

Cinemas as social infrastructures

Exhibitors facilitating social interactions



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Abstract

This research investigates to what extent cinemas function as social infrastructures and how cinema exhibitors facilitate this. A theoretical framework was developed, underpinning the human and non-human, materialistic or organic aspects of cinemas, making them an assemblage of social and material accumulations that can function as social infrastructures. After establishing that the cinema is an assemblage, the parameters 'material', 'competence', and 'meaning' were defined to understand the exhibitors' practice for facilitating cinemas as social infrastructures and to determine any existing policy and funding support.

Taking advantage of an internship at the German cinema and arthouse theatres association HDF KINO in Berlin, a case study was conducted with four different types of cinemas that already offer an event in the cinema, in addition to regular film screenings, where social interactions seem feasible. Four different data collection techniques were used: informal interviews, observations, semi-structured interviews, and reviewing information from primary resources. To give meaningful interpretations that were analysable, the transcripts of the interviews and the fieldnotes were coded and uploaded to the software Atlas.TI. This computer software tool supports the unveiling of patterns.

The findings indicate that facilitating social infrastructures requires *materials* that provide an aesthetic character that visitors appreciate and that creates comfort, using the space of the foyer and the auditorium of the cinema in ways that invite social interaction and spontaneous social encounters. Exhibitors need the competences to be sensitive towards the audience and create an intimate space where the visitors feel comfortable to socialise. The exhibitors' work motivation is a very important aspect for creating social infrastructures, as the amount of facilitated social interaction depends on the dedication, creativity and endurance of the exhibitors.

Although cinemas are still businesses that are part of the cinema industry and need to focus on generating income, exhibitors differ in opinion about how the cinema offers a social aim, depending on how they see the meaning of cinema itself. For the exhibitor of a commercial cinema, it becomes a place where visitors learn something about themselves or others through the film stories shown on screen and discuss this experience with their fellow visitors. For the exhibitor of a communal cinema, it creates a community by facilitating a place for returning visitors where exchange happens organically through debating or discussing views on specific topics from the film, while also being a neighbourhood place that one can visit without the need to see a film.

This study provides arguments in support of exhibitors and cinema associations to help convince policymakers and funding institutions that cinemas can function as social infrastructures that offer social interaction beyond film screening and how to facilitate this more in the future. Cinema exhibitors have the materials, the competence and are interested in enabling cinemas as social infrastructures but do require support at local and regional levels by (non-)governmental organisations to boost the social value of cinemas and to help them maintain and create new meeting places in society, which are essential for leisure activities, especially in the neighbourhood and also against loneliness, specifically for older people. To what extent cinemas can be social infrastructures is determined by the degree of social interaction in the cinemas and the appeal these have on visitors. This all substantiates that cinemas as social infrastructures do not exist alone, but are assemblages consisting of embedded relations and structures which depend on each other.

Kurzfassung

In dieser Studie wird untersucht, inwieweit Kinos als soziale Infrastrukturen fungieren und wie dies von Kinobetreiber*innen unterstützt wird. Es wurde ein theoretischer Rahmen entwickelt, der die menschlichen und nicht-menschlichen, materialistischen oder organischen Aspekte von Kinos untermauert und sie zu einer Assemblage macht, die aus sozialen und materiellen Ansammlungen besteht, die als soziale Infrastrukturen funktionieren können. Nach der Feststellung, dass das Kino eine Assemblage ist, wurden folgende Parameter, 'Material', 'Kompetenz' und 'Bedeutung', definiert, um die Praxis der Kinobetreiber*innen zu verstehen, die Kinos als soziale Infrastrukturen ermöglichen, und um festzustellen, ob es eine politische und finanzielle Unterstützung gibt.

Im Rahmen eines Praktikums beim HDF KINO e.V. (Zentrale Interessensgemeinschaft der Kinobetreiber*innen in Deutschland) mit Sitz in Berlin wurde eine Fallstudie mit vier verschiedenen Arten von Kinos durchgeführt, die zusätzlich zu den regulären Filmvorführungen bereits eine Veranstaltung im Kino anbieten, bei der soziale Interaktionen möglich erschienen. Um Ergebnisse zu erzielen, wurden vier verschiedene Datenerhebungstechniken eingesetzt: informelle Interviews, Beobachtungen, halbstrukturierte Interviews und die Auswertung von Informationen aus Primärquellen. Um aussagekräftige und analysierbare Interpretationen zu erhalten, wurden die Interviewtranskripte und die Feldnotizen kodiert und in die Software Atlas.TI hochgeladen, ein Computerprogramm, das hilft, Muster zu erkennen.

Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass die Förderung sozialer Infrastrukturen Materialien erfordert, die einen ästhetischen Charakter haben, den die Besucher schätzen und der Komfort schafft, indem der Raum des Foyers und des Kinosaals so genutzt wird, dass er zu sozialer Interaktion und spontanen sozialen Begegnungen einlädt. Die Kinobetreiber*innen müssen in der Lage sein, sich auf das Publikum einzustellen und einen intimen Raum zu schaffen, in dem sich die Besucher wohlfühlen und Kontakte knüpfen können. Auch die Arbeitsmotivation der Kinobetreiber*innen ist ein sehr wichtiger Aspekt bei der Schaffung sozialer Infrastrukturen, da das Ausmaß der ermöglichten sozialen Interaktion vom Engagement, der Kreativität und der Ausdauer der Aussteller abhängt.

Obwohl Kinos immer noch Unternehmen sind, die Teil der Filmindustrie sind und Einnahmen erzielen müssen, sind die Kinobetreiber*innen unterschiedlicher Meinung darüber, wie das Kino ein soziales Ziel verfolgt, abhängig davon, wie sie die Bedeutung des Kinos selbst sehen. Für Betreiber*in eines kommerziellen Kinos ist es ein Ort, an dem die Besucher durch die auf der Leinwand gezeigten Filmgeschichten etwas über sich selbst oder andere erfahren und sich über diese Erfahrung mit anderen Besuchern austauschen. Für Betreiber*in eines kommunalen Kinos schafft es eine Gemeinschaft, indem es einen Ort für wiederkehrende Besucher bietet, an dem ein organischer Austausch durch Debatten oder Diskussionen über bestimmte Themen aus dem Film stattfindet, während es gleichzeitig ein Ort in der Nachbarschaft ist, den man auch besuchen kann, ohne einen Film sehen zu müssen.

Diese Studie liefert Argumente zur Unterstützung von Kinobetreibern und Kinoverbänden, um politische Entscheidungsträger und Förderinstitutionen davon zu überzeugen, dass Kinos als soziale Infrastrukturen fungieren können, die soziale Interaktion über die Filmvorführung hinaus bieten, und wie dies in Zukunft stärker gefördert werden kann. Die Kinobetreiber verfügen über das Material, die Kompetenz und sind daran interessiert, Kinos als soziale Infrastrukturen zu ermöglichen, benötigen aber auf lokaler und regionaler Ebene Unterstützung durch (nicht-)staatliche Organisationen, um den sozialen Wert von Kinos zu steigern und sie dabei zu unterstützen, neue Treffpunkte in der Gesellschaft zu erhalten und zu schaffen, die für die Freizeitgestaltung insbesondere in der Nachbarschaft und auch gegen die Einsamkeit, insbesondere für ältere Menschen, wichtig sind. Inwieweit Kinos soziale Infrastrukturen sein können, wird durch den Grad der sozialen Interaktion in den Kinos und deren Anziehungskraft auf die Besucher bestimmt. Dies alles untermauert, dass Kinos als soziale Infrastrukturen nicht alleine existieren, sondern ein Gefüge aus eingebetteten Beziehungen und Strukturen sind, die voneinander abhängen.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Designing cinemas and arthouse theatres as social infrastructures

“I’m thinking of it in the terms of we’re going back to theatres around the world. They’re even going back to theatres in China where they’re having this big COVID surge. We’re saying as a society, ‘We need this! We need to go to theatres.’”

~ Director James Cameron

Director James Cameron demonstrated at the Golden Globes 2023 how fed up he was with the COVID-19 measures and the growth of online streaming services (Sharf, 2023). More politely on similar themes, German Minister of Culture Claudia Roth presented the ‘Federal Government's Cinema Programme and Distributor Awards’ in October 2022, after a two-year break due to COVID-19 measures, and gave away prize money amounting to 1.8 million euros. She praised all the people “*who have fought for the survival of cinemas in Germany*”. Further, Roth stated that the government will continue to be a reliable partner in keeping cinemas, especially arthouse cinemas, viable in the future, even in competition with the big streaming platforms. She also emphasised the importance of future funding strategies, which would be even more necessary due to the energy crisis. And she aims to ensure a diverse, culturally sophisticated cinema in the future (Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung (BPA), 2022).

Although many policies focus on the cultural benefits of cinema, the European International Union of Cinemas keeps amplifying the social importance of cinemas in society. It states that “*cinemas are modern meeting places that help stimulate dialogue on a range of important issues, combat social exclusion, revitalise interest in culture and foster innovation and creativity. Cinemas will play a vital role in bringing people together once the pandemic is behind us*” (UNIC, 2022, p. 35). This is acknowledged in the same sense by the largest German and Dutch associations of cinemas (EYE, NVBF, & Nederlands Filmtheater Overleg, 2015) (HDF KINO e.V., 2021). So, cinema associations consider cinemas to be important social meeting places.

Latham and Layton (2019) see places in the city where inhabitants make connections in public areas as social infrastructures, which are essential for a good city: “*These places matter as they are sites where strangers can meet and mix with others with whom they share their neighbourhoods and cities. More than just fulfilling an instrumental need, they are sites where cities can be experienced as inclusive and welcoming*” (Latham & Layton, 2019, p. 2). Libraries, cafes, parks, and children’s playgrounds are examples of places where people meet in public spaces and create social interactions. The function of these spaces is not to promote social encounters in the first place, but through their primary function, new connections between groups are created that might not have happened otherwise:

“Focusing on social infrastructure draws attention to the affordances that particular spaces or facilities offer for inhabitation and social interaction. It involves looking at the communities and networks of association generated through such spaces. It is also about paying attention to the design and provision of particular facilities and how their material qualities shape the activity that takes place within and around them” (Latham & Layton, 2019, p. 5).

In addition, De Vos (2020) argues for more policymaking on facilitating meeting places in society, as it aids against social isolation and makes people happier in their neighbourhood and generally in life.

Therefore, it is vital to analyse to what extent cinemas can function as existing and new social infrastructures in society.

The concept of Lesson is an accurate description of regarding cinemas as social infrastructure (2020, p. 59). He sees film screening in cinemas as a “micro *agora*” where the focus lies on the collective experience of the audience and the way the exhibitor facilitates this. It is more than merely screening the film: “*There is a micro institutional effect in the valuation of the film and of the experience, especially for the art film theatres*” (Lesson, 2020, p. 63). The film exhibitor sets up this relation between the audience and the film. Lesson (2020) argues that there are three ways in which exhibitors can facilitate this relationship and enhance this communal feeling, reinforcing and interacting with each other. First, the way the film is transmitted to the audience by the exhibitor. In other words, how the exhibitor screens the film to the audience, along with the decisions regarding the exhibited themes and what strategies the exhibitor uses to convey the theme to the audience. Second, how the exhibitor organises the space inside the cinema to create this feeling of collective experience during the film screening, but also in offering other services that make space for social interaction. Last, the approachability of the film and theatre for the audience through promotion and for building visitors’ trust in choosing one cinema over the other. In this sense, the film theatre becomes “*not only a simple place of aesthetic experience, but also a kind of network, a place of sociability, of exchange and of expression*” (Lesson, 2020, p. 68).

1.2 Research objective & questions

Following these preceding views, cinemas can be considered as social infrastructures that stimulate social activity and networking in a cultural context in the community. In this way, exhibitors organise social exchange in cinemas and arthouse theatres. This thesis aimed to analyse how cinema and arthouse exhibitors, comprising of theatre managers and their staff, facilitate social infrastructures in their respective cinemas. More precisely, the objective was to research whether exhibitors’ practices for social interactions resonate with the services currently provided in cinemas, analysing this in several cases in Berlin, Germany. The main research question is:

To what extent do cinemas and arthouse theatres in Berlin function as social infrastructures?

To answer this question, several sub-questions have been defined:

1. How is the cinema supported by (non-)governmental contributions to function as a social infrastructure?
2. What materials do cinema exhibitors need to facilitate social infrastructures?
3. What competences do cinema exhibitors need to facilitate social infrastructures?
4. How do cinema exhibitors give meaning to cinemas as social infrastructures?

The questions were investigated during an internship at the German cinema and arthouse theatres association HDF KINO in Berlin (HDF KINO e.V., n.d.) from April to June 2023.

1.3 Societal relevance

Evidence in the United States substantiates that people living closer to meeting places are happier, less socially isolated and more trustworthy towards other people (Cox & Streeter, 2019). That is also why de Vos (2020) argues for more policymaking on facilitating and supporting meeting places in society. At the same time, such meeting places are under pressure, because of declining numbers of memberships and voluntary work (Vermeij et al., 2024). With this in mind, it is very relevant to

analyse to what extent cinemas can function as social infrastructures to strengthen them as social meeting places for society. This movement is also visible in Europe, as cinema associations promote the value of the cinema as a social meeting place in their publications (UNIC, 2022). The results of this thesis could be promising for the German and Dutch cinema associations (G. Nolthenius, personal communication, 2 February, 2023), as these associations have shown great interest in identifying the social value and attractiveness of cinemas to audiences and how the cinemas can function as meeting places for society. Focusing on the social side of cinema creates a win-win situation: it facilitates more social cohesion in the neighbourhood and contributes to the future of cinemas. The associations expect to use the results of this thesis for new strategies and measures to boost cinemas as meeting places in the future, from which both the cinemas and society benefit.

According to a German consumer panel analysis done by cinema associations and the German Federal Film Board, some barriers for consumers to go to the cinema include the lack of alternative events in cinemas, after-work cinema with drinks and appetisers before the film, and meetings with filmmakers (Hinz & Peterswerth, 2023, p. 29). Linking this analysis to how an exhibitor transmits a film to the audience (Lesson, 2020), visitors also regard a form of interactive and social exchange as important for film screenings in cinema. Jacques Hoendervangers, CEO of Pathé Theaters in the Netherlands, also makes this argument. He sees cinemas as spaces where people of different ages and backgrounds meet for a small entrance fee. Additionally, cinemas make neighbourhoods more attractive to other businesses, which changes the area. Moreover, with examples from England, he predicts that cinemas will become a third place where people gather not only for film screenings but also for typical coffeehouse laptop work (Hoendervangers, 2021).

Nevertheless, cinemas still depend on government contributions or the revenues of major blockbusters to maintain financial sustainability. For example, in the Netherlands, cinemas have survived the closing measures of the COVID-19 pandemic without insolvencies, with the government's support. Major blockbusters restored the revenue well enough in 2022, though this trend makes the cinema industry very dependent on the few blockbusters coming out yearly. This dependency on blockbusters and funding leads the cinema associations to look for ways to make cinema more future-proof (Dijksterhuis, 2023).

The importance of government funding in Germany has been highlighted by the Minister of Culture Claudia Roth, who stated that the government makes 1 billion euros available to support cultural institutions, including cinemas, to endure their rising energy costs related to the war in Ukraine. Also, policies are aimed at making cinemas more environmentally sustainable. Moreover, a 'Culture Pass' with a 200-euro credit is available for everyone turning 18 in 2023, stimulating young adults to visit the cinema and other cultural institutions more frequently (Roth, 2022). To encourage visitors to use the 'Culture Pass' for cinemas, German Cinema associations worked together in 2023 and established a digital voucher system with the technical service provider *acardo* (acardo, 2023). However, how much government funding exists to support cinemas as social infrastructures is not clear and will be analysed in this study.

Cinema associations have expressed their willingness to include the social side of cinemas in their focus. At the same time, policymakers find it relevant to include cinemas in governmental funding programmes. This makes this research societally relevant, as it legitimises to policymakers, cinemas and supporting associations the extent to which the social side of cinema should be included in future policymaking, for the future of cinemas.

1.4 Scientific relevance

Research about social infrastructures does not focus on the cinema as an object of study or it is only addressed scarcely. There has been geographical research about the spatial role of cinemas, yet this focuses mostly on cinemas changing the urban environment: studies analyse and research the formation of entertainment districts around cinemas (Forsher, 2003) or the connection between cinemas and transportation hubs (Snickars, 2009). A different study that investigates the relationship between cinemas and space is Warden's study (2005), which analyses to what extent cinemas create new public spaces as physical pathways between the street and the cinema auditorium. A study aligning with this thesis is the study of Macdonald (2018), who researches different approaches to film screenings in public spaces. Yet, to see cinemas as social infrastructures, the focus needs to shift to the social aspects of cinemas.

Numerous studies reveal a gap regarding research on cinemas as privately provided commercial and leisure spaces that function as social infrastructures. The study by Latham and Layton (2019), addresses the value of commercially operated social infrastructures with a public and recreational character. They name cinemas as a category of this kind of space for social infrastructure (2019, p. 6), but unfortunately, they do not mention it any further in their article. Another example is the book by Hall (2012), which highlights the importance of how different shops on high streets can form social infrastructures for the livelihoods of migrants. Similarly, Anderson (2011) overviews how commercial spaces create sociability for African American men. Yet again, Anderson (2011) and Hall (2012) do not focus on cinema as a commercial space for sociability. In addition, Jackson's study (2019) is an example of the challenging financial aspect of social infrastructures while simultaneously demonstrating how leisure activities can function as a space for sociability. Becker, McCall, Morris, & Meshejian (1989) explain the importance and dependence of amateur theatre on the community.

Maltby (2006, 2011) critically argues much research considering film screenings in cinema primarily focuses on how the audience receives the films. This kind of research reduces the spectator's experience to an individual act of engagement and forgets to measure cinema attendance in its current societal context, regarding the social and cultural aspects as important.

There has also been research on the cinema and social gatherings, but these do not link to understanding cinemas as social infrastructures. Hanich (2014) suggests that seeing a film in a cinema is a joint action, but his attention is on the audience members' mental state while watching a film and less on how the cinemas facilitate this joint action. Van de Vijver (2017) questions moviegoers about their film-viewing experience and how they socially engage with it. However, her attention is neither on the exhibitors as facilitators nor on established cinemas and film theatres as spaces for the relation between experience and social engagement. Lesson (2020) focuses on the importance of creating a social experience by the exhibitor in film screenings in France. Nevertheless, he states that he has only focused on some minor cases in France, and it is unclear how many exhibitors will focus on this social experience of cinema in the future. Also, he sees film screening in cinemas more as a certain agora instead of classifying cinemas as social infrastructures. Therefore, research on the extent to which cinemas and film theatres function as social infrastructures is scientifically relevant, and this research has aimed at reducing these gaps in the literature by focusing on the day-to-day practices of cinema exhibitors, comprised of theatre managers and staff, that make the cinema a social infrastructure.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

This introductory chapter introduced the study's background, research objectives and questions, and relevance. The following chapter 2 now provides the conceptual framework. Chapter 3 presents the research methods used in this study, including fieldwork consisting of nine informal interviews, six observations of social events, eight semi-structured interviews, and nineteen (policy) documents, as well as the justification for using a case study as a research approach, with an outline and justification of the selected cases, four different types of cinemas in Berlin, Germany. Chapter 4 presents the findings for each research question, and Chapter 5 presents the conclusions of and reflections on this research, and finalises with a substantive reflection about cinemas as social infrastructures.

2. Conceptualising cinemas as social infrastructures

This chapter defines the conceptual framework by explaining that cinemas have different human and non-human, materialistic or organic aspects, which make them an assemblage (section 2.1). It clarifies how cinemas can function as a space of sociality (section 2.2) and illustrates to what extent cinemas function as social infrastructures (section 2.3), and how exhibitors' practices facilitate social exchange in cinemas (sections 2.4.1-2.4.3), how (non-)governmental contributions can support this (section 2.4.4), and it captures all parameters in a conceptual model (section 2.5).

2.1 Cinemas as an assemblage

Assemblage theory can have different meanings (Anderson & McFarlane, 2011). Anderson and McFarlane account that assemblage theory focuses on the basis set by Deleuze and Guattari as a composition of different elements, namely different human and non-human, materialistic or organic aspects, that form socio-spatial formations. Thus, *“deploying the term assemblage enables us to remain deliberately open as to the form of the unity, its durability, the types of relations and the human and non-human elements involved”* (Anderson & McFarlane, 2011, p. 124).

Legg (2009), on the other hand, adopts a less open term of assemblage. He states that power gives a more scaled element to assemblage. He takes the notion of the apparatus central in its focus. Legg describes it as a Foucauldian term of power, creating a more determined accumulation, away from an open assemblage:

“This occlusion is less likely if the Deleuzian term agencement, or ‘assemblage’, is read alongside the Foucauldian term dispositif, or ‘apparatus’. This notion is more closely aligned to political or power relations, being defined as a concrete assemblage of diverse elements with a particular purpose, specific targets and controlling strategies” (Legg, 2009, p. 239).

Baudry (1974) introduced this notion of power or *dispositif* into film studies: The *dispositif* in cinema is the system of relations that make a film: the lens, the frame, what is shown on the screen and how the audience's feeling of oneself mirrors this. Baudry has connected this to the notion of the apparatus (in cinema). The apparatus theory in cinema states that the invention of cinema is similar to Plato's allegory of the cave, where in both instances, the spectator is subject to the projection on the cave wall or the screen in the cinema. He finds that a power relation is there, one that gives an ideological notion to a cinema film: the audience mirrors themselves in the film, and an ideological point arises from a film screening, of which the audience is the only subject. Vélez-Serna addressed this and described this mirroring as the basis for apparatus theory:

“Which claimed that the material basis of production and consumption of moving images (the camera, the projector) was aligned with a psychic apparatus, a mechanism that allowed the individual to fantasize a sense of self through their seamless positioning in the film's machinery of vision” (Vélez-Serna, 2020, p. 26).

Vélez-Serna finds Baudry's view too deterministic, as it proclaims outcomes from the subject by only fantasising of 'a sense of oneself' through watching a film in the cinema. Vélez-Serna gives the term *dispositif* the meaning of *“a system of relations between heterogeneous elements”*, which she regards as more aligned with Foucault's description (Vélez-Serna, 2020, p. 25). She sees the cinema as an accumulation of different things, of which the subjects' assumption is based not only on the mirroring of the film but also on the social-historical context it is in. Instead of only mirroring the film or what

the moving images produce, one's power or agency is there for the spectator to make something of it. With this, she moves away from Baudry's deterministic view and she is also critical of writers that define cinemas as just watching films silently in a room, as she focuses on new forms of cinema or cinematic installations that differ from the mainstream model.

Vélez-Serna (2020) finds important all the aspects that arise from a cinema film screening, consisting of different physical and material configurations. These physical configurations are "*separation from the outside, projection of moving images, darkness, screen (...)*", and a space for an immobile audience to sit (Vélez-Serna, 2020, p. 28). But she adds to this the component of the subject: an agency of the audience that understands all these material aspects together with the projection of the film as seeing a film at a specific time.

And she emphasises the different human elements in the cinema, which are not so physically tangible, that create this agency of the audience: the laughter and crying of the visitors, and the outcomes of the individual, as it focuses on the individual imagination of the spectators in cinema. Thus, behavioural protocols that include this agency of the subject are needed and which define the social expectations (Vélez-Serna, 2020, p. 30):

- A "*protected [or definite] time*" set for the screening.
- "*Public address*" through the projection of moving images and sound.
- "*Division of labour*", as not only the visitor is essential but also the exhibitor who facilitates it.
- "*Behaviour codes*", that every person is expected to keep that include quietness or lack of cell phones.
- "*Discursive marking*": film in a dark room that defines film screening in an auditorium as cinema.

Vélez-Serna also denounces the focus of film studies on merely the audience's agency, the so-called spectator studies. She finds the audience agency a crucial element of film screening in cinema, but spectator studies focus mainly on the subject as a sole individual watching the film in "*a unspecified nowhere*" (Hanich, 2011, p. 460), which follows Baudry's notion of a spectator mirroring the film in his psyche. Instead, she introduces the *dispositif* as an arrangement: "*Three elements, not tethered together: an arrangement of things in space (including tools and information carriers); an arrangement of activity in time; and a discursive practice that produces a public*" (Vélez-Serna, 2020, p. 27). Still, it is evident here that she describes cinema as a disconnection of the everyday, where collectiveness comes about in watching a film together.

Following the views of Vélez-Serna, cinema consists of different heterogeneous elements, of which the subject's power plays a part. This clarifies that this 'arrangement', as Vélez-Serna describes it, with its material configurations and its subjective protocols, indicates that cinemas have different human and non-human, materialistic or organic aspects (Anderson & McFarlane, 2011), which make them an assemblage.

2.2 Cinemas as a social concept

To move away from cinema as only a place of collective film viewing and to understand it as a space of sociality, it is vital to regard cinemas as a social concept. Fitting this, theorists like Hanich (2011) and Maltby (2006, 2011) argue that it is time for a different form of film studies, one that focuses on the social side of the film in the cinema instead of solely on the object of the film. Hanich focuses on the audience's film reception (Hanich, 2011). Still, these spectator studies concentrate on every individual in the crowd and see them as merely a singular textual observer of films in cinema (Maltby,

2006, 2011). Or, it is possible to accept the audience as a subconscious being that experiences a film screening in a certain embodied way (Hanich, 2011). The social rules of behaviour of film viewing in a cinema also differ between cultures and are experienced in different ways by audiences (Srinivas, 2002).

Maltby (2006, 2011) argues for a New Cinema History, a form of research of the cinema that is less focused on the film itself and the interpretation of it or the audiences as observers of the film and more on “*the history of reception, which must itself include histories of distribution and exhibition*” (Maltby, 2006, p. 85). Inquiring about the meaning of film, not in a cultural manner but on a social level, exemplifies the social behaviour of film screenings and cinemas as sites for it (Maltby, 2006). This view coincides with the theorists that see film screening in cinema as a social-political activity, where film screening creates political spaces for neglected groups in society. Still, these theories are primarily critical observations of neoliberalism of the 20th century (Hansen, 1993; Schlüpmann, 2002; Solanas & Getino, 1970).

Building upon Maltby’s social side of cinema, Lesson (2020) states that film screening in cinema always had a social dimension, which had changed in the 20th century through the focus of exhibitors and film companies on the increase of film consumption and neglecting the social aspects of the film screening and viewing experience in cinema. This focus on consumption aligns with the neoliberal tendency of mass consumption as society’s steering wheel at that time, on which the theorists mentioned above have had a critical observation, ending in the emergence of multiplexes that focused on increasing the consumption of film and less on the social experience around it (Lesson, 2020, p. 71). These venues created a foyer design for the rapid transit of people along the lines of consumption, causing anxieties of queuing and the possibility of ultimate cleanliness for a bodily experience free of pollution by choosing seats away from others, and has turned multiplex cinema into what “*appears an ultimately individualized form of consumption*” (Hubbard, 2003, p. 264). This individualised form has changed the value of audiences about cinemagoing.

Nevertheless, Lesson argues that the local film theatre functions as “*a kind of network, a place of sociability, of exchange and of expression*” (Lesson, 2020, p. 68), where interaction is as essential to the meaning of films as the experience of the film in itself. In these interactions, essential discussions about different topics regarding the film contribute to the collective significance of going to the cinema. He argues that in Multiplexes, the broadening of the film experience itself is more important, while “*local cinemas disseminate a political, because collectively shared, dimension to this experience*” (Lesson, 2020, p. 68). However, he does not go on to explain how these social connections happen in practice.

2.3 Cinemas as social infrastructures

The term infrastructure is usually related to the notion of physical infrastructures in society: the sewage systems, the electricity network, the transit highways or the public transport network. Social infrastructures are assemblages or networks that can create social relations. Social infrastructure refers to the assemblage of the physical built environment combined with the opportunity that people have to meet and to interact in these public spaces (Brummel & Smits, 2021; Klinenberg, 2018). Social infrastructures are the spaces in public life that permit people to socialise and connect with each other (Latham & Layton, 2019), promoting “*civic engagement and social interaction, both within communities and across group lines*” (Klinenberg, 2018, p. 16). When social infrastructures decrease, it will negatively impact people's social lives, starting with weakening social ties and possibly growing

even further to criminality and isolation (De Vos, 2020). It is the whole assemblage of different elements that allows more persons to interact with each other in a specific place at a specific time.

It is unclear whether encounters are always meaningful and to what extent (Aelbrecht, 2016). There is also critique on what describes an encounter as meaningful (Wilson, 2017), as encounters can also be limiting or fleeting depending on the situation and how a person feels about behaving in a space (Van Melik & van de Schraaf, 2020). Some encounters can “*even just as easily provoke discomfort, misunderstanding and even hostility*” (Van Melik & Merry, 2023, p. 762). The co-presence of people in a space does not necessarily mean that they also co-mingle with each other and create meaningful exchanges (Van Melik & Merry, 2023; Ye, 2019). Evident is that certain conditions make an encounter either meaningful or of “difference” (Wilson, 2017), but that the focus is mainly on the social conditions and less on the spatial, which still should be taken for granted (Aelbrecht, 2016). Thus, encounters consist of an assemblage of material and (non-)human conditions, demonstrating the importance of social infrastructures for social interaction.

Examples of social infrastructures are playgrounds and libraries, green spaces and sidewalks, community and sports organizations (Latham & Layton, 2019), and commercial establishments (Anderson, 2011; Jackson, 2019). These spaces are places where people can spend some time or linger, regardless of the instrumental need that these spaces facilitate. Usually, these businesses are set up with an idea for profit, but they can also contribute to the social life of cities. For example, older people can benefit from commercial public spaces as spaces of encounter, where they choose what they do and who they (spontaneously) meet, favouring them over predesigned meeting spaces in, for example neighbourhood centres or care facilities (Van Melik & Pijpers, 2017). Some complex infrastructures, like public subway systems, can also function as social infrastructures with different levels of sociality. However, these depend less on direct interaction between passengers and instead on existing forms of subtle, non-verbal communication. Moreover, people would not mind having more social interaction in public subway systems but refrain because of the expected behaviour in this space, following non-discursive practices of behaviour in this space (Van Melik & van de Schraaf, 2020).

These examples of sociality fit the notion that social infrastructures rely on specific conditions. People going about in social life depend on practical knowledge of how one must behave, which non-discursive regulations and codes of conduct guide (Latham & Layton, 2019). Social interactions in social infrastructures are created during the process of one being in that space, without the initial plan of creating exactly these interactions: people come to these spaces for a primary aim, while in the meantime they forge social ties by getting to know other people that incidentally are in that space at the same time with them. Trust is also important for the reliability of a social infrastructure itself. Trust should be created through the repeated provisioning and maintenance of the facilities so that the users can use the infrastructures often and repetitively without them thinking about it. The trust of users in others using the same should also be established for a secure and open social environment (Latham & Layton, 2019). Lastly, social infrastructures should be accessible to everyone to socially include them, including physically limited people or without spatial mobility as a hindrance (Cass et al., 2005).

Social infrastructures do not just exist randomly, but spaces become social infrastructures through the efforts of certain individuals, such as librarians in libraries (Brummel & Smits, 2021). While librarians and cinema exhibitors are different in practice, the following example from librarians helps clarify how the dedication and dependence on these people for creating a social infrastructure, demonstrates

how the role of staff members is vital for facilitating social encounters in social infrastructures (Van Melik & Hazeleger, 2023). Librarians “*establish and informally enforce their own norms and codes of conduct, trusting patrons to honour them*” (Klinenberg, 2018, p. 46). The staff organises different activities and is open to everyone in society, creating new interactions between people that could be valuable outside the library (Brummel & Smits, 2021; Van Melik & Hazeleger, 2023). However, this is a difficult task, as it depends mostly on the dedication of the staff, while policies and institutional support are limited (Van Melik & Merry, 2023). In cinemas, the staff also have important tasks. The exhibitors are the people who define programmes for audiences (Maltby, 2011). They work behind the scenes so the cinema can run for visitors without them thinking about it (Vélez-Serna, 2020) and they are the first contact with the visitor (Maltby, 2011). However, their role in facilitating social interaction is not entirely clear. So, to understand cinemas as social infrastructures, it is important to understand to what extent the exhibitor’s practices, of theatre managers and staff, facilitate social exchange.

2.4 Elements of practice

After establishing that the cinema is an assemblage, parameters are necessary to analyse how cinemas can facilitate social infrastructures. These parameters are needed to understand the exhibitor’s practices for organising cinemas as social infrastructures. Shove, Pantzar and Watson refer to Reckwitz that practices consist of interdependencies between “*forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, “things” and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge*” (Reckwitz, 2002, as cited in Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012, pp. 22-23). Practice consists of accumulations, which interact with and on each other. To formulate these accumulations clearly, Shove et al. distinguish three elements of practice, which “*are integrated when practices are enacted*” (Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012, p. 21). These elements formulate how practices happen without prioritising societal structure or the practitioner's agency. It is a trajectory between which links are made and broken. Thus, the elements of Shove, Pantzar, and Watson are adequate concepts for analysing the practices of the exhibitors that create sociality, while at the same time including the notion of a film screening in cinema as an assemblage. The three different elements are material, competence and meaning.

Material signifies all the materials, objects, tools, hardware and more needed to make the practice happen. Competence is the know-how and skills the performer needs to compose the practice adequately. And meaning is the “*mental activities, emotion and motivational knowledge*” (Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012, p. 23) that represent the significance of the practice at any moment. These three elements are used in this research to analyse exhibitors' roles in cinemas as facilitators of social infrastructures. To correctly endorse the meaning of the (non-)governmental contributions that support film screening in cinema and to distinguish between the meaning of film screening for exhibitors as a social infrastructure and its value for societal institutions and policy, a fourth element, (non-)governmental contributions, was added. The four elements are described below.

2.4.1 Material

The term material covers every aspect that creates the audience's social appreciation of the cinema space. Here, it is important to understand how the physical structure impacts the audience, to create a feeling by the users that they are doing a cultural activity of film viewing, or related to film viewing, in a collective matter, where sociality has more room to happen: “*[the] organization of space inside the establishment and its position taken in a geographical context*” which focuses on “*the aesthetic experience in the public space and to offer a continuity between this singular experience and usual urban experience. In other words, by creating a concrete space in synergy with the public space, they*

make manifest the continuum between aesthetic experience and social experience” (Lesson, 2020, p. 65). Examples of these can be concrete aesthetic aspects like cinema architecture, cinemas with their own bars, restaurants, or bookstores, open-air viewings or how seats are organised.

2.4.2 Competence

Firstly, the competences of the exhibitor for making the cinema approachable to the visitors rely on new marketing techniques that make the cinema and its screenings feel familiar to the visitors. The exhibitor tries to form a relationship of trust with their audience, so the audience regards the cinema as a space where they can discuss or experience films and rely on the expertise of the exhibitor regarding the themes of these films: *“The personification of the film exhibitor creates trust because it makes obvious the intermediary and his (or her) logic. Thus a better closeness with the public is developed, the latter can identify itself (or not) with the film exhibitor and his/her logic”* (Lesson, 2020, p. 66). This relationship of trust is vital for constructing a social infrastructure, as stated by Latham & Layton (2019), as the visitors then rely on the cinema for social interaction and use it for that purpose.

Secondly, the competences of the exhibitor lie in how the audience “meets” the film: *“the editorial approach”* (Lesson, 2020, p. 64) in a social way. The exhibitor is an intermediary who organises or facilitates how the audience views the film and the skills that articulate these transmissions to the audience and create a social space. It is important that watching the film itself is not the only reason for coming to the theatre. What also matters is everything around it, the actual show. Lesson bases this on his analysis of the closing of cinemas in the 60s because of the resurgence of the television: *“This crisis showed that the film is not the only point of interest of movie-going, that the quantity of contents is not the only value of an establishment and that the quality of the film theatre matters”* (Lesson, 2020, p. 71), which depends on how film screening sessions are happening or defined by the exhibitor. Lesson (2020) gives examples of cinemas in France that show short films before the main movie or organise “open screen” sessions with discussions by the audience. Or, without using the traditional screen, by organising radio listening sessions or showcasing exhibitions about similar mediums like videogames. In the Netherlands, there is the example of “Koolhovens Keuze”, where the director Martin Koolhoven organises a masterclass in a cinema about a specific genre, after which a film of this genre is viewed and jointly discussed afterwards (LUX, n.d.).

2.4.3 Meaning

As the research aims to understand how cinemas facilitate social infrastructures, it is necessary to analyse the exhibitor’s *“meaning, emotion and motivation”* (Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012, p. 23). In other words, how exhibitors understand their role and the cinema as a social meeting space. In literature, there is no one-sided definition of cinemas. Still, differences exist between cinemas and film theatres. Usually, commercial cinemas are businesses aiming at profit by showing huge commercial film titles with technical properties that enhance the experience (Lesson, 2020). Film theatres aim to show films of particular cinematographic, artistic or cultural-social value, making people think about and question the world they know. These cinemas have carefully balanced programs and are also mindful of the value of film in historical and educational programs (Nieuwdorp & Stienen, 2021; Opdam, 2014). These local or independent cinemas give a political and collectively shared element to the viewing experience (Lesson, 2020). However, Bergillos (2020) notes how all cinemas are still part of the cinema industry, which influences the way the exhibitors can enact their cinema:

“Independent cinemas define themselves as different from commercial cinemas and recognize a relationship with their own communities. However, their activities as exhibitors are very much entangled with a consolidated industry. Like many producers and distributors, independent exhibitors work under conditions that are interrelated with the logics set by Hollywood (Holmlund and Wyatt 2005; Wasko 2003)” (Bergillos, 2020, p. 43).

2.4.4 (Non-)governmental contributions

(Non-)governmental contributions were added as an analytical element to distinguish between the meaning of film screening for exhibitors as a social infrastructure and its value for societal institutions and policy. As the fieldwork for this research was done in Germany, this added element was analysed in the German context.

German governmental policies focus on the cultural and economic value of cinemas. However, it is still important to see what kind of contributions the government and organisations give cinemas and to what extent these encourage the cinema as a social space. Regulations set up by the government and non-governmental support influence how cinemas function in society. For example, in Germany, the Federal Film Board (in German *Filmförderungsanstalt*) establishes rules and procedures for funding the film industry to which filmmakers, producers, distributors and cinemas (and everyone else related to film) can apply (FFA Filmförderungsanstalt, 2023c). The non-governmental German associations for Cinemas like HDF KINO set up partnerships with the government to research audience opinions, ticket prices or winning new employees for cinemas, and campaign for specific state contributions to the cinema industry (HDF KINO e.V., n.d.).

2.5 Conceptual Model

As seen above, film screening has different human and non-human, materialistic or organic elements, which make it possible for a cinema to be considered an assemblage. The following conceptual model (figure 2.1) captures the four different parameters identified that help determine to what extent cinemas and arthouse theatres in Berlin facilitate social infrastructures and includes them as parameters of said assemblage, displayed as a dashed line encompassing these:

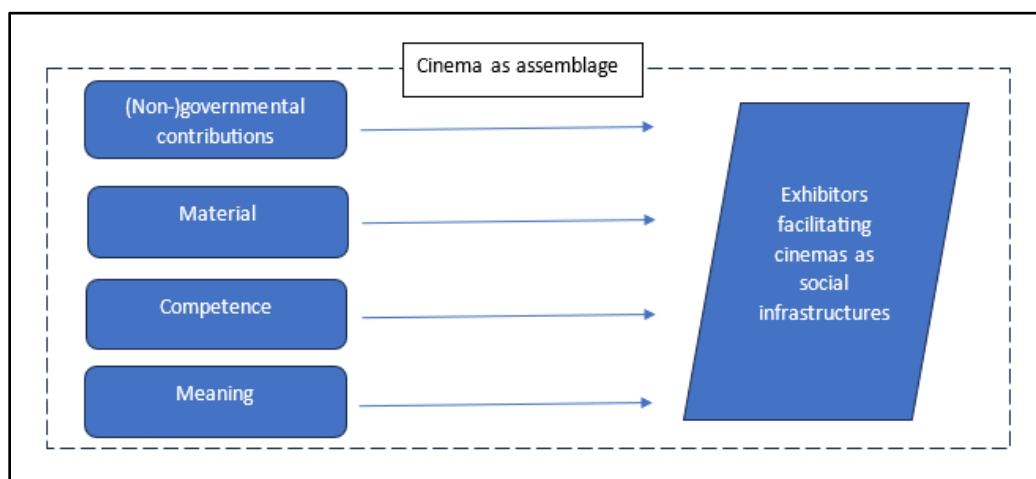


Figure 2. 1 Conceptual Model

This model guided the analysis done in the field. The next chapter presents the methods used during the fieldwork in Berlin.

3. Research design

This chapter outlines the research methods used in this study, as well as, the justification for using a case study as a research approach (section 3.1), with an outline and justification of the selected cases (section 3.2), four different types of cinemas in Berlin, Germany, including fieldwork consisting of (section 3.3) nine informal interviews, six observations of social events, eight semi-structured interviews, and a review of nineteen (policy) documents, and how the collected data was analysed (section 3.4).

3.1 Research approach

A qualitative approach was chosen for this research, as it is important to have an in-depth understanding of the research subjects for a detailed and holistic description of the exhibitors facilitating film screening in cinema as social infrastructure. Addressing multiple meanings and perspectives the exhibitors assign to organising cinemas as a social space, makes a qualitative approach fitting. This phenomenon and its descriptions are context-dependent, as the respondents give shape to these, for which a qualitative approach is favourable. Also, for qualitative research, the respondents can be investigated in a natural setting that is sensitive to the people studied, making it possible to establish patterns about the behaviour of the exhibitor (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A quantitative approach was not favoured here, as a statistical analysis on fixed indicators with a high amount of data is not the aim. Neither was a quantitative approach suitable for inquiring about an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon nor a deep understanding of the motivations of exhibitors (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2007).

Several approaches are possible for qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). In this research, the favoured approach was a case study. The case study is contested as a legitimate research strategy in science, as “*it does not have well-defined and well-structured protocols*” and there is no “*consensus on the design and implementation of case study*” (Yazan, 2015, p. 134). According to Yazan’s (2015) analysis, researchers see it either as a bounded system, or something that can be delimited, or as a phenomenon where the boundaries between phenomenon and context are unclear. But some agree that it fits research about the complexity of certain phenomena, are beneficial to study people, that the relationship between the phenomenon and its context should be considered, and that it should be defined by the researcher. In this research is chosen to use case study as a research strategy as it contributes to seeing cinemas as social infrastructures as a phenomenon, which makes it possible to inquire that phenomenon in the context of exhibitor’s practices.

As the significance of a case study as a method of enquiry in response to an epistemological form of knowledge construction differs in social science research, it is essential to decide what kind of approach is suitable (Yin, 2003). In this research, a layered approach was chosen, where a positivist and constructivist approach are combined. On the one hand, this is favourable for acquiring the kind of experiences and observations of social encounters and forms of sociality the cinema exhibitor has encountered in their cinema. So, a positivist approach where the instrumentality of the case study is embraced that give strategies and tools, which make it possible that cinema exhibitors forward their own experiences (Yin, 2003). On the other hand, the constructive side of the layered approach (Stake, 1995; Yazan, 2015) considers how the exhibitor facilitates events and film screenings and why the exhibitor does this, which results in explanations about the facilitation of social encounters in their cinema, sometimes even without the exhibitor realising it.

The advantage of a case study is that a select group of subjects can be analysed because features of a case study are a small group of subjects of a selected sample, on an in-depth basis (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2007). Still, case study researchers differ in meaning between having a clear research design beforehand, or having a flexible approach that can be changed along the research process (Yazan, 2015). In this study was chosen to define the research design before doing the fieldwork, as this was also needed to be approved by the supervisor. Still, it was possible to make subsequent adjustments if necessary, fitting the iterative process of qualitative research. The selection of cinemas was exploratory (Yin, 2003, pp. 22-23), as there is a lot of research on social infrastructures but less so on cinema as social infrastructure. However, certain propositions still make it possible to define patterns in the overall meaning of these cases (Yin, 2003). This proposition was as follows: all cinemas analysed were selected because they fitted the researcher's criteria of offering a social event with the potential for social interaction.

Some challenges should not be overlooked when doing a case study. Identifying the case is not always easy, as it depends on the context of the study, whether the scope is broad or narrow, in which bounded system it lies, and whether it contains a single case or multiple cases. Creswell and Poth (2018) mention three issues to consider: resource limitations, case selection and cross-case analysis. Regarding resource limitations, the study was limited to four months of fieldwork. The fieldwork was done in spring and summer, which could have influenced the outcomes of the observations. Good weather can be disadvantageous for cinema-going, as people tend rather to be outside. It could be that at other times of the year, other experiences lie in the foreground in the exhibitor's memories, influencing the interview outcome. Also, the study was limited to the agglomeration of Berlin, a city with many cinemas in a culturally and demographically diverse capital, which can have different outcomes to the sociality and motivations of exhibitors in comparison to, for example, cinemas in rural areas.

3.2 Case studies

3.2.1 Case selection

In Germany, three different groups of cinemas exist: regular cinemas, arthouse theatres and communal cinemas. Within these definitions, smaller categories are defined: arthouse theatres are ordered in types A, B, and C: A-film theatres have two or more auditoriums with different daily screenings. Type B consists of theatres with one auditorium showing films daily. Type C are smaller theatres that generally do not own an auditorium privately but are hosted in different spaces like schools or cultural facilities that occasionally show films. Cinemas, on the other hand, can be divided into regular cinemas or cityplexes with less than eight auditoriums, multiplexes with eight to sixteen auditoriums, and megaplexes with over sixteen auditoriums (Opdam, 2014). Communal cinemas are a distinctive kind of cinemas in Germany, which are directly subordinate to the municipality. They are non-commercialised and focus more on the cultural and educational aspects of cinema and film and less on immediate entertainment, with a focus on cultural meeting spaces in society. However, it is important to mention that regular cinemas and arthouse theatres can also function as educational or cultural-focused cinemas. But this specific group has criteria formulated and adopted in Nuremberg in 2005 at the 1st Federal Congress of Municipal Cinemas (Bundesverband kommunale Filmarbeit e.V., n.d.b) for being called a communal cinema.

Following these differentiations, communal cinemas would be the most relevant for this research, as they proclaim themselves as cultural meeting spaces. However, European cinema associations consider this meeting space also pertinent to multiplexes and arthouse theatres. Also, from a social-geographical point of view, it is interesting to understand how these cinemas function as social

infrastructures to recognise new meeting spaces in society. A select sample made it suitable to differentiate between cinemas and their operating style. Therefore, four different cases were considered:

- A multiplex cinema with eight auditoriums,
- An independent regular cinema with one auditorium,
- An arthouse theatre with one auditorium and
- A communal cinema with one auditorium.

These have been compared with each other and related to the extent they function as social infrastructures. This differentiation was deliberate, and direct replication was not possible. Instead, it was indicated whether different cinemas can function as social infrastructures (Yin, 2003, p. 54).

3.2.2 Cinema selection for each case

The fieldwork was done during an internship in Berlin, Germany, from April to June 2023 at HDF KINO, the largest association of cinemas and arthouse film theatres in Germany. They were founded in 1950 in Wiesbaden and currently operate for 600 members, presenting around 75% of all cinemas in Germany (HDF KINO e.V., n.d.). This internship involved working at every department of the organisation, from management, accounting, membership management, and strategy to marketing, and working for the HDF-affiliated event and campaign organisation *Forum film*, currently named *hdfstudio*.

HDF KINO preferred that at least two cinemas were cinemas that are members of the organisation. So, a certain bias from the HDF KINO organisation was inherent in this research. Without this requirement, other cinemas might have been selected. However, with this requirement, the Strategy and Communication employee and the Membership Management employee of HDF KINO helped find adequate cinemas complying with the identified four cases and offering a social event next to film screenings. The researcher examined the websites of eight proposed cinemas, to see what kind of events these cinemas offered and if these events would have the potential for social interaction and selected four cinemas, each one covering a specific identified case. All cinemas were contacted by the researcher's HDF KINO business email obtained for the internship, and all of them agreed to collaborate with the research.

Lastly, to avoid oversizing the research spread too widely and considering the time available, all selected cinemas are located in or around the city of Berlin.

The four selected cases are compiled in table 3.1:

Case nr.	Cinema Type	Location	Social Event	Justification
1	Multiplex	Northwest Berlin	'Film Café'	Before a film, an arrangement of pie with a cup of coffee or tea is offered to the visitors, with the potential for social interaction
2	Independent cinema	Southeast Berlin	'Film Breakfast'	Before a film, an arrangement of sandwiches with a cup of coffee or tea is offered to the visitors, with the potential for social interaction

3	Independent arthouse theatre	Southeast Berlin	'Cultural Theatre'	The auditorium transforms into a stage where different events are possible, with social interaction either during the event or during the break
4	Communal cinema	Northwest Berlin	'Neighbourhood Cinema'	A film screening that shows classic films from mostly Turkish cinema, accompanied by typical food and drinks from the neighbourhood before and after the screening, where conversations between the audience is also sought.

Table 3.1 Selected cases.

3.2.3 Case validation

For case studies, it is important to look above the general division of internal and external validation and use four different tactics to test validation: construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability (Yin, 2003). The study aimed to analyse how cinema and arthouse exhibitors, comprised of theatre managers and their staff, try to facilitate a social infrastructure through film screening in their respective cinemas. The subjects of the study were the exhibitors and their practices in facilitating a space of social exchange, which enables construct validity, as the data contains the experiences and motivations of the exhibitors. Still, the validity can be influenced to an extent as the perceptions of the exhibitors could differ from the reality of the visitors. Staff members were also interviewed to counter the singular exhibitor's perception and provide multiple sources of evidence combined with observations. The internal validity is granular to an extent because it is unclear if the relationship between sociality arises from the film screening or the events around it. However, this research was exploratory, so it was necessary to establish if a pattern was identifiable beforehand (Singh, 2021). Then, a causal claim was possible between the practices of the exhibitor and the creation of a social infrastructure (Yin, 2003). Still, again, concerns arose about whether the perceptions of the exhibitors in the past were airtight or convergent. With the observations of the screening events, it was tried to reduce this. The external validity relies on the concept that an analytical generalisation is more favoured than a statistical generalisation (Yin, 2003). So, the aim was not to analyse *if* all cinemas are social infrastructures but *to what extent* cinemas are social infrastructures. The theory was tested in several cases, as this research contained four different cinemas. However, these were not direct replications of each other (Yin, 2003). Still, all venues can be categorised as cinemas, granting representativeness.

For reliability, the goal was to keep the errors and biases in the study to a minimum. For this, the research process was explained, with an overview of the time, date and the person that is (informally) interviewed and by transcribing the interviews, as well as a time and date of the observations and documenting field notes of the informal interviews and the observations.

3.2.4 Anonymity

To respectfully display the motivations of the exhibitors in this research, the motivations were written down anonymously in this study, as the name would be of no significance to the outcome of this research. Still, as the relations between the exhibitors sometimes encompass employee-employer hierarchical relations, the job positions of the interviewees are given. These could indeed have influenced the motivations or perceptions of the exhibitors. So, the anonymity is toned down to an extent, which was justified by asking every interviewee if they would mind being cited, and every interviewee responded that they did not. However, all interviewees were kept anonymous to keep the report ethically valuable. This also applies to the names of the respective cinemas. Only the cinema type has been listed to allow proper distinction between the different cinemas.

3.3 Data collection techniques

Four different data collection techniques were used to achieve results: informal interviews, observations, semi-structured interviews, and reviewing information from primary resources. This is in line with establishing an in-depth understanding of the cases through multiple forms of data, fitting qualitative research (Yin, 2003).

3.3.1 Informal interviews

The informal interviews were held on the first day the researcher visited the cinemas (see table 3.2) to establish good contact with the theatre managers, gain access to them and their staff beforehand, and have a clear view of what kind of themes would be important for the semi-structured interviews. These conversations were in “*a natural setting*” (Rouse, 2014, p. 9). Field notes were taken using keywords during the conversation, to store the information from these informal interviews, to analyse them in the same way as the notes of the observations.

Initially, the researcher looked around the cinema; after that, he introduced himself to the theatre manager and asked questions related to the design of the cinema. Then, the conversation moved to more detailed themes about the cinema and asking the exhibitor about their daily activities. Afterwards, the researcher would sit in the foyer and ask questions about the contact between the exhibitors, visitors, and other employees. For the topic list of the informal interviews, see appendix B.

Informal interview	Date
Theatre manager Multiplex	7 June 2023
Guests Multiplex	7 June 2023
Employees behind the cash register Multiplex	11 June 2023
Theatre manager Arthouse theatre	9 June 2023
Theatre manager Independent cinema	19 June 2023
Guests Independent cinema	13 July 2023
Cultural manager Communal cinema	25 June 2023
Guests Communal cinema	7 July 2023
Employee Communal cinema	12 July 2023

Table 3.2 Date of Informal interview

3.3.2 Observations

The observations were done as direct observations, with the researcher as a nonparticipant, after gaining access through the informal interviews. Here, the researcher functions as an outsider where the cinema exhibitors and staff members are observed in their way of working (Bernard, 2006; Creswell, 2007). The observations happened at the identified events or film screenings (see table 3.3) that offered possibilities for social interaction.

Event	Date
Cultural Theatre Arthouse theatre	9 June 2023
Film Café Multiplex	14 June 2023
Neighbourhood Cinema Communal cinema	25 June 2023
African filmfestival screening Communal cinema	2 July 2023
Thailand film screening Communal cinema	7 July 2023
Film Breakfast Independent cinema	13 July 2023

Table 3.3 Dates of observing identified events

During these observations, the focus was on which materials the exhibitor uses, how the exhibitor operates at this event, interacts with other employees, creates social interaction, and how the visitor responds to the exhibitor and the cinema space. The researcher sat in the space where the event happened, which could be the foyer, the auditorium, or other seating areas.

This form of observation is direct, so the observed exhibitors could alter their behaviour (sub)consciously to be in line with the researcher (McDonald, 2005), the so-called observer effect. McDonald notes that to lessen this effect, one strategy is to discuss it directly with participants observed or ask them “*how ‘normal’ their day has been*” (McDonald, 2005, p. 459). That is why the observer effect was acknowledged in the semi-structured interviews, either with the observed participants or their colleague respondents. For the observation protocol, see Appendix C.

3.3.3 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted during the study of these multiple cases. Semi-structured interviews were selected because the interview starts with a clear format in the form of an interview guide, which also provides enough freedom during the interview for spontaneous answers and motivations of the respondents without the researcher controlling the interview too strongly (Vennix, 2016). The themes that recurred from the informal interviews amplified the questions. For the interview guide for these interviews, see Appendix A.

Of each cinema, all employees were regarded as exhibitors, of which two employees were interviewed (see table 3.4), one of whom was the theatre manager, and the other operating in a different field, to which service was also part of the remit. At the Independent arthouse theatre, only one employee, the owner and cinema operator, was interviewed as their colleague and partner was on sick leave. At the Communal cinema, the theatre manager felt a pressured workload at the time of the fieldwork, where it would cost too much energy to do an in-depth interview. Instead, an informal interview was conducted with her, and an employee of the marketing department stepped in to take her place for the semi-structured interview.

Identification of respondent in text	Semi-structured interview	Date
1	Theatre manager Multiplex	26 June 2023
2	Service employee & team leader Multiplex	31 July 2023
3	Owner & theatre manager Arthouse theatre	4 July 2023
4	Owner Independent cinema	4 July 2023
5	Theatre manager Independent cinema	6 July 2023
6	Recently installed (around six months) employee Independent cinema	13 July 2023
7	Bar and photography employee Communal cinema	12 July 2023
8	Marketing employee Communal cinema	31 July 2023

Table 3.4 Dates and respondents of the semi-structured interviews

3.3.4 Review of primary sources

Through working at HDF KINO, insight was acquired into the different strategies and projects the organisation has organised for cinemas as social spaces and which policies the German government currently sets up to support this. And to get an overall indication of what German cinemas do to function as social infrastructures in society. These insights and indications were complemented with primary resources (see table 3.5), such as documents and policy papers that HDF KINO made

available or were found online on German government websites or other cinema associations. Also, statistics and other numeric material were reviewed to thoroughly analyse the policy support for cinemas, which aligns with cinema-specific research according to New Cinema History (Maltby, 2011).

Name	Source
Acardo: FAQ – Kulturpass	https://www.acardo.com/downloads/FAQ_KulturPass.pdf?v=202305171038
AG Kino – Gilde Deutscher Filmkunsttheater	https://www.agkino.de/ueber-uns/
NEUSTART KINO - Wie aus der Krise eine Chance wird	https://www.hdf-kino.de/wp-content/uploads/Neustart-Kino_Abschlussbericht.pdf
Kino(s) mit Auftrag	https://www.kommunale-kinos.de/ueber-uns/kinos-mit-auftrag/
Kinopreis 2023	https://www.deutsche-kinemathek.de/de/content/kinopreis-2023
Financial Support for Cinemas – Eurimages	https://www.europa-cinemas.org/en/activities/Support_for_cinemas/support-for-programming-eurimages
Filmförderungsgesetz 2024 und ergänzende Vorschriften	https://www.ffa.de/filmfoerderungsgesetz-2.html?file=files/ffa/ffg-filmfoerderungsgesetz/FFG%202024.pdf&cid=5742
Kinoreferenzförderung	https://www.ffa.de/kino.html?file=files/ffa/foerderungen-ffa/kinoreferenzfoerderung/FAQ/2023-01_D.14%20FAQ%20Kinoreferenzf%C3%B6rderung%20Zuerkennung.pdf
FAQ – Zukunftsprogramm Kino der BKM	https://www.ffa.de/zukunftsprogramm-kino-i.html?file=files/ffa/av-zukunftsprogramm-kino-1/FAQ_Zukunftsprogramm_Kino_30_Januar_2023.pdf&cid=8508
FFA in Kürze	https://www.ffa.de/die-ffa-in-kuerze.html
Zukunftsprogramm Kino	https://www.ffa.de/zukunftsprogramm-kino-i.html
Richtlinien für die Vergabe des Kinopreises	https://www.deutsche-kinemathek.de/sites/default/files/public/Festivals/2023/Film-Restored-Absence/Richtlinien_Kinopreis_2023.pdf
Cinema Vision 2030 @ Berlinale – Ergebnisse der Ideenbörse	https://static.vsystem.io/641c2bd3c41c9e1e0cec6516?tr=w-2500,c-at_max
Förderrichtlinie	https://www.medienboard.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Richtlinien-Merkblaetter/ALT_MEDIENBOARD_Foerderrichtlinie_2021_neu2.pdf
Merkblatt Förderung in Ergänzung des Zukunftsprogramm Kino (ZPK)	https://www.medienboard.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Richtlinien-Merkblaetter/Merkblatt_FOERDERUNG_IN_ERGAENZUNG_DES_ZUKUNFTSPROGRAMM_KINO_ZPK_neu.pdf
Merkblatt Innovatives Kinomarketing	https://www.medienboard.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Richtlinien-Merkblaetter/Merkblatt_INNOVATIVES_KINOMARKETING.pdf
Förderung Kinos	https://www.medienboard.de/foerderung-filmtheater#:~:text=Die%20Fristen%20f%C3%BCr%20den%20Kinoprogrammpreis%202024%20werden%20im%20Fr%C3%BChjahr%202024%20bekanntgegeben.&text=Das%20Medienboard%20f%C3%B6rdert%20ab%2015.03,Erg%C3%A4nzung%20zum%20ZPK%20der%20
Kino- und verleihprogrammpreise des Bundes vergeben - Kulturstaatsministerin Roth: "Kino als Filmkunstlabor stärken"	https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/kino-und-verleihprogrammpreise-des-bundes-vergeben-kulturstaatsministerin-roth-kino-als-filmkunstlabor-staerken--2217012#:~:text=Die%20Verleihprogrammpreise%202023%20mit%20einer%20j%C3%A4hrlichen%20Auszeichnu
Neue Kulturförderung: Berlin unterstützt Kinos mit sechs Millionen Euro.	https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/kultur-vergnuegen/kino-streaming/berlin-unterstuetzt-kinos-mit-sechs-millionen-euro-neue-kulturfoerderung-li.2183216

Table 3.5 Primary sources

3.4 Data analysis

In this research, the data gathered from the informal interviews, observations, and semi-structured interviews were coded to give meaningful interpretations that were analysable. The interviews were held in German, except those at the Communal cinema, which were done in English due to an international staff. The quotes have been translated into English by the researcher, except the quotes of the Communal cinema employees done in English already.

All interviews have been transcribed and uploaded to Atlas.TI and analysed by coding; see appendix D for the coding book. Atlas.TI is a computer software program with which it is possible to assign codes to texts and unveil patterns in large amounts of text. The field notes of the observations were written down in German or Dutch, due to the bilingualism of the researcher, and also uploaded. Afterwards, the interview quotes or the field notes' keywords were linked to codes. These codes were then divided into subcodes based on the assemblage theory and the four parameters described in chapter 2 to distinguish how exhibitors facilitate film screening in cinemas as social infrastructures. The results from this analysis are written down in the next chapter 4 and conclusions and reflections presented in Chapter 5.

4. Analysing cinemas as social infrastructures

This chapter presents the findings of this research, based on four cases including fieldwork consisting of nine informal interviews, six observations of social events, eight semi-structured interviews, and a review of nineteen (policy) documents. The chapter begins with a broad description of (inter)national (non-)governmental contributions and funding support on the social side of German cinemas (section 4.1), hereafter narrowing down the analysis to the practices of individual cinema exhibitors in the four identified cases to facilitate social infrastructures using the parameters ‘material’ (section 4.2), ‘competences’ (section 4.3) and ‘meaning’ (section 4.4). The chapter ends by presenting how these parameters are considerably entangled in facilitating cinemas as social infrastructures (section 4.5).

4.1 (Non-)governmental contributions

In this paragraph, a short policy review on policies and funding mechanisms from the institutions and organisations that support cinemas in Germany is given on different national levels, from European to national, to regional and local.

4.1.1 Governmental support

The review of policies and funding mechanisms from the institutions that support cinemas in Germany determined that these mainly focus on establishing the cinema as a cultural venue. The support focuses on cinemas as cultural venues with a diverse or outstanding film programme instead of a social value. The Federal Government Commission for Culture and the Media (in German: Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien, further as BKM) supports commercial cinemas for the development as cultural sites with the *Cinema Programme Award* (Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung (BPA), 2023).

Still, exhibitors can use funds set up with the idea of establishing the cinema as a cultural venue to contribute to the accessibility of cinemas and for exhibitors to shape their foyer, such as an interaction space. For example, with the *Future programme Cinema 1* expenses can be covered for creating accessibility within the meaning of Section 4 of the Equal Opportunities for Disabled Persons Act, as well as modernisation improvements of the building and for the modernisation of a Point-Of-Service system, for the renewal of projection and sound technology, including subcomponents, for improving the equipment of the auditorium, for improving the equipment of the foyer, for outdoor and façade improvements, and on modernisation measures that take sustainability aspects into account and the use of environmentally friendly processes (FFA Filmförderungsanstalt, n.d, 2023b). Yet, an explicit policy focus on the cinema as a social meeting space is missing here.

For communal cinemas, the German Cinematheque Association gives out the *film theatre awards of the Cinematheque Association*, which can reward the cinema's importance as a social meeting place, but this is not explicitly the award's aim. This award honours communal cinemas and film cultural institutions that convey film history, international cinematography, and film art and expand the German film culture. The award aims to support the cinemas in their work, showcasing the importance of support for communal cinemas and establishing a diverse cinematic landscape in Germany. To be eligible, the cinemas submit their annual film programme, the focus of this programme and a presentation of their understanding of this focus and their actions. The award is the counterpart of the Cinema Programme Award of the BKM, and therefore, only cinemas that have not applied for the Cinema Programme Award can apply (Kinematheksverbund, 2023). The BKM provides the contributions (Deutsche Kinemathek, 2023).

The German Federal Film Board (Filmförderungsanstalt, further as FFA) provides administrative support for the film funding programmes of the BKM, of which some could make the cinema more approachable to visitors, but this is not explicitly the aim of these contributions. As the FFA is a federal organisation with legal capacity under public law, it must conform to the German Film Subsidies Act. The Act stipulates the different funding forms for cinemas in Germany, such as the *Cinema Project Funding* and the *Exhibition Reference Funding*. The *Cinema Project Funding* is applicable for several aspects, mainly focused on the material improvement of cinemas. Still, it also supports testing and exemplifying innovative measures or marketing for cinemas (FFA Filmförderungsanstalt, 2023c). The *Exhibition reference funding* supports cinemas with subsequent funding, measured in already achieved attendance figures (FFA Filmförderungsanstalt, 2023a).

On a regional level, there is the audiovisual funding organisation of Berlin and Brandenburg: Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg (MBB), which can contribute to material improvements and marketing, and it implements the funds of the city of Berlin to extend the range of the cultural exchange to more audiences in a neighbourly way. For 2024 and 2025, the city of Berlin, under the control of a coalition of the parties Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Social Democratic Party (SPD), has decided to provide cinemas in Berlin with additional support totalling 6 million euros. Of this, 1 million will already be distributed in 2024, and the remaining 5 million in 2025. The funding is to support investments in buildings and technology and, above all, for programme offerings that go beyond the conventional cinema visit: for example, festivals, special screenings for children and young people, discussion series, and more. On which ground a cinema is eligible for the funding was at the time of writing this thesis still to be determined in discussion with cinema operators and cinema associations, and more should be announced during the honouring of the MBB Cinema Programme Award in May or June 2024 (Seidler, 2024). Thus, the perception of cinemas as social spaces among governmental institutions slowly appears to be changing for the better, as it is established in concrete terms of institutional policy, albeit on a municipal level.

4.1.2 Non-governmental support

On the European level, exhibitors who devise cinema projects that create a social space can be supported by the inter-European network for cinemas (Europa Cinemas, 2023). However, the initiative to implement these projects lies mainly with the exhibitor. The network mainly has a supporting role. The network was established in 1992 by the European Commission and the French 'Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée' (in English, National Centre for Cinema and Moving Images) and created the first international film theatre network to circulate European films. Their focus is mainly on establishing European made films in the cinema, establishing a diverse programming in cinemas and establishing an international film theatre network to circulate European films. The network hosts an international conference for all its members every two years. Further, it organises an "Innovation Lab", has an international exchange programme for cinema employees, and awards the "Innovation Prize" for innovative cinema projects. Some other projects are aimed at younger audiences (Europa Cinemas, 2023). However, as the examples show, the inter-European network does not firmly focus on cinema as a social space.

In Germany, three different film associations commit themselves to strengthening cinemas' social image and establishing their position in political and economic institutional policies. Their main operation focuses on increasing cinema funding through the German Film Subsidy Act, but the social value of cinemas also gets more attention. Next to the already mentioned HDF KINO, there are the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Kino – Gilde deutscher Filmkunsttheater e.V., which specialises in the interests of independent arthouse cinemas (AG Kino - Gilde deutscher Filmkunsttheater e.V., n.d.), and the

Bundesverband kommunale Filmarbeit e.V., which are representing over 150 municipal, student and non-commercial cinemas as well as film culture initiatives and institutions, called communal cinemas (Bundesverband kommunale Filmarbeit e.V., n.d.a). These institutions have their own ambitions to increase their members' standing. However, they operate under the same goal of strengthening the position of cinemas in society overall, and they regularly work together. In 2022, the associations started with a “*recovery programme*” called *NEUSTART KINO* (in English ‘New Start Cinema’) with financial support from the BKM. This contribution involved 2,5 million Euros in “*order to mitigate the long-term consequences of the pandemic and, above all, to strengthen resilience for new potential crises*” (AG Kino - Gilde e.V.; HDF KINO e.V.; Bundesverband kommunale Filmarbeit e.V., 2023, p. 2). These include the closures of cinemas during the pandemic, the increasing shift of cinema productions to screening services, which influence the runtimes of films in cinema, and the setback of trust by audiences in cinema as a concept. The latter aspect focuses on cinema as a social meeting space because audiences seem interested in this notion.

The German Film Subsidies Act is disputed under the different German film associations to change the perspective of the cinema in the Act from merely a film culture viewing space to a social space. Still, their contributions mainly lie in increasing the current funding budgets of cinemas because the funding for cinemas is established less in the FFA and the Act than other sectors, such as filmmaking, production and distribution, creating a hurdle that first must be overcome, which makes it challenging to promote the cinema as social meeting space (FFA Filmförderungsanstalt, 2023c).

The cultural value of cinema is arguably very substantiated by the cinema associations, exemplified in the contribution of the cinema associations with support from the BKM and the FFA for transmitting this value to younger generations. There was a component in the ‘Neustart Kino’ programme about developing cinema viewing for children and young people, called “Junges Kino” (translated young cinema). The component aimed to enable cinema operators to realise pilot projects in which children and young people could participate, with funding from the ‘Neustart Kino’ programme to keep a low-risk approach for the operators. Afterwards, a guideline was made from the experiences of these projects to encourage and support future project development of cinemas (AG Kino - Gilde e.V.; HDF KINO e.V.; Bundesverband kommunale Filmarbeit e.V., 2023). ‘Vision Kino’ is another organisation that provides film education for youngsters outside of the ‘Neustart Kino’ programme. According to its website (<https://www.visionkino.de>), this organisation is set up by the associations and supported by the BKM and the FFA to support youngsters' film and media competence by enabling film education for schools in cinemas. The main project of ‘Vision Kino’ is the annual School Cinema Weeks. On a national scale, schools offer varied programmes for lessons with relevant films, accompanied by educational material and training opportunities. The MBB has also supported two projects at the regional level. The first is the *Spatzenkino*. On the website of *Spatzenkino* (<https://www.spatzenkino.de>), the project is intended for school children from 4 to 7 years old to get used to the medium of film in a calm way. The school classes will visit a cinema working with the organisation. Here, the children are introduced to three short films while a pedagogic mediator holds a puppet bird and organises sessions with them. The second project is called *Filmernst*, which is also about introducing film to schoolchildren and youngsters, but now from 7 to 18 years old, according to its website (<https://www.filmernst.de>). It also has a mediator that organises the film in exchange with the teacher about the intended learning process. Here, the aim is to acquaint the pupils with the medium of film and lessons from the story and the film genre.

Still, the notion of cinemas as social infrastructures starts taking shape in recommendations of the cinema associations in collaboration with the government. There have been several projects that concern themselves with the social meaning of cinema in society. There is a quantitative study about audience opinions on cinema, *All Eyes on Audiences*, and two projects about creating new ways of film screening events in cinema: *Dein Kino, dein Star*, and *Cinema Vision2030*. (AG Kino - Gilde e.V.; HDF KINO e.V.; Bundesverband kommunale Filmarbeit e.V., 2023). The *All Eyes on Audiences* study is a quantitative analysis of the target groups and the potential of the German cinema market, concluding that audiences regard film screening in cinema more as a leisurely experience than a meeting space. However, some crucial components mentioned in the study can also be applied to the functioning of cinema as a meeting space (AG Kino - Gilde e.V.; HDF KINO e.V.; Bundesverband kommunale Filmarbeit e.V., 2023): Going to the cinema is seen by audiences as a social activity, mostly done together. Also, the experience accompanies an exchange of ideas, which depends on the theme or story of the film. Visitors would like to be encouraged to interact with each other socially after the screening, and most visitors would rather not go alone to the cinema. With the new strategies of community building, social exchange in cinema could be encouraged, which can contribute to people also going to the cinema on their own. Moreover, lower prices would lower the threshold for audiences to enter the cinema, while they also prefer alternative events next to regular film screenings facilitated by cinemas.

There are several examples of alternate events which aim at facilitating social exchange, such as open events with visits from actors or filmmakers, but also other events than film screenings, like open readings and stage performances (AG Kino - Gilde e.V.; HDF KINO e.V.; Bundesverband kommunale Filmarbeit e.V., 2023). The project *Dein Kino, dein Star* is an example of this, where audiences interact during and after the film screening with well-known German actors who show film works that they cherish. At the same time, afterwards, they were available to discuss these films in depth with the audience. Still, it is unclear if the encounters go beyond these events (AG Kino - Gilde e.V.; HDF KINO e.V.; Bundesverband kommunale Filmarbeit e.V., 2023).

Another example is the *Cinema Vision2030* endeavour. Two conferences in 2022 and 2023 presented cinema projects around the world about cinema as a present-day cultural venue and its future. The topics ‘customer loyalty’ and ‘local anchoring’ were of great importance, showing that the cinema markets consider increasing the functioning of cinema as social infrastructures (AG Kino - Gilde e.V.; HDF KINO e.V.; Bundesverband kommunale Filmarbeit e.V., 2023). This endeavour produced best-practice examples for cinema exhibitors, increasing cinemas' local anchoring and community building in society. An example is the *Dörfy Dancing* event, a whole-day event that shows films with a storyline about dancing combined with dance workshops. Another example of anchoring the cinema in its region is an event where cinemas show films filmed in their region while offering a tour of the film shooting locations, with background knowledge from the filmmakers and regional food. *Take your Granny to the Cinema* is an example of a whole-day event targeted at grandchildren taking their grandparents into the cinema, with a reception, photo booth and discussion after the film, aimed at activating generational perspectives and bringing together older and young people (Kino International, 2023).

4.1.3 Exhibitors' opinion

All interviewed theatre managers find that they need external contributions to keep the cinema running, but they are not always sure if they qualify for these. The theatre managers of the Independent cinema and the Arthouse theatre (Respondents 3 & 5) were satisfied with past governmental contributions used for technological advances and keeping the cinema instated during

the COVID-19 pandemic. Both cinemas are eligible for the Cinema Programme Award from both the BKM and the FFA, and they received one in 2023. However, the two theatre managers of the Multiplex (Respondent 1) and the Communal cinema (Informal Interview, 25 June 2023) mentioned that due to governmental regulations, they are dubious about whether they qualify for governmental funding. For example, the Multiplex was not eligible for funding from the municipality of Berlin because the regulations stated that it has too many auditoriums and the programme is not diverse enough. However, the theatre manager finds that her cinema is qualified because they show enough arthouse films in her regard. And for the Communal cinema, the cultural manager mentioned that many mainstream cinemas consider them more fortunate in receiving funding. She noted that she did not want their work and what they present to audiences to be limited or downgraded to a monetary notion of value by ticket sales. Yet, to be eligible for contributions such as the Cinema Project Funding of the FFA, the Communal cinema exhibitors must do a lot of preliminary work for a concept about the funding's use, for which there is no compensation. Coincidentally, suppose the communal cinema is finally fortunate enough to receive the funding; they can only use this for the stated concept and cannot spread into other areas for which the cinema may need contributions.

Exhibitors aim to maintain a functioning physical infrastructure that facilitates social exchange, but this can be very expensive for them, and government contributions may impact this positively or negatively. Government funding can contribute to making cinema adjustments more affordable for exhibitors. Still, these contributions are only usable for certain adjustments determined through regulations by the governmental institutions. Their regulations can also influence these adjustments as the exhibitors need to follow these standards. These can go from limits in adjusting the street scene (as in the Independent Cinema) to short lines of communication between the municipality and the cinema for authorisations and building applications (as in the Arthouse theatre). If expected governmental funding is not received, as in the case of the Communal cinema, they had to rely on other sources, such as *the theatre award of the Cinematheque Association* (Deutsche Kinemathek, 2023).

The review of policies and funding mechanisms from the institutions that support cinemas in Germany determined that the focus of these institutions mainly lies on establishing the cinema as a cultural venue, with a diverse or outstanding film programme, instead of a social value. However, the perception of cinemas as social spaces becomes more concrete in institutional policy, albeit at the municipal level. German cinema associations contribute to this by committing themselves to strengthening cinemas' social image, and the notion of cinemas as social infrastructures starts taking shape in recommendations of the cinema associations in collaboration with the government. The exhibitors feel that government contributions help to keep a functioning physical infrastructure affordable. However, exhibitors do not always know if they qualify for external contributions and find some regulations unclear or a hindrance, which affects their faith in the contributing institutions.

4.2 Material

4.2.1 Interconnectivity

All cinemas depend on the interconnectedness between the foyer and the auditorium to establish a social space, best illustrated in case 4 at the Communal cinema. Here, the space and materials are used interchangeably, depending on the event that is taking place. The exhibitors chose to have a foyer and outside area with freestanding tables and chairs to be able to change the space easily if that is desired: *“Yeah. Yeah, we have everything mobile. [...] The room can change easily.”* (Respondent 8).

It is possible to have workshops and even host parties and determine per event if these should be in the auditorium or the foyer. Guests can sometimes reside in the foyer *during* the event, creating new properties for the foyer. The change to a social space is possible, as the focus is less on film screening alone and creates possibilities for interaction. They have also set up a karaoke space in the foyer. They

worked with an artist who made a Sinematon, a combination of karaoke and a small film screening machine, to create a convivial and festive space in the foyer. The function of the foyer as valuable beyond film screenings was the strongest at the Communal cinema, as it invites people to come and linger even without visiting a screening. Thus, confirming that visitors come to the cinema for the primary aim of film viewing, but in the meantime, they can create social ties with people who are incidentally in the same space.

In case 1, the 'Film Café' of the Multiplex, the space for social interaction is mostly the foyer. It is a gathering space for visitors to sit, linger and eat pie before the film. Whereas in case 2, the Independent cinema, for the 'Film Breakfast', the guests can roam freely and linger in the foyer, outside the front door on two benches or already in the auditorium. For special events such as the 'Cultural Theatre' at the Arthouse theatre, case 3, the auditorium is mainly the gathering place, and the function is the same as a regular film screening. The screen was constructed on a stand so that the visitors from the upper ring could also see the screen, while at the same time when having a performance, the stand functions as a performance stage. People sit and perhaps talk to other visitors close to them, but it is more about having an experience of cabaret or other live events together. Here, it is unclear if the co-presence of visitors also induces co-mingling of them. Still, guests linger and wait in the foyer before entering the auditorium. The same is true for the Independent cinema, as both cinemas have only one auditorium and one entrance and exit of the building. Because of this, the exhibitors of both cinemas mentioned that this creates a flow at screenings between just-arrived and leaving visitors that spontaneously run into each other. In this way, the cinemas can become spaces of sociality through spontaneous encounters, which is important for cinemas to function as social infrastructures.

4.2.2 Character

To create an appreciation of the cinema space that facilitates social exchange, the exhibitors of the commercial cinemas try to give the cinema a certain aesthetic "*character*" (Respondent 4). They do this, on the one hand, because it is the passion of the exhibitor; on the other, it is important that the guests gather an overall impression that makes them feel comfortable and perhaps gives them something to talk about, which is in line with the idea of combining the aesthetic experience with the social experience, to create a cinema character or personality.

In the foyer of the Independent cinema, a mural of a scene from a famous film is accompanied by drawings of a typical desert city landscape in the auditorium (fieldwork, 13 July, 2023). The exhibitor of the Arthouse theatre has a passion for knickknacks that correspond to the cinema. Therefore, the whole foyer is packed with different little things that remind people of cinema and give it a classical cinema vibe: there are posters, an old film projector, different little statues and photos of famous old-school film stars and much more (fieldwork, 9 June, 2023). There is entrance music, which corresponds to the film shown; French films with French music; crime films with *Tatort* (German famous crime TV series) soundtrack or the film's soundtrack; and then a welcome video where the exhibitor and his family thank the visitors for coming.

At the Multiplex, there are several film posters, one of which covers the entire front of the building and some props of famous film characters, but there is more strongly this feeling of a commercial cinema space. Still, for the 'Film Café' specifically, the theatre manager always buys flowers spread across the different tables by a service employee to give a more café vibe to the seating area. At the Communal cinema, there were not so many posters or film knickknacks, but the theatre manager encouraged every team member to bring in plants to create a curated garden as work- and hosting space.

4.2.3 Physical accessibility

Physical accessibility is important in how the events the cinemas offer reach people. Accessibility depends on several conditions. One is the accessibility of the cinema venue itself: the structure of the cinema influences the physical accessibility for mostly less mobile visitors. The Multiplex has an escalator and elevator, which makes access easier for older visitors who have difficulty walking. On the other hand, at the Arthouse theatre, many older people visit the theatre. Still, some struggle with the steep staircase to the bathroom, exemplifying how physical accessibility can limit possibilities for interaction in social infrastructures.

Another condition is the location of the cinema in the neighbourhood. The Independent cinema is in the southeast of Berlin, close to one campus of the Humboldt University. The theatre manager mentioned that he had difficulty reaching the students living in the student housing near the university. To him, it felt that even though the neighbourhoods on both sides of the station are very accessible, the students would take the tram into the city center instead of visiting the local area. He felt that the railway station becomes a mental barrier for the students, so the group of people the cinema reaches is mostly the locals from the area. The theatre manager at the Arthouse theatre (Respondent 3), on the other hand, thinks the 'Cultural Theatre' functions so well, as he finds that this kind of cabaret event is not offered in a certain radius around the cinema's location, but still adequately reachable by public transport to an extent, confirming that not only the physical but also spatial conditions determine access to social infrastructures.

In addition, accessibility depends on the capacity of the cinemas. The capacity determines how many people can enter, where and how long they can linger, and how they use the space. The Multiplex has the benefit that it is a massive building with several floors. It has different auditoriums and two floors that function as a foyer with a seating area. So, it is possible to host several events simultaneously during the day. At the Communal cinema, how many visitors come to an event is not always foreseeable, so extra chairs from the foyer are sometimes put in the auditorium as an additional first row. However, the exhibitors here (Respondents 7 & 8) mentioned that regulations against fire hazards still need to be followed, so adding extra chairs is not always an option. Whereas at the 'Film Breakfast', the people spread themselves throughout the whole cinema because there is not enough space in the foyer for all the guests to linger when the event is fully booked, confirming that the material influences the behaviour of visitors and determines how encounters happen. Lastly, the accessibility depends on the temperature. Ventilation makes the stay for visitors more pleasant, as it keeps the auditorium at a temperature suitable for such a confined space. On the other hand, one exhibitor (Respondent 1) even noted that fewer elderly were coming to the event when it was warmer, as it is seemingly too hot for them to travel to the cinema, even if the cinema offers coolness.

4.2.4 Other material factors

There are further relevant material factors that go beyond the aesthetic experience and the conditions of the physical building that create a social environment, and these need to be considered.

The appetisers the exhibitors provide for social events help create a social space. For example, at the 'Neighbourhood Cinema', the 'Film Café' and the 'Film Breakfast', the food and beverages that the exhibitors provide are deliberately provided for this event. These go beyond the general variety of popcorn or nachos that the cinemas continuously offer. It is more of an exceptional service that fits the group that the cinema wants to reach with this screening: a cup of tea or coffee with a piece of cake or small sandwiches go well with mostly older people. Mainly at the 'Film Café' and the 'Film Breakfast', the exhibitors felt that for the visitors, the food was of higher value than the actual film:

“For example, this breakfast cinema thing, they come to the cinema because of this breakfast event. They don't really care anymore what kind of film is on in the meantime.” (Respondent 5, translated)

The older people want to spend this time together chatting (“*quatschen*”) beforehand while enjoying cake and a cup of coffee or tea. Some of the elderlies at the ‘Film Café’ noted during informal interviews that they would rather choose this cinema than other cinemas with a similar event because here the cake was home-made by the theatre manager. The Communal cinema is part of a cultural organisation that provides culinary excursions. So, the kitchen prepares appetisers and combines them with certain events, “*activating*” (Respondent 7) the space for new social events besides film screenings.

Preparing for the different events can be demanding for the exhibitors because they mostly prepare materials and appetisers themselves. The theatre manager at the Independent cinema sometimes struggled with preparing the breakfast, as it did not fit his perception of cinema working hours. He mainly works from midday to night:

“And now it's like this thing, for me it's this struggle once a month, because you don't start at 10 am, but you start at 7.30 am, because the bread rolls, you order the day before, have to be picked up at 8 am. Then they still need to be prepared...” (Respondent 5, translated)

Thus, the event went from twice to once per month, exemplifying how the demand for preparations takes a toll on the offer of social events. And because sometimes the focus shifts to preparing or technically maintaining the events, it takes extra time and energy of the exhibitor aside from the social aspects. Exhibitors also need this hands-on approach, as many materials and repairs are not prefabricated or costly. During the live performances in the Arthouse theatre, when so many different technical features happen at the same time, it becomes difficult for the theatre manager to manage all this on a small tablet:

“I have to say, I'm really struggling with all the digital controls, to keep them all in my head. You used to turn the stick, and you could look and so on, so you knew, “What has happened?”. Now, you press buttons where you can no longer actually see what is happening, and you can no longer see the setting. Sometimes (sigh), I would like to return to the good old days, but I can't... Yeah” (Respondent 3, translated)

Another material factor beyond the aesthetic experience is that the sound and screen systems are adjustable for the kind of film screening. For the theatre manager in the Multiplex, this makes it possible to adequately manage the sound for the ‘Film Café’ screening. She realised that older people prefer films that are a bit quieter than those of normal audiences, so while the film starts, she always checks during the first few scenes to see if she should adjust the sound. And because she can so easily intervene, she does this for all her screenings. At the Communal cinema, panel discussions with short films belong to the daily schedule. The employees there need to be able to quickly switch back and forth between the microphones of the participants and the projector during the screenings. For the ‘Cultural Theatre’, the theatre manager at the Arthouse theatre installed all the extra sound and lighting systems to transform the screen into a performance stage without trouble, which also helps the performers, as they do not need to bring a lot of their equipment to the venue. So, adjustable projectors, sound, and light systems during screenings, discussions, or performances are necessary for these kinds of events. However, the technique can bring some complications. At two cinemas (Fieldwork, 14 June, 2023 & (informal interview) 19, June, 2023) examples of the projector's software not functioning properly were observed, while either a screening was happening or a screening was

prepared, which gave some stress to the exhibitors. The modern projectors are easy to work with, but this also reduces the exhibitors' knowledge of their functioning when something unplanned happens (Respondents 1 & 5).

4.3 Competences

4.3.1 Sensitivity

The theatre managers and employees of the three commercial cinemas create a connection by focusing on their behaviour with the customers. They try to be sensitive to the visitor. All exhibitors from the commercial cinemas mentioned that it was important to be open to visitors, start a conversation with them when they come in, perhaps small talk about the weather or the film they want to see, and then interpret if a further conversation is possible on which they try to engage, or if the visitor wants to attain his tickets in silence:

“you also develop a sensitivity for who wants to talk to you and who doesn't. And you just say hello and then you realise whether the person is telling you "Yes, the weather is really nice outside" and then you embrace it, or I don't know, there's just a joke when someone says "Yes, a big bag of popcorn" (Respondent 6, translated),

This employee at the Independent cinema also mentioned the word “*Seelenklemmer*”, which is in German an epithet for being a psychologist. The exhibitor does not need to be a social worker but can lend a listening ear to the visitors' everyday problems by being open and sensitive to the visitor. It lets the visitor feel welcome, and a lightly acquainted or even quite friendly relationship with the exhibitor can originate from it. It differed per exhibitor if they ascribed this sensitivity to openness and talkativeness as innate to them or a developed trait. The new employee at the Independent cinema (Respondent 6) even mentioned that she chose this job because she wanted to establish her social skills after the lack of social contact during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her theatre manager (Respondent 5) saw it instead as a kind of social trait, and the theatre manager of the Multiplex mentioned it as something that one needs to cope with in the job, as it incorporates working with people all day.

The commercial exhibitors also try to create this connection by familiarising the cinema with the visitors so they get used to it and are willing to return. It goes beyond the direct relationship with the exhibitor. It also means developing a sense of familiarity with the cinema as a lingering space for the visitors. The commercial cinemas establish a routine for every screening and event. At the ‘Film Café’, the theatre manager (respondent 1) realised that the older people appreciate being accustomed to someone, so when she cannot hold the session, she tries to let other, already familiar colleagues do it. The theatre managers of the Independent cinema and the Arthouse theatre (respondents 3 & 5) also mentioned similar notions. For the ‘Cultural Theatre’, the exhibitor of the Arthouse theatre also has a recurring routine: before the start of every live act, he gives a short speech to the visitors. It is something he feels the need to do, as he wants to emphasise his thanks to the visitors for coming to his cinema, to announce the artist and express his appreciation properly, and it creates a feeling of familiarity:

*“let me put it this way: at a big family celebration, someone will at some point stand up for a short speech or something, so I feel the need to do that.”
(Respondent 3, translated)*

Ultimately, the exhibitors believe this routine supports making cinemagoing a regular visitor activity. Thus, the importance of exhibitors facilitating social infrastructures becomes evident.

At the communal cinema, the respondents did not explicitly mention these specific notions or strategies, as the cultural manager describes in the informal interview (25, June, 2023) the interaction as something that happens organically and spontaneously through different events. The interviewed employees (respondents 7 & 8) also mentioned that the employees' openness and willingness to get to know other people create familiarity and establish an open environment without judgement to the offered themes, almost creating a safe space. Still, one of them (respondent 7) did mention that they should not underestimate the importance of sensitivity towards visitors, as during work, she felt at times, the rest of the team took the visitors and their openness to the kind of films they show for granted. From her experience behind the bar, she felt that sometimes new visitors were hesitant to come in and unsure how to behave in the space. Even though the organised events are open to everyone and also intended to bring people together:

*“and that's the main desire of [anonymous] who organized the 'Neighbourhood Cinema', to actually build a conversation, but like with more people, right? So not only people that are passionate about films, but people that **could** be passionate about films, right? Who are, like, sometimes too afraid to step in.” (Respondent 7)*

Thus, it is crucial in cinemas as social infrastructures to have a regulator explaining or illustrating specific non-discursive regulations and codes of conduct regarding social behaviour in this space.

4.3.2 Approachability

The different cinemas use marketing techniques to personalise themselves to the audience and make the cinema approachable for reaching out to new people, contributing to being known by younger visitors. However, creating a familiar social infrastructure for older visitors is mainly done through the classical techniques of leaflets and word of mouth. The commercial cinema exhibitors mentioned that older people were not really interested in new marketing techniques. They mainly enjoyed the short presentation before the film about the upcoming movies or used the leaflets announcing the latest schedules. Most importantly, the theatre managers (respondents 1, 3 & 5) mentioned word of mouth as a very effective strategy in advertising films to the public. The commercial cinema exhibitors still use different methods to make their cinema more approachable and personalise their marketing. They do a lot of marketing by themselves, such as hanging up film posters and screening schedules. Other strategies include a website, social media, Google reviews, email correspondence, and a newsletter. And personification is also evident: the theatre manager of the Arthouse theatre writes short texts for the films they are showing. At the Independent cinema, the new employee (Respondent 6) felt that younger generations were missing out on the cinema, so she tried coming up with new ideas on Instagram to reach them. The theatre managers of both cinemas also mentioned that perhaps their current strategies were more traditional, which they lacked in reaching out to students; thus, the new techniques could contribute to creating new social groups at the cinema.

The communal cinema does use marketing to create a social infrastructure. Here, the marketing employees use a combination of photography, documenting events, visuals, and schedules, sharing these online, and communicating with collaborating partners (cinemas and festivals). The interviewed marketing employee mentioned these strategies as important to reach out to visitors, as she felt that in a city like Berlin, where so much is available, one might be less considered by the public:

“So this online presence for offline access, I would say.” (Respondent 8)

In addition, the three cinema associations in Germany provide various training modules in their NEUSTART KINO training programme, some of which can supplement the exhibitor's sensitive

behaviour towards the audience and approachable marketing techniques for reaching the audience. The first training modules are two workshops for better assisting visitors. One of these teaches basic strategies such as body language and verbal argumentation for conflict-solving. The other teaches strategies for creating relationships with the audience by learning moderation techniques to let visitors feel invited and personally addressed. There are two more training modules on the marketing skills of exhibitors on social media. One of these modules is an E-Learning platform for a marketing masterclass. Here, cinema exhibitors follow a four-monthly online masterclass about the four topics "*Digital Strategy, Site Strategy & Search Engine Optimisation, Content Marketing and Social Media*" (AG Kino - Gilde e.V.; HDF KINO e.V.; Bundesverband kommunale Filmarbeit e.V., 2023, p. 15). It aims to improve exhibitors' basic knowledge of digital marketing and helps develop a digital strategy for an exhibitor. The other module is aimed explicitly at TikTok for understanding the app for marketing purposes and reaching a young audience, integrating it in the daily work routine, and understanding accessibility-related trends. And lastly, a training module for enhancing the communication between exhibitors and distributors, for reducing conflicts about the programme decision-making, while also aiming to increase collecting customer data, for creating a better understanding of the community and for personalising the programme more on their desires (AG Kino - Gilde e.V.; HDF KINO e.V.; Bundesverband kommunale Filmarbeit e.V., 2023).

4.3.3 Intermediation

Functioning as the intermediary between the audience and the film, creating a direct connection of exchange with the audience and between audiences by facilitating the event, emerged more potent in the interviews with the communal cinema employees. At the Communal cinema, screenings depend on the curator's aim, which is either to target specific groups or an event about a specific specialised topic. According to the two employees (respondents 7 & 8), the cultural managers give the curators a lot of artistic freedom in choosing how a screening should happen. Because of this, a screening also becomes the curator's screening. It brings new opportunities for curators to either show unknown talent and be experimental or show well-known filmmakers. Next to film screenings, the curators can also organise performances, music sessions and workshops. Some of these screenings arise from collaborations with filmmakers, film festivals and film institutes such as the film museum, seeking a balance between reaching a specific audience group or showing a particular story. Sometimes, the screenings are for every adult interested in the themes, and others are aimed explicitly at professional groups in the film industry, such as amateur filmmakers or artists with a research grant, causing the group of people that the event is aimed at to vary. Because their schedule is so diverse, it is hard for the curators to predict how many people will attend a screening. Perhaps not all the same people come to the screening. However, one employee mentioned in an informal interview (12 July, 2023) the term "*safe space*" about how the cinema relates to these people, as they identify themselves in the themes shown that are not so recurring in Western mainstream cinema.

Functioning as a direct intermediary between the shown film and what the audiences perceive is less relevant to the commercial cinema exhibitors. For them, it is more about attracting the audience to the cinema and keeping them engaged rather than having a programme focused on audience interaction. Still, a social space is facilitated. Here, the competence of being an intermediary establishes itself by focusing on the target group: the exhibitors try to understand their audience and adjust the programming of their cinema to the audience's preferences. The theatre manager at the Multiplex organises several recurring special screenings with which she tries to address specific groups. She tries to combine commercialised cinema with a substantial supply of films for different groups and plans the screenings accordingly. Several screenings appeal to particular, possibly stereotypical, groups more than others. For example, for the 'Film Café', the theatre manager realised that older people mainly come to see the film in the afternoon:

“The older ladies, they wouldn't go to the cinema in the evening because it's just too dark. [Then] there are so many people here, [and] they don't like popcorn so much, so we just pick them up in the afternoon when they have time.” (Respondent 1, translated)

In addition, they found it important for the ‘Film Café’ to show films with light-hearted themes and reflective stories that are not too long, as they realised that the visitors mainly came to enjoy the afternoon and talk with each other and tend to use the lavatories more frequently, which is difficult with longer films.

At the Independent cinema, as the ‘Film Breakfast’ mainly attracts older people, the theatre manager (respondent 5) stated aspects similar to the ‘Film Café’. For the ‘Cultural Theatre’, this is different. The theatre manager (respondent 3) started by organising ‘culture nights’ to give something back to the audience and change the everyday routine. Most importantly, it felt to them that hardly any cultural centres offered these kinds of events in this pre-city part of the Berlin agglomeration. They aimed at Thursday nights when artists in the cabaret scene usually do not plan other performances and are also available for lower prices. They started doing these ‘culture nights’ every four months, and after a few years, it became a monthly item. After a while, the cinema became known in the scene, and the artists also started recommending it to colleagues, making it a successful loop. Now, a base pool of artists is present, and the exhibitor can contract some performers.

Another way of appealing to specific groups is that all cinemas offer several recurring series. Such an editorial approach can contribute to setting up routines for other groups of visitors, attracting new regular visitors. At the Multiplex, they offer a *Sneak Peak* every Monday, a screening session with the name and theme of the film hidden, where the theatre manager and service employees notice the same people returning on Mondays. The Independent cinema presents the series *Film Highlights*, where every Wednesday, a film is screened for a reduced fee, and the same people return, according to the theatre manager (respondent 5). Sometimes, they offer events such as lectures or readings, with the screen in a more supporting sense. The same goes for the podium at the Arthouse theatre. These cinemas can also appeal to people who regular film screenings might not reach. The series the Communal cinema offers are either recurrent or definitive with a beginning and end. Still, according to one employee in an informal interview (12 July, 2023), visitors visit the whole sequence of the offered series.

Some programmes arise from initiatives in the city, such as the communal cinema. However, the Arthouse theatre also supports specific initiatives, such as a yearly one-night festival where many entrepreneurs from the area organise different events for the residents there. At the Independent cinema, some collaborations originate from city initiatives or even (political) parties from the neighbourhood. Still, the theatre manager (respondent 5) stated that the collaborated screenings should not be too restricted, as he cannot afford that, and he feels he should not mess with the schedule too much regarding the image-branding. These types of personalised screenings are also possible at the Multiplex, which can be very social for interested people but may exclude the functioning as social infrastructure.

Essential for understanding the target group by exhibitors is their understanding of the neighbourhood. Such spatial awareness influences their attempt to facilitate social infrastructures. Setting up screenings that reflect the demography of the neighbourhood can contribute to a higher number of visitors or affiliation of visitors to the cinema. All interviewed theatre managers mentioned that in a city like Berlin, where there is a vast supply of cinemas, many visitors do not choose a cinema because of a film schedule but rather choose their preferred one anyway. Therefore, the communal cinema decided to do the ‘Neighbourhood Cinema’ as an event with local Turkish food because the cinema is in northwest Berlin, a very Turkish-German district. In the Multiplex, the theatre managers decided to

occasionally show Turkish premieres, as they are also in northwest Berlin, and they realised that these would do very well with the local audience. Understanding the neighbourhood also contributes to this regulator role of the exhibitor's own norms, as the theatre manager of the Arthouse theatre mentioned that he can offer recommendations for dinner or lunches when visitors pick up their tickets early, contributing to the familiarity of the neighbourhood and being beneficial for the rest of the area. Or, as he summarised:

“You have to be involved somewhere, you have to be accepted, and you have to know local people, because that makes it easier for you to get in touch.”
(Respondent 3, translated)

4.3.4 Endurance

What came forward from this research is that having more visitors does not automatically presume a higher level of social practice by the exhibitors and can also be demanding for them, showing that many people can also limit social encounters. On busy days, the theatre manager of the Arthouse theatre sometimes requests voluntary assistance from family members or friends because, with all the guests, the exhibitor cannot do the cash register and admission control by himself. Still, he cannot afford to appoint someone permanently. At the Communal cinema, this problem of affordance also arises. Here, many people work dual jobs, one to make ends meet and the other at the cinema, because they enjoy it and believe in its aim. Still, keeping the place running can result in long working hours, and while crowded nights are very much appreciated, this can also require a lot of energy from the employees. At the Multiplex and the Independent cinema, the service employees even mentioned that the social aspect of their work is declining among many people. One of them explained the following:

“I think that's when you kind of push it to the background, to be incredibly friendly, but just want everyone to be seated at some point.” (Respondent 6, translated)

Other social challenges with visitors relate to policing, though only the exhibitors of the Multiplex mentioned these troubles. In the examples, the role of the exhibitor as a social enhancer shifts to one of policing. For example, cinemas must apply the age standard for admission of visitors set by the German government. Yet, the theatre manager and the service employees mentioned troubles with accepting guests in implementing this: people complaining about ruining a family visit or lying about their child's age. While dealing with the guests politely and sensitively, it felt to the interviewees that their role became more of a conflict-solver. Another example that the service employee declared very disruptive was the emergence of young people in large groups deliberately interrupting the film due to social media trends. For these groups, the film screening can become a very social event. However, she mentioned the troubles of gatekeeping the codes of conduct on behaviour in the cinema space, almost policing the screening. At the same time, these trends also had an excluding or disruptive effect on other visitors. Thus, employees can experience challenges differently, and the sociality of events also depends on the visitors' intent.

Dividing tasks over the team helps endure the workload and gives all groups of visitors the same level of attention they seek. This division can also amount to much responsibility from the staff members below the theatre manager. For example, at the Multiplex, service employee members decide on the set-up of the *Sneak Preview*, and three theatre managers also divide tasks between each other. At the Communal cinema, the whole team can bring in ideas for future screenings and even set these up if they are deemed worthy by the rest of the group and the theatre manager (in this case, the cultural manager). Even the two singular auditorium cinemas regularly work with more than one person per

screening. At the Independent cinema, two theatre managers divide the work week between them, and the recently employed young staff member often supports them and operates the cinema alone on some days. The theatre manager (respondent 5) even realised that the new staff member has good marketing initiatives and mentioned his regret for not allowing his new employee to develop her ideas sooner. At the Arthouse theatre, the theatre manager primarily organises all the screenings but is still supported by his colleague and partner on sick leave, who organises the administrative work from home. At the same time, they also seek voluntary support from acquaintances.

The theatre managers also mentioned how much they depend on colleagues and their commitment. For example, finding people who want to work in a cinema can be difficult. One must be willing to work during weekends, holidays, and evenings, mostly when *“others are off work”* (Respondent 4), meaning that one must be eager while working at the cinema. At the Communal cinema, for example, many people work dual jobs but still want to work in the cinema. The cultural manager even mentioned in the informal interview (25 June, 2023) that she is worried about their projectionist going abroad for an exchange, as it would be difficult to find a replacement with that kind of knowledge, willing to work part-time and be that committed. The theatre manager of the Multiplex mentioned that she aims to find people who fit the team and that there is an excellent work-joy balance so that she can depend on the energy of the employees during busy hours:

“So, I conduct job interviews and tell everyone who applies here that it's certainly easier to work at Kaufland. There's more money. You have less responsibility, and you have to take less initiative. You sit at the counter, swipe items, collect the money, and that's it. And if you work in a cinema as a temp, that's different. It's teamwork, which is always more challenging than doing your own thing. And it's guest work, which is also very challenging.” (Respondent 1, translated)

Still, team hierarchy can influence decision-making for events. At the multiplex, the CEO of the Cineplex group can make demands about screenings or events that the cinemas of this group must follow, including the Multiplex. At the Independent cinema, the theatre managers also adhere to the owner's wishes. At the Communal cinema, the curators have much freedom, but the cultural managers can still have a final say. Only at the Arthouse theatre are the exhibitor and his partner the owners, and they decide on everything between them.

4.4 Meaning

4.4.1 Social aim

It is important to understand the exhibitor's objective with their cinema to understand the motivations behind their work. All theatre managers agreed that the notion of cinema as an enhanced film screening experience is not the case anymore, as films can be consumed similarly at home due to current media devices. To start, the perceptions of the theatre managers differ on the notion of revenue. The multiplexes focus on maintaining adequate revenue, which the theatre manager of the Multiplex confirmed (Respondent 1). Her reasoning behind that is a realistic notion of cinemas as self-sustaining businesses that need to generate revenue. Interestingly, the theatre managers and employees of the three cinemas that are not a multiplex began their motivation to create a social cinema by doing it differently or better than the "profit-oriented" multiplex. They offered various opinions about how the multiplex cinemas did not provide what they did, referring to aspects of being *“processed as if in a manufactory”* (Respondent 6) or that people there are not treated as guests. Still, the owners of the Independent cinema and the Arthouse theatre (Respondents 3 & 5) exemplified that this perspective on

revenue is also necessary for their cinema to survive. However, the theatre managers differ in opinion about how the cinema offers a social aim, depending on how they see the meaning of cinema itself.

On a social level, the theatre manager of the Multiplex sees the cinema as a “*gathering of all generations*” (Respondent 1, translated) where the audience learns to do an individual activity collectively and learns to behave towards and accept each other. In her opinion, most visitors are not used to looking away from their phones and other distractions while focusing on a film for two hours. Therefore, she sees the cinema as a family place for entertainment and leisure, engaging the guests so that they can enjoy themselves and have this two-hour moment of distraction. The guests learn to deal with one another by concentrating on a film together; according to her, it cultivates tolerance and empathy. This notion probably arises from the fact that she offers a high number of films to many different audiences and that she facilitates and overviews the mixing of these audiences in one auditorium. For that to go well, all guests should feel welcome, enjoy themselves and be willing to return as their expenses keep the cinema industry instated:

“They pay my salary... (laughter). No guests, no salary. In the end, our guests pay the salary of our associations, our guests pay the salary of our suppliers, yes, and the guests are the most important thing of all. That's it” (Respondent 1, translated)

For the theatre manager of the Independent cinema (Respondent 5), the cinema becomes a “*window to the world*” (Respondent 5, translated), where visitors learn something about themselves or others through the film's story shown on screen and share this experience with their fellow visitors. The theatre manager of the Independent cinema finds an inherent part of his role as an exhibitor is trying to create a social bond with the visitors so that his cinema can be more than a pure film screening venue and becomes an entertaining leisure activity with a cultural surplus through this *window to the world*. To achieve this, he finds that one must make an event out of a film screening, something unique that can offer people entertainment that should be better than viewing a film at home. The visitors should have a reason for coming to the cinema that surpasses the comfort of the visitors' own living space, which also applies to the ‘Film Breakfast’. To him, the visitors actively decide to visit his cinema for entertainment and are willing to pay. That is why he feels the responsibility to host it as convenient as possible for them:

“There have been people who have complained because it takes so long at the counter, and you can see that if you look at Google reviews, [...] then something like "the guy or the person at the counter is talking to the other customer in front of me" and so on. That's where it starts: we don't see our guests as customers. All visitors are actually our guests, and then, if there's someone at the counter, we talk to them briefly and chat with them. And if they have to wait a little while afterwards, it might be a bit of a bummer for them at the moment. However, as soon as it's their turn, we do the same with them, and the important thing is that people actively decide to go to our cinema.” (Respondent 5, translated)

For the theatre manager at the Arthouse theatre (Respondent 3), this notion of a *window to the world* is why his cinema gathers many middle-aged and older people. The exhibitor and partner aim at only showing films that belong to the Arthouse category as they believe that the stories in these films have something of value to offer to the audience. They started out purposefully and realised that the films

also appeal to their surroundings. The visitors come, sometimes even alone, to enjoy a particular story with like-minded people and talk about the movie beforehand or afterwards with each other or with the exhibitor at the register:

“If [the conversation] is just about the film, then there are always parallels to life or something like that, where people talk about their experiences or what they've just been through.” (Respondent 3, translated)

For this group, they also offered the ‘Cultural Theatre’ and realised that the guests enjoyed the change of routine as something out of the ordinary. The Arthouse theatre and the Independent cinema also offer specific recurring special family series where they screen German youth films. They think these films transmit values to the youth and that they learn to experience a story through film and take something away from it instead of only consuming the film.

The Cultural Manager of the Communal cinema implied in the informal interview (25 June, 2023) that this notion of a *window to the world* is not enough and that the meaning of cinema ought to be more. She sees (Western) Arthouse and other cinema as too mainstream and as purely film screening venues. At the same time, she aims at going further than that: creating a community by facilitating a place for returning visitors where exchange happens organically through debating or discussing views on specific topics from the film while also being a neighbourhood place that one can visit without the need of seeing a film. As one of her bar employees explained, almost every screening should bring the visitors something to think about or even debate during and after the screening, changing the visitors’ perspective and making exchange during screenings almost inevitable:

“I think what gets everyone together is really like this new proposal for cinema. So, it's not only like coming to the cinema and watching films, but like having a space for gathering, for meeting other people. Like, for someone that is, like, starting the film industry, it as well is interesting because they get to know these people. And I will say that they work a lot with a part of the film scene, also that is more like leftist. There's like, intra-settled issues of the migrants and refugees. So, it has like a different political perspective as well.” (Respondent 7)

This aim emerged from the fact that the cinema originated from a film group that expanded to a cinema with a different functioning structure, and the focus was firmly on the programme, with a political base. A communal ground layer was already established by regular visitors from the film scene in Berlin, while there is still a focus on bringing in people with no film experience. Still, because the film group has moved to a new neighbourhood and turned into an actual cinema venue, all employees mentioned that forming this community needs some time. They offered the ‘Neighbourhood Cinema’ to help with this, as an event that encouraged people from the neighbourhood to visit the cinema.

4.4.2 Visitor commitment

For the commercial cinema exhibitors, regular visitors are also crucial. They confirm for the exhibitors that this group is committed to their cinema and forms a baseline for social interaction in the cinema. All theatre managers felt that in a city like Berlin, where there are so many cinemas, the regulars do not choose a cinema because of a film, but they almost always choose their preferred one. These people are more incentivised to linger at the cinema, and exchanges can happen. The exhibitors consider the regulars vital because they know how the events take place, make less of a mess, have

more patience when unplanned things happen and create an almost clear expectation of a minimum revenue. At the same time, they are a group of regular visitors that the exhibitors feel relaxed working with and are more willing to offer a little extra. Regular visitors can be groups of people coming together, people coming in a group that meets there or people that come alone every time. The exhibitors see them as open to giving their opinion about the film, the cinema itself, or new films that they think should be screened, which helps facilitate new interactions in (spontaneous) encounters, either with the exhibitor or other visitors.

The group of regular visitors is mainly over 50 years old for the 'Film Café' (Fieldnotes, 14 June, 2023), the 'Film Breakfast' (Fieldnotes, 13 July, 2023) and the 'Cultural Theatre' (Fieldnotes, 9 June, 2023). They make time for the screenings in the middle of the day and enjoy this familiarity and routine in the cinemas. At the 'Film Café', a guest stated in an informal interview (7 June, 2023) that the older people preferred this event over similar events at other cinemas because the theatre manager baked the pie instead of pre-ordered. Also, because the visitors feel so comfortable and are part of the theatre manager's life, the manager mentioned (Respondent 1) that many enjoyed bringing small presents for her young child. Not very expensive or excessive ones, but just as a gesture to them. For the *Sneak Preview*, the team always tries to offer a little extra that they have left in storage to thank the audience for coming so often. At the Independent cinema, visitors now bring their mugs and plates because they know the 'Film Breakfast' routine and want to contribute to it. At the Arthouse theatre, the people that come to the 'Cultural Theatre' are, according to the theatre manager (respondent 3), also mainly regular visitors because they enjoy that the event differs from regular film screenings, know the cinema and trust its offer.

During the observations at the commercial cinemas, when visitors began interacting with other unknown visitors, they did so on their own initiative (Fieldwork, 14 June, 2023). For instance, people talked to each other as they helped each other pour the tea (Fieldwork, 13 July, 2023) or bumped into each other spontaneously from a previous encounter (Fieldwork, 9 June, 2023). However, always consciously facilitating interaction between visitors that do not know each other, was not necessarily done by the exhibitors of the commercial cinemas. There could be many opportunities, especially at events where people go alone, or events that a lot of regular visitors attend.

For whom the social meeting place is intended is also essential. Exhibitors of all cinemas focus on their regular visitors to create social space. With regular visitors, a specific group of people inhabit this space. It can still be that the event is public to all but mostly taken as space by the recurring visitors. As the new employee of the Independent cinema mentioned, the cinema changes from a public space to a private space in a positive sense, as it can become very personal with the same group of people in a social sense:

"It's more of a private space than a public space, it's just totally personal and the same people always come here." (Respondent 6)

The two interviewed employees of the Communal cinema (Respondents 7 & 8) mentioned that non-regular visitors might regard the cinema as elitist or too intellectual due to its political themes. At the same time, through these themes, it becomes a safe space for people who feel a sense of belonging to these themes. In that sense, the cinema becomes very accessible for this group, which magnifies into parties and new series, for example, for the LGBTIQ+ community. However, a social space for everybody is not permanently established when many people visit a cinema. At the Multiplex, some teenagers came in huge groups to the multiplex due to social media trends, creating a mess and being loud during the screening while still enjoying themselves. It became a meeting space for them while being a hostile space for others.

4.5 Assemblage

Social infrastructures are forms of assemblage or networks that can create social relations consisting of different heterogeneous elements, of which the subject's power plays a part, implying that a film screening has different human and non-human, materialistic or organic aspects. The human aspects lie in the exhibitor's practices and the visitors' reactions. The organic aspects lie in the exhibitor facilitating a space of sociality, which the regular visitor then sustains. The power of the exhibitors as a subject is evident in how they shape this social space for the visitor. The practices used by the exhibitors in facilitating a social infrastructure have been pulled apart for analytical purposes in the previously described field results, considering the four elements: competence, material, meaning and (non-)governmental contributions. However, these four elements are considerably entangled in facilitating cinemas as social infrastructures, as evidenced in the interview with a marketing employee at the Communal cinema (respondent 8). She stated that at their cinema, their aim or **meaning** is to facilitate a community space by using or activating it in different ways, from hosting to participating:

“We want here to be more like a social space in that sense, too. [...] it's like more like a gathering space before and after. And now, this garden is also very nice. And [people come in] at the bar and approach like, “Oh, what's here? I just saw and then I came in, and I didn't know, I'm in the neighbourhood”. So, it also functions as a neighbourhood place, but we are neither a coffee place. But this is a place that you can breathe in and check out what's happening. So, it's also for the passersby as a discoverable location, I guess.” (Respondent 8)

Still, while her work fulfils many of her intellectual needs, it may not always be the case for every visitor. Some discussed and exhibited themes in the Communal cinema can be very realistic and intense, which may not be favourable for everyone. For this cinema to function as such a space, they have everything set up in a mobile way, making it possible to use several **materials** interchangeably to adapt the space according to the event they want to host. These materials range from freestanding tables and chairs to plant troughs that the exhibitors can move indoors or outside. It also illustrates the importance of a physical space for the communal cinema. The cinema had to move around several times with an unclear outcome, making it difficult to plan screenings. In the meantime, they had to deal with the insecurity of not knowing where and how soon to move again. Now, they have a permanent stay with material facilities such as a kitchen and infrastructure to run a cinema, which gives the team more opportunities for a varied programme. However, the materials alone do not create a participation space, as this also depends on the employees' **competences**. The team relies on the know-how of a colleague, for example, when hosting a workshop:

“[D]epends whether it's the workshop. Sometimes you have a film, analog film workshop and like [anonymous], she was doing it and she has all her own equipment. So she comes here, she doesn't need anything. She just needs maybe soup hahaha, and then she just brings everything. That's what she needs.”(Respondent 8)

Yet, she also stated that they are neither a coffee place nor a bar, nor have the licenses for it. This demonstrates that the influence of the element of **(non-)governmental contributions** is also evident, as there are specific governmental regulations that the cinema must follow. At the same time, it was unclear if they could afford the rent for the new place in the future, as the city council had shortened their contribution. On the other hand, they could secure their rent for 2023 because a different organisation gave them an honorary (*theatre award from the Cinematheque Association*).

In the following, chapter 5 presents the conclusions of and reflections on this research, linking back to the literature and comparing the findings with the concepts discussed in the theory chapter.

5. Concluding and reflecting on cinemas as social infrastructures

This chapter brings together the results of the literature and of the field research to answer the defined research (sub-)questions and reflect on cinemas as social infrastructures. The chapter starts by reiterating the importance of cinemas as social infrastructures (section 5.1), then outlines the research process (section 5.2), before answering the sub-questions (section 5.3) and main research question and reflecting on the conceptual model (section 5.4), followed by making recommendations for further research and for those involved in policymaking and cinema funding (section 5.5). The chapter ends with a final reflection, on cinemas as social infrastructures (section 5.6).

5.1 Importance of cinemas as social infrastructures

Evidence in the United States substantiates that people living closer to meeting places are happier, less socially isolated and more trustworthy towards other people (Cox & Streeter, 2019). That is also why de Vos (2020) argues for more policymaking on facilitating and supporting meeting places in society. At the same time, such meeting places are under pressure, because of declining numbers of memberships and voluntary work (Vermeij et al., 2024). Research about social infrastructures does not focus on the cinema as an object of study or it is only addressed scarcely. Maltby (2006, 2011) critically argues that much research, considering film screenings in cinema, forgets to measure cinema attendance in its current societal context, and he regards the social and cultural aspects as important research issues. There has also been research on cinema and social gatherings, but these do not link to understanding cinemas as social infrastructures.

Cinema associations in Germany have expressed their willingness to include the social side of cinemas in their focus. This movement is also visible in Europe, as cinema associations promote the value of the cinema as a social meeting place in their publications (UNIC, 2022). At the same time, policymakers find it relevant to support the social side of cinemas in governmental funding programmes.

5.2 Research process

This study investigated to what extent cinemas function as social infrastructures and how cinema exhibitors facilitate this function. This research focused on the day-to-day practices of cinema exhibitors, comprised of theatre managers and staff, that help make cinemas social infrastructures. The main research question was: *“To what extent do cinemas and arthouse theatres in Berlin function as social infrastructures?”*. To answer this main research question, a theoretical framework was developed, underpinning the human and non-human, materialistic or organic aspects of cinemas, making them an assemblage of social and material accumulations that can function as social infrastructures.

The conceptual analysis substantiated that cinemas are assemblages, of which the different physical and material configurations are important, as well as the human elements in cinema that are not so physically tangible (Vélez-Serna, 2020). Vélez-Serna understands these as the material configurations that are important for the visitor during a film screening: separation from the outside, projection of moving images, darkness, screen and a space for an immobile audience to sit, to which is added the agency of the audience in understanding that they are seeing a film. The human elements are understood as behavioural protocols that include the subject’s agency, such as protected time, public address, division of labour, behaviour codes and discursive marking, which define the social expectations. The theories of Lesson (2020) and Maltby (2006, 2011) were used to clarify that cinemas always had a social dimension, where interaction is as essential to the meaning of films as the experience of the film itself, and that they should be regarded as social infrastructures.

Establishing that the cinema is an assemblage that can function as social infrastructure, made the theory of practice of Shove et al. (2012) suitable to analyse the exhibitors' practices for facilitating cinemas as social infrastructures. The analytical parameters 'material', 'competences' and 'meaning' were defined and a fourth element was added, '(non-)governmental', to determine any existing funding that contributes to this. The sub-research questions were defined along these parameters. A conceptual model (figure 2.1) captured these four different parameters to determine to what extent cinemas and arthouse theatres in Berlin can function as social infrastructures.

A case study approach was used as a research approach, and four different types of cinemas were selected: a multiplex, an independent cinema, an arthouse theatre and a communal cinema. Four different data collection techniques were used to achieve results, consisting of nine informal interviews, six observations of social events, eight semi-structured interviews, and a review of nineteen (policy) documents, in line with establishing an in-depth understanding of the cases through multiple forms of data, fitting qualitative research (Yin, 2003).

5.3 Answering the research sub-questions

This section chapter brings together the results of the literature and of the field research to answer the defined research sub-questions.

5.3.1 How is the cinema supported by (non-)governmental contributions to function as a social infrastructure?

It was discussed in section 2.4.4. that German governmental policies focus on the cultural and economic value of cinemas; and that regulations set up by the government and by non-governmental support influence how cinemas function in society, under the guidance of the Federal Film Board (FFA Filmförderungsanstalt, 2023c), expecting that non-governmental German cinema associations like HDF KINO set up partnerships with the government and offer strategies in support of cinemas (HDF KINO e.V., n.d.).

The review of policies and funding mechanisms from German governmental institutions and non-governmental organisations determined that there is a distinction between governmental support and non-governmental support for cinemas.

Commercial cinemas are supported by the Federal Government Commission for Culture and Media through the *Cinema Programme Award* for their development as cultural sites (Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung (BPA), 2023). The German Federal Film Board provides administrative and executive support for the film funding programmes of the Federal Government Commission for Culture and Media, of which some could make the cinema more approachable to visitors, but this is not explicitly the aim of these contributions. The support focuses on cinemas as cultural venues with a diverse or outstanding film programme instead of a social value. Exhibitors can use funds set up with the idea of establishing the cinema as a cultural venue to contribute to the accessibility of cinemas and for exhibitors to shape their foyer as an interaction space. This can be understood to bring out the social side of cinemas, as these kinds of modifications also have an effect on some material aspects that enhance the cinema to function as a social infrastructure. Yet, how this is interpreted relies solely on the exhibitor and an explicit policy focus on the cinema as a social meeting space is missing here. For communal cinemas, additionally, the German Cinematheque Association gives out the *film theatre awards of the Cinematheque Association*, which can reward the cinema's importance as a social meeting place, but this is not explicitly the award's aim.

On a regional level, there is the Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, which implements the funds of the city of Berlin to extend the range of the cultural exchange to more audiences in a neighbourly way. This can increase the function of cinemas as social infrastructures, as their perception changes from a cultural space to a cultural-social space.

The non-governmental associations that support cinemas in Berlin range from European to national level. The cultural value of cinema is arguably very substantiated by the cinema associations. Still, the notion of cinemas as social infrastructures starts taking shape in recommendations of the German cinema associations in collaboration with the government. These associations drafted several projects that concern themselves with the social meaning of cinema in society and have set up several alternate events with cinemas which aim at facilitating social exchange.

Exhibitors do not always know if they qualify for external contributions and find some regulations unclear or a hindrance, which affects their faith in the contributing institutions. Also, the exhibitors feel that the funding contributions can either be liberating in that they help exhibitors financially or limiting because of restricting regulations. This makes it harder for the exhibitor to focus on the social aspect of cinema. Still, maintaining a cinema is costly and the exhibitors favour governmental contributions that help to keep a functioning physical infrastructure affordable. At the least, this can be seen as supportive for cinemas as social infrastructures as the continuing maintenance of facilities is an important condition for social infrastructures.

In conclusion, there is a distinction between governmental support and non-governmental support for cinemas. On a national level, the support focuses mainly on cinemas as cultural venues. On a regional level, the perception of cinemas as social spaces slowly appears to be changing for the better, as institutional policy establishes it in concrete terms. In Germany, three different cinema associations commit themselves to strengthening cinemas' social image and establishing their position in political and economic institutional policies and have drafted several projects that concern themselves with the social meaning of cinema in society and have set up several alternate events with cinemas which aim at facilitating social exchange. Exhibitors find that they still need external contributions and favour governmental contributions that help to keep the cinema's maintenance affordable, which can be seen as supportive for the minimum condition of cinemas as social infrastructures.

5.3.2 What materials do cinema exhibitors need to facilitate social infrastructures?

The parameter material covered every aspect that creates the audience's social appreciation of the cinema space. From the literature it was derived that the exhibitor's focus on the aesthetic experience which enhances the visitor's social experience is important, and Lesson (2020) gives examples of how cinemas' space is organised with their own bars or bookstores. Here, it is important to understand how the physical structure impacts the audience, creating a feeling that they are doing a cultural activity of film viewing, or related to film viewing, in a collective matter, giving more room for social interactions to happen.

The materials the exhibitors used in the analysed cinemas resemble the theory, as commercial cinema exhibitors try to give their cinema a certain aesthetic *character*, which the visitors appreciate, gathering an overall impression that makes them feel comfortable and gives them something (knickknacks) to talk about, which is in line with the idea of combining the aesthetic experience with the social experience (Lesson, 2020), to create a cinema *character* or personality. The *character* of cinema foyers generates a feeling of recognition for visitors, and makes the cinema approachable for them, making them at ease in the cinema. This creates a trustworthy and recognisable environment,

not only in the cinema but also its other users, that linger, which is an important condition for social infrastructures (Latham & Layton, 2019).

By contrast, this *character* was not that strong at the communal cinema, but the way the exhibitors organise the space facilitates social interaction, as it focuses on how the foyer is connected to the auditorium and can be changed to enable other social functions. This is part of the aesthetic experience (Lesson, 2020), but goes further as it invites people to come and linger even without visiting a screening and the way the cinema is constructed can nudge people into social interaction. It also confirms the condition of social infrastructures that visitors come initially to the cinema for the primary aim of film viewing, but in the meantime can create social ties with others in the same space.

Other material aspects are the repeated provision and maintenance of facilities and their accessibility to everyone. Physical accessibility is important in how the special events of the cinemas reach people and depends on several conditions, which exhibitors must keep in mind. One is the accessibility of the cinema venue itself: the structure of the cinema influences the physical accessibility for mostly less mobile visitors, exemplifying how limited access to cinemas can limit access to social infrastructures (Cass et al., 2005). Another condition is the location of the cinema in the neighbourhood, which determines which groups of visitors are reached by the cinema, confirming that not only the physical but also spatial conditions determine access to social infrastructures (Aelbrecht, 2016).

In addition, accessibility depends on the capacity of the cinemas. The capacity determines how many people can enter, where and how long they can linger, and how they use the space. While this is probably the case for every social infrastructure, the capacity of cinemas is essential in that it determines what other activities can be held and how many visitors can enter. The flow of incoming and outgoing visitors helps create spontaneous encounters, but the challenge for exhibitors is in not disrupting the screening, which exemplifies again the need for interconnectivity between the foyer and auditorium. It confirms that the material aspect of cinemas influences the behaviour of visitors and determines how encounters happen. It also exemplifies that visitors' trust should be established and that they can rely on the cinema repeatedly and without thinking about it, which is an important condition for social infrastructures (Latham & Layton, 2019). A critical note here is that this kind of thinking can also be exclusionary for visitors, which diminishes the functioning of the cinema as a social infrastructure.

A further relevant material factor that fosters social exchange between visitors is the provision of appetisers and drinks at special screenings, creating a social environment that invites lingering at the cinema that comes with enjoying these appetisers. These incentives may contribute to social infrastructure theory, with visitors coming to the cinema for a primary aim of film screening, while in the meantime getting to know other people who are incidentally in the same space with them enjoying appetisers and drinks. However, social exchange at these screenings can be partial, as the co-presence of visitors enjoying their appetisers does not necessarily result in co-mingling. Also, preparing for the different events can be demanding for the exhibitors because they mostly prepare materials and appetisers themselves. In addition, technology needs to be adjustable to these kinds of events.

In conclusion, facilitating social infrastructures requires first materials that provide an aesthetic character that visitors appreciate and that creates comfort, using the space of the foyer and the auditorium in ways that invite social interaction and spontaneous social encounters. Secondly, the spatial location of the cinema in the neighbourhood determines which groups of visitors are reached by the cinema and thirdly, the provision of appetisers give visitors the opportunity to linger at the cinema while enjoying the food, creating possibilities for spontaneous interaction. These conclusions exemplify that material aspects of cinemas are not only limited to the material aspects of the film screening itself, as mentioned by Vélez-Serna (2020), but also encompass the whole cinema, even its spatial location, and the specific materials the exhibitors built themselves.

5.3.3 What competences do cinema exhibitors need to facilitate social infrastructures?

The analysis of the parameter competences relied on two theoretical inputs. Firstly, the competences for making the cinema approachable to the visitors rely on new marketing techniques that make the cinema and its screenings feel familiar to the visitors (Lesson, 2020), with the exhibitor trying to form a relationship of trust with their audience, so the audience regards the cinema as a space where they can discuss or experience films and rely on the expertise of the exhibitor regarding the themes of these films. Secondly, the competences of the exhibitor in how the audience “meets” the film: “*the editorial approach*” (Lesson, 2020, p. 64), with the exhibitor an intermediary who organises or facilitates how the audience views the film and uses skills that articulate these transmissions to the audience to create a social space.

The analysed cases demonstrated that the exhibitors do not solely rely on marketing techniques to create a connection with the audience. The different cinemas use marketing techniques to the extent that they personalise themselves to the audience and make the cinema approachable (Lesson, 2020) for reaching out to new people. However, the commercial cinema exhibitors mentioned that older people were not interested in new marketing techniques, and mainly enjoyed the short presentation before the film about the upcoming movies or used the leaflets announcing the latest schedules.

Lesson’s (2020) notion about the exhibitor as an intermediary does recur with the exhibitors of the communal cinema. The exhibitors of the three commercial cinemas focus on their target groups: understanding their audience and adjusting the programming to their preferences, keeping them engaged to the cinema and creating a recognisable connection with them. With the exhibitors understanding their own neighbourhood and responding to the demands of the group closest to their cinema, showing spatial awareness, exemplifies that social conditions are strongly spatialised (Aelbrecht, 2016) for cinemas to function as social infrastructures.

This study shows the vital role of staff members in facilitating social encounters in social infrastructures, similar to libraries (Brummel & Smits, 2021; Van Melik & Hazeleger, 2023). However, as cinema work can be very time-consuming and tiring for exhibitors, it may reduce the amount of social interaction they can facilitate. Exhibitors do a lot themselves and feel they have then less time for other, more social aspects, but dividing tasks over the team helps endure the workload and gives all groups of visitors the same level of attention they seek. This division can also amount to much responsibility from the staff members below the theatre manager, still, team hierarchy can influence decision-making for events. It is important that theatre managers realise the potential of certain staff members in facilitating the cinema as a social space and give them freedom to it.

It emerged from this research that having more visitors does not automatically presume a higher level of social practice by the exhibitors and can also be demanding for them, and many visitors may also limit social encounters. For certain visitor groups, the film screening can become a very social event through social media trends, which also have an excluding or disruptive effect on other visitors. This is a good example of Srinivas’ (2002) theory that social rules of behaviour during film screening differ between audiences and that it is important to remain critical about whether all encounters are always meaningful (Aelbrecht, 2016). This shows that social norms do not only rely on social conditions, or spatial conditions but also on socio-spatial conditions through social media, that go beyond the real world.

Emphasising the importance of staff dedication, exhibitors regard as the most important competence, the capacity to create a space of closeness or intimacy where visitors feels comfortable opening up and socialising. They try to be sensitive in how they approach the guests and develop routines for visitors to get acquainted with so that the cinema becomes embedded in their lives and they pay attention to their role as regulators of the codes of conduct, which is important for constructing a social

infrastructure (Klinenberg, 2018). These competences do not correspond to Lesson's (2020) notion directly, but these make the cinema approachable to the audience and form a relationship of trust with them, which Lesson also regards as important. By contrast, at the communal cinema, these sensitivities were not explicitly mentioned. However, one employee still found her behaviour towards guests important, as it helps to bind guests to the cinema. To enhance these skills, the three Cinema Associations in Germany provide various training modules for exhibitors, which can supplement their sensitive behaviour towards the audience and approachable marketing techniques for reaching the audience.

In conclusion, exhibitors need the competences to be sensitive towards the audience and create an intimate space where the visitors feel comfortable to socialise. They should also function as intermediaries that create a direct connection of exchange with and between audiences, by facilitating how the audience views the event. This intermediation can also be expressed with exhibitors focusing more on the target group they want to reach with certain events, and in doing so, it is important they show spatial awareness and respond to the demands of the group closest to their cinema in the neighbourhood. The exhibitors' work motivation is a very important aspect for creating social infrastructures, as the amount of facilitated social interaction depends on the dedication, creativity and endurance of the exhibitors. Competences that exhibitors need less are those creating a familiar space through marketing, as this functions more as information gathering for visitors, but attracting a lot of visitors can also limit social encounters.

5.3.4 How do cinema exhibitors give meaning to cinemas as social infrastructures?

The parameter meaning analysed how exhibitors understand their role and the cinema as a social infrastructure. There is no one-sided definition in literature, however, it was conceptualised that commercial cinemas aim at profit by showing huge commercial film titles with a technical enhancement of the experience (Lesson, 2020), while local or independent cinemas have balanced programs and focus on the value of film education, which makes people think about the world and gives a political and shared element to the viewing experience (Lesson, 2020; Nieuwdorp & Stienen, 2021; Opdam, 2014).

The former part of this theory was countered quite strongly to the extent that all interviewed cinema managers agreed that the notion of cinema as an enhanced film screening experience is not the case anymore, as films can be consumed similarly at home due to current media devices and it is difficult for them to compete with this comfort. Still, the exhibitors differ in their opinion about how the cinema offers a social aim, depending on how they see the meaning of cinema itself.

Interestingly, the exhibitors of the three cinemas that are not a multiplex began their motivation to create a social cinema by expecting to do it differently or better than the "profit-oriented" multiplex. However, revenue is still regarded an important aspect for them as well, as their cinemas also need to survive. While the communal cinema aims more on government contributions for survival, this aspect of revenue exemplifies the point of Bergillos (2020) that cinemas are still businesses that are part of the cinema industry and need to focus on generating income.

The field analysis showed, that even the multiplex goes beyond an individualised form of consumption, as it seeks to become a place where visitors learn something about themselves or others through the film stories shown on screen and share this experience with their fellow visitors, refusing to an extent Hubbard's (2003) notion of individualised consumption.

The communal cinema goes further, creating a community, and organising a place for returning visitors where exchange happens organically through debating or discussing views on specific topics from the film which makes people think about the world and gives a political and shared element to the viewing experience as indicated by Lesson (2020), Nieuwdorp and Stienen (2021), and Opdam (2014), while also being at a neighbourhood place that one can visit without the need of seeing a film. This latter aspect is not taken into consideration in the theory and complies with Hoendervanger's (2021) prediction that cinemas can become third places in the future.

Commercial exhibitors do focus on returning visitors as well, mostly older people, creating a base group of returning guests that recognise each other and the cinema. They are more incentivised to linger at the cinema and give their opinion on films or on the cinema, which helps facilitate spontaneous encounters. Cinemas as a social experience combined with a viewing event appeal to this group. While this does not signify the commercial cinema as a neighbourhood place to the extent as the communal cinema, they do create a more social group in their respective cinemas, beyond a mindful programme or worldview change.

In conclusion, exhibitors' meaning about cinemas is that they do not see the cinema as an enhanced film screening experience anymore, as films can be consumed similarly at home. Cinemas are still businesses that are part of the cinema industry and need to focus on generating income. Still, the exhibitors differ in opinion about how the cinema offers a social aim, depending on how they see the meaning of cinema itself. The commercial cinema becomes a place where visitors learn something about themselves or others through the film stories shown on screen and share this experience with their fellow visitors. The communal cinema aims at creating a community by facilitating a place for returning visitors where exchange happens organically through debating or discussing views on specific topics from the film, while also being a neighbourhood place that one can visit without the need to see a film. Exhibitors focus on returning visitors, as they feel it contributes to the number of social encounters. However, exhibitors did not always facilitate interaction between unacquainted visitors, questioning if the co-presence of visitors also results in co-mingling of them (Ye, 2019). Still, it is also not evident if visitors desire this and if this responsibility should lie explicitly on the shoulders of the exhibitors.

5.4 Answering the research question

By answering the various sub-questions in the study, the central question "*To what extent do cinemas and arthouse theatres in Berlin function as social infrastructures?*" can now be answered.

Cinema exhibitors have different approaches, each having its own context that imposes specific requirements and preconditions for cinemas to function as social infrastructure. However, it can be gleaned from this research that:

1. Cinemas function as social infrastructures to the extent exhibitors enable it:
 - Exhibitors see the **meaning** of cinema as a social place, where visitors learn something about themselves or the world through a film and share this with other visitors.
 - Exhibitors aim to create a cinema space that generates a trustworthy and recognisable environment, that invites lingering and social interaction.
 - Exhibitors either construct a foyer aesthetic with *character*, or by creating a foyer that enables different events and social functions and nudges people into social interaction.
 - Exhibitors foster social exchange between visitors, by using **materials** that foster lingering and social exchange.

- Exhibitors have **competences** to create a direct connection of exchange with and between audiences by being an intermediary.
 - Exhibitors try to be sensitive and open towards visitors and develop routines for visitors to get acquainted with, to embed the cinema in their lives, as an intimate space where they feel comfortable to socialise.
 - Exhibitors try to understand their audience and adjust the programming accordingly, to foster a recognisable connection and create a base group of regular visitors, who are more incentivised to linger and socially interact.
 - Exhibitors focus on their own neighbourhood and respond to the demands of the group closest to them.
 - Exhibitors provide additional labour input, as preparing certain social events can be demanding, time-consuming and tiring.
2. The notion of cinemas as social infrastructure is supported by governmental and non-governmental institutions:
- Especially by monetary contributions at regional and municipal governmental levels, where the value of cinemas as solely cultural spaces is changing to now also seeing cinemas as social spaces.
 - It is emphasised by the efforts of the different German cinema associations, who manifest the social value of cinemas in direct institutional policy, such as the German Film Subsidy Act; or contribute to changing the meaning of cinema from a cultural leisure space to a social one, with different projects and events, and last by providing training modules for exhibitors that enhance their skills to facilitate social interactions.
3. The degree of social interaction determines cinemas as social infrastructures.
- Cinemas are still bound by the need to be self-sustaining businesses generating revenue by screening films and using marketing techniques to reach out to more people. While a focus on a larger number of visitors helps generate revenue, it can diminish the social functioning of cinemas, due to exhibitors not having the time to focus on social interaction or being forced to be the gatekeeper of codes of conduct.
 - Cinemas that provide appetisers may foster lingering, but it was not entirely clear if the co-presence of visitors also induces co-mingling of them.
4. The appeal to visitors determines cinemas as social infrastructures.
- Cinemas as a social experience combined with a viewing event, apparently appeal to a base group of mainly older visitors. They enjoy the classical techniques of marketing attracting them to the cinema and find social events appealing, while they also want to watch a film.
 - Cinemas can provide many opportunities for social interaction, especially events where people can go alone or events that attract regular visitors. They come to the cinema for the primary aim of film viewing, but in the meantime create social ties with others. Important is to keep in mind for whom the social space is intended. Still, visitors need a reason to come to the cinema, that outweighs the comfort of their own living space.

These insights led to the reworked conceptual model below (figure 5.1):

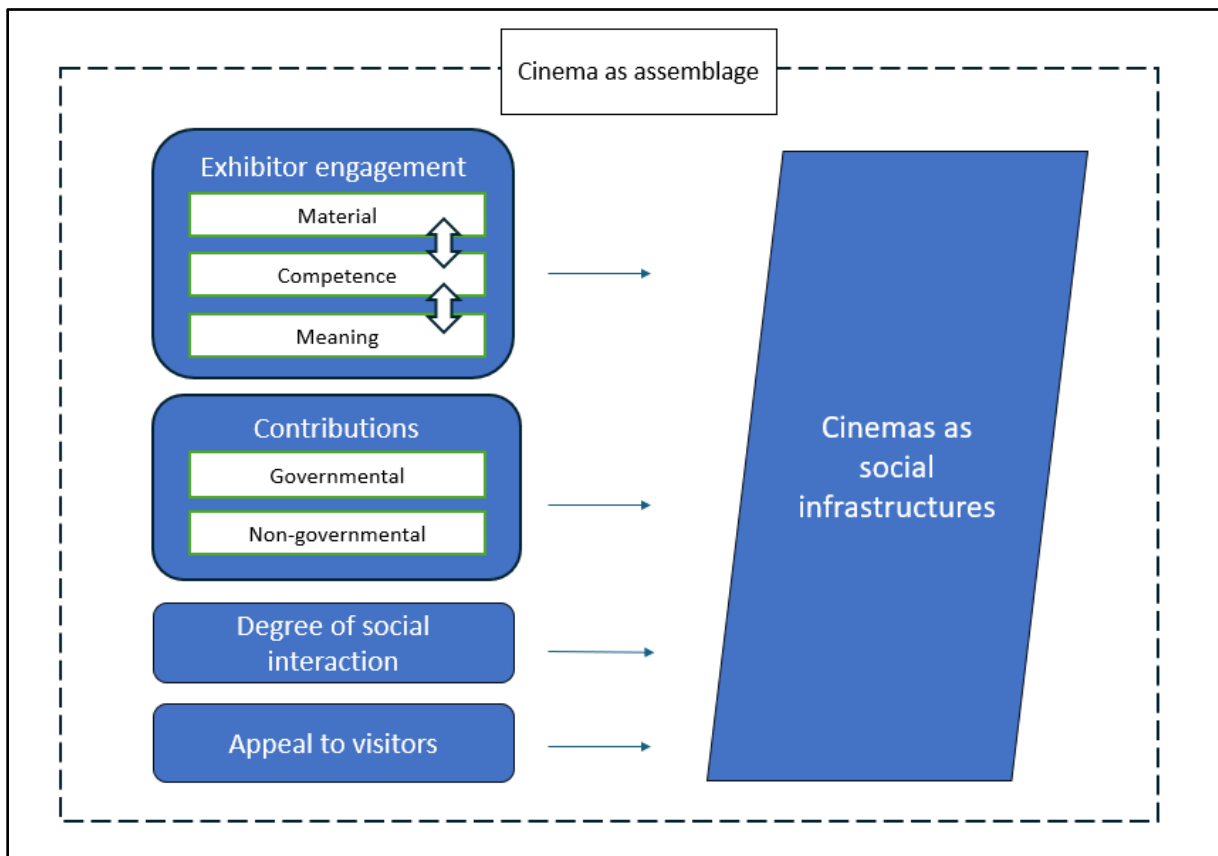


Figure 5.1 Reworked Conceptual Model

5.5 Reflections on the study and recommendations

This section chapter brings together the reflections on the research methods and the research findings, and offers recommendations for future research and for those involved in policymaking and cinema funding.

5.5.1 Reflections on research methods used and its influence on the research results and recommendations for further research

The subjects of the study were the exhibitors and their practices in facilitating a space of social exchange, which enables construct validity, as the data contains the experiences and motivations of the exhibitors. Still, the validity might have been influenced to an extent as the perceptions of the exhibitors could differ from the reality of the visitors, which were not a subject of this study. To counter the singular exhibitor's perception and provide multiple sources of evidence combined with observations, also staff members were interviewed.

In this study, an analytical generalisation was favoured to analyse to what extent cinemas are social infrastructures. The theory was tested in four different cinemas. This study showed that cinemas can serve as social infrastructures, but that finding may be coloured by the fact that the selected cases already had some type of social offerings. However, this was done on purpose as this was an exploratory study with a small group of subjects where social interactions seem feasible.

Recommendations for the two discussed topics above could include further research specifically about the social experience of film screening from the visitor's perspective, complementing the research of Vélez-Serna (2020) about non-commercial exhibitions; either through a quantitative analysis of cinema visitors and visitors of non-commercial cinema exhibitions, or by doing qualitative interviews. Also, qualitative research about the social value of cinemas may consider the differences between cinemas in a big city with a high offer of film screenings, such as Berlin, and cinemas in a village where only one film screening venue may be available, which could impact social interactions considerably.

In qualitative research, analysing people's behaviour in their working environment can have its own dynamic, including how they react to the researcher, which may influence their responses. This bias was handled, by establishing a first rapport during the first visit, to gain access and establish trust with the interviewees.

For reliability, the goal was to keep the errors and biases in the study to a minimum. For this, the research process was explained, with an overview of the time, date and the person with whom an informal or semi-structured interview was conducted. The interviews were transcribed, and the time and date of the observations and field notes of the informal interviews were documented.

As the researcher was introduced to each cinema as an intern of the HDF KINO association, this may have set preconceptions on the researcher's objectivity by the interviewees and may have influenced the interaction with him. This might have been different if access had been gained without this relationship with HDF KINO. Also, HDF KINO preferred that at least two cases were cinemas that are members of the organisation. So, a certain bias from the HDF KINO organisation was inherent in this research. Without this requirement, other cinemas might have been selected as cases. However, with this requirement, HDF KINO also helped find adequate cinemas offering a possible social event next to film screenings. Further research could focus more specifically on the effect of cinema associations on the behaviour or opportunities of cinema exhibitors in facilitating cinemas as social infrastructure. On the other hand, research on cinemas without any preconceptions from the associations could also prove valuable, as it could lower the bias noted in this research.

Lastly, another bias is the researcher's personal attraction to investigating the topic, as this comes from an interest in cinema and perceiving cinemas as enjoyable spaces to linger and go to leisurely, which may have influenced the correlations discovered in this research. It might not have been seen in the same way by someone with a completely neutral or negative view of cinemas. Further research could focus on the perception of visitors of the cinema as a social meeting space, in response to other, more socially accepted social infrastructures, such as libraries.

5.5.2. Reflection on research findings and recommendations for further research

As it was established in this study that mainly older people favour cinemas as social meeting space, further research could focus on this specific group and the importance of the cinema as a favoured social meeting space for them. Putting the perspective of cinemas as social infrastructures in its current societal context. Perhaps on the role of cinemas as spaces to meet or linger, outside of shopping malls or predestined meeting areas in retirement homes. Either by doing a survey among older cinema visitors, or by doing qualitative interviews that forward the experiences of these visitors.

Also, the spatiality of cinemas is also important and the value of cinema as an attractor or amplifier of urban social activities for people who want to linger leisurely in the city and start or end this at the cinema could be worth investigating, to analyse how this influences their behaviour and provides opportunities for social exchange. An option could be through a numeric analysis in counting the visitor growth of city centres with cinemas and city centres without cinemas, combined with a survey about the activity plans conducted among cinema visitors in those respective city centres. This may substantiate assemblage theory in the sense that social exchange, or social infrastructures does not exist in isolation, but are also part of embedded relations and structures which depend on each other.

Cinemas as social spaces came forward as a concept that appeals to visitors. However, the extent to which visitors could afford the ticket prices, was not analysed. The study remained focused on the exhibitors and their perspective. However, as social infrastructures should be accessible to everyone, it would be valuable to further research what the effect of entrance fees are on the visitor's appeal to visit social events in cinema.

5.5.3 Reflection on research findings and recommendations for those involved in policymaking and cinema funding

The commercial side of cinemas should not only recur in future research, as this research showed that exhibitors have to rely on making revenue and depend on contributions from the government. While these contributions are favoured, they were not always clear for exhibitors, and the social value mainly comes about in regional and municipal policy. So, a recommendation is that the Federal Government Commission for Culture and the Media and the German Federal Film Board that support cinemas should follow the Medienboard Brandenburg and Berlin and should also reward cinemas that focus on bringing together the neighbourhood. This could be done by more direct financial contributions when exhibitors provide specific action plans for doing so. This would give the exhibitors more financial freedom when testing out new strategies that enhance the cinema as a social infrastructure and define cinemas as more community-focused spaces.

The findings revealed that exhibitors find that cinema as a social space is appealing to visitors, but that it is unclear if visitors also see it as such space. To enhance the understanding of cinemas as a social space in society and make the cinemas more future-proof, the cinema associations could push strategies that establish the cinema as a social space in society. Firstly, the cinema associations in Germany offer training that teaches strategies for creating relationships with the audience, by learning moderation techniques to let visitors feel invited and personally addressed. While these are good for the competences of exhibitors, the associations could also look further into training that support exhibitors in facilitating social events such as the film café.

As the business side of cinema is still a big part of exhibitors' day-to-day activities, training could be provided for the different cinemas on how to set up events, and on financial matters that exhibitors need to consider when they want to set up new social events. Also, the associations could collaborate with the regional and municipal governments and look at ways how to make the cinema a more neighbourly place, which can be translated into new policies on the national level. Then the threshold for national government institutions to adjust the policies on cinema funding lowers, as clear examples lead the way.

This study showed that cinema exhibitors do facilitate social infrastructures through their practices. Some practises could be strengthened though, such as their skill in conveying a continuous social environment, also towards non-regular visitors, and their capacity to create discussions on what the visitor sees on the screen and what this may mean to them. For example, in this study, the commercial exhibitors in this research could learn from the communal cinema how to facilitate more interactive screenings, while the exhibitors of the communal cinema could learn from the commercial cinemas how to nudge visitors into social exchange by being sensitive to them. Exhibitors could also learn how employees of other institutions that function as social infrastructures, such as libraries, react to people and their needs. Or by being taught social skills towards visitors, such as hotel schools, or by looking at workers that already focus on social well-being from the start, such as social workers.

The exhibitors do enjoy facilitating social contact in their cinemas; however, it remains challenging finding the right balance between creating social spaces, for example, for visitors interested in a critical discussion about the film being screened and just providing the means to enjoy a film. Creating more social exchange at cinemas and opportunities for visitors to co-mingle, requires a lot of dedication from but also the needed competences of the staff. The former could be dealt with by separating the commercial duties of staff (selling tickets and beverages) from their social tasks and the latter by giving staff the opportunity to attend training or forward social initiatives themselves.

5.6. Final reflection on cinemas as social infrastructures

This study provided arguments in support of exhibitors and cinema associations to help convince policymakers and funding institutions that cinemas can function as social infrastructures that offer social interaction beyond film screening and how to facilitate this more in the future. Cinema exhibitors have the materials, the competence and are interested in enabling cinemas as social infrastructures but do require support at local and regional levels by (non-)governmental organisations to boost the social value of cinemas and to help them maintain and create new meeting places in society, which are essential for leisure activities, especially in the neighbourhood and also against loneliness, specifically for older people. To what extent cinemas can be social infrastructures is determined by the degree of social interaction in the cinemas and the appeal these have on visitors. This all substantiates that cinemas as social infrastructures do not exist alone, but are assemblages consisting of embedded relations and structures which depend on each other.

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Appendixes

A: Interview Guide

Kurze Einführung

Mein Name ist Daniel Wieseahn. Ich bin 24 Jahre alt, Deutsch, aber zweisprachig deutsch und niederländisch in den Niederlanden aufgewachsen im kleinen Ort Wageningen. Ich studiere Urbane Geografie an der Radboud Universität in Nimwegen, habe aber vor 8 Monaten angefangen in Berlin zu studieren für ein Auslandssemester. Das hat mir so viel Spaß gemacht, dass ich entschieden habe hier auch mein Forschungspraktikum zu machen. Die Richtung ist etwas mehr auf Raumplanung fokussiert, da ich mich jedoch neben Raumplanung auch sehr für Kinos interessiere, schreibe ich meine Masterarbeit über das KINO und wie die Kinobetreiber*innen diesen Ort gestalten.

Also, Ihr Kino. Ich habe mich schon einiges nachgelesen und mir gerade auch das Kino mal angeschaut. Wie schön! Ich bin eigentlich vor allem nach Ihnen, ihre Erfahrungen und ihr Kino neugierig und würde gerne ein paar Fragen stellen nach der Art und Weise, wieso sie es so gestaltet haben, und wie ihre Besucher nach ihrer Meinung darauf reagieren. Deshalb auch dieses Interview.

Ich erkläre Ihnen kurz den Ablauf: Zunächst werde ich der Einfachheit halber ein paar einleitende Fragen stellen. Dann werde ich 3 Themen durchgehen, das sind der Raum, die Menschen und die Unterstützung. Danach ist die Zeit vorbei und werden wir abschließen. Wenn Sie etwas nicht verstehen, können Sie jederzeit nachfragen. Es gibt keine richtigen oder falschen Antworten, alles, was sie mir sagen wollen, ist gut.

Sollten Sie nicht auf eine Frage antworten wollen oder das Interview aus irgendeinem Grund abbrechen wollen, können Sie das jederzeit tun und habe ich dafür volles Verständnis. Dafür brauchen Sie mir auch nicht eine Erklärung zu geben. Vielleicht werde ich Antworten, die Sie geben, als Beispiele in meiner Arbeit verwenden wollen (Anonym?).

Und schließlich: Sind sie damit einverstanden, wenn dieses Interview aufgezeichnet wird? Die Datei ist nur für mich selbst, damit ich ein Transkript erstellen kann, um daraus Antworten für meine Forschung zu erstellen kann.

Themen	Fragen		Anmerkungen
<i>Introduktion</i>	Wie sind Sie zu diesem Kino gekommen?		
	Wie empfinden Sie den Ort Kino?	Und warum empfinden Sie den Ort so?	
		Wie unterscheiden Sie sich von anderen Kinos?	
	Welche Aufgaben haben Sie im Kino?	Wie unterstützt das Team hierbei?	
		Was müssen Sie für die Aufgaben können/wissen? (Technik/Teamleitung/Skills?)	
<i>Menschen</i>	Was empfinden Sie als wichtig für die Besucher?		
	Ich habe gesehen, sie haben unterschiedliche Veranstaltungen, wieso?		
	Warum haben sie sich für diese entschieden?	Welche Soziale Ziele haben Sie mit den Veranstaltungen?	
		Inwiefern sehen sie sich als ein Sozialer Treffpunkt? Warum?	
	Wie kommen diese alternativen Veranstaltungen bei den Besuchern an?	Woran merken Sie das?	
		Was ist ihr Ziel mit den Veranstaltungen?	
	Welche Zielgruppe richtet sich vor allem darauf?	Wofür (dass Gäste zurückkommen)?	
	Wie richten sie diese Veranstaltungen ein?	Was nutzen Sie dafür? (Technik, Team)	
		Wer hilft Ihnen dabei? Und wie?	
	Wie vermitteln Sie Ihre Veranstaltungen dem Publikum?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internet? - Poster? - Face2face? 	

		- Sonstiges?	
<i>Raum</i>	Wie wird der Saal genutzt für die Veranstaltung?	- Sessel? - Bühne? - Licht? - Scherm?	
	Wird das Foyer auch für die Veranstaltung genutzt?		
	Welche Zwecke hat das Foyer sonst noch?	- Stühle? - Bänke? - Essen? - Zugang?	
		Warum haben Sie sich dazu entschieden?	
<i>Unterstützung</i>	Bekommen sie Finanzielle Unterstützung für das Kino von staatlichen Institutionen?	Nur? Wie viel entscheidet Verleih?	
		Was machen die Verbände oder sonstige Organisationen?	
		Wie empfinden Sie das?	
	Auf welcher Art und Weise?		
	Wie empfinden Sie das? („Ruhm und Ehre“)	Wie nutzt die Stadt den ihr Kino?	
<i>Abschluss</i>	Dann glaube ich, dass wir jetzt am Ende angelangt sind. Gibt es noch etwas, das ich Ihrer Meinung nach wissen oder besprechen sollte und dass ich hätte Fragen sollen?		
	Haben Sie eine weitere Frage an mich?		
	<i>Danke schön, dann höre ich jetzt mit der Aufnahme auf. (Letzte 2 Fragen nochmal)</i>	<i>Fortsetzung? Würden Sie am Ende gerne eine Zusammenfassung meiner Arbeit haben?</i>	

B: Topic List Informal Interviews

Material

- Motivation
- Space
- Position
- Adjustments

Competence

- Motivation
- Technical knowledge

Meaning

- Motivation
- Power dynamics

Policymaking

- Support
- Policy

Social infrastructure

- Motivation
- Sociality
- Occurrence

C: Observation Protocol

Ethogram

- How to address visitors?
- Conversations happening?
- Handing out drinks?
- Handing out food?
- Way of presenting?
- Appearance?
- Use of space?



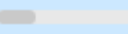











































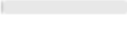
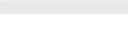

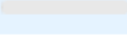
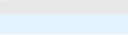

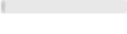
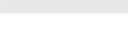

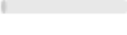
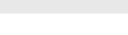

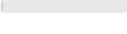
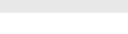

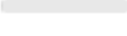
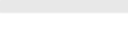

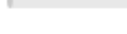
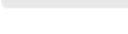

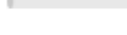
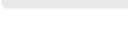

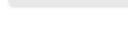

D: Codebook

Shown below is the entire codebook of the Fieldwork diary as it was made using Atlas.ti.

Name	Grounded	Density
◇ 'Entfliehen der Realität'	7	0
◇ Advertisement	4	0
◇ Anti-Social-Cinema?	28	0
▾ ◇ Challenges	145	0
◇ "Guests know better"	36	0
◇ Overwhelmed by regula...	12	0
◇ Power struggles	62	0
◇ Workfloor struggles	44	0
◇ Cinema doesn't need to b...	6	0
◇ Cinema is business	83	0
◇ Cinema never stops	36	0
◇ Collaborating	34	0
▾ ◇ Competence Exhibitor	617	0
◇ "Feingefühl" für die Gäste	108	1
◇ "You can't "study" cine...	23	0
◇ Admission (Einlass)	8	0
◇ Cash register & Tickets	30	0
◇ Cleaning	21	0
◇ Creativity	27	0
◇ Entertainer	20	0
◇ Entrepreneurship	31	0
◇ Film Disposition & Prog...	114	0
◇ Flexibility	71	1
◇ Joy in people managem...	32	0
◇ Merchandise managem...	51	0
◇ Office work	20	0
◇ Open for cinema routine	45	1
◇ Own input	46	0

◆ Preferring	6	0
◆ Responsibility	42	0
◆ Servicing	29	0
◆ Target group	107	1
◆ Teamwork is a must	115	0
◆ Technical ability	63	0
◆ TL'er	7	0
◆ Trust by audience/Conn...	95	0
◆ Undecided	1	0
◆ Exhibitors love cinema/the...	35	0
◆ Family is important	8	0
◆ film	1	0
▲ ◆ Guests	192	0
◆ "Stammgäste"	71	0
◆ Coming alone	16	0
◆ Coming together	22	0
◆ Guests enjoy the routine	38	1
◆ Guests prefer their "own...	52	0
◆ Meeting there	31	0
◆ Without guests, no cine...	24	0
◆ Hierarchy in workforce	70	0
◆ Imported comment	2	0
◆ Influence external factors	38	0
◆ Infrastruktur	3	0
◆ Institutional support	27	0
◆ Marketing is important	51	0

◇ Meaning		3		0
◇ multifunctional		0		0
◇ Popcorn?!		21		0
◇ Programming		7		0
◇ Seelenklemmer		2		0
◇ Sekt (Prosecco)		5		0
4 ◇ Social Infrastructure		286		0
◇ "Wohlfühlen"		7		0
◇ Access		71		0
◇ Assemblage indeed		23		0
◇ Conduct		59		0
◇ Debate		14		0
◇ Familiarity		33		0
◇ Informality		21		0
◇ Networking		5		0
◇ Only film is not enough		22		0
◇ Part of the Neighbourh...		54		0
◇ Sociality		90		0
◇ Spontaneity		1		0
◇ Tolerance		38		0

4	 Sonderreihen	 277	 1
	 Anime Reihen	 4	 0
	 Best Of Cinema	 2	 0
	 Dokumentarfilm des M...	 1	 0
	 Emotional Preview	 1	 0
	 Extra Sonderreihen	 36	 0
	 Familien Preview	 1	 0
	 Film Dialogue	 13	 0
	 Film Highlights	 4	 0
	 Filmcafé	 76	 0
	 Frühstückskino	 40	 0
	 Kino Tag	 1	 0
	 Konsukino	 5	 0
	 Kulturbühne	 17	 0
	 MEKB	 18	 0
	 Original Language	 10	 0
	 Premieres	 2	 0
	 Schul kino	 20	 0
	 Sneak Preview	 24	 0
	 Spatzenkino	 10	 0
	 Workshops	 4	 0
	 Technik	 27	 0
	 Values	 30	 0
	 Various labour tasks	 0	 4

Shown below are the code groups that were created from the list of codes above.

Name	^	◇
◇ "Being handy"		4
◇ COMPETENCE		22
◇ Connection building		14
◇ Film disposition & programming skills		10
◇ INSTITUTION		2
◇ Guests		7
◇ Hosting space or even "safe" space for whom?		7
◇ MATERIAL		8
◇ MEANING		22
◇ Money talks		11