morgan, for their patience and their insistence for me to further improve and deepen my analysis. Thanks to them I manage to reach a successful conclusion for this hectic journey.

A special mention to my wife and son, they decided to cross the ocean back and forth with me, staying by my side and sharing the good, the bad and the ugly of postgraduate research.

To my parents, they knew I would succeed since before I began.

I feel the necessity to recognise the work of so many teachers that all along my academic life have given me counsel and guidance, each of them was part of my motivation to pursue my PhD studies.

To my fellow PhD students, because even in a foreign land, I never felt like an outsider.

Finally, to José Cerdas y José Mario Quesada, out of pure friendship, one with the language and the other with graphic design, they helped me reach to the final point of my research project.

Branding Central America for an international market: practitioner networks in the region's film production

Luis F. Fallas

Newcastle University - 2019

Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Chapter 1. Cinema, A Network of Signification</i>	<i>14</i>
1.1 Meaning in an Industrial Art	32
1.2 Cinema as a Dense Composite	39
1.3 The Territoriality of the Image	46
1.4 Category and Cinema	54
<i>Chapter 2. A foggy Centralamerican-ness</i>	<i>59</i>
2.1 An Isthmus	63
2.2 Central America(s) Today.....	69
2.3 Giving Meaning to An Isthmus	77
2.4 Cultural Real Estates: the value of the isthmus	84
2.5 Other Identarian References in the Isthmus: pre-colonial, Latin American and global affiliations	88
<i>Chapter 3. Networks of Possibilities</i>	<i>93</i>
3.1 National Interactions.....	112
3.2 Post-national Interactions	117
3.3 Transnational Interactions	124
3.4 Deterritorialized Interactions	129
<i>Chapter 4. Common Sites of a Global Cinema</i>	<i>135</i>
4.1 The City	142

4.2 The Rural	155
4.3 The Road.....	168
4.4 The Body.....	175
<i>Conclusion</i>	187
<i>Bibliography</i>	194
<i>Appendices</i>	204
A. Research's sample of films	204
B. Online questionnaire for the directors of the film sample	206
C. Films and their producers, funders and supporters.....	210
D. Mapping of <i>Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos</i> (2008)	215
E. Mapping of <i>Cuilos</i> (2008)	216
F. Mapping of <i>Tercer Mundo</i> (2009)	217
G. Mapping of <i>Ausentes</i> (2009)	218
H. Mapping of <i>Wata</i> (2010)	219
I. Mapping of <i>Marimbas del Infierno</i> (2010)	220
J. Mapping of <i>Nosotras</i> (2010).....	221
K. Mapping of <i>El Lugar Más Pequeño</i> (2011)	222
L. Mapping of <i>Distancia</i> (2011)	223
M. Mapping of <i>El Engaño</i> (2012)	224
N. Mapping of <i>A Mi Lado</i> (2012)	225

O.	Mapping of <i>Nicté</i> (2012)	226
P.	Mapping of <i>El Regreso</i> (2011)	227
Q.	Mapping of <i>Lih Wina</i> (2012)	228
R.	Mapping of <i>Justicia Para Mi Hermana</i> (2012)	229
S.	Mapping of <i>Irene</i> (2013)	230
T.	Mapping of <i>Por Las Plumas</i> (2013)	231
U.	Mapping of <i>El Lugar Indeseado</i> (2014)	232
V.	Mapping of <i>El Codo del Diablo</i> (2014)	233
W.	Mapping of <i>Xic Vuh</i> (2013)	234
X.	Mapping of <i>12 Segundos</i> (2013)	235
Y.	IFF winners 2009-2014 organised by production stage and realm of action after ANT mapping	236

Table of Figures

FIGURE 1 CINEMA'S 3D FIELD (VIEW FROM FOUR ANGLES)	105
FIGURE 2 <i>POR LAS PLUMAS</i>	110
FIGURE 3 <i>ALGUNAS DIMENSIONES DE EFRAÍN RECINOS</i>	111

Table of Images

IMAGE 1 SEQUENCE FROM <i>MARIMBAS DEL INFIERNO</i>	146
IMAGE 2, <i>ESPERANCITA</i> IN <i>ALGUNAS DIMENSIONES DE EFRAÍN RECINOS</i>	150
IMAGE 3, DIRECTOR'S MIRROR GAZE IN <i>EL REGRESO</i>	153
IMAGE 4, THE QUOTIDIAN GAZE AT <i>EL LUGAR MÁS PEQUEÑO</i>	158
IMAGE 5, <i>EL LUGAR INDESEADO</i> , A MIMICKING GAZE	161
IMAGE 6, <i>LIH WINA</i> 'S MULTIPLE GAZES	163
IMAGE 7, <i>NICTÉ</i> 'S FANTASTIC AND RESTRICTED SPACE	164
IMAGE 8, MEDIA AS BONDING IN <i>POR LAS PLUMAS</i>	166
IMAGE 9, <i>MARÍA EN TIERRA DE NADIE</i> , DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES OF THE ROAD	169
IMAGE 10, DON TOMÁS'S GAZE IN <i>DISTANCIA</i>	174
IMAGE 11, <i>IRENE</i> , THE BODY AS A TERRITORY	178
IMAGE 12, <i>SOMBRAS NADA MEÁS</i> , MULTIPLICITY WITHIN A BODY	184

Introduction

Filmmaking on the Central American isthmus began in the early 20th century.¹ However, it was not until the 21st century that the Ícaro Film Festival (IFF), considering itself Central America's first and foremost film festival (Zambrano & Buvollen, 2007, pp. 16, 34), started to regard motion pictures made in the region as belonging to the category 'Central American Cinema'. Once a year, in Guatemala, the IFF screens a selection of movies from Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and the host country. Prior to this, an independent jury in each of Central America's component nations (or those named by the festival, at least) decides which local motion pictures to invite to the main event in Guatemala. There, these movies compete in four 'Best Central American Film' categories: feature-length fiction film, feature-length documentary, short fiction film, and short documentary. The admission criteria for each of these 'Best Central American Film' competitions focuses primarily on the quality of the final production. There is no precise definition within these submission and selection criteria as to what degree and type of affiliation the competing films need to have to Central America; having any sort of link with the isthmus suffices. On top of it, IFF's proposal of a region is not a direct adoption of a historical, geological, political or economic perspective of the isthmus. Thus, I argue, IFF's Central America is already a performative interpretation of all the above elements.

Notwithstanding how tenuous the affiliation between IFF's criteria and different notions of Central America may be, the movies awarded prizes in the four categories described above will later circulate as this festival's winners under the label of 'Central American films'. It is a screening tour organised by IFF that both reaches the countries within this festival's notion of Central America and beyond. Arguably IFF's selection depends upon an idea of the isthmus as a symbolically referential unit, which the same festival's scheme of displayability reproduces by presenting the movies as a coherent collection

¹ According to María Lourdes Cortés (2005), Guatemalans watched cinematic images for the first time in September 1896. A little earlier in that very same year, Parisians audiences were amazed by the vision of a train heading over to them in a dark room. Narrative films will be produced in a Central American country only 20 years after that. In 1913, Alberto de la Riva, also in Guatemala, premiered *El Agente #13*. All that is left from that pioneering filmmaking experience is its title, no copy of the film has survived (Cortés, 2005, pp. 35, 72).

of CAC. Precisely, what this thesis scrutinises is how cinematographic products interact and produce notions of a Central American region. To do this, I analyse contemporary performances of CAC, by taking as my corpus the 24 winners in the four IFF's categories of 'Best Central American Film' between 2009 and 2014, which are at the very core of the enunciation of the category. Appendix A includes the chart with the full list of this movie collection.

Similarly to IFF, media outlets propose their own interpretation of Central America. Their depiction of the isthmus is often characterised by violence, vulnerability, civil unrest and migration fluxes. Some films in my sample seem to validate that perspective, and thus the explanatory potential of the category.² That vision of a precarious Central America is entirely appropriate for motion pictures such as *María en Tierra de Nadie*, by Marcela Zamora (El Salvador-Mexico, 2010), *El Lugar Más Pequeño*, by Tatiana Huezo (Mexico-El Salvador, 2011), *A Mi Lado*, by Jean-Cosme Delaloye (USA-Nicaragua-Switzerland, 2012) and *El Codo del Diablo*, by Ernesto and Antonio Jara (Costa Rica-Guatemala, 2014). Each of these cultural objects in some way evokes images or notions readily associated with the isthmus: forced migration, the spectacle of the horrors of civil war, poverty and political instability. These movies represent but a part of this research's collection and only a partial representation of the themes dealt with across the corpus of the 24 winners.

By proposing a relational approach to my interpretation of cinema and its production of the isthmus, my research project contests any attempt at naturalisation or inevitability of what Central America is and what being Central American might mean in terms of belonging. The IFF's criteria are loose. There is not a ready-made prescription with which these films have to comply. Other motion pictures in this sample, for example, locate the narratives in different spaces of belonging: *Lih Wina*, by Dania Torres Hurtado (Finland-Nicaragua, 2012), portrays the Caribbean as the

² Just a few headlines for an example of this situation: in the New York Times, the US., Las guerras civiles de Centroamérica en los conflictos de hoy (2019); in El Faro, El Salvador, Centroamérica en fuga (2018); in Confidencial, Nicaragua, Centroamérica se desangra por la violencia homicida (2018); in The Guardian, UK, Central America braces for return of US military-led foreign policy (2017); and in El País, Spain, Médicos Sin Fronteras alerta sobre la crisis en Centroamérica del tamaño de una guerra (2017).

main characters' identitarian space; *Justicia Para Mi Hermana*, by Kimberly Bautista (USA-Guatemala, 2014), centres on a belonging based on gender and being a woman; and *Tercer Mundo*, by César Caro Cruz (Costa Rica-Chile-Bolivia, 2010), links Costa Rica to the global south before finally uniting the whole Earth under the threat of extra-terrestrial beings.

Furthermore, beyond thematic, there are additional elements to filmmaking that the idea of being Central American seems to omit, amongst them the funding of the movies and their extraction of value. I argue that the creation of meaning and commodification of films result from the interaction of the many factors intervening in their production. Territoriality and isthmian representativeness are not the pivotal element for the symbolic and economic interactions of my sample. Instead, these films are part of a global arena; mobility and translatability are at the fore of the process. My approach for identifying the role(s) of CAC is relational, as the idea of this region and the means of moviemaking interact with each other, affecting and adapting their meaning and functions. Making a film is an interweaving of financial interests, spatial evocations, artistic influences and education background, distribution circuits as much as the thematic proposals. It is this dense composite that is responsible for the production of meaning and the commodification of the movie too. There are not compartmentalised actions but consubstantial ones. Consequently, the potential identitarian implications of CAC and its commercial appeal define each other.

My interest in analysing CAC is the result of a combination in itself. Before engaging in this academic research, I worked as a film practitioner in Costa Rica. Thus, my professional activity was located within the region that is commonly known as Central America. Indeed, as an individual who was born and raised in Costa Rica, the isthmus should not seem foreign. Instead, it should be another identitarian layer of reference with which, in some way, I identify. Territorially, Costa Rica is inextricably located within the isthmus. Symbolically, it acknowledges this location, too. For example, the

top part of my country's national emblem includes the enunciation of Central America.³ However, my everyday experience as a resident of Costa Rica suggests that there is little symbolic unity in the Central American isthmus.⁴ Central America is not an imagined community of which I regularly feel a part – from my perspective; not even a national identification secures a sense of belonging. The Costa Rican government funds my activity as a filmmaker through a public university. My documentaries mostly portray local issues. Yet, like many filmmakers, my professional practice also crosses many borders; my documentary practice is at once both very local in the topics that it portrays and very transnational in the structures that make its production and exhibition possible. For example, I had the opportunity of continuing my higher education in media, that I had started in Costa Rica, with a postgraduate degree in Germany. Thus, there is a gap, it would seem, between the idea of the isthmus as defining a cinema practice and my personal experience. The Central American identification, for me, raises many questions, does it emerge solely from the perspective of the individual? Does it have to do with financing, education background, thematics or audiences? How about the characters of the films, do they have to feel Central American? Or is the category just meant to define an alternative sort of moviemaking? If so, what is peculiar about my sample of films to justify their *centralamerican-ness*? Although my concern for Central America indicates that it plays some role as a point of reference for me, there is a whole set of interactions and experiences in my life which do not strictly 'belong' to this region. However, I do not mean to turn this research into a reflexive identitarian exploration. I merely want to lay clear my background and interests as a researcher and film practitioner.

Implementing a Central American Cinema (CAC) category would require determining, formally or informally, an area of coverage, thematics, aesthetic approaches, and even financial or educational criteria of belonging. This dynamic of delimitation in itself both

³ This isthmian reference has a historical counterpart in the República Federal Centroamericana, the short-lived 19th century federalist attempt by Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Yet, Costa Rica is nowadays clearly absent from basic structures of the region's political integration, most significantly the Central American Parliament.

⁴ As recent as August 2018, an increase in the number of Nicaraguans seeking for asylum in Costa Rica sparked a condemnable xenophobic march in the latter country (Agencia EFE, 2018). These two neighbouring countries, through their history, demonstrate that internal borders are as problematic for the notion of a unified Central America as defining its external ones.

simplifies and fixes the notion of identity. Such a proposal is at odds with the continuous process involved in the performance and reinterpretation of belonging and cinema as well. Besides, the different exchanges that filmmakers engage on when making a movie, not to say the geographical dispersion of the public that ends up consuming that cultural object, do not match any of the multiple territorial configurations for Central America. When it comes to identity it is not any easier. First of all, Stuart Hall (1996, pp. 597-598) considers that 'identity' can designate three different forms of referentiality. There is one centred on the individual, this he calls the 'enlightenment subject' and consists of the core of that person, her subjective definition. The second option is the 'sociological subject'. Here, identity emerges from the relations with 'significant others', as these people cohabit and define the values, meanings and symbols that constitute the self. Finally, Hall defines the 'post-modern subject', for whom identity is multiple, overlaying, contradictory at times and evolving. That individual is not trying to fit within a greater frame, but defining herself through her experiences and transformations. This density and variability of what the term identity refers to, is indicative of its lack of specificity. Such vagueness contradicts its implementation as a selection criterion, which is the most obvious role of Central American in its interaction with cinema.

Central American Cinema is a category that, in the first instance, selects film productions according to their relationship with some of the countries located within the geographical strait between the north and south portions of America. What started with María Lourdes Cortés (2005) as a historical compendium of 20th century motion pictures, with Hispano Durón (2012) (2014) evolved to a sense of shared experiences and procedures of production and for Andrea Cabezas (2015) a thematic and aesthetic coherence in filmmaking. These previous academic research projects focus on the perception of CAC as the recognition of thematic and stylistic tendencies across a particular selection of films. It is relevant to consider that the motion picture sample that Durón and Cabezas analyse seems rather aleatory as they do not justify their selection criteria. Durón centres on a group of fiction films that for him reflect the best possible case of a CAC. Even if Cabezas includes in her sample documentary movies, she states an interest in widely recognised films, a form of inclusion that loosely mixes spectators and curators' criteria. In either case, a significant setback is that any

assumption that filmmakers, financiers or even audiences might align in their territorial affiliation is unrealistic regarding the complex and broad frame of exchanges involved in moviemaking. Usually, deploying the category is unrelated to its performance through the movies or its representativity for filmmakers or producers. Precisely, this research proposes an approach to CAC from a performativity perspective, recognising that the identitarian, as well as other potential functions of it, are relational. Central America is not designating any precise implementations of the territory nor of cinema. Hence why understanding the role of CAC requires to trace the category across its uses by the different actors interacting and pushing for their interests in the filmmaking process.

The discussion of the role of Central America in cinema links to the use of other also territorial/national criteria for classifying film production. There is a normalisation in referring to categories like Hollywood, British, Hindi, Latin American or French cinemas for explaining the style, circulation and function of a movie. Indeed, exploring the relationship between category and film does not apply in exclusivity to the notion of an isthmian cinema. Analysing the performance of identity and commodification in my film sample is relevant for moviemaking in general terms. I find that, rather than explaining a motion picture's process of funding, representation or signification, the reference to Central America might be interpreted through cinema as market-oriented action. Instead of describing a territory or an identitarian idea, the isthmus acts as a tag meant to find an audience niche for these movies. Hence, looking into the network of actors involved with a film avoids an essentialist interpretation of the category and the motion pictures. Interpreting the function of a narrative or Central America becomes a matter of the multiplicity of interactions and objectives that reunite around them, and which creates them too. From my own condition as a filmmaker, this is an urgent matter for better conceptualising the outcome and constraints of the image. It breaks with a naïve, or very optimistic approach, of movies exclusively fulfilling the agenda of their directors, funders or distributors. Motion pictures are a field of negotiations.

For dealing with such dense and multifaceted proposals for both cinema and Central America, I refer to Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (2007) as the basis for my methodological approach. ANT centres upon the exchanges taking place amongst the diverse actors involved in a dynamic of interaction – in this case, filmmaking from its

creative idea to production and distribution. Instead of looking for an essential notion of either Central America or cinema, I track the interpretations and functions given to them in the frame of exchanges generated by those involved in the end-to-end process of a movie. The resulting map shows that each film is a heterogeneous and intricate network of effects on a global frame, which explains the scant relevance of the isthmus's notion of territoriality or its cultural imaginaries. Those exchanges both create meaning and instrumentalise the image, a situation for which overdetermination is a clarifying term. Althusser (2005) proposes that the dialectical process does not necessarily end in a clean slate. Synthesis, in a sense, carries within it the indelible traces of those factors creating it. Furthermore, the meaning of those previous elements is modified as they interact with each other. The network is not only transferring symbolic or material contents, but it is also a transformation and adaptation of them through interactions.

In making the 24 films from my sample, most of the times, the director is also their writer, promoter and producer. Hence, for applying ANT as the core of this research's methodology, it proceeds to track those exchanges the directors find as the more significant for being able to propose, shot and distribute their movies. To achieve that retracing of interactions, I conduct in-depth interviews to as much of the directors from the film sample as possible.⁵ In total, 17 directors agreed to the interview. In consideration of the directors' geographical dispersion, all interviews took place in video-communication platforms, specifically Skype and Google Hangouts. The talks with the directors follow a basic scheme of seven topics: their educational and professional background, their motivations for making the film, what they identify as the artistic influences in their work, the process for funding their production, the production and distribution dynamics, how they perceived their level of control over the whole process and finally their perception over the motion picture's and themselves' belonging to Central America. As a follow-up, directors fill in an online questionnaire regarding demographic aspects, their professional development as well

⁵ Only *El Tanque* is out of consideration for this actor-network tracing, given that it is the result of the 7th Workshop of Noticiero Intercultural on filmmaking. Hence, the 11 attendees to that event are the choral director of this short documentary. Keeping track of the exchanges that those persons and the coordinators of the event, part of the NGO Asociación para la Cooperación con el Sur – Las Segovias, have in the frame of that production requires its own research.

as each film's budget and revenue.⁶ Only 11 out of the 17 interviewed directors did fill the questionnaire. For those directors who did not reply to the interview request, journalistic materials and conferences they attended became the only source for those data otherwise accessed through the in-depth interview and the questionnaire.

The argument here is not one of the film directors as the sole creators of a movie, that would be inconsistent with the theoretical and methodological approaches. However, the pivotal role of the directors for this film sample allows proposing a tracking of interactions departing from those subjects. Examining the intentions and interests of other counterparts in the filmmaking process relies on the consultation of their websites and bibliographical review. In this way, pace by pace, the practitioners' networks finally come to be drawn, locating the interactions between filmmakers, funders and distributors, as well as those stakes they bring to the table during the production process of the movies, along with the place that deploying CAC upholds in that entanglement. Thoroughly exploring those themes is also the reason the present research falls short on analysing audiences' reception and interpretation of the movies in the sample and the isthmian category. However, that is not same as discarding an analysis of the motion pictures. The final step of this project is the researcher's tracking, i.e. his identification and interpretation, of those exchanges and the notion of Central America in the proposed cinematic texts. This stage attempts testing the referential relevance of the idea(s) of CAC as a frame of analysis for this film collection.

To systematise these methodological and theoretical approaches for studying my film sample, I divide my research into four chapters. They respond to the fundamental aspects involved in the idea of Central American Cinema. The first chapter, 'Cinema, a network of signification' clearly states that the creation of meaning is the result of the imbrication of interests of very diverse natures. Expressly, this section acknowledges that the industrial dimension of filmmaking is not a straightforward economic instrumentalisation of the movie but a needed consideration for its symbolic potential. This first chapter juxtaposes the idea of a territorial characterisation of moviemaking with that of the displayability as well as the commercial practices and economic

⁶ A copy of the online questionnaire is in Appendix B.

interests that are also constituents of film. Displayability looks at the relation between the consumption of a film and its signification, particularly its role in creating a cohesive narrative. Distributing a motion pictures is more than generating a revenue, it is also about spectators relating to the movie's narrative, of using it as a token of a shared symbolic realm. Thus, elements seemingly closer to industrial concerns, such as that of displayability, are also integral for explaining the process of incorporation of narratives within the idea of a community. Gathering a group of motion pictures under the wing of a Central American category does not isolate some factors within that collection as the responsible for producing meaning through moving images. Instead, the identitarian or spatial proposals of the isthmus integrate and modify their material and allegoric roles as they become cinema.

In this sense, the interaction of CAC within film's symbol-commodity continuum admits that the identitarian function of the category can trigger a certain notion of cohesion or recognisability that is an asset within a world-wide circuit of movie distribution. This assertion considers Beller's (2006) proposition of a cinematic mode of production. For this author, movies are simultaneously the result and enablers of industrial and capitalist relations. This perspective challenges the tendency to interpret films exclusively as subversive texts or straightforward representations of subaltern groups, as happens in my sample with the depiction of sexually exploited women, indigenous communities, unemployed artists or gold panners. I argue that these motion pictures perform the extraction of value through exoticisation, matching Beller's perspective of the cinematic mode of production and its promotion of capitalism. In this sense, the image transforms a local object into a deterritorial experience, through an industrial process, for its massive consumption. Both image's and financial capital's immaterial circulation facilitate that such dynamic exists. As a result, an offer of 'exotic' cultural expressions is within reach of distant buyers, like any other goods through a world-wide market interaction. However, such actions coexist with sincere intentions of self-representation or activism directly opposing mercantilist and exploitative dynamics. In this tense and blurry interaction of interests, CAC is a label that obscures the diversity of exchanges around these films by imposing historical, economic and symbolic preconceptions of the isthmus upon their cinematic narratives and implementations. Hence, to understand the role of a region and its possible representations, this

research has to look simultaneously at two factors. One of them is to analyse the relationship between these 24 films and the deployment of CAC. The other one is to track down and study the tendencies that these movies may have in their use of spatial referentiality and representations of precarity.⁷

The second chapter focuses on understanding, from a relational perspective, the concepts of territoriality and belonging emerging from the idea of Central America. 'A foggy *centralamerican-ness*' sets out the major problematics for assuming that the isthmus provides a ready-made criterion of selection. Exploring the interactions that construct diverse iterations of the isthmus shows that space and identity are not fixed within a 'name', but evolving processes of creation. They are a performative dimension rather than a firm substrate. There is a collection of perspectives and potential meanings for Central America. A historical perspective of the isthmus gives a general view of the varied and contradicting territories, peoples, and practices allegedly reunited under this idea of a region. This heterogeneity has a contemporary counterpart as different indicators of the living conditions of most inhabitants of one possible Central America shows that it is still far from a consistent area. Besides, these statistical data are also indicative of the differentiation between local characters in a marginal condition and those depicting them as moving images. García Canclini (2004) explains that such difference locates each of these actors within separate spheres. Mainly, identifying with marginal and local conditions is a competitive edge within global exchanges as long as the individual has the economic capital to afford mobility and cultural capital for translatability (García Canclini, 2004, p. 76). In other words, external factors mediate the process of defining the meaning and role of Central America. The spatial notion of the region is not only a matter of concern for those inhabiting the area but also for those involved in transnational exchanges. Territoriality and the idea of belonging are valuable resources when looking for strategies of visibilisation and marketability of cultural products.

⁷ Precariousness surpasses economic limitations and "...describes that process of acclimatizing a population to insecurity... interpellating that population as expendable, if not fully abandoned" (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013, pp. 726-728). The tension that emerges for filmmaking is that it profits from the representation of such conditions without a clear path for the actual improvement of its depicted subjects.

The idea of CAC meets with a sensitive issue when considering the market of a film. These motion pictures' exhibition has a minimal reach. Audiences within the notion of the isthmus never get to consume these narratives massively. For most of these films, their strategic arena of validation and reproduction is the transnational circuit, even if never reaching a considerable number of spectators either. This reduced displayability invites us to ask for whom the notion of Central America is relevant. Notably, research and academic diffusion of a Central American related thematic also rely on the support and interest of a community located outside of the isthmus. This circumstance portrays the isthmus as part of broader networks of meaning and commodification. The selective circulation of the motion pictures is not in conflict with the generation of a surplus-value for funders, directors or academics related to them. Conversely, it helps to consecrate the actors around said movies thanks to these people's privileged mobility possibilities. In this sense, it is a negotiated displayability, not so much about validation through massive consumption, but the qualitative valorisation that global circulation brings to the filmmaker's professional practice. Hence, Central America serves as a brand that film festivals pick up, a form of marketing rather than a representation of belonging.

The third chapter, 'Networks of possibilities' begins by delineating a hierarchical scheme of organisation for the different interactions intervening in a film. It organises the networks outlined accordingly to a field theory approach. Bourdieu (1993) proposes that there is a relationship amongst different capitals defining the criteria for validating and reproducing a cultural activity, in this case cinema. For Bourdieu, the notion of the autonomy and heteronomy of a field are fundamental for assessing the variability of a given activity's internal consistency in defining the terms of its own production and validation. My research suggests that differentiating between internal and external influences is not crucial. Heteronomy, as interdependency and co-definition amongst the varied factors in a process of cultural production, is useful in as much as it recognises that there are interests of diverse origin and expectations mediating in filmmaking. The chapter uses the notion of the field to explore the films' networks and analyse the different scales of interaction that are more relevant for them. It is possible to identify that cinema's systems of production, reproduction and validation within this field rely heavily on cultural and economic capitals of a global and

deterritorialized character. These scales do not represent a way of displacing the notion of Central America from the sample but rather allow us to track the way the category of Central America is constituted within the spheres of national, post-national, transnational and deterritorialized interactions. It results in a functional understanding of the role of this category for each particular film and its main scale of referentiality. 'Networks of possibilities' shows the many options of identification within the actual sample of motion pictures and their spatial referentiality. Mapping the funding schemes, displayability, thematics and the depicting style of these films, as much as the background of their directors draws a network far from a Central American sphere. However, the lack of cohesiveness of the isthmus is not due to its particular idea of spatiality. Filmmaking and symbolic constructions of a deterritorial sort prove to be complementary. The moving image as a dematerial object fits narratives and ideas of belonging detached from geographical conditioning. The feebleness of the concept of Central American to define a praxis of cinema is not due to the perception of the region as in a condition of marginality. Filmmaking is a web of many factors, some of them quite more strategic for the production and reproduction of this activity, which downplays a territorial or identitarian conditioning. It is mobility, for this matter, which shows to be not only circumstantial but correlated to the viability of a cinematic project.

'Common sites of a global cinema' addresses the representations in the sample in their world-wide scheme of interactions. At this stage, the fourth chapter, it is clear that the primary function of the Central American identification of films is to be a label for the marketing of moving images outside of the isthmus. However, considering the research's relational approach, that situation is not disqualifying other possible roles or interests in portraying a regional thematic or depiction of space. As a further complexity, there is the matter of the gap amongst the subjects of representations and the filmmakers. Thus, this chapter analyses the points of view that constitute the visual narrative of the movies. Therefore, I take the term heteroglossia from Bakhtin's (1981) study of the polyphonic construction of the novel and adapt it as 'heteroramia' for the due consideration of the many potential gazes that visually create a cinematic space. The objective is to assess the most significant perspective for depicting a site and if there is a dialogical interaction amongst the different actors that through the film inhabit that location. It shows that the act of representation also aligns with the strategic

capitals for moviemaking. The main point of view in the movie translates its events for a global circulation. Self-representation is marginal or limited to those characters and circumstances closer to the directors' own experiences. In order to properly analyse the function of territoriality in filmmaking, this final chapter compares the depictions of 'the city', 'the rural', 'the road' and 'the body' in this collection of films. These four criteria obey to the more recurrent spatial constructions within the sample. Studying them looks for the gazes intervening in their depiction and their symbolic part within the movie. There is no ideal with which the different representations of these categories must oblige. Instead, I trace the probable compliance that the construction of these spaces has with the interests of the different actors involved in the film. It proposes these sites as relational territorialities, networks in themselves and thus, not standing outside of the cinematic field. Their potential for identification or activism does not escape their spectacularization and commodification as global resources in a market thirsty for images.

In this film sample, there are dense and varied proposals of belonging as much as complex interpretations of the cinematic mode of production. The notion of Central America is insufficient to adequately identify a cinematic style, suggesting sources of financing, giving clues about the directors' background, films' displayability and even their spaces of representation. However, chasing the ghost of the isthmus is an oblique path towards reflecting on the hopes and constraints of filmmaking. Perhaps, even more relevant, it addresses the shortcomings of symbolic shortcuts, collective terms that really does not explain much and yet are customary frames of analysis. For these sorts of categorisation, this research proves that as vital as it might be to try and find their meanings, it is also to recognise what they hide and the distortion that bears for the processes in which they intervene.

Chapter 1. Cinema, A Network of Signification

"...[F]orm/content, object/context, art/arti-fact, image/commodity serve as opposite sides of the same surface. They constitute a möbius strip in which the choice of one entails the other" (Nichols, 1994).

A category like Central American Cinema (CAC) is a label based on a territorial affirmation. This sort of characterisation for film products proves to be highly inadequate when considering the multiple actors and spaces intermingling in a motion picture. This chapter proposes to conceptualise filmmaking as an interactive process, showing the implications that this has for the notion of belonging. Neither cinema nor territory imposes itself on the other. Under a relational understanding of cinema, they create meaning together through a specific network of interactions, becoming a compound whereupon symbolic and material dimensions become inseparable. To explore the idea of CAC from the perspectives of spatiality, representation and belonging, I propose a close analysis of the 24 winners in the category of 'Best Central American' fiction and documentary, short and feature-length, movies at the Ícaro Film Festival (IFF) between 2009 and 2014 (Appendix A). The objective is to map out the exchanges taking place during the end-to-end production process of these movies, determining how each motion picture deploys and benefits from its distinction as 'belonging' to the isthmus at different stages. This methodological approach is informed by Actor-Network Theory (ANT), proposing to interpret the motion pictures and the Central American category according to their interactions. For this section of the research, the focus will be on the intricacies of moviemaking as a simultaneity of a medium, mode of artistic expression and global industry.

Opening up the use of CAC towards other functions besides the identitarian one involves both components of the term. That is Central America and cinema. This first chapter centres on cinema, without losing sight of territoriality of course. It thoroughly explores the multiple and intermingling factors intervening in the creation of a motion picture. As just stated in the previous paragraph, this includes the network of actors and interests interchanging along the end-to-end process of a film. That weaving leads to pondering the implications of industry, distribution and displayability in the creation and interpretation of moving images as symbolic objects. For structuring an

exploration that is unavoidably dense and overlapping, this chapter divides into four sections. The first one is 'Meaning in an industrial art'. Whichever aims a motion picture might have, they are involved in a material and economic context signed by massive manufacturing procedures. However, the relational perspective that I am developing does not imply that industry is the leading factor of moviemaking. The second section of the chapter, 'Cinema as a dense composite', explains the integration and struggle of those many actors involved in the film. At this stage, overdetermination is a fundamental term. It points towards the overlapping and cross-affecting processes for those elements interacting in the film rather than assuming them as compartmentalised. Setting up this relational framework gives a new perspective on the role of the depiction of a place. 'The territoriality of the image' explores the implications of a location in the network of interests constituting a film. A site is not a fixed object closed to interactions, nor it imposes itself upon moviemaking; it is a construction, symbolic and material, very similar to the film itself. Precisely, the last section, 'Category and Cinema', analyses the interactions of the function of belonging, with those of displayability, industry and territoriality. Their weaving together reveals that in implementing a criterion like CAC for grouping motion pictures, there is a persistent vein of commodification and market-driven interests. They subsume identitarian possibilities to the branding capacity of the isthmus.

The coinage of CAC – or one version of it, at least – derives from three seminal works that each explores the relationship between film and region. These research projects are *La Pantalla Rota*, by María Lourdes Cortés (2005); *New Central American Cinema (2001-2010)*, by Hispano Durón (2014); and the most recent one by Andrea Cabezas, *Cinéma centraméricain contemporain (1970-2014). La construction d'un cinéma régional: mémoires socio-historiques et culturelles* (2015).⁸ In their conclusions, there is a common idea of regional cohesion, a concept which my investigation does not share. In these works, beyond their similar interest in the isthmus, there is an undebated use of the notion of cinema and the assumption that films are fully explainable within a national – or regional – frame of reference. Although these works do not focus on what is Central America, the space they are naming, they

⁸ Cortes's work is a published monograph, while the other two works are unpublished PhD dissertations.

do claim the existence of the region upon their selection of a set of historical-cultural roots. These texts do not problematise the notion of Central America. For distancing from that approach, I will deal directly with the concept of a region in the second chapter of my work. The aim of that section will shift towards the building/creation dynamic of territory since it has resonances with filmmaking's process of meaning creation. That there is a similarity amongst those procedures is critical to explain the interaction between cinema and category, particularly the films' negotiation of their belonging/exploitation of CAC.

The research projects mentioned above recognise that filming in Central America is possible, in part due to multiple international interactions. Nonetheless, they interpret the movies, per se, as direct reflections of the productions' socio-geographical shooting locations. Cabezas most specifically draws on Siegfried Kracauer's proposal, sustaining that "films from a nation are absolutely comprehensible in relation to that nation's own logics" (Cabezas Vargas, 2015, p. 27).⁹ When referring to this statement, Cabezas transposes Kracauer's proposal from the nation to the Central American region without further comment on the different scales, legal constructions or history behind both terms. Nonetheless, for Kracauer, country and region are not necessarily interchangeable. In the German author's book *From Caligari to Hitler* (Kracauer, 1947), it is the specificity of the nation, expressed through its movies, that explains the uprising of Nazism. In his logic, it is impossible to consider that the scale of reference for giving full sense to a motion picture does not make a difference, say, between Germany and Europe. Cabezas takes the notion of a delimited area as explanatory for the contents of a film for justifying a rationale that defines Central America as a naturalised space of representation. Furthermore, this logic underestimates the impact of interactions outside of the nation/region, not to mention intra-regional boundaries and contradictions. The term 'absolutely' in the quote that Cabezas uses from Kracauer, implies a limitation upon transnational exchanges. From that perspective, any interactions beyond the nation/region play nothing but a passive role in the creation of meaning.

⁹ Original French text "les films d'une nation sont pleinement compréhensibles en relation avec les schémas propres de cette nation".

There is a heterogeneity of representations and production procedures, in my movie sample, which further questions the abovementioned academics' idea of a regional consistency. There is a recurrence of international exchanges, be it financial sources, film locations, as well as the directors' nationalities and educational backgrounds, which in many ways exceed and cannot be confined to the limits of the isthmus. This weaving of interests, supports, aims and expectations, calls for a frame of comprehension beyond nation and region. Thus, it is necessary to engage in developing an approach to cinema able to assess the intricacies of such trans-geographical interactions instead of discarding or just ignoring them as these critics seem to do. As a result, this chapter explores the production of a symbolic content from the merging of a film's aesthetics, technique, finance and distribution components, elements which simultaneously affect the meaning of each other. Hence, this section attempts to reach a deeper understanding of what constitutes cinema as a transnational activity. Within this paradigm, it proposes to discern the role of a specific regional identifier: Central American Cinema.

For overcoming the explanation of any movie either as just a cultural object, a commodity, or the product of a precise spatial delimitation is that ANT offers a resourceful approach. The exploration of this collection of films traces their development, thus paying attention to the diverse elements and interests combining along their process of production. In doing so, each motion picture is a live text for which a category is not definitory but another factor amongst its various interactions. This approach asks for keeping the many exchanges in a flat surface, a cartographic perspective as Latour argues (2007, pp. 171-172) when analysing the role of the director, financier, distributor or a brand. Those involved in filmmaking are not part of macro or microspheres; instead, they partake in a mutual process of creation and instrumentalisation. Following their exchanges and translations allows looking at the creators, the commercial and festival circuits of distribution and the film-texts as a whole, not subtracting any given factor nor subsuming one to the other. In this sense, interviewing the directors is a strategy for the collection of data; they are nodal points that make sense and participate in filmmaking because of their links with other participants. It is in the tracing of this grid that I propose to understand cinema and to assess each of the motion pictures' correspondence and deployment of CAC.

The objective of this chapter is beyond tracing lines of contact as if it was a scene from a crime film that presents the web of evidence in a wall. The concept of cinema that develops across these pages is responsive to the particular traits of each of the 24 movies that constitute the body of this research. To analyse these motion pictures, I intend to create a dialogue between the filmic texts themselves and a selection of works about cinema and cultural theory – mostly derived from European and U.S. authors. The choice of this theoretical framework is based on three fundamental premises. First of all, this film sample circulates globally – although not massively. In this stage, European and U.S. screens constitute a significant space for its exhibition. Second, similarly – even if different in scale – to mainstream filmmaking, industrial process and equipment are necessary for the creation of this collection of movies. Hence, referencing cultural industry for analysing these movies is valid regardless of their immediate creative sphere. Finally, most of the film directors from my sample have educational backgrounds from the Global North. Thus, the selected theoretical corpus is coherent with the moviemakers' academic formation.

Such an international scope, as opposed to a regional focus, coincides with some of the practitioners' declared perspectives on their own work. For example, Tatiana Huezo, director of the 2011 Mexican-Salvadorean documentary, *El Lugar Más Pequeño*, states that her film:

No es una película militante, ni para decir: así es Latinoamérica. Es una historia totalmente humana y en sí más cercana, y eso lo han valorado muchísimo los críticos. La ven como una pieza, como una obra cinematográfica que va, de repente pienso, más allá de nacionalidades y de países (Huezo, *El Lugar Más Pequeño* @ NTN24, 2011).

The emphasis that Huezo's documentary places on the personal experiences of historical events, on the details of everyday life and on a camera point of view that is intimate with the characters, cannot be immediately assumed to be invoking either a local, national or regional identity. By creating extreme visual proximity with the protagonists, she seems to be looking for a humane, and thus ubiquitous, empathy. The film's point of origin, its material departure might be El Salvador, or more specifically the agrarian town of Cinquera, located in the rural and poor stricken department of Cabañas in the centre-north of the country. Nonetheless, cinema is

being made, at least in this case, from a transnational experience and with a global perspective in mind; particularly when it comes to reception and the engagement the director hopes to forge with audiences. Huezo herself holds dual nationality (Mexican-Salvadorean). Also, she studied at the Mexican Centro de Capacitación Cinematográfica and Spain's Universidad Pompeu Fabra. So, both the goals and background of this documentary justify using an international academic framework of analysis. It recognises a moviemaking experience where local and global belonging entwines in constant negotiation.¹⁰ Besides, in this contraposition of cultural productions and theoretician proposals, my intention is for either side to contend and redefine the other.

As the epigraph suggests, we would be right to think that Central America is not the only defining element for the sample of cinema with which I am engaging. I interpret Nichols' assertion in the sense that symbolism is neither just a matter of cinematographic language, nor is it confined exclusively to the visual enunciation. The author locates his binary oppositions in a Möbius strip to hint towards the falsity of their confrontation. Rather than colliding factions, the pairs of "form/content, object/context, art/artifact, image/commodity" (Nichols, 1994, p. 78) state the density and multidimensionality of cinema. Therefore, this analysis views CAC as an interplay of interests and not as a normative selection criterion. In this sense, the present project acknowledges Cortés's more descriptive use of CAC for compiling the first hundred years of film production in the region. Cortés's encyclopaedic effort, at first glance, would be a catalogue that asserts the existence of a Central American Cinema. Nonetheless, her unproblematic assumption, which poses Central America as a distinct entity, requires further consideration. Likewise, the author's recognition that there are elements moulding this extensive collection of films beyond their setting/production sites, calls for a deeper reflection.¹¹ In her book, she divides the first hundred years of filmmaking experience in the isthmus into four different production

¹⁰ The third and fourth chapters deal with deterritorialisation, which is one possible expression of such a mixture.

¹¹ A film's nationality is already a complex matter. Does the director give the movie her nationality? Is it the country where it is shot or the one its funders belong to? Moreover, what about when those elements, to name just three, each has a different nationality? What would the country be, recalling Kracauer, who gives the film the full context for its comprehension?

dynamics: “el oficial, el artesanal, el comercial y el de ‘autor’” (Cortés, 2005, p. 31). These criteria refer to a mixture of financial resources, aesthetic and political motivations.¹² Furthermore, in her final reflections, Central America is not only a category that suggests a form of belonging but an asset for developing a film industry. The region's value lies in “la construcción de un espacio audiovisual regional que contribuya a paliar obstáculos, como la falta de un mercado rentable” (Cortés, 2005, p. 543). Consequently, for the present exploration of CAC, it is necessary to delve into the aesthetic, thematic and economic facets creating an artistic form of expression that is also a product to be consumed; a creative activity that is bound to commercial intricacies. The uses of the CAC category, as is evident in Cortés's last quote, reunite multiple interests. What Nichols (1994) claims is the need to consider artistry and economics not as separate fields of analysis but as a conjoined unit, conforming a single process, however paradoxical and contradictory as it might be.

For the analysis of contemporary CAC, I want to avoid putting myself in the position of defining a collection of cultural objects already marked by my own interpretation of what is Central American Cinema. Consequently, I opt to pick my sample from where such sense of isthmian belonging is by default stated. That is the case of the 24 IFF winners between 2009 and 2014. Although my selection slightly overlaps in time with Durón's proposal of a New Central American Cinema (NCAC) as emerging in the years 2001-2010, it still differs in its titles. Besides, in Durón's *New Central American Cinema (2001-2010)* (2014) he delimits his project to feature-length fiction movies doing a more in-depth analysis of three of them, from Costa Rica, *El Camino* (Yasin, 2008); from Guatemala, *La Bodega* (Figueroa, 2009); and from El Salvador,

¹² “Oficial” cinema is the one that the government endorses and finances. It is mainly celebratory of those authorities' deeds and therefore, always has a positive tone. By ‘artesanal’ – meaning handcrafted – Cortés attempts to differentiate between these films and the industrial production, the likes of Hollywood and Mexico, Argentina or Brazil. The term ‘artesanal’ also points to a recurrent thematic focus on local customs, intended to affirm national identities (Cortés, 2005, p. 30). The third type, ‘comercial’, is somehow a contradiction to its aims. The commercial cinema, intrinsically for entertainment, is an unviable one due to comparatively meagre production resources and exclusion from distribution and exhibition channels. These movies become “pálidas copias de sus modelos dominantes” (Cortés, 2005, p. 31). The last one, ‘de autor’, as the previous two types, relates to elements that transcend the Central American context. Cortés recognises that these auteur films are influenced by surrealism, existentialism and the French New Wave (Cortés, 2005, p. 31). Most importantly, it is the directors' eagerness to “realizar una obra original, distinta de la producción estereotípica de la industria o de las producciones meramente artesanales” (Cortés, 2005, p. 116) that characterises these movies.

Sobreviviendo Guazapa (Dávila, 2008). He offers no particular motives for his selection of these movies. In my case, I pick my film sample from IFF winners, procuring to secure the independence of the curatorial criterion from which I evaluate CAC. Besides, when Durón claims a new wave of Central American Cinema, he implies a so well established category that justifies him taking a fresh look at it. He keeps the idea of CAC as a standard frame of reference and interpretation. According to my motion pictures' collection, such argumentation is highly contestable, to say the least.

Indeed, both Durón's and my set of movies, are possible, at least in part, thanks to the availability of cheaper digital film equipment and financial support from international organisations. However, Durón identifies within his sample of motion pictures three other shared elements: educational institutions, transnationalism and specialised distribution circuits – mainly Ícaro Film Festival, as responsible for enabling film production in the isthmus in then 21st century. Specifically, Durón proposes five reasons for the increase that Central America saw in film production in recent years: enrollment of students from the isthmus at Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión (EICTV-Cuba), Fondo de Fomento al Audiovisual de Centroamérica y el Caribe (Cinergia) as the primary funder, digital technologies, transnationalism and Ícaro Film Festival as the leading distribution channel for the regional films (2014, p. 42). By transnationalism, he refers to multinational cast and crews, co-production with countries beyond Central America and diaspora productions (Durón, 2014, p. 57). Furthermore, Durón asserts that there is a consistent thematic agenda throughout most of the motion pictures from the region: migration, gangs and civil wars (2014, pp. 102-103). He argues that from the combination of those elements emerged a filmmaking movement delimiting the cinema made in Central America (Durón, 2014, p. 101). Duron's proposal gives a specific definition of which production dynamics and themes properly constitute his idea of NCAC.

Both Duron's research and my own represent only a partial view of the whole set of audiovisual productions from the isthmus. Durón considers Cuba's emblematic film school, EICTV, and Cinergia – the latter now defunct – along with IFF, as central actors that held together CAC as a homogeneous cinematic praxis. Contrarily, in my sample, these elements are marginal or lacking any participation whatsoever, which questions

the coherence of CAC and its use as a collecting criterion. Such is the case of EICTV, which only a minority of the directors in my sample attended. With regards to IFF, my interest in this festival responds to its use of Central America as an award criterion. On top of it, for the films that I am analysing, IFF is one of many possible spaces of validation. The value of this festival varies depending on each movie's international circuit of distribution. The thematic agenda also differs: 13 films from my sample do not deal with any of the topics that Durón identifies as prevalent in NCAC. This absence is still more relevant when questioning the use of CAC as standing for a unified cinematic movement. It is not only a matter of educational institutions, funding or spaces of validation; CAC even lacks a thematic or aesthetic axis. A film falls into CAC not because it shares particular practices characterising a performance of cinema as Central American. The category's geographical identification is little more than incidental. The collection of motion pictures under consideration has a heterogeneity that contrasts with NCAC's restrictive perspective. Thus, I attempt to analyse the function of CAC according to the movies' interactions and motivations, beyond places or symbolic/material binarism. This strategy is an innovative take to address the production of cinema in Central America as it does not approach CAC as a distinctive sort of filmmaking, nor does it use the motion pictures selected for this research to validate the category from within. Instead, I propose to consider each movie in its exchanges and ways of expressing cinema as a transactional and transnational practice. CAC is, then, a subject of global concern.

For this research, films are complex processes of creation of meaning. The intricacies of production and the dynamics of enunciation bind symbol and commodity through overdetermination; i.e. determining and modifying each other. Overdetermination refers to the multidirectional exchange amongst technical, economic and political elements within a film. Louis Althusser, in *For Marx* (2005), reluctantly introduces this concept which he considers suitable in the absence of any other options, to describe relations of production and their internal contradictions. When interacting, elements have an impact and are also affected themselves simultaneously in the process. This perspective allows the analysis of the constant negotiations undertaken by the variety of actors united through filmmaking. These exchanges do not define the meaning, relevance and impact on the overall outcome of their gathering beforehand. In this

sense, overdetermination neither discards a movie's geographical location from taking part in the negotiations nor does it set it as an autonomous guiding principle. A motion picture's location or any other kind of identitarian motive associated with its director, funders or even distribution circuits causes a wide array of effects on a movie. Overdetermination reminds us that such features are being modified in their interaction with the film. The meaning of them is as well the result of their participation in the creation of a moving image. Beyond a normative belonging category, this research tracks the Central America element of CAC in the motion pictures' symbolic representations. This tracking of the isthmus' implementations and exchanges carries on amidst cinema's stages of funding, production, distribution and validation. By following CAC's uses, it should be possible to show how both the notions of cinema and region are constructions that, when brought together, change and alter each other.

The present proposal of understanding the dynamics of overdetermination in and across a film's stages of production is relativistic. Relativism, for this research, "is not the relativity of truth but the truth of relation." (Gilles Deleuze, 1993)", as quoted by Bruno Latour (2007, p. 95). In this sense, movies are not exclusively commercial activities in which access to monetary resources determines unequivocal results. A motion picture's diegesis is not isolated from its production conditions either; therefore, an author cannot express his ideas pristinely. On the other hand, and although this is beyond the scope of this research, is the consideration that audiences generate a multitude of readings as they interpret the film according to their specific decoding frames. Thus, director's original intention for telling a visual story is not necessarily the same as that of the person who finances the movie nor of those awarding it at a festival or introducing it into a distribution circuit. Moreover, that original director's intention will undoubtedly differ from that of the audiences' interpretation of the film. Additionally, those exchanges within the filmmaking process are not unidirectional; that is, a political aim can influence the economic demands and vice versa.

For instance, in the case of *Justicia Para Mi Hermana*, a 2012 documentary by Kimberly Bautista, politics comes first. The film's distribution does not attempt at making an economic profit, but at promoting allegiance and awareness against gender-based violence. Alternatively, *Tercer Mundo*, a 2009 feature film by César Caro, looked for achieving financial viability and thus prioritised entering into a

commercial circuit of distribution. The former film had access to non-reimbursable funds, while the latter depended on private ones. In both instances, neither movies removed absolutely from politics or economics. According to *Tercer Mundo*'s director, migration and lack of common basic knowledge between Latin American countries were subjects of concern for him. That was his reason for selecting them as part of his film's thematic proposals (C. Caro, personal communication, October 21, 2016). *Justicia Para Mi Hermana* uses the film's sales and rental revenue to give financial support to Justice for my Sister social movement's activities. Each of these cultural objects was able to make distinct negotiations because, in filmmaking, neither politics nor economics subdues one to the other.¹³ Within this research approach, the relational perspective reveals how, in a single motion picture, not all of the exchanges are in coordination with the same objectives – contradictions are part of interactions. Hence, economic or political aims – not to mention an aesthetic proposal – do not look to extract or produce the same result out of a film. All of the above-mentioned elements struggle in defining the outcome of a cinematographic project all along the production process. What this means is that any apparent hegemony is volatile because it is in a permanent and ever-changing evolution. Moving images' polysemy and the different schemes of distribution reveal that those negotiations extend well beyond the final print of the movie.

Within this interconnecting perspective, cinema categories are part of and made through overdetermination. Political, economic and technical elements interact for determining a film's selection criteria. Moreover, defining the meaning of the category depends on the uses that those different actors related through moviemaking give to it. Paul Grainge, in *Brand Hollywood* (2007), reflects upon the implementation of movie studios as the criterion for classifying motion pictures, which reveals the many implications of branding. For Grainge, branding "different[ates] products and services

¹³ Cinema as a cultural industry, when we understand 'industry' from a narrow perspective, supposes that monetary revenue is the only way to measure a film's profitability. That some productions can challenge such a notion does not mean a break with the economic element. A shift in what we consider a successful outcome for a film's distribution stage exemplifies a different negotiation between aims, financing sources and available resources. Nonetheless, in a broader sense, the mechanical mediation needed for filming – a.k.a. a movie camera – and its industrial-like process of acquisition and reproduction make consumption to remain as a film's necessary evaluation criterion.

in ways that can foster cultural attachments and consumer loyalties but that can also then translate into forms of measurable (brand) equity” (2007, p. 177). Movie studios target a direct commercial outcome when their names are the identifying element of a collection of films. Mainstream filmmaking, although different in scope and aims regarding my sample, is still a relevant counterpart for understanding CAC. Film studios’ economic revenue is not autonomous from the symbolic exchanges they forge through the motion pictures. For becoming a referent for audiences, a production studio must be consistent with regards to a specific set of aesthetic/thematic trends. This correspondence of stylistic decisions and particular film enterprises, then, creates a sense of community – both as a film collection and for spectators – that is profitable for those companies. It is this logic of branding that emerges in the reasons intervening in the creation of other categories for cinema, like CAC.

Contrarily to the case of movie studios, an economic motivation is not as central, nor is it immediately related to the proposal of CAC. Nonetheless, CAC is mentioned directly in exhibition events; Actually, three different film festivals are named after CAC, proving its relevance for promotional purposes. The fact that CAC is also used by academic research, on the grounds of – allegedly – thematic, technical and funding similarities amongst cultural objects, does not contradict its potential role as a brand. The multiple uses of CAC can be indicative that this category is as embedded as the movies it binds into a dynamic of overdetermination. As a result, a category’s reproduction answers simultaneously to symbolic and material criteria. However, those two criteria do not have a clear separation; their interaction and mutual dependency involve both reproduction and how they create and acquire meaning. In this sense, it reminds us of a brand’s ambiguity; they do not follow strict commercial or identitarian purposes; indeed, one defines the other. The flimsiness with which Central America as an organising criterion enacts within this sample leads to exploring the roles in which the category does not stand for a specific set of contents or tendencies in filmmaking. Instead, the use of this category leans towards instrumentalising the notion of Central America as an attention grabber resource.

This approach to categories recognises that they are more than curatorial devices. I do not pretend to deny nor undermine categories as ways of knowing. I follow Michel Foucault when he affirms that “disciplines are techniques for assuring the ordering of

human multiplicities” (1977, p. 218). My interest, in fact, depends on this power exercise and aims towards how a category gets to play such a role in accessing or sanctioning what is knowable. It is according to Foucault’s ideas that I attempt to determine under which circumstances CAC is relevant for ordering multiplicity. My goal is assessing the congruency of the category’s uses and the production conditions of its enunciation, i.e. cinema. Categories such as CAC might well function as filters discerning particular collections of films amongst the cinematic universe. Nonetheless, for the Central American division, I am questioning the leverage that it has for determining that a specific selection of motion pictures constitute a discrete group. In *The Law of Genre* (2000), Jacques Derrida follows a looping path regarding how the text constitutes the genre and vice-versa. In this sense, it is a follow-up, to a certain point, his argument from *Archive Fever* (1995) about the problematic and deceitful search for origin/al. To deal with that conundrum, I address to overdetermination, as I explain in this chapter. However, my interest is not that of the tension regarding the essence of Central America as a category. I locate my work closer to Hans Robert Jauss, as he sees genres as “primarily social phenomena, which means that they depend on functions in the lived world” (2000, p. 135).

Notably, there is a scarce consciousness amongst moviemakers of belonging to an isthmian cinematic tradition. Central America is not a naturalised overarching referent binding these products in exclusivity. Therefore, this research on a film category analyses its response to a diversity of cinema needs. To be specific, it implements a teleological exploration of CAC, acknowledging that the isthmus must fulfil one or several functions by gathering together cultural objects. At this stance, the perspective on the category approaches Jonathan Beller’s (2006) proposal of a cinematic mode of production. The author aims at a holistic analysis about cinema’s praxis, which at least diminishes the centrality of any given notion of territoriality – which would include a region like Central America – on filmmaking. However, for Beller, the tandem of cinema and capitalism becomes a normative axis of interpretation. Later on, I will explain that my sample’s heterogeneity of performances of cinema poses a contradiction to his determinism. Specifically, I will refer to overdetermination and actor-network mapping to assess the impact of each movie’s specific production conditions, i.e. location, funding or distribution, on how to produce cinema and why. Such diversity of

interacting elements continuously create cinema. This research considers the exchanges amongst directors, funders, location, technical resources and distribution schemes. In that frame, overdetermination refers to the simultaneous modifications that those actors cause on each other, changing their relevance, symbolic perception and even monetary value in their relationship as cinema. It is this interactive dynamic that this chapter proposes to clarify.

The reason for bringing Beller's perspective into my analysis is that it draws attention towards the ideological dimension of political, aesthetic, technical and economic elements of a production – and consequently, of a film category as well.

“‘[C]inema’ refers... to that totality of relations that generates the myriad appearances of the world on the six billion screens of ‘consciousness’ ... [it] means the production of instrumental images through the organization of animated materials... [it] is a material practice of global scope, the movement of capital in, through, and as image... [it is a] changeover to a mode of production in which images, working in concert, form the organizational principles for the production of reality” (Beller, 2006, p. 14).

According to Beller, cinema is more than a narrative through moving images. Cinema is also the producer and reproducer of a system of perception of the world and generation of value. Therefore, a film category has implications beyond selecting movies. The isthmus's potential as a curatorial criterion simultaneously creates and is a part of a visual-based world-system.¹⁴ Calling any film ‘Central American’ does more than describing or defining its characteristics or even assigning an idea of belonging. Implementing CAC generates a region of representation. From Beller's perspective – and Grainge as well – delimiting that area and selecting motion pictures accordingly to it, involves nurturing a spectatorship niche. Hence, using CAC enables the commodification of territoriality and identity through the market of cinema.

Beller's statement on ‘working in concert’ gives the idea of a smoothly directed action, evidencing his deterministic position. In a film, there are negotiations amongst

¹⁴ Very succinctly, for Beller cinema is a system that symbolically validates sequential production, transforms leisure into labour and finally increases the prevalence of experience as a visually mediated event (Beller, 2006, pp. 9, 12, 111, 130, 161).

divergent interests and aims that do not necessarily always manage to reconcile their contradictions. It is characteristic of my sample to find a variety of actors and objectives pulling in different directions. Such hectic interactions might well yield comparable but not homogeneous representations or functions for a motion picture. The impression of a concerted work might come from the diegesis of a film, mostly if it is a well-paced and coherent narrative. However, looking at the whole set of processes and interactions enacted through its production, distribution, and validation can prove differently. In that sense, to divert from the cinematic mode of production implies, simultaneously, enunciation and filmmaking procedures. Beller proposes Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) as the exemplary alternative production of reality. In Beller's perspective, Vertov's film is a radical opposition to the model that he describes. The options that the author offers to the cinematic mode of production are dualistic, either a movie mimics the model or shreds it to pieces. This statement is contradictory to the complexity that Beller is reminding us that occurs within cinema. It is because of the multiple possibilities and interests within the network, enabling and enabled by a film that I question the author's binarism, and instead, I follow a performative perspective.

The cinematic mode of production is not a compulsory model that movies imitate; they deviate from it, transforming the model. In performative terms, the alleged reproduction of the model implies its subversion.¹⁵ Beller's perspective about cinema expands the scope of interactions and implications in which a single movie or an entire category is involved. My sample challenges Beller's determinism precisely on this new reach of cinema. These 24 motion pictures reveal dissonances within the concert, their disruption as much as their compliance with the mode of production. For example,

¹⁵ I use 'performativity' in the sense that Judith Butler proposes it when referring to gender, particularly lesbianism, "...it is precisely the repetition of that play that establishes as well the instability of the very category that it constitutes" (1991, p. 18). Almost 25 years later, Butler in her exchanges with Athena Athanasiou analyses 'performativity' on the actions led by groups. Hence, 'performativity' is a new sort of dialectics, which breaks with binarism as it "emerge[s] as a constant and multi-layered battlefield, without a programmatic and definite dissolution of conflict -without a final word, as it were" (2013, p. pos. 1857). For images in motion, 'performativity' is the constant negotiation or play between the different elements that enable it to exist and be distributed. Further on in this chapter, 'performativity' is fundamental for arguing that cinema is a symbol-commodity compound. When conflictual factors meet in a film, they do not achieve a balance. Instead, they remain engaged in overdetermined interactions, struggling for signification.

Marimbas del Infierno, a 2010 feature-length fiction by Julio Hernández, from its very subject, addresses the tensions amongst the different elements that get assembled within the moviemaking process. In this film, dissimilar characters are brought together to form a new kind of band combining marimba and metal-rock music. Alfonso, the marimba player, is fleeing from gang violence while still trying to earn a living with his music. For Blacko, the metal-rock musician, the conditions are different. He is on the fringe because of his personal style – long hair and black t-shirts – but as a physician, he enjoys good living conditions and leads a music band as a hobby. Blacko's interest in Alfonso could be regarded as stereotypical; he engages in this marimba-metal fusion project for art's sake. There is a third character, Chiquilín, younger than the other two and more chaotic. He is not a musician, more of a survivor. Yet, Chiquilín is the one with the idea of bringing both musical styles together. For the spectator, it is not all that clear if Chiquilín is in it for the money or the glory. However, his precarious condition will push him to sabotage his own project. In the movie's diegesis, the mash-up of music styles parallels the eclectic traits of the characters. Throughout the movie there is never a marimba/hard-rock concert, there is only the tensions of trying to put it together.

Hernández Cordon's *Marimbas del Infierno* brings to attention further negotiations. It does not have a clear cut between documentary and fiction. Therefore, the non-professional actors in the film are playing themselves in a script created by the director. This decision mixes artistic and financial aims too. The movie started as a documentary but shifted to fiction because, on the first day of shooting, Alfonso refused to continue taking part in a non-fiction film due to security concerns.¹⁶ Thus, the

¹⁶ Here, indeed, the place does play a role within a movie, beyond its incidental location. Nonetheless, there is a danger in considering insecurity or criminality as what defines *centralamerican-ness*. At least other two film crews faced criminal actions. Both *Por las Plumas* and *Justicia Para Mi Hermana*, had their equipment stolen. Kimberly Bautista, director of the second motion picture, even suffered a sexual assault as part of the robbery. It is not my intention to minimise these events but to point to the reasoning needed to equate them to Central America. This equivalence requires using the term in a normative way rather than a descriptive one. Central America is violent or dangerous, instead of saying that in places located in the Central American isthmus, there are criminal acts. The first option defines what that place is. In the second you recognise what might happen in that place. The normative definition puts forth a static lecture and invisibilises other possible experiences. 'What might happen' is relational, when and how it occurs depends on specific conditions. It is the normative perspective that I find problematic. It reduces the possibilities of interpretation, and its assumption does not necessarily consider the power dynamics that support its use.

fictionalised narrative and the visual style that derives from it have to do both with an aesthetic proposal and unexpected material constraints. Also, the film's distribution scheme cannot be directly understood as a commercial activity. At least in Guatemala, *Marimbas del Infierno* is not available for sale. Hernández is willing to give access to the movie as long as there is no charge to the spectators. That is, he is trying to withdraw the material from an economically-led mode of circulation. Besides, the director is aware that his narrative might not comply with most of the Guatemalan cinemagoers' tastes. Hernández is clear about disregarding a monetarily-driven form of validation and opting for one centred on the motion picture's function as a historical text (J. Hernández, personal communication, August 18, 2017). Such a stance is congruent with a filmmaking process that could not be developed solely according to industrial standards. It reacted and adapted to field conditions – most evidently to Alfonso's vulnerability.

Instead of just mimicking Beller's cinematic mode of production, Hernández's movie performs cinema through interactions that show constant bargaining between financial and material resources, location, aesthetic aims and distribution schemes. Of course, Hernández still requires industrial processes for the recording of images, beginning with the filming equipment. Thus, he entered into a co-production with Les Films du Requin, which provided cameras and other resources for the movie. This French-based company, which holds the rights for the commercial distribution of this film, had to delay the European release of the movie until January 2018 due to financial problems. Hence, for eight years after its production, *Marimbas del Infierno* did not yield monetary revenue directly from its reproduction. During that period, this film could hardly function as a tool for extracting value out of people's use of leisure time, as Beller argues about moviemaking in general. Rather, it is the director's perspective of his work as a document for future generations that prevails. Even after its release, the motion picture plays the role of a reflective text with a differentiated distribution scheme at a national level; in Guatemala, it adheres to the notion of public service. Thus, territoriality does mark a difference. However, the movie's epilogue displaces the precision of such perspective and opens it towards the world – “Un homenaje a la gente que conozco y que realiza proyectos impensables en un país como el mío” (Hernández Cordón, 2010). That Julio Hernández holds a triple nationality:

Guatemalan, Mexican and U.S.A., is far from anecdotic at this point. First, the reference to “un país como el mío” is harder to reduce to Guatemala. Moreover, this personal characteristic, added to his education at Centro de Capacitación Cinematográfica in Mexico and the French and Mexican financial participation in his movie are part of the considerations for claiming cinema as a transnational activity and thus challenging CAC's implied delimitation of a film's belonging.

Within cinema, differently interested parties struggle among themselves, producing variations and alternatives to Beller's mode of production. Referring to this broader scope of what cinema implies, makes it necessary to substantiate through this chapter that films are a symbol-commodity compound. Bringing to the fore this relational perspective demonstrates that just as a movie's symbolic and commodity dimensions cannot be separated, neither is the use of the category as a brand independent of its identitarian potential. This approach contemplates the different aspects that make Central America a valuable criterion for classifying films. Accordingly, this research explores CAC not as an exercise isolating aesthetic, geographical, historical, cultural or economic concerns, but as one recognising that each film has a unique combination of these relational factors working together rendering any generic category as necessarily reductive. As a follow-up, determining what the implementation of CAC makes visible requires considering the circumstances in which it is present. Additionally, it will be possible to show what is being left unsaid and therefore, how linking CAC naively with a sense of belonging could fall into a commodity fetishisation.¹⁷

¹⁷ Arjun Appadurai in *The Future as Cultural Fact* (2013) already calls to use the term ‘commodity’ as a phase rather than a taxonomy of things (pp. 19-20). This acceptation of commodity intends to explain how an object can be valuable both for what it means and what it can yield on monetary/material terms. Thus, it is not how the object is made or its circulation, which turns it into a commodity. Symbols can be commodities because that refers to how they move from one place to another and can be acquired through economic means. Hence instead of stepping back to a symbol/commodity dichotomy, by commodity fetishisation what I want to make clear is how I implement that latter term within my research. “The fetish is precisely the severance of community appearing as an object. It is the activity that the object undertakes as a medium for severing consumer from community” (Beller, 2006, p. 22). Consequently, I am interested in how the symbol-commodity object can get severed from its conditions of production and the community that it is supposedly addressed to.

1.1 Meaning in an Industrial Art

I am engaging in the process of understanding the relationship between an isthmian film category, its alleged notion of a regional identity, and the production and distribution of this 24 motion pictures' collection. It does not consider the interactions of the diverse audiences with these films, be it the venue for accessing the movies, their interpretation of the narratives in themselves as much as their belonging to a Central American imaginary. This research follows the interactions just to the point where practitioners and other specialists related to filmmaking employ the CAC category. There are many more meanings and for sure, a more complex grid expanding through audiences reception and translation of the isthmian classification. However, this point of intersection, the one about film practitioners and their deployment of CAC is a stepping stone towards understanding the use and identification of Central America for the varied publics of these motion pictures.

Notably, this research is a first exploration of the isthmian category as a process of signification embedded in exchanges that do not take place in one direction. Rather moviemaking, the notion of identity and the function of the category affect each other mutually. This approach to cinema regards for more than the moving images on the screen; the interest is in all the factors participating in filmmaking. The cinematic experience remains present in all of those elements; the visual representation also (re)defines them. This assertion is the gap that previous research has left behind. The academic work on Central America that I referred to in the last section naturalises CAC as a distinct artistic identity. From those academics, one can infer that there is an isthmian cultural unity that consequently leads to a cinematic movement.

In contrast, the present sample's eclecticism decentres the category of 'Central American'. Classifying films as isthmian is a reduction – an invisibilisation – of the vast array of spaces that interact and are expressed through these movies. Simultaneously, assuming CAC as a form of belonging prevents any consideration of other uses for this category within cinema. Such interactive and overdetermined perspective upon the isthmian identification lays down a more nuanced scope to analyse the variances and reframing that including audiences necessarily would bring for understanding the role of categories within cinema. For the time being, as a researcher, I have to accept

the limitation of not extending my mapping to the interactions with audiences, but it is a necessary exclusion. Attention to how diverse publics interpret and interact with the notion of CAC would expand the scope of this work beyond my possibilities. Moreover, strategically, limiting the investigation to the relationships amongst film practitioners and their uses of the category lead to developing a fresh vantage point departing from the naturalisation of CAC as a well-established subject of inquiry.

Conceptualising the symbol-commodity relation as a compound and using the notion of overdetermination, are fundamental ideas for exploring CAC's roles within cinema beyond merely an identitarian device. Understanding this category's diversity of functions requires looking both at filmmaking interactions as well as their outcomes. That combination resembles Steven B. Smith's study in *Althusser and the Overdetermined Self* (1984) when referring to "structural causality". Smith's perspective is that a structure no longer imposes or imprints itself unidirectionally on its parts. Instead, structure and its effects are inseparable because one exists within the other (1984, p. 521). This perspective of constant and multi-directional meaning-creation processes justifies the idea that films are a compound of symbol-commodity intentions/interpretations. The material, aesthetic, political or economic concerns do not sufficiently differentiate from each other. Their interaction alters and transforms the potential symbolic content of those factors. They form a whole – even if it is a unified heterogeneity. The use of those various labels represents a strategic analytical choice rather than a simple description. The diverse elements and actors gathered in a motion picture are involved in a co-dependent and shifting exchange through which they are mutually constituted.

This idea of unified heterogeneity can be perceived in *A Mi Lado*. In this documentary by Jean-Cosme Delaloye, Dominga, the main character, an impoverished and abused woman, watches *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (Cosmatos, 1985) on a TV set in Nicaragua. The eponymous soldier from the fiction film is killing a man who was attacking a woman. In terms of setting, the realm of interactions within this sequence reaches far beyond Central America. In terms of the meaning of this sequence, for Dominga, Rambo is not the epitome of the U.S.'s military strength that has a conflictual history of relations and interventions in Nicaragua. The documentary portrays this soldier as Dominga's avenger, the one of whom she dreams. In Delaloye's film about

Nicaragua, Rambo also has another use, that of drawing spectators closer to the movie. Delaloye, based in New York, identified both in the character of Dominga and in the dire conditions of La Chureca landfill a striking subject for the US news cycle. The director appeals to a mass media distribution for his documentary to secure the topic's exposition parallel with recovering his economic investment in the film (J. Delaloye, personal communication, March 23, 2017). In my view, including Rambo in this documentary brings the film's visual contents closer to its target audience and thus increases the production's possibilities of reaching its financial aims.

Succinctly, the greater access to *A Mi Lado*, the better for Delaloye and possibly for Dominga too. Dominga and Rambo are very different regarding their global recognition. However, these characters fulfil an equivalent archetypal role. If Rambo represents – at least to some – U.S. strength, Dominga is meant to be an image of Nicaragua's poverty and hopelessness. Either of these two representations is sold and consumed through cinema in a transnational market. Dominga is not two different images. Instead, her success as a symbol is given by her success as a commodity, which is as valid if stated inversely. Dominga is not a symbol or a commodity; she is both at once. The film is not an object traversing aesthetic, political and material stages. The interactions enabling cinema bind all these elements in a single movement. Just as Rambo is inside Dominga's TV set, these two characters are different in appearance and yet similar in their instrumentalisation, they are polysemic, and they both are *A Mi Lado*.

The outcome of the interactions in *A Mi Lado*, I argue, surpasses the representation of Nicaragua, Dominga or Rambo, to name three possibilities. Moreover, accomplishing that result is not indicative of the negotiations within the film reaching an even point. Looking at cinema as a symbol-commodity compound helps to recognise that even when there is a binding, contradictions persist. Overdetermination precisely refers to that problematic. Although this word has its roots in Sigmund Freud, Althusser proposes a new acceptance for the term. Althusser claims that the contradictions are modified by the present conditions with which they interact. Hence, for Althusser there is an immanence of causes that are "determining, but also determined in one and the same movement" (2005, p. 101), this is what he, in 'absence of anything better', calls overdetermination. It is a circularity of affects, from a

dialectical point of view, synthesis does not dissociate from its causes, given that the new object supersedes those elements that produce it. In a sense, the past of the object "is never anything more than itself..." (2005, p. 115). This dynamic supposes that the results of the interaction can alter the interpretation of their causes. The process of signification is alive and is inherent to the interconnectedness enabling it. For cinema, overdetermination reminds us that films exist due to technical and industrial developments that created the capacities to capture and project images in motion. At the same time, conditions for expanding and refining such industrial processes are in part possible thanks to the existence of cinema, a proposition at the core of Beller's argument (2006). From this perspective, Delaloye's film does not dissociate from the dynamics of other movies, such as those featuring Rambo. Delaloye's documentary mixes both business and humanitarian concerns. For analysing the creation of meaning in that film, it would be faulty to consider those factors as isolated from one another.

To proceed and consider the full complexity of exchanges deployed for the production and distribution of the 24 films in this sample, Actor-Network Theory (ANT) becomes the framework for building my methodological approach. ANT considers that the term 'social' designates the interaction of individuals amongst themselves and with inanimate objects too, which generates multiple exchanges and further actions. The social is "*a type of connection* [emphasis in the original] between things that are not themselves social" (Latour, 2007, p. 5). A phenomenon is not social; there is a network of relationships generating it. Thus, understanding such phenomenon requires to track which actors, i.e. persons and artefacts, intervene in it. As a research methodology, implementing ANT enables me to consider a film not as a thing in itself, but as a web of interactive processes. Each movie is an endless creation; accordingly, its meaning shifts and reconfigures constantly. Within this relational perspective, filmmaking is a collective, contradicting and yet cohesive unit. Thus, following the relationships and aims that facilitate and resulted from the creation and distribution of a film fosters a more comprehensive understanding of that cultural object. Never-ending negotiation and elaboration of signification justify that cinema is a symbol-commodity compound, as there is no final stage but constant propositions where each condition builds itself from the others. Consequently, CAC is not what organises but, as said before, it is

another element trying to give meaning to the interactions just as it is one of the films' outcomes. Hence, this research maps and tracks the use of the category in this collection of motion pictures as a way of figuring out its potential symbolic-commodity role(s).

Curiously, when academic research proposes CAC as a category, it portrays the lack of distribution as a common characteristic of these movies (Cortés, 2005, p. 534) (Alfaro-Córdoba, 2007-2008, p. 22) (Durón, *New Central American Cinema* (2001-2010), 2014, p. 53) (Cabezas Vargas, 2015, p. 143). As a result, the 'invisibility' for its regional consumers is what unifies the category. However, from a relational perspective, consumption is a fully integrated stage into a film's meaning creation dynamics. Therefore, within this research, CAC's lack of isthmian viewers undermines its identitarian function. Consequently, it is fundamental to put forward an analysis of the transactional possibilities of a Central American labelling. The question at hand is what criteria define, and who receives and accepts a product that has very few isthmian viewers as a Central American expression?

The vintage theoretical approach that Walter Benjamin developed in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936) helps to elucidate such query. Different from pre-industrial arts, Benjamin argues that the cultic value of a given motion picture lies in the possibility of its unrestricted and massive consumption. He uses the term 'displayability' to describe how mechanically-made objects rely on open – or easy – access to them. The relevance for art forms as community builders in the industrial era comes from its incidence. Therefore, displayability becomes a central criterion in the valuation of films (Benjamin, 1936, p. 18). Benjamin's distinction is material and therefore symbolic too. Cinema comes within a new paradigm, that of cultural industry, where a piece's uniqueness, as a material object, is irrelevant and its interpretation no longer requires specialised processes. He summarises it as follows "In making many copies of the reproduction, it substitutes for its unique incidence a multiplicity of incidences. And in allowing the reproduction to come closer to whatever situation the person apprehending it is in, it actualizes what is reproduced" (Benjamin, 1936, p. 13). Thus, the mechanical possibility that enables the object's multiple copies led to a change in the way it is consumed; this modified the meaning of access.

Displayability recognises that the object's mechanical reproduction has an impact on its logic of validation.

Certainly, the relationship emerging from mechanical reproduction and industrial processes is not exclusively attached to economic revenue. Benjamin relates displayability to the group cohesion role that moving images played in his contemporaneous context, that is, their cultic value. A cultural object becomes a community builder through the generalised access to it, which is enabled by mechanical reproduction. Therefore, part of a film's symbolic dimension is that it is a commodity made according to a logic of sequential production and wide distribution. However, cinema is not the first industrial artefact involved in creating a sense of belonging. Benedict Anderson develops a similar approach related to nation-building and written text in his book *Imagined Communities* (1983). Anderson is far more straightforward regarding that the exposition of a text deals with more than the validation of its contents. Anderson links incidence directly to the foundational role that books and newspapers have in the creation of groups and a sense of belonging to them. Displayability and imagining a community are pertinent subjects for my research on CAC. That films labelled as Central American has a reduced exhibition in the isthmus at least implies that this category's identitarian role is not validated, in a reflexive sense, by a representative number of those inhabiting the region referenced in its name. Thus, this research proposes to map and track when and where, in the production and circulation of films, this category comes into use. This approximation to CAC is not forcing a transnational perspective upon an isthmian imaginary; instead, it seeks to recognise the category's sphere of signification.

Indeed, film production, exhibition and consumption have changed in the nearly 80 years between Benjamin's observations and the release of the movies in my sample. Nowadays, there is a diversity of devices for screening a motion picture, a considerable reduction on costs and thus broader access to digital film equipment. Not to mention the multiple motivations and objectives for making representations with

moving images.¹⁸ However, the overdetermination that Benjamin describes is still valid. A film's meaning and functions are co-dependent with its public. CAC's displayability is not non-existent, just that the group that it summons does not seem to be the population from the isthmus. "Without space for films' national projection, filmmakers have to look abroad to try to project their films at international festivals" (Cabezas Vargas, 2015, p. 143).¹⁹ This exo-regional distribution indicates that consumption in Central America is not a significant factor in defining these movies' and the category's symbolic potentials. CAC depends on the creation of meaning amongst dispersed and transnational actors. As a result, the use of CAC when referring to the sample of films within this research would be closer to a process of deterritorial branding than to the bonding narratives amongst isthmian inhabitants. Analysing this category's displayability reveals that its function relates to tagging a territory compliant to a scale and referential imaginary suitable for its global consumption as an image.

Engaging in exploring the interaction of audiences with the notion of CAC and their interpretation of the films is beyond this work's scope. Nonetheless, as part of these 24 motion pictures' distribution circuits, at least the location of such publics comes into due consideration. Specifically, this analysis of the movies' displayability pays attention to the deployment of CAC as part of festivals' strategy for presenting them both to isthmian and international audiences. The argued failure of a Central American internal distribution pushes forth the notion of CAC as a useful tag mostly outside the region. Although even in this aspect, similarly to financing, education and thematic coherence, the idea of the isthmus lacks a primary explanatory role or fails in becoming a central dynamising element for them, at least in the dynamic of displayability, CAC is directly present. As a result, the category comes to have a patent part in identifying

¹⁸ The technical improvement and financial success of an industrial system capable of mass reproduction depend on the scope and dispersity of the population addressed by those objects too. Thus, again, the symbolic dimension and technology mix. Grainge explains that in the 1990's, recognising that Dolby sound quality had become an indispensable element of a cinema theatre's experience but a film's global revenue was linked to its media afterlife, "home theatre offered technological excellence within domestic surroundings [...] amplify[ing] the blockbuster's cultural presence in private as well as public media space, confirming its status as a 'central principle of contemporary viewing'" (Grainge, 2007, p. 89).

¹⁹ Original French text "Sans un espace pour la projection nationale, les réalisateurs doivent se tourner vers l'étranger pour essayer de projeter leurs réalisations dans des festivals internationaux".

films for audiences beyond the isthmus, despite being hardly representative of the many interactions leading to the creation of the motion pictures. Thus, the category is not only imposing through festival circulation over other potential forms of identification for the movies but performs that action amidst audiences that are themselves beyond that proposed region of belonging. Employing Central America as a label in such exchanges links its identification of a locality with its exchange value, a process of branding that Dunja Fehimović and Rebeca Ogden critically associate, in the case of Latin America, precisely to “unbalanced power dynamics” (2018, p. 21). In this sense, CAC becomes a tool offered to global observers to access and translate these motion pictures, which I suggest to understand as a self/colonial action. This interpretation of the interaction of the category but most of all, of the festival’s key role for these films validation, is further justified by Tamara Valicov’s (2016) argument. Although referring to A-list film festivals selection criteria and financing, Falicov claims that the dependency of the Global South moviemakers in these sort of venues and support, tend to position mostly North-Western actors as their “gatekeepers and cultural arbiters” (2016, p. 221).

1.2 Cinema as a Dense Composite

Reconsidering the functions of CAC is more than adjusting it to industrial imperatives. The intention is to avoid splitting the multiple actors within the process for making a film. I advocate for understanding those elements as a composite, blurring the lines between symbolic and economic factors as well as the constraints of a territorial scale. *Xic Vuh*, a 2013 short fiction movie by Edgar Sajcabún, had non-reimbursable support for its production from Kamin, a Comalapan (Guatemala) art organisation, Hivos (Netherlands) and Surkum Cine (the director’s own resources). This fiction represents a parable about greed and selfishness. *Xic Vuh* is spoken entirely in Kaqchikel, and Sajcabún self-identifies as a member of that community and speaks their language. Although, he explains, in the decision between Spanish or Kaqchikel for making the film, it was the actors’ mother tongue – all of them children – that mattered the most. Regardless of that linguistic element, the director explains that for him it is not about making Mayan or Indigenous cinema, he claims his story is universal. He is making contemporary art, with his influences from the *Popol Vuh*, and using a medium that

did not exist hundreds of years ago. “Mis historias siempre van a estar pensándose así, primero pensar como cuestiones humanas, más allá de la cultura, pensar en cuestiones humanas y después se le da un contexto, lo que yo tengo cerca” (E. Sajcabún, personal communication, October 7, 2016). Regarding distribution, the commercial circuit is not one of Sajcabún’s main interests; as a result, the exhibition of the film took place in public spaces at no cost to the spectators. The director’s aim was that the Comalapa community, the movie’s location, had free access to the material. Sajcabún finds more satisfactory that *Xic Vuh*, with the support of the project Cine en la Calle, was taken to communities with no access to cinema, than a theatrical release of his work.

In *Xic Vuh* exo-regional entities (Netherlands), pre-national ones (Kaqchikel) and deterritorial as well (the universal story) all mix in the making of a movie. This film constitutes an exclusive opportunity for the Kaqchikel community, which is scarcely represented in audiovisual images, to interact with cinematographic representations. They get the chance to both, watch and hear themselves in the characters on the screen. Simultaneously, the movie is in itself interactions and the element with which people associate. For this exchange to happen, it requires digital equipment – produced in accordance with an industrial logic – to make a representation and to exhibit it. To gain access to such hardware and to afford other production costs can mean that what appears as parochial filmmaking, actually has to look for or rely on non-local sources of financing.²⁰ These diverse territorial scales of interactions have a correspondence with *Xic Vuh*’s displayability. The local consumption of the film does not oppose the possibility that motion pictures have of packaging a representation consumable elsewhere. Therefore, what the movie has of revolutionary potential – a locally made film in Kaqchikel language – mixes with an incipient reactionary – even colonising – dynamic of enunciation and relationship. Calling upon potential coloniality addresses the convoluted exchanges amongst global financiers, film festivals’ audiences and movie directors, which Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong describes as a “symbiotic relationship” (2011, p. pos. 1535). However, it is within that interaction that I would

²⁰ The third chapter of this research will show those non-local interactions invisibilised when CAC is taken as a declaration of belonging that does not match the films’ production conditions.

say the local character or subject does not play a leading role, which is also congruent with Wong's appreciation of festivals "constructing their own myths of films knowledge, modernity, and diversity" (2011, p. pos. 3777).

The abovementioned reactionary and revolutionary functions differentiate between actions complying, only superficially, with a pretended cleavage between global/local, standardisation/originality, commodity/symbol. Those oppositions carry the same filmsiness that CAC has for defining a region. *Xic Vuh* exemplifies this situation. Tracking the film's interactions shows the conflictual use – even shortcomings – of considering Central America only as an identitarian space. This category has a function in a broader frame than that of its political interpretation. Similarly, associating the narrative with a particular form of activism ignores, or at least diminishes its other roles and implementations. Belonging and partisanship, understood amidst an actor-network perspective of transactions and translations, refer to the multiple – and not necessarily coherent – alliances made across the aesthetics, narrative, technical and financial interests of a film. Consequently, those interactions redefine the sense of political action within filmmaking. In such weaving, the political becomes spectacle and consumption; in turn, industrial practices and economic aims are also political. The commercial is part of the symbolic realm.

Moviemakers are well aware that their productions' symbolic dimension does not detach from a more material or economic vein. *El Lugar Indeseado*, a 2014 short documentary by Álvaro Torres Crespo about the dire living conditions of gold panners, helps to clarify this point. Alvaro Torres, the film's director, is forthright about his dual purpose. Torres sees displayability as a critical element for bringing a change or comfort to the characters' living conditions. At the same time, the director admits that the short documentary generated job opportunities for him in Costa Rica and led to the possibility of filming his new project: a feature-length documentary on the same theme (A. Torres, personal communication, October 20, 2016). It is essential to clarify that I am not referring to a process of instrumentalisation of contents via material or economics procedures. My concern lies in the assumption that despite the awareness about films' symbolic and material dimensions, there is little attention to the overdetermination happening between them. A movie is a dense compound of interactions. Compartmentalising economics on one side and politics on the other

rejects such an interactive perspective. Considering overdetermination brings to the fore that material production has a meaning and symbols are themselves a form of production (Baudrillard, 1981, p. 146).

Transposing economics for politics and vice-versa opens up a further revision of what a political action when it comes to moving images is, more specifically, the exchanges it has within this collection of films. It could be said that the movies from this research sample, *El Tanque*, *María en Tierra de Nadie*, *El Lugar Indeseado*, *Justicia Para Mi Hermana*, *Lih Wina*, *Distancia* or *Wata*, comply with a particular notion of political action, partisanship with the film's subject. The assumption is that the use of the movie as a tool for the advancement of the narrative's theme subdues any economic imperative to it. In the case of CAC, it is a sensitive issue since both Cortés (2005, pp. 217-224) and Durón (2014, pp. 31-34) recognise that this sort of militant cultural object characterised the isthmian production in the 1970s and '80s. Cortés affirms that it is in those decades "cuando presenciamos el nacimiento de la mayoría de cinematografías nacionales" (2005, p. 223) in Central America.²¹ Nonetheless, in light of the exchanges between content and form, technical resources and financing, displayability and a film's aims, a movie's subversive potential or a director's activism do not act in isolation. A motion picture's political or aesthetic goals are also the production practices that those involved with filmmaking enact. Prior use of militancy overlooks the material conditions that translate into moviemaking and the circulation of these cultural objects as a commodity. Following such a logic of activism reifies a film's enunciation as it separates the movie's contents from its conditions of production. Therefore, it reinforces the perspective that territory – in this case Central America – modifies cinema without being affected by that interaction. Meanwhile, that fictitious

²¹ This golden age, as Cortés calls it, of a regional stylistic, thematic and quantitative development is not that homogeneous. If there was some level of collaboration between Costa Rica, Nicaragua and El Salvador, on the other hand, Panama develops its cinematic process independently. At the same time, Guatemala and Honduras were not part of neither of those dynamics. "La violencia y la represión no permitieron un movimiento documentalista amplio en Guatemala... Honduras por su estrecha relación con Estados Unidos, evadió el tema de los conflictos centroamericanos y produjo filmes orientados hacia la etnográfica" (Cortés, 2005, p. 219). Additionally, that "[e]l cine centroamericano de los años setenta se integraba claramente a la corriente del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano" (Cortés, 2005, p. 224) in my perspective directly questions its Central American identification.

gap between politics and economics invisibilises other potentially more common elements to cinema praxis within this collection of motion pictures.

Only a minority of the 24 movies in this research have as their primary goal the generation of economic profit. This condition is potentially misleading; although making a financial gain might not be a central objective of these motion pictures, neither is it intentionally refused. Directors and funders do not assume filmmaking to be a purely altruistic activity. None of the directors want to fall into an economic default due to their productions, which I concluded from my interviews with Julio Hernández (*Marimbas del Infierno*), Neto Villalobos (*Por las Plumas*), Ernesto Jara (*El Codo del Diablo*) and Florence Jaugey (*El Engaño*).²² Regardless of whether the concern was to make an earning or avoid a loss, an economic perspective was never absent from these films. For instance, in *El Lugar Indeseado*, activism is not a safeguard against the spectacularization of its topic. For sure, as this short documentary seeks to raise empathy for the gold panners, it better fulfils such objective if watched by a large audience. But this exposition has a double goal, if successful, it will also allow the production of a new film on the same subject, a feature-length movie. Displayability is enabling the (re)production of industrial actions, thus generating new cinematic content. Supporting the gold panners or financing a new film are both forms of commitment, beyond differentiating them as a political action or an economic objective. Such conditions should not be overlooked when understanding how Central America – or the idea of space – and cinema interact.

The impression of a local expression of filmmaking negotiates with a transnational logic of interaction that is more hegemonic than any regional trait identified so far. The centrality of this latter scale demands of taking part in exchanges in which expressing or accessing a symbol requires filmmakers to perform industrial actions. This situation is not a new development emerging from a Central American filmmaking experience. In the late 1960s, Guy Debord (1967), the French philosopher and filmmaker,

²² Openly commercial expectations are not a significant trend within this group of cultural objects, but there is no homogeneity within CAC, even for this matter. For a film like *12 Segundos*, with approximately \$500.000 budget privately financed, yielding a monetary profit from the production was a frank and central objective.

proposed that the creation and consumption of images is the tenet of a more extensive industrial process of production and acquisition of commodities: the society of the spectacle. Debord informs Beller's cinematic mode of production regarding how the creation of images fosters a capitalist hyper-consumerist relationship amongst individuals and their surroundings. For both authors, as individuals' interactions or use of free time pivots around spectacle, the signs integrate as staples in commercial circulation. There is a time gap, physical distance and different financial conditions between Debord's Paris in 1967, Beller's proposals and the 24 films in my sample. However, the commodification of the representation that they both mention is at the centre of turning the exhibition of *El Lugar Indeseado* into a financial strategy for raising funds for a feature-length film. Moving images are not merely representing a space or the struggle of a people. Their symbolic potential articulates with industrial procedures, such as standardisation and finally, consumption. Thus, cinema monetises through its process of signification. Experiencing a place or sympathising with a cause become as well marketable commodities.

I am considering Debord's society of the spectacle within a frame focused on interactions rather than as a normative system.²³ Therefore, the proposal of the image as a reproducible and consumable object aligned with industrial imperatives is but a possible dynamic within a broader performative dimension of associations. Consequently, the spectacularization of images and relationships is not necessarily an exclusive outcome of the production of symbols on an industrial scale and individuals' unbridled consumption of them. However, even within filmmaking associated with non-refundable financing, there is a spectacularization of interactions; a person transforms into a cultural industry. This research has identified that directors' actions in those movies are not just that of a creator; they are also managers of a company. Regardless of applying for the financial support of a non-for profit project, directors are still expected to have access to corporation structures or at least their legal figure. Neto Villalobos explains how the different funding schemes available to him were requiring that it was a production company that applied for their support and

²³ "[T]here is no society, no social realm, and no social ties, *but there exist translations between mediators that may generate traceable associations* [emphasis in the original]" (Latour, 2007, p. 108).

not directors directly. The solution for directors is to have their own production company even though it may be integrated only by the director him/herself. (N. Villalobos, personal communication, July 13, 2017). When the production of motion pictures is available to individuals outside corporation structures, I identify three results: it multiplies the availability of images, which leads to an increase on the offer of a transnationally desirable good, and finally, entrepreneurship becomes part of people's interactions and creations.

CAC's use as a notion of belonging denies or at least fails to recognise the presence of industrially or commercially influenced meanings in the creation of images. Instead, characterising films as Central American facilitates their interpretation as political activism. The identitarian function frames the motion pictures as actively invested in the improvement of the region. Debord's perspective as well as the restrictive understanding of CAC as nothing else than belonging, each assumes there is just one form for the praxis of filmmaking. Consequently, for either case, there is only one possible relationship between motion pictures' representations and the world. In that sense, both interpretations depend upon an act of reification. That action, as stated by Axel Honneth, is the "loss of [the subject's] capacity for empathetic engagement but also to the world's loss of its qualitatively disclosed character" (Reification, 2005, p. 109). According to Honneth's use of 'reification', the image supersedes a direct contact and the relationship with persons, places or objects.²⁴ Accessing the image is what matters, and society of the spectacle or the identitarian function of CAC, prize and require of that superficial engagement. The depth of the full spectrum of interactions in a movie is hidden behind the filtering of these two particular proposals. An analysis of overdetermination goes in the opposite sense; it directly requires disclosing the networks around an image. It focuses on the multiplicity of events and effects in the

²⁴ In Alison Griffiths' 'To the World the World We Show': Early Travelogues as Filmed Ethnography, when she analyses what drew spectators to consume travelogues, quotes from a 1910 Moving Picture World editorial that argued: "one may acquire a reasonably accurate knowledge of distant lands and their inhabitants for the expenditure of a few cents per week; and there is no heavy expense or hardship for actual travel" (1999, p. 294). The moving image of that quote stands for experiencing distant places and people with the further considerations that it is cheaper and more comfortable than actually travelling. In this interaction, the image democratises travel-like experiences while reifying access and contact with persons and territory through their mechanically reproduced substitution.

production of symbols. Overdetermination acknowledges that identitarian expressions can be a show and that becoming a spectacle is also a strategy for bonding.

Images that belong to the cultural industry adhere to its logic of maximum exposure and exhibition. In this sense, relations are not only expressed as images or meant as identitarian; they are also created to be seen by others beyond those interacting through the making of a movie. *Xic Vuh* became Central American at IFF. It is for this movie's exhibition outside of Comalapa – its filming location – that CAC functions as an identifier. Upholding this category as a notion of belonging severs *Xic Vuh* from its very parochial elements (Kaqchikel), its international exchanges (Hivos) and its broader human appeal. It also cuts it away from Sajcabún's region of identification from Mexico to Peru or Chile (E. Sajcabún, personal communication, October 7, 2016).²⁵ The deployment of CAC comes to constitute a colonising act precisely because as a counterpart of its trimming of the full scope of interactions that the films weave, it imposes a notion of belonging not necessarily congruent with the ones practitioners recognise for themselves. The isthmian category then is the identification necessary or relevant elsewhere or for someone else. Consequently, exploring images as relations deals directly with the reification deriving from the identitarian use of CAC. This proposed analysis of the isthmian category deeps into its commercial-like applications, its participation as a brand in the market of films. This approach keeps in track with the complexity of the processes for creating images and meanings.

1.3 The Territoriality of the Image

A movie's representation of, or belonging to any territorial unit is far from a unidimensional issue. It involves constructing and negotiating between multiple settings and interests. *12 Segundos*, a 2013 movie by Kenneth Müller, is but one example. It took part in IFF as a Guatemalan film and was awarded as the best feature-length fiction from Central America. However, this motion picture was considered Mexican as well, when it took part and won the 2015 Netflix Mexico award. For IFF, what mattered was that the director was born in Guatemala; while for the latter, the

²⁵ Sajcabún remembers anecdotally that an Ecuadorian spectator believed the film to be from his country instead of Guatemala. (E. Sajcabún, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

justification was that the director was studying in Mexico. Neither criterion is only material or symbolic. The interpretation of a film – even if it just means assigning it a nation of origin – does not step aside from the conditions that brought it into being. Commodity and symbol, in a broad sense, constitute an inseparable composite. Overdetermination encourages considering the many interactions – and meanings – that bring territoriality and filmmaking together. Thus, this exploration points towards the integration of CAC in a diverse set of processes of cinema's reproduction, particularly those related to branding.

Detaching this sample of motion pictures from CAC, and this category from an identitarian function allows grasping, on a case-by-case basis, their construction of space and belonging. According to Massey (2004), any venue is a set of interactions and negotiations in a network beyond the local, which calls for the notion of 'geographies of responsibility', an ethics of connectedness between all those actors and factors involved in creating a locality (as cited in Escobar, 2010, p. 42). Massey affirms that "local places are not simply always the victims of the global; nor are they always politically defensible redoubts against the global. For places are also the moments through which the global is constituted, invented, coordinated, produced" (2004, p. 11). Massey's critical perspective helps me to thoroughly express the complex relations of meaning and production that gather around cinematic images. In this relational dynamic, there is no notion of a lesser cinema, nor even an alternative one. Moviemaking creates meaning as a global economic activity; it displays and reproduces a logic of production. Tension arises as analyses of films limit signification to their enunciation. The movie seen only as a visual text repeats a process of reification because it detaches some of the conditions of production from the resulting motion picture. Between each narrative and meaning, there is a mechanic-economic interaction that modifies and is modified by the creation of images as relations.

Non-reimbursable financing for artistic activities does not exclude material interests within filmmaking. This is not an option exclusively available for cinema production in Central America. Neither, belonging to the isthmus is a justification for producing films that yield a scarce monetary revenue. Movies in this sample profit from a world-wide tendency of supporting the development of impoverished communities through financing cultural production. This sort of bursary seeks to generate an 'art object'

capable of being consumed away from the vicinity and precarious conditions of its place of elaboration. The World Commission on Culture and Development (1996) identifies art forms as community builders, a sort of affirmation of difference (as cited in Stupples, 2014, p. 119). For this global entity, there is a strong relationship between the economic and cultural roles of motion pictures. It is through the notion of development that production of local images gets access to non-reimbursable funds. Stupples points to the United Nations' (UN) Conference on Trade and Development, and its call to support creative economies because they are "...an undervalued driver of 'inclusive growth', able to 'foster income generation, job creation and export earnings while promoting social inclusion, cultural diversity and human development' (UNCTAD, 2008: 4)" (2014, p. 120). Considering these factors, upholding that the proposed meanings emerging from such art objects are parochial would be contradictory. Both the source of funding and the reasons for investing in apparently non-lucrative creative activities disregard the notion of the local – in my case, the isthmus – as a coordinating axis.²⁶ It is the potential for profit of these artistic expressions on a global market that is supporting and dynamising their creation.

The circumstances of creation and the way audiences relate to cultural objects change since it is the interaction between multiple sites on a global scale that fosters their 'local' production. In such a frame, the function of CAC, then, relates to both internal and external factors.²⁷ Stupples' description of the institutionalised non-reimbursable support for moviemaking disrupts a logic of proximity and inserts these objects within an existent dynamic since early cinema. Travelogues, Griffith affirms, profited from exhibiting what its audiences considered exotic (1999, p. 286). Displayability comes to the fore again, identitarian-like elements translate into an image, and consequently spectacle. The UN would argue that the localised artefact supports the material and symbolic stability of human groups through the generation of wealth. The exchanges

²⁶ There is a hegemonic tendency of a global notion of community as disrupting into geographically bounded activities. Hence the financing of 'local expressions', reproduces a world-wide system of signification; thus, a colonial action is taking place. It is this action that Sandra Ponzanesi describes as "the cultural industry, which, in an age of late capitalism, creates space for local marginal manifestations, such as postcolonial artefacts, and turns them into a commodity of global exchange" (The Postcolonial Cultural Industry, 2014, p. 16).

²⁷ I do not pretend to affirm a rigid border for a Central American region, by 'internal' and 'external' I am only pointing to what I will further explain as a misleading differentiation.

between narrow and broad circuits of distribution and consumption co-define the value of the local. The image moving as a commodity is a strategy through which art expressions yield a revenue beyond their spatial circumscription of production. The elaboration of these objects answers to endogenous factors only secondarily, at best. The reproduction of the conditions for the generation of these cultural products is, in the first instance, attached through financing and consumption to trans-local groups. The institutional interaction with the creative industry promotes a gaze from within that has to negotiate with the possibility of profiting from self-exoticization. In this context, a film category affirming a specific notion of territoriality like CAC, has the potential – regardless of whether it manages to structure a thematic or to insinuate representations – of relating worldwide consumers with commodities from a recognisable origin. As a brand, the category is worthy when it matches a perspective of space that is valid for those spectators. In spite of what it represents to the producer of a message. Furthermore, the success of the label could make pressure on the creators of content to fulfil the expectations audiences or financing organisms have of that division.²⁸

Nicté, a 2012 short fiction film by Andrea Dardón, clearly exemplifies that sort of use of the above-mentioned process in two instances. First, an example of how exoticism interacts with the presentation of images and their multiple possibilities of meaning. Second, that even if the source for non-reimbursable funds is not a UN organism, it still fits the institutionalised perspective previously described. Dardón, *Nicté*'s director, attended an educational institution in Argentina, Universidad del Cine. This university gave its support for making Dardón's short fiction about motherhood. The director attempts to create a mythic dimension attached to a mother's caring actions, through the construction of an atemporal place and the representation of a language that remains magical. The film does not offer a translation to Spanish – or any other language – of the language the character uses, Ma'am. Besides, the indigenous population that the moving images somehow represent was not the primary audience

²⁸ Stupples' research dealt directly with artists in Central America and their relationship with non-reimbursable funding. She identified that "arts funding that is restricted to its capacity to deal with development 'issues' reinscribes a social imaginary of underdevelopment (critiqued by post-development scholars such as Escobar, 1995) and is exoticising – reinscribing difference between the Third World and the metropolitan centres" (Stupples, 2014, p. 123).

for the movie's distribution scheme. It intended to reach, from its conception, a transnational public.

For Dardón, IFF was meant to be one of many possible international exhibition venues. Nevertheless, Universidad del Cine inaugurated its web video service with her motion picture, undermining *Nicté*'s possibilities to have access to other festivals. (A. Dardón, personal communication, June 17, 2016). Regardless of the festival circuit, Internet access to this short motion picture follows a worldwide criterion of distribution other than that of the usual circulation of cultural artefacts in the Ma'am language. Hence, the spoken words in the movie are alien to most of its audience, which detaches the denotative meaning of the character's lines from the spectators' interpretation of them. The additional observational handling of the camera, a static shot from behind two trees, informs of the image's voyeurism. The local, an indigenous character, is there to satisfy the external observer's curiosity while remaining resistant to immediate interpretation. Because Dardón's fiction presents objects, language and activities as atemporal and ubiquitous, their transformation into images severs their Ma'am cultural meanings from the possibility of interaction with the transnational sphere.²⁹ Both the location and the song the woman interprets are mythic because as images, they are detached from their cultural context. *Nicté*, therefore, depends on offering its viewers an exotic representation to fulfil its aesthetic intentions. Consequently, this movie reproduces commodity fetishism as the exchange in its circulation limits the access of the content to only an object of consumption that pleases – or teases – the senses.

That said, this analysis of *Nicté* is not meant as a deterministic interpretation of its symbolic discourse. Given the attention paid to overdetermination, this section attempts to visibilise the implications that derive from cinema as a transnational practice. From this perspective, CAC is not defining a distinctive space of production or signification. Even if we consider the implementation of this category as acknowledging the diversification of cinematic representations, this conclusion still

²⁹ Dardón, a Guatemalan national, gave a film workshop in exchange for the support of members of the Ma'am community during her filmmaking process. Those who attended the workshop became the film's crew and actress. Thus, again, relations motivated by capturing images in motion are recreating cinema's conditions of production before other networks of signification.

owes to other actors. Multiplication of the sites of origin and creators of films depend upon phenomena happening outside of the imagined limits of Central America. Ilana Gershon states that global economic flows “acknowledge[s] variety for the sake of increasing possible alliances and developing more nuanced or specific markets. Difference is not neoliberalism’s enemy, especially not when these differences can so easily be figured as homogeneous heterogeneities” (2011, p. 544). Recognising self-exoticization in a film is not in contradiction with that same movie’s possibilities of self-representation. It is its corollary.

There is more to CAC than its uses as an analytic category for researchers or the alleged awareness that a group of motion pictures shares a regional identity. CAC, in its interaction with a worldwide circuit of film distribution, is also a differentiation within the logic of the market. This sort of implementation comes forth when the Central American category is deployed by IFF in its yearly international film exhibitions in New York and Miami (U.S.A.), La Habana (Cuba), San Juan (Puerto Rico), Buenos Aires (Argentina) and Vienna (Austria). In Vienna, the festival is made in collaboration with Papaya Media Association and is named Mittelamerikanisches Filmfestival. Also, since 2015 there is an unrelated event based in Los Angeles (U.S.A.), the Central American Film Fest, which in 2016 already had an additional venue in Washington. This last festival declares having amongst its aims to “forg[e] an innovative global industry with Central American roots that will enhance the region’s international standing and create new opportunities for development of its communities in the Isthmus and abroad” (Central American Film Fest). This offer of cinematic products for a global audience is voiced as well by the Costa Rica Festival Internacional de Cine and the Festival Internacional de Cine de Panamá when the former presents its Competencia Centroamericana de Largometraje category (Ministerio de Cultura y Juventud and Centro de Cine) and the latter Primera Mirada chapter for Central American and Caribbean productions in development (Fundación IFF Panamá).

Even if reading CAC as part of a broader surge diversification in the geographical origin of motion pictures, such process is not indicative of them equally subverting, not even diverting, from the cinematic mode of production. I question that the shift in the site of enunciation is necessarily emancipatory. Filmmaking’s new territorial and symbolic sources develop in a relationship with Gershon’s description of economic

dynamics in which culture is a possession instead of a perspective upon a network of interactions. Culture, then, becomes marketable through media forms, amongst others (Gershon, 2011, p. 541). The specificities of any expression or place are, at some point, modified by their global exchange value. It is not a matter of elucidating if the films are or not identitarian expressions of Central America. It is about moviemaking's potential to normalise difference by translating it into images. The homogeneity that a film creates comes from the reification of the image, which reduces it into a commodity.³⁰ An example of that situation comes from my own interaction with the motion pictures in the sample. Specifically, my encounter with Chicabal Lake, where *Nicté* was shot, is not with that heterogeneity that it could represent in its relationship with the Ma'am or other communities. The lake is only the mythical space it stands for within the movie, allowing it, therefore, to be filled by my fantasies and expectations. It is merely a space that the short film exposes to the spectator's – which is me in this particular case – imagination, a utopia in its literal meaning of 'nowhere'. Under these circumstances, CAC's function as a brand for a transnational identification of a regional cinema also reproduces other neoliberal practices. Notably, the validity of turning places into staples, all for the benefit of a deterritorialised industry producing equally deterritorialised images.

Assuming that a place or local expressions interact with cinema according to a neoliberal perspective falls into the trap of presenting yet another deterministic deciphering of the image. Images as interactions hold a performative potential that I do not intend to overlook. These films deploy their representation of space in diverse ways. Take, for example, the case of Guatemala. The comparison of Sajcabún's *Xic Vuh* and Dardón's *Nicté* makes it clear that these movies do not perform the sense of locality in similar terms. The same happens in their interaction with distribution and, therefore, their commodity phase. According to their creators, *Xic Vuh* is a fable about greed and rightfulness, while *Nicté* is a tribute to the wonders of motherhood. Their locations might seem similarly generic. As a counterpart to *Nicté*'s lake, *Xic Vuh*'s

³⁰ The simplification I refer to is that, no matter what relations converge on an object, it is capable of being acquired in a market. The global exchange value simultaneously becomes, at least in part, the reason to praise the expressions and places represented by the film. This economic interaction plays no minor role in enabling financing opportunities for the production of these objects, as Stupples (2014) argues.

setting is a curve on a dusty road next to a profound slope all framed by leafy trees. Nonetheless, the use of the language that is spoken in Sajcabún's short fiction – Kakchiquel – grants his movie an interpretative specificity that is distinct from Dardón's film. While *Xic Vuh* has subtitles in Spanish and English for its Mayan language, *Nicté*'s soundtrack in Ma'am does not. In the latter, language is an exotic barrier; in the former, it is open and available to the audience through its translation. *Nicté* presents a mythic – unreachable – land; *Xic Vuh*'s is graspable and quotidian. Besides, *Xic Vuh*'s director makes a differentiation regarding distribution, free for in situ access in the Kakchiquel community (E. Sajcabún, personal communication, October 7, 2016) and video-on-demand over the Internet. On the other hand, access to *Nicté* is available for free through the Universidad del Cine's website. Hence, the representation of a space and its circulation beyond its shooting location is not equally modified by its expression as a moving image.

Notably, regarding the circulation within a market, these motion pictures challenge customary monetised forms of movie consumption, as both works have stages of distribution detached from direct economic revenue. Once again, the relational perspective drives back to overdetermination and constant transformation. It is not a matter of a straightforward reproduction or opposition to a mode of production – global markets for Gershon. Instead, it is the awareness that there is a mode of production that takes part in films' performative practices. As a result, it validates the starting point of questioning that CAC describes a particular approach to filmmaking. Analysing the category's multiple possible roles according to each production interactions aims at explaining any likely trends without limiting to any given region.

The interactive perspective offers more venues of research than simply understanding an image's relation to a territory – or the notion of space as images. To me, looking at the interactions helps in clarifying how I interpret cinema as a complex mesh of exchanges associated with the meaning(s), as well as the role(s), that a Central American category might portray. The intersection of land and image reminds us of the multiple relationships and contradictions continually re-creating that space. In the negotiation of filmmaking and rootedness, there is more than internal tensions; there is an array of exchanges involving actors beyond the geographical boundaries of that said territory. For example, there is an inconsistency between the localities connected

through financing, production and distribution in my film sample, and Central America as the region they should represent or belong to. Then, shooting moving images compels a review of the interactive dynamics building space as much as what the notions of scale – local and global – stand for. Filming is not about forcing the local into the world or vice versa. Equally, the cinematic mode of production is not something acted upon a film, as *Xic Vuh* and *Nicté* show. It is a role that each motion picture performs by itself. The image is but a contemporary expression of the continuous flow of overdetermination, local/global, hegemonic/counter-hegemonic.

For Arturo Escobar (2010), this attention towards networks is the result of multiple theoretical works focused on materiality for which “[s]pace is no longer taken as an ontologically given but as a result of relational processes. These approaches constitute proposals to work through two of the most damaging features of modern theory: pervasive binarisms, and the reduction of complexity” (pp. 39-40). Therefore, the image does not alienate a locality; neither does the cinematic mode of production define the image. There is a multilateral co-definition because space and cinema are both interactions. Unravelling a territory requires taking into account other localities associated with it – a translocal dimension. More so, then, it becomes necessary to avoid the use of Central America as a filter for accessing or interpreting the movies in my sample. Just as much, for understanding the category, the function of a place is not bound to an identitarian role, it relates to economic aims as well.

1.4 Category and Cinema

I want to finish this chapter by discussing the circumstances moulding the roles of categories within cinema, specifically their function as brands. A relational approach to CAC unveils that it has to do with an interpretation of images and applying a selection criterion to films. Moreover, there is a clear trend pointing to the use of CAC as a brand, at least in the frame of my research sample. Implementing CAC is not alien to the culture industry's production; in fact, they are intrinsically related. Defining the common characteristics that fosters labelling movies under a category is part of filmmaking's dynamic of overdetermination. Thus, it is a matter of elucidating what the isthmian geographic reference does within such activity. Cinema categories have implications as an aesthetic criterion as well as economic and even colonial actions.

Therefore, rather than subjecting motion pictures to a restrictive belonging, a category is another place of interaction and meaning that cinema has – contradictions included – amidst its reproduction stages.

Indeed, deploying a category triggers a process of discrimination amongst the variety of films in existence. It assigns which of them should belong together. In this sense, it is a curatorial process. Even so, this is not always a normative action. Andrew Higson, in *The Concept of National Cinema* (1989) describes two sorts of interactions between a category and its selection criteria. In particular, concerning national cinemas as a classification criterion, Higson identifies that they can be used as “prescriptively rather than descriptively, citing what ought to be the national cinema” (1989, p. 37). For this research, there are two main reasons for mentioning Higson’s approach. First, he makes a direct reference to national cinemas, which already focuses the attention on the use of a political/geographical identification to select movies. Second, and most importantly, Higson’s proposal implies performativity because it recognises that there is not a unique way in which motion pictures and categories might interact – although his perspective still stagnates into binarism. What is critical about Higson is that he already interprets collating movies according to their use, which opens up multiple possible relationships between a category and cinema. The argument that the present research brings forth is that by considering filmmaking from an actor-network perspective, these classifications of motion pictures, either prescriptively or descriptively, curate more than aesthetic elements.

A curatorial perspective might be deceptive regarding the interaction cinema-category that I wish to express. Instead, I propose to study the CAC category through overdetermination. The relationality in which this approach relies on shows that the selection criterion does not impose itself upon cinema. For cinema, categories are not disconnected or unaffected externalities. These divisions are part of filmmaking’s interactions instead of autonomous elements that filter films and remain unchanged. Consequently, to understand why any group of movies is selected instead of others, it is necessary to ponder the relevance that such segmentation plays in cinema. Hence, categories can be a tool for analysing movies, as in the case of their descriptive use, and simultaneously an element of the films’ strategy for securing the diverse resources needed for keeping this activity ongoing. It is by turning the attention to reproduction,

in the Bourdieusian sense, that even what might seem as prescriptive emerges as relational. This perspective attempts to explain that when selecting films within a particular category, in turn, that division acts as a brand. Sorting motion pictures into groups have the potential of enhancing those movies' spectatorship. It is this possibility of a category of securing the access of a bundle of motion pictures to an audience that is part of its value for cinema. Under these circumstances, visibility comes to be the action of ensuring or building a niche in the market of images. Thus, film categories are not absent from cinema's commodity phase.

The latter proposition comes from my in-depth analysis of CAC as a category. Even if the 24 motion pictures on my sample have experienced a previous selection stage, that of IFF, it is precisely the movies' identification as Central American that defines their admissibility into the festival. Thus, regardless of the diversity of aesthetic, financing or distribution proposals that the films have, they get to be presented as Central American. In this interaction, the region that is supposed to express an identity – or several identities at once – is at the same time a brand. The category is a vehicle for the promotion of the consumption of certain cultural objects amongst cinemagoers. According to Grainge (2007), this dynamic equates to branding. More specifically, he identifies that mix of identity and promotion in movie studios as film categories. I translate it to CAC because visibilisation is something that both studios and festivals are seeking, whether succeeding or not in generating economic revenue. Branding is coherent with my proposal as it “cannot be defined neatly in ‘cultural’ or ‘economic’ terms; it consists inescapably of both elements and has done so from advertising's earliest history” (Grainge, 2007, p. 22). Besides, Rhyne (2009) underlines that festivals handling of cultural objects had a shift towards a business logic, industrial generation of value, paired to the rise of neoliberalism (as cited in Loist, 2016, p. 58). Finally, bringing branding and region into a dialogue applies an image's relation to space into the category's proposition, i.e. territory transposable as a commodity.

It is not rare that geographical references or nations become brands. On the contrary, Melissa Aronczyk finds that innovation and competition are “drivers of profit in a global system of free markets, with national cultural specificity as the ‘competitive edge’ over the other nations” (2008, p. 44). Along with this global competitive perspective, Aronczyk also identifies branding's modification of cultural practices. The latter

becomes an industry mainly seeking profitability. Such a transformation in cultural production interacts with global organisations' financial support (Aronczyk, 2008, p. 44). Therefore, financing cultural production, as explained in the previous section, not only enables a commodity phase for cultural objects, but it also drives the sense of identity towards that phase.

In my opinion, the conditions that Aronczyk describes are transposable to the use of CAC in the festival circuit. The sense of belonging implemented as branding is a dynamic that is present in this film sample. Bringing branding into consideration exposes the overdetermination created by regional or local categories clustering motion pictures together. Alessandro Jedlowski, commenting on the implications of the notion of Nollywood films, affirms that this tag "produced an illusion, the illusion that something different, something original and "pure" existed behind and despite the label [...] a tendency toward the general, the global, the transnational" (2011, p. 231). Under these conditions, using film categories caters to international needs and translocal exchanges. For the case of CAC implies the instrumentalisation of its expression of shared practices or imaginaries.

Approaching categories, in this case, CAC, in their various interactions with cinema and not just as external curatorial processes upon films, gives a more comprehensive approach to the dynamics of filmmaking. Specifically, it enables critical engagement with the multifaceted interests reunited around cinema. Two separate publications, one from El Salvador, *FONDEPRO, más de \$719 mil dólares a emprendedores y empresarios* (Fondo de Desarrollo Productivo, Ministerio de Economía, Gobierno de El Salvador, n.d.) and another one from Costa Rica on the expectations of its Film Commissioner, *Costa Rica quiere impulsar un conglomerado de negocios filmicos* (Fernández Mora, 2017), agree on justifying giving support to filmmaking due to its potential to generate economic profit. What I extract from these two sources is that between enunciation and promotion of cinema, there is not a unified path of action.

Movies like *El Lugar Indeseado* or *Xic Vuh* can very well help to give visibility to geographically delimited concerns and practices. However, film production also aligns with transnational policies and economic practices that are meant to foster different

and even opposed objectives to self-representation.³¹ It is at this crossroad that it is possible to identify the selection of films according to a territorial belonging as an act of reification. Unveiling this phenomenon requires considering the category within cinema. The normative use of CAC potentially invisibilises those relationships for funding, enunciation and distribution that the movies have, that do not align with a Central American criterion. Reification is not only about *Nicté* cutting links with local meanings. It is also assuming that CAC – or a film – only expresses an aesthetic dimension. Furthermore, the claim that CAC entails a specific ‘cultural’ belonging, overlooks the reasons and schemes financing and supporting cinema production and their relationship with space. In that scenario, those elements become an independent and somehow irrelevant economic dimension. This detachment facilitates the commodity fetishisation of space and identity, which through the category becomes staple for global consumption. Tracking films' interactions allows for exploring this possibility. An actor-network approach gives the chance to contemplate what the uses of CAC really are, and how the film practitioners associated with it perform this category, without limiting this exploration to the geographic reference on its name.

³¹ Rambo's presence in *A Mi Lado* exemplifies that enlarged space of representation. But that is not the only incidence of Silver Stallone's characters in a movie from the sample. In *Por las Plumas* the fighting rooster is called Rocky. Besides, *El Codo del Diablo* focuses on the human impact and transformation that a state crime had on the victims since it is a more empathic element for a broader audience. Similarly, *El Engaño* has Spanish subtitles, foreseeing that the local jargon can be a barrier to other Spanish speaking audiences.

Chapter 2. A foggy Centralamerican-ness

"We live in the space of neighbourhood [...] You living in New Zealand or San Francisco, you are my neighbour, my fellow person. It is very interesting that modernity had to redefine what a fellow person is, and new technologies define what that new fellow person is"

M. Serres. (Bernstein, *Le Voyage Encyclopédique de*

Michel Serres, 2008).³²

Media make widespread use of the term Central America. Many times, references to the region involve violent crimes or human forced-migration from the south of the American continent towards the US. That was the case when reporting about the terrifying Central American migrant caravan – at least accordingly to right-wing outlets and even the US President Donald Trump – heading to ‘the land of the free’.³³ Such a clarity for designating an area is achievable from afar, but it is not necessarily coherent with the experiences and perspectives of those inhabiting it. There are heterogeneity and richness of cultural expressions within the isthmus which is hard to properly explaining by calling them Central American. Being precise regarding what the isthmus defines in terms of geographical, historical and symbolic space is problematic. However, as I argue in the first chapter, Central American Cinema (CAC) is an identity-category built upon the precept of a well-delineated idea of territoriality that justifies and orientates curating, promoting and researching moviemaking.

Under more careful – and closer – consideration, Central America is a vague concept. From a historical perspective and regarding cultural production, this foggy vision is prevalent for those within the many different territorial configurations of the isthmus. It is in this sense that Ernesto Cardenal chooses the term ‘doubtful strait’ (1995) – which also employs Virginia Pérez-Ratton in her article about art production in the isthmus,

³² Original French audio “Nous vivons dans un espace de voisinage [...] Tu es mon voisin, toi qui vit a Nouvelle Zélande, ou à San Francisco, tu es mon voisin, tu es mon prochain. C'est très intéressant que la modernité ait eu à redéfinir ce que c'est qu'un prochain, et les nouvelles technologies définissent ce nouveau prochain”.

³³ Daniel Béland analyses political actors’ use of ‘framing processes’ which “generally involve the construction of collective identities, [...] a] definition of ‘otherness’ as a latent or immediate threat to the people” (2019, p. 6). Béland explains, within such a frame, the depiction the US president Trump makes of a migrant invasion. Portraying this group of migrants as dangerous Central Americans or Mexicans, was a recurrent proselytising strategy for Trump in the face of the 2018 midterm elections (Béland, 2019, p. 9).

¿Qué región? Apuntando hacia un estrecho dudoso (2011) – to refer to experiences and the spatial imaginary related to Central America. In Cardenal's homonymous poem, he critically traces the development of Spain's first exploration and subjugation of the isthmus. In that work, Pedrarias Dávila coined the term the 'doubtful strait' in 1525. The conquistador writes to Carlos V to inform of the establishment of a city in what today is the Gulf of Nicoya. "En el Estrecho Dudoso [...] / Se pobló una villa que se dice Bruselas" (Cardenal, 1995, p. 64). Pedrarias believed that Bruselas stood at the exit point of a navigable path connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific shores, right in the middle of the continent. 'Su Majestad', in reply, sends Cortés to find such strait. Cortés eagerly assumes this enterprise, which proves a failure, until the Panama Canal materialises it almost 400 years later (Cardenal, 1995, pp. 64-66). This insider description is not without its problems. The role of a strait characterises one point in the isthmus, but not the whole area. Besides, this perspective is not independent of external factors. The configuration of this land is only doubtful for the newcomers, the conquistadores. On top of it, they were looking for an expedited route between the Iberian peninsula and Asia.

This section of the research analyses the many possibilities there are for conceptualising the isthmian territoriality. Such exploration sets out to put forth the most persuasive possible argument for the unity of a notion of spatiality and identity around the concept of Central America. At this point, the research is not attempting to bring back an audiences' perspective upon the films or belonging dynamics in the isthmus. As stated in the first chapter, previous academic works reveal that 'Central American' movies fail in reaching their 'internal' market. However, attempting to find a set of parameters that could describe a regional entity is in line with comprehending under which material conditions this collection of movies was produced, or actually how uneven those factors might have been. Also, such exploration considers if moviemaking interacts with a common thematic and cultural frame reference. In this process, there are two parallel actions, one of delimiting a geographical/political configuration for the isthmus, the other of defining the characteristics, practices and conditions of a *centralamerican-ness*. Indeed, it is not without debate to try and impose a material configuration and an understanding of what amounts to be a Central American individual. This concern, yet, is secondary to finding the function of such

delimitation for cinema, the ultimate aim of this chapter. There are different interests and reasons for having Central America as a referent for cultural production. Clarifying the proposals of spatiality and identitarian traits that support deploying CAC as a classification criterion unveils the stakes at play.

In the first chapter, I deal with the concept of cinema from the perspective of a network of actors with interests mixing and reshaping themselves as they interact in the making of a film. This approach, which I call relational, at that point connected the concepts of displayability and overdetermination for proposing the symbol-commodity continuum of the film. Translating that perspective to the analysis of Central America, as territory, belonging and film category requires considering the interaction of historicity, spatial materiality, economic indicators, political and cultural interpretations of this scale of agglomeration. This perspective delves into the diversity of identities creating, inhabiting and crossing one or many of the isthmus's possible configurations. Besides that, whichever idea of space the isthmus defines, symbolic and material interactions are not contained within such boundaries. In a world of 'neighbours', notions of territoriality are both fluid and just one amongst the many factors of a person's sense of identity. This situation is keener in the frame of the peculiarities of a case by case negotiation between directors, funders, distributors and locations of a film. Evidently, a Central American category falls short for describing a praxis of cinema characterised by interactions and exchanges exceeding that spatial/symbolic circumscription. Correspondingly, the focus of the chapter is not to find a dubious strait but the roles within cinema of the different iterations of this strategic option of visibilisation.

Nonetheless, to study the symbiotic constructions of cinema and Central America, I need to select a sample clearly related to an option for that sense of territoriality/identity. This idea of a region must not be defined nor validated by my gathering of said films. I decided to use a ready-made selection of motion pictures since as a researcher, I take no part on its curatorial process. I am not the one proposing that this specific collection of films is Central American. Any personal bias is limited to the source of the sample but not the movies themselves. As a result, my sample consists of motion pictures that took part in Ícaro Film Festival (IFF). I pick this event because it is the first-ever to bestow awards and distribute movies according to a 'Central America' criterion. Since it is the winners at this festival that afterwards get

access to a screening tour as CAC, this research focuses on those movies. Specifically, I choose the 24 winners between 2009 and 2014 to overview a contemporaneous use of the category. With this selection, IFF is delimiting one possible version/iteration of Central America for my study. The festival narrows down to an area of coverage consisting of six countries: Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. The sample, on its part, reduces the possibilities for the depiction of Central America to those representations produced exclusively by this festival's winners. So, IFF does delimit and characterise a region, yet the current chapter will debate such a proposal. That is the function of excavating the concept of Central America; a task modelled after Walter Mignolo's (2005) work.³⁴ This exploration tracks the symbolic contents assigned to the isthmus, contrasting its historical, political, demographic and economic configurations.

For thoroughly exploring the idea of Central America, its identitarian possibilities and functionality for studying cultural production, this chapter proposes to divide the subject into five sections. The first one, 'An isthmus', analyses the region's political and demographic configurations through time. A contemporary perspective of such processes of differentiation is looked upon in the second section, 'Central America(s) today'. The first section directs towards the multiple layers and configurations on the background of the idea of this region. This second one directly proposes the implications of claiming a unified area where heterogeneous conditions prevail. Specifically, the second section puts the unevenness of economic and demographic indicators at the core of the foggy cohesiveness of the sample's cinematic proposals. 'Giving meaning to an isthmus' delves into the external factors intervening in the configuration of the diverse notions of Central America. This section centres on the global exchanges that co-define and also questions the isthmus as a coherent category. These world-wide dynamics are fundamental for the 'Cultural real estates', which explores the roles of Central America for cultural production. It locates the

³⁴ Mignolo aims at unearthing the foundational elements of the idea of Latin America, he refers to "an excavation rather than an archaeology because it is impossible to simply uncover coloniality, insofar as it shapes and is shaped by the processes of modernity [...] the Americas exist today only as a consequence of European colonial expansion" (2005, pp. pos. 49-53)

function of the isthmus when it comes to funding and distribution processes that exceed any of its spatial imaginaries. The closing section, 'Other identitarian references in the isthmus' underlines the flimsiness of the doubtful strait. It presents the identitarian proposals of the films themselves for which Central America is not a reference. This chapter tries to describe the best-case scenario for a cohesive and meaningful Central American space. However, it ends showing the isthmus not only as a malleable concept but a marginal one in the processes of signification, although, not an absent reference regarding visibilisation. This journey through the isthmus sets the framework for analysing the films' networks in the further two chapters of this research. The vagueness of Central America's foundational elements brings to the fore the constructed nature of the isthmus. The region is a constant elaboration, a nebulous meaning adapting to the needs of whoever advances its use.

2.1 An Isthmus

When implementing Central America as a category for cinema, it mixes territorial and identitarian references. As so, it is fundamental to thoroughly trace the many positions from where the region is named. This exploration clarifies the variability of the idea of Central America and locates which factors might be consistent in its description through time and space. Those persistent elements are the ones that can account as the basis for a notion of belonging and the sense of shared land. As this section develops, it demonstrates that in alleging the cohesiveness of this region, it is the colonial perspective that has a pivotal role. As a very basic set up, geographically speaking, there is undoubtedly a tangible landmass behind CAC. In the north-western hemisphere lies a thin strip of land – 1000 km at its widest point, but also as narrow as 80 km in some other parts – that constitutes the Central American isthmus. If there is a stark difference between Central and North or South America, it is at a geological scale. Central America is a newer landmass than its continental neighbours. Central America emerged from the ocean due to volcanic processes back in the Pliocene (3 to 4 million years ago). The isthmus united both the northern and southern sections of America but it also separated the Pacific from the Atlantic Ocean. As Carolyn Hall explains in *América Central como Región Geográfica*, the resulting terrain from those ancient tectonic and volcanic processes, today has its southern tip in the Atrato

Valley in Colombia and extends for almost 3 thousand kilometres to the Tehuantepec isthmus, Mexico (1985, p. 5). This geographical description is practically unaccounted for when research and festival circuits decide their criteria for including films into a Central American category, which shows how complex is it to accurately define what the cultural and territorial space of such notion of a region is.

The Pliocene had little to do with the human occupation and reoccupation of the isthmus. Since before the European colonisation, in Central America there have been two main indigenous populations according to their linguistic families, material and symbolic practices. A Mesoamerican group, which spreads far beyond the Tehuantepec area, it is present from the centre of Mexico until the Nicoya Peninsula in Costa Rica. The other sector is the Macrochibcha. Communities within this tradition spread from Ecuador and Colombia – past the Central American geographical meridional tip in the Atrato Valley – northwards up to the southern lands of the Nicaraguan Atlantic coast (Hall C. , 1985, p. 7). Adolfo Constenla and Eugenia Ibarra's (2009) mapping of language influences in aboriginal groups at the early stages of the colonial era, confirms Hall's population scheme. For the aim of this section, the geographical perspective on the previous paragraph merely indicates that there are lands technically within the isthmus that however are beyond IFF's proposal of a Central America. Significantly, indigenous roots extend to further areas too. Besides, they are indicative of differentiated groups within the tentative region. So, this pre-colonial stage does not confirm nor aligns with a notion of historical continuity for Central America. Hence, it is debatable to assume that representations of indigenous groups, such those in *Nicté*, *Xic Vuh*, *Distancia* and even *Lih Wina*, are adequately classified within CAC.

The human occupation and political entities of the isthmus between the 16th and early 19th centuries – the colonial era – point to other heterogeneous configurations. Spaniards took over these lands and brought European and African descendants to

Central America, uprooting and decimating its indigenous populations.³⁵ However, the Spanish Empire was unable to properly unify nor control all populations and territory of the isthmus. There is no incipient Central America notion being built at this stage for all of those living at the isthmus at the time. Along with the persecution, reduction/enslavement of native groups, the indigenous inhabitants also put up fierce resistance. Native peoples' reactions to colonisation and the conditions Spanish authorities imposed on them, did not develop equally in all the political divisions that the crown placed upon these people of their lands. Up to present days, these aboriginal groups have either mingled or stayed apart from nation-building processes and other cultural exchanges according to a country by country experience.³⁶ The colonial era, in human terms, resulted in new ethnic and language components for what already was a diverse Central American isthmus.

The political division of the region under Spanish rule expressed its own diversity too. In broad terms, from the early 16th century until 1821, officially most of the area was part of the Reyno de Guatemala, as the Kingdom of Spain used to designate this colonial possession.³⁷ That historical territory is also often denominated the Capitanía General de Guatemala.³⁸ The current countries that constituted the Capitanía are Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and, for a time, Belize. Regarding other countries in the region, Virreinato de Nueva España, nowadays

³⁵ By comparing the estimated aboriginal population of Central America in the 16th century with that on the 17th, the impact caused by the Spanish colonisation is evident. According to *América Central: un mosaico étnico y cultural*, in Panama the indigenous population in that period dropped from 800,000 native inhabitants to just 25,000 and in Guatemala out of 2,000,000 only 165,000 were left (Pérez-Brignoli, 2003, p. 4).

³⁶ According to Pérez-Brignoli between 1800 and 1900 the aboriginal population shifted in the following proportion: Costa Rica, 4.2% to 1%; El Salvador, 34.7% to 20%; Guatemala, 82.3% to 65%; Honduras, 23% to 21%; Nicaragua, 27.6% to 34.5%; and Panama, 30.5% to 20.3% (2003, p. 5). In the 21st century, U.S.A.'s Central Intelligence Agency reports that the aboriginal population is around these values: Costa Rica 2.4% (2011), El Salvador 0.2% (2007), Guatemala 39.95% (2001), Honduras 7% (n.a.), Nicaragua 5% (n.a.) and Panama 12.3% (2010) (The World Factbook, 2019).

³⁷ "La circunstancia de ser la Capitanía General o Reino de Guatemala un territorio que no dependía de virreinato alguno, sino directamente de la Corona, le daba un carácter peculiar. De allí la codicia posterior de los dos Virreinos con los que colindaba, y en ambos casos, como era lógico frente al poderoso, habría de salir perdedor. / De este modo se explican la pérdida de Chiapas e incluso la reincorporación de Yucatán, por el noroeste, y el cercenamiento del territorio de la actual provincia panameña de Bocas del Toro, por el sureste, que formaba parte original de Costa Rica" (Meléndez, 1971, p. 8).

³⁸ I will use Reyno and Capitanía, although generic terms, rather than the full form with Guatemala for clarity and to avoid any equivalence with the country with that name at the present-day.

Mexico, extended well into the Tehuantepec zone, although the state of Chiapas belonged to the Reyno. On the other hand, Panama was under the Virreinato de Nueva Granada authority; this virreinato later came to be, in a broad sense, Colombia. That being the case, Capitanía's region of control did not reach either the southern or northern extreme geographical points of Central America.

The isthmus's Caribbean coast was in part neglected and in part outside of the reach of the Reyno's colonial government. Due to this condition, the region was subject to bargains as part of Spain's international politics. Since 1783, Carlos Meléndez (1971) explains, Spain granted to the British Empire access to Capitanía's eastern coast. More precisely, the British could settle and exploit the area between Wallis or Bellece river and Hondo river (Meléndez, 1971, pp. 10-11). Reyno's effective rule over Mosquitia, south down the same coast, was a fiction. In 1803 Spain commended this territory to the Virreinato de Nueva Granada trying to hold it away from the British Empire's area of influence (Meléndez, 1971, p. 10).³⁹ According to Karl Offen (2008), that strategy was Spain's last effort for controlling Mosquitia's territory. The challenge to Spanish authority dates back to the 17th century (Offen, 2008, p. 9). Spain's last stance proved fruitless. For much of the colonial period, another political configuration was also part of the isthmus. Between 1655 and 1894, the Mosquitia Kingdom ruled over what today is Nicaraguan Caribbean coast. This realm was under British protection and with a population that combined indigenous people and a free African population.⁴⁰

The plasticity of the political configuration had yet to face another stage: the first years of the Capitanía's independence period. Guatemala, after splitting from Spain, for a brief time, also declared itself as part of Iturbide's Mexican Empire (1821-1824).

³⁹ Juan Manuel Santana and José Antonio Sánchez argue that "Nicaragua era codiciada por los británicos porque pretendían ocupar una franja desde las costas caribeñas hasta el Pacífico para construir un canal. Los intentos ingleses de hacerse con el control del río San Juan fracasaron en 1780, pero los españoles fueron incapaces de desalojar a los británicos de la Mosquitia, que contaba en 1787 con aproximadamente 2.600 habitantes" (2007, p. 696).

⁴⁰ Nicholas Rogers (2002) affirms that there are reports of a Miskito population in Nicaragua Caribbean coast dating back to Columbus's fourth travel. Héctor Pérez-Brignoli (1989) clarifies that Zambo-Miskito group is a mixture of that aboriginal population and descendants of enslaved Africans. They governed the area and resisted the Spanish rule (Pérez-Brignoli, 1989, p. 53). The dates assigned for the Mosquitia kingdom are those available for a continuous line of succession to the throne, according to Michel D. Olien (1983).

Nonetheless, Guatemala's leadership was contested, most emphatically by the city of León in Nicaragua and Costa Rica.⁴¹ Once Spain lost its power, the Capitanía's internal local power struggles rose up, which resulted in displacing the provinces' colonial capital cities. Although almost simultaneous, these were scarcely isthmus-wide coordinated actions. Instead, they were parochial confrontations fuelled by the power vacuum of the moment.⁴² At the beginning of the independence era (1821 onwards), five of IFF's countries (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica) were part of the República Federal Centroamericana for a little less than 20 years. This regional federation was not stable; it had a rather short and conflicted existence.⁴³ From 1838 on, these five countries' internal constitution, their economic development and international relations had substantial differences.⁴⁴

After the end of the Federation era, the United States of America (US) became a new major actor in the isthmus. Nicaragua experienced a series of military interventions involving the US, starting in 1855 with William Walker. Interestingly, this event is hardly only a Central American reference, the historian Michel Gobat locates it at the origins of the idea of Latin America (as cited in Tenorio-Trillo, 2017, p. pos. 621). Years after the events related to Walker's armed venture, Costa Rica opened the doors to a different US expansion. Minor C. Keith and the Costa Rican government signed a contract for building a railroad to its Caribbean coast in the 1870s. Keith gained rights of landownership on both sides of that track, which lead him to start his banana plantation business, the United Fruit Company. Panama only came into nationhood in the 20th century, deeply related to US interest in building an interoceanic canal (Pérez-

⁴¹ In 1821 "...el primer paso de los leoneses fue la separación e independencia de Guatemala; lo segundo, la independencia de España." (Meléndez, 1971, pp. 11-12).

⁴² "Las fuerzas disociadoras parecen ser en verdad el resultado del natural aislamiento en que vivía el Reino de Guatemala (...) de allí las fuerzas localistas disociadoras, más frecuentemente centralizadas en dos núcleos antagónicos: Granada y León, San José y Cartago, Comayagua y Tegucigalpa, San Salvador y Santa Ana, etc." (Meléndez, 1971, p. 19).

⁴³ In *Del sueño unitario a la fragmentación: la República Federal de Centroamérica (1823-1838)*, Willy Soto Acosta (2014) exposes the many motives of República Federal de Centroamérica's collapse. For starters, the disorganised colonial process of the region. The Federation inherits from the Capitanía, the absence of an internal commercial circuit. Many armed conflicts erupted between the provinces. Simultaneously, there were many local struggles for the constitution of new power centres, and in the absence of a Federal army, the central government could not intervene (Soto Acosta, 2014, pp. 17-32).

⁴⁴ According to Margarita Silva Hernández, "...en cada país la reforma liberal y la consolidación del modelo agroexportador tuvieron alcances y significados divergentes en términos socioeconómicos y sociopolíticos" (2014, p. 35).

Brignoli, 1989, p. 25). Therefore, in the face of the failure of the internal cohesiveness of the idea of Central America, it is US intervention that seems to be a binding element for the region, originating in the Monroe doctrine, as Ana Rodríguez elaborates in *Dividing the Isthmus, Central American Transnational Histories, Literatures, and Cultures* (2009, p. 67).⁴⁵ However, that doctrine did not have Central America as its exclusive zone of enforcement. Hence, regarding the US interventions as a peculiar isthmian phenomenon is in contradiction to the Monroe doctrine's area of impact, "our southern brethren" (Monroe, 1823). That region came to be so broad that it included the Philippines during the Spanish-American War in 1898. Neither the multiple combinations of economic, military and diplomatic expressions of the doctrine nor the transformations that it implied on the countries were homogeneous.

The Central American isthmus, as it exists in the second decade of the 21st century, runs across nine countries, seven of them – Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama – are wholly inside the isthmus. Colombia and Mexico, on the other hand, conform the southern and northern ends of the isthmus respectively. Therefore, the geographical description of the region does not match either the historical or the contemporaneous references to Central America. The above statement also applies to the community that both Rodríguez and IFF puts forth: Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. Besides the reduction that those six countries, in territorial terms, represents for the isthmus, there is still a huge leap for assuming that such regional configuration expresses a notion of *centralamerican-ness*. There are scarce historical and geographical elements for justifying the cohesiveness or cultural representativeness of Central America. Instead, from temporal and geographic perspectives, there is a multiplicity of territories and identitarian possibilities other than the Central American one that literary analysis and film festivals propose. The argument that I yield bases on relationality and performativity. Possibilities of identification and spatial organisation in the isthmus, just like motion pictures, are networks in which elements of diverse origin and objectives mix. Identity is not a matter of finding a *centralamerican-ness* that

⁴⁵ Consistent with the colonial perspective of the region as a unified overseas territory under the authority of the Capitanía General de Guatemala, or the menacing Central American migrants caravan of Donald Trump, it is for external actors that Central America stands for a symbolic and spatial unity.

matches a strict perspective of territoriality or historical continuity. Anyhow, even a geographic approach with all its materiality does not offer any certainty due to inexorable changes of the Earth's crust. If the ground under your feet is movable, under what premise could we assume that any other given – or imagined – spatial configuration can be more reliable.

The creation of a Central America and its use as a criterion of cohesion has its verification in the application of the term to various ideas of integration conceived in the 20th century. Several entities have attempted to express their version of regional unity. That is the case of Central American States Organisation, *ODECA* (1951); Central American Court of Justice, *CCJ* (1907-1918, reconstituted in 1991); Central American Parliament, *PARLACEN* (1987); Central American University Council, *CSUCA* (1948); and Central American Common Market, *MCCA* (1961). Today, the Central American Integration System, *SICA* (1991), brings these bodies under a single structure. Not all of IFF's six countries are members of all these structures. Furthermore, Belize and the Dominican Republic are full members of SICA and therefore integrate some of its organisations (*Sistema de Integración Centroamericana*, n.d.). Notably, the incorporation of the Dominican Republic and the projected inclusion of Haiti, both sharing an island in the Caribbean, evidences the complex processes of delimiting a region and how such groupings obey a variety of interests.

2.2 Central America(s) Today

The isthmus, either from a material or symbolic perspective, escapes a simple definition. IFF's Central America is a gross oversimplification of the isthmus territorial configuration and the belonging possibilities for its inhabitants. Indeed, I am aware that by grouping films under this category, it would appear as if thematically they are expressing a cohesive idea of CAC. Defining a *centralamerican-ness* through such lens is analogous to the media or politicians matching a series of events, such as violence and migration, to a Central American imaginary. It is a neo-colonial imposition, external actors – or interests in the worldwide circulation of cultural production – prioritise a series of characteristics over the internal nuances and self-identifications of those gathered within their criterion. Although, nations participating in IFF share some

similarities, they also have plenty of differences. Taking a quantitative approach is useful to grasp the persistent heterogeneity of IFF's six countries beyond a historical or geographic optic. Besides, economic indicators are convenient for assessing state by state financial conditions for filmmaking because cinema is an industrial activity. Collecting the data presented below is not an exercise intended at recognising a single area. Instead, it is an effort to characterise a culturally imagined one, which derives its name from a quasi-geographical denominator. Acknowledging this diversity is meant to produce a new perspective about identity; one focusing on the performative notion of group formation. Therefore, this research ditches the concept of the isthmus as a well-established delimitation like the one nations had on the 19th and 20th centuries. My approach focuses on considering the interactions giving meaning to different notions of territoriality and film production. It offers an interpretation of Central America, as a supranational entity, and a device of visibilisation on the global scale. This interactive perspective also finds that the region's alleged cohesiveness invisibilises differences and fosters hegemonic discourses.

Income and inequality indicators show that material conditions have a high variability within the region. The set of data below corresponds to the years considered within this research (2009-2014). There is a fundamental consideration for the relationship between these statistics and the production of the films in my sample. These motion pictures rely on transnational networks. Specifically, their financing schemes are not exclusively dependent on the wealth of the country that serves as its primary location. Thus, I do not argue a direct link between film production and the income of any of these six nations. Besides, this study does not look at all the films made during those six years; it is not a quantitative analysis of moviemaking. Hence, it lacks the necessary elements to find possible correlations. The focus of this analysis is about the multiple realities and diversity of conditions gravitating around notions of *centralamerican-ness*. It demonstrates that the isthmus plays no significant role in organising those factors. This tendency echoes Néstor García Canclini's (2004) concern. Access to wealth, education and communication services is more than a material differentiation; it is an identitarian one. "Son evidentes las consecuencias de esta desigualdad para la formación de diferencias culturales y para participar en redes comunicacionales con rangos de diversidad e interculturalidad distintos, en varias

lenguas y en circuitos de muchos países” (García Canclini, 2004, p. 169). This assertion does not deny the possibility of self-identification as Central American. García aims at recognising that there are qualitatively different experiences related to the networks and places any given person can inhabit. The inequality within this table points to those heterogeneous symbolic spaces from where directors, funders, festivals and spectators are making cinema(s) with multiple – and sometimes transnational – identities.

Table 2. 1 Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama basic data on income and inequality, 2009-2013.

Country	IHDI*	Gini Coefficient				GNI** per capita, PPP***			
	HDR	World Bank Index		HDR		World Bank Index (current international \$)		HDR (2011 PPP \$)	
	2013	2009	2011	2013	2003-2012	2009	2011	2013	2013
Guatemala	0.422	n.a.	n.a.	48.3 [†]	55.9	6,290	6,630	7,110	6,866
El Salvador	0.485	45.8	42.3	43.4	48.3	5,810	6,310	6,710	7,240
Honduras	0.418	51.3	56.2	52.6	57.0	3,610	3,820	4,000	4,138
Nicaragua	0.452	43.9	n.a.	46.2 [†]	40.5	3,670	4,110	4,640	4,266
Costa Rica	0.611	50.6	48.7	49.3	50.7	11,740	12,940	13,980	13,012
Panama	0.596	51.9	51.4	51.5	51.9	13,560	16,080	18,560	16,379

* Inequality-adjusted to the Human Development Index / ** Gross national income / *** Purchasing power parity / [†] These data are for 2014. For Guatemala, this is the closest date available for this index. For Nicaragua, it enables to have a notion of the evolution of this variable, which is available for most of the other countries on the chart.

IHDI scale goes from 0, full equality, to 1, absolute inequality. Gini coefficient scale goes from 0, full equality, to 100, absolute inequality.

Sources:

The World Bank Index (GNI per capita, PPP (current international \$), 2019) and (GINI index (World Bank estimate), 2019).

Human Development Report 2014 (HDR) (United Nations Development Program, 2014).

As shown in Table 2. 1, the differences regarding inequality and income between IFF's six countries are considerable. In the most extreme situation, Panama had almost five times more revenue per year than Honduras in 2013. Regarding inequality, Honduras has 16.5 points more on the Gini coefficient than Nicaragua in the HDR's average. From these measurements taken at a national level, the imagined region is more diverse than homogeneous. In any case, let us say that CAC indicates that there is a comparable filmmaking industry, regarding organisation and financing, according to its territorial definition. Anyhow, from those same territorial and economic perspectives,

making a movie would hardly be seen to be the same experience in Honduras – the lowest income in 2013 – as in Panama – the highest. Yes, Honduras has no films receiving an award at IFF in my period of research. However, only one motion picture from Panama did. Besides, Guatemala, that in 2013 had nearly 1.8 times Honduras's income, and yet less than half of Panama's GNI, is the greatest award-winning country in my sample, nine movies in total. At the same time, Nicaragua with less than 70% of the income than El Salvador in 2013, got the same amount of films awarded at IFF, three each. Finally, Guatemala with a low GNI as shown in the table, was the production site for the most expensive movie in my sample, *12 Segundos*. Indeed, arguing the recognition of national – or regional – economic conditions as normative for cinema reproduction does not seem feasible. Such a statement is not verifiable from comparing the table above with this research's film sample. Actually, in the third chapter, I elaborate that the viability of this collection of movies derives from transnational exchanges, both relating to funding and displayability. The chart above does affirm that economic activities in the IFF's countries face conditions hardly describable in regional terms. Instead, these particularities are identifiable traits of specific nations. Following the World Bank classification of countries according to their GNI, this data does identify two groups that were stable between 2009 and 2014. Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua are included in the Lower Middle-Income country list, while Costa Rica and Panamá are in the Upper Middle-Income countries profile (Historical Classification by Income, 2019). Nonetheless, this generalisation, proposed by a global organism, for profiling nations, fails to describe those directors making these films and their specific conditions of enunciation.

Migration has also come to challenge how different actors imagine the region. Specifically, diasporic experiences require considering territorial discontinuity. *Centralamerican-ness* is in contact with lands far from its geographical referentiality. The overall impact of this human displacement upon IFF's Central America reaches the point where you can say that there is an additional nation in migration.⁴⁶ Around 4

⁴⁶ Víctor Acuña, in his article *Centroamérica en las globalizaciones* recognises that migration processes – exclusively those towards U.S. – are an example of "...la transnacionalización de los

million citizens from these six countries have migrated to the US alone (Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, & Cuddington, 2013), more than Panama's entire population.⁴⁷ However, migration is not a homogeneous phenomenon that unites the region. It has different characteristics according to each country. For example, it has more incidence in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua than in Panama or Costa Rica. Among the first four countries, Nicaraguan migration is almost five times less than that of El Salvador. The 1.9 million Salvadorean migrants represent 45% of all Central Americans currently residing in the US. Guatemalans are the second largest group, making up around 28% of the total migrant population. Hence, almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of all Central American migrants in the US come from these two countries. Also, that 'migrant nation' does not have equal living conditions across the board. Guatemalan and Honduran migrants face harsher conditions compared to other communities of Hispanic origin in the US. Their group indicators are under the average values in education levels, English proficiency and household income, while they are above average in the poverty rate (Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, & Cuddington, 2013).

The economic dependency of each country in the income generated by this migrant population also varies. For El Salvador, poverty would increase by seven percentage points if it lost the \$3.465 billion made by remittances. Comparatively, if Panama lost the \$168 million that receives from this activity, it would cause an increase of only three points in its poverty indicator. For Costa Rica, poverty would rise by one point if \$264 million in remittances were to stop (Estado de la Región 2011, 2011, pp. 381-383).⁴⁸ Intra-regional migration does not even add up to match the number of Nicaraguans in the U.S., with an estimate of just 355.559 persons migrating within

procesos históricos del istmo y sus dimensiones interactivas" (2015, p. 21). I view the interactive dimension in this research as exchanges that characterise the permanent creation of cohesive narratives that are continually shifting as the result of continuous translations. I do not mean by interactive a naive negation of the struggles for hegemony, just that I trace identities and groups as heterogeneous discourses. Acuña's normative consideration of a 'region' is problematized later on this document.

⁴⁷ According to *Estado de la Región 2016*, the total population for each one of IFF's countries in 2014 was as follows: Guatemala, 15.6 million; Honduras, 8.3 million; El Salvador, 6.4 million; Nicaragua, 6.2 million; Costa Rica, 4.7 million; and Panama, 3.9 million (Programa Estado de la Nación, 2016, p. 95).

⁴⁸ Guatemala and Honduras are the other two main countries receiving remittances from migrants in the US with \$3.912 billion and \$2.475 billion. These two countries and El Salvador concentrate the 88% of the region's remittances from the US. If Nicaragua is added, this percentage grows to 95%.

Central America.⁴⁹ There are also profound differences within this intra-regional migration, 63% of it consists of Nicaraguans living in Costa Rica. Meanwhile, the second-largest diasporic population, 3% of the total, are Salvadorans living in Guatemala. The smallest number of local migrants is not even statistically significant, only 39 Panamanians living in Belize (Estado de la Región 2011, 2011, p. 380).⁵⁰ Indeed, if you believe that something like migration is a shared experience, the dynamics of how it groups and moves according to different parameters affect its relative meaning for each nation.

Tomás Guevara's *Ausentes* is a film about migration's impact on people's sense of belonging. Instead of a unifying *centralamerican-ness*, the documentary focuses on disruptions. Specifically, Guevara portrays the effects of female migration on family relations. In the documentary, both, the displaced women that reach the US, and their sons they leave behind in their home country – El Salvador – go through profound turmoil. This film portrays the contradictions experienced by a group of women who were only seeking an option to earn their living. The path they followed forced them to change their traditional role of stay-at-home and work-a-lot mothers. They become wage-earning migrant workers, hence absent from home. The situation complicates once the women, unable to return to their countries of origin or bring their children to the US, start new family groups. On the other hand, in the mountains of El Salvador, children have a stable income to cover their daily needs thanks to their newly employed mothers. However, those same kids seem to be dragging other unsatisfied qualitative needs. The potential regional character of these experiences fails as migration towards the US is not a Central American phenomenon. Salvadoreans share this experience with other Latin Americans, all facing similar circumstances and experimenting with similar responses to their diasporic condition. Hence, adapting to migration hardly identifies as belonging to the isthmus. The interview in the documentary to María Gómez, director of a migrant reception centre in the US, makes that point clear. She speaks about migrants in general without making any specific remarks about Salvadoreans or Central Americans; she does not even mention their

⁴⁹ The set of data for internal Central American migration dates from 2000.

⁵⁰ I include Belize to preserve the dataset elaborated by *Estado de la Región 2011* (Programa Estado de la Nación, 2011), which studies the 7 exclusively isthmian countries.

demonym. The women in the documentary become members of an exodus; their excision is the pivotal element of their identification. Evidently, this situation transcends Central America.

Documentaries about migration represent the diversity of conditions that diasporic characters have along their journey or in the processes of settling in a new nation. They are not representing Central America as a territorial nor experiential unity. Amanda Alfaro-Cordoba – also researching on Central America Cinema – asserts that “...no hay una Centroamérica sino varias y [...] la variedad de las centroaméricas no se restringe necesariamente a los límites de los países instituidos como tales” (2007-2008, pp. 22-23).⁵¹ That lack of internal coherence is also evident in the portrayals of poverty in my sample. Such is the case of *El Lugar Indeseado* and *A Mi Lado*, which argue remarkably different reasons for what pushes individuals to endure life in precarious conditions. In the Costa Rican documentary, *El Lugar Indeseado*, there are structural problems in the country that force a group of men to live on the edge of the nation, both geographically, economically, socio-politically and culturally. Costa Rica's government receives international monetary support for protecting its wildlife. None of those resources have been allotted to help resettle those who make a meagre living out of one of the protected areas. This explanation is stated at the beginning of the documentary. The setting of *A Mi Lado* is a landfill in Managua, which seems like a never-ending space with no room for any other element but trash. This film is not interested in linking those living from the trash with those who produce it. *A Mi Lado*'s narrative chooses to expose poverty as an almost self-inflicted condition, mendable as long as the people suffering it decides to make the 'right' decisions. Although these two films represent poverty, destitution is not the same in each documentary. They do not explain it in similar terms and their aesthetic approaches to the subjects vary as well.

⁵¹ Regardless of her acknowledgement, Alfaro-Cordoba's research departs from the idea of Central America and its cinematic production as a single region. In her proposal, she considers five countries: Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Consequently, she looks for common traits and elaborates conclusions recognising Central America as a unity, despite nation by nation exceptions.

Furthermore, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, the countries represented in these two documentaries, do not share similar economic parameters, at least when comparing amongst themselves and with the other four nations within IFF. Looking from the outside, differentiating a definition of poverty for either country might not seem significant. However, in depicting the characters and for the dwellers of each country, those insignificant variations in a global perspective might stand for major ones on a local scale. Nicaragua shifts between the second lowest and the lowest income in the region; Costa Rica has the second highest GNI, which is the triple of the Nicaraguan income. The common element of their poverty is destitution, which characterises poverty anywhere. These two productions also differ in their patterns of financing and distribution. *El Lugar Indeseado* is a master's degree film project that is now available for free from Vimeo. *A Mi Lado* is a journalistic endeavour, meant by Jean-Cosme Delaloye to be broadcasted in the US and now it is for sale in iTunes. Thus, both the representation of poverty and cinema as an industrial process of production, each follows various schemes. Characterising these films through a shared regional category is only possible when obviating the many specificities each has.

A diversity of indicators about living conditions, as well as representations, leads to new identifications altogether, instead of presenting multiple Central Americas. *Justicia Para Mi Hermana* uses violence parameters, more precisely homicide rates, to define a new region for its narrative, called the *Triángulo Negro*, integrated by Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Hence, that area constitutes a differentiated territory. These three countries had their intentional homicide rates amongst the eight most elevated in the world between 2009 and 2014. Even for this standard description, this problem has a wide variance for each of these three nations. These ranges oscillated between 31 homicides per 100.000 inhabitants in Guatemala in 2014, and 85 murders per 100.000 inhabitants in Honduras in 2011 (UN Office on Drugs and Crime's International Statistics database, 2019). Kimberly Bautista, the film's director, is not describing a Central America, she is (re)creating an alternative significantly referential space. *Justicia Para Mi Hermana* questions and splits the cohesion of IFF's Central America by organising a new group according to criminality indicators. This documentary does not represent exceptions or heterogeneity within the notion of

a Central America. The isthmus does not define this 'triangle'; its pivotal element is present-day violent crimes.

Bautista, who through her documentary explores feminicide and impunity, did not come to Guatemala because of a notion of Central America either. She is a US-based filmmaker with a shared Colombian and Irish heritage. As a university student in California, Bautista came in contact with the subject of violence against women in Latin America via a documentary about feminicide in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, and started a collective to raise awareness and give support on this subject (Bautista, Palabra Radio, 2014).⁵² Evidently, Bautista's background diverts from the territory claimed by CAC. Thus, both the contents of her film and her personal experience relate to identitarian possibilities beyond just a simple alternative geographical area. Her documentary identifies violence against women as a global problematic. As such, the movie denounces patriarchal violence as a transnational practice and demands for transnational solidarity against it. Hence, Bautista is not proposing a representation of a *Triángulo Negro*'s singularity. Feminicide is not about a region's identitarian legacy. Bautista's narration presents women as the deterritorialized collective subject to patriarchal aggression. In her film, violence in the local sphere does not translate into a national or regional identitarian element. The director relies on exchanges and interactions that do not depend on a Central American frame.

2.3 Giving Meaning to An Isthmus

Certainly, cinema is not alone in the use of Central America as an identifier. This section reviews the many interests already at play in justifying the isthmus as a symbolic and cohesive reference in other cultural, social and economic research. They delineate a fundamental problematic for analysing the possibility of depicting a notion of *centralamerican-ness* in the films in my sample. In those academic works, giving meaning to Central America gathers internal as much as external factors. Víctor Acuña understands the region through its interactions, "... la condición estructural de Centroamérica por su ubicación en el globo presenta una historicidad con momentos

⁵² The film that moved Bautista was *Señorita Extraviada* by Lourdes Portillo (2001)

de mayor o menor vinculación, y dimensiones múltiples, unas más económicas y otras más políticas” (2015, p. 15). Although Acuña remarks the need of a bidirectional analysis, that is Central American influences on the globe as much as the world influences in the isthmus, he lacks recognising the region as a creation rather than a natural space. “América Central ya no solo es un sitio surcado de eventuales o efectivos pasos interoceánicos, sino también un solo espacio en su conjunto que protagoniza la función de puente...” (Acuña, 2015, p. 17). His focus on the isthmus geostrategic condition, although relational, sets down the norms for two regions – Central America and the global.⁵³ Acuña, then, does not avoid naturalising a Central America. He merely shifts the logics for defining the isthmus by prioritising the use of an externality, the global. In establishing this relationship, Acuña’s argument overlooks that both spheres have many possible constitutions and that delimiting one from the other is disputable too.

The involvement of an extra-regional dynamic extends to literature, in which case it is not just a matter of having a frame for understanding the content but a scale that justifies the field of studies. Thus, Central America is something else than an alternative or aggregate of national perspectives. It becomes a functional label for the recognition/support of a set of literary works in a broader sphere. In Silvia López’s (2012-2013) analysis about the development of cultural studies in the region, she recognises that in particular, the existence of a field of Central American literary studies is possible thanks to the California State University Northridge. This author, additionally, traces back a critical point in the development of this field to the Congreso de Literatura y Cultura Centroamericana, instituted in 1999 with the support of Arizona State University (López, 2012-2013, pp. 1-2). According to López, the isthmus is a creation depending on transnational interactions at a larger scale than on regional exchanges. Arguing that literary works have a shared belonging to a territorial entity is the basis for claiming that a collection of cultural production – not necessarily internally

⁵³ The global is also a location, as it presupposes the representation of a whole. This imagined inclusion expresses a hegemonic discourse because it creates – norms – a place and its people. The focus of this research on the relational pretends to track the heterogeneity created by constantly transactional and ubiquitous interactions. They don’t belong to a place; they happen in physical structures and imaginaries that, as they relate to each other, create a particular notion of space. This action does not make a site global or local but relative.

related – still conforms into a single group. This sort of clustering aims at gathering momentum and attention in its conglomerate form, rather than valuing the literary pieces as instances of national literature or individual creators. Other academic journals, such as *Istmo*, supported by College of Wooster in Ohio; the Italian Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore publication *Centroamericana*; or the *Boletín de la Asociación para el Fomento de los Estudios Históricos en Centroamérica*, located in Toulouse, France, are examples repeating the deployment of Central America as a notion fostered by the exchange with actors outside the region.

Labelling a region has a prescriptive dimension as it requires to choose a set of limits and configurations amongst many possible ones. This selective procedure is evident when presenting the validity of the isthmus as an identification amongst global exchanges. Acuña (2015) clearly depicts this selective choice when he advocates for research on transnational histories, of interconnections. He explains that amongst those global networks, Central America endures in the realm of new post-national configurations (2015, pp. 23-24). Presenting Central America as a well-defined space depends on a colonial referentiality and an essentialist stand. The colonial reference addresses two parallel and intrinsically linked processes. One refers to instituting a territory; the other is the roots that Central America allegedly has in the Capitanía General de Guatemala. IFF's Central America inherits its core configuration – Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica – from the Capitanía General de Guatemala. Neither the Capitanía nor these countries align with the political structures of the aboriginal people who preceded the Spanish occupation. Rather than an emancipating action, Central America as a territorial division lingers on colonial categories, normalising asymmetrical centre-periphery relations.

The creation of a region is not naïve. Precisely, Jaques Derrida characterises it as violent and colonial, a denial of other possible configurations (2001, p. 57). The process of Central American independence confirms the applicability of Derrida's reasoning to my perspective upon the isthmian history. Capitanía's independence was declared by then still Spanish authorities, amongst other reasons, “para prevenir las consecuencias que serían terribles, en el caso de que la proclamase de hecho el mismo pueblo” (Acta de Independencia de la Capitanía General de Guatemala, 1821, p. Art. 1). Also, Nicaragua and Costa Rica signed *Acta de los Nublados* (1821) instead

of the independence act, to secure their autonomy, foremost, from Guatemala. This alternative document proves the extension of power dynamics of impositions and silences even in that initial regional configuration.

The process of construction of meaning is continuous, and therefore, the foundational moment perennially recreates. *Geografía de la Región Centroamericana* (McKay, 2008), a text made by Coordinación Educativa y Cultural Centroamericana, offers a more recent example of inclusions and exclusions from the imaginary. This book has a map of the Mesoamerican region and then a full section devoted to it while it merely mentions the Macrochibcha. The fact that this text pays more attention to Mesoamerican influence than the Macrochibcha is intriguing since it is aimed at the formation of educators in the seven exclusively isthmian countries. It looks as if the presence of the former to the north were more valuable than the latter to the south. This partial exclusion of influences or territories becomes a pattern when delimiting the isthmus. Defining an imagined space over a geographically descriptive term also happens in Rodríguez's (2009) work. Her research on literature, although it makes an explicit reference in the title to the geographical perspective, *Dividing the Isthmus*, only looks at six out of nine possible countries. Rodríguez is well aware that her selection does exclude not only the two countries that are not entirely inside the isthmus – Colombia and Mexico – but also Belize, which is inside. She is truthful to her appreciation that "[t]he idea of nature at any one time is filtered through systems of thought, culture, language, and rhetorical figures that serve as interpretive lenses through which to see the material 'natural' world" (Rodríguez, 2009, p. 24). Rodríguez claims that there is a special – or natural – bond between Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama, a bond that constitutes them into a region.

The perspective that Rodríguez adheres to is one of Central America as a unified literary field. That stance implies that there are linkages and common elements across the different works produced in the region or by authors related to it. Since cinema studies are scarce for the seven exclusively isthmian countries, literary studies are an indispensable reference in tracing a history of a cultural community of artists who self-identify, or who are identified by others as Central American. In this sense, cinema studies repeat some of the exclusions present in literary ones, like subtracting Belize

from the region. In her research in Central American Cinema, Andrea Cabezas states that Belize “does not share the same language, nor the colonising Spanish history with the rest of the region” (2015, p. 24).⁵⁴ However, British colonial influence and the Anglophone community are not exclusively Belizean experiences. Carolyn Hall and Héctor Pérez-Brignoli affirm that those elements are common to the isthmus’ Caribbean coast (Historical Atlas of Central America, 2003, pp. 36-37). The consistent exclusion of Belize is indicative that the Central American category of these analyses, defines a configuration – amongst the many possible ones – for the region. This Central America excludes, probably unwillingly, elements mostly identified with Afro-descendant populations and invisibilises ties with insular lands in the Atlantic.

Literary studies do not produce a homogeneous approach towards Central America nor define how research on cinema deals with the region. I find that there are two trends when associating cinema or literature with the isthmus. There is an essentialist one, which Rodríguez (2009) puts forth in her conclusions, and that is similar to Durón’s (2014) position regarding cinema. Another option is rendering the region as a reference but not as a defining element for cultural production. This position is shared by researchers on literature like Werner Mackenbach (2004) (2007) and Silvia López (2012-2013). And in cinema, by Maria Lourdes Cortes (2005). Rodríguez elaborates towards a foundational principle of what I call *centralamerican-ness*. She refers to the six countries, which she chooses from the geographical reference, as a cohesive region. “Central American cultural production has shaped and been shaped by the greater social, economic, political and cultural contradictions of the isthmus” (Rodríguez, 2009, p. 252). Julio Pinto, on the other hand, contradicts Rodríguez’s argument. “Como lo confirmó la posterior balcanización política del antiguo Reyno de Guatemala, de toda la América española, fue en Centroamérica donde el regionalismo encontró su desarrollo más agudo” (Pinto Soria, 1988, p. 69).⁵⁵ An essentialist perspective bypasses any other territorial specificities. It claims there is a set of core isthmian

⁵⁴ Original French text: “ne partage ni la même langue, ni la même histoire de la colonisation espagnole que le reste de la région.”

⁵⁵ Pinto uses the term ‘regionalismo’ to address the leverage that smaller territorial units within the colonial area of Capitanía General de Guatemala had in front of that political entity. Pre-Columbian indigenous development as much as other colonial economic factors intervene to sow and strengthen these divisions inside the Reyno.

elements in defining identity and belonging. For the second group of authors, Central America works as a heterogeneous repository. Be it five nations, six, seven or nine. The latter researchers make generalisations out of one of the countries' experiences or from a smaller group of them. Even though they refer to Central America as a naturalised area, in their use of the term, the region is a metonymy of the experience of a given country.

Recognising the wealth of expressions within a group is what makes us perceive a multitude as heterogeneous. Antonio Negri argues that "[t]hrough its relation with the multitude, each subjectivity generates words in language, threads in social relations, goods in labour. The multitude possesses in itself the capacity to render beautiful the products of language, just as much as those of social relations or of production" (2011, pp. 97-98). My research challenges Negri's assumption, and the notion of Central America as an identifiable whole – even if diverse. Although relations might well create meaning, yet divergent aims coexist and permanently challenge each other. Their exchanges evolve in a movement that is neither forward or backwards, given that a unique point of reference requires consensus, and that contradicts the panoply of subjectivities in interactions. There is not a single multitude, but several, infinite. There cannot be just one Central America, but constant reiterations and reinterpretations of the term. There is no guarantee that the region has an equivalent reference to or resonance for all the individuals living in its proposed – and continually re-configuring – limits.

The plurality of Central Americas has major implications for my critical approach to the isthmus and cinema. Regardless of the contents of *centralamerican-ness*, it will always relate to the essentialisation of a territory, which denies the process of struggle for signification. In dealing with that process of delimitation it is worth considering that "[t]he boundary is Janus-faced and the problem of outside/inside must always itself be a process of hybridity, incorporating new 'people' in relation to the body politic, generating other sites of meaning and, inevitably, in the political process, producing unmanned sites of political antagonism and unpredictable forces for political representation" (Bhabha, 1990, p. 4). Space as discourse is a reminder of the multiple voices looking for validation – and even hegemony.

Both, an essentialist and a repository use of the region, select a configuration according to its needs of incorporation and corroboration. Anderson (1983), describes how these sorts of narratives, when related to media, can reach a point in which they become a critical cohesive element for a group of individuals, gathering them into a nation, i.e. an imagined community as Anderson argues. Hence, behind such imagined community, there is a negotiation for defining its prevalent narrative. Although Central America is not a nation, it stands, from an essentialist perspective, for a sense of identity and axis of representation for artistic expressions. This claim also defines one out of the many possible configurations of the isthmian territory. Thus, the implementation of this region in the frame of cinema studies is analogous to the dynamics that Anderson ascribes to nations. It is in fulfilling that role of a shared narrative, precisely, that resides another challenge both for film and literature produced within the IFF's nations. These products are failing at distribution and consequently have feeble participation in the creation of a popular imaginary, be it of the region, the country, the city or the neighbourhood. This lack of displayability is part of the subject of the next section in this chapter.

Centralamerican-ness, be it the belonging to a particular set of countries, the expression of a precise group of cultural practices or a collection of economic and political conditions, faces another conundrum. Descriptions of Central America are so generic – violence, governmental instability, poverty – that they urge comparing and integrating them into broader communities. These descriptions might well fit that of former Spanish and Portuguese colonies across the continent, or even that of developing countries. The other alternative is giving descriptions that are too detailed, specific. In such circumstances, we would be identifying groups within the area, micro-regions or nations, all differing from one another. For example, three isolate cases that are not transposable for the whole region: The Mayan suffering a genocidal action, *North Triangle* economic migration towards the US or a revolutionary left-wing movement that wins the civil war in Nicaragua. Silvia López is aware of such tension and is willing to embrace it as an intrinsic part of the study of Central America, “[q]uerer borrar ese carácter escindido de este objeto de estudio sería falsificarlo, sería pretender la reconciliación de una totalidad irreconciliable, sería obviar la dialéctica de las realidades centroamericanas y de los modelos que armamos para su

comprensión" (2012-2013, pp. 3-4). Besides heterogeneity, fragmentation – what I would call fogginess – is not at odds, in her case, with the study of a Central America. Instead, it becomes its identifiable characteristic. For López, the tension is not an impossibility for proposing a region, but the expression of isthmus's pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial layers of history.

López does not define a Central American area. Absence of clear boundaries can move the analysis of the subject towards the relational, dealing with the plurality of interactions of which, a territory, is but one single part. However, López's omission is not the same as understanding the region as a performative act. To achieve that much, it would require to acknowledge both the normative use of the isthmus and the many other exchanges proposing alternatives to it – which is not in López's article. Instead, assuming Central America as a natural or given space reproduces systematically its more colonially related constitution: from Guatemala to Panama, subtracting Belize. No matter how you attempt defining Central America's boundaries, it is going to be conflictive. The idea of a *centralamerican-ness* opposes considering human processes as interconnected and in constant search for meaning. Actor-Network Theory (ANT) proposes an approach relying on interactions and exchanges. "...[M]acro no longer describes a wider or a larger site in which the micro would be embedded like some Russian Matryoshka doll, but another equally local, equally micro place, which is connected to many others through some medium transporting specific types of traces" (Latour, 2007, p. 176). ANT focuses on the performativity of the region. It deconstructs *centralamerican-ness* as a delimitation in favour of analysing the continual changeable exchanges exceeding geographical and symbolic constraints. A territory does not define, neither is it determined; it is just part of a discourse, a narrative that is endlessly created by those who voice it. As a consequence, cultural production does not belong to a place. Thus, I analyse the labelling of my film sample as Central American according to the uses that such impression of identity has for the production, reproduction and validation of said objects.

2.4 Cultural Real Estates: the value of the isthmus

Acuña reminds us that Central American countries have followed a national development based on the centre-periphery division of work in the capitalist system

since the 19th century (2015, p. 16). Therefore, these nations' economy depends on looking outwards. It relies on the export of primary goods, complying with their role of satellite countries. That is the case with staples such as coffee, indigo and bananas. Moving on to this area's cultural production, more precisely film, Cortés argues that its perception is that of between "stereotypical images and nothing" (2005, p. 19). By assuming a perspective based on marginality, a regional cinema implies the recognition of a centre and the acceptance of hierarchical structures. That approach reinforces the colonial elements that depend on a dynamic of positionality in CAC. Consequently, embracing this category – to some extent – reproduces and profits from the idea of the isthmus as a peripheral region.

Picturing Central America as standing in the global market's fringes is consistent with the notion that:

"... [d]ebido al esfuerzo económico y humano que implica hacer cine -y al rígido mercado de cada uno de los países centroamericanos- dentro de la región, este es el más raro de todos los productos culturales. La infraestructura económica se ha trasladado desde un proyecto de desarrollo nacional, que ha existido desde antes de la crisis de los años setenta, hacia un proyecto de desarrollo cuya meta es la inserción en el crecimiento económico del mercado global (Robinson, 2001: 539)" (as cited in Alfaro-Córdoba, 2007-2008, p. 22).

Approaching cinema as an economic activity reveals Central America's other potential meanings for filmmaking. It is an industrial facet that associates with investment, cost of production, distribution and profits. Films need a market, and in 2010, the six countries under scrutiny in this research offered a combined audience of 42 million people (Estado de la Región 2011, 2011, p. 369). There are two relevant considerations for that market worth coming back to: first, as stated by Cortés, Hollywood productions already saturated the cinema distribution in the isthmus (2005, p. 533). Second, movies originating from these six nations remain practically undistributed (Alfaro-Córdoba, 2007-2008, p. 22).⁵⁶

⁵⁶ In this aspect, cinema parallels literature. Mackenbach mentions that for the circulation of books, at the beginning of the 21st century, "más allá de las fronteras nacionales no existe un mercado editorial, y salvo unas pocas excepciones tampoco existe una editorial que opere regionalmente" (2007).

Regardless of what seems a challenging regional distribution prospect, cinema production in the 21st century increased in all of IFF's countries. Durón affirms that considering only fiction films, more movies were made from 2000 to 2010 than during the whole 20th century (2012, p. 248). Amongst the causes for this growth is access to funding, although Durón mentions Ibermedia, he finds that Cinergia is the pivotal one. "CINERGIA is a regional project that supports filmmaking in Central America and the Caribbean. Though the fund supports two countries of the Caribbean islands (Cuba and the Dominican Republic), its main focus is on the countries of the Central American isthmus (Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama)" (Durón, 2014, p. 48). This description associates Central America with the Caribbean; they are a unified region under the interest and possibilities of film funding. Besides, Cinergia recognises Belize as part of its coverage area. Thus, the funding agency's space of action is not entirely equivalent to IFF's and Durón's imagined territory. On top of that, Cinergia had interactions that reveal filmmaking dependence in a transnational sphere rather than a regional one. Hivos, a non-governmental organisation based in The Netherlands "is Cinergia's main donor and has supported the fund since its beginnings" (Hivos, 2014). Hence, the production of a CAC is not only a matter of Central American exchanges.

Twenty-one, out of the twenty-four films in my study, were made in collaboration with non-Central American counterparts, while only two have, amongst their funders or producers, intra-regional participation (Appendix C).⁵⁷ While Cinergia is related to six productions, it is Hivos that either directly as an organisation or indirectly through this former fund, gave support to more films, seven in total. Not far behind is Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID) involved in four documentaries and one fiction film. Moving from organisations to countries that have financially supported my sample, Costa Rica leads with nine productions, followed by Guatemala and The Netherlands with seven each, and another tie between Spain and US with six each. Costa Rica is the only country that has fully funded two films, *Irene* and *Sombras Nada Más*. Fifteen out of the remaining 22 productions received external funding from sources other than international cooperation agencies such as

⁵⁷ The delimitation of Central America for these effects derives from IFF's selection of countries.

AECID or Hivos. Film directors in twelve of these cases were either a national, lived or studied at the country contributing with financial support to their movies. Four of these films, *Nosotras*, *Justicia Para Mi Hermana*, *A Mi lado* and *El Lugar Más Pequeño*, could even be described as external productions because neither the director, nor the funder resided in the country where filming took place.⁵⁸

Clearly, these funding interactions tend to take place either within each country or with other nations beyond the region in question here. There seems to be a minimal intraregional interaction, suggesting that CAC does not stand for a joint industrial endeavour or infrastructure. Instead, the category's use is more associated with academic research or with giving recognition and facilitating distribution; both applicable to IFF. When it comes to the festival circuit, CAC is neither a toponym within a purely identitarian endeavour. Thomas Elsaesser (2005) already analyses such venues of film distribution as networks. Particularly, aside his description of them as self-referential clusters of cultural and economic interests, he does locate festivals as regulators of production for which the global market stands as a primary target (Elsaesser, *Film Festival Networks: the new topographies of cinema in Europe*, 2005, p. 88). Hence, the need to trace CAC's uses through those involved in the films' end-to-end production. This tracking does more than breaking with the game of oppositions of centre-periphery. It aims at looking at CAC's performativity, and thus the negotiations of its translations and appropriations. This mapping opens the term towards its diverse implementations while recognises the complexity of technology, economy and politics interacting with it. The objective is producing a decoding that acknowledges worldwide exchanges along with different degrees of disconnectedness.⁵⁹ My goal in this study is to clarify for whom and how the concept of Central America is valuable for filmmaking.

⁵⁸ These four films are documentaries, two from Guatemala and the other two from Nicaragua and El Salvador. In the case of *El Lugar Más Pequeño*, its director, Tatiana Huezo, was born in El Salvador, but she left the country as a young child. She studied film and lives in Mexico. For the other three productions, the film directors were properly foreigners.

⁵⁹ I use 'disconnectedness' from the perspective of García (2004) as the differentiated access to cultural and material goods.

This relational perspective has been dealt with in previous approaches to cinema as a practice. In fact, Bill Nichols affirms that, "[t]hough made locally, film production is always a site where the global penetrates the local, the traditional, the national" (1994, p. 77). The present proposal does not follow interactions trying to trace a specific cinema of a delimited area, which distances it from Nichols's global/local opposition. Instead, my mapping of film interactions reveals vast uncharted lands in permanent multidirectional evolution. There are configurations and significations beyond the fog of *centralamerican-ness*. Each of these 24 films makes a performance of cinema and interacts with different notions of territoriality. Thus, the use of a category that affirms a parochial – or regional – element to identify moviemaking is contradictory both to the processes enabling its production and the following procedures related to its distribution. In the case of CAC, as opposed to some national identities, there is not even a specific production funding allocated for the exclusive use of the region's 'citizens'. For these 24 films, financing, spectatorship and even moviemakers do not align with the notion of territoriality that the isthmian segmentation intends to convey.⁶⁰ Therefore, I am shifting CAC from a category expressing an aesthetic, thematic and material closed-system of creation to a symbolic shortcut used for reaching ulterior political/economic aims. It is under this new logic that I will assess the cinematic instrumentalisation of Central America, i.e. its assumption as a periphery for the sake of the motion pictures.

2.5 Other Identarian References in the Isthmus: pre-colonial, Latin American and global affiliations

Up to this point, this chapter has dealt with the multiplicity of options for defining Central America. Such variety tells us that the use of the term is failing in delimiting a geographical area. That uncertainty is decidedly contradictory with using that notion of a region for describing a set of cultural practices. Besides, when it comes to the isthmus as an identifier of filmmaking strategies or contents, the 24 IFF's winners are both challenging in their diversity and confrontative. Indeed, these films affirm

⁶⁰ Seven of the directors are either nationals of a country that is not located on the isthmus or at least hold a dual citizenship.

alternative identitarian constructions to the isthmus. Four productions, *Xic Vuh*, *Lih Wina*, *El Codo del Diablo* and *Wata*, exemplify the many other symbolic spaces expressed through the movies' enunciation. This chapter's discussion is limited to the visual narrative, leaving aside the rest of the interactions and actors involved in the elaboration of these materials. Despite such a specific perspective, these four films present belonging proposals displacing a Central American one. Each movie is creating a territory of their own; be it in what the isthmus is supposed to contain (Maya), in what it attempts to minimise (Caribbean), in the area from which it proposes to stand out (Latin America) and finally in what outweigh the region (the world).

The previous chapter mentions that Edgar Sajcabún, *Xic Vuh*'s director, recognises that there are Mayan elements in his narrative. Nonetheless, he considers his short film to be about general human experiences rather than culturally specific ones. Because this stage focuses on the film enunciation, let us disregard that identitarian affirmation. Exclusively referring to the diegetic dimension of the movie, I find that a first significative element is its language. Evidently, from the very film title, the presence of Kaqchikel brings with it a degree of peculiarity. The subtitles offer a compound phrase for *xic vuh*, which intentionally translate it as 'paper wing' instead of comet or kite. That translation affirms an identitarian specificity. It does not matter for the filmmaker if the object mentioned in the title, *xic vuh*, has a standard equivalent in other languages. For the film, what is relevant is how Kaqchikel names that object.

Concerning *Xic Vuh*'s story, a fable about greed, in my perspective, it depicts the industrial elements as causing that moral harm. Costumes and props play a central role in portraying Mayan specific traits as characteristic of moral high ground. On the contrary, the two young male protagonists are wearing shirts, pants and sneakers made on an industrial scale. They are the ones going down the hillside; they are tempted by the colourful plastic kite and end up fighting over it. The girl's outfit is strikingly different from the boys'. She wears what looks like a small-scale hand-made production skirt, blouse and leather sandals; she is the one learning about greed and will remain absent from any violent confrontation. She waits on the top of the hillside for her brother to come back. It is the handcrafted paper wing that her brother brings out of the slope the object that will give them joy as they share it and go running down the hill. The other boy is left crying, he has neither a kite nor anyone to soothe him.

The girl gives him back a plastic toy, but it is no substitute for friendship. This boy, regardless of his language, only eagers for mass-produced gadgets. Like the foretold crab with crooked eyes in the short story in the film's opening sequence, this boy is stuck with greed. Craving for industrial goods, he is unable to look beyond possession, isolating himself from those around him.

With *Lih Wina*, at first glance, the representation of miscegenation appears as if expressing Central America's heterogeneity. The problem with this interpretation is that the very conflict exposed in this documentary is the clash between a nation and local-scale processes of affirmation over their perspectives regarding coastal resources. Nicaraguan Atlantic coast is an autonomous region. Through this film, for me it is clear, that the coastal population is not willing to submit to what the central government's mandates about turtle catching. My reading of the documentary's narrative is that it proposes an 'us Nicaraguans' in the Caribbean that is not necessarily the same as that of Managua or the Pacific coast. In this documentary, a variety of languages are heard: Miskito, Creole and Spanish, with the differentiation that only local authorities and the film's narrator speak Spanish. Turtle meat exploitation has to do with the Miskitos' Caribbean oriented economic drive and the specificity of their interactions, with due mention of British influence. Languages and territories in the documentary are at odds with a notion of Central America oriented along with a Mesoamerican/Pacific/Spanish axis of inheritance. *Lih Wina's* proposes a Caribbean that has similarities across Costa Rica's, Panama's, Honduras's and Guatemala's eastern shorelines. Noticeably, naming that coast includes Belize, regularly absent from the isthmian configuration, along with all the insular regions in the rest of the basin. Recognising these interactions does not add a set of expressions to a *centralamerican-ness*; it questions the delimitation of both identity and territory. It is a reminder that the isthmus is populated by belongings that are not restrained by the geographical structure that it names. These groups extend their symbolic spaces alternatively to Central American imaginaries.

El Codo del Diablo seems to be the iconic portrayal of Central America's shared history, it mixes revolution, banana plantations and US intervention. This documentary, about memory and state crime, narrates two contemporary events, the extrajudicial execution of six men (five political leaders and a military officer) and Costa

Rica's army abolition process. Therefore, one objective of the film limits to a national frame of referentiality, a crime tainting the immaculate tale of Costa Rica's second republic. The perpetrators did face trial and were convicted. However, they avoided prison and were conveniently taken out of the country. If the state was not an accomplice, at least it was negligent. Except for a few newspaper articles, it all vanished from the official historical narrative. The same documentary mediates the identification of this situation with a Latin American experience. Therefore, this film reminds us there are other transnational belonging areas sharing many of the trends and external interactions that supposedly shaped a notion of Central America. The difference with *Lih Wina's* Caribbean territoriality is that Latin America is not an alternative to Central America but a larger territory encompassing it. Thus, regarding rootedness, in my opinion, *El Codo del Diablo* is not offering a diversity of isthmian identitarian traits. It is questioning the logic that divides or the need to affirm a segregated identitarian region from a Latin American one. The documentary's closure sequence, a series of family reunions of those descendants from the six murdered men, drives the narrative back to the national sphere. Even more, it reaffirms a sense of exceptionality for the Costa Rican experience.

Additionally, some motion pictures in this sample go a step further and transcend national and regional identities. These movies frame their themes as ubiquitous narratives, hence appealing towards deterritorial communities. *Wata*, a 2010 Panamanian film by Efraín Castro and Ana Endara, does not use spoken language. This fiction limits verbal expression to written intertitles, which means no local accents while dealing with the subject of global freshwater scarcity. The fact that this short film speaks from a devastated near future deflects, for me, its identification with present-day constructions of belonging. The setting is a generic building in a generic wasteland. For the most part, the depiction of the scenery limits to smallest details, which further complicates the recognition of any possible current locations, better serving to the film's global dystopian proposal. This aesthetic strategy tries to underline the worldwide reach of environmental changes. The fiction's call for action is not meant to be specific to a nation or a human group. In this case, *Wata* inverts the previous quote from Nichols; this short film is a local concern – at least its enunciation – that penetrates – or tries to reach – the global sphere. The motion picture's analogy of the

woman character that is haunted by the loss of a child aims at bypassing specific cultural referentiality by affirming her role of caregiver. The child is the memory of abundance, of the happy days. If we keep depleting the environment, we will look back at it with regret. *Wata* endorses a common sense of identity, humankind, from a common territory, Planet Earth.

This chapter explored the multiple possibilities appealed to when Central America is named. The geographical description of the isthmus covers very diverse lands according to their cultural influences, profoundly disconnected in their communal dynamics and processes of belonging. At the same time, it is unavoidable to consider that the people inhabiting these territories have digital interactions that produce a profound impact on everyday life. Individuals' online activities blur frontiers without necessarily building a new macro post-national structure but a myriad of highly movable and continuously changing identitarian narratives. This last section is about the diversity of ideas of rootedness. Hence, the convergence of a notion of region and cinema brings dense and varied options for its representation. An accurate illustration is the four alternative identitarian spaces described above. Regardless of what you select for constituting a Central America, once the isthmus becomes a category, matching geographical descriptions, historical perspectives or socio-economic conditions becomes irrelevant. Deploying an imagined identity for distinguishing amongst cinema practices imposes a symbolic determinism. It has to do with an essentialist/sing notion of what is the true nature of the territory it uses as a reference – and its inhabitants. This last action is consequential with the claim of *centralamerican-ness*. I opt for analysing the performativity of this selection criterion. It challenges the isthmus's homogenising intention by opening its discourses to a resignification through the objects that it catalogues. Thus, when I enquire about what is a Central American Cinema, I am not looking at understanding why films belong to this category. I aim at finding the interests in implementing this kind of labelling, its roles and interpretation within cinema. It is a pressing issue since, as the four motion pictures that I analysed here show, their narratives do not conform to that regional imaginary.

Chapter 3. Networks of Possibilities

“De alguna forma, esa misma incertidumbre sobre lo que era o no, o sobre lo que es o no es Centroamérica, y la dificultad en poderla descifrar, abre las posibilidades de inventarse un concepto de región que borra la certeza geográfica y se construye a sí misma como quiere. De nuevo, asume la libertad de representarse desde sus propias realidades y ficciones, y no desde un concepto predeterminado por el estereotipo”
Virginia Pérez-Ratton (2011).

This chapter analyses the map of interactions that takes place between individuals, institutions, events and equipment throughout the end-to-end filmmaking process across my sample of 24 films. The method I use to create this map draws on Actor-Network Theory (ANT), as developed by Bruno Latour (2007). This enables me to better visualise and compare the broad scope of exchanges that takes place in the making of each of the films, as each creates its own specific symbolic space of belonging. It also enables me to visualise the production of a heterogeneous and porous space when the interactions taking place in each film are brought together. What becomes clear is that these interactions spread across countries both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the Ícaro Film Festival’s (IFF) delimitation of Central America, which I have already argued is simplistic and unproblematised. These filmic landscapes, both individually and collectively, challenge the notion of a clear-cut Central American Cinema (CAC). The supposed geographical boundaries of this cinematic category are not mandatory for these movies’ locations or their proposals of territorial representation. My focus here on the interactive side to filmmaking builds upon the arguments questioning the differentiation between symbol and commodity in moviemaking as well as the problems for defining the limits of any proposal of belonging presented in the two previous chapters. Such an approach also makes clear that Central America does not stand as a straightforward description of a people or a community; it is a process of identity construction as well.

Actor-Network Theory is meant to understand how collectives come into being and how they live on. However, for Latour, that collective is not an entity in itself but a collection of ‘ties’, thus his is an interactive perspective. In this sense, it is interactions that build up and sustain a group (Latour, 2007, p. 32). But this idea for the group also transfers to the self, thus, “‘We’, like ‘I’, is a wasp’s nest; as the poet Rimbaud wrote:

‘*Je est un autre*’ [emphasis in original]” (Latour, 2007, p. 45). There is no isolated actor, nor a network where she enters, network and actor are interconnected. This proposal is performative, in the sense that there is not an imposition but exchanges and mediations, a process of constant interpretation. As such, ANT helps me to analyse CAC as the (re)creation of a category through its implementation in cinema rather than the critical defining element of a film praxis. Hence, I trace those different actors and exchanges through the production of a movie. I am following what sort of group do they come to form and the role the notion of Central America has in those interactions along with the many other factors, political, economic and cultural, that moviemaking involves.

Narrowing down the complex set of belonging(s) found in the 24 film sample of my research to a Central American identity would be contradictory. The findings of this study show that each production has a specific combination of interests creating/defining its imagined territory and a hierarchical negotiation amongst different types of capital. In the case of *12 Segundos*, directed by Kenneth Müller in 2013; this Guatemala-Mexico film, as mentioned in the first chapter, had Guatemalan private resources financing it as a commercial activity. A vital element of this movie's success in its more commodity-like phase was its link to Mexico as it was granted access to distribution through Netflix.⁶¹ Another motion picture embracing commercial circulation is Neto Villalobos's *Por las Plumas*, a film shot in Costa Rica that combined personal savings, semi-reimbursable funds and crowdfunding. The director granted the distribution of his 2013 film, both for festival circulation and other commercial uses, to two companies, Pacífica Grey (Costa Rica) covering Central America and Urban (France) for the rest of the world. According to the director, they showcase and sell the movie as part of a Latin American collection in Germany (N. Villalobos, personal communication, July 13, 2017). In these two

⁶¹ Chapter one explains that *12 Segundos* got to participate at the first Netflix Award Mexico because its director, Kenneth Müller, at that time was studying in that country. Thus, for the online video platform, his film was Mexican. Winning the chance of distribution through Netflix meant for this fiction its prime form of massive circulation.

films, we find heterogeneous notions of territorial belonging, at a Mexican, a Central American, and even a Latin American scale.

Commoditisation of the films in my sample is neither without nuances nor a mandatory aspect linked to their circulation. The commercial circulation of *12 Segundos* was seeking a profit. While the distribution of *Por las Plumas* limited, for the most part, to covering its screening costs. However, both movies targeted non-specialised international audiences. A different option is that of *Sombras Nada Más*, a 2010 short fiction produced in Costa Rica by Max Valverde. Its circulation circumscribed to international festivals, while locally, it was only available at special cinema theatre projections and one public TV broadcast. Currently, this movie is not available anywhere else. The common ground for these three films, despite the variance in their audiences (available for general consumption or 'art house' specialised public), is the transnationality of their spaces of validation. The perspective of Central America, even just as the organising axis for their distribution, is deficient in the realm of these motion pictures' displayability dynamics. It was Pierre Bourdieu himself, referring to artistic categories, who stated that "names... are pseudo-concepts, practical classifying tools which create resemblances and differences by naming them" (1993, p. 106). As a consequence, creating a map of film interactions allows us to compare their processes of signification, their dynamics of production, reproduction and validation. It bypasses CAC as their decisive group configuration to focus on the category's application within cinema understood in more general terms.

The implications of such an understanding of CAC do not contradict Pérez-Ratton's (2011) argument about visual arts from seven isthmian countries in the first decade of the 21st century. This author claims that creators were successful in accomplishing a production of a region with "the liberty to represent from their own realities and fictions" (Pérez-Ratton, 2011, p. 29). Merely, I adapt her statement to the particular case of filmmaking, the specificity of its exchanges, and the notion of belonging in my research. Indeed, these movies – more precisely their directors, funders and the spaces where they were filmed and distributed – do take part in, or claim to belong to, specific communities. Within the sample, those groupness proposals have a marked heterogeneity amongst them. These films refer to a plurality of communities and symbolic spaces, which are diverse in their imaginaries – even the geographical ones

when they are referential. Their representations are not necessarily involved in the (re)construction of a 'doubtful strait'. For the most part, they are oblivious of a Central American belonging.

Grouping motion pictures under the label of CAC does have a performative impact. It creates the impression that within that region, movies have unique commonalities. Tracking the exchanges required for a motion picture to be made, as well as those resulting from its production, avoids that conditioning. Instead, tracing back this network helps to locate occurrences where the implementation of the category came into play. It avoids assumptions or imposition of a symbolic value to it. Certainly, Central America does have an appeal for these cultural objects, at least considering the festival circuit. Hence, directors and distributors decided to participate in the IFF, an event that recognises their films under such a category. However, these movies are not normalising nor reproducing a Central American imaginary or a specific way of practising cinema. A comparison of their dynamics of production, financing and distribution, as well as their content, reveals that common patterns are lacking, contradicting the idea of a specific isthmian cinematic identity. My claim, which I will clarify henceforth, is that the production of the label 'Central American' responds mainly to distribution strategies. Categories of this sort seem successful in attracting international recognition for circulation purposes.⁶² My 24 films sample fosters the idea that Central America emerges as a brand that has little to do with self-representation and mostly aims at the transnational consumption of these cultural products.

Exploring Central America as a cinematic brand requires further review of the implications of approaching my sample and the isthmian notion of groupness through ANT. Mapping is not only about tracing the steps in the process of moviemaking. Those elements taking part in a motion picture are in a co-creation, transforming themselves as they elaborate new meanings. ANT notices that this dynamic of exchange does not activate or deactivate. Instead, actors are concurrently

⁶² Chapter one states that researchers also use and validate this label as expressing a cohesive region. Under the present circumstances, it would seem that such practice might be closer to cinema's strategy for visibilisation than to properly narrative or symbolic concerns. However, the current analysis does not delve into such academic process.

interactions. Such simultaneity addresses the performativity and complexity of the social, not as an adjective but as an action bearing interactivity – which the first chapter characterises as overdetermination. Under this scope, the structure is defining the possibilities of signification, at the same time, it is subject to the procedures that permanently propose and modify itself. Analysing the idea of Central America in filmmaking by using ANT does not invalidate that its proposal of a region can be significant. The argument is that any content of the category is also part of cinema, and therefore of its symbol-commodity continuum. This interaction questions any intrinsic meaning that CAC might have. It shows, instead, that the isthmus' signification depends on the specific set of relationships involved in the making of the films in the sample.

Tracking the production, financing, and distribution of these 24 films reveals that there are diverse ideas of what Central America is, just as there are a variety of ways of making cinema. Subscribing these motion pictures to a preconceived Central American imaginary is problematic. In fact, my CAC sample is a collection of audio-visual works coming from a diversity of places. Hence, the need to determine the uses of cinema and the relationship these films have with their immediate surroundings. It is noticeable that just some of these motion pictures represent the local, and that most of them are made through global exchanges. Besides, with very few exceptions, these films are scarcely shown and have a minimal viewership in their countries of origin – or the region for that matter. These conditions of displayability make it challenging to view them as symbolic for an isthmian audience who does not see them. These factors lead to intersecting the uses of cinema and its relationships to space, identifying the terms under which CAC has a role in moviemaking. As a result, analysing these movies does not separate them from others, as if they were performing a particular – regional – sort of filmmaking. Instead, the research looks at the way the isthmian category functions within cinema as a deterritorialized practice.

I study the implementations of CAC from two perspectives. First, I track the references that actors involved with these films make about the region. That is, those emerging from their awareness and self-identification with the isthmus. This step questions the referentiality – for those making movies – of the 'doubtful strait'. For many filmmakers, Central America is either secondary to their concerns, or unclear, invisible, or even

unrepresentative of their sense of themselves. Second, my mapping allows me to extract patterns of production, reproduction and validation amongst these movies. There is no single paradigm. The reasons for creation, the directors' educational background and their stylistic references, the sources of funding and the strategies of distribution are inconsistent across this collection of motion pictures. My conclusion is that there is not a generalised practice of cinema shared on a regional level. This insight challenges the notion that CAC can be thought of as an organising principle.

This research, then, suggests that CAC is epiphenomenal. That is to say, a by-product of the dynamics of film production and distribution. Referring back to overdetermination, this category exists in part due to previous notions of a regional entity appealing for cinemagoers, filmmakers and researchers alike. The Ícaro Film Festival, presenting these films as CAC is in itself a claim of the existence of an artistic field matching with such a term. By gathering films under this label, it creates possibilities of a *centralamerican-ness*. The pitfall at this point is that such a collection of movies is not homogeneous nor necessarily matches the territory that the classification invokes. It means that such a gathering of motion pictures is more in the hope for differentiating a field within cinema than a consistent expression of it. However, classifying movies under this label serves a primary function of defining an award criterion associated with distribution schemes in filmmaking. Thus, Cinema instrumentalises the notion of a regional territory in two ways. First, it assumes that the category of CAC implies the existence of standardised regionally-based moviemaking industrial processes. It gives the impression that calling upon the isthmus sets a levelled arena for their comparison, a valid indicator of their quality. Another use of the category is to serve as a vehicle for market access. It suggests that there is a Central American audience to which these motion pictures appeal. In this same line, CAC also fosters a market outside of the isthmus. The category offers a historical-political scale of recognition tentatively more significant to these global audiences than that of the individual nations that it gathers. The role of CAC as one amongst many strategies of reproduction and validation deployed by these films means that it is closer to a marketing device than a representation of an unambiguous regional identity. A more dynamic perspective to CAC as a regional label would indicate it exists due to a general impression of identity, albeit foggy.

The notions of belonging that are under construction in this film sample, their productions' network of interactions, their self-awareness and overlapping patterns, all point to a multidimensional, overdetermined creation of their rendering of identity. To understand these processes, I propose to divide them, from a spatial perspective, into national, transnational, post-national and deterritorialized cinema practices and identities. This chapter devotes a section to each of these dimensions, focusing the analysis on a web of interactions and the role that CAC plays in them. This strategy challenges the idea that CAC expresses a shared sense of identity. It refers to other more significant scales for these films. Within each of these sections, I focus on the motivation that triggered each project; the educational and aesthetic influences that informed the directors' visual proposals. Also, I consider the films' financial scheme; and their plan for distribution. This approach looks at the sample as a whole. Its spatial departmentalisation is only methodological. This segmentation aims at recognising the top players and the organisational frames of these moviemaking projects. It is amongst those factors that CAC performs as a brand. To have a grasp of how this broad panorama organises itself, I refer to Bourdieu's idea of an artistic field (1993). This framework leads to determining the elements of production and reproduction, as well as those central to the validation of these films. From this transversal perspective, I examine the results of imposing a single identity label upon the multidimensional and varied conditions of possibility that bring these films into being.

Turning to Bourdieu in the context of film studies poses some challenges. Movies have a peculiar relation to industrial production and mass-consumption; the first chapter covered both subjects extensively. Yan Darré summarises that situation "producing a film requires significant investment, the creator's freedom can only be relative" (2006, p. 126).⁶³ Moreover, the consumption of these materials is not exclusively commercial. That is why Benjamin's (1936) notion of displayability recognises the importance of processes of validation and identity construction that it reunites. Hence, Bourdieu is not necessarily mistaken when addressing media and calling attention to the constraints that monetary gain imposes on them (1993, pp. 130-131). Tatiana Heise

⁶³ Original French text: "la réalisation d'un film suppose des mises de fonds importantes, la liberté du créateur ne peut être que relative".

and Andrew Tudor (2007) accurately assert the limitations of Bourdieu's approach as inherent to its reductionist appeal to low and high arts. As "one suspects, his model presumes an over-centralized view of artistic consecration, one which might be appropriate to the centralized character of French cultural life in the 19th century (and perhaps even the 20th), but is a less than sensitive instrument in application to later, more plural systems" (Heise & Tudor, 2007, p. 184). To Heise and Tudor's comment, I add the high dispersion and lack of interaction amongst the films within my sample. These characteristics further distance my corpus of research from Bourdieu's. Nonetheless, my interest in Bourdieu's field approach lies in its potential to represent "a multidimensional arena in which economic and cultural capital are both the objects and the weapons of a competitive struggle between classes", as Eileen Culloty quotes him (2016, p. pos. 1734). In this sense, the field approach compels us to discuss what drives the balancing of power amongst negotiating parts instead of normalising their exchanges.

Interactions are not neutral. A unique transaction of capitals is pushing and resulting from the different actors reunited and negotiating within each of the films that I analyse. From the first chapter, it is clear that the reference to overdetermination supposes that interactions surrounding a motion picture are a circular and interconnected process. For those deploying CAC, or any other structure, the category is not merely imposed upon an object. Instead, the relational nature of the ANT perspective implies that there is a power struggle taking place in these exchanges.⁶⁴ Hence the relevance of heteronomy, from Bourdieu's field theory, for the development of this project. For Bourdieu, heteronomy is not opposed to autonomy. The latter term does not suggest that actors within a field are isolated or entirely independent in the process of defining their status and possibilities of access to resources and recognition. An example of this situation is Bourdieu's understanding of how some avant-garde artists gained their renown. Freed from the need to sustain their livelihood through the selling of their work, these artists neglected externally defined systems of recognition. They engaged in the creation of aesthetic proposals that only followed criteria sanctioned from within

⁶⁴ Antonio Negri (2011) elaborates regarding that idea of a creative confrontation, reminding that art production in general "exists within a specific mode of production, and that it reproduces it – or, more exactly, that it produces it and contests it, that it suffers it and destroys it" (p. 108).

their artistic field. Yet, it is hard to say that these artists or their field were functioning autonomously of economic capital. These artists' 'autonomy' was possible due to them having inherited a fair amount of financial resources (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 68).⁶⁵ I will not stop to define what is in or out of a field. Heteronomy, in the frame of this research, acknowledges that filmmaking is a field in constant tension since it reunites aesthetic, political and economic interests.

Field Theory is in no contradiction with my initial statement that CAC is not a referent organising the interactions of the films in this sample. The Central American frame is unable to settle a single arena in which all the motion pictures battle for resources and recognition. On top of their global circulation, these 24 motion pictures' financial sources and the educational background of their directors are dispersed. It indicates that this sample is no unit in itself beyond the present academic exercise. The field that I am addressing here is that of cinema in general terms. It is within this broader field that IFF's use of CAC is but a simulacrum of a self-assessing group. Even if other venues and researchers pick up on CAC, the category remains a mock-field. The isthmus is not expressing an identity, it intersects with films as long as it serves as a vehicle for acquiring an enhancing displayability or access to funding. At different points of each movie's hierarchical organisation and struggles for capital, CAC comes to fulfil, in a wide range of degrees, the role of a brand.

A more in-depth analysis of this marketing function leads us to consider CAC as a weak field. I draw this last term from Antonio Di Stefano (2016), who, when reviewing Bourdieu's value for analysing digital social media turns to the idea of a weak field for dealing with those sites' particular conditions for interaction and validation of capitals. In social networks, diverse sets of spheres intermingle, making them structurally blurry spaces, open to the adaptations that constant contacts through electronic devices

⁶⁵ Interestingly, Bourdieu recognises that some creators risked developing alternative or avant-garde proposals thanks to having large inheritances. "...[E]conomic capital provides the conditions for freedom from economic necessity, a private income [la rente] being one of the best substitutes for sales [la vente] ... economic capital provides the guarantees [assurances] which can be the basis of self-assurance, audacity and indifference to profit" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 68) However, it is clear that he does not consider that condition as heteronomous to the field. It might be true that in the artistic field that Bourdieu describes, there seems to be an autonomy from financial validation. Yet, the influence of that sort of capital is neither absent; heteronomy just enacts through more nuanced channels, if you wish.

bring to their internal configuration (Di Stefano, 2016, p. pos. 3645). I understand that it is about acknowledging that online platforms have limited possibilities of validation and signification, since they do not have full control over the factors meeting in it, and thus must be in a permanent state of delimitation. Using 'weakness' in the frame of my research indicates that CAC is a category that struggles to set itself as a referential space or notion for validating social and cultural capitals. Brandishing the isthmian identification fails to guide the generation of contents, nor does it secure exclusive financial resources. It does not describe a primary region of interactions or expresses a particular imaginary either.

Darré (2006) expresses a revealing condition about the differentiation between industrial and artistic creations in the early days of cinema that becomes handy for explaining CAC's 'weakness' as a field. He locates the emergence of a specialised branch of cinema, art film, back in 1920. This new type of movies claims its freedom from commercial needs. However, it was an elitist and class-driven desire to separate their consumption of moving images from that of the popular and more impoverished groups. Thus, despite this classification, the material conditions for filmmaking did not change (Darré, 2006, p. 133). In Benjamin's terms, art film did not renounce nor overcome displayability. Likewise, CAC is more in the line of a wishful differentiation; it still overlaps with many other possibilities in the process of negotiating the relevance of geographical scales for international recognition, diverse sources of financing as much as the uses of the cultural objects. Proposing CAC as a weak field responds to the lack of specific processes of production, subjects of representation, spaces of reproduction or validation criteria associated with this category.

Referring to a broader field of cinema is simply an inductive approach, with no generalisation biases. All movies in this sample, whether fiction or documentary, shorts or feature-length, national cinemas or regional ones, arthouse or commercial, go through the same processes of filming and editing, producing a final reel distributed for its exhibition. Beller (2006) proposes that we equate all of these moving images as part of a cinematic mode of production. Beller's normative perspective is problematic, though. It is at odds with the (re)construction of a mode of production through the enunciation and circulation of moviemaking. However, his assertion lays bare the political nature of the technical and economic elements as well as the economic value

of the political and technical counterparts that interact in moviemaking. These 24 films are part of a more significant creative niche, cinema. In this field, they partake in regulating a particular balance of forces typically identified as economic, social, cultural and symbolic.

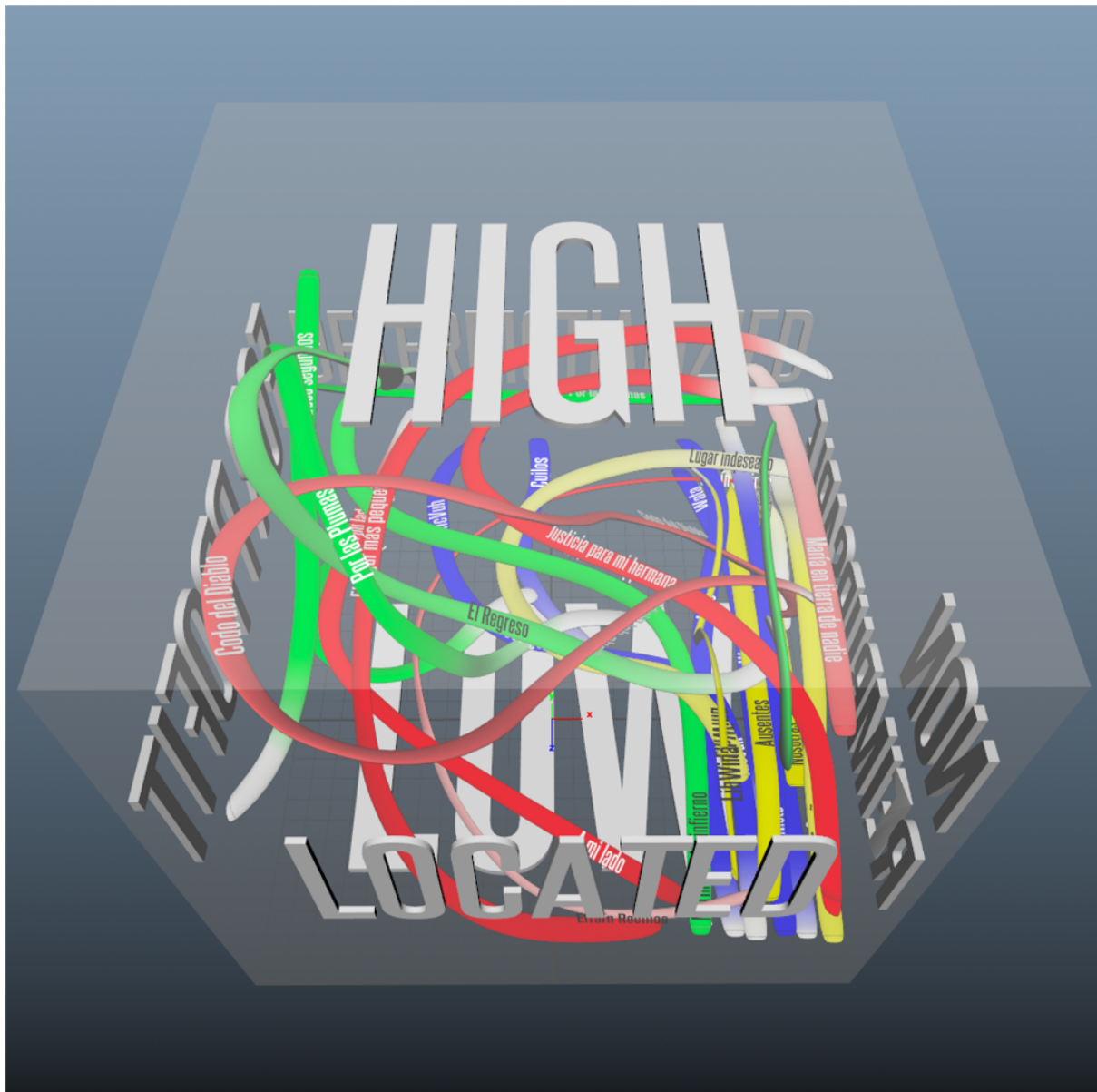
Heteronomy implies that cinema does not produce these forms of capital all by itself and yet the creation and recognition of motion pictures depend on them. Additionally, the interaction of these capitals and the aims of a movie hint at their hierarchical organisation, defining their relative weight and meaning. Therefore, this research sticks to identifying and analysing the elements that facilitated the networks of each film. It also assesses the most significant factors leading to the creation and the exhibition of the movies in the sample. Even within an undifferentiated field of cinema, these productions still perform particular types of identity. Consequently, it is pertinent – and possible – to track the way each of them contributes to multiple forms of group formation. According to a Bourdieusian notion of field, charting the processes of production, distribution and validation of these motion pictures with ANT leads to renouncing to a Central American identification and opts for a perspective of a global dynamic of transactions. It goes beyond the direct interactions enabling the movies. Including these cultural objects as part of a general film field validates the centrality of their interactions, be it with the cinematic mode of production or with their transnational elements. These conditions are not marginal nor specific of an isthmian category of motion pictures. Each of these 24 films makes a performance of cinema. Identifying how they enact the extraction of value through the fetishism of the image is necessary, independently of their displayability. Under these circumstances, cinema conveniently instrumentalises the use of Central America. In this scope, the regional category surpasses a narrow artistic justification. The isthmus becomes a frame from which to examine the political-economy aims that it bears.

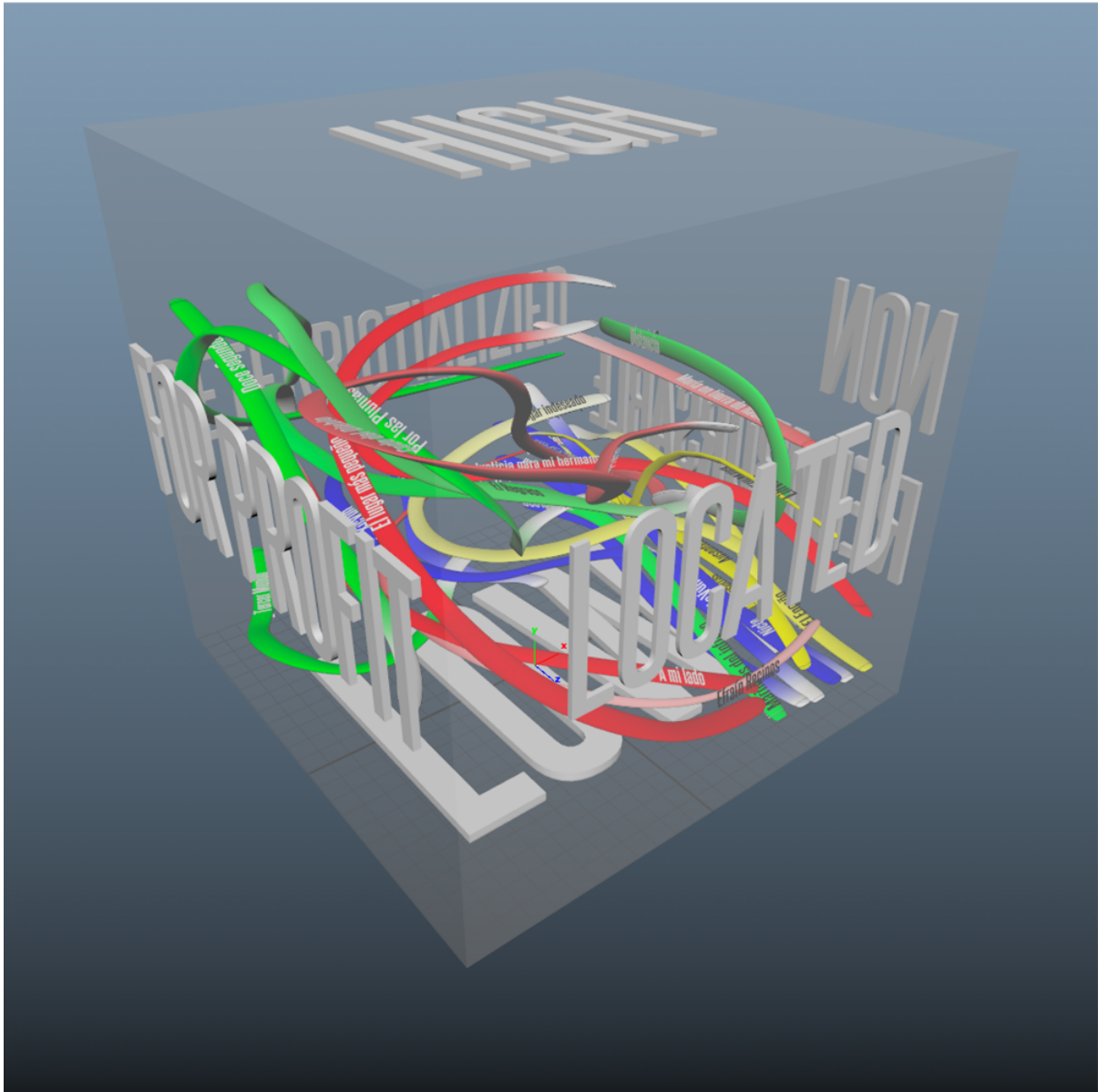
Finding a suitable representation for the field of cinema is not without its dilemmas. A fundamental consideration is that, as Chris Cagle argues, "artists and producers working in the film industry share common cultures not reducible to professional instrumentalism", for whom "[t]o propose production cultures as a social field helps connect them to larger social determinants" (2016, p. pos. 991). Any film, as a process of interactions and construction of meanings, resists being a fixed point on a flat

surface. On this particular, overdetermination reinforces that wandering condition of cinema. It states a constant negotiation by different interests and requirements. I propose a three-dimensional mapping of the films' field because by increasing the number of axes it avoids commercial/artistic, symbol/commodity or national/international dichotomies. With this arrangement, the movies are now journeys in space, allowing the recognition of their multiple phases and simultaneous negotiations. The final disposition of such path in the three-dimensional field is heuristic. Following the ANT perspective, producing this field does not separate the interactions; it tracks their connections (Appendices D to X). The cube's non-binary space allows presenting the tendencies that result from the multiple linked transactions within each movie as motion, every film represented as a line. The cube below is a faithful systematisation of the complex actor-network ecosystem from each motion picture. The 3D-shape is a visualisation of that mapping, enabling a better grasp of the general trends and practices identified with it.

Figure 1 Cinema's 3D Field (View from four angles)







The path of a motion picture on the cube might not be mathematically accurate, yet it is not whimsical either. Besides interpreting the actor-network mapping, the line that each film draws in the three-dimensional field derives as well from a table (Appendix Y) that is a middle step between the mapping (Appendices D-X) and the cube. That table divides the tracked interactions into two axes: rows according to different notions of space, and columns for keystone actions of filmmaking. This layout does much more than simply avoiding the use of Central America, it shows that these films' production processes bypass such region. By sorting out the movies in the table, it hints at what the cube is meant to express with more clarity. There is a lack of a consistent path for the movie collection cited. Moreover, its common element verges towards transnational interactions adding up to deterritorial dynamics of production, signification and consumption. Cinema, under such parameters, exceeds the isthmus's borders and on top of that, it thrives regardless of the region.

Using this 3D figure with volume and elements stretching within it, allows to express the diversity of actors and the main aspects of the interactions struggling and co-existing in a single film. In this manner, the movies can behave like threads interweaving themselves together according to their exchanges or, alternatively, show that they had unique experiences. Turning a Bourdieusian field into a three-dimensional object is an adaptation for a collection of motion pictures that do not have oppositional modes of filmmaking, but circumstantial ones. This cinema's 3D-field has the flexibility to display the tendency of these motion pictures to occupy several positions within cinema field. It is a representation responsive to translations and transactions, which do not override each other but that coalesce into an evolving composite. The path of each film in the cube maps out and links those multiple actions, spaces and impacts that a movie has. The outcome is a cinema field capable of depicting the performance of belonging and industry that motion pictures enact, as much as their heteronomous and multifaceted mixture of capitals.

The paths that the movies draw in the cube indicate the heterogeneity of practices, levels of consumption and financial schemes corresponding to a group of films that do not have a coordinated axis of action. They do show consistency with cinema as a space of transmutation and hybridisation. Local and deterritorial, for-profit and non-

reimbursable are not oppositional options.

They relate with one another; motion pictures traverse them back and forth, weaving meanings and uses for them. This dynamic does not differentiate between fiction or documentary films nor for those with local or transnational motivation and influences. Two examples can clarify the cube's capability to represent interactions amongst capitals, territorialities and their resulting proposal of a hierarchical organisation. Let us begin with the

Figure 2 *Por las Plumas*



path of *Por las Plumas*. The green colour tells us it is a feature fiction film for which deterritorial motivations – bright colour – and influences of the same sort – thick line – are central. Since this movie has a mixture of financial support from international organisations and the director's own savings, the white tip of the line is in between the 'Located' and 'Deterritorialized' faces of the cube. From that middle point, a curve rises towards 'Located' because the distribution of the film in Costa Rica had a good impact on cinema theatres, it also leans towards 'For-Profit'. When the line represents the distribution in a more global arena, it goes towards 'Low' and a bit towards 'Non-Reimbursable'. This turn means that the film's circulation in a transnational circuit, commercial (including online sales and cable TV services) and festivals, had comparatively less numerous audience than at a national level. The bright green colour and a thick line indicate that the deterritorial characterisation of motivations and influences had a pivotal role in spite of the possible national elements in the film. The director aims at expressing his perception of reality and people regardless of where they are. In creating this movie's aesthetical proposal, Neto Villalobos refers to specific directors by their names, and not by location.

On the other hand, *Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos* is a documentary – red – with a local character in its motivation – opaque – and influences – narrow line. This documentary's path has its white tip directly on the 'Located' and 'Non-Reimbursable' faces because a Guatemalan non-profit foundation financed it. The local distribution, at least in DVD format, had some release for sale. Thus, the line goes towards 'For-

Figure 3 *Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos*



'Profit' but always keeping low in audience reach since it was not a large-scale commercial process. The path bends back to the 'Non-Reimbursable' face as it reaches a 'Deterritorialized' space of distribution because it was limited to the festival's circuit. In general terms, this motion picture has a nation-centred characterisation – opaque and narrow line. Efraín Recinos is both the subject of the film, as a prominent Guatemalan artist, and the guide for the visual representation, the

animation of his paintings. For this documentary, the Central American element is absent in its economic dynamics as well as its motivations and influences. Neither *Por las Plumas* nor *Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos*, limit their exhibition to specific zones, nor bound their distribution to commercial circuits or their validation to the presentation in film festivals.

The layout of the sample in the cube demonstrates its thematic and material disconnection with the isthmus. Movies are interactive products rather than grounded or nationalised artistic expressions. They are cultural objects undeniably converging locality and globality. The key that the cube shows is the hierarchical value of mobility; having the tools to move across different places is a central element enabling filmmaking. This condition applies indifferently of motivations, influences, financial sources or distribution. That is why thin and opaque lines are a minority in the cube. However, even those lines do not relinquish to traverse through the deterritorial section of the cube. This situation visibilises cinema's commodity/symbol continuum. An audiovisual cultural object has several ways of capitalising its investment that are not opposed to recognising its artistic achievements. The low level of exposition the films that remain closer to the non-reimbursable axis have, would point towards a problematic situation arising from limiting or being excluded from commercial-driven distribution strategies.

Since none of the directors in the sample claim their films are for an exclusive recognition from a cinema-savvy elite, having a reduced displayability does not meet

their aims. The only movie for which this statement is not accurate is *Marimbas del Infierno*. Its director relinquishes a commercial distribution in Guatemala – not internationally – and admits thinking his work as a testimony for future generations rather than an appealing object for the contemporary general public. (J. Hernández, personal communication, August 18, 2017). Movies must not be a financial success for securing their validation. However, integration in identitarian narratives seem reduced when a film opts out of, or it is not admitted to, exhibition circuits requiring a fee from spectators.⁶⁶ For the moviemaking process, suffice it to say, almost all of the directors have managed to continue their careers. Such continuity shows that neither specialised validation nor financial success is what defines the reproduction of cinema. In effect, it is the directors' insertion in transnational networks of exchange what seems more relevant for the continuity of their careers.

The next sections of this chapter engage in identifying where Central America stands in filmmaking. Since the claim is that the isthmus is a weak field, it should act as a soft filter that the films traverse without defining them. Then, CAC becomes identifiable as a brand in a transnational orbit. A use leaning towards for-profit activities; closer to the industrial needs of cinema than to located identitarian processes. Thus, this category is coincident with an understanding of cinema as a matter of symbolic images instead of symbolic places. For a further analysis of this sample, I will move on to focusing on the films' division into national, transnational, post-national and deterritorialized dynamics. Looking at cinema through those scales clarifies which capitals are interacting, their hierarchical organisation and instances appealed by the regional category.

3.1 National Interactions

The use of 'Nation' at this point is not a safeguard against transnational exchanges, and still less a redoubt of identity which might offer an autonomous definition of cinema. Similar to the role of a Central American identification, nations do not mark

⁶⁶ That is my reading of the consequence of films having a reduced impact on a national or regional audience. Although, from my data, this affirmation is not conclusive, given that it lacks information about uses and reactions from cinemagoers.

crucial elements of filmmaking. Circumscribing to a particular country is, for the most part, irrelevant regarding education, influences and financing of cinema. Thus, even local – national at this point – proposals of representation negotiate their development with other territorialities. *El Codo del Diablo*'s script process supports this argument. This documentary aims at describing the intricacies of a state crime against non-combatant individuals, happening just after the end of Costa Rica's civil war in 1948. The final version of this documentary shifted from the political towards the familiar. It was thanks to the influence of a non-local – nor regional – advisor that the production focused on the experiences of the relatives of those assassinated characters (E. Jara, personal communication, February 22, 2017). Pointing at that creative decision is far from denouncing a falsity or betrayal by a cinema that results out of deterritorialized exchanges. Explaining the background of the conflict leading to this summary execution already requires the portraying of the transnational links of this event. In this sense, the historical perspective evidences the shortcomings of reducing this affair to an exclusively local scale. Following the logic of overdetermination, the script's process is a reminder of the mixture of elements affecting what is only a seemingly national narrative. There is a confluence between moviemaking and the film's subject; they both are part of a relational world.

The interpretation I offer in the previous paragraph is independent of the possibility of Central America as a referential of identity. This idea could hardly be delegitimised just from the analysis of film production, and less so by narrowing it down to only 24 individual cases. Consider the opposite proposition, just this time with a nation. Would it be possible to argue that a Costa Rican identity comes to life just because *El Codo del Diablo* represents a political event taking place within the borders of said country? Or, from a negative perspective, does the introduction of exogenous historical elements on the film deny the symbolic existence of Costa Rica? Thus, the intention is not to invalidate the idea of the country. This is a different discussion. Instead, it is about the use of a nation as an adjective for the phenomenon that a movie describes. It is not something of the nuance of a term but a matter of film studies. Filtering the understanding of a cultural object such as a motion picture by characterising it as belonging to a nation – or a region – reifies that space. There is a complex interaction, and it would seem as if the category imposes a preconception of possibilities of

transactions and translations over the actual exchanges enabling a film. Characterising *El Codo del Diablo* as a Costa Rican film would fail to acknowledge the interactions and support it had from a Guatemalan producer and a Mexican script advisor. Because of those exchanges, the notion of territoriality transforms; the country is not regulating but acting as a facade. The national identitarian element does not even align with the texts selected from the archival material. *El Codo del Diablo* takes an excerpt from *Costa Rica Cuna de Libertades* (Rubens, 1949), precisely when the last documentary frames the representation of Costa Rican civil war as “una revolución dentro de las revoluciones de América Latina” (Jara Vargas & Jara Vargas, 2014, 00:28:07) (Rubens, 1949, 00:12:05). Additionally, Jara brothers’ film names one crucial support for the revolution’s success, a group called ‘Legión Caribe’. Hence, even a claim of centralamerican-ness would also be a reification.

Political actors in the documentary turned to look for support, validation and differentiation in those spaces that were within their reach and which meet their interests. Similarly, affiliation to a national or regional cinema is a matter of convenience, at least according to my sample. The possible realm of belonging to a country, a physical object in a geographical sense, is adaptable. Likewise, a non-material artefact like a motion picture, can wear different belongings in an even less contradictory fashion. This research suggests that cinema does not behave like a product with an appellation of origin. Instead, as Beller pointed out, moviemaking's reproduction of mechanical processes ends up surpassing Fordism. Cinema mimics – and can create – financial capital in a dematerialised dynamic of production and circulation (Beller, 2006, p. 209). Therefore, using national identifications is an instrument for the film’s distribution.

The marginal role of the national sphere in cinema production and distribution experiences demonstrates that the cultural capital at play comes from elsewhere. Even if that capital is not fully deterritorialized, it is at least mostly a non-national one. This situation proves what García (2004) argues about access to cultural capital. As quoted in the last chapter, he states it is in association with the disposition of an economic one. An approach to belonging from a performative optic, reveals that national belongings are wearable and valuable identifications for those individuals who can get in and out of such affiliation with ease. This is the logic of ‘connected’, which

García describes, where the one whose economic capital grants him resources for deterritorialized interactions, “para sacar partido de los contactos que establece, tiene que ‘interesar’, o sea aportar algo que a su vez conecte con ‘otros mundos’” (2004, p. 76). Thus, in this ‘costume party’, celebrated in a global field, those who want to join it, use the local appeal as a strategy of inclusion. It is noticeable that not even this condition is normative considering that the use of the national identity is not a generalised departing point for all the films in my sample.

Cinema, in its industrial, dematerialised production and circulation, is global.⁶⁷ Looking for international financing and markets is a typical experience in moviemaking. This task is not a burden for contexts new to this enterprise or for projects attempting at representing less frequent visual narratives or subjects. These las sort of films are not enduring such conditions because they are on the fringes of mainstream media, but because they are part of the general field of cinema. Recognising national-linked elements is neither a limit nor a reason to look for non-localized financing or distribution. It is highly probable that every movie, at some point, has interactions on a deterritorialized sphere. Establishing these exchanges is not exclusively an effect of non-national funding. Financing for only three of all the movies from the sample is limited to the country where they were shot: *Irene* (Costa Rica), *Sombras Nada Más* (Costa Rica) and *Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos* (Guatemala). Notwithstanding, in the first two of these three productions, the coincidence of financing and location does not assert coordination between contents, dissemination and the idea of a nation. *Irene*, a 2013 short fiction film by Alexandra Latishev, has a deterritorialized theme, a woman’s quest to reconnect with pleasure. Access to this material is possible thanks to a transnational service (latamcinema.com) without a local differentiation or focus. Likewise, the subject and circulation of *Sombras Nada*

⁶⁷ Production and consumption of film materials from Hollywood is no longer an activity tightly controlled by a national circuit, US. It has adapted to global opportunities and demands. Mark Lorenzen explains that Hollywood led productions shifted from located and centralised activities to global dynamics of production based on networks of movable individuals (2007, p. 353). W. D, Walls and Jordi McKenzie (2012) analyse the impact caused in Hollywood production once two-thirds of its revenue comes from its global spectatorship. These products now first comply with worldwide audience’s preferences than with the US’s domestic ones (Walls & McKenzie, 2012, p. 215).

Más is of a non-national nature.⁶⁸ Although this last production is currently unavailable, at the time of its distribution, it aimed both at national and transnational circuits.

El Codo del Diablo offers yet an additional perspective of the relation of films and nation. What establishes a requirement for the documentary's narrative is not its interest on a national issue, but the particular country it deals with. Notably, the conditioning is not aesthetic, economic or precisely political; it is a matter of contextualisation, as the director recognises (E. Jara, personal communication, February 22, 2017). It would seem that Costa Rica's 1948 Civil War is not very well known beyond the country's boundaries. As a result, the documentary is bound to give a detailed explanation of background characters and events for the movie's central topic. This decision targets audiences beyond Costa Rica, in hopes of a global displayability of the documentary. Such interest rejects interpreting this material merely as an affirmation or self-representation of the nation. *El Codo del Diablo* is not an isolated case. Movies in my sample are a cinema moving across borders where directors and distributors recognise its space of circulation as deterritorialised. The displayability of this cinema aims at gathering communities regardless of their specific location. Thus, from a Bourdieusian perspective, the milieu for this film collection's validation and reproduction surpasses both the nation and the region.

'Nation' does not behave as the guiding path towards CAC, which does not mean both concepts are unrelated. Referring back to the three-dimensional field, the 'Located' face refers indistinctively to a country, a town, or a region. These territories are not necessarily found within the isthmus. In some instances, like *Nosotras*, a 2010 short fiction film by Shari Sabel Strandmark, the located identification of its financial support lies in Sweden. Hence, lines reaching from 'Located' towards the cube's 'Deterritorialized' face are not traversing or meeting a Central American phase in their path. Besides, 'Nation' is neither refuge, foundation nor goal for filmmaking. Detachment from a local determination invalidates implementing CAC as a middle point or a referential organiser for filmmaking. Therefore, the Central American component is often acquired instead of being performed. This conclusion might be

⁶⁸ It is a fiction about the internal multiplicity of the self, a narrative located in a magical space-time frame. Chapter four further analyses this film's proposal of territoriality.

concerning for an identitarian understanding of the isthmus. However, it is revealing of cinema uses of geographical or communitarian referents; it deploys them as labels. Thus, the function of 'Nation' and CAC for filmmaking is that of a marketing brand.

Nosotras receives recognitions due to its Guatemalan, Sweden and female identifications. Sometimes, awards respond to the location of the documentary, others to a condition of its director. What is particular about this case is the evident disconnectedness between a Sweden and a Central American labelling. To that situation, Shari Sabel Strandmark, the film's director, adds that IFF did very little to boost *Nosotras*'s distribution (S. Strandmark, personal communication, January 28, 2017). In spite of that, the initial image of the online version of the film displays the awards won, including IFF's best Central American Short Documentary. Alternatively, *12 Segundos* juggles with two national tags, Mexican identification for Netflix and a Guatemalan one for IFF. For this fiction film, it could be tempting to understand the isthmian category within a multinational performance. However, for distribution purposes, the Mexican belonging is the valuable one in the VOD platform. In either case, fiction or documentary, Central American identification's role is that of a generic recognition, not particularly relevant concerning the specificity of the territory that it mentions. Consequently, from a perspective of national belonging, CAC persists as a marketing device, although it might not always gather new audiences. When nation and region intersect, CAC remains instrumental for cinema without undertaking a guiding role.

3.2 Post-national Interactions

Looking at the 'Post-Nation' interactions and identifications is not an intermediate step between national and transnational cinemas. Congruently with a general field of cinema, there is not a dichotomy between the many possibilities of belonging found in this research's collection of films. The 'Local' face in the Cube is not equivalent to the national scale, nor 'Deterritorialized' means to traverse borderlines across different countries. There are several materialities for the identification of the characters and the directors themselves. There are also diverse scales with or without a geographical component, called upon by filmmakers to finance their projects or to locate their stories. Enabling the possibility to deal with this plurality implies that moviemaking is

not a direct machine of globalisation. There is a chance of opening up classifications such as nation/region, and to consider that they are “valid only from a ‘given perspective’ or locus of enunciation” (Mignolo, 2005, p. pos. 359). The mapping of these 24 films portrays the diversity of components and variances that these objects reunite. These are reminders of the extensive collection of spaces of identification coexisting in the motion pictures, even if contradictory. The clashes that might appear between different notions of belonging are not to be overlooked. A relational perspective claims that they are not mutually exclusive, actually they create their very own meanings. In the interaction of these different notions of belonging, they show us the potential roles that rooting plays in cinema. In this sense, tracking ‘Post-National’ dynamics unveils the colonial relationships beyond their performance amongst countries. There are many scales in which rebellion and imposition occur, and where signification and commodification also take place.

Central America is part of this ‘Post-National’ sphere. Placing the region in this category responds to its use as a shared territory, an idea of *centralamerican-ness* regardless of what geographical configuration or symbolic content you give it. For example, when Jean Cosme-Delaloye, director of *A Mi Lado*, thinks about the region in terms of access, he makes no differentiation amongst nations. It is a single land, which allows an unfiltered approximation to violence from his perspective. (J. Cosme-Delaloye, personal communication, March 23, 2017). Andrea Dardón, *Nicté*’s director, agrees with Cosme-Delaloye’s vision of a cohesive isthmus, despite them having a different qualitative valorisation of the region. Besides, she is not an external viewer, she is in fact claiming her identity as Central American. For her, the region accounts for a unit of aesthetical expressiveness. A peculiar contact with the ground and earth products. Even a colour temperature, which marks all the people within this new singular locality (A. Dardón, personal communication, June 17, 2016). Regardless Dardón’s awareness of violence and segregation, in her perspective, the isthmus coalesces in spite of countries. It is a declaration of inclusion and differentiation, a foundational act that renders other notions of belonging either as adhering or excluding from this larger narrative.

From Mignolo’s (2005) perspective, Central America refers to a direct political inheritance, Capitanía General de Guatemala. However, the material referent, a

geographical imaginary is far more relevant than the historical one – as the inclusion in IFF of Panama reveals. That role of territoriality is present as well in other proposals of belonging that come into this criterion. The material and the symbolic intertwine regardless of your reasoning for naming a place. Such a situation is tangible in *El Lugar Indeseado*. The gold panners in this documentary dwell in the edge between different spaces. They move from open land to a national park, avoiding the reach of the law enforcement of the nation. Finally, they live in the precarity of their being: scarce food, scarce clothing and scarce – scary – future. The gold panners are in Corcovado, located in the Osa Peninsula. It is a geographical formation protruding into the ocean, a sort of endpoint for the physical configuration of Costa Rica's landmass. Visually, the tropical forest where protagonists live and the small town where they go to buy their food, is the territoriality that matters. Even if they are strangers in that town, Torres presents these gold panners as a post-national group of individuals, not in their self-recognition, but in his treatment of them. They are the ones left behind; the ones not included in the ecology driven identity of the nation. They cling on their citizenship, as when they attentively listen to the football match on their shack, but this relationship is not reciprocated. Hence, they are 'post' the nation in a double sense. First, they are gold diggers, an activity unfitting in a country that presents itself in the vanguard of ecological development.⁶⁹ Second, the country has left them to rot, in a way, it is closing on the legal possibilities of their economic activity and prone to expelling them from their huts.

The gold panners from Torres's documentary build their identity according to the materiality where they are, restricting their living conditions to what nature – the river where they extract gold to be precise – provides. They are an all-male close community and share most of their earnings as a group. These conditions drive them to find their symbolic dimension in their everyday work. For the closing audio of the video, Torres Crespo creates a text using the gold panners words. This audio evidences the symbolic referentiality of everyday actions, as the following short fraction shows.

⁶⁹ 35982-MINAET (2010) decree by the Costa Rican government declares a moratorium to any opencast gold mining in the country.

Aquí hablamos bonito porque las palabras traen muchísimo y pesan como el oro y el hierro, que son lo más pesado del río, el oro y el hierro. Eso somos, palabras que se confunden y caen a lo más profundo. Y hay que cantear las palabras, sacarlas con cuidadito del fondo, mover una piedra, palpar las sílabas, juntarlas y hacer algo de ellas. Quemarlas para que signifiquen algo (Torres Crespo, 2014, 00:23:22).

I draw from this excerpt an evident equivalence between the actions of extracting gold and the process of signification. The place might be unwanted, yet it is meaningful. Despite this cohesive dynamic, they also show a mutability of identity. They are willing to renounce their gold panner condition if they are accepted back in the nation. That implies the state agreeing to concede monetary support for their relocation. The documentary's protagonists are claiming a twofold recognition: that they are citizens subject to rights and that their work has entitled them to the land where they are. Thus, due compensation is required, if the government wants them to leave. The adaptability of these gold panners is comparable to the negotiations of cinema. In exchanges around filmmaking, a territory is part of complex networks that enable film's production, reproduction and validation. As so, a location is as well a symbol-commodity continuum, charged with meaning and open for business.

'Post-National', as a sphere of identity performance, is not exclusive. There is a simultaneity of territories or symbolic constructions that coexist in a film as forms of belonging. *Justicia Para Mi hermana*, by Kimberly Bautista, begins by proposing a new shared space, a 'black triangle', constituted by Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. This triangle has the highest percentage of women murdered due to gender violence in the whole western hemisphere. Bautista's production does not break down femicides by country. This documentary presents the data as that of a single land where women endure and are killed in misogynistic attacks at a higher rate than elsewhere. After this initial motive, the narrative moves towards another kind of identification, that of womanhood. This notion of groupness is a post-national cohesive element in as much as it inscribes upon a concrete object, the body, without further

differentiation by country.⁷⁰ The documentary's narrative remarks the similar patriarchal threats that women have regardless of nations and only due to their gender identification. In this sense, the scope turns global. The documentary has a geographical nuance, Escuintla, a city within the 'black triangle'. But this is not imposing a specific territorial reading of the story. This town is present for its representativeness of the structural disposability of women bodies. Femicide, and in more general terms, gender violence is a threat eluding its containment to a single locality.

Another production that gathers various types of non-excluding post-national identifications is *Xic Vuh*. As the director of this short movie recognises, he draws from Kakchiquel elements, but his story is a ubiquitous human tale. Meanwhile, regarding his own identification, he relates to a region between Mexico and Peru or Chile (E. Sajcabún, personal communication, October 7, 2016), following cultural instead of geographical configurations of belonging. This multiplicity of belonging possibilities extends to the distribution scheme, which occurs as well in *Justicia Para Mi Hermana*. As noted in previous chapters, both films differentiate their circulation according to different post-national groups. *Xic Vuh* grants free access to indigenous communities in Comalapa, Guatemala. *Justicia Para Mi Hermana* is part of the free workshops organised by the homonym collective to help women prevent abusive relationships, regardless of countries. Elsewhere, access for both films requires to pay a fee. Such mutability of identitarian configurations points towards the directors' capability of navigating multiple sceneries, creating highly adaptable symbolic objects. In this case, the post-national is not a scale for interpreting relationships between sizes – neighbourhood, city, and country. Actually, it is a reminder of the diversity of configurations to which people, or narratives, can identify with and that they are not necessarily nested one within the other. Post-Nation opens another door, that of

⁷⁰ Womanhood presents an additional element to its understanding regarding the materiality of the space it occupies. The belonging to such identity is not mediated by a geographical area, at least not as a first step. It is from this consideration that I further analyse Bautista's documentary as part of 'Deterritorialized' in the final section of this chapter.

communities that are beyond any territory, like womanhood or human, an omnipresence that is profitable for cinema.

In this sample, 'post-national' proves that within cinema, not only Central America, but also nations are decentred. None of those configurations is central to the reproduction or validation of cinema. When it comes to the concept of the isthmus, even as a place for financing, it only works when in relation with other spaces. This interactivity reaffirms that filmmaking valorises connectivity over entrenchment. When a film depends on Cinergia, there is a negotiation of a belonging extending, at least nominally, to the Caribbean, as it happens with *Distancia* and *Ausentes*. The diversification of spaces, besides a nation, is more than a Central America-Caribbean extension for these two productions. *Distancia*, a 2011 feature film by Sergio Ramírez, portrays many groups surviving colonial domination, showing the multiplicity underlying a Guatemalanness. Those beyond the nation are the central characters of this motion picture. The representation of these individuals is not under a single indigenous identity; the film avoids levelling them. There are several post-national identities, including K'iche' and Q'eqch', which are different languages that symbolically underline the distances between the central figures of the story. *Ausentes* goes directly to the diasporic experience. It inserts Salvadorean or Central American traits in their transformations and adaptations in the process of expulsion from one country to another. Going through this experience unites people beyond nation or region; they are now migrants.

Territorial displacement is also central for *María en tierra de nadie*, by Marcela Zamora, the only production from the sample, featuring a direct visual reference to the isthmus' name. It is when people set foot in Mexico – entering through its southern border – that a billboard reads “¡Bienvenidos Hermanos Centroamericanos!” It is by migrating that the characters become Central American. Those who are making the journey from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua to the US face a violence that is not exclusive to them. Their mistreatment repeats for those millions migrating in irregular conditions all over the world. They are part of what Zygmunt Bauman characterises as “the acute crisis of the ‘human waste’ disposal industry” (2007, p. 28). Bauman puts in the foreground the global responsibilities, the network behind these individuals' living and expulsion conditions. Hence, another post-national

group is visible in Zamora's documentary, besides that of Central America. This group is formed by displaced people, just as happens in *Ausentes. María en tierra de nadie* portrays yet another configuration, Christianity. Symbolically the leading motive of the movie is a via crucis. It walks over the many places where migrants have disappeared and the many testimonies of horror from survivors. Christianity is also a praxis within the documentary. Faith is driving those looking for their missing relatives, as much as it is the motivation for those giving support to the migrants in their path. That performance of a Christian community is acknowledged by 'Las Patronas'. This group of women provides food to the expatriates riding 'La Bestia', the cargo train that they take to cover part of their route.⁷¹ A member of 'Las Patronas' says that they are committed to the migrants because they are brothers in Christ, sharing the same heavenly father. This interaction of migrants and Christians, intersecting with a Central American potential of identification leads back to the immateriality of belongings, or at least, to their possibilities of detachment from geographical definitions. Such independence is fundamental for understanding the relationships between place and cinema. Any groundedness seems to be ornamental in the creation of identities or for producing and distributing cinema when considering the centrality of networks – be it a system of belief, experiences or shared goals.

'Post-Nation' confronts us with diverse ideas of belonging. These constructions of groundedness trace their references alternatively to European-centred colonial processes. Their proposals even deviate from geographical attachments, which reinforces the questioning this research does about identifying cinema production according to territorial criteria. Contemplating the coexistence of these identities drives the attention to mobility and the permeability of the lines separating any symbolic ideas of territoriality. It is not that every subject presented by a film is interstitial, but that for making cinema, it does seem that this capacity for in-betweenness is fundamental. Directors must be able to interact and represent those identifying in such myriad of groups. Also, they have to navigate across multiple organisations, each one operating in different scales. It is by combining those two abilities that they gain support and

⁷¹ The women from 'Las Patronas' throw food and beverages in plastic bags to the migrants, who ride as stowaways in the cargo train. This transport goes non-stop for more than a day. If it were not for this group, the migrants would have no kind of sustenance along this long and dangerous journey.

enhance distribution opportunities for their works. It is their skill in networking instead of their position on a map that grants them the chance to propose visual narratives.

3.3 Transnational Interactions

The gathering of experiences, support and markets from many countries does not mean these 24 films perform a regional practice of cinema or represent a single identity – at least not one Central American. Their networks match better with a 'Transnational' sphere of interactions. This segmentation turns towards analysing mobility, a very material one on the part of the directors. It is no longer about debunking Central America as the axis of validation or reproduction of cinema. Education experiences, artistic influences and financing of films indicate that moviemaking takes place far from a constricted territory. It is a praxis requiring directors themselves to be more of a traveller than a local subject. Specifically, 'Transnational' is a good description of the educative background of the film directors of my sample. Most of them moved out of their home countries to attend university. Only a sixth of the directors of these 24 films went to university in their country of residence in IFF's Central America. These are Alexandra Latishev, Sergio Ramírez, Eduardo Spiegeler and Dania Torres Hurtado. Their unusual educational background is indicative that the path towards film production, or at least the one receiving awards, according to this sample, often lies on the opportunity to live and study abroad. Cinema, consequently, starts its reproduction through a diasporic event.

Clearly, the fact that Kimberly Bautista, Jean-Cosme Delaloye, Florence Jaugey and Shari Sabel Strandmark, studied in their home countries does not posit a local constraint over their filmmaking activity abroad.⁷² Although their migratory path might be different, they are all still making movies across borders. Their experiences reinforce the impression of adaptability of their craft. Filmmaking has a deterritorialized capacity; skills learned in one location can be transposed and produce moving images elsewhere.⁷³ This situation demonstrates that it is not only those born in Central

⁷² These four directors attended university in the US, Switzerland, France and Sweden, respectively.

⁷³ Acting on a transnational networking sphere is a gateway to a deterritorialized dynamic. The separation between the two stands in reason of interactions that still refer to geographical notions of territoriality and other exchanges for which this material substrate is marginal, or even irrelevant.

America the ones making journeys to the rest of the world to accomplish themselves as filmmakers. The transnational vocation of cinema is also present for people born and educated outside of the isthmus. It indicates that cinema, as an activity involving mobility, traversing many localities, is not a condition that newcomers or marginal places in this industry endure. Again, making films is an activity involving more than one nation; it creates a representation from the gathering of people, experiences and instruments from multiple geographical points. This transnational dynamic does not stray from dealing with CAC; it frames the need to understand the category regarding the conditions of the industry of which it is part.

Even for the four directors without an educational experience outside their home countries in Central America, movement beyond national borders, material or imaginary, is not absent. Latishev's film, *Irene*, takes part in this transposability. The struggles of the central character are not specially framed by her local conditions but by her gender. Therefore, hers is an issue of worldwide incidences and translatability. It is in the choosing and treatment of this topic that *Irene* adheres to a cinema surpassing the nation.⁷⁴ In the case of *Lih Wina*, its director Dania Torres has an audiovisual background relying heavily on the opportunities and conditions that she has in Nicaragua. Nonetheless, her documentary depends on other diverse spaces that cinema brings into contact. Her documentary is not about her country, Nicaragua. *Lih Wina* addresses an issue of multiplicities, that of cultural heritages (doing a rough simplification: Miskito, Creole and mestizo), jurisdictional (national laws and autonomous territories rights) and even regional belongings (Central America and the Caribbean). The other interaction showing that cinema is a wandering industry is financing. *Lih Wina*, is indeed an initiative of Vikes, a Finnish NGO, which decided to produce a documentary about turtle fishing in Awastara. Thus, they selected a script, written by Puerto Cabezas' journalist, Jairo Uvieta. Then, Vikes provided all the necessary funding for the movie, becoming its producers and consequently gathering the crew. (S. Green, personal communication, July 06, 2016).⁷⁵ As a result, there is

⁷⁴ I find that Latishev's short film is, to be precise, deterritorialized. Despite it, I am mentioning *Irene* in this section since it incorporates mobility both in its narrative and its distribution. The exact character of that mobility and its relation to places is something that I will deal with in the final section.

⁷⁵ Shirlene Green is credited as *Lih Wina*'s producer. She worked at URACAN when Vikes first came to Nicaragua and then she became the NGO's liaison with local producers.

still a mediation or influence in Torres's development as a film director that involves having transnational experiences.

Crossing national borders might be subtler for Sergio Ramírez, director of *Distancia*, yet that negotiation of limits permeability is still there. The quest of his main character – don Tomás – is to preserve the memory of his family during and after the civil war in Guatemala for his missing daughter. This movie is a faithful representation of what a national memory means. In his journey, Don Tomás meets many archetypal figures of the Guatemalan people – this nationalist essentialization works for making a succinct description of the film. Through the main character, the country faces its own history. Notwithstanding, this production is far from contained within the Guatemalan frontiers. Before directing *Distancia*, Sergio Ramírez had worked producing institutional videos for foreign NGOs, showing the impact of their activities in his country. From these previous assignments, he got a contract with a national NGO, Comunidades de Población en Resistencia de la Sierra. Ramírez admits that it was in this last project when he became aware of historical events that until then were somehow distant for him. (S. Ramírez, personal communication, October 18, 2016). Both Dania Torres and Sergio Ramírez share a similar transnational component in their professional development. Yet, for Ramírez, this influence further extends to his historical awareness. Entering into filmmaking in their own countries gave them experiences of mobility and fluidity of interactions regardless of geographical barriers. Such transactions leave a trace in the film text. For *Lih Wina*, it is noticeable in the international appeal of turtle fishing. While in *Distancia*, this trace is evident in the introduction of an opening sequence with members of the Argentinian team of forensic anthropology. This first sequence in Ramírez's motion picture resulted from his exchanges at the Toulouse Film Festival, where his movie took part in the 'Works in Progress' section. Both motion pictures show that local interests are not in isolation from transnational ones. Instead, cinema connects those sorts of concerns, translating and even constructing them as part of a peculiar transnational community.

César Caro's *Tercer Mundo* shifts the focus of analysis of the transnational, from the marginal to the paradigmatic. This production depends on the director's expertise in mobility. Caro – a Chilean educated in Cuba's EICTV – gathers support from Bolivia, Costa Rica and Chile to tell a story of one character in each of these countries. In his

choral narrative, there is an overarching element linking all the places and characters. *Tercer Mundo*'s visual text turns the whole planet Earth into a single locality. This fiction shows that national borders are obsolete. Their symbolic weakness is patent once humans are facing extraterrestrial beings or exoplanetary forces. Through Amaya's story, in Bolivia, Caro tells us that these aliens have been visiting us since many centuries ago. Richi, in Costa Rica, discovers that bizarre and powerful unidentified objects are abducting people from one point and placing them in a random and distant different spot on Earth, Chile in this case. One such 'traveller' will bump into Juan, the Chilean who has to fly to outer space to stop an approaching meteorite. At the same time, Amaya wants to go to Costa Rica, by regular earthlings' travel options, to meet with her father, who migrated there years ago.

This film creates links between national subjects. Amaya longs for the Bolivian lost sea, Juan identifies with copper, a main staple from Chile, and Richi takes an unwanted trip to Costa Rica's tourist destinations. This fiction weaves a transnational network by bringing these three characters together under a same plot. Through the image, the text unites us in our humanity, that recognisable face in the screen. It reminds us that we are similar, much more when, as in *Tercer Mundo*, we are against extraterrestrial forces. This type of cinema, free from a national-driving principle, uses the local as a catch. The fixity on the geographical is an intertext amongst many others in a community that is also self-referential. The use of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (Strauss, 1896) in Caro's science fiction production hints at *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Kubrick, 1968). But *Tercer Mundo*'s multilateralism is not just about its narrative. Caro moves in the transnational sphere for finding financial support, exhibition venues, and even his crew, not to mention his educational background. Caro's project depicts filmmaking as an activity criss-crossed with global interactions.

Crossing borders, leaving them behind – sort of – and uniting subjects through cinema is not only a feat of fiction films. Connotations might change, but transnationality is also present in non-fiction productions. In *Ausentes*, such diasporic movement questions borders, the limits of the national, at least in its relationship towards identity. Tomás Guevara, the documentary's director, dips into displaced humans' grievances instead of exposing a Salvadorean dynamic, and least of all a Central American one. His movie is about people fleeing from threatening economic and political conditions.

Frontiers are not the lines demarcating identities in the paths that these characters must follow. On the contrary, these imaginary dividing lines are places of negotiation and quite often denial of human rights. The documentary rejects to simply reducing its subject to a national context by focusing on the uprooting of mother-son relationships. Marginalisation and traumas of undocumented travellers paradoxically link at least two countries, the one their citizens run away from and the one that rejects their entrance. Filmmaking is a reminder that mobility is not equal for all. In general terms, moviemakers have a qualitatively different experience of migration themselves. For once, this film's director had the chance to study journalism in Spain. More significantly, while shooting this documentary, he went back and forth between El Salvador and the US, sometimes bringing with him video recordings for the families to be in touch with their loved ones. Differently from his characters, Guevara's mobility between these two sites is unrestricted. *Ausentes*, as a visual object, also moves freely across borders. It was part of *Migraciones: Mirando al Sur* (Red de Centros Culturales de AECID, 2019) an itinerary art exposition, convened by Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID).⁷⁶ A relevant correspondence between *Ausentes* and *Tercer Mundo* is that both are a cinema from more than one place. They both spread the notion of rooting of their characters and production process. However, it remains that there are ones who can move with fluidity while others are adrift.

The fourth filmmaker with a non-transnational education comes to close this section because of the specificities of his relationship with transnational exchanges. Eduardo Spiegeler bridges this scale of mobility and that of Central America in his work as a filmmaker. He steps out of country boundaries for narrative and circulation purposes in his 2008 documentary, *Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos*. Nonetheless, the experiences of Recinos, the main character, and the circulation of this documentary refer to a more extensive area than the isthmus. It is Spiegeler himself, who brings this cultural object back to a Central American referentiality. He worked in most of the countries in Central America, splitting his professional activity mainly between

⁷⁶ The Spanish governmental institution made a call, in tandem with Cinergia, to produce a documentary about migration, resulting in Guevara's film.

Guatemala and Nicaragua. For him, the isthmus is a shared space, and he is committed to producing documentaries about Central America (E. Spiegeler, personal communication, January 21, 2017). Given that Central America still entails exchanges amongst nations, I locate his performance of cinema within this transnational section. A movie, under such circumstances, is an object, a process of creation and a staple, which surpasses the national scale. In this sense, Central America is not another kind of localism. In the region's configuration, there is the acknowledgement of an industry that, as Beller (2006) already pointed, favours the circulation of stories and capitals regardless of any territoriality, mainly, that of a nation.

The movement of motion pictures as capital, according to Beller (2006) implies dematerialisation. That would seem contradictory for the use of 'Transnational' along with that same idea. This latter criterion still recognises a certain level of territoriality for film production, be it the place of an educational institution, a shooting location, or the base of an organisation that gives funding for a project. Correspondingly, analysing interactions on a transnational frame is not a final stage; it is a gateway towards deterritorialized networks. But, understanding power-struggles within the three-dimensional field requires considering this quasi-temporary materiality. Transnational exchanges speak about actual mobility, people going across different countries to continue their education or to engage in filmmaking. This possibility of moving freely from one nation to others shows that filmmaking is not so much about where you are but where you can go – or connect with. Mentioning the exceptions to that kind of mobility is indicative of its critical role in filmmaking. Even for those with fewer transfers across countries, the parameter for the reproduction of film praxis within this field is their capacity of transposing and translating local conditions, instead of their specific rootedness. In that sense, cinema requires a particular cultural capital, the one enabling transnational exchanges.

3.4 Deterritorialized Interactions

First of all, a necessary consideration is that by leaving 'Deterritorialized' schemes of interactions for last, I am not proposing a progression of scales. Similar to the case of 'Post-Nation', the deterritorial perspective merely recognises particular conditions and spaces in which the exchanges for making a film take place. Therefore, this category

does not aim towards a more flexible concept of identity, one that could fit each movie in and incorporate them as a group. It is not meant to be a structure that embodies the other divisions that this chapter proposes. Deterritorial refers explicitly to the dematerial shift lying behind the dynamics of production, reproduction and distribution of cinema. This assertion alludes to Debord, cited in the first chapter, and the idea of spectacle, an omnipresent model of interactions, driven by images (1967, p. pos. 443). Beller picks up on this concept and takes it precisely to the equivalence of image and monetary capital. They both lack a material substance, allowing the former to circulate as a purely symbolic commodity (Beller, 2006, p. 75). Such perspective about cinema is incomplete for the purposes at hand given that its focus on the most visible part of moviemaking leaves out the consideration of this activity as a process.

Accounting for 'Deterritorial' exchanges is not the same as taking cinema outside of materiality. Many tangible elements of filmmaking have not yet to vanish. Films are, in words of Hye Jean Chung "embedded in, and [have] repercussions on, the historically and geo-politically specific material conditions of media production, distribution, exhibition, storage and maintenance" (2017, pp. 25-26). Consequently, the mapping of these 24 films traces the participation of these ethereal images in the conditions that define the viability of these cultural objects. A motion picture partial detachment from explicit material support does modify the actors at play in their making and their hierarchical organisation. Directors, financiers, film locations and audiences are mostly material entities that can be pinpointed to a geographical place. But they are in constant negotiation with the immateriality of the image. The analysis of each movie from this sample in its networks of exchanges, many times reveals a de-spatialised dynamic. Transactions are independent of precise localities; all actors hunt down the possibilities for filmmaking wherever they emerge. Under this logic, the interactions are deterritorial; they occur regardless of their geographical location. They do not exist in a vacuum. Their new land is cinema, their reason to be, instituting it as a space on its own – a belonging without a territorial groundedness as its organising factor.

As a result, this exploration of cinema proposes to look at the material and immaterial transactional elements in these motion pictures, because none of these films was made as a solo operation. Recognising that territoriality might be in the margins for the exchanges happening in the making of a movie does not override it. It just frames the

role of the local, national or regional identifications within the process of filmmaking. Alternatively, looking at belongings, alliances and practices necessary for the reproduction of cinema, demonstrates that having connections, rather than being in a place, is what drives filmmaking. Deterritorialized would be, in some instances, the meeting point for the many factors interacting in a film. It is also the space that a large part of the creators appealed to, even their source of aesthetic influences.⁷⁷ Significantly, thematics, artistic, financial and exhibition schemes gravitate towards 'deterritorialized'. It supposes that cinema's reproduction and validation are prominently linked to their mobility and translatability. Self-representation is tangential to the availability of narratives with a global(isable) appeal, when they are not self-exoticising. Images emerge as a composite of financial support and distribution circuits in a worldwide arena.

Kenneth Müller, director of *12 Segundos*, was clear from the very beginning about aiming his production towards the most varied and ubiquitous possible audiences (Emprendiendo en Cine y TV, 2015). Therefore, in negotiating for resources, as much as in the visual representation, the deterritorial was already ingrained. This feature film keeps spaces as generic as possible. The city in *12 Segundos* could be portrayed anywhere. The shots are not of open streets, but of building facades, no names, not even logos that could be recognised by a potential local audience. The film's main location is a coniferous forest with a log cabin. Characters driving towards that place only meet a traffic signal that names that site as 'La Frontera'. This spatialisation looks to detach the diegesis from any precise territoriality, keeping it stereotypical. This decision has a mirroring image in the production dynamic. Müller was studying and living in Mexico at the time of the shooting. He remembers the advantage of having a non-Latin last name. It helped him to get access to Mexican film stars while he gathered financial support from tequila producing friends in Guatemala. They were all interested in a profitable result. This outcome was possible due to the box office success in Guatemala and that Netflix picked the film and exposed it to a worldwide

⁷⁷ For 41,6% of this sample, there is a deterritorial element related to the motivation of the production. The directors expressed that they wanted either to narrate a familiar human tale or to put forth a global concern. Meanwhile, regarding artistic influences, 45,8% of the directors refer to the names of other film creators instead of national or regional practices of cinema as the guidance for their work. The numbers are according to Appendix Y.

audience. The online distribution is the epitome of the detachment from any precise locality. The VOD platform depends on the circulation of the image as immaterial. It thrives on films' capability of reaching audiences as digital data more effectively than geographically and time-bound media (film circuit, national or regional TV channels).

'Deterritorialized' is not a sort of an all-covering category for moviemaking. It coexists with other ideas of belonging and even very much nation-related objectives. This possibility is what *Marimbas del Infierno*, by Julio Hernández, presents. What is consistent amongst Hernández's and Müller's experiences with cinema, is that networks woven around their motion pictures require a strategical negotiation beyond the limits of the nation. That is the case of the for-free circulation that Hernández decided for his movie in Guatemala and Central America. That idea of use and distribution is autonomous from what Films du Requin, a private company based in France, will do for the commercialisation of the material elsewhere. Films du Requin invested in Hernández's production because of his previous works, which showcased him as able to deliver profitable content. The director recognises that *Marimbas del Infierno* was finally made thanks to both, his contacts and the French company. There are also Mexican private funds backing Hernández's motion picture. This multiplicity of origins for the actants gathered by the film means that the interactions did not follow national paths but their own. Hernández's production dynamic was possible because his film proposal and the recognition of his work reached beyond national bounds. Therefore, deterritorial interactions do not eliminate Hernández's local interests or the support he had from other compatriots. This identification demonstrates that the product at hand and its director's skills can be valuable for so many other players besides those that share direct geographical links.

A detachment from the centrality of a geographically identifiable location is not only possible or demanded by cultural products with commercial purposes. It is not as if the immateriality of the image autonomously modifies a motion picture in its stages of financing and distribution. For some of this sample's narratives, appealing to a global audience is not a monetary concern but a thematic and empathic one. There is a sense of community that transcends national borders, but that does not unite a collective of multiple citizenships. Instead, such group formation proposes a new idea of belonging whose symbolism requires of no geographical rootedness. *Irene* and *Justicia Para Mi*

Hermana are examples of this type of groups. These films' proposal of belonging shows how cinema and deterritorial do not elude overdetermination. In these two cases, it is not the industrial needs that drive movies away from a nation or regional identification. It is the subject that calls for and is created outside of geographical constraints. The film, in this case, is a vehicle for a content requiring reaching individuals living all over the world. Such a group is coalescing due to withstanding similar experiences and challenges, which become their common narrative. The individuals' location or origin do not determine these stories, but who they are, i.e. their gender and their bodies. Hence, for womanhood, detaching from a geographical specificity is part of recognising the community's shared conditions. Cinema, here, is not erupting in the local and diluting its peculiarities. The representation requires a media that as a symbol and object can elude land-based determinisms.

Alexandra Latishev, *Irene*'s director, prepared for her short film by researching gender and psychoanalysis studies (A. Latishev, personal communication, October 11, 2016). Therefore, Latishev's critique of motherhood, privacy and cyclical routines, mixes elements from her immediate geographical surroundings, but her reflection is mainly about being a woman. Similarly, for *Justicia Para Mi Hermana*, its director, Kimberly Bautista intended to raise awareness towards femicides and thus took a local case as a metonym of women's endurance of patriarchal violence worldwide. She aimed at putting a face to the statistical data for creating empathy and solidarity (Bautista, Luchadoras, 2014). Hence, for both motion pictures, having a distribution enabling them to be available for a public as broader as possible completes the goals of their narratives. Immateriality is not a condition for reaching this goal. Currently, access to *Irene*, and *Justicia Para mi Hermana* is available through the Internet. Although, until recently, for Bautista's documentary, DVD delivery was the only option, this material form of distribution had a global coverage. Hence, the condition and the value of a movie as a media to share these stories is its deterritoriality.

Be it because of education, funding, influences, motivations or distribution; all the films in my sample have interactions of a deterritorial nature. Dealing with this sphere is not an imposition but the outcome of negotiations, intertwining it as part of production, reproduction and validation. Nonetheless, succeeding in creating a network that reaches into deterritoriality seems unavoidable or at least strategic. As a result,

developing the skills and contacts for arriving into this non-spatiality would be a must amongst filmmakers. Facing this praising of mobility, more conceptual than physical, drives back to questioning the use of a geographical identification to gather the cultural objects in this sample. First, there is the acknowledgement that Central America is not the main, not even secondary venue for financing, distributing or motivating the production of films. Second, amongst directors, it is not clear what a Central American movie is, if any. Besides, as individuals, only a few of them identify themselves as isthmian subjects. Finally, independently of IFF, other two film festivals address the regional category in its possibility to improve motion pictures' circulation on a global arena (the final section of the first chapter explains this). This use links CAC to an industrial role, portraying it as a resource instead of an axis of creation.

Losing its perception as an identitarian element means that cinema's view of Central America is instrumental. Because CAC emerges as a curating element, its use is that of a brand, not necessarily expressing the values within but building on expectations. Nadia Kaneva (2011) associates global market-driven prerogatives with a new perspective regarding land. In this context, the appreciation of the symbolic dimension of nationalism comes from its capacity for generating income. To accomplish this, the notion of land visibilises a service or commodity for their external buyers (Kaneva, 2011, pp. 126 and 131-132). Hence, in the interaction between Central America and cinema, the immaterial and deterritorial conditions of filmmaking enhance the brand's possibilities for extracting value and reifying the actual location that it labels. The classification of films according to a place that has minimal impact in their symbolic or financial production processes necessarily relegates the category to the dynamics of circulation, acquisition and validation. Besides, the term's territorial configuration has its roots in the Spanish conquest and its political division of the area. In this sense, CAC is a marketing device that responds to patterns and mechanisms of colonial recognition and consumption. Under such circumstances, the deployment of the isthmian identification hardly deals with a function of self-representation or geographically driven interactions, hence its potential link with exoticisation when invoking global spectatorship.

Chapter 4. Common Sites of a Global Cinema

"It is of course understood that the artist's idea itself is in no way spontaneous or self-engendered, but is a socially reflected mirror-image, a reflection of social reality"
Sergei Eisenstein (1949, p. 127).

This chapter tests the cohesiveness of the visual narratives of 24 motion pictures, both as a stand-alone collection and in their possibility of being an expression of Central American Cinema (CAC). Continuing with the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) methodological approach of this research, this section is a cartography of these films' representations. This map traces both the movies' settings and the viewpoint that translates them into screen images. Given CAC's implication of certain territoriality, by analysing the narrative function of the sites that these motion pictures depict I address directly that material dimension. For accomplishing that goal, this chapter contrasts the relational spatiality that the films propose against their matching with an isthmian sense of belonging. Additionally, as a result of taking into account whose the gaze that brings a site into a representation, this chapter delves into the relationship between the act of depiction and its filmed subject, which I will later explain as heteroramia. Each movie is a chorus, a mosaic of points of view striving for recognition. Analysing in simultaneity the symbolic role of a site and its process of becoming a cinematic object charts a motion picture's interactions. It traces back the journey through which each of these films constructs and uses their shooting locations. The research sets out to explore the net that the representation of space of a motion picture weaves in its interaction with the other exchanges in their filmmaking process.

The rationale for using ANT when studying the visual narrative of a movie is to achieve a comprehensive study of the relationship between symbolic, territorial and industrial interests interacting through the different participants of a film's end-to-end process of production. A category such as CAC negotiates with the notion of identity amongst other functions there are for it in filmmaking as a symbol-commodity continuum. The possibility of this category for supporting the creation of an imagined community or being a label for bolstering a film's global circulation intertwines with one another just as much as with other potential exchanges and implementations. This strategy reckons the cultural objects in the sample as performing and compromising notions of

identity along with their role as spectacle or militancy. Those functions change, adapt and communicate in light of the motion pictures' production and distribution dynamics – a backstage perspective of them. More than pure exotic commodities or exclusively CAC, these movies are highly heteronomous processes of signification. A close reading of the diegesis of these 24 motion pictures informed by ANT tracks the functions of territoriality and the sense of belonging in the sample. An approach that also avoids imposing on these motion pictures any preconceived identitarian traits, for instance, that of a *centralamerican-ness*.

I propose a thematic analysis of these 24 films that frames their contents within the weaving resulting from their making and circuits of distribution. In this research, the study of cinema as a circular relationship covers the network consisting of directors, funding agencies, characters, festivals and researchers. For reasons stated in previous chapters, further entanglements of those factors with audiences is outside this work's scope. It does not mean that I discard such interactions from the overdetermination that I propose to track in the film sample through the ANT approach. Spectators' translations of the film texts, their comprehension of the venue and the label it has when they assist to a screening or browse for a motion picture over the Internet, as much as how they locate and relate to the filmmakers are all significant interactions, which open up CAC to further functions and possibilities of an identitarian relevance. However, tracing the map of the deployment of the category is a necessary first stage, for there were no previous work on an interactive exploration of the notion of an isthmian cinema. Future inquiries on CAC should take on this approaching to the term from the perspective of exchanges and extend them, connecting the category with even more actors, relevantly with the spectators of the allegedly Central American films. For the work at hand, It is within a network under construction, as it has only ventured into the orbit of the cinema practitioners, that I develop my interpretation of the film texts..

Understanding the roles of CAC by tracking how associations evolve and change due to their involvement in the process of producing, distributing and using images in motion will link the present endeavour and those yet to come. In this sense, the hyphen of 'actor-network' works as Latour intended. It is a reminder that none of those factors becomes a new foundational unit; as the third chapter also shows, each of them is a

collective, which connects and becomes part of many belongings and experiences. They are webs of meaning. Coherently, the content analysis of this film collection relies on that logic. Specifically, interpreting the movies centres around the representation of space and its connections to the diverse interactions and interests of those involved in the film production. An additional component of this scrutiny is the films' narrative use and creation of space. The intention is to assess if there is a network connecting this sphere of relationships. This focus on the depictions and functions that locations have in these 24 motion pictures responds to their direct link with the geographical element that using CAC implies as an axis for organising and understanding film production and enunciation. Thus, this section evaluates the correspondence between the category and the cinematic implementation of space.

In the previous chapters I have assessed the role of CAC mainly in relation to the processes of production and distribution of these 24 movies. Space is a part of that vaster negotiation, a strategical one when it comes to finding the function of CAC within the narrative proposals in the sample. In this framework, analysing the territorial depictions in the sample matches Henri Lefebvre's (1991) notion of the long history of space. Far from precise materiality, boundaries or definitive symbolic content, space is "a set of relations and forms" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 116). It is a long history because space is a construction through time, malleable, relational and just as material as it is symbolic. Even the cinematic representation of a site is part of producing or becoming space, a performance within that exercise. Such form of creating meaning poses a last challenge to CAC. Space, within that dynamic of signification, sits at the intersection of shapes, practices and exchanges. As a critical element of identity, the meaning of territoriality necessarily moves towards a heterogeneity of images and experiences thereof.

Exploring the visualisation of a site from this perspective is not reconstituting a region. Stepping into the production of spaces, and their handling in a movie addresses the problem of using symbolic shortcuts. Grand narratives of inclusiveness, regardless of scale – the global, an isthmus, a nation, a city or a neighbourhood – overlook the vast array of settings and individuals struggling between recognition and rejection within those supposedly all-encompassing perspectives. In this sense, this study of the diegesis of my sample fully acknowledges the many other notions of belonging or

possibilities of self-representation at hand.⁷⁸ Besides, there is always the option that a locality becomes just a reduced backdrop, an ornament or intriguing 'accent' for a character or subject, which is aiming at a greater area of translatability – or one decidedly deterritorial. In such a case, as a site's potential for rootedness fades away from the narrative, its interaction with cinema shows that geographical territoriality is not a mandatory identitarian principle.

Precisely because the films in the sample once and again have demonstrated to be a very eclectic collection, this spatial approach to the representation presents its own challenges. Particularly, establishing a comparison parameter without forcing a new sort of belonging scheme upon these 24 motion pictures. The solution that I propose is using those sites that regularly emanate from the motion pictures themselves for interpreting these movies' diegetic territoriality. The city, the rural, the road and the body are those analysis categories. The reasoning for this selection relates to Eisenstein's quote in the epigraph. The theoretician indicates a relational action between discrete entities, a director who imagines a depiction after a frame – context – that inspires it. I re-signify the theoretician's reference to 'artist' and 'society', following the perspective on space. A creator, just like that which she/he intends to represent are but interactions, dense associations that result from and trigger further symbolic and material exchanges. Hence, these four criteria of selection only name generic places. The focus of this chapter is understanding them as complex webs of interactions, including their relationship with a visual creating process. My proposal keeps Eisenstein's perspective that representations do not emerge spontaneously. Therefore, locations become cinematic spaces – a very peculiar one in each movie – through the gaze and the circulation of the film.

This section provides a multifaceted perspective from which to observe the relationship between film and location, cinema and subject. The city, the rural, the road and the body relate to geographical variables as much as they take part in reconfiguring them into imagined communities. These criteria are not discrete and

⁷⁸ This broad perspective links to the category of 'Post-National' in Appendix Y.

overlap in many ways; they are fields of relations, disputed spaces expanding their limits and encroaching upon those of the others. There is nothing specifically Central American about them. However, the concept of a country or a region – the territoriality of belonging – necessarily includes these ideas of space as its crucial constitutive elements. These four criteria correspondingly represent sites with the most concentration of people, those with a more direct interaction between humans and nature, the paths across the land, and finally the individuals and their concept of being. Cinema offers a new layer of complexity for the creation of such sites, as the networks woven in the movie's process of production and distribution are also part of the representation of space.

In this film sample, the many participants at either end of the filmmaking process inhabit and perceive a site differently. There are many disparities amongst those whose subjectivity – or its simulacrum – come to constitute a cinematic territoriality. Filmmakers, as it is clear from the third chapter, enjoy a high degree of mobility and have access to transnational interactions, which contrasts with the conditions of the characters in their movies. In the diegesis, most of the subjects are consistently vulnerable, disposable and attached to a fixed locality.⁷⁹ Consequently, the gaze of the onlooker bringing a setting to the diegesis also matters for (re)creating it as a space. To work through the interaction that filmmaking provokes between location, characters and point of view, I am adapting a concept from Mikhail Bakhtin: that of heteroglossia.

The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized... this movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its dialogization -this is the basic

⁷⁹ Consider that only one of the characters in these 24 films safely travels between countries. That is the case of Tony in *El Regreso*, which I will be dealing with in 'the road section'. For the rest of the characters, mobility is a challenge, not just to afford it, but because it endangers their lives. There is a diminish on their sovereignty, in the sense that Achille Mbembe employs the term in *Necropolitics*, as to exercise control over mortality (2003, p. 12). In the movies, characters moving across borders are impotent in face of the mortal threats in their migratory paths.

distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel (The Dialogic Imagination, 1981, pp. pos. 3729-3739).

To Bakhtin, the novel began with the emergence of a polyphonic discourse. He argues that the literary author interprets and presents a variety of voices and slangs, which diverts from her own, to build a narrative. That is, in the novel the author is not the only one speaking, there is not a monopoly over the use of language; many speech forms populate the text. This core idea of dialogue and plurality in heteroglossia is complementary to my own approximation to motion pictures using ANT. In the first chapters of this research, implementing ANT traces the interactions outside of the diegesis. Heteroglossia is a reminder of another dimension of exchanges, those constituting the profilmic narrative.

This encounter of heteroglossia and ANT holds true to the notion of looking at diversity within what seems a singular text. It motivates to expand the scope of the dialogic action, which now traverses from the film as images to the whole web of exchanges in the end-to-end process of its production. This proposal is congruent with overdetermination. According to Sharmani Patricia Gabriel, Bakhtin acknowledges that the meeting of many voices “denot[es] the presence of tension and struggle -of otherness- within any linguistic, national or cultural system” (2005, p. 41). Applying such perspective to these 24 movies demands an obvious adjustment. Since it is an analysis of a visual medium, besides the voices – speech – of the characters or narrators, it must include the gazes that integrate the dialogic composite. To adequately express this adaptation to Bakhtin’s concept, I am developing the notion of ‘heteroramia’. Coining this term keeps from heteroglossia the root for different (hetero) and for making clear the centrality of the visual, it substitutes the reference that Bakhtin makes about languages (-glossia) for vision (Greek: -órama). This use of vision refers to this word’s whole spectrum of signification. It means being able to see and to create images, a perspective on the future but spectral apparitions too, even the act of imagining. As such, vision mixes materiality and perception. Hence, heteroramia explores the interactions of gazes constituting the diegesis in all their possible diversity, coordination and discord.

The point of view affects the representation of a site. At the same time, any given perspective is a result of that act of collecting images that is a motion picture. Thus, heteroramia is not a new layer on top of space; for cinema, it is part of a composite of representation and interpretation. I do single out the gaze since it questions the relationship between the interactions mapped out via ANT and the themes/stylistic aspects of the films. The selection of gazes for creating a profilmic space is telling of the establishing of a hierarchical order. Following on Bourdieu, the preeminent presence of a certain subjectivity for depicting a space reveals its relevance amongst the several capitals and scales of belonging that combine across a film's process of production and distribution. Thus, the proximity of the camera's point of view to characters and their surroundings, or the inclusion of those characters' visual perspective, are decisions driven by the movie's political-economy imperatives.

Filmmaking is creating its own shared narratives, which depend on the mobility of its creators, their transnational cultural influences and displaying their work on international venues. These experiences are uncommon for most of the characters in my film sample, who are locally bound, besides occurring and referring to spaces outside these motion pictures' locations. The point of view is a narrative and industrial factor as well, one selecting amongst global circulation needs and local self-representation possibilities. Turning a variety of tales, places or people into profilmic objects do not necessarily assert alterity or subversion to Beller's (2006) idea of the cinematic mode of production. The gaze regulates the heterogeneity of that conglomerate. Understanding the aims for selecting through which gazes a film depicts a site, explores cinema's instrumentalisation of space. The point of view simultaneously enables the appropriation and extraction of value through the image. In translating theme, location and people into an audiovisual narrative, the gaze watches them from a particular stance. For this sample, that position is, for the most part, coincident with the critical capitals for the financing and distribution of filmmaking.

The previous chapter portrays the dynamic of production and distribution of IFF's winners between 2009 and 2014 in the form of a three-dimensional field. In that cube, mobility and translatability come as fundamental for accessing to and reproducing filmmaking. Those two factors stand at the top of these 24 cultural objects hierarchical organisation of capitals. The cinematic production of space is critical because there

intersect imaginary, logistics and displayability. The gaze leading the recreation of space in these films is as deterritorial as the other elements interacting through them. It is a subjectivity coincident with a logic of distribution in need of global translatability. It results in a depiction of the city, the rural, the road and the body closer to exoticism than belonging. This representation of space is equivalent to CAC's implementation as a brand. This function of territoriality could be said to be neo-colonial in the light of Byung-Chul Han's (2018) cultural critique. He posits that "[d]iversity' as a neoliberal term is a resource that can be exploited. Hence it contrasts with alterity, which eludes any economic utilization... As a neoliberal production strategy, authenticity creates commodifiable differences" (Han, 2018, pp. 19-20). In this sense, paying attention to how a site becomes a space in cinema, explores a process of commodification. Tracing the map of these movies' interactions reveals that symbolic discontinuities entail industrial similarities.

4.1 The City

This first spatial category already drifts away from Central America as a consistent entity. Even conceptualising the isthmus as a non-normative collage of sites, people and representations; focusing on interactions makes evident the limitations of such a gathering proposal. Mapping the use and depiction of the city in these 24 movies puts forward its performative dimension. Multiple interpretations/constructions of space mean that the symbolic content that attaches to the name of a city varies accordingly to the different experiences of it – a condition applicable as well to the idea of the region. John Orr (2003) finds that such complexity and variability of the city as an idea and a territory blur the lines between those concepts and their cinematic depiction.

The metropolis is thus never the sum of its physical parts but an accretion of living tissue, of both humdrum activities (work, commuting, shopping, eating, and sleeping) and public spectacle (the festivals, celebrations, riots, and demonstrations which define its flowing history). A film is both representation of that living tissue and an integral element within it. It not only records and documents the symbolic. It is itself symbolic. Thus, technically, film is always a two-fold mediation on the ground and the nature of its own being. In the contemporary city, the density of the nature of being, social and symbolic, refracts itself in narrative and iconic density (Orr, 2003, p. 285).

From Orr's perspective, a motion picture representing a city does not just depict it, but the moving images become part of what that space might be. At the same time, the movie is not absent from the conditions of its location; there is cross-affects. However, this interaction is not a closed loop. As a 'living tissue' it keeps in transformation. Therefore, representing a city is all about its human determination, what shifts at every look you take at it, every action and experience of it. Diversity, in this case, comes from relationships amongst peers, revealing not the vastness of a given land or a region, but people. This panoply challenges the assumption of a shared belonging for cinema makers and characters just because at some junction they were at the same spot at once. Furthermore, it questions the identification of a group of films under the tag of Central America or, for that matter, any other particular region or nation. There is a symbolic multiplicity that comes together and projects as a result of making movies. Such a condition is contradictory with equating them through spatial identifiers.

Failing to impose a clear borderline, the depth of a filmed-city instead reveals the plurality of meanings and functions of spatiality. Not only identity is fluid, but the journey from symbol to commodity is as well. Thus, in this analysis of the city, its presence does not translate directly as belonging. The implementation and depiction of this sort of sites across the different motion pictures could also lead to distinguishing a cinematic movement. However, that is a possible interpretation for CAC that is more than only identitarian; it is procedural, bringing a new complication for an isthmian selection criterion. Becoming a label for tagging a group of cinematic narratives reveals a value of the category that is not exclusively dependable on self-representation. This role links to broader dynamics of funding, distribution and consumption of moving images.

Consequently, tracking the representation of the city seeks to determine whether it is a central element within a film or just a background, and the relation of said functions with the production scheme of a movie. In such a process, the gazes that depict the city are more than alternative perspectives of it. The point of view reveals a relationship with space and the structure of production. In the gaze, the distances and different rootedness of characters and filmmakers come forth. There is a cinematic eye that finally results predominantly in exploring and reconstructing the experience of the city.

That situation reveals the most significant interactions that for a particular filmmaking endeavour form part of its 'living tissue'. Interpreting belonging derived from the gaze and the backstage of a motion picture offers a reading of the use of the city. That is, analysing the film's heteroramia allows grasping if the narrative role of a location is closer to its dwellers or to further deterritorial consumers.

For these 24 films, the cities that have a distinctive role in their narratives are Ciudad de Guatemala, Quetzaltenango, Escuintla, Managua and San José. In this sample, there is mention of other human conglomerates, both on and outside of the isthmus. Given that those are sites where characters arrive momentarily, they will be dealt with in "the road" section. The abovementioned five cities have a significant presence within a specific production and in some cases, will feature in more than one movie.⁸⁰ This last recurrence allows for exploring the variability in the experience and meaning of space. *Marimbas del Infierno* and *Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos* are an example of that diversity. That the former movie is a fiction and the latter a documentary could present some reservations for their comparison. However, *Marimbas del Infierno* was meant to be a documentary. It was due to safety reasons that it morphed into a fictional narrative once filming had already begun. Therefore, the films' genre difference is no obstacle to comparing how they relate to Ciudad de Guatemala. I will be exploring how even if nominatively the setting of these two movies is the same city; they depict two spaces disconnected from each other. It means that the local scale – even narrower than the nation or region – have significant degrees of variance. This variability of the local also demonstrates that CAC's identitarian potential has challenges unrelated to its multinational scope. Comparing representations of the same city makes evident nomenclatures' shortcomings in erasing symbolic differences. Simultaneously, the relationship between the depictions of Ciudad de Guatemala and the backstage of each motion picture indicates that

⁸⁰ Three out of the five cities are a country's capital, Ciudad de Guatemala, Managua and San José. The first and third capitals repeat their presence in at least two films each. For the notion of CAC as a marginal cinema, their representation of 'the city', at least nominally, repeats a pattern of centre-periphery although on a more local scale.

belonging diverts from territoriality towards interactivity – in the sense that ANT uses the latter word.

Julio Hernández was planning *Marimbas del Infierno* as a documentary, and it was until shooting began that it changed for a fiction film. Don Alfonso, the main character, was concerned for the safety of his personal life if his story was to be told as a documentary. Such a threat forced this very last-minute adjustment (J. Hernández, personal communication, August 18, 2017). The city is already acting here, at least the potential harm that don Alfonso faces in that location.⁸¹ A situation that, at this point, affects the actor and the film crew differently. Don Alfonso – the actor – feared a gang that was extorting him. They were demanding part of the earnings from his music group; failing to do so would compromise his life. For the moviemaking team, it was a matter of adapting their project profile. In the motion picture's first sequence, a documentary rather than fictional representation, the main character explains that he is being extorted. That situation made him relocate his family away for protecting them.⁸² Since the criminal menace persists, it forces him now to an intra-city exile with his musical instrument, a marimba called 'Siempre Juntos', to keep the two of them safe.⁸³

⁸¹ I am interested in the interaction of a location and filmmaking. Certainly, a city is not the only place that can modify a motion picture. I analyse it first given the centrality of human interactions in its definition. In the next sections of this chapter I will consider movies' interaction with further sites.

⁸² Although the fiction/documentary dichotomy is far from clear, I use it here to differentiate the section of the film with an interview that was not staged.

⁸³ The voice of the director is in this section too; he is doing the interview. Hernández's voice will not be present again until the final part of the film, that last time as a text on the screen, what creates a hiatus from reality to fiction and back to reality.

Extortion's effect on the crew is the fictional narrative that squeezes between the first and last sequences of the movie. The director proposes the fiction form for his motion picture as a cover-up operation. This strategy allows the crew to use still the equipment that they had already hired and the characters that they had contacted. Playing a game of facades, gives the protagonist a sense of security, while the story follows him, Chiquilín and Blacko into a fantastic quest. They make a wild bet for creating art in precarious conditions, an aim that the filmmaker is after as well by making this movie. In the diegesis, our musical ensemble pushes a fusion between metal rock and traditional marimba compositions. Behind cameras, a documentary turns into a fiction stretching its budget as much as possible. The intention is not Alfonso's and his fellow's success; the representation is about the challenges for art creation. In this sense, Ciudad de Guatemala is part of the difficulties that the creators face, a metonymy about the problematic access to government support and the limitations that the market imposes.

Visually, *Marimbas del Infierno* uses as few camera movements as possible. Actions can even fall outside of the screen frame; the camera remains still. This visual style gives the impression of non-intervention in the profilmic events. I interpret this gaze to be that of an onlooker, a detached witness. The lack of camera movement and wide-angle shots reproduce private places in which the onlooker tries to occupy the minimum space. The characters are the ones moving, the gaze limits to their observation, one that should go

**Image 1 Sequence from
*Marimbas del Infierno***



These excerpts show the film's observational perspective. The camera position remains static while the action comes in and out of frame.

unnoticed. The style repeats when it goes outdoors. There is no intention of showing a vast landscape; filming does not explore; it merely follows – looks at – the actions. The movie gives us disconnected streets, just a road with one-storage buildings covered with advertisements, that we see from across the street. I understand the predominance of this type of disengaged gaze on the film's heteroramia as a disguise in itself. It gives the impression of registering events without directing them, which is a second layer cover-up. It is a fiction movie posing as a documentary one.

Heteroramia gets a bit more diverse at certain times. The marimba/metal jam practice is an example of it. This jamming session offers a more dialogic relation of points of view. The director is watching at the musicians. However, the camera gives the impression of the players exchanging their gazes across the instruments too. Thus, it is in this moment of creativity that there is a visual dialogue, a co-construction of space where the characters' and the crew are equals through their artistic performance. I find that this more participatory point of view results from an interaction where the film crew and the protagonists are on more similar terms. The creative action equates those on the profilmic space with those behind the cameras. The gaze expresses that similarity or proximity, a familiar dynamic of interaction. Other situations that the film depicts, mostly those associated with violence, do not have that shared experience. In those instances, the network diverts through different paths, and that has a visible result: the distant witness's perspective.

For the most of *Marimbas del Infierno*'s visual representations, when one of the protagonists' gaze enters the diegesis, it comes to show the gaps between characters marked by their local conditions and onlookers of a more deterritorial sort. That is the case when Alfonso changes clothes in the middle of the hotel kitchen and when Chiquilín observes the actions at the car park. In the hotel sequence, Alfonso realises the awkward and marginal position the venue's administration sets out for him. For Chiquilín, it is all about having a lookout at potential menaces, keeping ahead of problems. The characters' gazes in these two sequences depict their vulnerable situation; the camera does not protect them from the hell of Ciudad de Guatemala. Differently, the static point of view more common for the rest of the motion picture stands away from such threats. The coincidence of the main gaze and characters is limited to access; they navigate the same locations at once, but their experience of

space differ. They are not interacting as partners building the city. The gap between the characters' and the central gaze of the rest of the movie – the distant observation, makes their vulnerability part of the cinema spectacle. This situation is not a cynical instrumentalisation of the characters' experiences. It derives from a different qualitative dimension of rootedness, one that puts filmmaking as a hub of deterritorial exchanges. A dynamic partly enabled by creators with a high degree of mobility, and that translates characters and places into symbols that are commodifiable.

In *Marimbas del Infierno*, the city, the interactions that Alfonso, Chiquilín and Blacko have are not welcoming. The camera visits with them everyday places, a pool saloon, a restaurant, a market, a printing workshop, a radio station, an art gallery and governmental offices. It is this journey through Ciudad de Guatemala, which is hellish since the characters face mostly rejection. In its last sequence, the film's dedicatory gives a final twist to that marginalisation. The director's voice comes back with the line that I have already pointed at in the first chapter. Hernández makes his movie to celebrate what artists like him have to endure in countries like his. With this statement, the representation of Ciudad de Guatemala renounces to be about the city in itself. Space is an instrument for expressing the concerns that the director has as part of a different identitarian group, that of art creators. This use of Ciudad de Guatemala is the last cover-up of the movie. The town, home of IFF, is not the organising idea for filmmaking. Instead, the gaze pretending to not-intervene reproduces the city as a metaphoric Inferno. This hell that the town poses is not for don Alfonso, Chiquilín or Blacko as its dwellers. The film's closing text guides a reading of Ciudad de Guatemala, its threats, its crumbling and marginal sites as a metaphor for the continual struggle of those doing art projects anywhere with similar conditions. The narrative defines the location's value. The call of belonging that the motion picture openly affirms addresses a deterritorialised community. A ubiquitous group of people that finds a cohesive element in the precarious conditions of their work.⁸⁴ This situation reaffirms what the previous mapping of the roles of CAC alerts. City and isthmus categories

⁸⁴ It is worth noticing that in the films sample, there is not a homogenous group of artists. *12 Segundos*, opera prima with a budget of around \$500,000 does not seem to be struggling, while the glances that it offers of an anonymous city neither gives an impression of precariousness.

seem to be functioning as attention-grabbers. This process of extraction is of a colonial sort. I make that claim because of the dependency that making these representations on the screen have on foreign resources, typically coming from the global north, and more specifically, the links that films in this collection have with festivals; for which in some cases CAC is an organising factor. Such events are in an a-symmetrical relationship with the producers of these movies and even their potential local publics (Elsaesser, *Film Festival Networks: the new topographies of cinema in Europe*, 2005, p. 93). The utilisation of Guatemala or Central America is made by a deterritorial gaze influenced and mainly targeting an international market.

The city as a theme for exploring the possibility of a unitary identitarian construction gives us a second possible perspective of Ciudad de Guatemala and artists as well. The everyday places of *Marimbas del Infierno* changes in *Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos* for a tour around some of the Guatemalan capital's iconic landmarks. For this documentary, narrating the life of Efraín Recinos requires to represent buildings and monuments. Thus, the use of general shots and even aerial images. The city is more than the backdrop of actions; it is the oeuvre that the artist has co-created. In Spiegel's documentary, Ciudad de Guatemala is not limiting Recinos. The director's depiction of Recinos's works displayed in public spaces is telling of negotiations and disputes but not about insurmountable threats. The defeated artist from *Marimbas del Infierno*, the menacing city, they are nowhere to be seen in Spiegel's proposal. In the documentary, Recinos is a genius – of universal proportions. He combines the legacy of his hometown, Quetzaltenango, with ample knowledge of classical arts, conquering the capital city with the inventiveness, strength and frankness of his pictorial and sculptural creations. He, it seems, is moulding 'the city', taming it. In a sense, Recinos is one with Guatemala – the city and the nation – because it is his canvas of creation and a central part of his inspiration. *Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos* depicts a distant situation from that of the characters in the fiction film, who are outsiders, surviving despite the conditions thrown at them. Hence, I argue that they are not inhabiting the same space; each one creates a city from departing different – even contradictory – experiences. In the light of each of

these various options of group formation, it is clear the distortion that carries using Central America as a somewhat standard frame of interactions and symbolic content.

Image 2, Esperancita in *Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos*



Esperancita gaze stands for the most intimate perspective upon Recinos, his own. Recinos's mock point of view is re-creating his life and the city.

Heteroramia in this documentary offers more than the actual character looking at his surroundings. Eduardo Spiegel, the director of the film, proposes a representation of the gaze of one character from Recinos's paintings, 'Esperancita'. I interpret this child-like creature performing as the artist's conscience and as the keeper of his memory. In the documentary, she is a narrative voice and a point of view. Using 'Esperancita' recreates through animation, a gaze at Ciudad de Guatemala, and also a historical record, according to Recinos's pictorial works. 'Esperancita' is the one looking at the big frame, just as hers is the view we follow in the aerial shot of Ciudad de Guatemala. When the gaze is that of the filmmaker, it also presents a variety of relationships with the author. It might be that the camera is afar, just looking at Recinos exposing his own story and anecdotes, a student in a classroom perhaps. Then there is the sequence riding in the car while the main character drives. Also, the other one when Recinos visits the Miguel Ángel Asturias Cultural Centre (Guatemala's national

theatre).⁸⁵ In both cases, the camera is close to Recinos and at times, hand-held. This disposition of the gaze offers the idea of familiarity, confidence amongst peers. Such proximity, I argue, expresses a two set of off-screen relationships. First, the closeness that the documentary's scriptwriter and funder had with Recinos. Second, the familiarity that grew between the protagonist and the film director in the two years that took shooting *Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos* (E. Spiegel, personal communication, January 21, 2017).

Curiously, the parallelism of Recinos and Guatemala might be better fitting for Hernández's expectations for his fiction film. *Marimbas del Infierno*'s director sees his film as an object of memory, a document for generations of Guatemalans to come (J. Hernández, personal communication, August 18, 2017).⁸⁶ Contrarily, Spiegel considers that his non-fiction film speaks about a broad Central American subject. Although, even the documentary's director is aware that it is up to spectators finding a potential common ground between Recinos's life and work, and that of other artists in their own countries (E. Spiegel, personal communication, January 21, 2017). Spiegel's regional perspective seems more suited to the closing text in Hernández's motion picture, which opens the reading of the narrative beyond the city, nation and even region. These two productions' general impression appears to be more congruent with their financial sources than necessarily with the directors' intentions. The fiction film, having international economic support, presents a final thematic dialogue around the limitations of art creation that aligns with its deterritorial displayability. The documentary, a production of a Guatemalan non-for-profit organisation, looks for a more local palate. In either case, the directors' aim is merely one prospect for the movie. Overall, the elements that a motion picture depicts can yield contradicting outcomes. In the visual register, what is clear is the clash between the nomenclature given to a territory and the spaces that it can become. Even

⁸⁵ Recinos designed the Miguel Ángel Asturias Cultural Centre, and the documentary traces this process, making clear the architect's desire to include in the forms of the building the cultural heritage from aboriginal groups as well as the landscape that frames the city.

⁸⁶ Clearly, at least from the aims of the film director, Central America is not a prerogative of representation or consumption.

narrowing down to a single locality is incapable of generating a homogeneous belonging.

San Jose, a different town in a different country, Costa Rica, enhances the difficulty for finding consistency around the city as a category. The visual recreation of San José in *El Regreso*, a 2011 feature film by Hernán Jiménez, poses a peculiar condition; the director and main character is the same person. Consequently, when the camera watches Antonio (Tony), the movie's protagonist, it is not precisely a detached gaze from him. That perspective is a reflexive action by Hernán Jiménez, the director. Although the motion picture does include other characters' points of view, the city, the public space, remains mainly Tony's and, unavoidably, the director's gaze. Those open spaces, even the family home in *El Regreso*, are not represented in isolation. New York is the counterpart for Costa Rica's capital. It begins in the initial sequence where Tony is flying back home and continues with the direct references that he and his friend Cesar do. Hence, the chaos that the fiction proposes visually and argumentatively is not just a depiction of San José. This representation is comparing the protagonist's two spaces of compound belonging. Jiménez is offering a critical view of San José, as a city dweller and as an external observer.

El Regreso's heteroramia and its depiction of the city are not a self-representation of the nation, not even of josefinos. They are congruent with a group that economically and culturally are similar to those behind the camera. *El Regreso's* characters have higher education and access to mobility. Even Amanda, Tony's sister, who has been living at the family house for years, taking care of her son and father, shows such features. By the end of the film, she will establish a relationship with a foreigner. Territoriality is not mandatory for Tony's family and friends; it is a circumstance into which they can come and go. Ciudad de Guatemala is, in *Marimbas del Infierno*, a trap for its characters. That town is also the site where a plastic artist thrives in *Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos*. But for *El Regreso*, San José is just a nuisance, which given the right material conditions, the characters can overcome. A situation that is evocative of the ease of international movement that the three directors of these movies have.

Image 3, Director's mirror gaze in *El Regreso*



Director's mirrored image is the grounding of the diegesis, from outer look to internal struggles. Antonio brings his unpublished novel, also called "El Regreso", for his father to read. Tony's book even repeats the film's argument, the problematic relationship with his father. The city is his internal projection.

The representation of San José in *El Regreso* begins closer to the one that *Marimbas del Infierno* does of Ciudad de Guatemala and *A Mi Lado* of Managua.⁸⁷ The difference that *El Regreso* presents is the progression in the experience of the place. The illness of Tony's elderly father drags him out of New York and into San José. The main character verbally describes the Costa Rican capital as chaotic, where there is nothing for him. But the city comes back to its best shape, at least to the character's perception by the end of the film. A rebuilding that does not involve the material conditions of the San José where he arrives, it depends exclusively on the interactions that he can secure. This focus on relationships is evident in the sequences where the family house and car get broken. A septic tank stops working, and the car's engine

⁸⁷ In *A Mi Lado*, the representation of Managua is that of the continuation of La Chureca, a chaotic landfill. These locations are an exotic backdrop for the story of three destitute women. However, instead of analysing the cosmetic role of Managua, it is more fitting to leave this documentary by Jean-Cosme Delaloye for the section on 'the body'.

malfunctions during a short trip. In such cases, the attention is not on fixing those failures but in Tony having positive experiences out of them. In the first one, Antonio becomes Inti's protector, his little nephew, comforting him and bonding together. The situation is similar during the trip that Sofia and Tony take to the countryside. As the engine stops working, the two characters find the ideal moment to get intimate. This movie does propose a metonym for the country. However, it is still a very individual

Decentering the role of the location is not exclusive to *El Regreso*. The same city, San José, is present in *Irene*, a short film that takes this town as its foggy background. This sort of visual depiction is congruent with Alexandra Latishev's exploration of woman experiences rather than the Costa Rican landscape. The movie's protagonist moves through a city barely described, no landmarks as the framing of the actions do not reveal any hints about precise locations. The public spaces that Irene occupies are generic – for example, when she rides the bus, the image limits to her face, a bit of a window and the border of the seat. The scene is by night, thus through the window, the only thing to see is dim lights out of focus. The central element of the scene is the protagonist's body. In the bathroom sequence, Irene's and the director's gaze merge as the main character looks at herself in the mirror. I find that this intimacy between in and off-screen points of view properly reflect their shared experiential dimension.

As *Irene* develops, the proximity of the gaze and the protagonist only increases. The protagonist takes Santiago, her six years old son, to do some shopping at a market. The sequence begins with them already inside the building, in a corridor crammed with goods. The director presents the market as a maze, not the reconstruction of a familial space. Santiago gets strayed momentarily and out of sight, making Irene panic while the camera turns around her. She is the pivotal element while the world revolves madly around her. The gaze in this latter sequence is beyond observation; it reflects the main character's emotional condition. It is the concern for her lost son that makes her head spins. In this sequence, it is particularly evident that San José merely has a cosmetic role in this film. The centrality of the protagonist's perspective in this fiction's heteroramia does not attempt a reconstruction of the public space. The territory that Latishev explores is Irene, the character, a woman as herself. A situation that repeats in *Justicia Para mi Hermana*, where Escuintla happens to be just another city in which women suffer and fight back patriarchal oppression. Instead of private experiences of

a place, as what *El Regreso* proposes, *Irene* and *Justicia Para Mi Hermana* move the subject to another kind of joint space. For these two cultural objects, their common ground is the female experience; 'the city' makes no difference whatsoever.

4.2 The Rural

Dealing with the rural shows the need to separate, although in very generic terms, the different main sites that emerge from this film sample. While for the city, human interactions are practically the only defining element, when it comes to the rural, landscape features play a significant role. It is clear that an identitarian claim, be it national or regional, do not require a homogeneous land configuration. Just as geographical diversity is not an impossibility for group formation, also its similarities are not a guarantee of its belonging to a Central American imaginary. Specifically, in this collection of 24 movies, remoteness is a central element for representing areas with low population density. That sense of isolation derives from the distance between the film location and large urban centres, which remains a matter of human interaction. However, this separation also emerges due to profuse vegetation covering large expansions of land. This element depends upon geological formations, mostly mountainous terrains. At least this is the sort of proposal that films like *Distancia*, *El Lugar Más Pequeño* and, up to some point, *El Lugar Indeseado* do. Even if the first two films portray those features as isolation, it does not cause them to produce equivalent rural spaces.

Setting in vast natural areas uses that sense of remoteness to underline the representation of border situations. As a result, the lack of urbanisation is the depiction of a frontier space; the nation, or the region, meets a vanishing point for the notion of cohesion or inclusion. I argue that if there is a possibility in the rural for an identitarian CAC, it lies in its denial, since the movies represent zones of eviction. Presenting these contested landscapes as if Central American, is telling of the symbolic variability of a name and takes it even further. The rural in its struggle with an idea of belonging or the rule of law brings forth alternative territorialities, amongst other symbolic conformations. In this sense, instead of a CAC potentially diverse, the rural stands for alterity, one that goes beyond internal contradictions. In the countryside, some norms do not apply – which is menacing. Simultaneously, marginal populations find its liminal

condition as a retreat for their survival. *El Lugar Más Pequeño*, by Tatiana Huezo, is about that suspension of the rule of law and the consequent criminal and brutal actions against a non-combatant population. But the frontier does not come forth in all these cultural objects only as expulsion. It can also be an affirmation since it appears as the arena for the confrontation of not so uneven power structures, as what happens in *Lih Wina*. Significantly, in this last documentary, a new element comes into play, that of the ocean. A border in itself, the characters in the movie are its proficient navigators. Again, these 24 movies offer a broad range of experiences about the interaction among people and with the landscape. Thus, these motion pictures represent a variety of notions of rootedness or belonging, which hardly fits within a single territorial/symbolic category.

Distancia offers many alternatives for the use of remoteness. This fiction film, by Sergio Ramírez, from its very title, speaks of the interval between two points; that is the isolation don Tomás, the protagonist, commits to overcoming. In Ramírez's proposal, the rural does not equate as a static retreat; it becomes a road, a topic for the next section. At the moment, the interest is on the actual conditions of the location where don Tomás lives, his daily activities and the gazes that the motion picture offers of them. Don Tomás, a K'iche' peasant, works for a large landowner at whom he cannot look directly in the eyes. The film portrays this situation from a third observer's perspective. Don Tomás's gaze when it comes into the diegesis, is about memory. Don Tomás's point of view is the one he recreates in his notebook. There he is gathering the story of his relatives, and the movie depicts it while he writes. Don Tomás's notes tell about the assassination of his family by military forces, which remains unpunished. Therefore, this rural as remoteness portrays an instance of suspension of the rule of law. Such a situation is a default of the logic of inclusion within the state or the country. In this sense, *Distancia*'s representation of the rural is similar to *El Lugar Más Pequeño*'s proposal. But it is not the only one that Ramírez's film has to offer.

A menacing frontier contrasts with the beauty of the land that *Distancia* depicts. However, it conforms with the notion of remoteness, which is also coincident for the final linguistic gap that don Tomás faces between him and his daughter. Ramírez engages in showing a multiplicity of ruralities. Don Tomás, crosses through mountains

and safely keeps his family memory – his book – attempting to forge bonds between separate identitarian groups. Although he speaks Spanish and K'iche', it is impossible for him to communicate directly with his daughter Lucía once they meet. She only speaks Q'eqchi'. As the third chapter mentions, these characters locate within post-national groups, a different one for each. Even if they are living with the consequences of a national event, the Guatemalan civil war, they have diverging experiences of it. Don Tomás and Lucía's division in the film appears un-translatable. The father's book may contain the family's history, but it is still unreachable for Lucía. They do not manage to share a narrative, instead of creating a single rural for them, the interactions in the film offer diverse and even disconnected spaces. The various post-national belongings claim a place of their own, which does not subsume or adds to broader conglomerates. Bringing the K'iche' and Q'eqchi' identifications within the idea of CAC implies the repetition of a colonial act. Uniting those two groups under this isthmian belonging requires obviating their specific circumstances, their pre and post-national networks of interactions.

The rural that *El Lugar Más Pequeño* recreates is isolated and mountainous as well. Although, it is not the endless extension of *Distancia* nor its mosaic composition of heterogeneous belongings. Huezo's documentary is circumscribed to Cinquera's inhabitants experience at the time of the civil war in El Salvador.⁸⁸ Also, instead of farmworkers living in rustic huts and working for a patron, the inhabitants of Cinquera own their land. The coincidence between both films is depicting the rural as the space that protects these characters' lives and stories. In *El Lugar Más Pequeño*, there was a break with the rule of law; their dwelling place became a frontier land where people's sovereignty was taken away. However, after the war, as the survivors rebuilt their small village, the same territory acts as a safe ground for keeping their memory. The notion of contrast in *Distancia*, repeats in *El Lugar Más Pequeño*. Sunny days and the exuberant views of the forest, the peaceful lake and tame cattle, intertwine with the remembrance of cruelty and terror.

⁸⁸ The isolation of Cinquera is only relative, this small agrarian community is just about one hour and a half to the northeast of San Salvador.

Image 4, The quotidian gaze at *El lugar más pequeño*



The rural is remote, yet, everyday actions make it closer. This intimate gaze corresponds with the internal-like voice of the narrative. They create a shared memory between the characters and the audience.

The most significant shift of Huezo's documentary is that the diegesis does not enter momentarily in the characters' gaze; it is purely made out of them. If at times the camera observes the people of Cinquera, the constant presence of their voices, not as interviewees, but as if the memory itself was talking, gives the impression of self-representation. Accordingly, the characters are not performing any extraordinary task; an interview would be one. The characters, all through the documentary, carry on with their daily activities. This filming decision creates a dialogue that is visual and aural. The camera moves across different parts of this rural setting, public and private ones alike, roads, houses and fields. On its part, in the sound register, the director does not individually identify the characters' voices. Without on-camera interviews, each character's voice mixes seamlessly with the others; they become a single narrative. It gives the idea of a cohesive Cinquera, the space and memory of a self-aware collective.

El Lugar Más Pequeño offers a first-person approach to the slaughter that those living in Cinquera suffered during El Salvador's civil war. The internal gaze in Huezo's documentary aims at re-creating an undifferentiated human experience. The quotidian actions frame a choral narration. No specific individual is speaking in the motion

picture. Their memories are a voice that lurks in the audience's own head, a notion of proximity that bases in more than sharing contiguous lands. In *Distancia*, the gaze at the landscape is from afar. The proximity of Ramírez is with don Tomás's memory, with the book as a familial artefact, the rural is framing it. In Huezo's film, heteroramia leads to assuming a process of self-representation by the inhabitants of Cinquera because her documentary presents memory and territory as a single entity.

In Ramírez's fiction, don Tomás's immediate surroundings open up through his journey. The specificity of *Distancia*'s rural representation enters in an extended dialogue with a multiplicity of other Guatemalans. This depiction is for a national public – the idea of it. The director's aim, which matches part of his financial sources, is to recover a memory that he sees as his own, his history (S. Ramírez, personal communication, October 18, 2016). Huezo's quest was different. She looks for understanding the struggle of a group of characters rebuilding Cinquera after the war. This situation is reminiscent of the director's own journey. As a child, she fled from El Salvador during the war and went back to that very same place because her grandmother used to live there. For her, focusing on such personalised experience is convenient to show violence as an all-pervasive human threat that links everyone regardless of any exclusive regional reading (Comentarios sobre el documental *El Lugar Más Pequeño*, 2011). For *El Lugar Más Pequeño*, identitarian and distribution dynamics completely bypass their interaction with the nation or the region. Cinquera's inhabitants enter in a straight dialogue with a global audience. This proposal works for a director and funders who produce material for a circuit larger than El Salvador or Central America. Thus, creating a cinematic rurality in these two movies mixes the dwellers' local experiences with the broader set of interactions of the cultural objects, far from a country's or isthmian imperatives.

A diverse representation of the rural obeys more elements than how filmmakers make use of memory or their aims towards different circuits of displayability. Documentaries like *Lih Wina* and *El Lugar Indeseado* reiterate the perspective of the countryside as a borderland. However, these two productions portray a clash, not an overwhelming push. Characters fight back at expulsion dynamics; they stand defiant at their opposing forces. Alvaro Torres Crespo's *El Lugar Indeseado* represents Corcovado and more specifically, the gold panners making a meagre living on the outskirts both of a national

park and formal human settlements. As the previous chapter points out, these characters are in the margin of the law, but they are fighting amongst the interpretations and the proper enforcing of such national norms. In this struggle, the government has been unable to erase their liminal space. Now, in the documentary, Torres Crespo proposes recognising them within the idea of a Costa Rican identity.

Authorities consider that gold panners mining on the verge of a protected wilderness area, are a menace to its preservation. It follows then that they suppose a contradiction to the values of conservation and eco-friendliness associated with the country. The documentary challenges that idea by visually integrating the gold panners and their natural environment. When the film shows their shacks, it uses a general shot. Within this broad view, the structures appear both small and absorbed by the vegetation around them. Instead of breaking with their natural surroundings, they are mingling with it. Torres Crespo also depicts the work of the gold panners very differently from an industrial process of extraction. Theirs is manual labour; the direct strength of their muscles is interacting with the river, with the stones; it is an artisanal mining activity. This primogenial depiction of the rural, a low impact interaction between human beings (all males in this case) and nature, binds the characters and the idea of sustainability. Additionally, gold panners' use of leisure time, their gathering at night after work, be it to listen to football matches on a battery-operated radio or to discuss political leaders, furthers their claim of a Costa Rican citizenship. In my view, the movie's heteroramia affirms this binding act of panners and nation. The documentary has its leading gaze at eye level, at the side of the characters, as one of them when they are at their shacks. This perspective, mimicking that of any of the men sitting around at night, with dim candle lights, gives the impression of integration; the director's gaze identifies as theirs. This gaze reiterates the assertion of national belonging for both the gold panners and the documentary.

Image 5, *El lugar indeseado*, a mimicking gaze



Just like the gold panners merge seamlessly with the forest, the director's visual proposal also mimics their gaze. Their meeting point is extraction, a meagre one, but extraction, nonetheless.

Considering the central gaze represented by *El lugar indeseado*, here seems to be a dislocation between the image and its conditions of production. The documentary got support from a US institution, the same one where the director was studying at the time. Torres Crespo did live in Corcovado for a while. Nonetheless, his access to education and mobility is qualitatively different from that of his characters. What I propose that brings these two actions together, cinema and mining is extraction. Torres Crespo's is a low budget movie, one that amongst its aims had the future financing of a feature-length documentary on the same topic. Hence, without reaching a full industrial dimension, *El Lugar Indeseado* seeks to profit from the role of the image as a commodity. It went into a rural environment, and without causing much disruption, took with it a story to be consumed elsewhere. This dynamic is equivalent to panning gold out of the river in Corcovado. The mineral is only valuable as a commodity that miners can sell to sustain their living. Gold panners and moviemaker take something from one place and profit from its value in a global market. The rural for both is a well from which resourceful craftsmanship can turn a potential presence into an object of consumption. Hence, the gold panners and the film, instead of being excluded, are negotiating their presence.

Lih Wina's variant of the rural as a borderland is unique within this sample. The metaphor of the frontier as suppression of the law is not menacing individuals' sovereignty but affirms it. Like in no other film, the protagonists of the documentary have a wide diversity of ethnic and linguistic characteristics. They inhabit a special zone. Their heterogeneity as a human group has a legal counterpart, theirs is an autonomous region, and as such, they can repeal national legislation. Hence, for the people living in Awastara and Bilwi (Puerto Cabezas), their frontier condition does not translate exclusively as marginalisation, it is a more complicated situation. They do claim a lack of interest from the Nicaraguan central government and at the same time, demand that it respects their traditions. It is in this context that the documentary portrays turtle fishing. This community opposes the national ban on this activity on the grounds of not having any other economic opportunities nor proper governmental support for their development. By using their autonomic condition to keep on catching turtles, they are not infringing the law; they are imposing their sovereignty. The rural in Dania Torres Hurtado's *Lih Wina* challenges the homogeneity of the nation. Puerto Cabezas is not a site that acts as an exception to the idea of a country because law and citizenship are not absent; they are just others. The alternative that *Lih Wina* presents is a reminder of the borderland as a negotiation, even more, that any group is continuously in negotiation. In the documentary, the Región Autónoma de la Costa Caribe Norte (RACCN) is simultaneously in and out of Nicaragua. Out of the country, because it sets its own rules. It is inside Nicaragua because they demand their inclusion amongst the country's priorities. RACCN statement of sovereignty, the representation of its diversity, are not separatists' acts, they speak of identities and belongings as relationships, processes of overdetermination.

Image 6, *Lih Wina's* multiple gazes



From near to foreign, the film director explores a territory with a sense of unity but with segregated levels of access. Moving images traverse those separations but keep a sense of their differentiation.

Torres Hurtado's documentary does not depict Bilwi's heterogeneity as idyllic coexistence. The film's more recurrent gaze is that of a witness, one that additionally speaks through the narrator in Spanish, just as the others with an authority figure in the diegesis. The gaze is familial and takes part in the action only a few times. That is the case when a cart is selling turtle meat across the central town roads and then as the camera strolls down the marketplace. There is also proximity when fishers unload turtles at the harbour and in transitions sequences with images of sailing along the coast. Addressing the characters, local authorities, fishers and butchers, the documentary steps back and distances the gaze, the director's point of view is that of an external interviewer. A detachment that becomes greater in the butchering sequence, as the camera appears to hide, maximising the idea of an outside perspective, one that cannot even be disclosed. Considering that Torres Hurtado lives in Bilwi, the different gazes reveal that the frontier is not a unified space. The diversity of the characters is capable of drawing other demarcations. It negotiates further divisions amongst groups, generating units with even more localised, racialised or linguistic specific belongings. Thus, *Lih Wina* exceeds binarisms. The central Nicaraguan government and local authorities are just two of several possible and non-exclusive groups interacting and building their versions of spatiality within RACCN.

Lih Wina's narrative stance is not neutral; its gaze's greater proximity is with the Spanish speaking authorities. Cinema, in this case, is hierarchically at the same level of local government officials. Although RACCN is not remote for Torres Hurtado's documentary, nor it narratively absents from the sovereignty struggle, the key factor in its production is mobility. The perspective that the film offers is of a traveller, a movable gaze able to transport across territories and symbolic delimitations. Spanish acts as a lingua franca, the authority's gaze that goes with it translates difference, and thus homogenises it. The movie is creating an accessible rural, mediating in a conflict that it asks to be considered by further actors. Filmmaking tells of other interactions, those outside its diegesis. Mainly, the international NGO that promotes the use of media, more specifically journalism as inclusion and recognition. The documentary enters in another dynamic of identification. As Douglas Kellner proposes, "media stories provide the symbols, myths, and resources through which we constitute a common culture and through the appropriation of which we insert ourselves into this culture" (2015, p. 7). It is the image as presence, the space that matters is the screen. At this point, Central America is not even a gatekeeper for these narratives; they circulate as immaterial objects within deterritorial networks.

Nicté by Andrea Dardón and *Xic Vuh* by Edgar Sajcabún use natural areas as frontiers for other reasons than memory or marginalisation. They use it as a fantastic backdrop for their stories. Dardón finds in a lake, in its shore while the water slowly covers in mist, the magical frame for her representation of

motherhood (A. Dardón, personal communication, June 17, 2016). For Sajcabún, the location is a metaphor for the moral struggle of his characters. In these two films, the rural performs as suspension of reality rather than law. However, heteroramia challenges the apparent similarity in their symbolic use of the rural. *Nicté* has one single static gaze. Framed between two tree trunks, the female character and the lake

Image 7, *Nicté*'s fantastic and restricted space



A single static shot, the action is internal, and the spectator is kept at bay.

are always afar. The experience is kept at bay, just as the language of the film is inaccessible, except to Ma'am speakers. In *Xic Vuh* that situation changes, the gaze includes observation and participation. The point of view of the children, the two boys descending the metaphorical abyss and the girl waiting on top of the cliff are present in the film. Sajcabún's fiction is creating a bridge between the spectators and his character's perspective of the world, similar to the one he tends between cinema and the Kaqchikel fable about the crab the characters mention at the beginning of the short film. Their gaze and language – there are Spanish subtitles for the Kaqchikel dialogues – are present and accessible. His, then, in my view, is a reachable exotic. Meanwhile, Dardón's created space remains a distant exotic one. Hence, two fiction films from Guatemala give a different approach to the rural as a magic place, for one is open, for the other is closed.

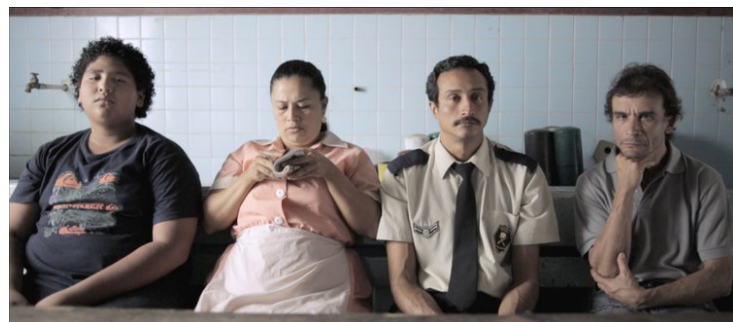
Analysing these two motion pictures as interaction processes is useful for understanding their variants in creating a rural space. *Nicté* has support from Universidad del Cine in Argentina, where Dardón studied at the time of its production. For her, motherhood is a personal experience, but at Laguna de Chicabal – the film's location – she is a visitor, a regular one but not a dweller. Dardón's Guatemalan identification faces other local belongings of which she is not a part, such as the Ma'am community. For *Xic Vuh* there is a communal organisation channelling international funding. Sajcabún also attended a film school abroad, EICTV, however, he self-identifies as Kaqchikel and at the time of recording his short movie, he was a Comalapan resident. Besides, the cinema's overdetermination has further implications for these cultural objects. Their dealings with exoticism in no case obtrude their displayability. The familial actions of Dardón's character avoid their untranslatability because of the language gap. For Sajcabún, it is clear that his fiction is a human story, for which the local tones do not stand as symbolic barriers (E. Sajcabún, personal communication, October 7, 2016). The rural is not being negotiated in the frame of a Central American belonging. It is interacting with a global displayability.

There is yet another option for depicting the rural. *Por las plumas* offers a version of this space as transitioning. Neto Villalobos chooses to present a tale about friendship in a vanishing point between rural and urban areas. The main human characters in the film are not working in the fields. Two adult men, Chalo and Jasón, are security

officers. Candy, leading female role, is a housekeeper and finally, Erlán, a teenage boy, is a student at a high school, trumpet player and occasionally sells fruit. For Villalobos, the rural is where the characters can distance themselves from law enforcement agents. Their hobby, cockfighting, is legally forbidden; they need remote places to keep it ongoing. That expectation fails since police officers will raid the arena where the fight occurs and even capture Rocky, Chalo's rooster. On top of that, Chalo and Jasón must attend an official examination to obtain the permit to carry guns at the local police headquarters. Thus, rather than being on the outskirts, their rural area is in the process of incorporation; one that they oblige.

The look at these characters varies. There is one of static distance when they are at work. The gaze is far closer and integrated while they travel in a bus. It even depicts a first-person perspective when Chalo is preparing Rocky for their first fight. Moreover, heteroramia does not limit to living entities; the four characters are seen sitting together from the position of the TV set. Chalo struggles during the whole

Image 8, Media as bonding in *Por las Plumas*



Staring at and becoming image, gathered around the TV set, the technological device's gaze is conjoining nation with characters.

film to have a signal on the TV at his workplace. The film closes with the entire bunch sitting in front of this artefact. The position of the gaze is the one that the TV set has, while in the audio a typical jingle from the oldest ongoing TV show in Costa Rica is in the foreground. In this respect, technology mediates the integration of the nation. The rural is not passively participating in this merging process. At least Chalo has actively been looking to be within this interaction. In this aspect, *Por las Plumas* repeats *El Lugar Indeseado*'s representation of the presence of the idea of a nation as media.

Such a notion of a country's identity is not evicting the rural, radio and TV's unidirectional signals are embracing those areas. National narratives reach well where the characters of these two films live. Besides, media is not offering something alien to them. In Torres Crespo's documentary, gold panners listen attentively to the football match. In Villalobos's fiction, Chalo's final success is to gather his friends in front of

the TV set. These characters are not outsiders of the nation, nor liminal citizens in this relationship; they are within the coverage area and interested in what media have to offer. They share the national narrative regardless of the precarious conditions of their reception sets. *Por las Plumas*, in particular, presents a Costa Rica that has not evicted nor restricted the characters or where they live. Media coverage was always there, Chalo just needed to figure out how to access it. Nation, family and friendship were open to him; he was the one in denial to them. Chalo's final success is his integration.

Following the final shot of *Por las Plumas* with Chalo and his group sitting together watching TV, with that apparatus as the pivot of this group formation, belonging becomes image. Hence, this relationship is simultaneously commodifiable. The immaterial mobility of motion pictures projects them beyond the borders of the city and the rural. Or for that matter, those of the nation or the region. *Por las Plumas* is aiming at a broader displayability; Costa Rica is but one of the multiple places for its circulation. There is no mention of Puriscal, the film's shooting location, in the diegesis, nor are there any visible landmarks. Such anonymity subdues any specificities of territoriality to a dematerial identitarian space, one associated with media. The process of group formation involving Chalo, Jasón, Candy, Erlán and Rocky is a mediatic one. Even the rooster's name already evokes globalised narratives. And at the end, the human characters seal their union as they sit to watch TV. This situation is similar to the media-links of *Lih Wina*; the difference being that in *Por las Plumas* the characters also perform that process. The rural transforms in Villalobos's film in a type of bonding through images, a promise rather than a threat.

Cinema, in its dynamic of image consumption, brings character and audience into a single plane of belonging: spectatorship. Our relationship with Villalobos's and Torres Hurtado's characters is mediatic. Here lies another sensible challenge to the sort of identitarian constructions of CAC and like territorial categories. Bhabha (1999), refers to Derrida when arguing that interactions through media alter the sense of a *national ontology*. Media brings a change of technical nature, "[t]hese new media apparatuses are distinctive for their temporalities of 'acceleration' and 'tele-technic dislocation.' They enable us to 'access' a range of materials and material cultures with an ease never before imagined" (Bhabha, 1999, p. IX). The notion of territoriality undergoes a

transmutation. There is an immaterial space of shared identification, that of being with/as image – which defies local, national and regional delimitations.

4.3 The Road

I interpret that, In this film sample, the roads that the characters have to take are not communicating different points within a single land. These paths are at the centre of experiences of displacement and recomposition of identitarian links for which the notion of Central America is either absent or at most is a tag for global recognition. One film is straightforward in demonstrating that nation's sphere of action overrides the isthmian potential for integration. There are other depictions of the road contesting CAC by uniting sites inside the category's territorial proposal with lands far beyond it. In those interactions, Central America is not the one extending or negotiating with other regions or geographical configurations. Instead, the characters perform self-contained local, national or religious identifications for enabling their exchanges. Migration inevitably associates with the portrayal of 'the road'. Once again, these motion pictures engage with that kind of journey from a variety of optics and conditions.

The cinematic function of the road as well as the infrastructure that constitutes it, share a characteristic Christopher Morris considers that pathways bring to a movie. They are "a reflexive image of continuity and linearity that may suggest, among other meanings, the act of reading" (Morris, 2003, p. 25). The road is not imposing an interpretation; it reminds of the multiple symbolic possibilities when creating a space. It is not a one-dimensional experience, nor does it have a unique motivation. These films are not depicting one people on the move. Mobility is a crucial consideration. Travelling is very dissimilar between most of the characters on the road and those behind the camera. Travelling or displacement, then, is far from a unifying value for all the persons interacting in the filmmaking process.

Image 9, *María en tierra de nadie*, different experiences of the road



It is not the same road for all the characters in the documentary. The migrants face a menace. The relatives of those disappeared go mourning tracing back those they have lost. The filmmaker's gaze observes them; it is at a safe distance or is only present along the secure tracts of the road.

Comparing *El Regreso* with the documentary *María en tierra de nadie* exemplifies the gaps amongst the different experiences of migration with utmost clarity. In the introductory sequence of the fiction film, Antonio sits comfortably on an aeroplane. He is coming back to Costa Rica, after spending years studying and working as a writer in the US. On the other hand, in the documentary, Sandra and Marta are fleeing poverty. They have to ride as stowaways in the train known as 'La Bestia' to avoid being caught by police authorities while they traverse Mexico trying to get to the US. Not only is Tony going back home instead of leaving, but his journey also is a safe ride. The women in the documentary, on the other hand, are jeopardising their lives. Going through migration does not flatten experiences of travel, the road traces differently for each one; it is in the creation of new and multiple identities. As Hamid Naficy states, "...exile must not be thought of as a generalized condition of alienation and difference, or as one of the items on the diversity-chic menu. All displaced people do not experience exile equally or uniformly" (1999, p. 4). The qualitative differences in the access to that mobility render heterogeneous performances, various notions of belonging in transit. Thus, migration affirms that an identitarian configuration is a matter of interactions and not exclusively territoriality. This situation is far from a Central American phenomenon. The characters migrating take part in a dynamic of mobility occurring on a global scale, for which location is but one of its variables. Income, education, gender or religious beliefs often play more important roles within these experiences of displacement and relocation.

Even if limiting this analysis to documentaries, Tomás Guevara's, *Ausentes*; Florence Jaugey's, *El Engaño*; and Marcela Zamora's, *María en tierra de nadie*; their representations of the road are far from homogeneous. For sure, migration – a complex and multifaceted experience – can hardly be thoroughly represented in a

single film. Nonetheless, these three motion pictures do not create a composite narrative about displaced populations in Central America. Guevara presents one aftermath of migration, almost the downside of a successful relocation to the US. The road in itself matters not as much as the distance that it creates, one that disrupts relationships. Jaugey's documentary explores the reasons that are pushing or deceiving women to leave their homes. Migration, then, is not a decision; it is a trap. This stratagem profits from the vulnerability of Nicaraguan women, their precarious living conditions and the loss of citizenship once they leave their country. It is in Zamora's movie that the road becomes a central element. Her film traces the menaces and solidarities that people, particularly women, forced into migration, meet across Mexico.

The road in *Ausentes* is a spectral presence, the characters are never travelling on it, but it lurks as the barrier keeping mothers and sons from being reunited and as a threshold too. The ghostly road is unnamed when the documentary presents mothers in the US and their sons in El Salvador. The actual journey is secondary to the resulting separation. Also, the same road is a point of no return. Throughout the film, authority figures express how migration changes those reaching the US and those who stay in El Salvador as well. This process is not peculiar to Salvadorean or Central Americans arriving at the US; authorities explain that it is familiar to any migrant. Mother and son split swaps a relationship of care and attention for the provision of material goods and somehow neglect. If mother and son reunite in the US, many elements keep a distance between the two of them. It might be the time they have spent separated, the new place or the new family members – or all of the above. Experiencing 'the road' is not bringing diversity into Central America as a heterogeneous unity. The analysis of the representations of space barely shows standardised or interconnected significations or depictions of "the road" – or "the city" or "the rural" for that matter. Instead, these locations have a diversity of functions and symbolic implementations, which has a better explanation in their transnational and deterritorial interactions than in a regional criterion or as part of an artistic movement. Groups are not given; they are in a permanent foundational state, a notion that comes from ANT.

The women that Jaugey brings to her 2012 documentary, *El Engaño*, have more dire consequences than family separation or substitution of roles because of migration.

After they are tricked into leaving Nicaragua, their lives continue to be at risk once they manage to escape back to their home country. The road is no barrier as in *Ausentes*; it is a constant menace. Through this path, women are taken away from the relative secure coverage of their citizenship. Moreover, the road remains open to the transnational criminal organisations abducting them. These women are no longer safe back in Nicaragua, and thus, their faces are concealed from our view. Their images become scraps of themselves, small pieces of a puzzle scrambled for security reasons. A fundamental element that *El Engaño* brings forth in the analysis of CAC is that the women in this documentary become foreigners as soon as they are outside of Nicaragua. They do not have to step into Mexico or the US., Guatemala is an alien place for them already. These women, merely travelling into another country inside the isthmus, can fall into a phase of illegality. The criminal groups exploit the condition that migration brings, a suspension of national citizenship, which they handle as proficient transnational agents. *El Engaño* exposes simultaneously two variants of the road and its travellers. Some are anchored into localised networks and thus prone to be exploited outside of them. The others are mobile, operating national frontiers as porous borders that they can traverse and use as a cloak to hide away their illegal activities. Here the criminal organisations are code masters, in-betweeners of many nations. These groups are acting in their own space, one where they move freely but that proves alien and menacing to their chosen prey. That territory, where the criminal organisations operate, does not depend on the idea of Central America. Meanwhile, the women who fell victim to those groups, have no solace in that regional configuration either.

The main characters of *El Engaño* and *María en tierra de nadie* are scarcely protected even in their home countries. It is another identitarian structure, Catholicism, that gives support and haven to these women. In Jaugey's documentary, *Hermanas Oblatas*, a congregation of nuns, rescues one of the Nicaraguan women abducted to Guatemala. Security for this movie's protagonists does not rely on their geographical condition. In Marcela Zamora's documentary, as Sandra and Marta attempt to reach the US, Christianity is the transnational belonging granting the travellers access to support along the road. The last chapter already reviewed Zamora's documentary depiction of migration as a deterritorialised dynamic. Christianity, aligns with that idea in both

motion pictures, appearing as an identity of global scope. Catholicism translates into an actual shelter to uprooted individuals on foreign land – starting in Guatemala. This religious belief becomes a matter of creating space, a safe one independently of national or regional conditions. An interactive approach indicates that, for the migrants in the documentary, Catholicism is the relevant belonging. Central America is but the label that sardonically, given the circumstances awaiting them ahead on the road, gathers and greets them as they come into Mexico.

Keeping track of Sandra and Marta as much to the survival experiences of Jaugey's women, their paths represent relationships instead of territorial rootedness. A Christian brotherhood, as a member of 'Las Patronas' explains, enables solidarity exchanges bonding people of diverse national origins. Central America is not projecting itself through these migrants. The religious belief is so overwhelming that, in Zamora's case, becomes part of the documentary's structure. *María en tierra de nadie* reproduces a Via Crucis metaphor. At each nodal point of the path between Guatemala and the northern Mexican border with the US, the film collects a more nightmarish story of those that came before Sandra and Marta. In those stops, there are shelters that Christian led groups organise for helping so many other people like Sandra and Marta. Considering the ordeal laying ahead of the migrant's journey, the road they take is no longer a metaphor of penance; it is one for them. Parents and kin of those who disappeared trying to reach the US complete that image; they are pilgrimaging after the victims of migration. Therefore, Christianity is more than the solidarity that is met along the road, the travel in itself translates as a religious quest, a martyrdom imposed by economic expulsion.

Catholicism references do not turn migration into a spiritual experience. Looking at the road as relationships helps in discerning that the religious narrative uniting documentaries' characters with their benefactors, cohabits territories that are also populated by those menacing their lives. Zamora's motion picture identifies individuals and institutions, be it in Mexico or Central America, as causing, or neglecting their responsibility to prevent, the migrants' vulnerability. In Jaugey's narration, victims fell to the traps their neighbours set to them. The road that these films represent does not proclaim a more substantial coverage of an isthmian belonging. In any case, travelling always implies to get away from the local. This mobility urges to look for other

identitarian possibilities where the geographical consideration is secondary in the forging of alliances. These deterritorial links are not purely symbolic, direct actions of clerics and laypeople alleviate women's vulnerability. Just as well, not a tag or religious imagery are keeping Sandra and Marta safe from disposability along their journey. Nor praying saves the women abducted in *El Engaño*. Networks are extending to relieve migrants' hardships, and also there is another set of exchanges profiting from their exploitation, specifically cross-borders criminal groups. These webs are in a struggle over the same territory, even over the same people, showing the fragility of land for designating a homogeneous symbolic content or offering security to its dwellers.

There is one element where the films following migrants in precarious conditions do share a common trait. Whenever the road becomes highly dangerous, there is no register of the people travelling on it. Indeed, it is not my opinion that filmmakers are neglecting the representation of that experience out of petty considerations. The people who take those sections of the road do it out of desperation. Migrants know their lives will be at risk but for them desisting is just as threatening. Hence, this absence testifies to the unavoidable disconnectedness between those on the profilmic space and those behind the camera. Forced migration remains an experience that is only watched. And even that observation is just partial. Its full dimension, in these motion pictures, does not come through. For the women in Guevara's *Ausentes*, the menacing road did exist. They survived that journey, but the documentary will not venture down that path. *Ausentes*'s heteroramia offers the gaze of the journalist when interviewing authorities, the women already in the US or their sons still in El Salvador. The gaze moves closer to the characters when they are in familiar – secure – places.

Absences fill *El Engaño*'s heteroramia. The first one is the face of the women that criminal groups took out of their country to exploit sexually. Their faces remain hidden; their road is unreachable. For Jaugey's movie, the acts and presence of criminal groups create spaces that it can only depict as fictionalised sequences. The recreations this documentary makes mix two points of view, one for the abducted victims, other for the sites where they arrive. The first gaze is that of a passenger, a person riding on a bus. The other one is the concealed camera at a bar, a case in which both gaze and place are archetypes – an investigator entering into a den. But proximity varies in these two representations; the bus remains a more familiar object,

one where the perspective is that of the individual travelling. It is this mechanisation of the gaze, riding on a means of transport, the one that *María en tierra de nadie* repeats. Zamora's documentary makes a self-representation, the film crew following the migrants. When the documentary traces back 'Las Patronas' and 'La Bestia' the gaze becomes that of those on board a vehicle, asking passers-by for directions. That is the direct experience of the road that the filmmaker had. For the rest, the documentary witnesses Marta and Sandra heading for the road and back from it. The motion picture only ventures in the actual path when it follows the group of people making a procession for their missing relatives. For Zamora's documentary, the space controlled by criminal groups also proves to be forbidden territory.

Image 10, Don Tomás's gaze in *Distancia*



Shared objects, a vehicle or a book, mediate the gap between director's sphere of experience and that of *Distancia*'s main character. Those are the props enabling to represent the world as don Tomás sees it.

The first-person look at the road, coincident with the mechanisation of travelling, is also typical to its fictional representation, which is the case of *Distancia*. Although this film has no criminal organisations claiming sovereignty over the path that don Tomás embarks on, vehicles do mediate in experiencing the road. In depicting the landscape, *Distancia*'s gaze opts for an observational perspective from afar. This point of view describes the enormity of the route ahead. Ramírez's fiction has closer visual proximity with the characters when they are riding vehicles, mainly don Tomás's gaze in the motorised conveyance. It is then that the film's heteroramia includes his point of view. It is while riding vehicles that there is no distance between gaze and character; it is in that space that we see the world as don Tomás does. This dynamic is similar to the one the third chapter refers to when don Tomás writes in his book. An artefact enables filmmaker and protagonist to come closer. Cinema, in this sample, offers an image that (re)produces a partial relationship with migration under unsafe conditions. Mechanic – familial – objects act as the contact zone for accessing and depicting that

tale. Mechanisation is the normative translation of the road when integrating the first-person gaze of those forced to travel. This type of gaze and space of interaction resonates with Kittler's (1999) attention to how technical procedures supersede on the enunciation of cinematic messages. Hence, this proximity tells of an interaction with both potentially more familial spaces for the directors as well as for cinema's industrial process. The serial shot, the automated recording of images, which Kittler further links to death as a spectacularised action (Kittler, 1999, pp. 122; 124-125)

The gap between the experience of mobility for those expelled to the road and the ones filming them narrows down when vehicles intervene, but it is not at all overcome. The familiarity with the industrial object indicates the webs both groups share as much as their differentiated access. Don Tomás rides as a guest in the cars, a disposable one, as the sequence at the clinic shows.⁸⁹ Marta and Sandra are stowaways on a train where they get robbed by criminal groups. The women from *El Engaño* were unwilling passengers on a bus that took them away from Nicaragua. The filmmakers' experience of migration is closer to Antonio's, in *El Regreso*, safely travelling across borders. Tony and the directors are invited or welcomed on their journeys; they are not risking their lives. From the profilmic to the relations and moviemaking processes, every road does drift apart. The networks that these images integrate are not the same as those of which the economically displaced populations are part. Neither is there a single structure of relationships extending through the isthmus. There are many cohesive narratives on the making, which are struggling for sovereignty over territorial configurations that overlap, overlook or stretch far beyond the doubtful strait.

4.4 The Body

The body shares with the previous categories a sense of territoriality. Hence, it is as valid as any to explore the interaction between representation and CAC from an identitarian perspective. This section conceptualises the body as a mixture of

⁸⁹ Don Tomás gets a lift by a couple driving a car. The driver, a man, is not particularly pleased with the decision. They stop by the road to look at the landscape, and don Tomás starts to feel unwell. The couple drops him by a clinic, leaving immediately without waiting to hear for a diagnosis.

materiality and meaning. It is space, therefore, not given but created. The body is not unity but another network, a dynamic that creates spatiality, symbolism and belonging. This perspective of a discursive body is congruent with ANT. It is as well with another of the academics that I have used across my research, and who is a referent in contemporary gender studies, Judith Butler. Butler (1999) considers that “inner” and “outer” references to the body are only meant to create a sense of stability as if there is an essence of the self.

“The displacement of a political and discursive origin of gender identity onto a psychological ‘core’ precludes an analysis of the political constitution of the gendered subject and its fabricated notions about the ineffable interiority of its sex or of its true identity” (Butler, 1999, p. 186).

Under such circumstances, it is clear that Butler argues that gender and the body in itself are discourses. For this research, it implies that corporeality is in co-construction and constant alteration. The body is not internally endowed of any particular meaning; its symbolism is a matter of interactions and representations. I argue that these 24 movies are not interacting with Central American bodies, or at least do not present them as marked by that belonging. Oppositely, the body in these films is an incarnation of networks. It is negotiating and creating many identitarian possibilities. The corporeal entity can be a territory of its own; it can relate to other land-based notions of rootedness as well as with the body politics of gender roles. The interaction with cinema does not link the body to a region; filmmaking introduces it to its production and distribution networks. By translating the body into an image, movies open it up for new notions of belonging while enabling its transformation into a commodity.

An individual that is internally multiple, projecting and translating a diversity of interactions, disputes static notions of identity. The geographical location of a body is not all there is to know about its perception of belonging. Neither it is possible to reduce identitarian possibilities to specific attitudes within a group. My exploration of the body through these 24 films allows to distance the corporeal form from a restrictive idea of womanhood or manhood. The alternation of functions that the characters in these 24 films fulfil underlines that they perform a wide spectrum of gendered roles. These bodies traverse a corporeality that is both public and private, as Michel Serres put it,

they are equivalent to an actor-network.⁹⁰ Central America is but one of the many tags that the body rejects. This approach follows what Myra Medible (2007) argues regarding place and representation. "We understand that even when shared contingencies of history, ancestry, language, or material conditions serve to foster the illusion of cohesion, embodied selves rarely comply with the terms or theories that attempt to define them" (Medible, 2007, p. 5). Mapping the interactions of these bodies tracks codes that are not reconstituting regions or groups necessarily. My proposal at this point, once the body departs from a Central American frame, moves towards comprehending its relationship(s) with cinema.

There are various ways for the body to interact with filmmaking. However, its representation according to gender identities does come across as a pivotal issue for defining plenty of these movies' thematic approach. There are 11 films for which womanhood and the experience of characters identified as women, the situations they face due to their gender, are their central topic and motivation. However, that guiding function of the body is not equivalent to a normative representation of a gender role; these movies offer a collection of gazes and experiences showing diversity and contradictions instead. *Nicté* and *Irene* portray women bodies, motherhood in specific, from opposite extremes. The first short fiction opts for depicting a mother at ease with her task, so much that it turns into a mystical experience. The latter film associates the duty of childcare/bearer with frustration, almost like divine punishment. Motherhood and womanhood become different spaces in each of these movies. The body remains free in its construction, allowing a range of representations that refer to individualised conditions rather than normative gendered roles, or a regional frame of possibilities. From a geographical perspective, these two films are depicting the body as a deterritorial entity. This representation is also immaterial, as it reaches us as moving

⁹⁰ Serres affirms that as the body meets digital interactions it becomes a code, "[a]n indefinite, decipherable, and undecipherable cipher, open and closed, social and discreet, accessible-inaccessible, public and private, intimate and secretive" (2015, p. 75).

images. At the core of these symbolic constructions lies performativity, the expression and function of the networks that I am mapping.

Image 11, Irene, the body as a territory



The gaze is with and is also that of the main character, Irene. It journeys through Irene's bodily and emotional experiences.

The woman in *Nicté* is primogenial, procuring to be untouched by the camera. Andrea Dardón, the movie's director, creates a window into her own experience of motherhood, so personal that it keeps spectators at a distance. Mother and child remain undisturbed. Alternatively, Alexandra Latishev's protagonist, Irene, is a compound of the director's perception of women struggling to raise children and work to support themselves on their own. Latishev's film mixes theoretical research and everyday observation to produce a visual narrative where the character is always close. Irene's body is a territory under exploration. It becomes the object that the director dissects to try to understand the probable frustrations and needs of women facing economic limitations and solely responsible for any dependants. The gazes in these two motion pictures are not exploring an undifferentiated subject of Central American motherhood. In both cases, the centrality of the body, director/subject

proximity, is the core of the representation. Besides, the two filmmakers avoid the presence of land markers or any specific national or regional distinctiveness. For the diegesis, personal conditions bypass identity proposals related to geography, cultural groups and even womanhood. Yes, motherhood is the subject of interest for these two films. But its representation fosters a deterritorial translatability. The idea of being a mother is breaking away from delimited notions of land and the gendered body itself.

Wata, by Enrique Castro and Ana Endara, has an additional option for motherhood. First of all, in their short film, neither being a mother, or a woman are leading topics. The directors' focus for their narrative is water scarcity as a global threat. To represent the dire consequences of a world that ran out of drinking water, *Wata* chooses to follow a single protagonist, a woman. Between struggle and remembrance, the unnamed woman has no other option to survive the global drought but to cannibalise the last standing symbolic element of her memory of the loved ones. As a result, I find that in *Wata*, the body's symbolism is very ambivalent. The protagonist, at one time, gave life, thus the remembrance in her dream sequences of abundant water and joy next to a small girl. Regretfully, overexploitation has led to a world where she must become Cronus; now she devours life. She has reached a point where all the remaining freshwater at hand is that of a small bowl that holds a fish. This pet is the last token of the child in her dreams. By living in this dystopic future, her body, regardless of gender, carries the memory of what we are now, and it is simultaneously an omen of where we are heading. In spite of it, her corporeality still serves gendered tropes. Thus, in my view, the woman as a goddess mother is a metaphor for the world, a higher power which nourishes us now but that as we deplete it, it can also annihilate us. Thus, Castro and Endara's motion picture values ecological catastrophe not in its affectation to biodiversity but for its direct implications for their leading character, and hence humanity with it. In this instance, the body moves away again from an exclusively gendered representativity.

Heteroromanticism in *Wata* includes the character's gaze for making her predicament ours. We are not only watching at her; we are in her flesh as she faces water scarcity. For *Wata*, the main element of representation is the body; it individualises material conditions and translates them into emotional, personal struggles. This narrative role, then, is similar to the one in *Irene* and *Nicté*, their stories pursue an identification with

the characters themselves. These three fictions avoid the identifiability of their filming locations. This decision underlines the pre-eminence of the corporeal entity as the axis of belonging. Hence, these women characters are not constituent parts of other lands. The plurality of their representation addresses the many different territories that each of their bodies can be. We face three identitarian spaces, two of them, *Nicté* and *Irene*, are heavily focused on gendered roles – although not necessarily submissive to them. *Wata* offers a more variable dynamic; the protagonist enters and exits from those roles as part of constructing her body into a global space, the rootedness of humanity. The body erasing the certainties of a geographical region does not depend on its interpretation as a discrete object. Instead, is its possibility to mark singular, yet somehow common points. That is why symbolic contents are absorbed, resignified and recast away. Meaning in a network is not a definition in circulation; it is in constant negotiation. The lack of participation of an isthmian referentiality in the creation of these bodies-spaces shows that in their relationships, a geographical immediacy and a historical perspective of citizenship are less than secondary topics.

María en tierra de nadie has a special consideration for what women face as displaced people. Still, the documentary presents its characters specifically as Central American. Zamora asks for the isthmian community to protect its migrants as they cross Mexico heading towards the US. It appears as if guaranteeing a minimum of safety for migrants is up to each body's possibility of adding up to a larger group. Zamora portrays the Central American belonging as a more substantial structure than the solitary migrant. Such scale also functions for the displayability of the film, implying in both cases that attention to the particularities of each individual or motion picture is only reachable under a larger gathering category. Marta and Sandra's corporeality through the documentary become a shared possession. These women as image are no longer on their journey; they get into a new process of exchange, one outside their reach. The isthmus is not inscribing anything in particular upon the migrant women. It is for the sake of transnational politics and cinema that their bodies circulate as Central American. A dynamic for which Elsaesser's (2019) critique of global circulation through film festivals is relevant. He identifies in such events a double occupancy, for they allow diverse productions to expose their narratives and gather support for their endeavours; however, in the lights of that same internationalism, they are also "an

open invitation to self-conscious ethnicity and retribalization" (Elsaesser, 2019, p. 280). It is this latter tendency added to the lacking identitarian role of CAC that justifies my belief that the deployment of this category leans towards exoticism and colonialism.

Florence Jaugey's representation of womanhood is far from the prevalent victim condition of Zamora's migrants. *El Engaño* showcases women as suffering from violence but as protectors and perpetrators of it too. Jaugey's depiction of women who experienced sexual exploitation avoids their faces and present their bodies as scattered pieces. Another alternative is for those characters who are no longer vulnerable to exploitation and become fighters against it. María Auxiliadora, the women's shelter administrator, and the nuns do not require to conceal their image. Their bodies – their faces – stand whole, defiant to the enablers of human trafficking. Still, the major turn that *El Engaño* brings for the depiction of the women-as-territory is that they are also exploiters of vulnerable individuals. Hence, womanhood is a field of negotiation. However, Jaugey subsumes that diversity to a process of incorporation of the body into a broader community, just as Zamora does. The director appeals to an international community for awareness and to give its support to stop the exploitation of women in Nicaragua. In the sake of that solidarity, the distribution of the documentary is for free on the Internet. It is through the exposition of the film even if not a direct sale, that *El Engaño*, expects to gain support to mitigate the abuse of women. Corporeality, as intersection, is in contact with different factors. That explains how it can perform roles that are not only diverse; they are directly opposed to each other. In its relationship with cinema, consequently, the body, even more than the previous three spatial categories, shows its participation of the symbol-commodity continuum. Precisely in *El Engaño*'s circulation for free on Internet, bodies are a commodity bartering their private experiences of trauma in exchange for global solidarity.

Problematically, filmmaking takes possession of the body. It is women that, in *Justicia Para Mi Hermana*, function as a collective that the documentary's distribution stage targets as its market niche. The body besides being the story, a sense of unity or validation, it is merchandise as well, an artefact for gathering a potential audience. Kimberly Bautista calls upon womanhood as a conglomerate, for, thematically, women

bodies are the identitarian entity that the documentary is representing, a space in their own. Bautista depicts a diverse but not a contradictory group. Confrontation is with an external, exploitative force, patriarchalism. The variability in women's roles keeps in a relationship with that clash, they are victims of gender violence, or they struggle against male oppression and prejudices to access justice. Rebeca's quest, the documentary's protagonist, takes her all over Escuintla, the film's geographical location. She is trying to bring justice for the feminicide of her sister. Bautista frames Rebeca's pledge as a global phenomenon, as being a woman or a man are as much. Her claim for justice is defying patriarchalism everywhere as it affirms the value of women's lives, the integrity of their bodies. The dignity of women bodies clashes with the attitudes of Guatemalan governmental officials. They see women as objects of desire. Rebeca is well aware of that, of her body unfolding from actor to object of exchange. However, she gains access to judicial information and manages for authorities to fulfil their obligations without surrendering her body. Rebeca's control over her corporeality defeats her patriarchal appropriation. Nevertheless, despite that emancipatory action, her body also circulates as image.

Corporeality turns from metaphor of a group to an object in dispute in Paz Fábrega's *Cuilos* and Max Valverde's *Sombras Nada Más*. It does not make the body any more localised. The opening scene of *Cuilos*, a 2008 short film, a panoramic establishing shot, during twilight, serves an archetypical function. I read it as the announcement of poverty and the movie's interest in the grey areas of power relations and moral impositions amongst the characters. This detachment from identifying with a nation or another kind of land-related locality deepens as Fábrega aims her story towards the tensions amongst three central female figures. They are all relatives but from different age groups, clashing in their hierarchical relationship. The image of a guinea pig – a cuilo in Spanish – on a cage is representative of the dynamic of control that the characters try to impose amongst them. From this perspective, the attempt to liberate the guinea pig shows that hegemony within the group is highly volatile. Interactions, then, are trying to define the other as much as the self in this family's hierarchical and moral structure. Characters are trying to enforce, upon each other, regulations for the body as a territory, one that is personal but under public scrutiny.

Grettel struggles with her daughters, Michelle, a teenager, and Patsy, a child, to define what is appropriate behaviour, the use of their corporeality. Michelle tries to cover up her mother's back as she prepares to go out to work by night. The teenager also corrects Patsy manners at the table and denounces that the girl keeps a filthy guinea pig inside the house. Grettel acknowledges that the pet must remain outside and the need to correct Patsy's lack of manners. Before leaving her home, Grettel forbids Michelle from inviting her boyfriend, Carlos, to stay overnight. Grettel is concerned about what the neighbours might say about Michelle and herself if she allows a young man to stay with her daughter for the night while she is not there. Patsy finally exerts control over Michelle's defiance of Grettel's orders. The youngest daughter not only directly condemns Michelle's morals for kissing with Carlos. She will report that the teenager boy stayed at their home against her mother's will. Revenge, disguised as discipline, comes when Michelle puts the guinea pig outside the house and opens the cage so it can get loose. The hierarchical organisation amongst these bodies lacks fixity; it circulates since they all get to be censors of the others. The role of the mother, as the authority figure, is interchangeable amongst *Cuilos's* protagonists, demonstrating to be a performance.

Fábrega knew Grettel from a previous university project with women in prostitution; her fiction was not the first contact with this family group but a follow-up on their relationship. Thus, I find that this short film is very close to the director's chest, which comes to pour in the visual representation. Fábrega includes the gaze from her characters for showing that it is their perspective of the world and not the director's the one condemning or validating their actions. This dynamic continues the circulation of hierarchical roles since the gaze poses as an inclusion of the protagonists in the depiction process. Also, that play amongst the protagonists' points of view avoids an exploratory perspective; which withdraws them from being objects of representation, making them the subjects of it. Nonetheless, their bodies once turned into images circulate away from their control, even from the director's. Films du Requin, the co-producer company from France, is in charge of distribution. Through that company, this film had access to a greater displayability than what Fábrega could secure from Costa Rica (P. Fábrega, personal communication, 25 October, 2016). Delegating the film shows that ownership over the representation of the body is transient. The image

as interaction diverts and diversifies its control. The body, like the authority in *Cuilos*, now circulates, changing hands and submitting to the judgement of other gazes. A relationship that takes the body back to the role of an object. The 'cuilo' never really leaves its cage.

Image 12, *Sombras Nada MEás*, multiplicity within a body



The shadow becomes an internal 'other', struggling for the control over corporeal actions.

This diversity of bodies constituting cinematic spaces aligns with Butler's notion of political and discursive processes of definition and redefinition of the self. Even if women characters often are facing vulnerability, their bodies transcend that condition. The body's symbolic content is undefined. In these motion pictures, different individuals occupy a variety of roles in non-compliant fashions. The body-images show the many possibilities of the self. They are unbalancing the idea of a fixed core, contesting gender and geographical affiliations alike. The body-territory is a field of interactions. A condition that is more evident in Max Valverde's *Sombras Nada Más*, a fiction depicting the individual's internal multitude disputing over the control of his corporeal expression. This short film's protagonist, a male mime, unfolds himself into several characters, a multiplicity that comes in the form of shadows. His body is projecting itself. However, the image it casts over a wall is not a reflection of the protagonist's corporeality; it is a variation, a second body, or at least a subsection of it. Mime and shadow are in constant quarrel over the way each one behaves. I see that this representation of negotiations uses the idea that shadows are interactions, a composite of body, light and surface. In this short movie, the result of that relationship is that the contours of the characters contest them, showing alternative paths of action or directly forcing the protagonist out of his shyness. Thus, the shadow does not subject to the mime; it is independent, similar to a spectre.

María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren gather the different roles that non-corporeal beings have both in research and representation and find that there is a common element to them.

"The ghost, even when turned into a conceptual metaphor, remains a figure of unruliness pointing to the tangibly ambiguous... its own status as discourse or epistemology is never stable, as the ghost also questions the formation of knowledge itself and specifically invokes what is placed outside it" (Del Pilar Blanco & Peeren, 2013, p. 9).

In Valverde's representation, the multiplicity of the body through its shadows, their simultaneity of behaviours signals more than the contradictions within a group. Reminding the hierarchical struggle of *Cuilos*, spectres of the male mime are not incorporating difference but fighting for hegemony. *Sombras Nada Más* offers a glimpse into the exclusion that entails the idea of unicity – a potential present in the use of CAC –, in this case, within an individual. Be it from the shy, the daring or the violent, as the film splits the protagonist's personalities, roaring for recognition puts performativity upfront. There is no single mime, but many options of him, which morph accordingly to the exchanges and possibilities at hand. Corporeality as space is in constant transformation; it does not reach an ultimate definition. This situation distances the body from its coalescence to nation or region; it has too much a vast internal heterogeneity. *Sombras Nada Más* increases that indefinability by moving the narrative to a fantastic place and time. Thus, Valverde's story is not about characters in San José in the 21st century. The movie's costumes mix a 'Belle Époque' for the adults and contemporaneity for the children. It has no establishing shots; outdoor images use walls as backgrounds for including the shadows of the characters and only briefly show the house of the protagonist. The body in *Sombras Nada Más* is not part of an external collective. The protagonist's multiplicity is his own gang. Significantly, the lack of an international financial source, do not stop *Sombras Nada Más* from having a representation of land and a circulation dynamic similar to those in *Cuilos*. Both stories aim at identifying with characters due to their human dimension, regardless of their citizenship, which aligns with cinema's deterritorial sphere of interactions and circulation. In Valverde's film, a fantastical temporality positions its protagonist in a no-place while his struggle with a shadow guides the story towards a

conventional – and yet unique – element, the self. In *Sombras Nada Más*, the body in its interaction with cinema, becomes a familiar singularity, one that moves across local and global borders with ease.

This analysis of the representations of the body discards Central America as the pivotal identitarian adscription of these films. The depictions of women, motherhood or men, present an individual who does not follow regional paths. This array of performances would not suffice to discard CAC as indicative of a cohesive and referential symbolic construction. Directors often relinquishing to show identifiable elements for where their narratives occur complement the body's defiance to the idea of an isthmian cinema. Their spatial depiction minimises the relevance of the location for the events taking place in the diegesis. Except for *María en tierra de nadie*, none of these bodies claims a geographical belonging; they are creating spaces of their own, which gathers a community around the idea of the self. Thus, the body and filmmaking meet as deterritorial and immaterial practices; theirs are networks of high mobility where the circulation of images is both symbolic action and commodity consumption. The body as an axis of the narrative is not a culprit, but it works well enabling cinema's extraction of value. Beyond any regional context, the body is a familiar cross-borders object. It is a carrier/enabler of a translatable heterogeneity. This dynamic severely limits CAC's belonging and symbolic tasks within these films. The isthmus expresses merely as a tag. It is a vehicle for these narratives when clustering seems preferable for improving access to financing or for their visibility within distribution circuits or academic circles.

Conclusion

For this research's movie sample, its thematic agenda, the educational background of the films' directors and their aesthetics proposals, as much as their sources of financing are quite varied. The diversity of expressions, interactions and interests gathering in those elements of the motion pictures hardly conforms to a Central American sphere of exchanges. Labelling these films as Central American Cinema (CAC) finds little justification on those aspects. Instead, a more characteristic element for this sample is the prevalence of deterritorial relationships for financing, circulation and even symbolic referentiality. It is precisely for the transnational distribution of the motion pictures in the sample that CAC comes to be, at least, consistently present. It is in the look for a market share outside the isthmus that I find CAC's more prominent role for cinema practitioners. This function, in turn, has a direct association with industrial processes and commercial purposes. Deploying this category as a brand for global displayability implies that tagging a movie as 'Central American' relates to its potential for recognition by an international audience. This category-region is a scale of identification that allegedly would speak or connect to the worldviews of those spectators. Notably, because CAC bears with it a notion of territoriality, its marketing application tends to commodify its spatial referentiality and identitarian possibilities. For moviemaking, the use of CAC implements the isthmian imaginary as a consumer good.

Most of the filmmakers from this sample have an honest desire to bring to the screen stories that are both touching for them personally and compelling for their viewers further afield. They find in cinema a tool for expressing their wide range of perspectives upon themes and characters that, under certain circumstances, could be said to be in some way or other associated with Central America. However, that circumstance does not mean that the isthmian category is a definitive identification for the motion pictures. Instead, the regional label along with the directors' good intentions interact in a complex web emerging from the end-to-end moviemaking process. As I have demonstrated in my map of these 'Central American' films, multiple interests gather around a cinematographic project. Filmmaking mixes the experiential dimension, representations and industrial actions. One of the results of that combination is that

movies are a form of spectacle, which has the capability of becoming immaterial and deterritorial at the circulation stage. In consequence, films tend to target at a global audience since it boosts their displayability and income generation. Under such considerations, it was improbable that CAC could stand for a coherent characterisation of film production, their topics and forms of depiction, as opposed to what other researchers claim. A thematic's parochial character and the director's commitment with it, interconnect with the movie's search for financial support in a transnational sphere as well as with its process of displayability in a deterritorialised arena. There is a diverse array of exchanges in a motion picture, which contests to assume it exclusively as a symbolic expression from a position of alterity.

Persisting in analysing those motion pictures in their representativity of CAC, omits those interactions and notions of belonging that does not fit the category. Following the conditions for the deployment of the category show that hiding such complexity responds to the need of branding them under a criterion that, from a distribution perspective, seems to be only pertinent for its global consumers, which I argue is a (neo)colonial practice. Even so, in this role, the isthmus reference has been proven to be unsuccessful too, as there are repeated mentions to CAC's poor circulation. Besides, from a consumption perspective, the marginality of the isthmian cinematographic production is also whimsical, as looking to a broader region such as Iberoamerica demonstrates. In 2015, the first *Anuario del Cine Iberoamericano* identified that this latter territorial proposal of cinema segmentation merely reaches a 0.9% share of the global box office revenue. (Barlovento Comunicación; Media Research & Consultancy (MRC), 2015, p. 4). The problematic distribution of the movies in the sample is not emerging from their *centralamerican-ness*; there is an overlapping territorial notion of belonging for which this situation applies too. It is not that Iberoamerica is a more accurate selection criterion than the isthmus for filmmaking related processes. I am just pointing to how the hardships for accessing a greater displayability are not exclusive of 'Central American' films. Using CAC – as far as this research goes – does not necessarily help to explain better the motion pictures' conditions of production, their symbolic content or their area of incidence. Rather, the category loses much of each of the movies' nuances, the specific forms of localism

and transnational networks involved with their financing, enunciation and displayability.

The shift that I am proposing in this research is to follow an actor-network approach, for it acknowledges that there is a broad scope of elements involved in filmmaking. Mapping each of the movies' interactions in the production and distribution stages shows that they participate in a global dynamic of financing, circulation and representation. These motion pictures are not isolated into a regional praxis of cinema. They perform the cinematic mode of production, it means that, whichever the subjects and characters of these films are, in their processes of representation, they interpret the logic of spectacle along with the reproduction of industrial practices. Focusing on interactions and exchanges drives into exploring cinema as an economic-mechanic configuration that is intrinsically symbolic. The relational perspective does not stop in the function of CAC for cinema. The isthmian reference also leads to follow the grid associated with the construction of identitarian processes. This tracing of relationships demonstrates that forms of belonging are incompatible with reducing them to a label and a list of characteristics. I would not say that they are indescribable; it is just that they are mutable. Moreover, different notions of identity are not mutually excluding. Consequently, in my sample, films interpret and fit within many different possibilities of belonging.

The final chapter does divide the movies accordingly to their spaces of representation, but it does not suggest that they are new discrete belonging categories. In the cinematic construction of those referential territories, I recognise an internal diversity and many overlaps, be it amongst those notions of space, the relationship of the characters with their surroundings and even for the audiences with which filmmakers are proposing to relate. It is a compound of depiction, experiences and expectations. The thematic and symbolic richness of these motion pictures is lost when filtering them through a category like Central America, which potentially frames them within a specific territorial, historical and thematic imaginary. Keeping the isthmus as pivotal identitarian element leads to a discussion about the movies' compliance with those elements. My research, instead, explores the meanings of the films accordingly to their networks of broad and diverse interactions, of being and belonging.

There are economical and massification procedures at play when translating concerns or symbolic contents of a potentially local character to moving images. The attention to heteroramia shows that in the depiction of subjects, actions and places, it is a distant, practically uninvolved gaze, the one that prevails. A movie, as a product of compromises, affirms its characters' alterity, the specificity of their problems or their way of living, while that same representation can also act as a homogenising filter for producing a deterritorial symbolic artefact. The first step for this global translatability is articulating a story in a film format, which presents it as a more familiar object for its distant or alien spectators worldwide. Both, the profilmic interpretation of the particularities of the characters and the interaction with the audience, are a media experience, which is the actual communal space that cinema proposes. The other factor that facilitates motion picture's homogenisation of difference is precisely the visual relation with characters and space. For this matter, I interpret the recurrence in this film sample of an external observer's point of view as a gaze attending to the needs of the films' probable spectators rather than to its protagonists' worldview. This depicting style proposes to translate the differences that cinema practitioners perceive between them and the object of a film, and this and its target audience. Crossing the analysis of heteroramia with the motion pictures' mapping of interactions confirms that this gaze is not about self-representation but comes closer to fulfilling with the requirements for their circulation as symbol-commodities in the global market of images.

My relational exploration of these motion pictures traces their study according to the mobility and transnationality of their filmmakers, financing schemes, as well as to the deterritorial market(s) where they look for audiences. The perspective of a network recognises spatially disperse actors with diverse motivations and objectives gathering around notions of identity that are only partially defined by territorial, national and regional affiliations. This approach stands for an ontological challenge upon the direct association of land, history and cultural production. It asks to step aside from defining a pure or authentic notion of representation, creative endeavours or belonging. Instead, it delves on the intricacies and mutual dependencies amongst varied factors. Overdetermination looks for connecting the past, present and future of an object along with its diversity of origins and interests backing it. Creation is a collective performance

that expands across many borders, territorial and symbolic too. Precisely, cinema demands studying such complexity to cope with the intricacy of interests for its production and distribution. This entanglement is more than the backstage of its representation; it is consistently part of its symbolic dimension

Picturing films as the weaving of many hopes, concerns, functions, and aims is relevant for more than academic interests. There are many instances, from NGOs to governments giving different forms of financial support to filmmaking. These funding schemes are not shielded from justifying their support upon the reproduction of idealised notions of belonging, Central America amongst them. However, many of these funds also have a compromise with enabling a cultural production from struggling or alternate positions. Remarkably, they do not involve in the displayability of the motion picture. Right, that is a stage connected to industrial processes, but not more than others. In this sense, influencing the form of consumption is as important as financing production. Due recognition of a film as simultaneously being an object of consumption and signification would be fundamental in proposing financial schemes that foster both filmmakers' possibilities of creation and the incidence of those motion pictures in their referential space of representation. Otherwise, the diversification and multiplication of origins for cinematic texts would have a hard time in distancing from asymmetrical relations involved in their dynamics of financing and commodification.

For this research, it is clear that cinema is much more than producing a film. The construction of meaning traverses many spheres, which includes that of audiences. However, this work is the first mapping of those interactions around the notion of CAC. Such a task forced me to limit the tracing of exchanges from the proposal of a film up to its distribution strategies. It is within those interactions that the film practitioners deploy the category. I am well aware that the region of a motion picture is its viewers too. Access to the film is an intrinsic aspect of its community-building dynamic, but also of its commercial objectives. Potentially, neglecting or being unable to reach those same actors that form part of the profilmic layer of a film is counterproductive for promoting cinematic narratives capable of diverting from the exploitation of exoticism and pornomiserism. Any certainty around that affirmation requires examining the spectators' interests and connections both with the films and the category. I urge upcoming works to expand the map around CAC by following such a line of research.

Within the interactions' scope for production and distribution that I explore in my sample, regrettably, the role of CAC in the deterritorial circulation of a film commonly associates to a process of commodity fetishisation.

There are many paths that I leave open. Ones directly refer to the practice of filmmaking, for instance, having non-for-profit and effective platforms for the circulation of those motion pictures. Without re-idealising a territory or a group of individuals, the distribution scheme should be sensitive to the possibilities of access for those populations depicted in the films. The intention would be that those individuals are not just objects of the narrative but can appropriate it as spectators too. Another issue for further development addresses film practitioners, like me, directly. It regards representation and heteroramia; I am interested in incorporating the perspective of the characters narratively. It means exploring and constructing a depiction that looks with the characters, both at where they are and who they are around. In my opinion, such point of view has the potential for counteracting the homogenising capability of a film, as it delves into differences and their untranslatability. This more experiential gaze implies a horizontal relation too, as it calls for a closer negotiation between director and characters, treating them as objects and subjects of the narrative. It would end up downplaying the centrality of mobility, I believe. Representation would no longer be the exclusive realm of directors and their crew. Indeed, this alternative would create more opportunities for self-representation and potentially provoke a reframing of films' circuit of distribution. Furthermore, diverse gazes do not only impact upon identitarian and industrial functions of cinema. The witness point of view of many of the films in my sample reproduces an inheritance from theatrical performances. Thus, generating a more character-centre depiction provides an update for this aesthetical approach too.

I find that the case of CAC might be paradigmatic for other categorisations of cinema also following territorial and identitarian notions of representativity. Further research is necessary on those other labels for film production to assess the transposability of my findings. Analysing different categories based on the putative origin of a film would be relevant for identifying if their use tends to cause an idealisation of the movie's representation and symbolic function. Besides, it is necessary determining if other territorial filters of moviemaking also impose a delimitation upon a film's ever-

expanding extension of interactions and aims. Testing my findings against a broader sample of territorial categories would help determine if their deployment depends on the idea that thus characterised filmmakers have no possibilities on their own of overcoming local conditions of production. This last notion many times interrelates with a qualitative perspective upon the films themselves; the local or regional label is an excuse/exploitation of their perceived poor or odd production values. Evaluating the state of affairs for cinema and its future developments, be it from an industrial, narrative or identitarian perspectives, depends upon our analysis and understanding of contemporary film production. In this frame, exploring the function of these categories according to the interactions gathering around them and the exchanges beyond their referential reach is a necessary action for avoiding potential distortions upon our concept of filmmaking and the cinema field.

Finally, for my future work as a researcher, I plan to apply the methodological approach that I derive from actor-network theory to the comparative analysis of films of more diverse origins. The mapping of those other productions would overcome the compartmentalisation of moviemaking according to territorial or belonging identifiers. I will aim at finding if there are crossovers with my present sample. In specific, if motion pictures from allegedly different contexts repeat patterns such as the centrality of mobility and translatability for the reproduction of cinema. Heteroramia, then, would demonstrate its potential in assessing the local characteristics of the cinematic depiction as much as the global tendencies at play. Besides, there is the matter of their circuits of distribution, since I believe that deterritorial is just a part of defining the niche of those audiences. Hence, I am not moving away from identitarian concerns. Instead, I would be exploring the multiple incidences of belonging within a broader frame. I want to trace how in the uniqueness of local expressions cinema introduces a translatability that not necessarily will have the same results all the times. Such a mapping would track the specificities as much as the intersections amongst diverse moviemaking networks. It would shed light upon their forms of cohesion and the cinematic spaces at play in a more immaterial, yet not necessarily disconnected global arena.

Bibliography

- Acta de Independencia de la Capitanía General de Guatemala. (1821, September 15). Guatemala, Guatemala.
- Acta de los Nublados. (1821, September 28). León, Nicaragua.
- Acuña, V. H. (2015). Centroamérica en las globalizaciones (siglo XVI-XXI). *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos*, 41, 13-27.
- Agencia EFE. (2018, August 19). *Costarricenses protestan violentamente contra el ingreso de nicaragüenses*. Retrieved September 23, 2019, from EFE: <https://www.efe.com/efe/america/sociedad/costarricenses-protestan-violentamente-contra-el-ingreso-de-nicaraguenses/20000013-3723616>
- Alfaro-Córdoba, A. (2007-2008). La Producción Cultural en Centroamérica: El Caso del Cine. *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos*, 33/34, pp. 15-28.
- Althusser, L. (2005). *For Marx*. London, United Kingdom: Verso.
- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Revised, 2016, Kindle ed.). London, United Kingdom: Verso.
- Appadurai, A. (2013). *The Future as Cultural Fact*. London, United Kingdom: Verso.
- Aronczyk, M. (2008). "Living the Brand": Nationality, Globality and the Identity Strategies of Nation Branding Consultants. (L. Gross, Ed.) *International Journal of Communication*, 2, 41-65.
- Aycart, A. (2018, January 27). *Centroamérica se desangra por la violencia homicida*. Retrieved February 3, 2018, from Confidencial: <https://confidencial.com.ni/centroamerica-se-desangra-la-violencia/?fbclid=IwAR0-vOUUEwC1HPSMrIrEXD3or4qDUuVRZYcio8RBFieZFtsYYaiXLVUgRWs>
- Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Kindle ed.). (M. Holquist, Ed., M. Holquist, & C. Emerson, Trans.) Austin, Texas, United States of America: University of Texas Press.
- Barlovento Comunicación; Media Research & Consultancy (MRC). (2015). *Anuario del Cine Iberoamericano 2015 (Resumen)*. Madrid: Media Research & Consultancy.
- Barreno Xicar, L., González López, E. P., Ixcot Sac, E. O., Estacuy Estrada, J. M., Nimatuj Pérez, M. N., Quemé Chay, V. H., . . . Pe (Directors). (2009). *El Tanque* [Motion Picture]. Guatemala-Spain.
- Baudrillard, J. (1981). *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. (C. Levin, Trans.) New York, United States of America: Telos Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2007). *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty* (Kindle ed.). Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press.
- Bautista, K. (Director). (2012). *Justicia Para Mi Hermana* [Motion Picture]. Guatemala and United States of America: New Day Films.
- Bautista, K. (2014, March 26). *Luchadoras*. (L. Barrera, Interviewer) Rompeviento TV. YouTube, Ciudad de México.

- Bautista, K. (2014, June 03). Palabra Radio: Justicia para mi Hermana. Palabra Radio. Oxaca.
- Béland, D. (2019, July 26). Right-Wing Populism and the Politics of Insecurity: How President Trump Frames Migrants as Collective Threats. *Political Studies*, 1-16.
- Beller, J. (2006). *The Cinematic Mode of Production: Attention Economy and the Society of the Spectacle* (2012, Kindle ed.). Lebanon, New Hampshire, United States of America: Dartmouth College Press.
- Benjamin, W. (1936). *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (2008, Google Books ed.). (J. Underwood, Trans.) London, United Kingdom: Penguin Books.
- Bernstein, C. (Director). (2008). *Le Voyage Encyclopédique de Michel Serres* [Motion Picture]. France.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1990). Narrating the nation. In H. K. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (2013, Kindle ed., pp. 1-7). Oxon, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1999). Arrivals and Departures. In H. Naficy, *Home, exile, homeland: Film, media, and the politics of place* (pp. VII-XII). New York, United States of America: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The Field of Cultural Production*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press.
- Butler, J. (1991). Imitation and Gender Insubordination. In D. Fuss, *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (pp. 13-31). New York, United States of America: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1999). *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* (10th anniversary ed. ed.). New York, United States of America: Routledge.
- Butler, J., & Athanasiou, A. (2013). *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political (Conversations)* (Kindle ed.). Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press.
- Cabezas Vargas, A. (2015). *Cinéma centraméricain contemporain (1970-2014): la construction d'un cinéma régional: mémoires socio-historiques et culturelles*. PhD Thesis, Université Michel de Montaigne - Bordeaux III, Laboratoire MICA (Médiation, Information, Communication, Arts) (ES 4426), Bordeaux.
- Cagle, C. (2016). Bourdieu and Film Studies: Beyond the Taste Agenda. In G. Austin, *New Uses of Bourdieu in Film and Media Studies* (Kindle ed., pp. pos. 889-1253). New York, United States of America: Berghahn Books.
- Cardenal, E. (1995). *The Doubtful Strait / El Estrecho Dudoso*. (J. Lyons, Trans.) Bloomington, United States of America: Indiana University Press.
- Caro Cruz, C. (Director). (2009). *Tercer Mundo* [Motion Picture]. Costa Rica, Chile and Bolivia: Distrify (limited time).
- Castro Ríos, E., & Endara Mislov, A. (Directors). (2010). *Wata* [Motion Picture]. Panama.
- Central American Film Fest. (n.d.). *Central American Film Fest*. Retrieved January 16, 2019, from Enclave World Culture in Los Angeles: <https://www.enclave.la/event/central-american-film-fest/>

- Central Intelligence Agency. (2019, January 22). *The World Factbook*. Retrieved January 28, 2019, from Central Intelligence Agency: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>
- Chung, H. J. (2017). *Media Heterotopias: Digital Effects and Material Labor in in Global Film Production* (2018, Kindle ed.). Durham, United States of America: Duke University Press.
- Constenla, A., & Ibarra, E. (2009). Mapa de la Distribución Territorial Aproximada de las Lenguas Indígenas Habladas en Costa Rica y en Sectores Colindantes de Nicaragua y Panamá en el Siglo XVI. *Estudios de Lingüística Chibcha*, XXVIII, 109-112.
- Cortés, M. L. (2005). *La Pantalla Rota: Cien años de cine en Centroamérica*. Mexico D.F., Mexico: Santillana Ediciones Generales, S.A.
- Cosmatos, G. P. (Director). (1985). *Rambo: First Blood Part II* [Motion Picture]. United States of America and Mexico: Carolco Pictures.
- Culloty, E. (2016). The Taste Database: Taste Distinctions in Online Film Reviewing. In G. Austin, *New Uses of Bourdieu in Film and Media Studies* (Kindle ed., pp. pos. 1714-2184). New York, United States of America: Berghahn Books.
- Dávila, R. a. (Producer), & Dávila, R. (Director). (2008). *Sobreviviendo Guazapa* [Motion Picture]. El Salvador: Digital 1.
- Dardón, A. (Director). (2012). *Nicté* [Motion Picture]. Guatemala and Argentina.
- Darré, Y. (2006). Esquisse d'une sociologie du cinéma. *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 1-2(161-162), 122-136.
- Debord, G. (1967). *Society of the Spectacle* (2012 Kindle ed.). (1. Black & Red, Trans.) N.A.: Bread and Circuses Publishing.
- Del Pilar Blanco, M., & Peeren, E. (2013). Conceptualizing Spectralities. In M. Del Pilar Blanco, & E. Peeren, *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory* (pp. 1-27). New York, United States of America: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Delaloye, J.-C. (Director). (2012). *A Mi Lado* [Motion Picture]. Nicaragua, United States of America and Switzerland: Cat&Docs and iTunes.
- Derrida, J. (1995). Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression. *Diacritics*, 25(2), 9-63.
- Derrida, J. (2000). The Law of Genre. In D. Duff, *Modern Genre Theory* (2014, Kindle ed., pp. 219-231). Oxon, Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Derrida, J. (2001). *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Di Stefano, A. (2016). Weak (Cultural) Field: A Bourdieuan Approach to Social Media. In G. Austin, *New Uses of Bourdieu in Film and Media Studies* (Kindle ed., pp. pos. 3436-3900). New York, United States of America: Berghahn Books.
- Durón, H. (2012). Rompiendo el Silencio: diez años de Nuevo Cine Centroamericano (2001-2010). *Revista Reflexiones*, 91(1), 247-253.
- Durón, H. (2014). *New Central American Cinema (2001-2010)*. PhD Thesis, University of Kansas, Lawrence.

- Eisenstein, S. (1949). *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*. (J. Leyda, Trans.) Orlando, Florida, United States of America: Harcourt.
- El Faro. (2018, October 16). *Centroamericanos en fuga*. Retrieved August 2019, from El Faro:
https://elfaro.net/es/casos/caravana_migrante/?fbclid=IwAR09Dbs8Uy6R3FCbjZXTDWnZO_QziSSRd5dhgUDrwy4F5t-2wMzHIL1C5Ss
- Elsaesser, T. (2005). Film Festival Networks: the new topographies of cinema in Europe. In *European Cinema: face to face with Hollywood* (pp. 82-107). Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press.
- Elsaesser, T. (2019). *European Cinema and Continental Philosophy: film as thought experiment*. London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Escobar, A. (2010, January 12). Latin America at a Crossroads. *Cultural Studies*, 24(1), 1-65.
- Fábrega, P. (Director). (2008). *Cuilos* [Motion Picture]. Costa Rica and France.
- Falicov, T. (2016). The "festival film": film festival funds as cultural intermediaries. In M. d. Valck, B. Kredell, & S. Loist, *Film Festivals: History, theory, method, practice* (Kindle ed., pp. 209-228). Abingdon, Oxon, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Fehimović, D., & Ogden, R. (2018). Context and Contestation. In D. Fehimović, & R. Ogden, *Branding Latin America: Strategies, Aims, Resistance* (Kindle ed., pp. 1-34). Lanham, Maryland, United States of America: Lexington Books.
- Fernández Mora, E. (2017, June 10). *Costa Rica quiere impulsar un conglomerado de negocios filmicos*. Retrieved November 7, 2017, from El Financiero:
<https://www.elfinancierocr.com/negocios/costa-rica-quiere-impulsar-un-conglomerado-de-negocios-filmicos/22DVYVWVWCRHPDIWYFVDKHQ2BGQ/story/>
- Figueroa, R. (Director). (2009). *La Bodega* [Motion Picture]. Guatemala.
- Fondo de Desarrollo Productivo, Ministerio de Economía, Gobierno de El Salvador. (n.d.). *MINEC entrega, a través de FONDEPRO, más de \$719 mil dólares a emprendedores y empresarios*. Retrieved January 17, 2019, from FONDEPRO: www.fondepro.gob.sv/component/content/article/1-noticias/326-minec-entrega-a-traves-de-fondepro-mas-de-719-mil-dolares-a-emprendedores-y-empresarios.html
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison* (1991 ed.). (A. Sheridan, Trans.) London, United Kingdom: Penguin Books.
- Fundación IFF Panamá. (n.d.). *IFF Panamá: Razón de ser*. Retrieved November 8, 2017, from IFF Panamá: <http://iffpanama.org/es/iff-panama-razon-de-ser>
- Gabriel, S. P. (2005, May). The heteroglossia of home. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 41(1), 40-53.
- García Canclini, N. (2004). *Diferentes, Desiguales y Desconectados: Mapas de la Interculturalidad*. Barcelona, Spain: Gedisa Editorial.
- García, J. (2017, May 12). *Médicos Sin Fronteras alerta sobre la crisis en Centroamérica del tamaño de una guerra*. Retrieved May 16, 2017, from El

País:

https://elpais.com/internacional/2017/05/11/mexico/1494507403_180438.html?fbclid=IwAR39ijGKPFEEY1W8ZTvhSxK3ETuSPC8ERzmO5beFYHZGTnUMfJPXq8UZph0

Gershon, I. (2011, August). Neoliberal Agency. *Current Anthropology*, 52(4), 537-555.

Gonzalez, D. (2019, February 27). *Las guerras civiles de Centroamérica en los conflictos de hoy*. Retrieved March 20, 2019, from The New York Times ES: https://www.nytimes.com/es/2019/02/27/fotos-guerra-civil-centroamerica/?fbclid=IwAR1Jg3ntWeOyC1QdXxgNE29FnxmO-rswjZZs_JzSpY6jd9XY7debTKSvZ6Q

Grainge, P. (2007). *Brand Hollywood: Selling Entertainment in a Global Media Age* (Kindle ed.). Abingdon, Oxfordshire, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Griffiths, A. (1999). 'To the World the World We Show': Early Travelogues as Filmed Ethnography. *Film History*, 11(3), 282-307.

Guevara, T. (Dirección). (2009). *Ausentes* [Película]. El Salvador and United States of America.

Hall, C. (1985). América Central como Región Geográfica. *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos*, 11(2), 5-24.

Hall, C., & Pérez-Brignoli, H. (2003). *Historical Atlas of Central America*. Oklahoma, United States of America: University of Oklahoma Press.

Hall, S. (1996). The Question of Cultural Identity. In S. Hall, D. Held, D. Hubert, & K. Thompson, *Modernity: an Introduction to Modern Societies* (pp. 595-634). Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishers.

Han, B.-C. (2018). *The Expulsion of the Other: Society, Perception and Communication Today* (Kindle edition ed.). (W. Hoban, Trans.) Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press.

Heise, T., & Tudor, A. (2007, July 1). Constructing (Film) Art: Bourdieu's Field Model in a Comparative Context. *Cultural Sociology*, 1(2), 165-187.

Hernández Cordón, J. (Director). (2010). *Marimbas del Infierno* [Motion Picture]. Guatemala, Mexico and France.

Higson, A. (1989, October 1). The Concept of National Cinema. *Screen*, 30(4), 36-47.

Hivos. (2014, October 30). *Cinergia keeps boosting film industry in Central America*. Retrieved January 31, 2019, from Hivos.org: <https://knowledge.hivos.org/news/cinergia-keeps-boosting-film-industry-central-america>

Honneth, A. (2005). Reification: A Recognition-Theoretical View. *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* (pp. 89-135). Berkeley: University of California.

Huezo, T. (2011, May 02). Comentarios sobre el documental El Lugar Más Pequeño. *Laboratorio de Proyectos Culturales de los estudiantes de la MEC*. Tijuana, Mexico: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte.

Huezo, T. (Director). (2011). *El Lugar Más Pequeño* [Motion Picture]. Mexico - El

- Salvador: Deckert Distribution GmbH.
- Huezo, T. (2011, September 25). El Lugar Más Pequeño @ NTN24. *Celebrities de Planeta Gente*. (A. Diaz, Interviewer) NTN24. RCN Televisión, Bogotá.
- Jara Vargas, E., & Jara Vargas, A. (Directors). (2014). *El Codo del Diablo* [Motion Picture]. Costa Rica and Guatemala.
- Jaugey, F. (Director). (2012). *El Engaño* [Motion Picture]. Nicaragua: Youtube.
- Jauss, H. R. (2000). Theory of Genres and Medieval Literature. In D. Duff, *Modern Genre Theory* (2014, Kindle ed., pp. 127-147). Oxon, Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Jedlowski, A. (2011, January-December). When the Nigerian Video Film Industry Became "Nollywood": naming, branding and the videos' transnational mobility. *Estudios Afro-Asiáticos*, 33(1-2-3), 225-251.
- Jiménez, H. (Escritor), & Jiménez, H. (Dirección). (2011). *El Regreso* [Película]. Costa Rica.
- Kaneva, N. (2011). Nation Branding: Toward an Agenda for Critical Research. *International Journal of Communication*, 5, 117-141.
- Kellner, D. (2015). Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture. In G. Dines, & J. M. Humez, *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Critical Reader* (Fourth ed. ed., pp. 7-19). Los Angeles, United States of America: SAGE.
- Kittler, F. A. (1999). *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. (G. Winthrop-Young, & M. Wutz, Trans.) Palo Alto, California, United States of America: Stanford University Press.
- Kracauer, S. (1947). *From Caligari to Hitler, a psychological history of the German film* (Revised and Expanded Edition, 2019, Kindle ed.). New Jersey, United States of America: Princeton University Press.
- Kubrick, S. (Director). (1968). *2001: A Space Odyssey* [Motion Picture]. United Kingdom and United States of America.
- Lakhani, N. (2017, June 13). *Central America braces for return of US military-led foreign policy*. Retrieved June 15, 2017, from The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jun/13/central-america-us-foreign-policy-deportations-aid?fbclid=IwAR0Bf1sGUeSFUxLnxbtcBJGPbEnXn4pklvjPnI9zwSlcZdrPklby6Z3Jmgo>
- Latishev, A. (Director). (2013). *Irene* [Motion Picture]. Costa Rica: Latamcinema.com.
- Latour, B. (2007). *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (New Ed edition ed.). United States of America: Oxford University Press.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of Space*. (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.) Oxford, United Kingdom: Basil Blackwell Ltd.
- Loist, S. (2016). The Film Festival Circuit: Networks, hierarchies and circulation. In *Film Festivals: History, theory, method, practice* (Kindle ed., pp. 49-64). Abingdon, Oxon, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Lopez, M. H., Gonzalez-Barrera, A., & Cuddington, D. (2013, June 19). *Diverse*

- Origins: The Nation's 14 Largest Hispanic-Origin Groups*. Retrieved January 29, 2019, from Pew Research Center:
http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/06/19/diverse-origins-the-nations-14-largest-hispanic-origin-groups/?beta=true&utm_expid=53098246-2.Lly4CFSVQG2lphsg-Koplg.1&utm_referrer=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.pewhispanic.org%2Fcategory%2Fdemographic-profiles%2Fpages%2F3%2F
- Lorenzen, M. (2007, September). Internationalization vs. Globalization of the Film Industry. *Industry and Innovation*, 14(4), 349-357.
- López, S. L. (2012-2013). Modelos para Armar: Retos para la Crítica Cultural Centroamericana. *Istmo, revista virtual de estudios literarios y culturales centroamericanos*, 25-26.
- Müller, K. (Director). (2013). *12 Segundos* [Motion Picture]. Guatemala and Mexico: Netflix (limited time).
- Müller, K. (2015, October 26). *Emprendiendo en Cine y TV*. Guatemala: Universidad Francisco Marroquín.
- Mackenbach, W. (2004, January-June). Después de los pos-ismos: ¿desde qué categorías pensamos las literaturas centroamericanas contemporáneas? *Istmo, revista virtual de estudios literarios y culturales centroamericanos*, 8.
- Mackenbach, W. (2007, July-December). Entre política, historia y ficción. Tendencias en la narrativa centroamericana a finales del siglo XX. *Istmo, revista virtual de estudios literarios y culturales centroamericanos*, 15.
- Massey, D. (2004). Geographies of Responsibility. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 86(1), 5-18.
- Mbembe, A. (2003, January). Necropolitics. *Public Culture*, 1, 11-40.
- McKay, A. A. (2008). *Geografía de la región centroamericana*. San José, Costa Rica: Coordinación Educativa y Cultural Centroamericana, CEEC/SICA.
- Medible, M. (2007). Embodying Latinidad: An overview. In M. Medible, *From Bananas to Buttocks: The Latina Body in Popular Film and Culture* (pp. 1-28). Austin, Texas, United States of America: University of Texas Press.
- Meléndez, C. (1971). Rasgos Fundamentales de la Geopolítica Centroamericana en la Independencia. *Revista de la Universidad de Costa Rica*, 31, 7-24.
- Mignolo, W. D. (2005). *The Idea of Latin America* (2008, Kindle ed.). Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing.
- Ministerio de Cultura y Juventud and Centro de Cine. (n.d.). *Costa Rica Festival Internacional de Cine 2017*. Retrieved November 8, 2017, from Costa Rica Festival Internacional de Cine: <http://www.costaricacinefest.go.cr/acerca>
- Monroe, J. (1823, December 2). Seventh Annual Message to Congress. *The Avalon Project*. New Haven, United States of America: Yale Law School.
- Morris, C. (2003). The Reflexivity of the Road Film. *Film Criticism*, 28(1), 24-52.
- Naficy, H. (1999). Framing Exile: From Homeland to Homepage. In H. Naficy, *Home, exile, homeland: Film, media, ant the politics of place* (pp. 1-13). New York, United States of America: Routledge.

- Negri, A. (2011). *Art and Multitude*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press.
- Nichols, B. (1994, January). Global Image Consumption in the Age of Late Capitalism. *East-West Film Journal*, 8(1), 68-85.
- Offen, K. H. (2008). El Mapeo de la Mosquitia Colonial y las Prácticas Espaciales de los Pueblos Mosquitos. *Mesoamérica*, 29(50), 1-36.
- Olien, M. D. (1983). The Miskito Kings and the Line of Succession. *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 39(2), 198-241.
- Orr, J. (2003). The City Reborn: Cinema at the Turn of the Century. In M. Shiel, & T. Fitzmaurice, *Screening the City* (pp. 284-298). London, United Kingdom: Verso.
- Pérez-Brignoli, H. (1989). *A Brief History of Central America*. (R. B. Sawrey A., & S. Stettri de Sawrey, Trans.) Berkeley, United States of America: University of California Press.
- Pérez-Brignoli, H. (2003). *Segundo Informe sobre Desarrollo Humano en Centroamérica y Panamá. Capítulo Desafío de la Multiculturalidad. América Central: un mosaico étnico y cultural*. Retrieved January 28, 2019, from Programa Estado de la Nación: https://estadonacion.or.cr/files/biblioteca_virtual/centroamerica/002/Hector_Perez_Brignoli.pdf
- Pérez-Ratton, V. (2011, January-June). ¿Qué región? Apuntando hacia un estrecho dudoso. *Istmo, revista virtual de estudios literarios y culturales centroamericanos*, 22, 1-41.
- Pinto Soria, J. C. (1988). El Valle Central de Guatemala (1524-1821): Un análisis acerca del origen histórico-económico del regionalismo en Centroamérica. *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos*, 14(1/2), 69-107.
- Ponzanezi, S. (2014). *The Postcolonial Cultural Industry: Icons, Markets, Mythologies* (Google Books ed.). Hampshire, United Kingdom: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Portillo, L. (Director). (2001). *Señorita Extraviada* [Motion Picture]. United States of America.
- Programa Estado de la Nación. (2011). *Cuarto Informe Estado de la Región en Desarrollo Humano Sostenible*. San José: Consejo Nacional de Rectores.
- Programa Estado de la Nación. (2016). *Quinto Informe Estado de la Región en Desarrollo Humano Sostenible*. San José: Consejo Nacional de Rectores.
- Ramírez, S. (Director). (2011). *Distancia* [Motion Picture]. Guatemala.
- Red de Centros Culturales de AECID. (2019). *Migraciones: Mirando al Sur*. Centro Cultural de España en México. Mexico: Centro Cultural de España en México.
- Republic of Costa Rica. (2010, April 29). 35982-MINAET. *Moratoria en Minería*. San José, Costa Rica.
- Rodríguez, A. P. (2009). *Dividing the Isthmus, Central American Transnational Histories, Literatures, and Cultures* (Google Books ed.). Austin, United States of America: University of Texas Press.
- Rogers, N. (2002). *Caribbean Borderland: Empire, Ethnicity, and the Exotic on the*

- Mosquito Coast. *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 26(3), 117-138.
- Rubens, L. A. (Producer), & Rubens, L. A. (Director). (1949). *Costa Rica Cuna de Libertades* [Motion Picture]. Costa Rica.
- Sabel Strandmark, S. (Director). (2010). *Nosotras* [Motion Picture]. Guatemala and Sweden.
- Sajcabún, É. (Director). (2013). *Xic Vuh* [Motion Picture]. Guatemala: Vimeo (limited time on demand).
- Santana Pérez, J. M., & Sánchez Suárez, J. A. (2007, September-December). Repoblación de costa de Mosquitos en el último cuarto del Siglo XVIII. *Revista de Indias*, LXVII(241), 695-712.
- Serres, M. (2015). *Thumbelina: The Culture and Technology of Millenials* (Thumbelina ed.). (D. W. Smith, Trans.) Lanham, Maryland, United States of America: Rowman & Littlefield International.
- Silva Hernández, M. (2014). Centroamérica 1850-1950, los debates fundamentales sobre la unión política regional. In W. Soto Acosta, & M. Sáurez Ulloa, *Centroamérica: casa común e integración regional*. Heredia, Costa Rica: Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica; Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano.
- Sistema de Integración Centroamericana. (n.d.). *Quienes somos*. Retrieved January 28, 2019, from SICA: http://www.sica.int/sica/sica_breve.aspx
- Smith, S. B. (1984, October). Althusser and the Overdetermined Self. *The Review of Politics*, 46(4), 516-538.
- Soto Acosta, W. (2014). Del sueño unitario a la fragmentación: la República Federal de Centroamérica (1823-1838). In W. Soto Acosta, & M. Sáurez Ulloa, *Centroamérica: Casa Común e Integración Regional*. Heredia, Costa Rica: Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica; Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano.
- Spiegeler Szejner, E. (Director). (2008). *Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos* [Motion Picture]. Guatemala.
- Strauss, R. (1896). *Also Spracht Zarathustra*. Frankfurt.
- Stupples, P. (2014). Creative contributions: The role of the arts and the cultural sector in development. *Progress in Development Studies*, 14(2), 115-130.
- Tenorio-Trillo, M. (2017). *Latin America: The Allure and Power of an Idea* (Kindle ed.). Chicago, Illinois, United States of America: The University of Chicago Press.
- The World Bank. (2019). *GINI index (World Bank estimate)*. Retrieved January 29, 2019, from The World Bank: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?end=2014&locations=CR-SV-GT-HN-NI-PA&start=2006>
- The World Bank. (2019). *GNI per capita, PPP (current international \$)*. Retrieved January 29, 2019, from The World Bank: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.PP.CD?end=2013&locations=CR-SV-GT-HN-NI-PA&start=2009>

- The World Bank. (2019). *Historical Classification by Income*. Retrieved January 29, 2019, from World Bank Country and Lending Groups:
<http://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/site-content/OGHIST.xls>
- Torres Crespo, Á. (Director). (2014). *El Lugar Indeseado* [Motion Picture]. Costa Rica and United States.
- Torres Hurtado, D. (Director). (2012). *Lih Wina, el viaje sin retorno* [Motion Picture]. Nicaragua-Finland.
- UN Office on Drugs and Crime's International Statistics database. (2019). *Internantional homicides (per 100,000 people)*. Retrieved January 29, 2019, from The World Bank:
https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IHR.PSRC.P5?end=2014&locations=CR-SV-GT-HN-NI-PA&name_desc=false&start=2009
- United Nations Development Program. (2014). *Human Development Report 2014. Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience*. New York: United Nations Development Program.
- Valverde, M. (Director). (2010). *Sombras Nada Más* [Motion Picture]. Costa Rica.
- Vertov, D. (Director). (1929). *Man with a Movie Camera* [Motion Picture]. Soviet Union.
- Villalobos, N. (Director). (2013). *Por las Plumas* [Motion Picture]. Costa Rica.
- Walls, W., & McKenzie, J. (2012). The Changing Role of Hollywood in the Global Movie Market. *Journal of Media Economics*, 25(4), 198-219.
- Wong, C. H.-Y. (2011). *Film Festivals: Culture, people and power on the global screen* (Kindle ed.). New Brunswick, New Jersey, United States of America: Rutgers University Press.
- Yasin, I. (Director). (2008). *El Camino* [Motion Picture]. Costa Rica - France.
- Zambrano, A., & Buvollen, H. P. (2007). *An Evaluation of Casa Comal in Guatemala 2004-2007*. Royal Norwegian Embassy in Guatemala City; Humanistic Institute for Development Cooperation (HIVOS). Oslo: Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.
- Zamora, M. (Director). (2010). *María en Tierra de Nadie* [Motion Picture]. El Salvador and Spain.

Appendices

A. Research's sample of films

Name of the movie	Genre	Length	Country (Representing at Ícaro)	Year (Ícaro Award)	Director(s)	Year of Production	Country of Production
12 Segundos	Fiction	Long	Guatemala	2014	Kenneth Müller	2013	Guatemala / Mexico
Xic Vuh	Fiction	Short	Guatemala	2014	Edgar Sajcabun	2013	Guatemala
El Codo del Diablo	Documentary	Long	Costa Rica	2014	Enrique Jara Vargas and Antonio Jara Vargas	2014	Costa Rica / Guatemala
El Lugar Indeseado	Documentary	Short	Costa Rica	2014	Álvaro Torres Crespo	2014	Costa Rica / USA
Por las Plumas	Fiction	Long	Costa Rica	2013	Neto Villalobos	2013	Costa Rica
Irene	Fiction	Short	Costa Rica	2013	Alexandra Latishev	2013	Costa Rica
Justicia Para Mi Hermana	Documentary	Long	Guatemala	2013	Kimberly Bautista	2012	Guatemala / USA
Lih Wina	Documentary	Short	Nicaragua	2013	Dania Torres Hurtado	2012	Nicaragua / Finland
El Regreso	Fiction	Long	Costa Rica	2012	Hernán Jiménez	2011	Costa Rica
Nicté	Fiction	Short	Guatemala	2012	Andrea Dardón	2012	Guatemala / Argentina
A Mi Lado	Documentary	Long	Nicaragua	2012	Jean-Cosme Delaloye	2012	Nicaragua / USA / Switzerland
El Engaño	Documentary	Short	Nicaragua	2012	Florence Jaugey	2012	Nicaragua
Distancia	Fiction	Long	Guatemala	2011	Sergio Ramírez	2011	Guatemala
Sombras Nada Más	Fiction	Short	Costa Rica	2011	Max Valverde	2010	Costa Rica

Name of the movie	Genre	Length	Country (Representing at Ícaro)	Year (Ícaro Award)	Director(s)	Year of Production	Country of Production
El Lugar Más Pequeño	Documentary	Long	El Salvador	2011	Tatiana Huezo	2011	El Salvador / Mexico
Nosotras	Documentary	Short	Guatemala	2011	Shari Sabel Strandmark	2010	Guatemala / Sweden
Las Marimbas del Infierno	Fiction	Long	Guatemala	2010	Julio Hernández Córdón	2010	Guatemala / Francia / Mexico
Wata	Fiction	Short	Panama	2010	Enrique Castro Rios and Ana Endara Mislov	2010	Panama
María en Tierra de Nadie	Documentary	Long	El Salvador	2010	Marcela Zamora Chamorro	2010	El Salvador / Spain
Ausentes	Documentary	Short	El Salvador	2010	Tomás Guevara	2009	El Salvador / USA
Tercer Mundo	Fiction	Long	Costa Rica	2009	César Caro	2009	Costa Rica / Chile / Bolivia
Cuilos	Fiction	Short	Costa Rica	2009	Paz Fábrega	2008	Costa Rica / France
Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos	Documentary	Long	Guatemala	2009	Eduardo Spiegeler	2008	Guatemala
El Tanque	Documentary	Short	Guatemala	2009	Lourdes Barreno Xicarà et al.	2009	Guatemala / Spain

B. Online questionnaire for the directors of the film sample

INFORMACIÓN DIRECTORAS Y DIRECTORES DE CINE CENTROAMERICANO

INFORMACIÓN DIRECTORAS Y DIRECTORES DE CINE CENTROAMERICANO

El contenido del presente formulario será usado exclusivamente en el marco de la investigación para el grado de doctorado que realiza Luis Fernando Fallas Fallas en la Universidad de Newcastle. Se garantiza la confidencialidad en la presentación de los datos ya que los mismos no se utilizarán en su relación a un/a director/a en particular sino solamente en su conjunto estadístico. Igualmente los datos desagregados de este formulario solo podrán ser accedidos por quien realiza este proyecto y sus dos supervisores.

1. Nombre y apellido

2. Sexo

Marca solo un óvalo.

☐ Femenino

☐ Masculino

3. Lugar de nacimiento

4. Nacionalidad

5. Lugar de residencia

INFORMACIÓN DIRECTORAS Y DIRECTORES DE CINE CENTROAMERICANO

6. ¿Ha vivido por más de seis meses en un país distinto al de su nacionalidad?

Marca solo un óvalo.

☐ Si

☐ No (Pasar a la pregunta 8)

7. Razones de la residencia en el exterior

Selecciona todos los que correspondan.

☐ Estudios

☐ Trabajo

☐ Otro

8. Títulos académicos obtenidos o estudios realizados relevantes para su actividad cinematográfica (indicar institución y país donde se realizaron)

9. ¿Cuántos años ha trabajado en la producción de materiales audiovisuales y cinematográficos?

Marca solo un óvalo.

☐ 0-5 años

☐ 6-10 años

☐ 11-15 años

☐ 16-20 años

☐ 21 años o más

INFORMACIÓN DIRECTORAS Y DIRECTORES DE CINE CENTROAMERICANO

10. ¿Trabaja actualmente en la producción de materiales audiovisuales o cinematográficos?

Marca solo un óvalo.

- ☐ Si
☐ No (omitir la siguiente pregunta)

11. Su condición laboral es:

Selecciona todos los que correspondan.

- ☐ Trabajador independiente
☐ Trabaja en su propia compañía de producción
☐ Trabajador de planta de una compañía de producción

12. ¿Posee su propio equipo de grabación y edición?

Marca solo un óvalo.

- ☐ Si
☐ Solo grabación
☐ Solo edición
☐ No

13. ¿En qué otros países, diferentes a su lugar de residencia, ha realizado proyectos audiovisuales?

INFORMACIÓN DIRECTORAS Y DIRECTORES DE CINE CENTROAMERICANO

14. ¿Cuáles son las principales fuentes de financiación para sus producciones?

Selecciona todos los que correspondan.

- ☐ Recursos propios
- ☐ Obra por contrato
- ☐ Fondos públicos no reembolsables
- ☐ Co-producción nacional con fines de lucro
- ☐ Co-producción internacional con fines de lucro
- ☐ Organizaciones no gubernamentales nacionales
- ☐ Organizaciones no gubernamentales internacionales
- ☐ Crowdfunding

15. En caso de recibir financiación de parte de entes internacionales, favor indicar los países sede de los mismos.

16. Presupuesto (aproximado) en dólares estadounidenses de la producción por la cual se le realiza este cuestionario

17. Recaudación de esa misma producción

Este contenido no ha sido creado ni aprobado por Google.

Google Formularios

C. Films and their producers, funders and supporters

Name of the movie	Funders and supporters from the same nation as the film's place of production	Funders and supporters from different nations than the film's place of production	Regional or non-territorial entities		
			<i>Cinergia (C.A. and the Caribbean)</i>	<i>Ibermedia (Iberoamérica)</i>	<i>Crowd-funding (Deterritorial)</i>
12 Segundos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TVRHD Kraft Logic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rock Movie (Mexico) 			
Xic Vuh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kamin proyecto Comalapa Surkum Cine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hivos (Netherlands) 			
El Codo del Diablo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> La Pecera Pro-Artes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ceibita Films (Guatemala) Hivos (Netherlands) AECID (Spain) 	X	X	
El Lugar Indeseado	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Montaña Adentro 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dina Sherzer Award for Documentary Filmmaking at MFA University of Texas at Austin (USA) 			X
Por las Plumas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> La Sucia Centroamericana Ministerio de Cultura, Centro de Cine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rotterdam Film Festival (Netherlands) Encuentros Miami (USA) BAL (Argentina) Hivos (Netherlands) 	X	X	X
Irene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changula, Nueva Escuela de Cine y Video, Veritas University Trigo Miel La linterna films Bar El Lobo Estepario 				

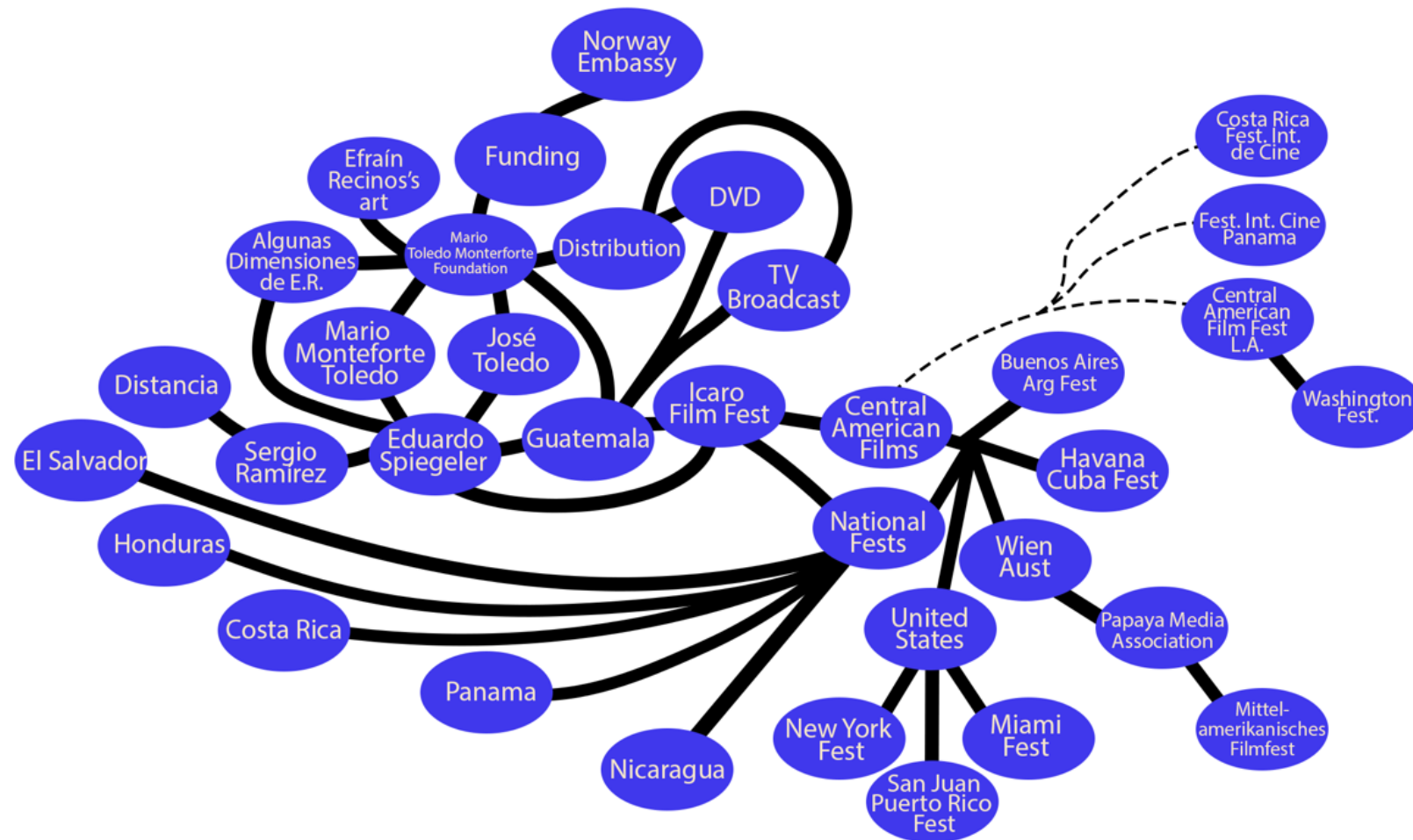
Name of the movie	Funders and supporters from the same nation as the film's place of production	Funders and supporters from different nations than the film's place of production	Regional or non-territorial entities		
			<i>Cinergia (C.A. and the Caribbean)</i>	<i>Ibermedia (Iberoamérica)</i>	<i>Crowd-funding (Deterritorial)</i>
Justicia para mi Hermana		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Day Films (USA) Artevista Films (USA) 			
Lih Wina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periodistas Costeños MAR Producciones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Finnish Foundation for Media and Development – VIKES (Finland) 			
El Regreso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Miel y Palo Films Bar El Lobo Estepario Centro de Cine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> San Francisco Art Institute (USA) AECID (Spain) 			X
Nicté		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cine Color S.A. (Argentina) Universidad del Cine (Argentina) 			
A Mi Lado		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under the Milky Way (USA) JCDE productions (USA) 			
El Engaño	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Camila Films 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Save the Children (Spain) AECID (Spain) 			
Distancia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Producciones Concepción Melindrosa Films Casa Comal Los Insolentes Código Cinema Liga Guatemalteca de Higiene Mental 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Films in Progress by Rencontres de Toulouse (France), San Sebastián Festival (Spain) and Cinélatino (France) 	X		

Name of the movie	Funders and supporters from the same nation as the film's place of production	Funders and supporters from different nations than the film's place of production	Regional or non-territorial entities		
			<i>Cinergia (C.A. and the Caribbean)</i>	<i>Ibermedia (Iberoamérica)</i>	<i>Crowd-funding (Deterritorial)</i>
Sombras Nada Más	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who? Films Estudios Orosí Salazar Ministerio de Cultura Teatro de Muñecos Pro-Artes 				
El Lugar Más Pequeño		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centro de Capacitación Cinematográfica (Mexico) Fondo para la Producción Cinematográfica de Calidad. (Mexico) Gucci Ambulante Grant (Mexico) Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes (Mexico) 			
Nosotras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TV USAC, San Carlos University New Vision Imagitlán 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharikompaniet Innovadora Stockholm (Sweden) The Honeypot Foundation (UK) 			
Las Marimbas del Infierno	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Melindrosa Films Código Cinema 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Les Films du Requin (France) Axolote Cine (Mexico) Hubert Bals Fund and Rotterdam Film Festival (Netherlands) 			

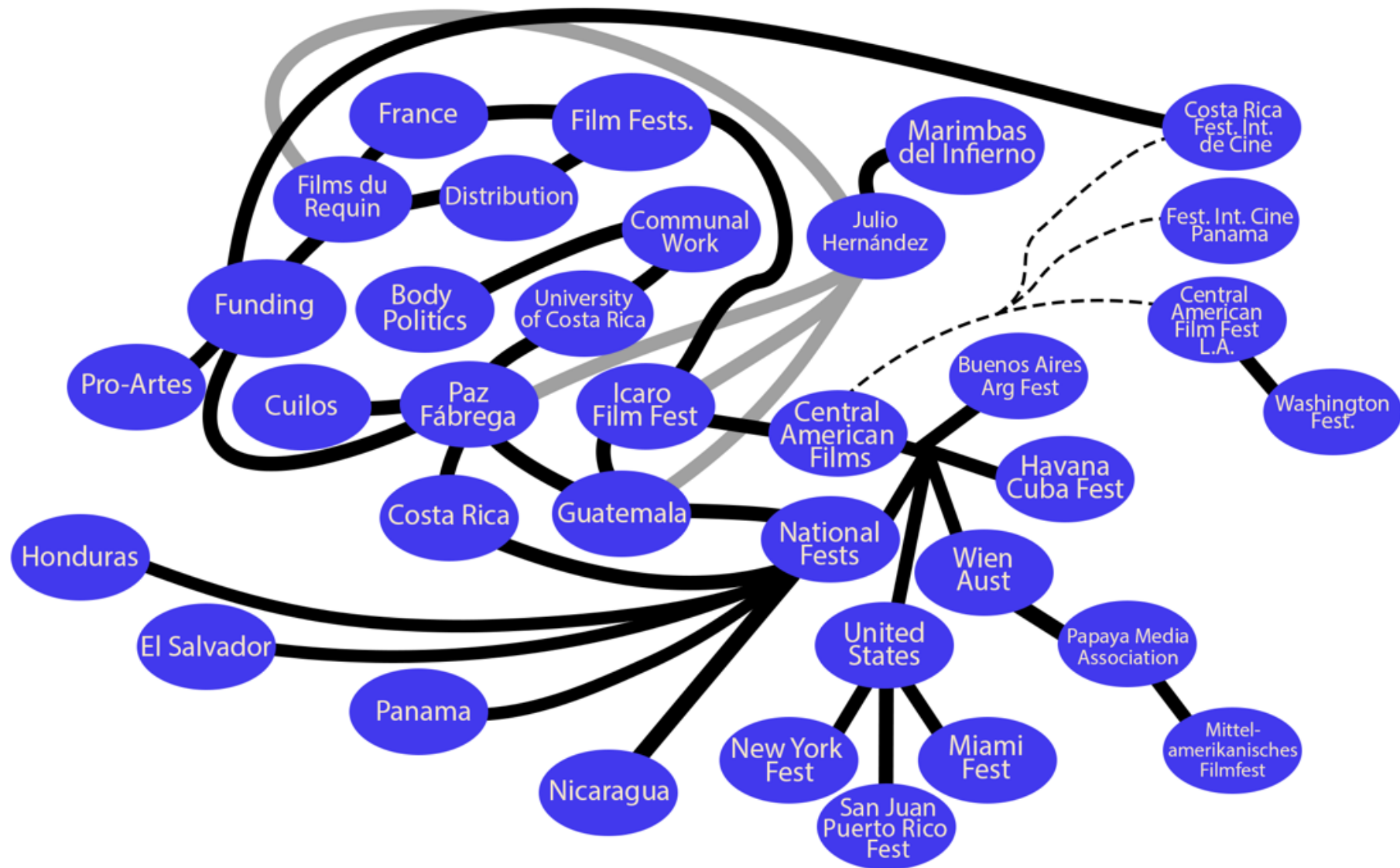
Name of the movie	Funders and supporters from the same nation as the film's place of production	Funders and supporters from different nations than the film's place of production	Regional or non-territorial entities		
			<i>Cinergia (C.A. and the Caribbean)</i>	<i>Ibermedia (Iberoamérica)</i>	<i>Crowd-funding (Deterritorial)</i>
Wata	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instituto Nacional de Cultura, Oficina de Cine Al Fondo del Callejón Pituka Ortega ECR, Enrique Castro Ríos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tEORETICA (Costa Rica) 	X		
María en Tierra de Nadie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> El Faro 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open Society Institute (USA) Escuela Internaiconal de Cine y Televisión de San Antonio de los Baños (Cuba) Ford Foundation (USA) AECID (Spain) Ruido (Spain) Idheas films (Mexico) 			
Ausentes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ángulos Films (El Salvador/USA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mirando Al Sur (AECID/Spain) 	X		
Tercer Mundo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Películas Plot Filamento Films Veritas University Centro de Cine Pro-Artes Marte Studio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cinearte (Bolivia) CORFO (Chile) 	X		
Cuilos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporal Films Premio de la Industria (Muestra de Cine CR) Pro-Artes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Les Films du Requin (France) 			

Name of the movie	Funders and supporters from the same nation as the film's place of production	Funders and supporters from different nations than the film's place of production	Regional or non-territorial entities		
			<i>Cinergia (C.A. and the Caribbean)</i>	<i>Ibermedia (Iberoamérica)</i>	<i>Crowd-funding (Deterritorial)</i>
Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fundación Mario Monteforte Toledo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Norway) 			
El Tanque		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noticiero InterCultural, ACSUR-Las Segovias (Spain) 			

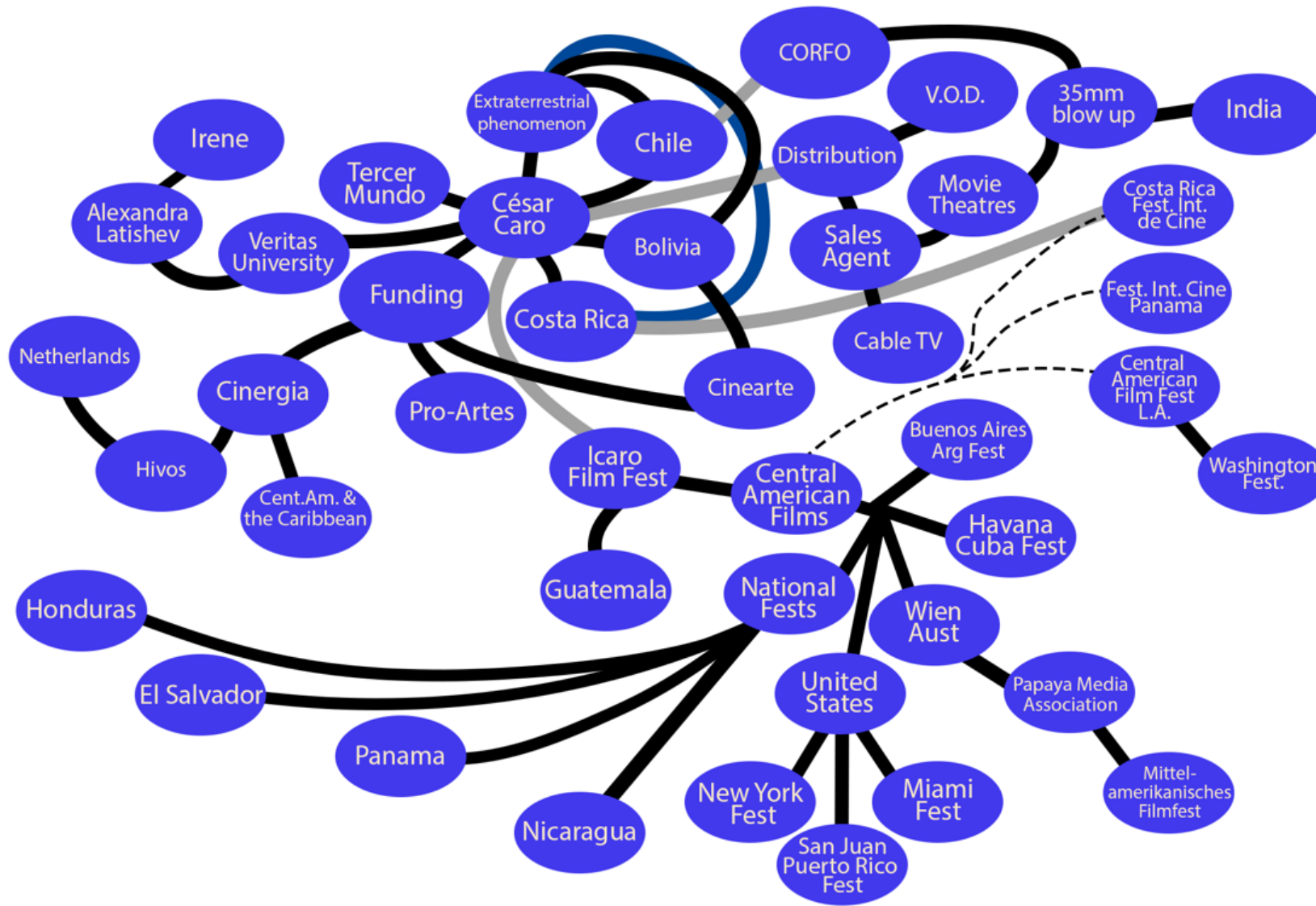
D. Mapping of *Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos* (2008)



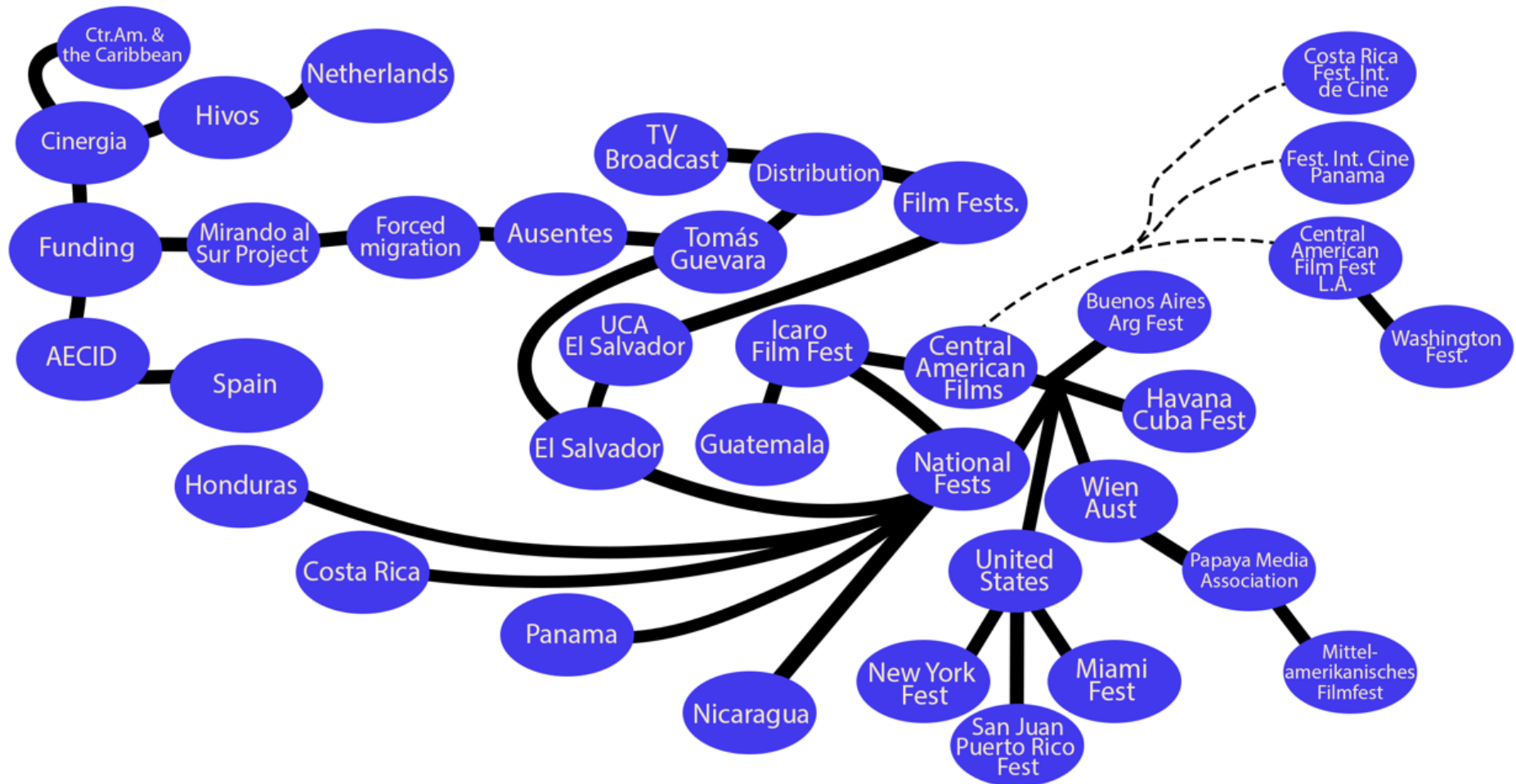
E. Mapping of *Cuilos* (2008)



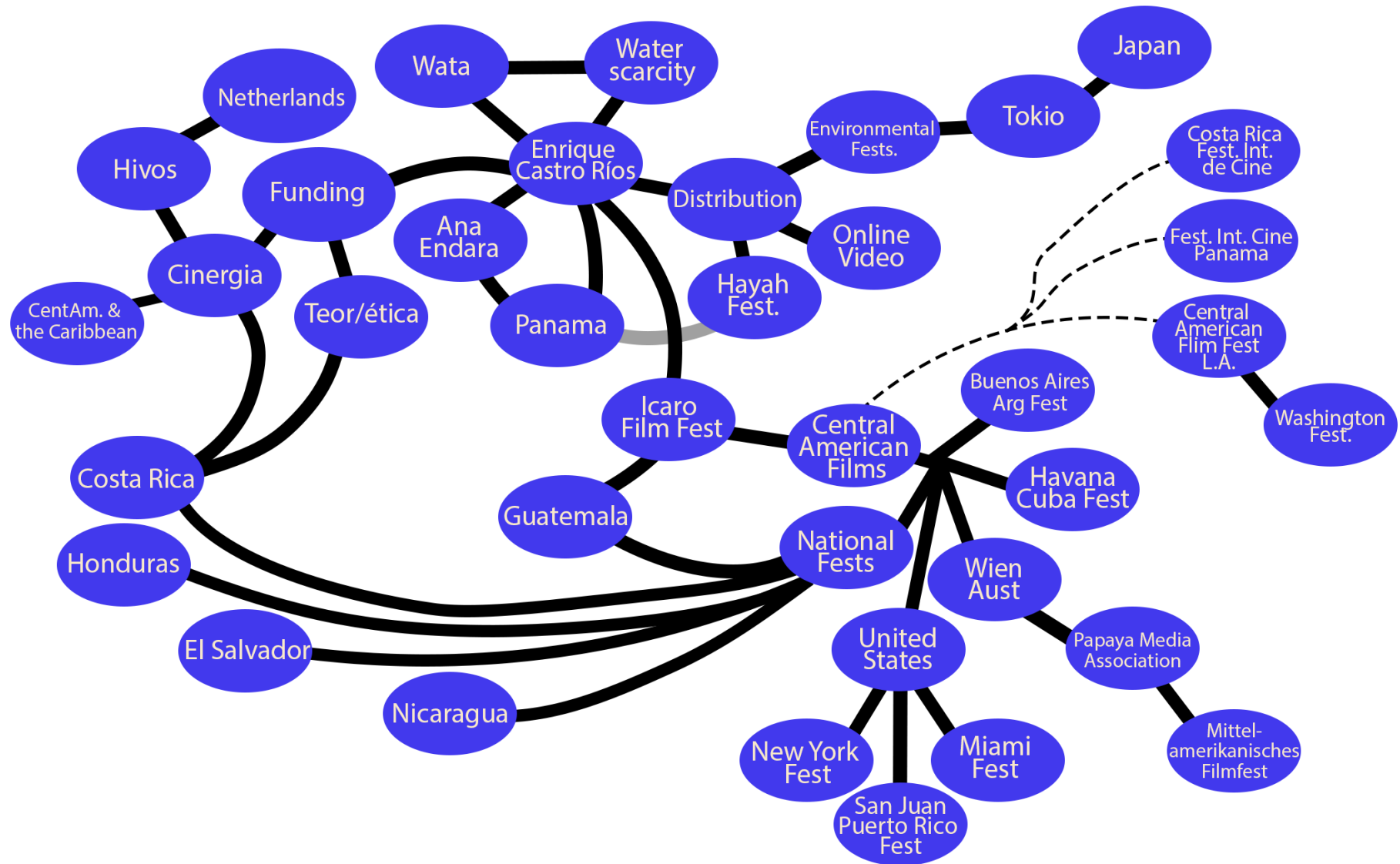
F. Mapping of *Tercer Mundo* (2009)



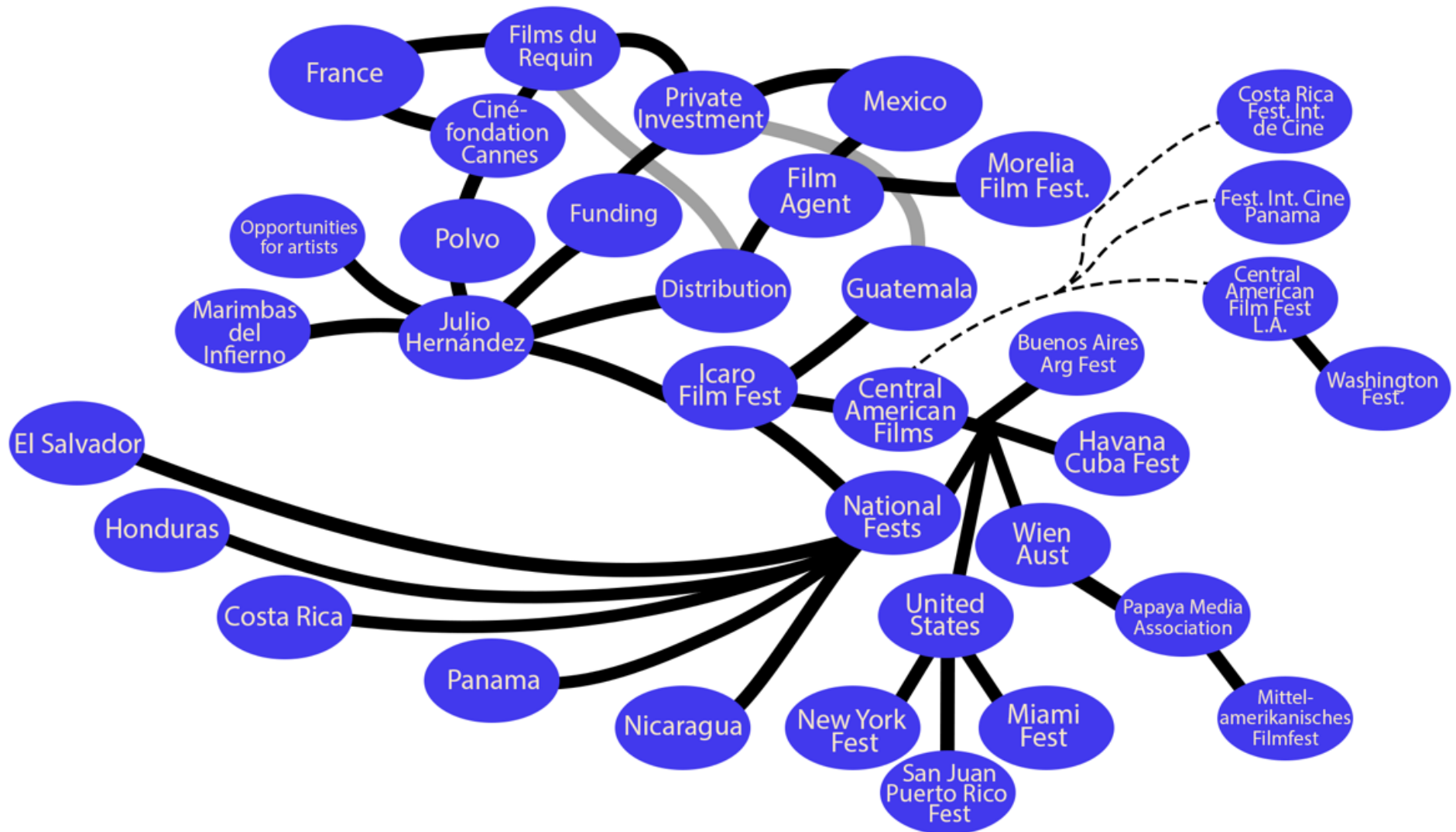
G. Mapping of *Ausentes* (2009)



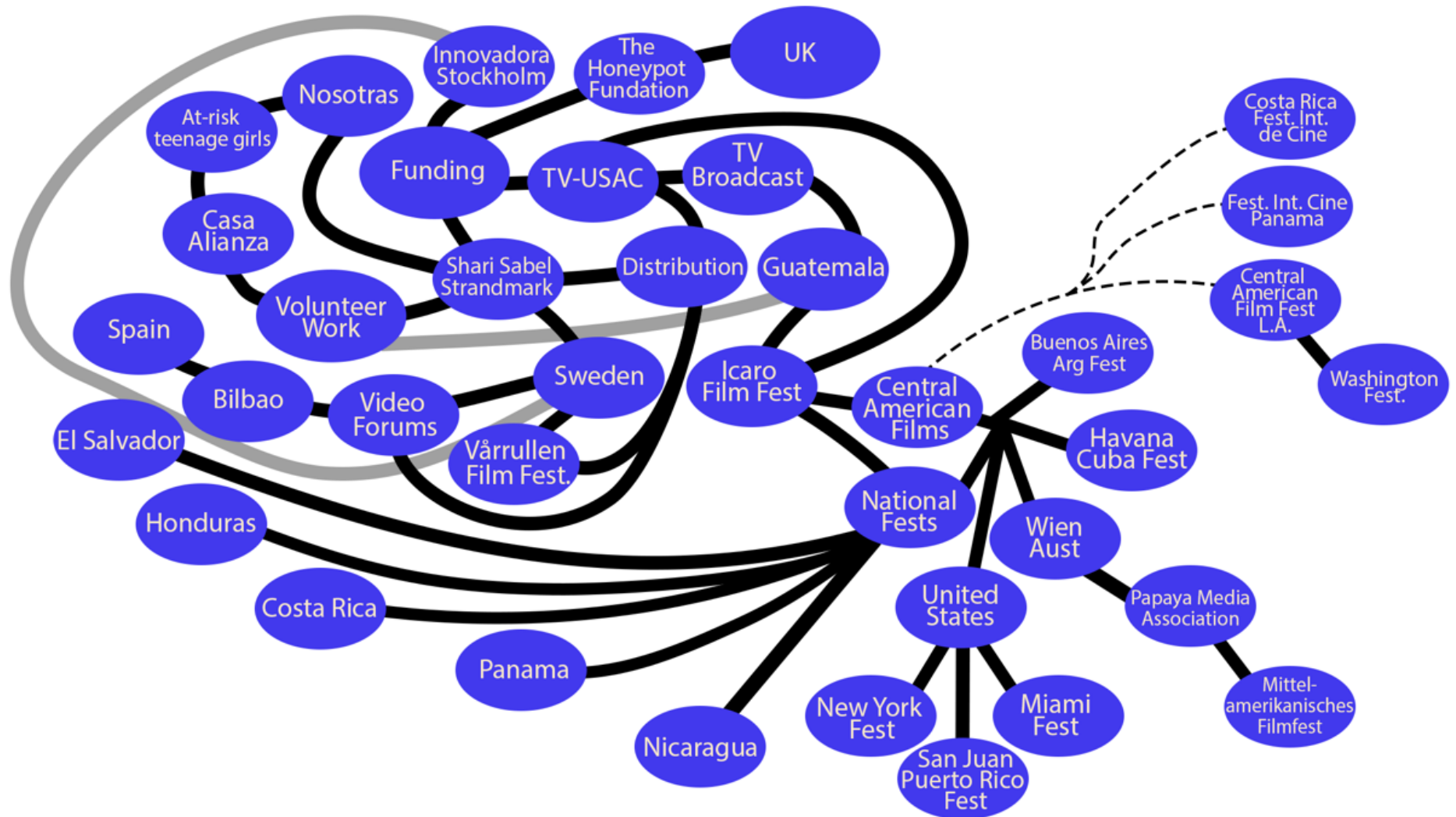
H. Mapping of *Wata* (2010)



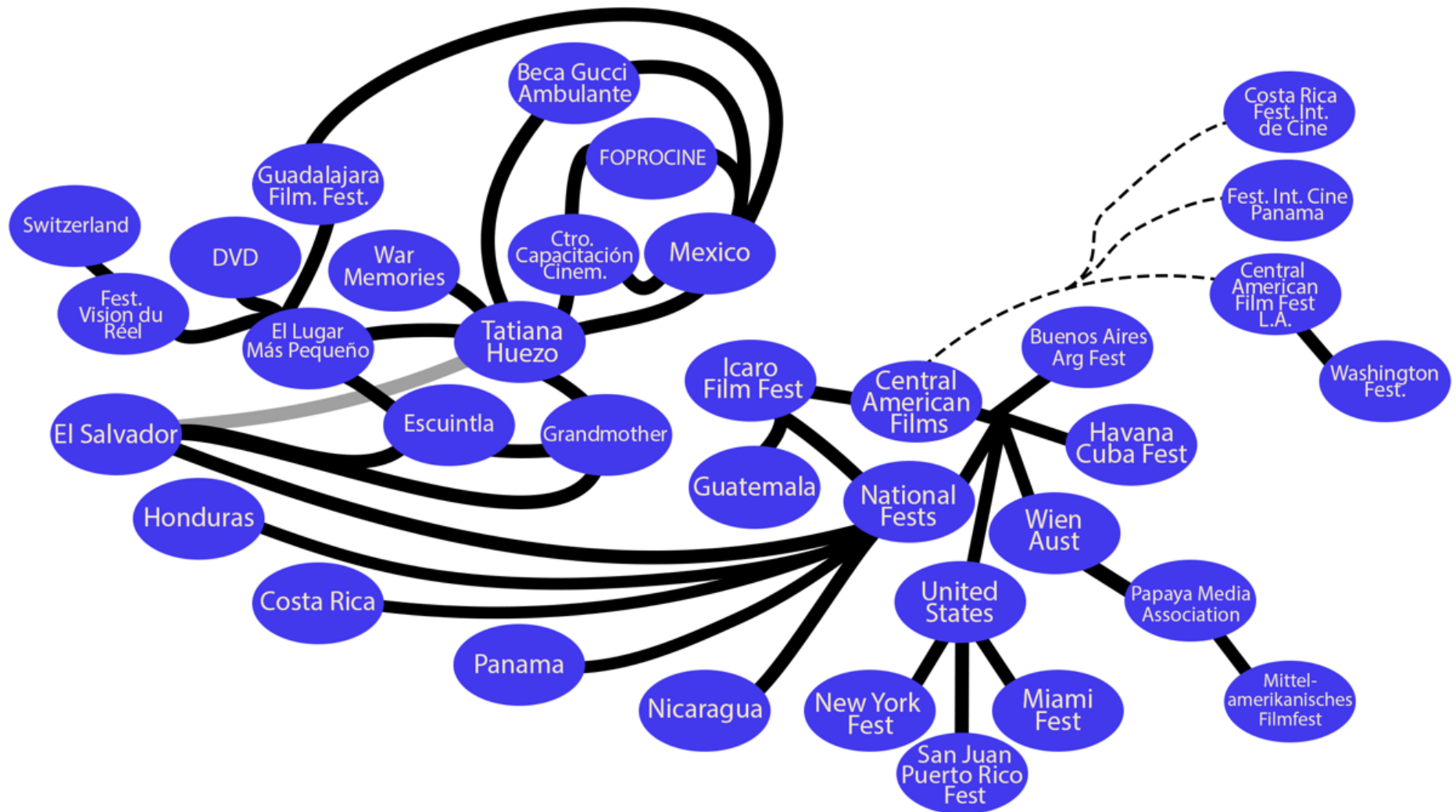
I. Mapping of *Marimbas del Infierno* (2010)



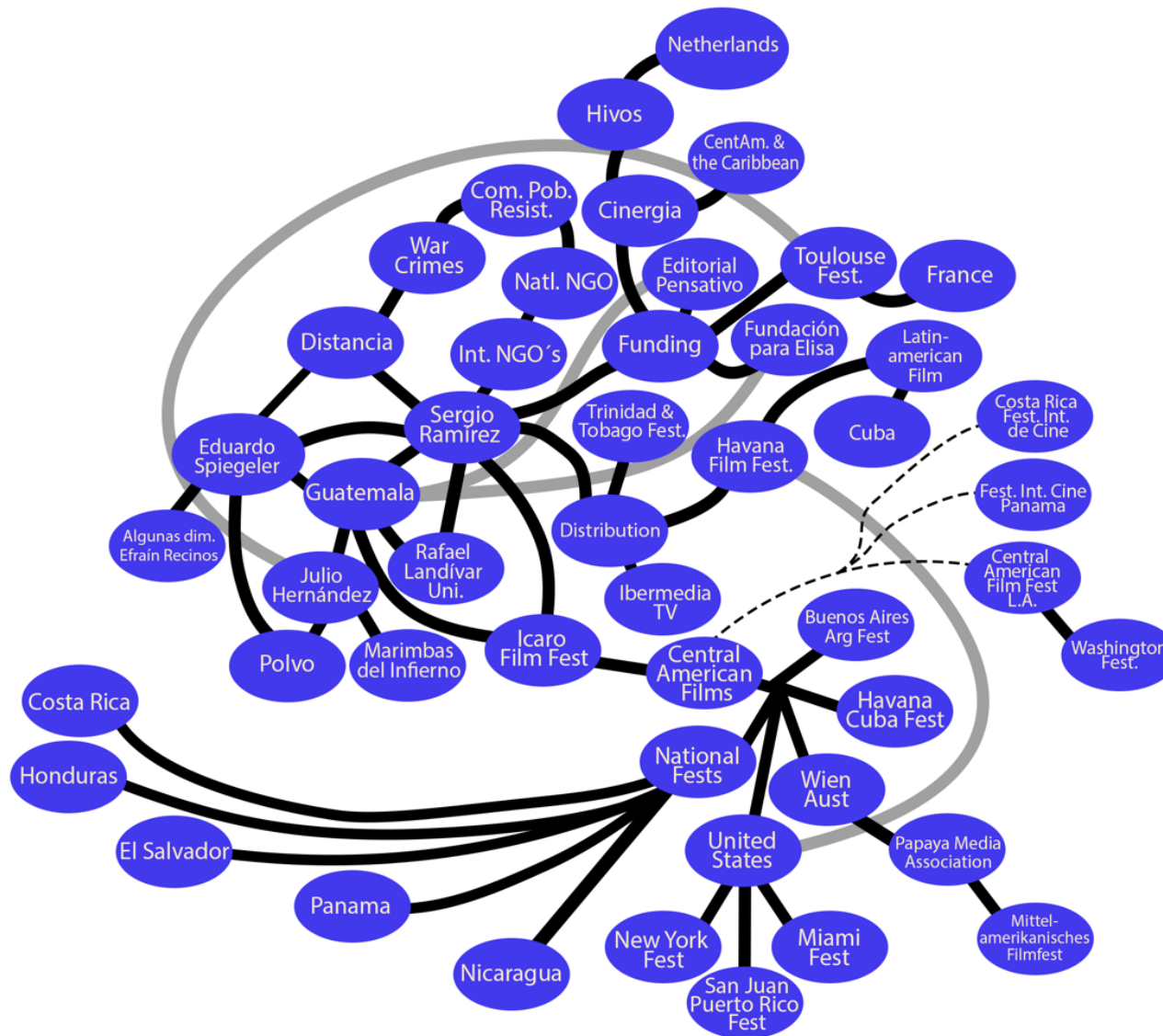
J. Mapping of *Nosotras* (2010)



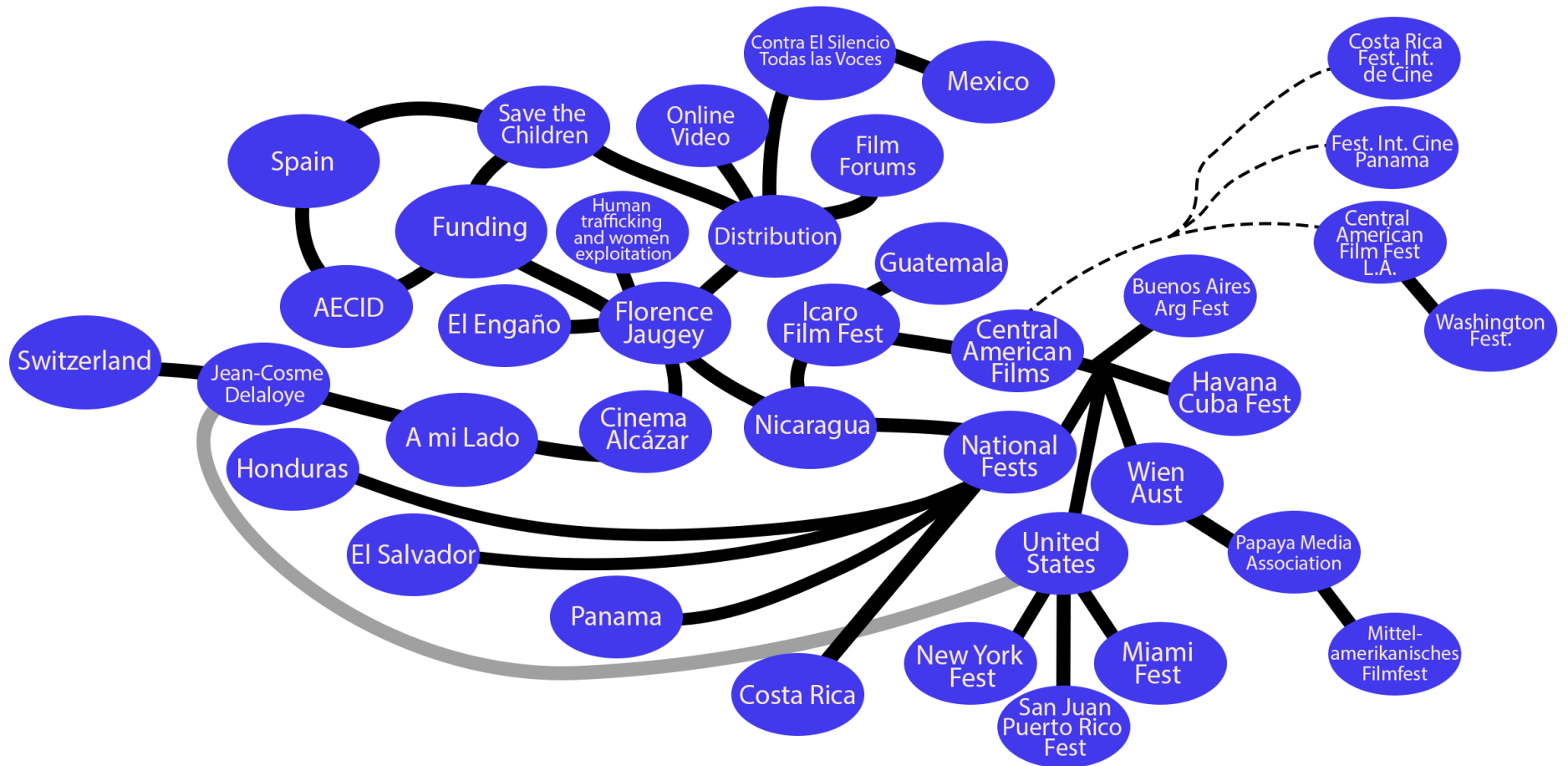
K. Mapping of *El Lugar Más Pequeño* (2011)



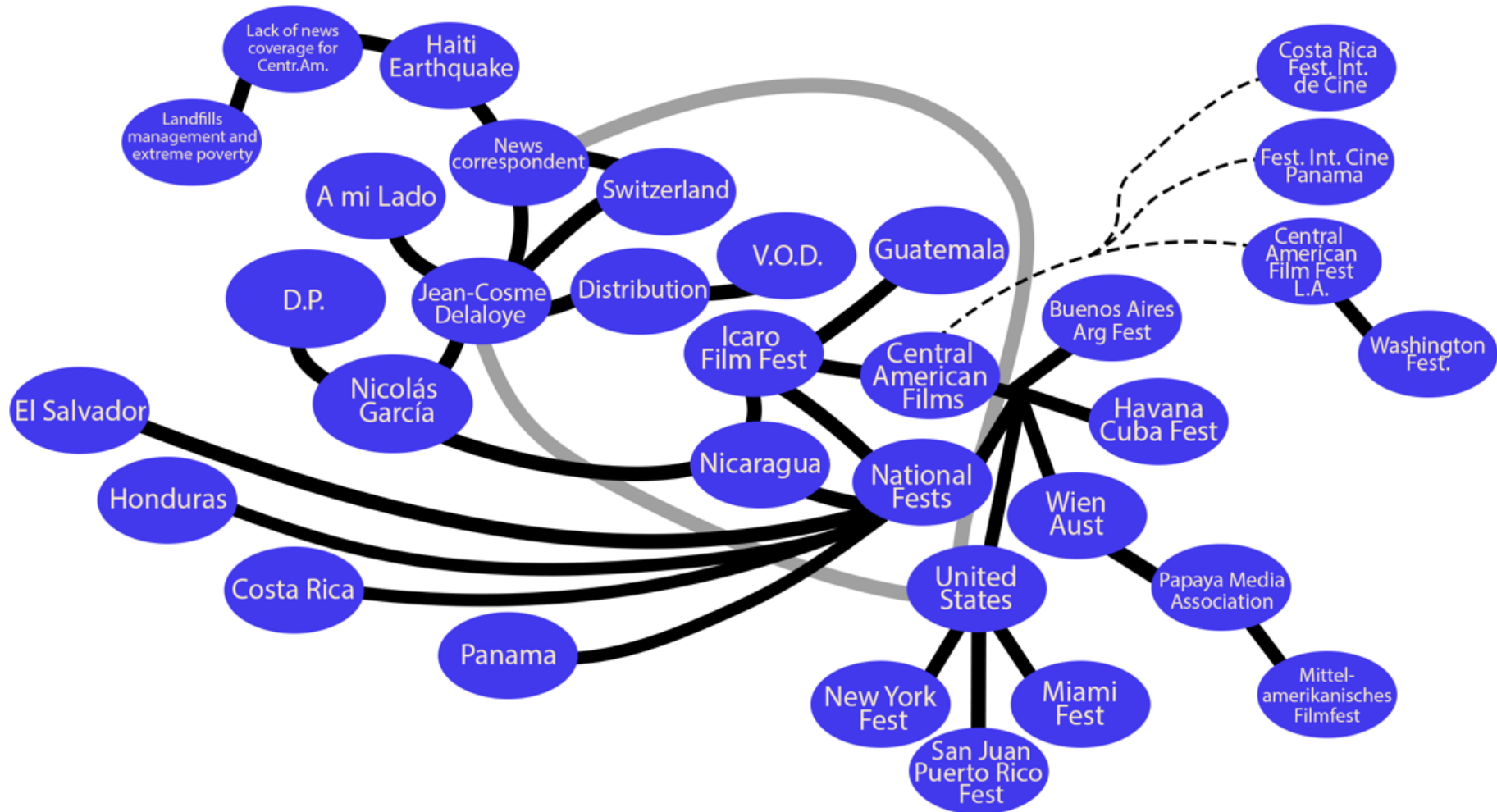
L. Mapping of *Distancia* (2011)



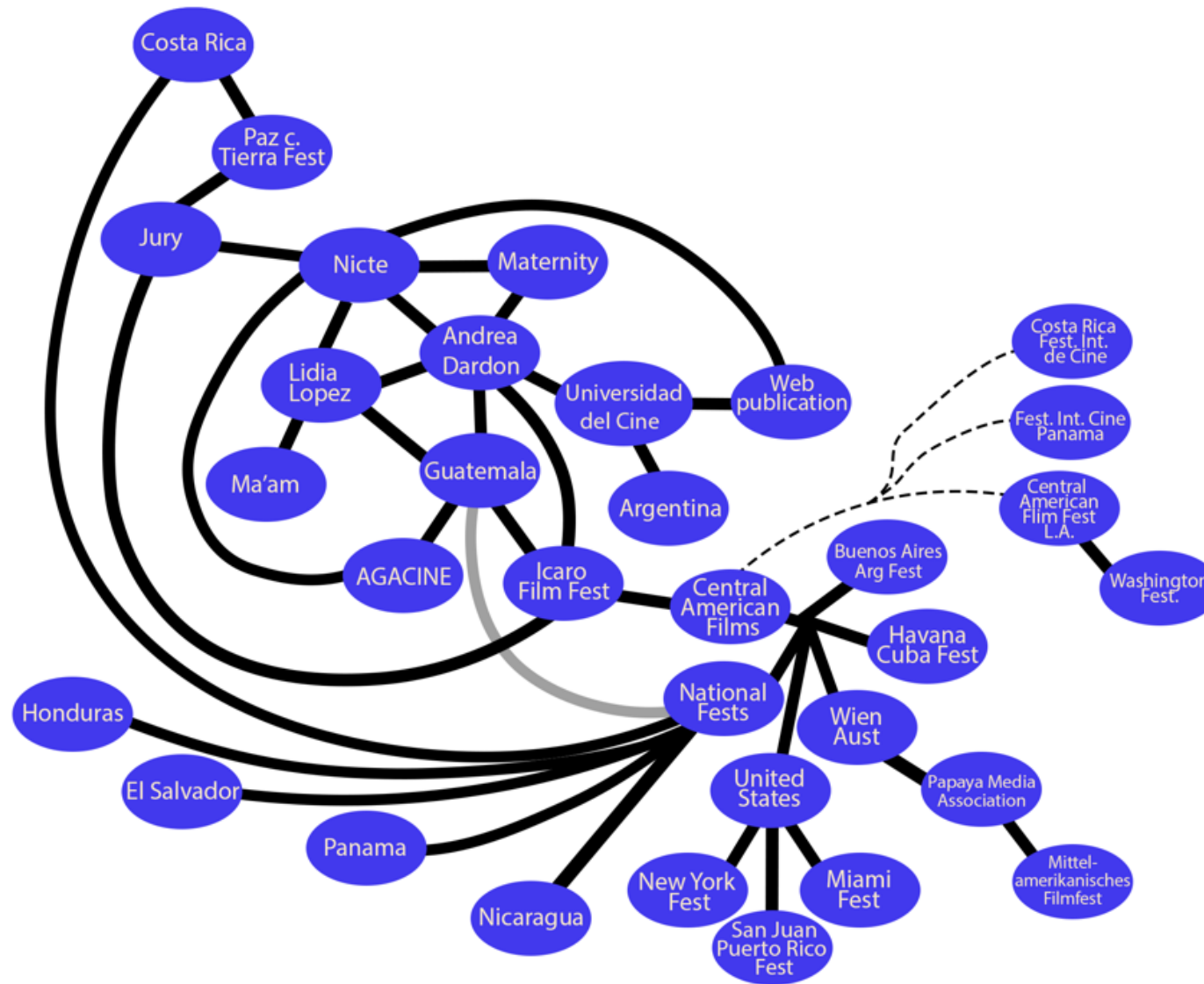
M. Mapping of *El Engaño* (2012)



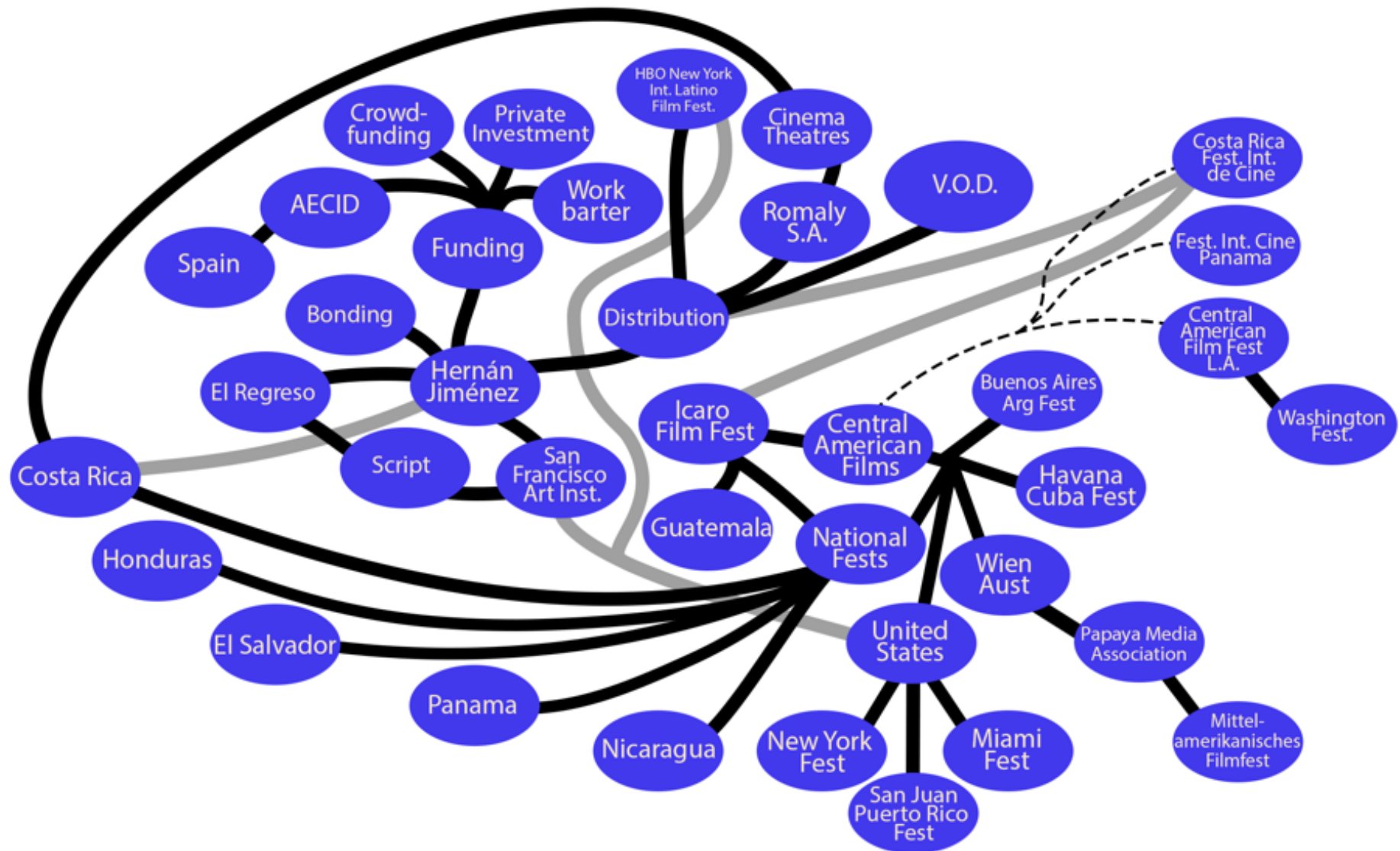
N. Mapping of *A Mi Lado* (2012)



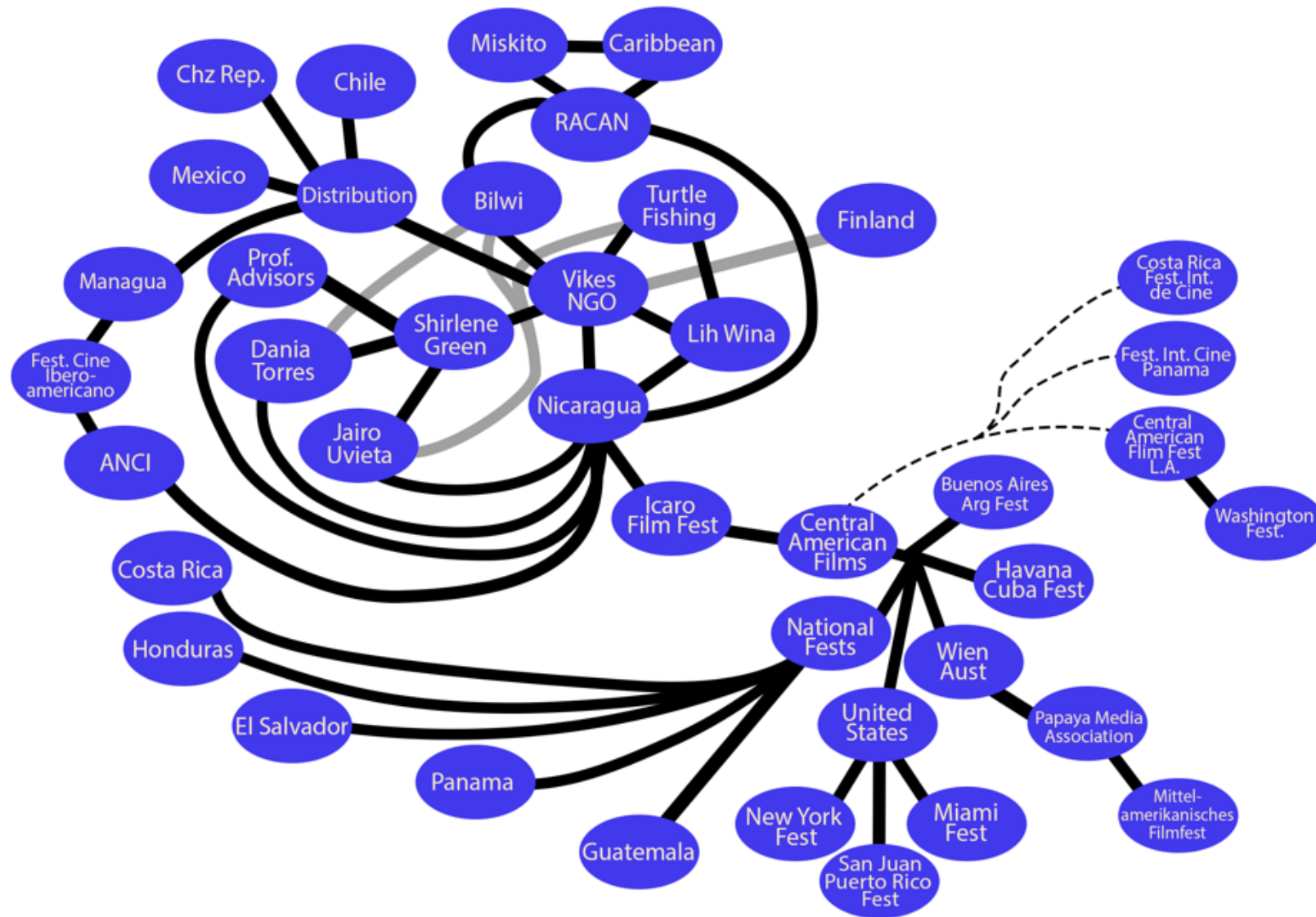
O. Mapping of *Nicté* (2012)



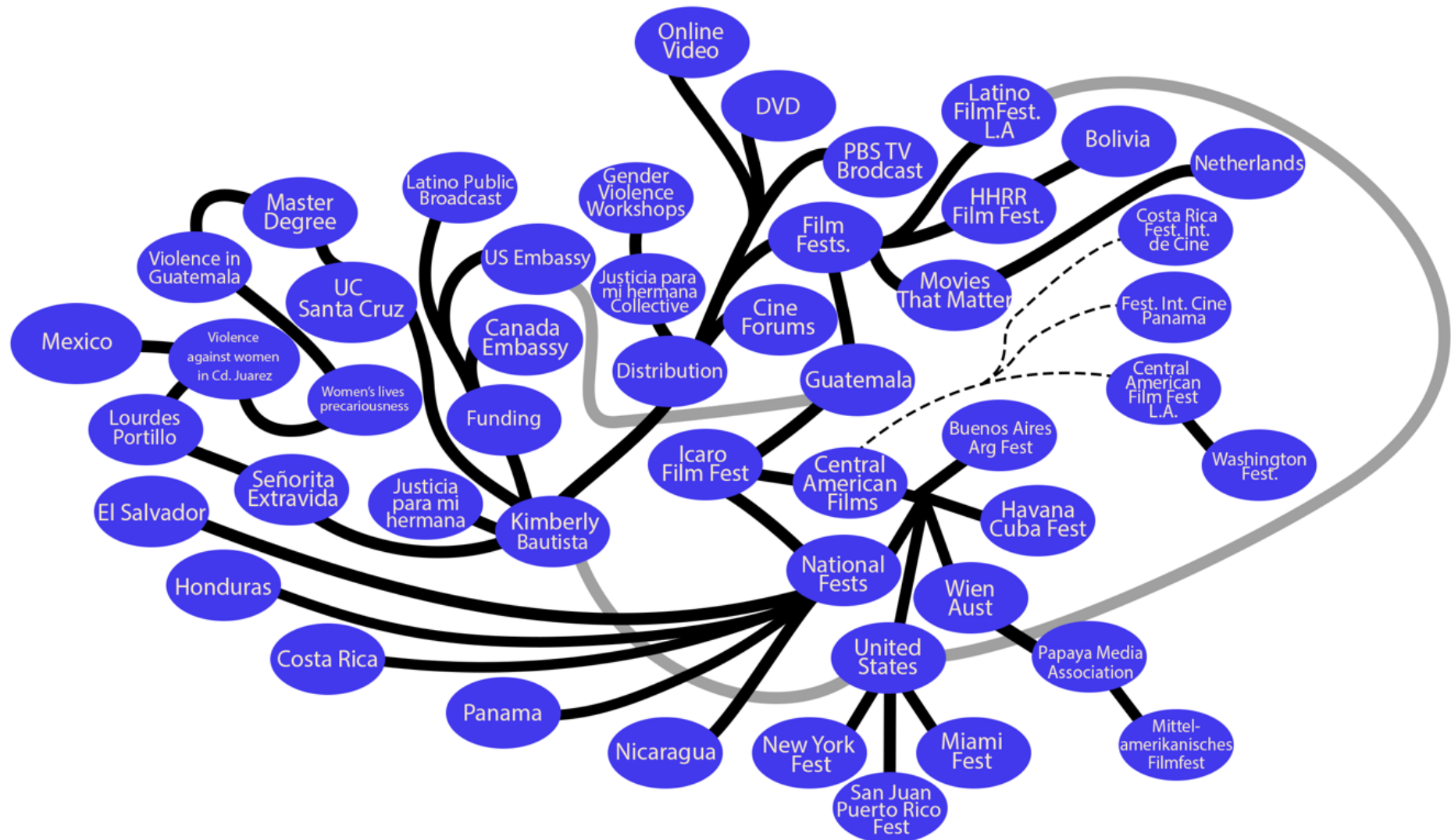
P. Mapping of *El Regreso* (2011)



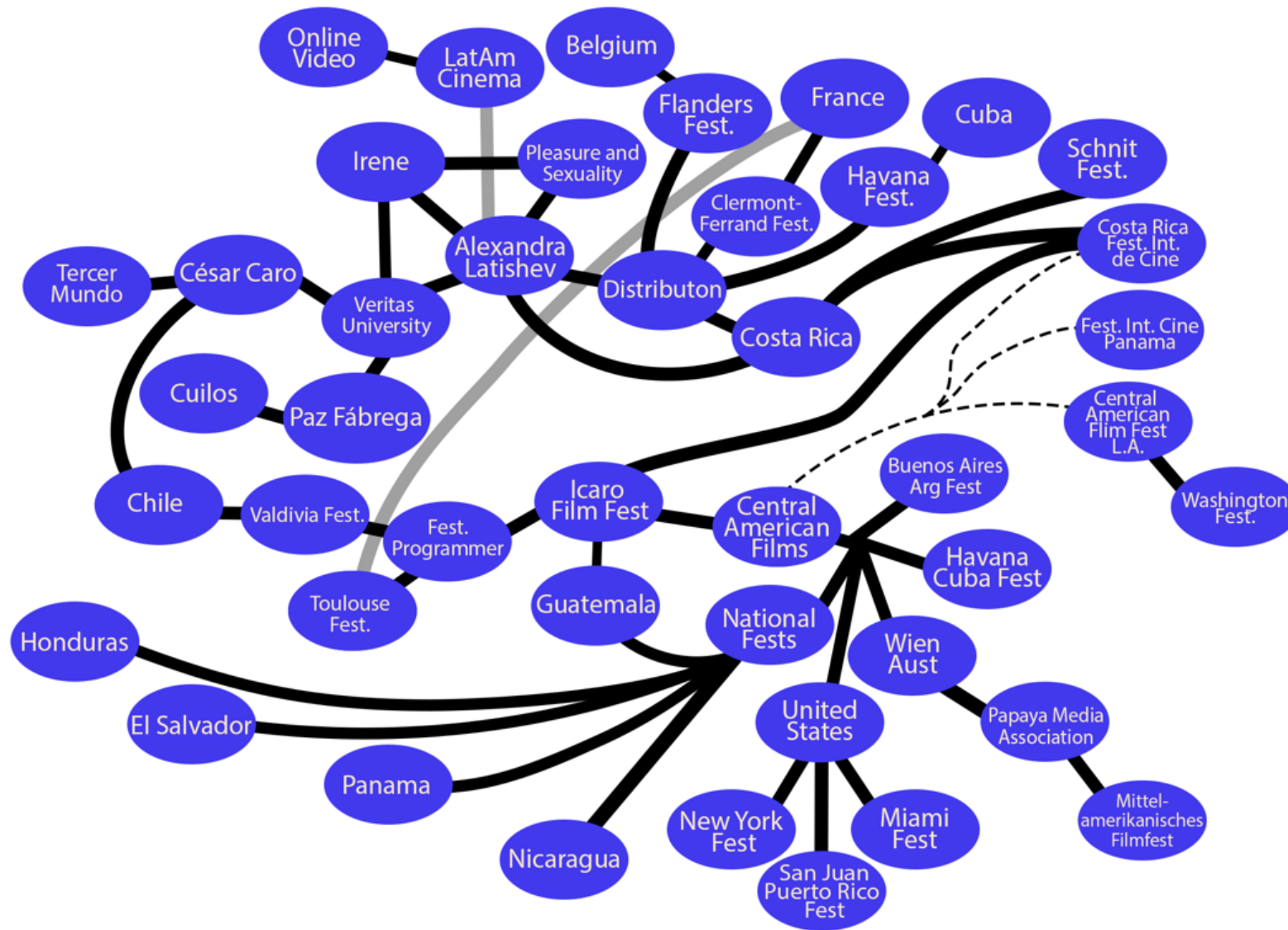
Q. Mapping of *Lih Wina* (2012)



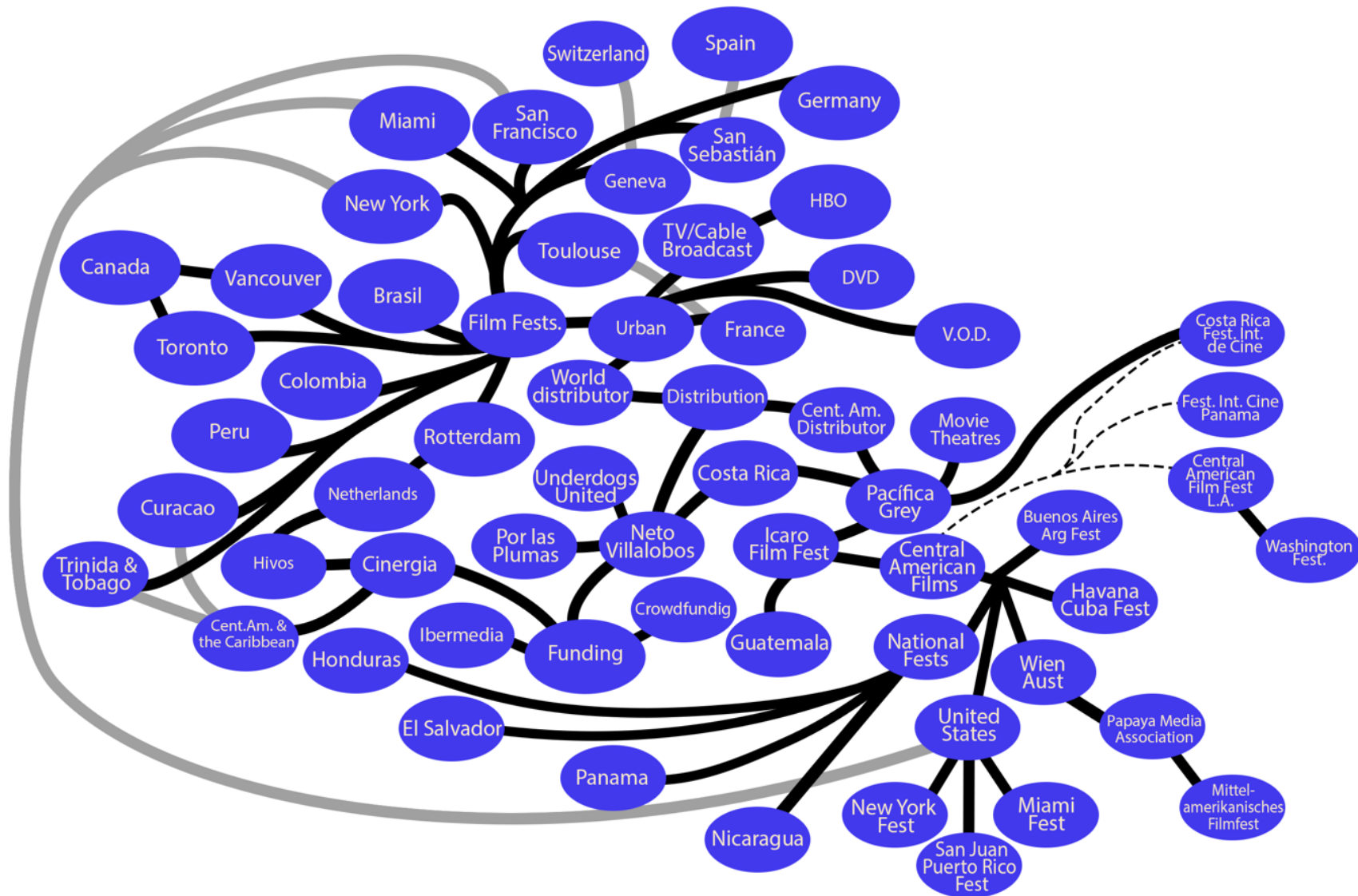
R. Mapping of *Justicia Para Mi Hermana* (2012)



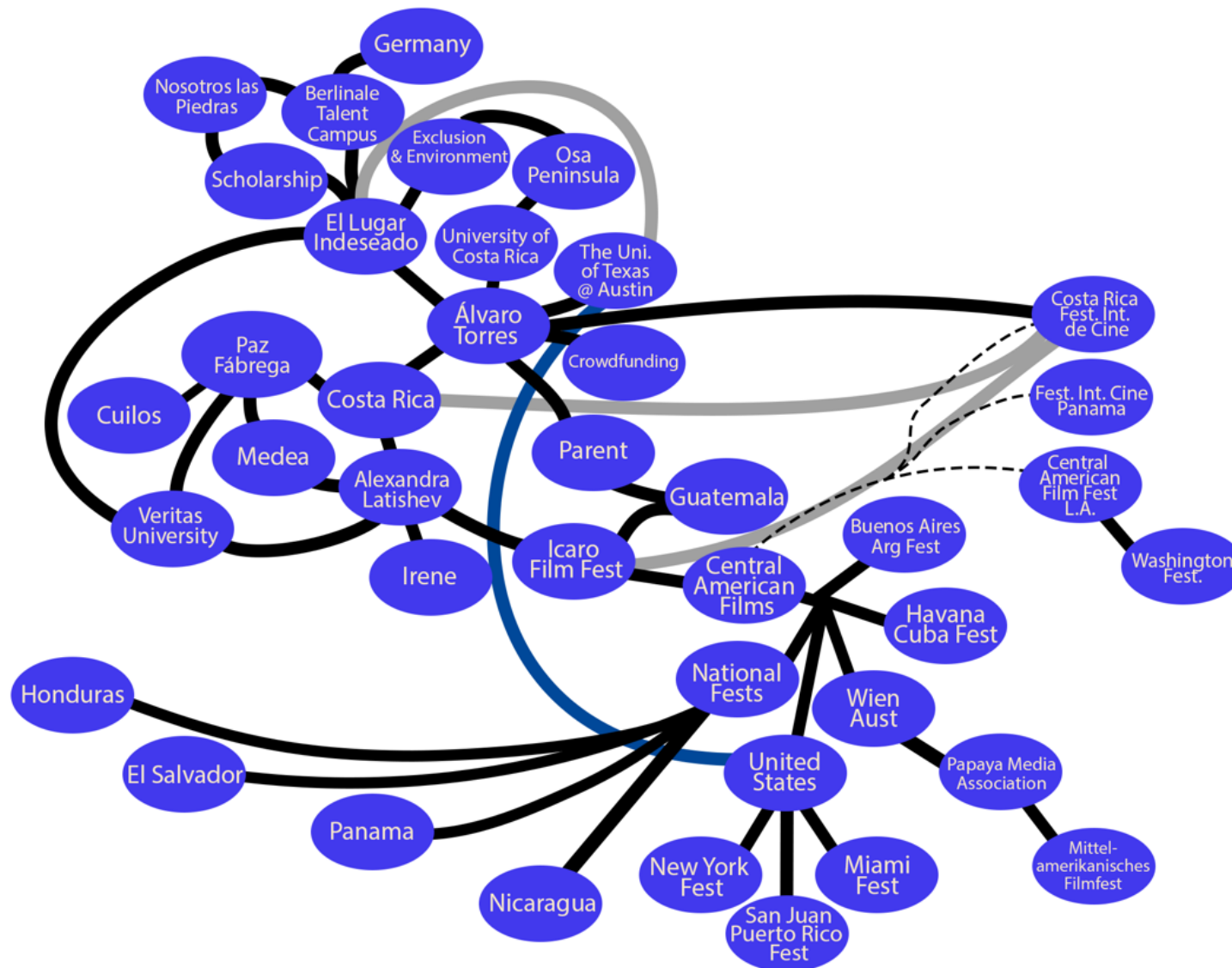
S. Mapping of *Irene* (2013)



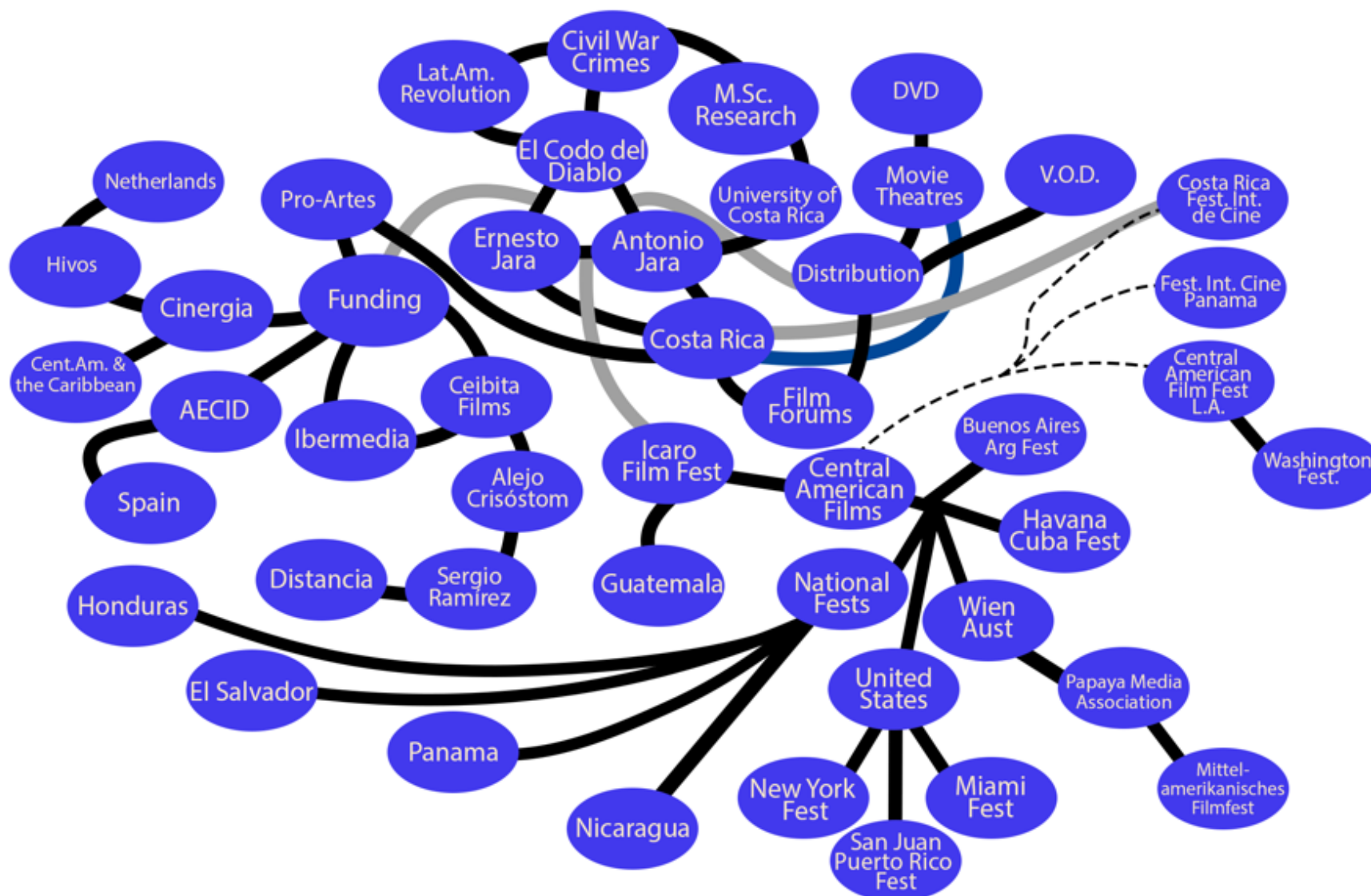
T. Mapping of *Por Las Plumas* (2013)



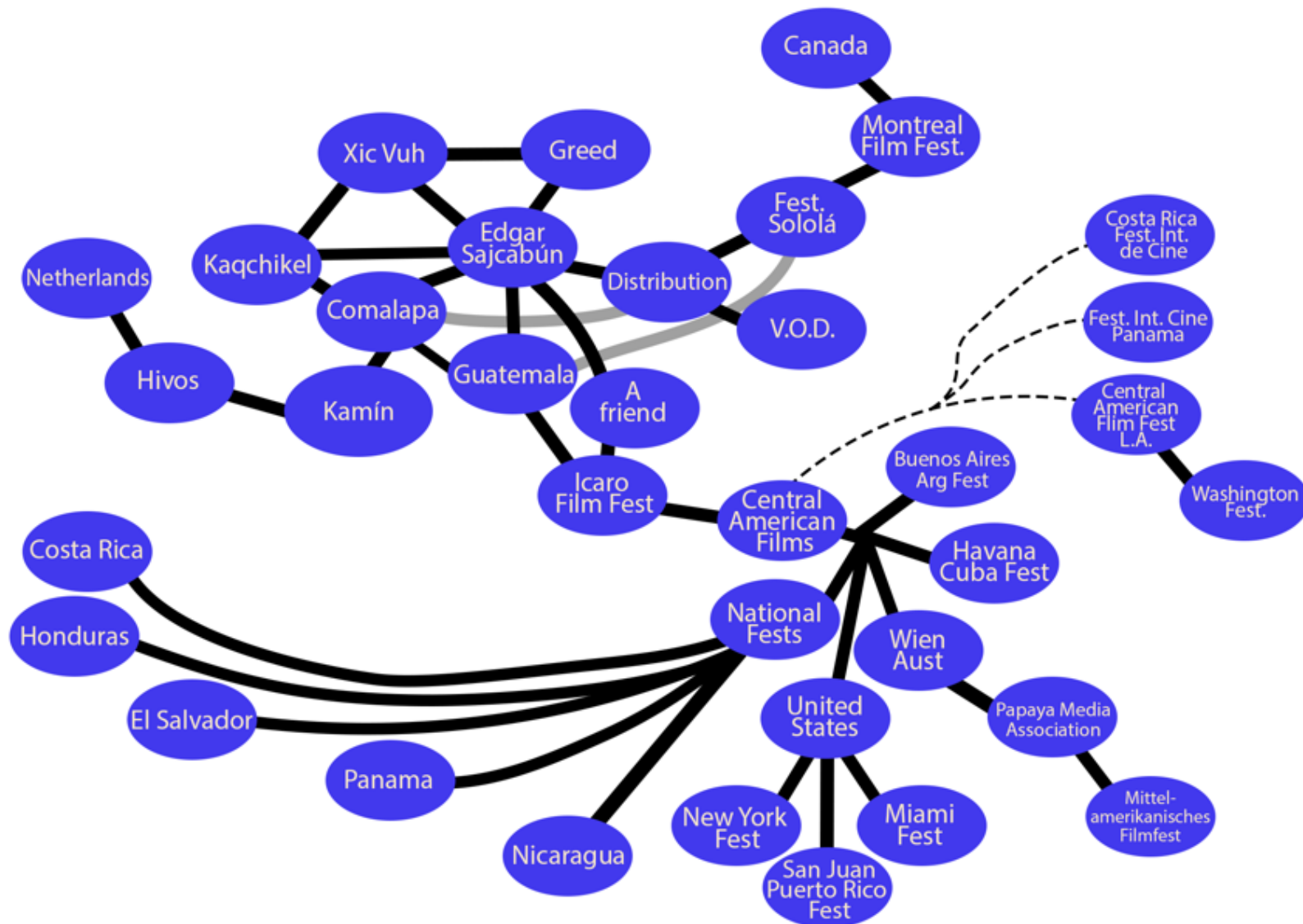
U. Mapping of *El Lugar Indeseado* (2014)



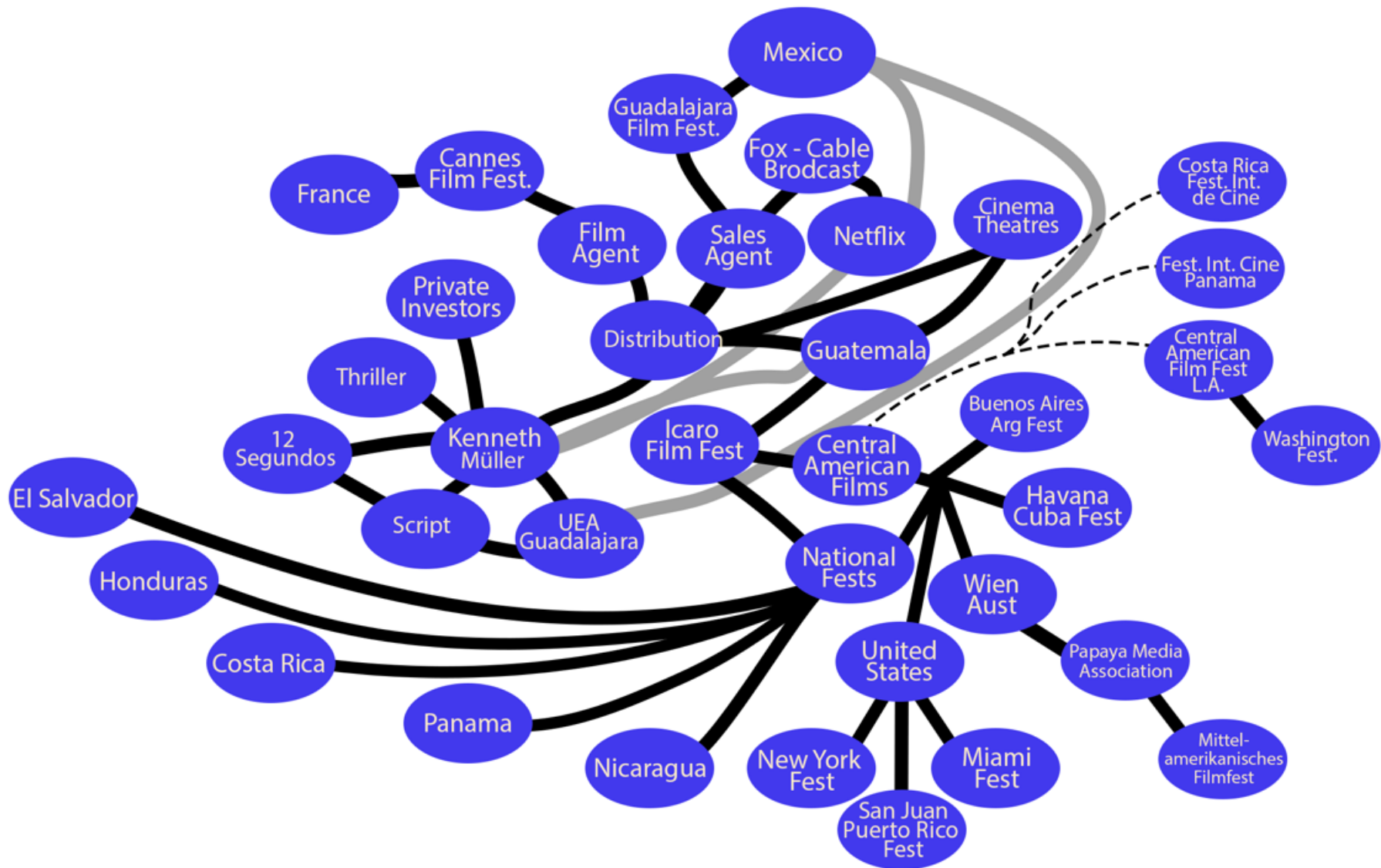
V. Mapping of *El Codo del Diablo* (2014)



W. Mapping of *Xic Vuh* (2013)



X. Mapping of 12 Segundos (2013)



Y. IFF winners 2009-2014 organised by production stage and realm of action after ANT mapping

	Motivation	Education	Influences	Financing	Distribution
National	El Regreso (CR) Por las Plumas (CR) Distancia (GUA) Marimbas del Infierno (GUA) El Codo del Diablo (CR) Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos (GUA) El Engaño (NIC)	Distancia (GUA) Irene (CR) Justicia para mi Hermana (GUA)* A Mi Lado (NIC)* Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos (GUA) Lih Wina (NIC) El Engaño (NIC)* Nosotras (GUA)*	Justicia para mi Hermana (GUA)* Lih Wina (NIC)	12 Segundos (GUA) El Regreso (CR) Irene (CR) Sombras Nada Más (CR) Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos (GUA) Nosotras (GUA)*	El Regreso (CR) Por las Plumas (CR) Marimbas del Infierno (GUA) El Codo del Diablo (CR) Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos (GUA) Lih Wina (NIC)
Transnational	Tercer Mundo (CR)	Por las Plumas (CR) 12 Segundos (GUA) El Regreso (CR) Tercer Mundo (CR) Marimbas del Infierno (GUA) Xic Vuh (GUA) Nicté (GUA) Sombras Nada Más (CR) Wata (PA) Cuñiles (CR) El Codo del Diablo (CR) El Lugar Más Pequeño (ES) María en Tierra de Nadie (ES) El Lugar Indeseado (CR) Ausentes (ES)	Distancia (GUA) Marimbas del Infierno (GUA) Sombras Nada Más (CR) Wata (PA) El Lugar Indeseado (CR) Ausentes (ES)	Por las Plumas (CR) Tercer Mundo (CR) Wata (PA) Cuñiles (CR) El Codo del Diablo (CR) María en Tierra de Nadie (ES) El Lugar Indeseado (CR) El Engaño (NIC) Lih Wina (NIC)	Distancia (GUA) Tercer Mundo (CR) Irene (CR) Sombras Nada Más (CR) Cuñiles (CR) Justicia para mi Hermana (GUA) El Lugar Más Pequeño (ES) El Lugar Indeseado (CR) Ausentes (ES)
Pos-National	Justicia para mi Hermana (GUA) María en Tierra de Nadie (ES) A Mi Lado (NIC) El Lugar Indeseado (CR) Lih Wina (NIC) Ausentes (ES)		Xic Vuh (GUA)	Distancia (GUA) Xic Vuh (GUA)* Ausentes (ES)	Xic Vuh (GUA)
Deterritorialized	12 Segundos (GUA) Xic Vuh (GUA) Irene (CR) Nicté (GUA) Sombras Nada Más (CR) Cuñiles (CR) Wata (PA) El Lugar Más Pequeño (ES) Nosotras (GUA)		Por las Plumas (CR) 12 Segundos (GUA) El Regreso (CR) Tercer Mundo (CR) Irene (CR) Nicté (GUA) Cuñiles (CR) El Codo del Diablo (CR) El Lugar Más Pequeño (ES) Algunas Dimensiones de Efraín Recinos (GUA) El Engaño (NIC)	Marimbas del Infierno (GUA) Nicté (GUA) Justicia para mi Hermana (GUA) El Lugar Más Pequeño (ES) A Mi Lado (NIC)	12 Segundos (GUA) Nicté (GUA) Wata (PA) María en Tierra de Nadie (ES) A Mi Lado (NIC) El Engaño (NIC) Nosotras (GUA)

IFF winners 2009-2014 organised by production stage and realm of action after ANT mapping. The colour guide indicates the length and genre of the film, the abbreviations on the brackets are for the country with which it participated in the festival. The asterisk indicates when a national action is not equivalent to the country on the brackets.