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The phenomenon of the Norwegian mobile cinema

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Introduction

The subject

The Norwegian film scene and industry is largely unknown even to attentive cineastes. Hardly in any treatise on international film history, there is more than a comparatively short section on Norwegian film scene. In hardly a treatise on international film history is more than a comparatively short section on the Norwegian film. In general, Norway has always received considerably less attention than the neighbouring countries of Denmark and Sweden. The film industries of Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland - countries that provide a reasonable basis of comparison due to geographical, political and cultural factors - are far more present within the European film context than the Norwegian ones.

Examining the history of film in Norway, soon a feature that has made the Norwegian film and cinema organization distinguishable from other countries since its beginnings is to be recognised: the strong local anchoring of cinema policy and its clearest expressions in the phenomenon of the municipal cinema system and the phenomenon of the national touring institutions. Both the national touring institutions, like the mobile company for cinema called Bygdekino, and also the municipal cinema system itself, are the products of a locally oriented cinema and film policy that has strongly been particularly focused on equity of access to culture and decentralisation.

Vertical integration is extremely high in cinema and film landscape in Europe. The trend towards multi-megaplexes and megaplexes (from 8 up to 24 halls) can be traced back to the 1980s but was particularly marked in the 1990s. The Norwegian cinema landscape has completely different characteristics. Vertical integration is virtually non-existent (in 2001 only one out of 13 film distributors was active in the field of premiere), the cinemas are for the most part independent units and are independently operated; in multiplexes, the country is not rich - only 3.5% of the cinemas in Norway possesses more than 8+ screens, whereas cinemas with 2 to 7 screens constitute the 38.8% (Unesco Institute for Statistics 2015). Most cinemas are still owned and operated by the respective communities. As part of the local cultural offer, they are (at least in the beginning) more public service institutions than profit-oriented companies. While municipal cinemas abroad are isolated cases, municipal cinemas are the norm in Norway; despite this, the scenario is changing in the last years. The number of partially, half or

completely private cinemas is increasing, as well as their share of visitor numbers and ticket sales - in some places such as Oslo, the end of the municipal cinema system has become reality.

But more important than the fact that the municipalities are in most cases owners of the cinemas, and at the same time its reason, is that the Norwegian communities are defined to be politically responsible for providing the access to every cultural form to every citizen, including cinema and film screenings. That is the reason why national touring institutions such as Bygdekino are still functioning in the present days. The responsibility of the municipalities for the exercise of cinema policy distinguishes the Norwegian cinema policy from that of other countries and forms the actual basis of the Norwegian municipal system.

The reason

The nature of the research itself would have made it impossible to be conducted without a specific trip to Norway, in order to gather information on the subject matter. On the one hand, the scarcity of both physical and digital access to English literature regarding the national municipal cinema system – and in particular concerning the national mobile cinema company – , would have represented a major obstacle; on the other hand, it would have been insufficient if not misleading to analyse the two phenomena outside their peculiar context, since the Norwegian cinema industry has proved to be historically atypical if compared to its Scandinavian and occidental counterparts. This is the reason why I applied for a scholarship at the Venice International University in January 2017, and after the granting I was able to leave for Norway and stay there for three months, from September to December 2017.

On the ground, I could interview both Bygdekino's employees but also professors and experts of the cinema field, thanks to whom the context, in which the cinema municipal system and the national mobile cinema company has developed, resulted to be more definite; moreover, I was given the chance to fully understand how the company practically works by following some of their screenings by travelling with two projectionists along the West Coast from November 16 to November 21, 2017. During this weekly trip, I had the opportunity to interview them and follow their working routine, receiving thus a 360degree overview on both the human and technical-organisational components; in addition, I managed to talk to the local contacts of the company in the visited municipalities and eventually attend the screenings. For every screening of the trip – and for two additional more – I personally managed to distribute some

forms which had been previously prepared and then translated in Norwegian. The forms were distributed among the audience, to better understand their average level of satisfaction for the service they were offered and the general benefits and impacts they receive from its presence.

A digital copy of the form was available on Google Forms and both the locals and two projectionists kindly shared it with as many other spectators as possible; the final amount of answers reached 305 people, a satisfactory result, bearing in mind that the 2017 average number of admissions per each Bygdekino's screening is 30.4 people. The answers to Bygdekino's forms were collected from the middle of November 2017 to the end of December 2017. The places where the answers were assembled from are the following (25): Atløy, Averøy, Barmen, Bykle, Eidsvåg, Eikefjord, Fiskå, Fjærland, Fjørå, Geiranger, Halså, Harøy, Hellesylt, Innvik, Kjølisdalen, Kyrksæterøra, Langevåg, Lauvstad, Norddal, Ringeby, Sandshamn, Skjolden, Smøla, Tofte, Værlandet. The age group of the interviewed varies from 9 to 70 years old. The surveys were submitted in Norwegian; a translation of the original form is reported and analysed in the last section of the paper. The comments to the resulting figures were written in January 2017 with the digital support of professor Anne-Lise With, chief executive officer of Film & Kino Guttorm Petterson, and chief executive officer of Bygdekino Arnfinn Inderhaug.

However prolific it has been, in order to accomplish and terminate the research I had to overcome some difficulties. A part of the hurdles I would face was already clear before departing: above all stood, of course, the language. The linguistic issue has created a number of appendices. On the one hand, sometimes it could be quite difficult to communicate; on the other hand, it was extremely difficult for me to gain access to the sources, being the vast majority of them written in Norwegian. This contributed to aggravate the already abovementioned scarcity of digital material. Of course, even succeeding in finding the essential sources was not easy. Thus, I was helped by professors and locals overcome linguistic difficulties – especially in revising carefully the digitally translated sources.

Logistics, too, were not the easiest. Originally, I should have spent the first month and a half in Oslo and the remaining time in Lillehammer, hosted by two different college residences. Because of bureaucratic reasons, Oslo campus could not provide any housing, thus the whole research was conducted in Lillehammer with regular trips to Oslo. This contributed to make it more difficult to keep in constant touch with Bygdekino's team, despite their willingness. The non-availability of a personal vehicle meant that I was not able to follow more screenings than I actually did. Luckily enough, the company at all levels (from the CEO to the

projectionists/drivers) remarkably mitigated what could have been a serious impediment to the research.

The structure

As far as the structure is concerned, the paper is organized in four extended chapters, each one divided into several sections.

The former two are compiled by opting for a descriptive method: a specific case – the mobile cinema company Bygdekino – is analysed within its being collocated in the peculiar environment of the Norwegian cinema industry. Through this study it is possible to comprehend the background within which the company operates in all its uniqueness and complexity: indeed, although other forms of mobile cinema are present in the world, it is the context itself in which Bygdekino is immersed that makes it so special and quite difficult to replicate elsewhere. On the other hand, the latter two appear to be more strictly analytical, since they show more statistical diagrams supported by further data with related comments and original contributions such as interviews. In other words, it can be said that the former chapters expose the causes whereas the latter ones explain the direct consequences.

The first chapter concerns the context from which the mobile cinema was conceived: the history of the implementation of the cinema industry in Norway and the process of communalisation of the cinemas are the main objects of analysis. Regarding the sources, the most consulted have been *One Hundred Years of Cinema Exhibition in Norway - a Historical Profile* by Nils Klevjer Aas, curator of the Film Archives Department of the Norwegian Film Institute, and *Helt og skurk. Om den kommunale film- og kinoinstitusjonens etablering i Norge* by professor Ove Solum, respectively.

The second chapter illustrates the principles of Norwegian cultural policy and illustrates its consequences that led to the birth of the Norwegian municipal cinema system and the establishment of the national cultural institutions. Moreover, it goes through the history of the company stretching from the first achievements to the difficulties before and after the introduction of television within the country, a fundamental break for the evolution of Bygdekino. The source I principally relied on have been *The Nordic Cultural Model* by Peter

Duelund and *Norsk Bygdekino A/S: En deskriptiv analyse av en halvoffentlig kulturinstitusjon* by Anne-Mari Nyhus.

The third chapter describes both the evolution of the latest years of the national mobile company for cinema and the recent tendencies within the Norwegian cinema industry, especially after the market entry of some foreign, private enterprises – such section is scrutinised with the aid of up-to-date figures. The main sources for the chapter have been *Film På Vei: Bygdekinoen Gjennom Femti År* by Mona Vagaan, direct interviews to the team of Bygdekino; in addition, figures and comments from the National *Årbok 2016* by Film & Kino, from the digital archive of Statistics Norway and from Film & Kino digital public reports.

The fourth and last chapter relies on an inductive method and consists firstly of the description of the actual structure of the company and its present-day tendencies within the cinema industry in Norway. The main sources have been the figures collected from the company's recent statistics provided by the CEO of Bygdekino, Arnfinn Inderhaug. In the second part, a survey conducted among Bygdekino's audience is analysed in detail through the digital support of professor Anne-Lise With, chief executive officer of Film & Kino Guttorm Petterson, and chief executive officer of Bygdekino Arnfinn Inderhaug.

Practical information

The majority of the mentioned cultural institutions or associations have been reported in their original language. Synonyms – such as: the national mobile cinema company, the mobile cinema company, Norsk Bygdekino, NB, etc. – have sometimes been adopted to refer to Bygdekino in order to facilitate the lecture. Some acronyms have been adopted to indicate the Right Party (DNA and A), the Left Party (H), the National Association of Municipal Cinemas (KKL) and the Norwegian League of Youth (NU). The amounts are not converted, and they are reported in the Norwegian currency unit, the Norwegian krone (NOK). The conversion rate in February 2018 is 1 EUR = 9.74066 NOK (15.02.2018). Information from the Internet comes exclusively from reliable sources, such as the homepages of public institutions or research institutions. The date in parenthesis behind the address refers to the publication of the content on the website. All addresses are in February 2018 still active.

Chapter 1: The establishment of the cinema industry in Norway

1.1 The cinema goes to Norway

Cinema arrived in Norway only a few months after the historical premiere by the Lumière brothers in Paris, on December 28, 1895. Already on January 20, 1896, the first Kinetoscopio was presented in Oslo; three months later, two German brothers, Max and Emil Skladanowsky, announced they would set up their first projection at Circus Variété (Bono 1991). In 1897, Olaf Bjerke left Oslo to travel around the country, organising occasional performances in some towns where he managed to bring cinema. After the first period, although, the initial enthusiasm towards the new medium diminished. Seven years later, something suddenly changed: on October 30, 1904, the very first cinema theatre was opened in Oslo after the initiative of the *Svenska Kinomatografen* of Stockholm, and in charge of it there was Hugo Hermansen.

In 1905, Norway finally had reconquered its independence from the reign of Sweden, and both the economy and the cultural life within the country were facing a very quick growth. Cinema theatres were spreading; by the end of 1910 in the country 150 theatres had been established, and they were annually visited by approximately 10 million people. The total amount of income collected by the industry almost reached NOK 2.5 million. Despite the huge growth in the sectors of distribution and general exercise of the business, a parallel growth in film production did not follow. Only one film was produced during throughout the period in the country, while in Denmark 200 films were produced every year, and in Sweden the average number circulated around 20. Indeed, in Norway, distributors and owners of activities have hesitated to invest their profits on the production of national films for a long time, and this led to marked consequences on the following development of the national cinema industry.

The first moving picture shows were screened in the country by the Norwegian photographer Ragnar Knudsen, who had organised a tour in the cities of Kristiania (the old name of the capital, Oslo), Bergen and Trondheim, where he projected some films by the Lumière brothers. A travelling tradition for the screening of films demonstrates to have ancient roots within the country. Knudsen was soon followed by some other travelling projectionists, among which there were the Danish Constantin Philipsen, the Swedish Bernhard Forssberg and the German August Otter. They all started travelling from 1899. In addition to them, two

German immigrants have been the projectionists who have travelled the most across the country: Carl Köpke crossed the coast from Stavanger to Trondheim, and eventually opened some permanent theatres with his son and his two daughters (Aas 1996). Paul Kreusslich, instead, travelled mostly in the Northern part of the country, and after a while he started to work for a fixed cinematographer in Trondheim. These travelling pioneers are reported to have visited the biggest cities with regular intervals of time.

The first fixed cinematographer was opened in Kristiania by a Swedish company on October 30, 1904. The 25-year-old Hugo Hermansen quickly replaced his Swedish supervisors, and by the end of the year in Kristiania three other fixed theatres had already been established. The number of fixed cinemas soon increased, for it was becoming quite clear that running such an activity offered great chances of considerable income. In the following five years, Hugo Hermansen became known as ‘the king of Stortingsgaten’, where Stortingsgaten was the name of the street where the first cinematographer was opened. The reason of this success was mainly due to his innate ability in giving the spectators what they wanted; short documentaries formed a great part of the repertoire, together with some famous foreign films which were imported. Hermansen was also smart enough to play with some nationalistic feelings related to the recent independence of the country, thus provoking strong reactions among his audience (Aas 1996). Hermansen succeeded in attract an even wider number of spectators throughout the country for he was the first operator to introduce the upper classes to cinema.

Thanks to his passionate involvement, the first national film was produced. It was probably filmed in the late summer of 1908, and *Fiskerlivets Farer*, i.e. ‘The dangers of a fisherman’s life’, seemed to have gained a remarkable success among its audience. By 1909, Hugo Hermansen had built an empire consisting of 26 permanent theatres located mostly in the Southern part of the country. Most of the screened films included imported, foreign works and short, local documentaries (Aas 1996).

The subsequent and sudden disappearance of the two main characters within the Norwegian film industry – Hugo Hermansen and Johan Widnes – led to the consequence that the national theatres started to screen a repertoire of films selected individually by their owners, without referring to any central institution. This caused the owners’ tendency to rent every film the distributors offered them, relying on no particular criterion of selection (Aas 1996). The uncontrollable expansion of the number of fixed venues within the country quickly followed.

At this point, a control for contents was demanded and operated through censorship; and after a while, the Norwegian communalisation process of cinema began.

1.2 Introducing the municipality takeover

The municipal cinema system is a distinctive Norwegian phenomenon, and it has had various actors and relations to film industry; it has often been referred as ‘the world’s best’ (Asbjørnsen and Solum 1998). Whereas the early film history in other countries resulted in private systems, in Norway an unusual development found place and led to a public involvement through the municipalities, that happened to play a more central role. This happened despite the fact that the earliest film history development in Norway apparently followed the same tracks of the neighbouring countries and the rest of Europe. Film media evolved quickly to become a popular international mass medium, and its history is essentially similar to the other European countries. The films had a lot of audience, the cinema was soon institutionalised, and the media spread roughly the same. However, at a relatively early stage, the history in Norway changed, and its history took a completely different direction.

The first phase for cinema industry in Norway had its start with the establishment of a municipal system between 1913 and 1918-1919. In the following years, this peculiar management of cinema theatres strengthened itself, at least until television was introduced in 1960. The legal background for this development is to be found in the Cinema Act of 1913 (Solum 2016).

1.3 The political background: the film medium as a threat of modernisation

The main question may be formulated like this: what was the reason why in Norway the cinema institutions were organised in a way that separated them from the rest of the world? What was it that let a place like Vardø have the first national cinematographer in the autumn of 1913? The reasons are complex and must be explained referring to different social and cultural processes, historical and political factors, which played their specific role in that precise historical period.

The process of communalisation can primarily be found in the period between 1912-1913 and 1920, when the Cinema Act of 1913 initiated it. Indeed, the cinema industry was the first medium which was to be regulated with a separate law. In addition to this, the State reformism and decentralisation are key concepts in this era of Norwegian history. A good hypothesis that could explain the Cinema Act of 1913 would see the localisation of the cinema institution as an expression of the dominant political attitudes and values of the Left Party. Inge Krokann discussed mainly about the major social and cultural changes that took place in the Norwegian countryside from around 1850 until the end of 1930, focusing on 'the big transformation' that was happening in the country. Although he was mainly studying the farming community, the term was after referred to many other contexts, standing for a general changing process of modernisation of the society in both cities and countryside, with monetary and industrialisation and urbanisation as keywords.

The central process, according to Krokann, consisted of the transition from the traditional farming community to a modern industrial community, and the film medium happened to be introduced right in the middle of this period. For this reason, film medium can be referred as a cultural expression of the modernisation process that took place. The consequences of the process were cultural conflicts where some groups of people expressed scepticism about the changes that affected the society, which were largely associated with the urbanisation that followed the industrialisation of the country. The film was regarded as a genuine expression of the industrial modern values and needs, and was violating the strong, populist ideology that soon enough emerged – to a large extent as a reaction to modernisation (Solum 2004).

According to Stein Rokkann, the main purpose of this populist ideology was to protect the national values against what was interpreted as foreign influence. In relation to this, the moral associations became strongly involved in the role of the new international mass media. It is important to emphasise that the modern history showed that the introduction of a new medium always results in some resistance, with very few exceptions. A new medium, apparently, mobilises opponents in defence of what is new and unknown, since it is usually perceived as something that will threaten the lasting and worthy values. And film medium was a phenomenon of mass culture that was spreading rapidly. For this reason, it caused scepticism among those who protected the traditional and nationally-oriented culture (Solum 2004).

This constitutes some of the social and cultural background conditions that together resulted to be the factors promoting the ideas of municipalisation at the expense of those who fought for a cinema industry to be private and independent to the greatest possible extent. The groups of who became professionally involved in this new form of entertainment in Norway did not differ significantly from those who worked in the Swedish film industry, to mention an example. Indeed, in comparing Norwegian and Swedish conditions regarding this issue, similarities appear to exist among the two countries. Nevertheless, film industry's relationship with the public sector soon became markedly different in Norway (Solum 2004).

It was precisely the social role that the leading political groups claimed the medium was playing, which justified the political interest for the film sector. These groups' view created a general perception of the film as a medium which could possibly be a threat for children and adolescents.

1.4 Institutions, social role and justification

A key concept that needs to be clarified is the concept of the institutions. An institution is, according to Søren Kjørup, a system of rules governed by expectations of fulfilling certain social tasks, and this fulfilling can help, in turn, legitimising the institution's social position. Any institution is a given system that is subject to certain changes related to historical and political developments. The rules that hold together the institution are both formal and informal, as Dag Østerberg points out. The film institution counts as part of the public culture, and the keywords to define it as an institution are many. The tangible features comprehend formal organisational procedures (features and practices embodied in formal rules and procedures) and formal organisational professions (hierarchies of employees who govern different areas of institutional activities). Equally important are the intangible features, i.e. the norms, interpretations, values and discourses, ideas, thoughts and expectations that circulate around a particular social practice, which become essential for understanding of any institutionalisation process (Solum 2004).

In extension to this, it would be interesting to discuss the social position the medium had in relation to its legitimacy: to what extent can municipal institutionalisations be explained in the light of the contemporary perceptions of the social role played by the media in Norway? Public service is associated with what can be termed a social responsibility ideology, and the

first public service broadcasting companies were just one of the expressions for the ideology of the Left Party.

One of the most important characteristics of the various public service institutions was that they were initially assigned certain social tasks, a special social responsibility. This was what, first and above all, gave legitimacy to the institution, that consequently based its foundation on a privileged position – not least economically. What is interesting is that a publicly-run cinema must also find its reasoning of existence in relation to the society in which it is a part. We could either talk about positive justifications in form of social benefits given by the institution, or about negative justifications where, for example, protecting certain social groups is central, and a public institution is able to demonstrate that it plays a significant role in society (Solum 2004).

The social role or justification is crucial to the position the medium institution can achieve, and one keyword in this context is the term ‘legitimation’. A fundamental question is the implied legitimacy base that linked casualties to cinema institutions in the early and decisive phase of the history of the medium. What social legitimacy had film and cinema institution? What was the social reason why the public should get involved so heavily in connection with film and cinema in this country?

1.4.1 Legitimacy and power

A central point in this discussion is thus how the public service is connected to any kind of social responsibility, since a public service institution’s legitimacy basis lies on the maintenance of certain obligations towards the society. To maintain a commitment to what are perceived as social consensus values, is important in such relationships. However, a fundamental feature of its formation and development is that this is not considered to be stable, but it is constantly changing and interacting with other historical, political, cultural or social evolutions. In other words, the nature of this relationship is dynamic and changeable. At the same time, it is clear that the size or the tasks that creates an institution’s legitimation basis are intertwined with what the institution has to develop (Solum 2004).

What can guarantee an institution’s survival opportunities depends on how the legitimacy basis of the institution relies on the institution’s ability to meet crossing interests,

changes and resistance. In other words, the ability to develop strategies will play a decisive role in the context of the institution's legitimacy. In certain phases, institutions will be forced to reconstruct their social role and to change their legitimacy basis to ensure their eligibility and existence.

The modern use of the term legitimacy often refers to Max Weber's theories of power. Weber was particularly keen to study how power relations are justified in hierarchical-system based organisations. The bureaucracy was, according to him, the modern society's clearest form of legitimacy. The bureaucracy is characterised by the fact that it involves fulfilling tasks according to formal rules, where the roles are arranged hierarchically in systems of superiors and subordinates. The power exercise takes place in accordance with bureaucratic rules, and for Weber this was as an effective method of administration (Solum 2004).

It is possible to focus on the processes that play a part in the relationships between an organisation's overall legitimacy and the individual actors' actions. In addition to such an internal perspective, the concept of legitimacy has been central for studies concerning how organisations relate to the outside – primarily for the relationship between the institution and its society.

The municipal cinema institution that was developed during the period between 1915 and 1925 was given a privileged position. Within this context, it is essential to underline that the competitive conditions in running a cinema activity were changed as a result of the private cinema interests being marginalised. Such a privileged position, however, rested on the institution's ability to operate financially satisfactorily and to safeguard different social interests. Balancing, on one hand, social tasks and obligations and, on the other hand, justifying privileges, can be regarded as the institution's central survival strategy. Trine Syvertsen (1992) made a similar reasoning in connection to the establishment of the first public broadcasting companies, emphasising reciprocal relations between duties and privileges:

All institutions are expected to fulfil certain obligations in return for a privileged position, and privileges are often considered necessary for the institution's ability to fulfil its duties. If privileges were to be removed or obligations added without any form of compensation, there is a danger that the institution's structure may simply exhaust itself. It may be over-strained

and impossible to handle, or it may collapse due to external pressure. To prevent this from happening, i.e. to survive organisationally, the institution's strategies must include measures to keep privileges intact. This involves designing strategies that legitimize institutional arrangements.

For an institution to be able to achieve social legitimacy, a form of acceptance or social approval is required. Thus, central to an institutionalisation process, it would be to achieve this goal. To maintain legitimacy over time through society and politics changes, will always represent a challenge for an institution, which must not only convince external actors that it is acceptable and fair and that it should keep a privileged position. It must also demonstrate that it is generally beneficial to their interests. Thus, the institution will often refer to what is perceived as some broad and common value system to justify the desired position (Solum 2004).

Henrik Berg's series of articles in the National Film Magazine of the Municipal Cinematographer's National Film magazine in 1931, titled 'Around Communalisation', has been the basis for a comprehensive presentation of the communalisation process. Berg's article series begins to report the communalisation process by pointing out that the spread of the municipal cinema system followed the initiative of some teachers in Stavanger, Rogaland, who raised the hypothesis of the establishment of a local municipal cinema for the first time. The Cinema Act of 1913 is written with references to the 'public opinion' and a 'general discussion' as a result of the fact that 'the authorities found themselves in favour of proposing a law on the public display of cinematographic images' (Solum 2004). This Act proved to have very significant consequences, for it gave to municipalities the opportunity to decide on the nature of the cinematographic operations either by releasing a private license or by self-handling the business. One consequence was that a number of municipalities started a business themselves. Berg, once again, confirmed that these decisions had no political background. According to Berg's history, the rule was that coherent political parties' intentions were behind municipalisation, emphasising a general consensus in relation to the decision: the overall public opinion was argued to be definitely in favour of it.

It can therefore be concluded that the localisation of cinematographic operations in Norway was not due to political party influences, but it is instead an expression of the general perception that the film impact affects the general population, culture and morality. The public

intervention is therefore due to a legitimate demand for a maximum of control over the business, for both moral and economic purposes (Solum 2016).

1.5 The Cinema Act

The Cinema Act was passed as a reaction to the moral panic arising from the emergence of moving images. Before 1913, educationalists, socially oriented organisations, organisations of public morals, teachers and politicians demanded greater public control of the ‘dreaded’ films. On this point, the development in Norway was fully in line with international trends, and as early as 1911, Sweden had enacted film censorship. In Norway, before 1913 it was the duty of the single local police authority to exert control over the rapidly growing film and cinema business. This control was mainly confined to issues of buildings and security, but to a certain extent also was concerned with what was projected on the screen. This local control was, however, considered coincidental and unsystematic, and the police themselves eagerly argued in favour of the establishing of a central organ for the necessary approval of films for public presentation (Evensmo 1967, Aas 1996).

The Cinema Act of 1913 was the result of a complex process. The law is, however, in many respects the result of a grassroots movement consisting of non-governmental organisations, such as those mentioned above. The legal power expressed in the law, as well as the paternalistic ideology on which it is based, are all a result of attitudes and pressures from below. Even if the argument of control was more prominent in the discussion leading to the Cinema Act, there was also a clear cultural argument for subjecting film to public control. Concepts like popular education and improved general education were used early on among political actors mainly of the political left, where the possibilities of the new media were emphasised. It is thus interesting to note that the idea of public control of cinemas was also related to the notion of exploiting film for the benefit of popular education.

Economic motivation has clearly also been a force in the municipalising of cinemas, as expressed in a committee recommendation of the local council in the city of Tromsø in 1913: ‘A public cinema in Tromsø will be a profitable source of revenue for the municipality’ (Evensmo 1967). There is however, no doubt that the cultural argument remains central in the local councils’ discussions leading to their decisions to take over cinemas. Therefore,

Norwegian politicians decided to add a paragraph stating that whoever wanted to publicly exhibit cinematographic images had to apply for a municipal license:

Public exhibition of cinematographic images may not take place without the consent of the local Council or its executive Committee or the body to whom the executive Committee according to paragraph 2 may grant authority. (Besl. O. no. 90 1913)

As a result, the policy on cinemas became an issue for local municipalities. The private owners of theatres did not immediately recognize the Act as a threat to their business, since the regulation was primarily about censorship and could even contribute to change people's attitude towards the new medium. Nevertheless, the municipalities soon seized the opportunity to get the licenses to themselves, at the expense of the private business owners.

The owners of private theatres decided to gather together into one formal association, the *Norsk Kinematografforbund*, and the distributors soon joined them, founding the Norwegian Film's Distributor's Association. Several of the large agencies that distributed films also had various owners' interests in private cinemas. The resistance of the private film and cinema segment is thus most explicitly expressed in the agencies' obstructing public cinemas' access to films. The film rental rates, normally 25% of the gross box-office revenue, were to be increased to 30% for public cinemas. Frequently, public cinemas would not be given the possibility of hiring the films they wanted, or they would receive them only after their release in private cinemas. The earning capacity of the film was thus severely reduced. On the initiative of Henrik Borg, on May 19, 1917, nine municipalities owning public cinemas joined forces to establish the *Kommunale Kinematografers Landsforbund* (National Association of Municipal Cinemas), and the further establishment of a new society for film distribution was planned. The organisation still exists, renamed *Film & Kino*, today serving both municipal cinemas and private cinema chains.

Even though private Norwegian distributors tried to boycott the initiative at the expense of municipalities by convincing foreign distributors to refuse to sell their films to the newly born municipal cinemas, on May 6, 1919, the first inter-municipality society in the world for

distribution of films, the *Kommunernes Filmsentral A/S* (KF), was established. During the '20s, KKL repeatedly argued that the profitable municipal cinemas should take more responsibility into national film production; in the organisation's view, it was a matter of legitimising the municipal cinema model. Many of the minor municipalities hesitated first, but eventually KKL formed its own production company in 1932, the *Norsk Film A/S*, i.e. the Norwegian Film Ltd. The company included 40 municipalities as shareholders, and, among them, the Oslo Municipal Cinemas society represented the major one (Solum 2016).

This produced a lot of discussion among the political parties. The political Right supported the interests of the private cinema owners, while the Left, through the Labour Party, argued for what was to be thought as public interest, i.e. the municipal takeover of cinema activities. By the late '30s, Norway's municipalities had become involved in each area of the cinema business, from production to distribution and exhibition (Solum 2016). Norway's unique municipal cinema system was finally realised. Even if municipalities, with the establishment of Norsk Film A/S, showed a willingness to take responsibility for the production of films, many directors continued to criticise the municipal takeovers, claiming that the municipal ownership prevented the development of the national film industry. The municipal system, indeed, had broken the vertical economy that ruled every other economic system, since production companies could benefit very little from running theatre chains (Hjort and Lindqvist 2016).

Year	Number of screens	Number of spectators (in millions)
1950	502	30,000
1951	527	32,000
1952	552	34,000
1953	577	33,000
1954	620	34,000
1955	652	33,000
1956	660	35,000
1957	657	35,000
1958	669	35,000
1959	-	-

1960	670	34,995
1961	646	33,908
1962	687	32,833
1963	690	26,500
1964	691	24,504
1965	618	22,960
1966	583	21,820
1967	554	21,000
1968	526	19,165
1969	500	19,243

Figure 1.1. Numbers of screens and spectators per year. Source: Aas 1996

1.6 Completing municipalisation

In an article in the *Journal of the Norwegian Film Association*, December 1936, Kristoffer Aamot, one of the central figures in Norwegian cinema and leader of the KKL, stated that the year worked as a watershed for Norwegian film history. He underlined that 1936 would be a remarkable year for Norwegian cinematographer, and the article concluded with the words ‘the goal is reached’. In retrospect, however, there is not much suggesting that 1936 had gained some special or significant place in Norwegian film history. On the contrary, 1930 had been one of the poorest year when it came to Norwegian film production: only one Norwegian feature film was premiered the same year (Solum 2004).

The answer is to be found in a long struggle within the association he was put in charge of. He had stood at the head of it and eventually managed to convince the municipal cinematographers to provide an annual amount of kroner to be invested on Norwegian film production. The municipalities, in other words, had agreed that a part of the profits originating from the revenues of cinema operations should be reserved in supporting film production through the company Norwegian Film A/S. Finally, as Aamot pointed out, the municipalities had comprehended the national relevance of Norwegian films.

It was the municipal cinema system’s own head that had spoken this way. Aamot would become a particularly palpable man for the entire film and cinema industry in the following 30 years, as Sigurd Evensmo explains. He had been of extreme importance as an impetus for the proposal of establishing the inter-municipal funded production company Norwegian Film A/S,

created in 1932. At the opening of the offices on March 4, 1935, it was concluded that now Norway could finally measure up to Sweden, at least for what it came with the practical framework of film production. The following year highlights a turning point, since the municipal association of cinemas finally ended up in supporting the Norwegian Film Production through some fixed annual grants taken from a large and growing profit (Solum 2004).

A public-based and unique system had been established. By the creation of the Norwegian Film A/S in 1932 and through the institutionalisation of the intermunicipal production, an unprecedented arrangement of a vertically integrated film economy happened, where the distinctive aspect of the Norwegian model was the public interest commitment through the municipal film system. The public organs were now involved in all the parts of this big chain, from production (Norwegian Film A/S) to distribution to the screening in the cinematographers (gathered together in 1917 into the National Association of Municipal Cinemas). Perhaps with the exception of the Soviet Union, Norway had now become the only country with a dominant public cinema system (Asbjørnsen and Solum 1999).

1.7 The second phase: film becomes Art

The second phase of the history of cinemas in Norway shows how the deficits from the competition with the new rival, the television, start to be clear enough. Cinemas had been a main source of income until the late '60s for municipalities. Indeed, in 1917 municipalities held a share of 20% of gross box office revenues, and only a decade after, when a municipal cinema monopoly was established in the capital, the public turnover held about 90% of the total income. The share was maintained until the last couple of years, even though the introduction of television already started to change the reality of the municipal cinema system.

Instead of getting positive incomes through the running of their activity, municipalities realised that many cinemas needed, instead, financial support. By the end of the decade, about one third of the audience had turned to television screenings, and only the largest cinemas still made positive profits. The result was that the foundation of the municipal cinema system had to be redefined through a modernisation of the public service concept (Asbjørnsen and Solum 1999). Indeed, the system had to justify in other ways its need for maintaining a privileged position.

Fortunately, the status of the film medium had entirely changed meanwhile: film had become Art. In the 1960s indeed, the new consciousness of film as an artistic product of cultural value and expression – with the recognition of auteurs like Bergman, Fellini, Truffaut, Resnais and Antonioni – led, as a consequence, a change of attitude towards the medium. Awareness grew that it was recommended to give financial support to the so-called art films, which had little commercial potential in cinema theatres (Solum 2016). The issue about quality content of films was raised, and it was even noticed that the support of film production and distribution of films was equally important as the support of other art forms. Because of film's new status, now municipalities could justify their support and responsibility on film exhibitions by positively involving into the cultural commitment of showing quality films. At the same time, they were given greater responsibility for cultural policies in general during the '70s. The old reasons linked to collecting large amounts of money had been replaced by a new, modern public service which was focused on key concepts such as variety, quality and access, and this let the municipalities legitimize their crucial role within the cinema industry in Norway (Solum 2010).

Thus, in the years before and after 1970, there was a public debate on the goals for Norwegian cinema politics as cultural policy. In 1969 Arnljot Engh, the cinema director of Oslo, formulated an argument of support for the municipal-based system in the journal *Film & Kino*, where he was concerned about the improvement of conditions of art films. Films, he says, must be selected on the basis of quality, but this does not necessarily mean that it is to underestimate the interest of the wider public who looks for pleasure in the screenings. The classical ideas of popular education and protection of public moral through censorship was finally abandoned to look for film as a piece of art with independent value, to which the population should have the access. To ensure quality in film culture, thus, the municipal system was needed, since only through it the quality will have its safe place. Only a municipal cinema, it was said, will be able to consider other issues beyond commercial and market-based ones (Asbjørnsen and Solum 2003).

The general public service concept is used in which equal access, diversity and quality constitute the main elements. This also coincides quite well with the development of the 'modern' concept of public service in the field of broadcasting described by Syvertsen (1990). She defines the classical ideology of broadcasting as 'oriented towards cultural development, education and upbringing' (Syvertsen 1990). This was called 'paternalism'; the intention to administer good culture, knowledge and sound ideals and disseminate them to as many as

possible. Today there is, according to a modernised concept of public service, an objective to ‘provide a varied offer to all’.

This implies measures for the maximum percentage share of different types of content (e.g. programmes produced in the United States) rather than notions of the intrinsic qualitative value of the programmes. The paternalistic element is reduced due to the fact that quality film is not regarded as something that everyone should see, but more or less as a genre in its own right, tailored for ‘the selective minority’. Thus, American entertainment film is also regarded as a necessary element in the offer. Generally, the bases for a public service cinema run by the authorities have moved from argumentation concerning general and popular education and the protection of people’s minds, to one that sees film in cinemas as an offer of culture to an audience consisting of consumers. Thus, there is a shift from the paternalistic objective of offering the audience what is beneficial for it, to a ‘modernised’ view directed towards giving people what they want and may select.

Cinemas needed to be able to provide a cultural offering to everyone, independently of taste and living area of its audience. The attitude towards film as art was present also in the Public Reports and Parliamentary White Papers from the ‘60s until the ‘70s.

The intention is to preserve our de-centralised cinema system, which provides, also in an international perspective, a uniquely balanced offer of art film and entertainment film to the whole country. (White Paper no. 61 and no. 32 to the Parliament, 1991-92-93)

1.8 The third phase: privatisation comes

In the third phase of the Norwegian cinema industry, the shadow of privatisation appeared. This resulted after the increased competition from other media and other methods of film exhibitions such as video, cable-TV, satellite channels and the Internet. When cinema management shifted from the income side to a financial problem, several municipalities decided to limit or interrupt their involvement in running theatres. This happened in a new political climate in which there has been a shift from dissolving monopolies towards privatisation in

many fields, among which the media and telecommunication sector (Asbjørnsen and Solum 2003).

The main challenge to the municipal cinema system has been privatisation; therefore, defenders of the system needed to show the advantages of a public system over a possible private alternative, which would be market regulated. The privileged position of an institute depends on its ability to sustain and develop the legitimacy of its activity within the society. The issue which can be raised is, however, whether it is needed or not a municipal cinema in order to fulfil these goals.

Nowadays, defendants of the municipal model of cinemas present arguments like the equality of access, and the guarantee of quality and diversity for the whole audience of cinemas. It is to be noted that within a private-driven business, spectators started to be thought more as consumers who pay for a commercial service rather than ‘just spectators’, thus the traditional service idea that the audience should be given what is good for them shifted to a more modern way of thinking, which is that spectators should receive what they want. The difference between a modern public-service based institution and a commercial, private one is that a public institution provides its audience with an offering even in cases when it is not profitable. This is compulsory for modern municipal cinemas, and until now this has been the main motivation for giving the municipalities such privileged position in cinema industry. The offering has become the key to their legitimacy.

The moment a private-based cinema business is able to outperform such tasks just as well or even better than the municipal one, the most important argument for supporting the municipal system will start to break. It is no longer sufficient to claim to be acting in the interest of the audience or for the benefits of the public interest; it is also necessary to show proof of the results (Asbjørnsen and Solum 2003).

But does a public-based system really assure quality content?

1.8.1 A research about the Norwegian public cinema system

It has been forcefully argued that the municipal exhibition system in Norway effectively prevented the production of national films of any size and quality by breaking the circular

economy of the industry and diverting the profits from the exhibitions to the municipal authorities, to be used for ordinary issues, from art galleries to the installation of street lighting (Braaten 1995). This is undoubtedly true, since at least half or even two-thirds of the net profits were taken away from the producers. But some other factors played their role in making Norwegian production weak. From 1920, the government imposed a fiscal tax of 10% on cinema tickets, furtherly weakening the net profits from which the producer's share was calculated.

Besides, the early hegemony of their Danish and Swedish neighbours, the fall of strong national enterprises in the early, establishing stages, a migration of talents to Sweden, Denmark and Germany, and the early American dominance in distribution, must have played a part in turning down the community of producers and authors in Norway (Astrup 1984). But most important was probably the dramatic decline in attendance figures throughout the '20s. There are no reliable and comprehensive attendance statistics available for the period, but tentative studies suggest a steady fall in cinema attendance from around 1920 until around 1935 (Aas 1996).

Professor Ove Solum and professor Dag Asbjørnsen conducted an interesting research concerning the issue of public involvement. In their paper, published in 2003, some of the figures of the Norwegian public based-system and the private-based systems of Sweden and Denmark were compared. The aim was not to set up a Scandinavian competition of which cinema system was the best – the purpose was, instead, to produce some rankings, when possible, and to understand how the two different systems work and how they could possibly change in the future, without forgetting that each country has different goals and a complete work of comparison between the overall figures would be impossible even to think.

Without looking too deeply into the results of their research, it may be interesting to focus on some of them. Sweden and Denmark show many similarities with Norway – they are all welfare States with active cultural policies, they share a similar cultural basis and are small nations. Significant differences such as the size of the population and the size of the national film production were taken into consideration in the research as much as possible.

	National	Capital ^a	Capital ^a	Large town ^b	Medium town
	1998	1996	1998	1998	1998
Norway	2.61	6.1	5.5	5.4	4.5
Sweden	1.79	5.9	6.0	2.8	2.5
Denmark	2.08	6.7 ^c	6.1	3.2	2.4

Figure 1.2. Cinema admissions per capita. Source: Asbjørnsen and Solum 2003

a) Sources: Willbergh/Asbjørnsen 1998, film&kino 3A 1999. The Swedish Film Institute, the Danish Film Institute.

b) The figure here and that in the next column are taken by Igdun (2000). The large cinema-going cities surveyed are Trondheim (N), Malmø (S) and Odense (DK). The medium-sized ones are Drammen (N), Gävle (S) and Esbjerg (DK).

c) The figure is valid for the municipalities of Copenhagen and Fredriksberg, i.e. the central parts of Copenhagen. If one includes Gentofte, the figure is 6.1 visits per capita, bringing us even closer to Oslo and Stockholm figures.

	Capital	Large town	Medium town	Medium theatre	Small theatre
	1996 ^a	1998	1998	1996 ^b	1996
Norway	248 (213)*	237	211	156	93
Sweden	321 (203)	219	154	**	**
Denmark	358 (183)	229	122	131	65

Figure 1.3. Number of different titles exhibited in different cinemas/cities in Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Source: Asbjørnsen and Solum 2003

a) Sources: Willbergh/Asbjørnsen 1998, film&kino 3A 1999. The Swedish Film Institute, the Danish Film Institute.

b) The figure here and that in the next column are taken by Aanes (1998). The surveyed medium-sized cinemas are Mo i Rana (N), Aveny (S) and Gladsaxe Bio (DK). The small ones are Nes (N), Stjärnan (S) and Tsvildeleje (DK). The comparison has been made between cinema companies with comparable audience and not between cities.

* The number of new releases in parenthesis.

** The figures are not comparable since there is more than one cinema in the municipality.

Diversified programming may contribute to explain higher admissions; in such a perspective, this could be a merit in favour of the public system, which would provide a more segmented offering in order to reach the audience to the highest possible extent. In the recent years, Norway has generally had a relatively equal number of film releases as Sweden, and more than Denmark. Lately though, there has been a new tendency towards more film releases in Norway than in Sweden. The reasons for this are complex. Denmark probably has, in general, a lower number of newer films since the number of its screening halls is fewer. A possible explanation for the higher number of film releases in Norway in 2003 may be the following.

Figures in Oslo cinemas, the most important film market in Norway, showed that Oslo cinemas are somehow able to immediately replace the films which are not followed by immediate satisfactory admission numbers with new films; this could explain why in Oslo cinemas the number of new film releases was higher than in Stockholm and Copenhagen cinemas. Another possible explanation may be that the new film releases are given a wider distribution along the different districts in the country. A higher number of screenings for each film gives higher profit (Asbjørnsen and Solum 2003).

In the overall summary, it was noted the three countries American films dominate what was offered. In Norway, films from the neighbouring countries had also a larger share of repertoire.

Concerning national films, Norway scored lower than Sweden and Denmark; the number of productions in Norway was lower, but it is also true that Norwegian films do not enjoy the same popularity as Danish and Swedish films do among their national audience. Concerning

what the audience chooses to see, the preferences were fairly similar. The cinema audience spent about NOK 8 of 10 on American films in Norway as well as in Denmark and Sweden. At the moment of the survey, European film had, however, a higher share of the market in Norway rather than in the other three countries.

The research concluded that it is possible to see what may be termed as ‘public effect’ of the Norwegian municipal system on the basis of the comparative results obtained in 2003 by the professors. In particular, the effects become more visible when looking outside of the capitals, where the Norwegian cinemas carried a higher number of screened titles and had a more heterogeneous repertoire than their neighbours. What is more, the dominance of American films outside the capitals was weaker in Norway.

It was concluded that in Norway the cinemas offer more variety in their repertoire, providing their audience with more options, and this is a result of the Norwegian cinema system which is structured publicly. It is not certain, however, that a system that has proven to be effective and useful in the past like the Norwegian one will survive in the future. The current tendencies of privatisation within Norway, indeed, are leading to a different reality.

Chapter 2: Norwegian cultural policy and the birth of Bygdekino

2.1 Ideological basis for cultural policy in Norway

Cultural policy in Norway (Mangset 1992, Berg 1987), as well as in Denmark (Bakke 1987, Bakke 1988), has been dominated by a set of social democratic values: (1) equality, equal opportunity, egalitarianism, (2) quality of life, including cultural aspects, (3) Government involvement and control, and (4) anti-elitism, i.e., emphasising people's own activity. These values are part of the overall welfare State ideology that has steered Norwegian politics since World War II. This ideology combines two elements: (1) equality as the declared central political value and as the primary goal for political decision making. The focus, thus, is on reducing inequalities in terms of distribution of economic, social, health, educational and cultural resources, goods and services among the population; and (2) the State is seen as the primary actor for obtaining this goal. Thus, the State has a legitimate responsibility for providing necessary preconditions and conditions for the obtainment of the declared welfare goals.

In order to understand some of the mechanisms of the Scandinavian welfare States, four different interpretations of equality (Hernes 1976) will be taken into examination: equality in terms of formal rights, equality in terms of equal resources or conditions, equality based on competence, and equality in terms of equal results.

Formal equality is defined as having the same legal rights. In cultural terms, however, this kind of equality can be expressed as everybody's right to have the access to any kind of cultural event. The second quality is clearly defined on whether everyone has the same resources to apply for the same services, i.e., whether these resources are equally distributed. The third type of equality means that people should be treated according to their different competences. Fourth, equal results imply that special initiatives can be taken to compensate for the lack of relevant resources that some parts of the population have in order to obtain equal results, be it income, culture, education (Bakke 1994).

These values – the general ones for the whole society, and the more specific for the cultural sector – have been transformed into two strategies within Norwegian cultural policy's framework since 1945: (1) to distribute high quality ('high-brow') culture to as many people as possible. This policy was implemented by establishing national institutions, many of which

toured the country. The way to implement this form of ‘culture by distribution from above’ (democratisation of culture) has been to provide people with opportunities to fulfil their need for artistic expressions as such, and (2) to take particular sociocultural factors into consideration, like different educational income groups’ needs and interests. The implementation of this policy has relied on local initiatives, voluntary and amateur activities. This second form of policy has been called ‘culture by initiatives from below’, or cultural democracy. By a major focus on everyday life, this perspective regards cultural activity as a means to improve people’s social well-being on a general level (Bakke 1994).

The main issues within any discussion on cultural policy concerns control by the State and content of welfare. The State may choose to act from above and participate actively in providing and distributing welfare goods. It is a political matter, however, how strong its role should be, and whether its control should be direct or indirect. The second issue concerns instead the content of welfare, i.e. what kind of needs a welfare State should be responsible of providing its society with and what results are aimed to. Until 1945, there had been no coherent Government policy concerning cultural issues in Norway. The decisions were made ad hoc, usually to rescue institutions navigating in economic difficulties. Since World War II, however, for the first time there has been political consensus first to include culture into welfare concept, and second to let the State be greatly responsible of the development of Norwegian welfare society (Bakke 1994).

2.1.1 The overall cultural policy goals: democratisation and decentralisation

Democracy and decentralisation have always been, and still are, crucial goals within the Government’s cultural policy in Norway. There were three broad cultural policy positions during the post-World War II period: democratisation, decentralisation and public service mixed with market elements. These perspectives were particularly evident in specific periods: democratisation was dominant between 1945 and the early 1970s, while cultural democracy lasted from the early 1970s until the early 1980s, when the introduction of market elements in the funding of arts and culture marked the beginning of a third period. Although each perspective was pronounced during a particular period, there was evidence of all three throughout the post-War period (Bakke 2010). As demonstrated the State Secretary Helge Sivertsen’s speech at the municipal cinema premiere in Storsteinnes: ‘As far as can be expected,

a democratic society must (...) create not just economic, but also cultural justice' (Arbeiderbladet 1950).

Democratisation is based upon the principle of equal distribution of welfare goods and services. Thus, the Government is responsible for providing conditions under which each citizen has equal access to cultural facilities and experiences. The challenge for politicians and cultural administrators is to decide what kind of culture to support and promote. A democratisation of cultural policy is founded on the primary role of the welfare State and it is therefore a top-down policy. A cultural democracy perspective, on the other hand, opens up for much more citizen participation. It is the people in local communities who should determine what kind of cultural activities they want to participate in, and express wishes for financial and organisational frameworks to local, regional and national political authorities. Cultural democracy implies the Government's responsibility for providing people with equal opportunities – a bottom-up policy. The challenge for a welfare State is to find the politically legitimate balance between the two (Bakke 2010).

The Joint Programme (1945) was an early indicator of some principles that have formed the ideological framework of Norwegian politics until 1980. The main principle was the emphasis on the expanded role of Government in public affairs. The State should have the primary responsibility for implementing a welfare policy – with respect to arts and culture, this implies that the Government should define the national cultural policy and serve as the major funding source.

A major goal of Norwegian cultural policy has been to enhance access to culture for as many people as possible. (St. meld. 8 1973-74)

The national Government has a special obligation to provide equal geographical distribution of cultural goods and services. (St. meld. 61 1991-92)

Consistent with the Government's intention of turning Norway into a welfare society, cultural policy from 1945 to the early 1970s was based on the principle of democratisation. This implied that preconditions for access should be established and that all social classes and people

living in all geographical areas should have access to culture. Thus, democratisation of culture was realised through a combination of both national and touring institutions. The National Art Gallery, the Norwegian Opera, the National Theatre, and the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation are examples of national public, cultural institutions. The problem with this is that they were located in the capital, thus the potential audience was limited to people who lived in the nearby. The solution was to establish public touring institutions. The intention was to facilitate access to concerts, theatre performances, film shows, and art exhibitions for people who lived in rural and peripheral parts of Norway, and for social groups that did not normally attend such events. Everybody should have equal access to cultural goods of high quality, regardless of their social background (Bakke 1994). The aim was to break down social differences in cultural activity patterns.

Cultural democracy was introduced as the new cultural policy goal in the early 1970s, with decentralisation as the crucial strategy. Decentralisation meant a change in the decision-making process. Decentralisation has also manifested itself within Government's economic regulation. Until 1986, this was partly done through a system in which the State automatically transferred amount of moneys to municipalities for specific purposes, including cultural ones. This was a very complicate system of economic regulation, and it became increasingly difficult for the municipalities to keep track of all the sources for the economic support (Bakke 1994).

Following the 1986 reform, State appropriations started to be transferred as financial grants, leaving it completely to the county and municipal Councils to decide how to spend their own budgets. Consequently, local interest groups and voluntary associations could present their ideas and demands to the municipal authority which decided how many kroner should be spent on each project. This strategy had the consequence of blurring the distinction between culture and leisure, to the extent that the concept of culture was open to include sports, special youth activities and similar. The effect was that the traditional concept of culture changed from emphasising artistic quality to accepting both art and leisure under the same field. At the time, sports activity for the youth and voluntary projects were put under the culture umbrella (Bakke 2010). As a result, the municipalities' total share of Governmental funds spent on culture increased between 1968 and 1987. In 1968 the municipalities' share was 48%, the counties' 3%, and the State's share 50%. In 1987, the contribution from the three Government levels (national, county and municipal) were 56%, 6%, and 38% respectively (Mangset 1992).

In 1959, the Labour Party prepared its way for decentralisation to become the core element of the Government al cultural policy. Twenty years later, the Conservative Minister of Culture, Lars Roar Langslet, was the first to introduce market elements into public Government al cultural policy. While supporting the basic welfare-State principles, he wanted additional means to finance institutions and activities. Langslet thought that cultural institutions should make an effort to obtain a higher percentage of funding for their budgets from earned income by increasing business support as income from advertising. The mixed system of public service and market elements was - and still is - somehow complicated, in part because the Government is still responsible for providing equal access to goods and services, but on the other hand private actors can interact with each other within the same market.

2.2 A change of attitude towards cinema after the War

In *The Big Tivoli*, Sigurd Evensmo marks 1946 as the third memorable date within film and cinema history in Norway. The first was represented by 1913 and its Cinema Act, which placed the whole cinema industry under a strong social scrutiny, differencing Norway from the other Western countries. The second remarkable year was 1917, when the establishment of *Kommunale Kinematografers Landsforbund* (the Association of Municipal Cinemas), also known as KKL, was realised.

What was so special about 1946 was that, for the first time, the public sector showed some manifested interest towards taking part in the support of Norwegian film production. It was proposed, among the other initiatives, that the State should be working as an advisory and initiating body for the Ministry. At the same time, under the Ministry of Finance, it was decided to establish a Government al Film Fund with an approximate capital of NOK 10 million. Cultural policy was an essential part of the welfare program designed during the post-War years, and it took place in parallel with a large-scale industrial development. In many ways there was a whole new society that was trying to emerge from its ashes.

Film policy was not forgotten when it came to schedule the areas which needed to be developed. According to the author and film historian Sigurd Evensmo, the authorities did not engage in any matter regarding film issues since Cinema Act was introduced in 1913. Since then, 'the Parliament had not conducted a single proper debate about the role of cinema in

society, and from the Government there had never been any incitement to consider whether it might become a national cultural task' (Evensmo, 1967).

The common thread throughout Evensmo's book *The big Tivoli* is that film had always been regarded primarily as entertainment, only then as art. This was largely due to the origins of cinema as a simple source of amusement in line with variety and circus – a form of entertainment for the illiterate, as the French historian Georges Duhamel thought (1930). However, according to Evensmo, the War had caused a national awareness of film as a medium to grow. It was probably a widespread perception that film as a medium should become to be taken seriously, and that it should be brought to all those who had not been part of it. The State budget of the years 1946-1947 shows that cinema had become one of the most important factors in the overall cultural life 'both for good and evil' (St. prp. no. 2 1946-1947). The general attitude towards the industry of film and media was starting to change. Solum (2004) reports that individuals within the Labour Party began to emphasise the need for the Government to be involved in the film industry, since film production was naturally thought as a national cultural task.

To bring culture out to all the people, we need to use modern communications such as cars and aircraft, and to establish an information network cross the country.

The film has a lot of influence on the people. An influence that is so big that most do not really reach it yet. The film contributes greatly to the design of human habits and thoughts.

2.2.1 Labour Party's involvement

The last half of the 19th century was the period when some full-time youth associations founded on the basis of Norwegian cultural traditions started to be recognised as nationwide voluntary organisations. The idea of public bodies being involved in cultural management had already become central in particular for these youth associations, which, inter alia, manifested it in lectures, amateur theatres and start-up of chains of newspapers and journals. It was during the same period that the Labour movement grew. Cultural activities and educational work began

to be considered as important parts of the everyday life background. It was stated that without information and knowledge, the working class could never get strong enough to meet its demands (Solum 2004). In 1927, the editor of the Labour newspaper in Trondheim, Ole Øisang, claimed that: ‘The battle (...) concerns freedom and participation to all the goods of nature and culture, only the best is good for the working class!’ (Kokkvoll 1981).

When the Labour Party formed the Government after the War, tendency towards a general reconstruction of society grew to be the overriding goal. Nevertheless, still strong stood the opinion within the Party that the new welfare State was not just about building houses, factories, roads and bridges. However, it was not only the working class, but all the people within society who had to be raised and enlightened. Solum (2004) reports that in his speech at the Labour Party’s National Assembly in 1955, the Secretary of the State Helge Sivertsen claimed that the Labour movement had one goal, to create a new society composed of cultured human beings seeking for what is true and beautiful.

It is evident that the Party has been keen to work for a fair distribution of cultural products in a stronger degree than the other political parties of the Parliament. Through much of the history of the Party, efforts for education and equitable distribution of cultural objects have been the central aims. There were two dominant aims within the Party’s policy guidelines (Nyhus 1984):

- 1- Art and culture as goods which most people must have the opportunity to acquire.
- 1- Big emphasis on a ‘class culture.’

2.3 Centralised decentralisation: the touring institutions for culture

The previous section documented that one of Norway’s crucial culture policy goals has been to enhance people’s access to culture. Culture and arts are very labour-intensive; thus, any investment in cultural institutions of any size has to be analysed carefully. This requirement posed a challenge in Norway, with its long physical distances and scattered population. To overcome the economic as well as geographic barriers, the Government has chosen a threefold

strategy: (1) to support national cultural institutions; (2) to create a system with touring institutions; (3) to establish a system for administrative and functional differentiation between national, regional/county and municipal levels (Bakke 2010).

The 19th century saw the establishment of several national institutions; to compensate for the long distances that people had to travel to attend the cinema, theatres or concerts, the Government proposed to implement four touring institutions: *Riksteatret* (The Norwegian National Touring Theatre) and *Bygdekino* (The Rural Cinema) in 1948; *Riksgalleriet* (The Touring Art Gallery) in 1952 and *Rikskonsertene* (NorConcert) in 1967.

It is no coincidence that these touring institutions were created shortly after World War II. The Labour Party was the political party that most strongly argued for the establishment of a system that could distribute welfare goods throughout the population, regardless of people's social background. The basic principles of a welfare society were approved also by the other parties; the discrepancies regarded specific issues, concerning which goods and services should be supported by the Government and with which priorities, but the overall consensus was shared. Thus, it is somewhat astonishing that none of the political parties spoke against establishing national touring institutions with a large percentage of Government funding. A closer look at the arguments that were presented during the process of creating these institutions reflects that the political debate about the Government's responsibility for providing cultural goods to people outside the cities had begun already in the '30s (Bakke 1994).

With regard to the establishment of a mobile company for films, film distribution was emphasised, particularly to remote areas and places without permanent economically viable cinema theatres. The need for Government involvement was stressed even more afterwards, when it turned out that the private touring companies had not managed – or been willing - to serve every rural area (Bakke 1994). It is in this light that the establishment of organisations such as *Bygdekino* can be fully understood and explained. Indeed, it embodied the concrete consequence of the Labour Party's cultural democratisation plan.

At the request of the Ministry of Education, the Norwegian Film Council presented a proposal for the establishment of a company for ambulatory cinema operations in 1947. The *Kommunale Kinomatografers Landsforbund* (KKL) had contacted the Council for the matter about the same time. During KKL's meeting in October, one year before the Norwegian *Bygdekino* was established, it was decided to allocate NOK 20,000 to be shared among the

representative bodies, assuming that KKL would be the first member on the company's board, since its driving force towards the creation of NB had been remarkable. The final proposal from the Norwegian Film Council was submitted to the Ministry by letter on April 10, 1947.

The following year, the amount of sharing quotes to be allocated reached NOK 100,000 and it was to be distributed as follows (St. prp. no. 85 1948):

State: NOK 50,000
National People's Information Council: NOK 20,000
<i>Kommunale Kinomatografers Landsforbund (KKL):</i> NOK 15,000
<i>Kommunernes Film Central A/S (KF):</i> NOK 15,000

Figure 2.1. Distribution of quotes among the representative members of Bygdekino's company.

Source: Nyhus 1984

The Norwegian Film Council also proposed that the company would open their office in Oslo and create a Supervisory board. The Ministry, despite preferring a simpler distribution, agreed to the proposal and suggested that the State would grant a loan of NOK 200,000 for purchasing the technical equipment. The Ministry's reason for establishing the company was the need for quality films to be screened also in places that were not big enough to have fixed cinema theatres; beside that, it was greatly emphasised that those who were privately conducting ambulatory cinema activities did not perform their task full time, and the lack of cultural and technical quality was not only an assumption.

When the proposal went under the supervision of the Committee, there were few objections to the submitted measures. Only Bernt Ingvaldsen (H) argued that the expansion of the ambulatory private business operations had to expire because of the country's severe

financial situation, but no other significant counterargument was put forward (Nyhus 1984). On June 29, 1948, the proposal was eventually submitted to the *Storting*, i.e. the Parliament. The Committee's rapporteur, Einar Osland from the Left Party, strongly underlined the need for a company like Bygdekino in Norway, saying that:

The Committee believes that this is an important task [...]. Personally, I think that the majority of the Committee has the same view. The State annually allocates millions of kroner for cultural purposes, [...] and it is only a legitimate requirement when the towns, especially the most remote ones, receive a modest part of these goods. (St. t. 1948 7b, 1735)

The Committee's proposal for NOK 50,000 to be owned by the State was voted against two votes. The grant of NOK 200,000 in form of loans from the Norwegian State Film Fund was voted against one single vote. In general, the idea of establishing a semi-public company for ambulatory cinema operations does not seem to have caused special discussions either in parties, in the Ministry or in the Parliament. The reason why the proposal went apparently so smoothly probably is to be found in the fact that there were no major economic benefits for the State.

The mobile service for the screening of films was established in 1948 after further planning and debates, through legislative measures and a secure space in the State budget. The *Riksteater*, the National Mobile Theatre and the Bygdekino were raised over the years and were mentioned as State agencies that would spread culture to the highest possible extent. Despite several similarities with regard to their history and activity, it is worth noting that at a particular point the Bygdekino was significantly lowered by the very limited support from the State. Unlike the National Mobile Theatre, the travelling cinema began its activity after a shorter planning period, without a special debate and with little preparation of tasks and platforms (Nyhus 1984).

The State support was, after all, limited to sharing quotes and giving ordinary loans, but not in form of direct financial support; the cinema should operate as a self-financing company, and this necessarily put great limitations on the creation of the Bygdekino.

2.4 The constitution of the company

In an extensive, thinly-populated and mountainous country such as Norway unusually great difficulties must be expected in making the benefits of contemporary culture available to everyone. With its area of 324,222 square kilometres, which means that it is larger than Italy, Norway has a population of barely three and a half millions; its length, 1,752 kilometres, is roughly equivalent to the distance from London to Tunis. A considerable proportion of the population lives in real isolation – in long narrow valleys, along inaccessible fjords, on lonely islands out in the sea, or far in on the desolate mountain plateaux – and, particularly in winter, the problems of communications in such districts are intensified by cold, storms, and heavy snow-falls. The Norwegian Government considers it a prime task to make cultural opportunities equally available throughout the country, and many steps have been taken in this direction since the War ended. The creation of the Norwegian Rural Cinema Company must be seen as an important aspect of this work, since it represents an attempt to give everyone a chance of enjoying the most popular art-form of our days. The Company's function is to show good films at places that possess no permanent cinema of their own, including small settlements where showing must necessarily be given at a loss; it is not intended to be a profit-making organisation. (Semmingen 1957)

The creation of a company for ambulatory cinema operations was approved by the Parliament on June 26, 1948. The Ministry of Education called for a meeting on the first day of October on the same year, and it appeared clear that the original proposal would be adopted with minor changes. The name of the company was eventually decided to be *Norsk Bygdekino A/S* instead of *Norsk Film A/S*, which the Ministry had originally suggested.

The company was to be owned and administrated by the State (through the Ministry of Church and Education), by local authorities (represented indirectly through the National Association of Municipal Cinemas, KKL, and the Municipal Film Centre), and by other nine national organisations: the Worker's Educational Association, the Villagers' Education

Council, the National Association of Folk Academies, the Temperance Study Council, the International League of Women for Peace and Freedom, the Norwegian League of Youth (NU), the Norwegian Housewives' Association, the Norwegian Sports Association, and the Norwegian Cooperative Union and Wholesale Society. The main shareholder was to be the State; it was natural that also local authorities would be represented (Semningsen 1957).

The board of the company consisted of five members, two representing the State, two coming from the inter-municipal film bodies, and the fifth representing the nine national organisations listed above. In the choice of the board members there is evidence that great emphasis was placed on finding experienced people with both political and professional weight. Several of the names were highly involved in the cinema sector at that time. Unfortunately, this attention did not end up favouring the management of the new company; due to their positions, everyone in the list was already heavily charged with jobs in other companies, organisations and parties, and probably Bygdekino was not their absolute priority.

The chairman of the first board, director Kristoffer Aamot, was at the heart of film and cinema life in Norway since he had joined the board of Oslo Cinematographers in 1926. He was one of the initiators and future chairman of the National Association of Municipal Cinemas in 1929 and the director of Oslo Kinematografer from 1934 to 1955. There are many reasons to believe that Aamot, thanks to his central position, has been in the role of adviser to the Ministry both as a member of the Film Council of Norway, and occasionally also as a private counsellor on a more informal basis.

The State Council convened a meeting where Aamot presented his view about the State's responsibility for cinema as a national cultural task. Aamot had in his mind very concrete measures, among which the idea that film-related matters should be sorted by the Ministry of Church and Education, and proposed the establishment of a National Film Fund, which should have financed the ambulatory cinema so that rural areas which did not have their own permanent cinema would be given the opportunity to enjoy cultural programs. It is even known that Aamot had already mentioned the idea of an ambulatory film company in a letter to the Ministry on December 12, 1945, where he talked about the creation of an 'ambulatory cinematographer with particular reference to land farms and fishing districts' (Nyhus 1984). According to Aamot himself, the letter had been a natural consequence after a meeting at the University of Oslo in January 1946. Against this background, there is little doubt that Kristoffer Aamot played a central role in the creation of the company: he was its initiator and then the first

company's chairman. However, it is known that he left the business at an early stage, probably in order to prioritise other tasks.

On October 13, 1948 the articles of the company had been written, yet some detailed cultural policy guidelines and objectives were clearly lacking. The main purpose was Stated in the first paragraph (Nyhus 1984):

1- The company is to name Norsk Bygdekino A/S and has the objective to run ambulatory film production.

Thus, it was not evident from the first article where, when or how these ambulatory operations should take place nor which criterion should be adopted for the selection of films to be displayed. Arguably, the creation of the company must have been somehow precipitous and perhaps not fully detailed; despite this, its employees could take a great advantage in defining the company's further tasks and in managing the business as they preferred.

After some disputes concerning the prevail of the political aspects over the general benefits of the villages, director Aamot left his chairman position, declaring that it was regrettable that rivalry between the parties could ruin a good cause like the ambulatory cinema. Moreover, he focused on getting started with the business as the most urgent matter, stating that there was little difference between putting in charge 'urban' or 'rural' people. The Ministry eventually presented its final proposal for the distribution of the shares among the members of the board. The Norwegian League of Youth received a very consistent share since it had always shown particular interest in the matter. The problem was that some ambulatory companies of travelling cinema already existed in the country; indeed, the first resistance which the Bygdekino met was the presence of some private competitors. Conflicts in relation to the private travelling companies go back throughout the history of the company.

2.5 The private travelling cinematographers

Ambulatory film production in Norway is an old phenomenon as the film itself. At the beginning of the century, both individuals and companies were already travelling around the country with different film programmes. Just to mention one example, the German Paul Krasslich used to travel along the coast and give performances in northern Norway (Evensmo 1967).

One of the very first Norwegian traveller is supposed to have been Johan Widnes from Fredrikstad, born in 1849 and died in 1929. Widnes operated extensive turnaround activities across most parts of the country, but eventually moved to operate on a more local level in Østfold towns and Tønsberg, Kongsberg and Fredrikstad (Evensmo 1967). Evensmo points out that the reason why some parts of the country had seen cinema relatively early was largely due to the development of cinema industry in Sweden. After the international attention on the moving pictures had grown smaller, some individuals made their trip to Norway in regions and places where people had had no chance of meeting the moving pictures.

It is reasonable to provide a concise but limited overview of the private ambulatory cinema operations in Norway before the Bygdekino was established, for it is quite difficult to come up with precise and specific information about its size or quality. Not everyone reported their business to KKL, since many operators were considered direct competitors of KKL itself (Nyhus 1984). In 1950 there were 462 permanent cinemas registered in Norway. Among these, 182 were municipal, 108 were private and 160 were associations of cinemas. In addition, there were also those structures which were not included under KKL's umbrella, and therefore are not counted.

The private traveling business for ambulatory cinemas are divided into three main categories. In the first category there were people or companies which were members of the *Norsk Reisekinoers Landsforbund* (NRL). NRL was an organisation created for private business cinema operations. The second category comprehended individuals or companies which were not members of NRL, but which continued to operate actively, conducting their activities to a relatively large extent. In the third category there were individuals or companies which were not NRL's members and used to travel more sporadically, conducting activities to a smaller extent – for example, they travelled with minor, basic equipment.

The first group of NRL members included:

- 1 Huseby Kinobyrå, Trondheim
- 2 Cinematographer agency A. S., Oslo
- 3 Eiler Krag Mos Cinema Company, Stavanger
- 4 Bjarne Overå Kino, Trondheim
- 5 Refslund Cinema, Bergen
- 6 Rogaland Cinema, Stavanger
- 7 Trøndelag Kinoteater, Trondheim

The second group comprehended, among the others: Lorang's ambulatory cinema, Hamar; Gudbrandsdalen Kinematographers, Espaa; Schaug Pettersen Sound Film, Dverberg; Agder Kinematographers, Arendal. The last group is likely to have run ambulatory cinemas after 1950 (Nyhus 1984). The activities conducted by NRL's members can be characterised more or less nationwide, and it can be affirmed that the business has been stable within some limited areas for specific periods of time. It is known that most of these individuals travelled across several counties and regions at the same time; some had started already in the period between World War I and World War II, while a few of them began during World War I years.

Within the municipal cinema members, private cinema – and especially private ambulatory cinema – had a rather bad reputation. There may be reasons to believe that it was not merely due the poor quality of both equipment and films, but probably competition existed between the public and the private after the 1913 Cinema Act.

Evensmo (1967) summarises the history of private ambulatory cinema in the following way. For some years, a large part of Norway had not been used to films, partly because cinema travelling companies did not visit, partly because local performances were of poor quality. These companies were private and certainly not driven by philanthropic reasons or by missionaries with cultural purposes in mind. The only interest the runners had was to make some profit out of their activity; plus, they had no competition to fear. It is possible that Evensmo was somehow exaggerated in his statements; trends in the direction he was pointing out, however, can be well verified by various publications and newspaper articles of the post-War period (Nyhus 1984).

When the creation of a public company for the screenings of films was first proposed, representatives from the Right Party defended the already existing private operations, just as like the Socialist Party's representatives went strongly against it; regarding the opposition, it is worth to mention that the lack of quality of the private cinema companies was used as the main argument in support of the establishment of the semi-public company Norsk Bygdekino A/S.

There was another matter to take into consideration, however. As mentioned earlier, the State was used to taking significant sums in form of taxes on entry fees from the cinemas around the country. The issue of Norsk Bygdekino being taxed like every other cinema theatre and private ambulatory company was raised right after its establishment. In a letter dated March 4, 1949 from the Ministry of Education and Culture to the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry was asked to provide its interlocutor with the necessary arrangements in order to guarantee tax exemptions to the company.

The exemption was to be adopted formally on the same year, but for some economic complications it was not possible to accomplish it. The issue returned in the Parliament on June 23, 1950. Following the recommendation of the Committee it was shown that, among the other matters, it was not reasonable to tax cultural measures that had been implemented by the Government to spread culture on a national level. Most of the people who could vote in the debate had a somewhat positive attitude towards the mobile cinema. But especially among the representatives of the conservative parties, there was deep concern about the future of the private travelling cinema. They believed that the private operations would be directly threatened by introducing special economic benefits for the semi-public travelling company.

Some representatives of the Right did not agree on the assumption that Bygdekino would show films of better quality than the private ambulatory cinemas. They had the impression that the quality was already very good and thought instead that the new company should be established only if under two conditions. First of all, it should have had a purely cultural purpose; secondly, it should have been shown to a different audience (Nyhus 1984). Lyng, representing the Right Party, looked at the tax exemption like 'an expropriation from a back door' (Nyhus 1984). He felt that the consequences would have been that this new Governmental enterprise would have systematically killed the lives of the others. Lyng went so far in implying that the private individuals could even proceed for legal claims to get financial compensations from the State, if any cooperation was to be guaranteed.

Bratteli, representing the Left Party, disagreed on the fact that the company was a purely State-owned company launched to compete with the private business. It was probably feared that the new company would be able to outperform the private. After long debates, it had become quite clear that the bourgeois representatives, and first and foremost the Right Party, were not prepared to give to the mobile cinema their boundless support, since they saw the business as a dangerous, direct threat to the private business companies; in addition, there is reason to assume that a promotion of socialism was probably suspected (Nyhus 1984).

With the Act of July 14, 1950, the Parliament eventually sanctioned that the rural cinema would receive some economic benefits. In addition, the company had the right to prepare its itineraries, to decide how to distribute the tours and to choose the repertoire by making some agreements with the agencies. During the meeting on November 2, 1950, the Minister of Finance stated that the main rule to follow should be that only the films showed in NB's name would be tax-free. Therefore, the private parties should negotiate directly with the NB for cooperation. Based on the available material, however, it does not appear that something similar ever happened. Probably the company never took any active step towards any form of cooperation or negotiation with the private agencies (Nyhus 1984).

2.6 The political support

As shown in the previous section, Norsk Bygdekino A/S was created after a relatively short period of time. Despite this brevity, even concerning its constitution there were different views about issues like the shares of distribution and the governance of the company among the representative members. The Norwegian League of Youth (NU) traditionally represented rural communities; due to this, the League expected to own an important place on the board, but mostly a larger amount of shares than the Ministry had initially proposed. The Ministry, on its part, had formulated a proposal for distribution of shares that secured the Workers' Confederation, the AOF, a more central place. This happened because the Labour Party had seen the creation of Norsk Bygdekino as part of the general post-War reconstruction and wanted to associate the company to one of the workers' organisations, the AOF.

The support that NB could possibly have received by powerful associations like NU and others was weakened because of the relevant position of AOF as the dominant board member. The conflicts led to the fact that, at the beginning, the company stood without receiving any

firm and strong support by the traditional rural organisations. In addition, the political support granted to the company, whose creation had been confirmed by an almost unanimous decision of the Norwegian Parliament, was unfortunately short-lived. The debates in Odelsting had shown that the bourgeois parties, especially the Right Party, were not prepared to give to the new company any special benefit. These matters prove that it must have been far from easy for the company to start up in 1950; even before it properly began its business, Bygdekino had already lost essential political support.

2.7 The first screenings

The very start of Norsk Bygdekino's business represents one brilliant example of the leading concepts of distribution and dissemination of culture which had guaranteed the basis for the creation of the company – as well as the creation of the other Governmental touring institutions with similar purposes. The company originally had five cars at its disposal. They had the choice either to cover a limited part of the country relatively often, or to travel instead across the whole country, reaching each place more sporadically. The majority of the Government eventually decided to vote for the first option, so they company should have avoided to drive on the Southern routes, even though a minority among them thought that the company should aim to cover the entire country.

On July 7, the cars started to travel from Oslo up to the North. The mechanics, who worked also as ticket sellers and drivers, were accompanied by a representative of the Ministry, Helge Sivertsen. On July 23, 1950, the first performance took place in Storsteinnes, Balsfjord, with the Norwegian film premier of *Just a mother*, directed after Ivar Lo-Johansson's novel. With this premiere the company had a proper face for the first time. Just like the National Mobile Theatre, which had given its first performance the year before in Kirkenes, Bygdekino started its business at a very safe distance from Oslo.

'High-dramatic film in rural areas', wrote Dagbladet on July 7, 1950, after the press conference in Oslo of the day before (Nyhus 1984). Despite the newspapers thinking that Bygdekino should have selected an easier program for the start-up phase, it is not to forget that one of the company's main aim was to provide its audience with an accurate selection of quality content from the very beginning, and this was something that the audience and the press – after the newspapers' reviews – began gradually to appreciate only afterwards.

An enthusiastic telegram to the State Secretary arrived on the opening day from the National Mobile Theatre, by Frits von der Lippe. It was a telegram wishing good luck for further shows; the National Mobile Theatre was looking forward a cooperation with NB in order to cover some Northern and Southern districts of the country. Throughout the years, it was often and on various occasions expressed the desire for cooperation from both the NB and the National Mobile Theatre. However, it is not possible to find any trace of this in the archives (Nyhus 1984). The five Bygdekino cars originally used to drive on the same route, but with three-week intervals between each show, from Levanger to the South and to the border with Finnmark in the Northern part of the country. In the first business year, the company was able to visit approximately 100 places, with over 500 films shown for about 93,000 children and adults in total (Nyhus 1984).

The rural cinema ran far from trouble-free, according to the annual reports and newspaper reviews. Many of the premises were very difficult to be resolved. One of the mechanics was interviewed in Nordland Folkeblad on August 11, 1950. He could tell that during the first fourteen days of the tour, only one night had he been able to connect the equipment to an ordinary lighting system (Nyhus 1984). In each place, the Mobile Cinema was sustained by a local who helped in hanging up the posters and arranging the room, so that everything was in proper conditions for the evening's performances. The local person often assisted during the ticket sales. Bygdekino have had this kind of arrangement with locals throughout all the years, and still has. The remuneration for this work was one free access to the evening's performances.

In the first winter of the business, the original northern Norway route from Levanger was extended south to Sør-Trøndlag and Romsdal. Already during the summer of 1951, some routes in Finnmark were traversed, with visits up to 30 places visited four times in each season. Two boat travelling tours began in February 1951: one went to Trondheim's Leia, the other travelled along the Northland coast. In August 1951, the company was able to cover some Southern districts, where the mobile cinema visited 300 places with three cars that travelled with an interval of three weeks. In the second year of activity, the number of performances had increased to over 6,500 for around 400,000 paying spectators. The total number of the cars was extended to 15 and the company started to travel to a narrow route in Sogn. In 1952, Bygdekino was bringing cinema screenings to approximately 700 total places.

Ten additional tours soon started, among which nine were carried out by car and the remaining one by boat. On the Southern Norway route (Eastern Norway, Sørlandet and Western Norway) eleven cars were travelling. An interesting note to add is that an overview of the company's activity from the Annual Reports shows that the number of the visits were much higher during summer and lower in the cold, winter months – that is exactly the opposite of today. This was probably due to the harsh weather conditions, which prevented people from going outside, and perhaps to a more attractive summer repertoire. However, the two main reasons are others. First, in the early post-War years, the most common place to go to holiday in summer was the countryside. The second and most important reason, though, was that the majority of fixed cinemas were closed during summer. A survey about the cinemas in Oppland made in 1960 shows that permanent cinemas, both municipal and private, were closed from three to eight weeks for the holidays (Nyhus 1984). The company early organised some extra tours that visited bigger places during summer. They managed to reach a potential audience they did not attract during the rest of the year. At the end of 1953, 48 people were employed by the company: twelve of them worked in the office in Oslo, the rest of them travelled around the country.

The ticket prices had always been NOK 2 for adults and NOK 0,75 for children. Adults only paid NOK 1 for some children screenings. Already on its second year of activity, Bygdekino could present an approximate balance of its business. This was possible thanks to the fact that the general attendance to the performances was solid, but also because a solution had been found for fixing some small deficits. Experience had proved that the company needed to collect a total amount of NOK 200 in ticket revenues (corresponding to 50 paying adults) for each performance to avoid financial insufficiencies. In some venues, revenues were larger, thus it was possible to cover the deficits originating from the minor revenues with the extra tickets sold in the most crowded places.

2.8 The company adopts new measures

In 1952 the company estimated that they could no longer visit places that did not reach at least 35 paying adults for performance. There is nothing concrete in the archives today that comprehensively shows what specific decisions had been made, and how many places omitted, but there is reason to expect that some of the smallest places had to face this inevitable consequence (Nyhus 1984). On the other hand, for the first time Bygdekino was able to

guarantee a screening every three week in each place. It was something not always easy to respect, since the financial conditions were not the best all the time.

The car equipment cost approximately NOK 40,000 in 1950-1951, according to an outbound report to the main board of Oslo in 1952. The business required bigger investments. In order to help, the State granted the company NOK 130,000 for acquiring a larger equipment; the following year, a loan from the Norwegian Film Fund granted NOK 500,000 to the company, and this fund made possible a great expansion of the business on the second year of operations (Annual Report, 1951).

In connection to the planning of a development program for the years 1954-1957, the Office for Arts and Culture in the Ministry of Education asked the company for an official statement of the required capital for that period. The board sent an application asking for NOK 0.5 million to be able to expand their routes with 15 more tours. These new tours would have covered districts in some parts of Eastern Norway, the coastline and Finnmark during winter months. In their development plans, the company would have provided 20,000 performances per year. Medium-sized places would have been visited every three weeks, the larger instead with an interval of 10 days. In the smallest places, instead, 6 weeks would have passed between each visit.

In 1953, the company visited about 700 places with 14,874 total screenings shown for approximately 900,000 visitors (Annual Report, 1953). The fact that the business was vulnerable to external circumstances became particularly clear that year. The low incomes had been caused by a decline in visitors – due primarily to the climatic conditions of that winter, cold and harsh in most of the country. In addition to that, in January and February there had been some exceptionally heavy snowfalls. According to the mechanics, there was also less money circulating among most people (Annual Report, 1954).

Consequently, the company continued its activity more carefully, on the basis of the experience of the previous year. Despite everything, more than 710 places were included in the original route plan, and after a few months the number was extended to 830. In February, a combination of cinema and travelling libraries began. The State was economically supporting the initiative of some boats that travelled along Kristiansund and Bodø to bring both cinema and books to communities. This has been a very successful collaborative project between different cultural institutions. The purpose was to provide 32 remote locations with both books

and films. At the end of the year, the boss in charge contacted the offices of the company to thank them for the excellent collaboration she hoped it would be continued in the next future.

In 1956 the visited venues amounted to 830. Two screenings per night were usually hosted, but in some of the larger places three films per night could be shown. The rule was that the first film was a children film starting at 7 pm; the second was a film for adults starting at 8 pm; and finally, a feature film at 9 pm. Around 19,3000 performances were shown that year. In 1957, the company could guarantee on over 1.4 million paying spectators, and the average number of visitors per performance had increased from 62.7 people to 67.3 the following year (Annual Report, 1957).

The numbers kept increasing, and 900 places managed to be visited: 70 among them had cinema screenings three times per month, 270 had them every 14 days, 480 every three or four weeks, and the rest one per month. In the autumn it was decided to send another application to the Ministry to get tax exemption for any future operating surplus. The application was justified by the fact that the need for the screenings was high, especially in small places. Since it was difficult for the company to avoid economic losses at all, they wanted their profit to finance the following years' tour plans and, above all, the smallest places. In connection to the application they sent, it was established that the constitutional articles of the company would see the following additions, according to the Board Protocol of June 20, 1958:

- a- No dividends shall be distributed on shares.
- b- The Company will use any surplus for the expansion of the business.
- c- The company aim is to conduct cultural dissemination work through ambulatory cinema activities.

The additions were probably a reasonable consequence of the development of the company. If in the very first years the possibility of any surplus was not even thinkable, at the end of the first ten-year period of the business it just seemed a natural consequence (Nyhus 1984). The third point, which specifies the purpose of the entire business, may have resulted

after a cultural debate in the Parliament, probably initiated by the Labour Party. In 1959, the Party had published a cultural programme whose main tendency was to emphasise the importance of bringing culture to every citizen, and strongly stood the idea that people should be educated to appreciate both art and culture. These two features were, according to the programme itself, an absolute and necessary good for humans (Nyhus 1984).

During the following two years, car tours were converted to district routes, allowing the drivers to visit 14 or 28 places around the area of their residence. This new rule let them stay home from 7 to 14 days per month. In 1953, the company had started to organise some special performances in sanatoriums and hospitals. They only received a very small remuneration from this activity over the years, thus never managing to conduct it on a purely economic basis. In 1959, 121 performances were given, while in 1960 200 were the screenings in a total number of 31 different hospitals of the country. Of the 31 places visited the same year, there were 14 sanatoriums, 7 mental hospitals, 3 respiratory hospitals, 2 hostels and 3 health centres, as it can be read from the Annual Report (1959).

2.9 Agreements with the municipalities and the first financial problems

The company soon began to turn to municipalities to receive regular operating support, ensuring a continuity of operations in many smaller places where otherwise it would have been impossible to screen anything. The ordinary practice for most of the municipalities was to demand a certain percent of the ticket revenues from both permanent and travelling cinema; the fee was very different from company to company, but, in most cases, it was around 10% of the total gross income, thus representing a significant expense (Nyhus 1984).

In a circular of November 13, 1950 KUD had recommended that the municipalities should exempt Bygdekino from the fee for film screenings. Many gave a positive response, but most of them did not even respond at all. Ever since the start-up, the company had met a good portion of scepticism coming from lots of rural municipalities. There was a widespread misunderstanding that the company received large sums of money which in the end benefited Oslo in terms of incomes (Nyhus 1984). The fact that in some cases a negative attitude towards the company was manifested, though, must not be overshadowed by the manifested, overall interest towards Bygdekino's visits, which in most cases seemed great and sincere. Since its beginning, the company received a consistent number of calls from municipalities and small

towns who wished for regular visits. During the general meeting in March 1954, it was announced that there were still 200 inquiries which the company was not able to accommodate for economic reasons. These mainly consisted of very small places from where it would have been impossible to earn anything at all (Nyhus 1984).

In May 1954, the company contacted most of the rural municipalities with the purpose of obtaining a proper overview of the needs of each town to be able to establish a direct cooperation with those venues whose needs were not 100% fulfilled. Out of 665, positive responses came from 285 municipalities. Of these 285, 206 wanted a direct cooperation, and at least half of these 206 would give the company the exclusive rights to screen films in their municipality. The remaining 79 stated first and foremost the lack of available spaces for the screenings. The company had to make lot of effort to visit regularly the smallest places. Due to the limited availability of the company to visit them, since they could not guarantee positive incomes, the screenings largely depended on grants or guarantees of deficit from municipalities. On May 29, 1954 the company sent a telegram to the Ministry, declaring the conditions of the general operating business, from which it was clear that without any grant of supplementary funds it would have been impossible to visit 800 places as they had arranged. Since they did not receive any response from the Ministry, there was no choice but a reduction in the number of the visited municipalities (Nyhus 1984).

Throughout this period, the offices of the company were very precise in keeping the Ministry and the municipal authorities informed about the overall business operations and the main problems in meeting the original goal. The company regularly applied for a State operating aid, which was not granted until the late '60s. The municipal and county communal support was also judged to be very modest, at least in the first 10 years. The annual reports reflect the difficult economic situation and the company's will to reach a better goal.

Norsk Bygdekino is exposed to a constant pressure from small places that want cinema visits. It is hard to resist this pressure, because in the smallest and excluded places it is more likely that the need for film screenings feels more intense. However, the operating accounts show that the company does not manage to accommodate the towns' wishes to a greater extent than what is now being done and this is very regrettable. (Annual Report, 1956)

2.10 The company's repertoire: examples from 1960

It goes without saying that the repertoire from one year, in this case 1960, is not necessarily representative of the film offering throughout the entire operating period. According to the amendments added to the articles, the goal of the company had evolved into showing 'good films' – without any further specification. A review of the program for 1960 shows that the travelling cinema had the vast majority of film categories represented, and that the general quality must be regarded as 'acceptable'. In the anniversary paper, Nymoene (1960) wrote:

NB through its repertoire has helped develop the sense of good film art. It applies to all categories of films, from comedy to drama.

An important difference from the general tendency of the permanent cinemas was that the company was receiving a larger portion of ticket revenues coming from Norwegian films than ever before. By 1960, municipalities had received 5.9% of gross income coming from Norwegian films, while the corresponding figures for private and travelling cinemas were 6.3% and 7.6% respectively. The mobile cinema could count for 1/5 of its revenues on Norwegian films – the 20.6% of the total income.

For many years, the company had been keeping good contacts with *Norsk Film A/S*. Already in 1952, an agreement was reached between the parties that Bygdekino would have hosted premieres at the same time as the permanent cinemas of the major cities for those films produced by Norsk Film A/S (Annual Report 1952). The company was obviously screening a fewer number of films than the regular cinemas, since it had to tour the same film for entire weeks or even months. For this reason, the company had a real choice on their repertoire that fixed cinemas did not have to the same extent, but still Bygdekino had to pay attention to its audience in the same way as the other cinemas did.

Of the over 150 films that were shown in 1960, 17 were Norwegian, i.e. about 10% of the total number of given performances.

2.11 After 10 years of activity

In 1960, the company celebrated its 10th anniversary. An anniversary publication, released on that occasion, summarised the adventurous development that the company had undergone during its operating period. In 1950, NB was visiting 100 places. The number increased to 900 in just ten years. At least 1 million visits could be counted during the 1959 operating period. While over 400,000 people participated to the screenings in 1951, the figures reach up to 1.6 million in 1960 (Nymoer 1960). On average, there were 90 performances distributed throughout the whole country every night.

The vast majority of the newspapers also failed in emphasising the importance of this cultural offer to the rural communities of Norway and the importance of the State's financial support. Despite this, and regardless of their political tendency or affiliation, the newspapers underlined the general importance of the company for many small communities. The cars of the company had been well-liked where they had come, and in particular among the villages of coastal areas and islands. Nyhus (1984) reports that:

The screenings of the Mobile Cinema mean quite a lot in the sparsely entertainment life of the towns, where it can be long and expensive to travel to the nearest permanent cinema.

However, it is safe to say that Norsk Bygdekino, through its repertoire, has helped to develop a taste for good cinematography. This applies to all categories of films, from comedy to drama.

The period from the release and up to 1960 was an incredibly successful time for the industry of cinema, speaking on a general level. In the first place this was true for the regular cinemas that, according to KKL's yearbooks and cinema statistics, showed a solid progress in the number of visits until 1960, the top year. The general interest towards cinema and the lack of competition coming from different cultural offerings, may have created the conditions that could explain this background.

In their anniversary year, Bygdekino was, economically speaking, the country's fourth largest cinema. Oslo had a turnover of NOK 22 million, Bergen NOK 5.3 million, Trondheim NOK 3.9 million and Norsk Bygdekino NOK 2.7 million (KKL Yearbook 1961). As the company's entity had become of such size, it was obvious that its business relationships had also favourably turned. The company was never given direct operating grants, but it obtained to be tax-free and it kept on receiving loans from the Norwegian Film Fund over the entire period (Nyhus 1984).

Chapter 3: The recent years

3.1 The Mobile Cinema is merged with KKL

During the last two years the mobile cinema was merged to the National Film Board, the total number of visitors reached a new level. In 1986 it dropped to 196,000, a decline of over twenty thousand compared to the previous year; the following year, it went even lower to 170,000, only one tenth of the highest number reached in 1961 – the peak year for the company. In particular, it was the youngest audience to be absent. The blame was first and foremost put on television, which was extremely popular within the country at that time. ‘There are almost no children’s films anymore, so we have little new to offer (...). The kids see fresher things at home in their living room. They want more action,’ Hjalmar Lippestad told the Labour magazine (1987). ‘The days of the Mobile Cinema are over’, wrote the newspapers at this time. ‘The question is just how long it takes before anyone takes on the burden of putting down the operation.’

In connection to the forthcoming merger with KKL, the newspaper had interviewed Director Fonn, who did not seem enthusiast to take over the responsibility in the management of Bygdekino. Answering if he was willing to financially cover the ambulatory cinema’s operations, Fonn replied that ‘there are limits to how far it can extend to maintain operations’, emphasising that ‘there are alternative ways to run the rural cinema and we will first try out these’ (Nation 1987). Fonn probably had in his mind the 16 mm films that were currently being tested across the country, which were not abandoned before 1989.

KKL had some mixed feelings for the takeover of the mobile company, and this appears quite clear from an article in Film & Kino magazine in 1988, the year the merger took officially place. Here Bjørn Bjørnsen, chairman of KKL, was wondering whether the rural cinema had the right of survive, since the visits had continued their dramatic decrease over the past few years. ‘Can we continue with this, and in case how and for how long?’ wondered Bjørnsen. He claimed it was unrealistic to believe that it was possible to keep on financing the business:

A handful of young people who gather to watch an old film without particular qualities, is far from the social objectives we have with cinema operations. Views (...) do not meet the basic conditions for maintaining Bygdekino. We

must find solutions, if solutions exist, within the economic framework that is given. (Film & Kino no. 3, 1988)

Even though the number of the visits went down, there were still two hundred thousand people in the country who had had their cinema experience at Bygdekino's screenings at the turn of the year 1987-88. The mobile cinema, after being incorporated into KKL, started living under a new roof. From 170,000 sold tickets in 1987, the visits dropped down to almost 140,000 in 1988. The places of screenings were reduced by 40, from 334 to 294 (KKL's Annual Report 1988).

Looking for available solutions that could compensate the falling of ticket revenues, KKL's chairman in 1989 decided to withdraw larger bills directed to those municipalities visited by the mobile cinema. The municipalities had to agree on being committed to cover a possible deficit if the income did not reach the amount of NOK 1,200; they would receive, on the other hand, 25% of the surplus if the amount was achieved. Most of the municipalities, 158, chose to continue their collaboration with Bygdekino (KKL's Annual Report 1989).

Perhaps the biggest innovation for the Mobile Cinema after being merged with KKL was that it was included into the National Loan Scheme plan, introduced in 1988 by KKL itself. This scheme consisted of a support measure aimed to help the running of smaller cinemas, and it guaranteed that KKL would pay for additional copies so that the films could reach each cinema theatre within the country in a shorter amount of time than before. The launch was part of a major initiative conducted by KKL in the '90s, which also included special support measures for children's films and quality contents, and even helped launch new directors. All these measures were specifically mentioned and explained in the 1987 Film and Video Act.

By using, among other things, richly-featured copies, the mobile cinema in the '90s was able to celebrate the screening of a bigger series of films, whose number increased from 10 to 15 per year. One of the first and most known has been Nils Gaup's *Ofelaš* (1987), which became quite popular, as Hjalmar Lippestad remembers. 'When we approached the room, a giant queue was already there several hours before it started. People had come from Finland to see the film' (KKL's Annual Report 1988). The films that had been most popular in the '90s were a mix of broad Hollywood and Norwegian films. On the other side stood Bygdekino, whose screenings

of Norwegian films had had almost 10% more visits than the fixed, regular theatres (KKL's Annual Report 1991).

According to Bræin, the taste of the public had somehow changed in those years. While in the early '90s the classical action films drew most of the people, it became increasingly difficult to understand the new audience's tastes. In the meanwhile, the core audience of the mobile cinema had unexpectedly started to be embodied by the younger, whose age group varied from 10 to 18 years old.

A change of generations took place in 1996, when the head of department Hjalmar Lippestad retired after 45 years of work in Bygdekino's offices. At his resignation, Lippestad was awarded by the King of Norway with a merit for bringing cinema to every audience in the country. It was not just a boss and administrator who signed off, but also a vibrant chapter film history. Lippestad's successor from March 1, 1996, and actual chairman, is Arnfinn Inderhaug.

3.2 More turbulences for Bygdekino

On April 16, 1999, this statement was heard from the journalists of NRK P2's Cultural News: 'The director of cinemas in Oslo, Ingeborg Moræus-Hanssen, will shut down the mobile cinema'. The outpour of Moræus-Hanssen resulted after KKL's national meeting, where Oslo Cinematographers had gathered together, looking for the liquidation of both the mobile cinema and the National Loan Scheme. Moræus-Hanssen explained her position in April 1999 to the newspaper *Firda*: '(...) It is forbidden to demand profitability and efficiency in this industry. Many believe that cinema in Norway is a part of one democratic process, but the fact is that we run a commercial business'.

Worried reactions immediately exploded. The *Addressavisen* called the mobile cinema 'an initiative that was established at the time to provide cultural goods to most people, regardless of whether they lived – in Sinsen or Frøya. We therefore hope that this initiative is still trusted and that cultural bureaucrats (...) know what basic values need to be managed and conserved' (1999). In Valldal, a group of adolescents' comments were reported by VG magazine: 'Do not take our cinema! It's too far for us to go to Ålesund for eight miles to go to the cinema' (VG 1999).

To mitigate the ongoing debates, the chairman of Film & Kino clarified that shutting down the mobile cinema was not something that depended by KKL, since the company was a statutory measure enshrined in the 1987 Film and Video Act. On the contrary, Film & Kino believed that the mobile cinema had the right to survive, but that it was appropriate to look for new forms of operation (VG 1999). Bygdekino ended up gaining even more power thanks to that debate, as department manager Arnfinn Inderhaug observed. The mobile cinema could also count on the support of many small municipality cinemas.

Moræus-Hanssen's views were not just a variation of the traditional centre-periphery debate, as some newspapers pretended, but rather a symptom of an in-depth crisis within the overall Norwegian cinema industry. Moræus-Hanssen's argument was not about getting rid of the mobile cinema, but it regarded a different use of the money originally designed to the National Film Fund (NOK 4.9 million in 1999) to upgrade instead the larger municipal cinemas, which were at the time in a completely new, and threatening, competitive situation.

3.3 From monopoly to competition: foreign companies enter the market

The Norwegian cinema system is unique in an international context, as it was municipally license-based through the 1913 Cinema Law, meaning that the individual municipalities could gain control on whoever wanted to establish a cinema business within their area. This had left a backdrop in the prevailing opinion during the first years of 2000, that film was a speculative medium and that it may be subject to public control. In most of the cases, the municipalities decided to run the cinema themselves, and only a 10% of private business survived. The Cinema Act of 1913 also formed the basis for the establishment of KKL in 1917 as a federation of municipalities which gather together to administrate cinema activities.

The municipal cinema system meant that, unlike most of the other countries in Western Europe, it was common to distinguish between the fields of production, distribution and screening of films. This had led, in turn, to the fact that cinemas, through KKL (today part of Film & Kino), were able to maintain an independent influence over the distributors. Additionally, this had made it possible to introduce some market-regulatory measures; among these, one consisted of a film rental agreement, which meant that smaller cinemas had to pay less amounts than the big ones. Another measure has been the National Loan Scheme.

During the '80s and early '90s, newspapers, radio and television quickly became major private investors' assets, and many opponents of the municipal cinema system started to argue that cinemas should be privatised as well. Politicians started to speak in favour of privatising cinemas, while the Labour Party still thought a municipal-based system should be kept in cinema industry. A new political climate was spreading around the country.

The municipality-based system has been generally capable of being responsive to the recent phenomenon of the decreasing audience (Bono 1991). In the meanwhile, considerable investments were placed upon the renovation of the oldest theatres, transforming them into the modern multiplexes. Nevertheless, after the elections in 1981, the Conservative Party formed the Government, and one of the first decision it took was to deregulate the broadcasting service, allowing the existence of private local radio channels (Solum 2016). The national broadcasting company of NRK, *Norsk rikskringkasting*, ended in the same year, and private radio and television companies were founded and started to compete with the NRK. This happened as a result of the neo-liberal ideology of deregulation which had been circulating in Western Europe over the past three decades.

The main private actors showing interest in the Norwegian cinema market were two of the major media conglomerates in Scandinavia: *Swedish Svensk Filmindustri* (SF) and Danish *Egmont* (Solum 2016). As a consequence, during the '90s, several city councils decided to transfer their theatre license to private owners. In KKL's Annual Report of 1993, it was stated that the Swedish Film Industry had made an offer to the municipality of Tromsø to take over the operations of municipal cinemas. The board writes that the takeover in the case will represent:

A special challenge for our cinema system that is based on the same film-rental agreement between cinemas and distributors. It may also open to the possibility of greater privatisation of Norwegian cinemas, where distributors will want to establish cinema chains, primarily in the larger cities. (KKL's Annual Report 1993)

KKL's board was right in its prediction. The Swedish Film Industry was eventually licensed to run a new municipal cinema in Lillestrøm. In Drammen, the municipality formed a

joint cinema company with the Danish company *Nordisk Film*, where municipality owned 1/3 and Nordisk Film the other 2/3 of the shares. In spite of the changes, however, the municipal cinemas still had a market share of 86.3% in 1999. Nevertheless, there was reason to believe that this percentage would decrease. As the chairman of KKL Kristin Clemet wrote in the Annual Report of 1998: ‘The great Scandinavian cinema chains (...) have clearly defined goals to secure the market shares’.

At the end of the ‘90s, the municipality of Bærum, near the capital Oslo, decided to let *Schibsted*, the new Norwegian conglomerate, establish a private eight-screen multiplex called *Kino 1*, which opened in 1997 (Solum 2016). In the same year, a private multiplex opened in the city of Svandika outside Oslo. In the following years, SF Kino obtained the license to run cinemas in Sandnes and Stavanger, together with some midsized cities in the southern part of Norway: Moss, Tønsberg, Sarpsborg and Skien.

True is that the foreign acquisitions took place in parallel with a decline in the general cinema surveys on a national basis. In 1992, for the first time after the War, the total number of the visits did not reach the amount of 10 million. This was also one of the reasons why the mobile cinema managed to receive an increasing number of requests from disused municipal cinemas; some of the municipalities across the country could not afford to run their own cinema anymore, partly due to the failure of visitor numbers, and the company was asked to take care of the business instead.

3.4 New strategies for Bygdekino

Following the initiative of the Board of Directors of Film & Kino, the 2000 National Assembly adopted new terms for the municipalities visited by the company of ambulatory cinema. The new agreement intended to place higher economic demands on municipalities than ever before, estimating that they had to commit to the payment of a fixed price every time the mobile cinema would come and show films, i.e. NOK 500 per screening night. If the screening night gave a surplus of NOK 1,000, the municipality would then receive 25% of this profit.

Another strategy of survival was found in a closer contact with the municipalities. ‘Here it is important that the mechanics become more visible’, commented Inderhaug. The mechanics/drivers would be connected to the local community, and therefore they would have

much more responsibility than before. 'There will be less emphasis on driving the car, and more emphasis on marketing and contact with municipal administrations and media. This is also something that the mechanics themselves wish for'. Through this initiative, a more constant network of agreements was to be established, assuring the fidelity of the audience, who would not come only for the screenings.

Concerning the introduction of digital cinema, Inderhaug did not see it as a threat: 'The distribution of films is one of the major problems for us. Digital cinema can solve this problem. We could host premieres in 100 places at the same time. The question is what investments are required for each venue, and if there are possibilities for transportable solutions. We do not know yet. But it can be affordable for us if the technology is available at an affordable price'. And, as a matter of fact, Inderhaug's predictions were right.

3.5 The digitalisation

In 1925, the public municipal system of Norway was holding between 80% and 90% of the turnover in the country, a market share which has remained stable until 2010, for more than 100 years. The most dramatic change within the structure of this cinema industry in the following years was the introduction of digital cinema. According to Rolv Gjestland, digital cinema reached a considerable scale only over a three-year period (Film & Kino 2000). The introduction of digital cinema, or 'e-cinema', as it is called, entailed huge challenges especially for the smaller cinemas, not least since each digital planting was predicted to cost approximately one million dollars for its installation (Film & Kino 2000).

Financially, it was from the resources of the Cinema and Film Fund's levies that the bankroll of the digitalisation of Norwegian cinemas could count on. Based on an extensive trial programme for digitalisation initiated in 2006, the Film & Kino 2009 General Meeting decided to launch a nationwide digitalisation programme, comprising 400-plus screens in 220 locations. In line with its mutuality remit, Film & Kino expressly aimed at bringing all cinema theatres on board from day one. The decision to 'go digital' was furthermore enshrined in the Government's 2007 White Paper on film policy, which anchored the digitalisation programme to the principle of citizens' right to own equal access to cultural benefits (Holst and Urbanika 2011).

Earmarking NOK 100 million (€ 13 million) from the Cinema and Film Fund to leverage a NOK 400 million credit line, Film & Kino devised a model for digitalisation which comprised:

- Agreement with six US major studios to supply digital prints under DCI (Digital Cinema Initiative) standards and based on a 40% VPF (Virtual Print Fee) contribution from distributors.
- Agreement with all Norwegian distributors on contribution to the VPF funding model, at same 40% rate as US distribution subsidiaries.
- A technical package, comprising a 2K or 4K projector, a screening server, and installation, on-site service and technical help-line, plus optional extras, to be provided by ‘system integrators’, i.e. technical suppliers, chosen by tenders.
- Financial facilities, by loans or payment in instalments, to cinemas to fund another 40% of costs, raised by a financial institution, chosen by tender.
- NOK 100 million from the Cinema and Film Fund to underwrite the remaining 25-30% of programme costs.

In return, American studios would have a large influence on the choice of technology, on the repertoire, screening options, and technical quality of the films shown to the Norwegian public. The initiative also inevitably resulted in an increasing number of selections and projects aimed to strengthen the position of smaller, often municipal, cinemas. The project called *From monopoly to competition* was addressed to the major cinemas and it was focused on strategy development, efficiency, promotion, and marketing efforts in order to gain more visitors. In other words, Norwegian cinemas were not just heading into a digital age, but were in a general dilemma as described in KKL’s national meeting document (2000):

In order to lower costs and increase revenues, the (cinemas) must become more commercial. In order to maintain the framework conditions and support

the schemes they currently have, they must appear as cultural companies with a clear repertoire profile and accessibility for all groups. The two conditions are difficult to reconcile.

In 2008, Rune Smistad wrote these lines for the *North Sea Screen Partners*:

Virtual Print Fee Agreements (VPF) with the major Hollywood studios (Twentieth Century Fox, United International Pictures, Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures International, Warner Bros Pictures International) to deliver content to the digital cinemas in Norway was signed in June 2009. In October last year the bidding round for the purchase of digital equipment and systems integration was launched. According to Film & Kino the providers have been selected only among the best, in an evaluation of price vs. quality. Most cinemas will be equipped with 2k projectors in the smaller theatres, and 4k in major theatres. Unique Cinema Systems, which is already a supplier to most of the cinemas in Norway, will now be the main provider of digital cinema systems. Unique will also deliver equipment to Bygdekino, a cooperation of rural cinemas, which currently consists of 227 venues.

In the same year, Oslo municipal cinemas inaugurated the first newly built 100% digital multi-screen in the Nordic countries, the six-screen *Ringen* theatre with half of the halls equipped with digital 3D. ‘This is a breakthrough for digitalisation and a milestone which shows that we are heading towards a new technological era’, said Lene Løken, head of Norwegian cinema association Film & Kino. ‘I am also very pleased with the opening of the Ringen Cinema because it drastically increases the screen capacity in Oslo, which in turn increases the capacity for import and overall film availability in Norway. We want to see a better rotation of film premieres. This will notably offer smaller films a better place on Norwegian screens’, continued Løken.

For Norwegian Government, digitalisation of cinemas has been one of the top priorities for 2009 and the national plan has been orchestrated by Film & Kino with support from the State and film distributors (Nordisk Film & TV Fond 2008). After successfully negotiating the VPF contributions and technical standards with the US studios, and after selecting different

system integrators (to avoid monopolisation) for the ten ‘zones’ into which the country was divided, Film & Kino commenced full digital roll-out in early 2010. Digital roll-out to all Norwegian cinemas was completed by the summer of 2011 (Holst and Urbanika 2011).

Film & Kino’s initiative has come under criticism for ‘giving the Americans an easy deal’ in regard to the VPF funding model: distributors, critics feel, should be paying a larger share of the costs. If the criticism is true, however, the additional costs of compensating disadvantaged distribution must probably be regarded as an expense to retain the mutuality concept, which is at the heart of the digitalisation programme. Gone are the days of the ‘biggest gets first’ and the hierarchy of cinemas in relation to release dates. Some sceptics have pointed to the danger of ‘crowding out’ on Norwegian screens – smaller films being squeezed out of screening space/time to make room for US blockbusters, now available in digital format to all cinemas on the day of national release.

The ability of cinemas to employ the widest choice of titles available in digital format to serve the cultural and entertainment needs of their audiences needs to be kept in mind. Since political support for the digitalisation programme rests on the principle of equal access to cultural benefits, cinemas must demonstrate that going digital with public support brings would add cultural and social value to their audiences (Holst and Urbanika 2011).

3.6 The most recent years

The Swedish company SF Kino gradually became one of the main challengers to municipal system in Norway. In 2010, the Swedish chain owned about 20% of the market shares: it was the first time the municipal Norwegian system had a true and strong competitor with ambitious plans. In the last ten years, the company doubled its market shares, through the control of the cinemas in the biggest towns of the country; despite this, until 2013 the municipal network of cinemas in Norway still controlled about 80% of the total market.

At the beginning of 2013, however, two of the biggest cities in the country, Oslo and Bergen, claimed that they were ready to sell their cinema theatres. The two dominant companies within cinema industry in Norway are nowadays Sweden’s *SF Bio* (SF Kino), and Denmark’s *Nordisk*. In March 2013, politicians of Bergen decided to sell 49% of the city municipal cinemas to SF Kino. Just some weeks after, politicians in Oslo decided that they would follow

Bergen's example and the Danish company managed to buy 100% of Oslo Kino, and by doing so the company took over eight local municipal cinemas around the country. A few months later, in July 2013, Ålesund, on the West coast, also chose Nordisk's company to run its theatres, and the same happened in the city of Kristiansand in the Southern part of Norway in 2014 (Solum 2016).

Through these takeovers, Nordisk could own more than 30% of the total market in the country. By the end of 2014, the two Scandinavian media conglomerates controlled nearly 60% of the Norwegian cinema market. The municipalities are still in charge of licences, and at the same time the foreign Scandinavian companies are able to maintain local monopolies without having to fear any possible competitor. In the history of Nordic cinema, Scandinavia's national cinema companies had always operated within their national borders. Today, this situation has dramatically changed, as it is possible to see now a context in which two multinational cinema companies of Sweden and Denmark compete for market share across the region of Norway. The purpose of both companies is to expand their business operations by entering new markets, following the example of what the other media companies in Europe have been doing.

A further step in the recent transition of Nordic cinema market was taken in 2015, when the Swedish equity company *Ratos* decided to sell the company's share in Nordic Cinema Group to the European company Bridgepoint. According to Bridgepoint's chairman in the Nordic region, Mikael Lövgren, the company saw some potential for Nordic Cinema Group to 'accelerate its growth in the region and in adjacent countries' (Bridgepoint 2015). In the country, this development corresponded to a growing political willingness to give up on the management of municipal cinemas. It is still a local, license-based system, but the decisions made by the municipalities towards the privatisation of the markets have been uniform. In other words, local licensing is still maintained according to the Cinema Act, but it seems quite impossible that a privatisation process like this can be stopped (Solum 2016).

The year 2013 was thus the beginning of the end of what had been a unique municipal system in Norway. Among the country's largest cities, only Trondheim, the third largest, has kept its cinemas running through the municipalities. In Trondheim, in contrast with Norway as a whole, the social democratic Labour Party still constitutes the political majority (Solum 2016). Another change in the market sector was announced in August 2014, when the municipal cinemas in Tromsø and Trondheim stated they had initiated a new chain, *KinoNor*, in response to the quick changes that had been taken place. The chain consists of five local, still

independent, municipal cinemas, which were ready to face economic negotiations for film rentals, technical equipment and cinema advertising. It now holds approximately 10% of the market. Several municipal systems are following the example of KinoNor by gathering under the same chain, so as to be stronger in competing with private cinemas. In Bergen, SF Kino is actually owning the 94% of the total market share.

A peculiar observation to be made is that these Scandinavian, foreign companies never compete on the prices nor on the choice of repertoire, but they prefer competing instead on comfort and service. This can be regarded as a typical Scandinavian form of competition (Holst 2017). Through the arrival of private cinema companies, in a sense, the market has been normalised. However, one of the most crucial questions is whether these recent developments will result in a commercialisation of the repertoires provided, with fewer art films reaching the screens.

3.7 Figures from today's cinema in Europe

The following data have been taken from European MEDIA Salles, 2017. In 2016 admissions increase in Europe's cinemas (+2%), thanks in particular to Central and Eastern Europe. 97% of screens are now digital. From statistics elaborated by MEDIA Salles on the basis of the initial, still provisional, figures, it emerges that in the 35 countries analysed, from Portugal to Belarus, from Iceland to Cyprus, admissions have grown to 1,276.0 million with a 2% rise over the 1,250.6 million of 2015.

Nonetheless, a more detailed analysis reveals a situation lacking in homogeneity. The 19 Western European countries – with a total of 892.9 million admissions compared to the 895.2 in 2015 – close the year with a substantially equal balance (-0.3%), whilst the 16 in Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean Rim see a flattering increase of 7.8%, with a total of 383.1 million tickets sold, compared to the 355.4 million of 2015. This part of Europe more than doubled its audiences since 2005.

The substantial balance that seems to emerge from the overall figures for Western Europe also conceals rather uneven trends in different countries, with some markets gaining admissions and others recording more or less marked drops. These differences are also to be seen on Western Europe's top 5 markets. Here, France, the continent's leading market, gains

over 7 million spectators (+3.6%) and, with 212.7 million tickets sold, achieves its second-best result over the past 50 years. Since 1966 the country managed to better this result only in 2011 (217.2 million spectators). 2016 was a positive year for Italy, too, where, for screens operating for at least 60 days a year, and according to the forecasts elaborated by MEDIA Salles, admissions amount approximately to 112 million spectators, a result that has not been achieved since 2010. 2016 was a good year for Spain, too, which grew by 6.0% and manages to cross the 100 million thresholds in terms of tickets sold, a result last achieved in 2010. The United Kingdom, instead, sees a slight dip (-2.1%), which nonetheless, with over 168 million spectators, confirms its position as Western Europe's second market and in terms of box office achieves a new record.

Instead, the drop recorded in Germany, a country where cinema-going has followed a rather rocky path in the last few years, is more marked. In 2016 admissions amounted to a little over 120 million (-13.0%), equal to the 2014 figures. Nonetheless, box office crossed the billion-euro mark for the fourth time. Light and shade on the smaller markets, too. Audiences decrease in Denmark (-2.8%), Switzerland (-6.7%) and Austria (-10.0%), as, according to the estimates calculated by MEDIA Salles, in Luxembourg (-4%) and Belgium (-7%). Finland remains more or less stable, slightly (-0.6%) taking the edge off the record 2015 result. Positive news, instead, from Greece (+2.2%), Portugal (+2.5%), Sweden (+3.6%) and the Netherlands (+3.7%), where the uninterrupted chain of increases since 2008 continues. Growth in Ireland, too, (+4%) and, even more markedly, in Norway (+9%).

3.8 Figures from today's cinema in Norway

Cinema is the most widely used cultural offer in Norway. About 70% of the population goes to the cinema theatres at least once every year. On a national average, the entire population has been at the cinema from a minimum of 3.1 times in 2014, to a maximum of 4.5 times.

A survey conducted by Film & Cinema in 2015 shows that people's interest in watching films at the cinema is still high and that there is a potential for continued growth. The 2016 figures can be seen as a confirmation of this. In the same survey, most people affirm that the film is the most important factor for the attending the screenings in theatres, but also that the cinema itself and the 'overall cinema experience' must satisfy them. Almost without exception, the audience seems to be generally content with the service, and they visit theatres more often

than before. 80% of the theatres within the country demonstrate that they have increased their overall admissions.

Film & Kino interviewed groups of visitors whose age varied from 9 to 79 years old for its national survey in 2015. The following report is based both on the results of the mentioned interviews, completed in March/April 2015, and also on the national surveys of the last 3 years (*Årbok*) realised by the same company. In addition, figures from Statistics Norway (SSB) are reported.

Number of interviews	1,770 total interviews, among which 1,131 people have been to the cinema last year
Age of population interviewed	9-79 years old
Delivered by	Ipsos MMI
Authority	Film & Kino and Norwegian Film Distributors Association
Circulation	500

Figure 3.1. Premises for the interviews conducted by Film & Kino in 2015. Source: Kinoundersøkelsen 2015

About 70% of the population goes to the cinema theatre over the year, according to Statistics Norway (2015). This has proved to be a very stable number, in spite of the growing population, which has been contributing to decrease somehow the visit per capita. From the mid-80's, the total number of visits in Norway has been almost completely stable. One year it went below 10 million and one year over 13, but, generally speaking, it has remained constant around 11.5 million. What truly changed is that Norwegian films gained a larger share than before; from 2008, they have had over 2 million visitors each year, and the respective share raised to 22.3% (Kinoundersøkelsen 2015).

High proportion of audience attending cinema screenings means high cinema accessibility to the venues. The Norwegian cinema system is organised in such a way that people have a cinema offer close to where they live: 86% of the population has a permanent cinema within their municipality or receives visits by Bygdekino's screenings. 50% of the population has a cinema theatre less distant than 5 km from where they live (Kinoundersøkelsen 2015).

The 2016 total number of visits of 13.1 million paying spectators has been the best since 1983. The 2016 results are the best not only for Norwegian film attendances, but they are also the second-best results for foreign film performances over the past ten years. Many have been the films able to attract a wide audience; 21 films have had over 200,000 visitors, scoring a record as average number of spectators per film.

The red curve below shows the tendency in the number of cinema theatres actively functioning within the country from 1987 to 2015 (Figure 3.2). It has long been falling, but digitisation in 2011 managed to stop this decrease. The smaller cinemas became able to compete with the big ones also on the most popular screened films. The evolution led to a general increase of visitors, but mostly it brought a new air of optimism – including a relatively small increase in the number of theatres opened from 2011 on (Årbok 2016).



Figure 3.2. Number of cinema theatres 1987-2015. Source: Årbok 2016

The total balance of cinema overall admissions at the end of 2016 is 13,125,068. The percentage increased by +9, over a million higher than in 2015, and has been the highest since 1983. Only once after 2016, the total number of visits went over 13 million (2003). The three most popular films in 2016 were *Kongens Nei*, *Snekker Andersen og Julenissen*, and *Børning 2* (Figure 3.3).

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2015-16%
Total	12,124,008	11,802,662	11,085,134	12,037,874	13,125,068	9.0%
Norwegian films	2,164,983	2,690,110	2,707,834	2,465,049	3,143,381	27.5%
Norwegian market share	17.9%	22.8%	24.4%	20.5%	23.9%	-
Admission per citizen	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.5	-

Figure 3.3. Total admissions and market share 2012-2016. Source: Årbok 2016

69%

Of the population was at the cinema in 2016.

4.5

The average number of visits is 4.5 per year.

The average number distributed to the entire population (9-79) is instead 3.1 visits.

86%

Of the population has a cinema offer in its municipality.

Figure 3.4. Overall figures of 2016. Source: Statistics Norway / R&D

The gross value of sold cinema tickets passed one billion in 2011, while in 2016 tickets were sold for almost 1.4 billion (Figure 3.5). The increase in revenues of +11.7% from 2015 to 2016 was mainly due to the visitor growth (+9%) and to the increasing of VAT rate of +2% from 8 to 10 in 2016. The market share of Norwegian films in 2016, 22.6%, was the same as it was in 2011. A market share of 22.6% for Norwegian national films has been the highest share recorded since 1975.

Exact amount of box office in 2016: 1,375,197,359

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2015-16
Total	1,110.1	1,095.2	1,082.1	1,231.4	1,375.2	143.8

Norwegian films	184.5	221.1	232.3	231.3	310.8	79.4
Foreign films	925.6	873.1	849.8	1,000.1	1,064.4	64.3
Market share of Norwegian films	16.6%	20.3%	21.5%	18.8%	22.6%	-
Average ticket price	91.6	92.8	97.6	102.3	104.8%	2.5

Figure 3.5. Total box office 2012-16. Source: Årbok 2016

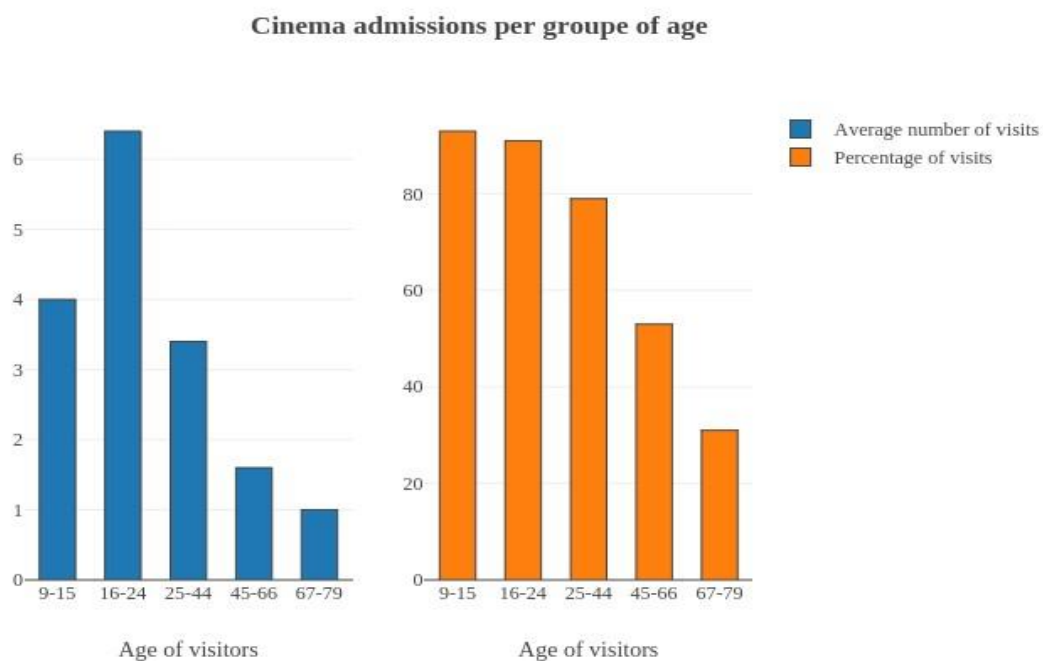


Figure 3.6. The blue bars show the number of cinema visits on average for each age group. The orange bars show the total percentage of the population who has been to the cinema. Source: Statistics Norway 2015

Total number of admissions over the last 10 years

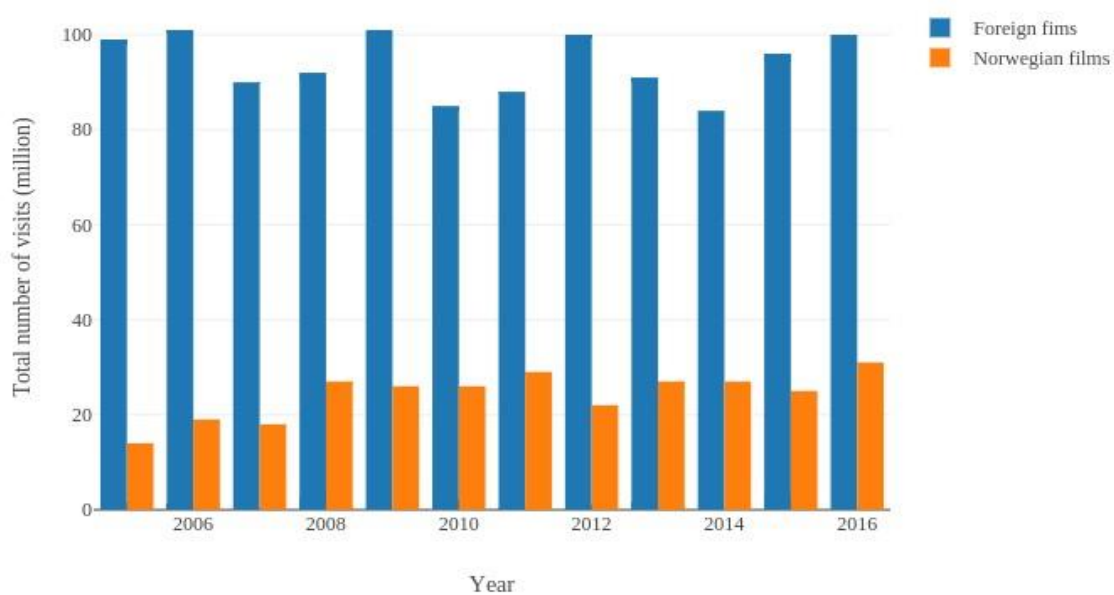


Figure 3.7. The number of visits varies around an average of 11.5 million over the last ten years. The figures show the total admissions distributed among Norwegian films and foreign films. The numbers are expressed in millions. Source: Kinoundersøkelsen 2015

Number of cinema theatres and rooms

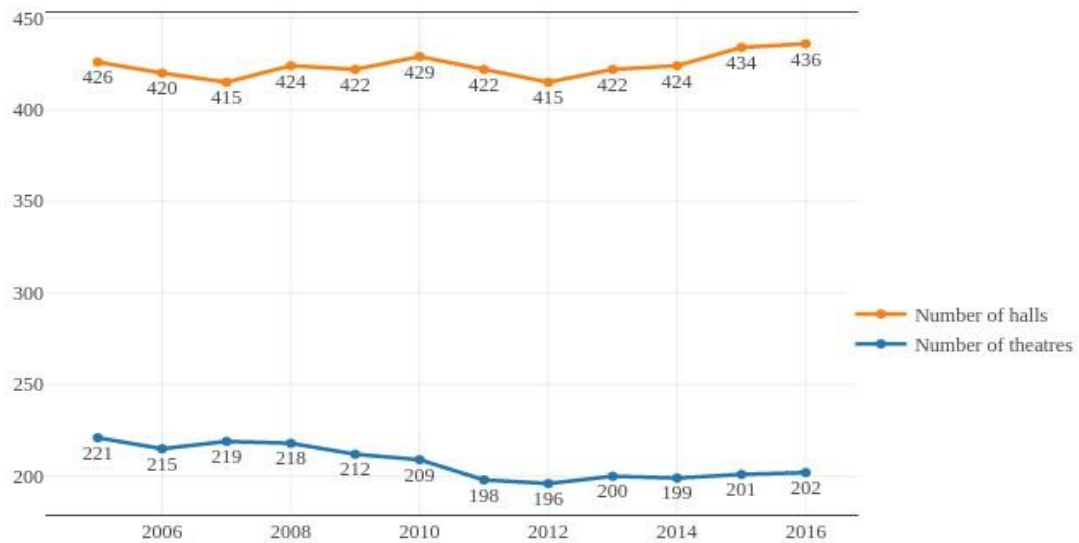


Figure 3.8. The cinemas get more halls. When the number of halls does not go down in parallel with the number of theatres, it is due to the fact that several cinemas are rebuilt or move to new houses with several halls. Source: Årbok 2016

The foremost feature of Norwegian cinema system is that almost everybody is offered a cinema close to where they live; in practice, this means that there are many small cinemas. Indeed, nearly half the total number of cinemas in the country had less than 10,000 visitors in 2014 (Bygdekino is not included in these figures). Additional charts available in Film & Kino’s reports shows that among the 2014 admissions figures, only 6% of the cinema companies, i.e. 12 cinemas, had more than 200,000 visits, while almost half of them had less than 10,000 visitors.

The decisive factor for visiting cinema theatres, as for the other cultural activities, is accessibility, which is not only about distance, but also about frequency and variety of offered contents. Norwegian cinemas are in a unique position when it comes to availability; a large part of the population is offered cinema theatres close to where they live. 350,000 performances and approximately 200 new films throughout the year provide a frequent and varied overall offer. This means that cinema is the mostly chosen cultural activity, while concerts and sport

events immediately follow. The figures are taken from Statistics Norway's Cultural Barometer 2016.

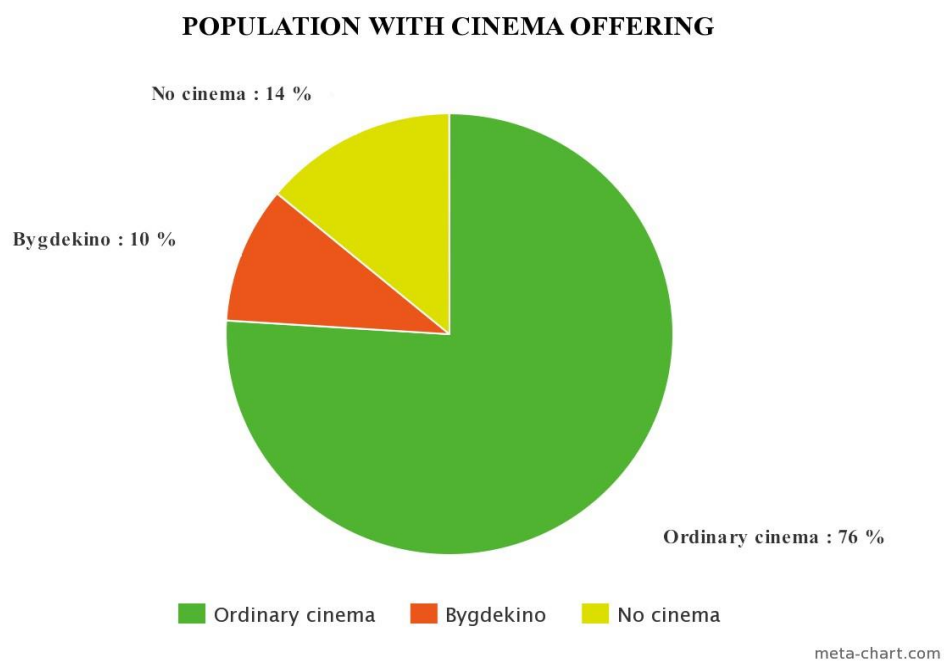
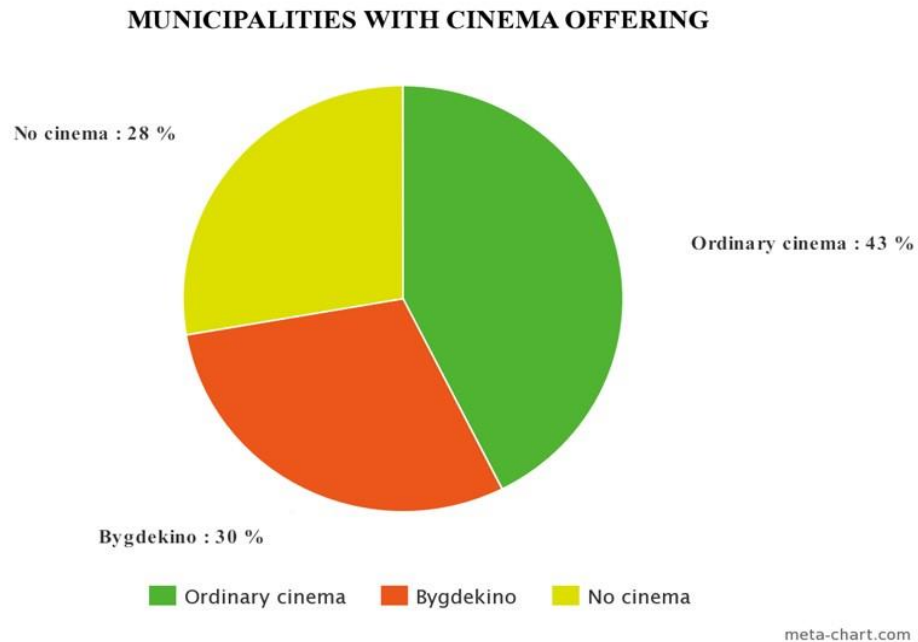


Figure 3.9 & Figure 3.10. 86% of municipalities have cinema offer within their area. 183 of the country's 428 municipalities have a permanent cinema, and Bygdekino shows films in over 120 municipalities. Source: Statistics Norway's Cultural Barometer 2016

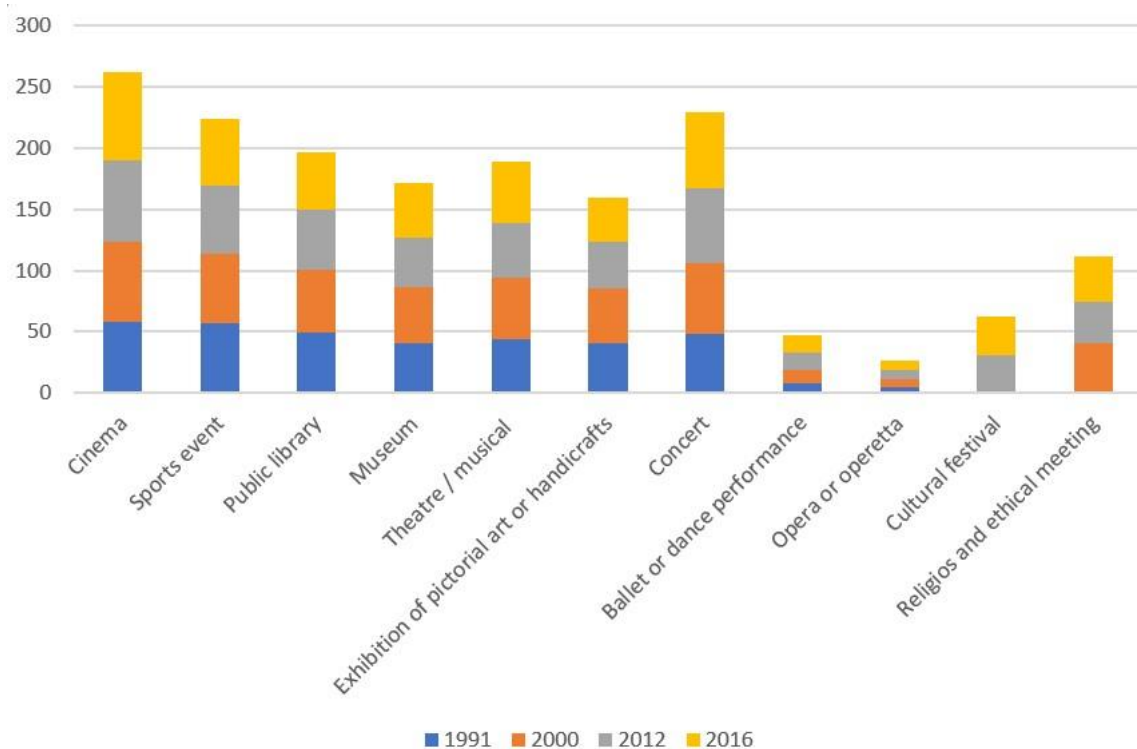


Figure 3.11. Cinema is the most widely used cultural offer. The chart shows the proportion of the population who used different cultural activities from 1991-2016. Source: Statistics Norway 2017

In Norway there are 194 cinema enterprises, 202 cinema houses and 439 rooms. The number of cinemas has been decreasing for many years, but after the digitisation promoted by the American studios the decline stopped, and new venues were opened instead. The digitalisation, completed in 2011, unexpectedly reversed the development of small and medium-sized cinemas, since they managed to be able to get the new films much faster than before, thus attracting a wider portion of audience than before.

To the question of where it is preferred to watch films, 47% of the interviewed answered with ‘film at the cinema theatre’ as their first choice. However, the group of audience whose age varied between 20 and 29 years old preferred the online streaming with a percentage of 50 (Figure 3.12). In just a few years, streaming and other online services have overtaken the routine of buying physical copies of films. Even though the audience prefers going to the cinema theatre, most of the films are watched at home. However, since going to the cinema is

the first choice for many people, there is a great potential for the cinema theatres to expect spectators.

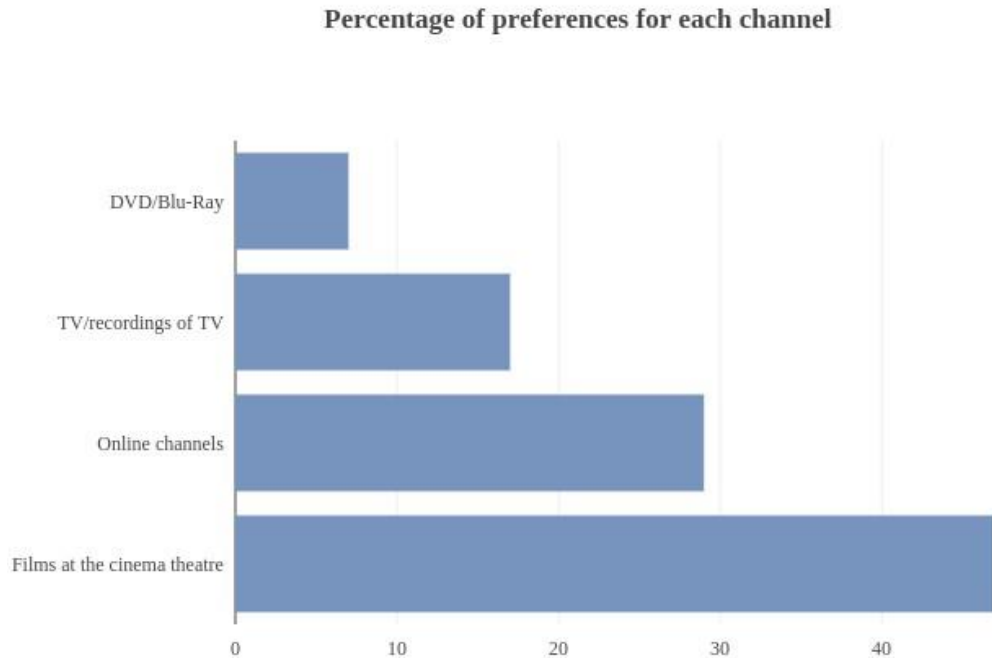


Figure 3.12. 47% of the interviewed like watching films at the cinema theatre. The participants were asked to prioritise between different channels (more choices for online services are exhibited). In total, 85% have cinema theatre as first, second or third choice. Source: Kinundersøkelsen 2015

To the question of why going to the cinema, the interviewed responded in 2015 as they had answered in the previous surveys: there must be a film they want to see, but - to a greater or lesser extent - the visits deal also with other issues. The cinema is a place where to spend quality time with friends and family, it is a place to do something different, and a place to be entertained.

Both in terms of watching films and quality of the abovementioned additional factors, the theatres must compete with other platforms and other venues. But cinema has some qualities which are not found elsewhere. Its quality is superior in picture and sound effects, and it provides its visitors with an experience which is perceived as ‘more authentic’ (Figure 3.13).

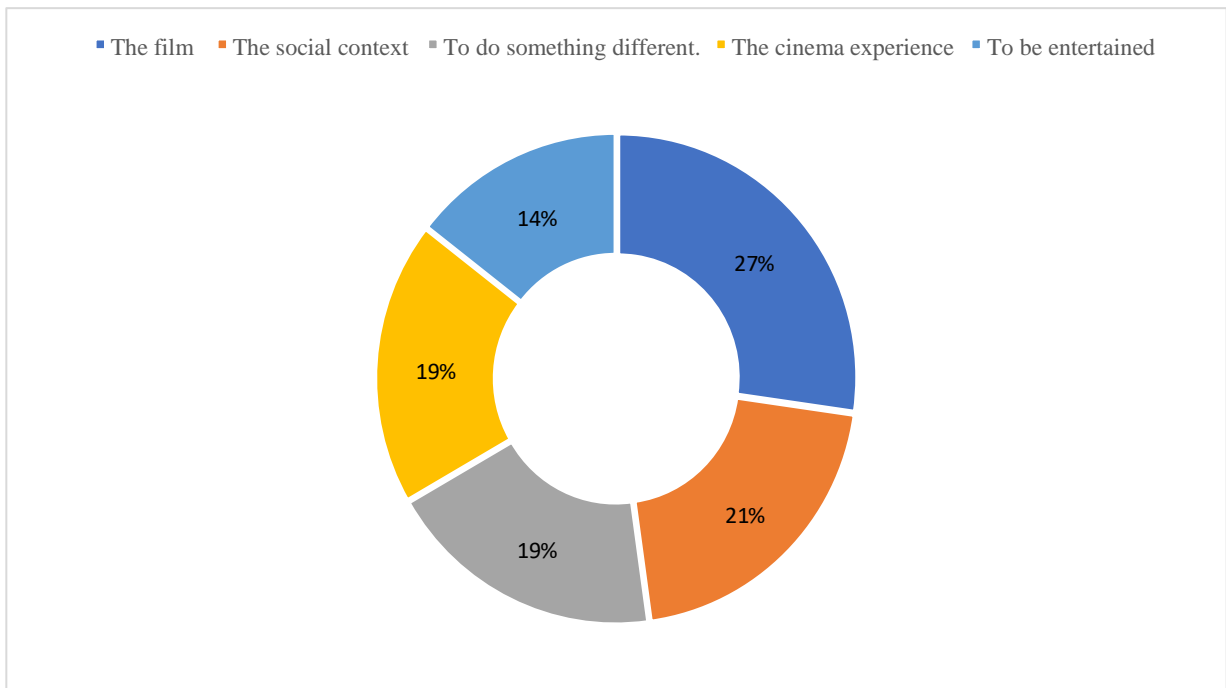


Figure 3.13. Reasons to go to the cinema theatre. Source: Kinoundersøkelsen 2015

Another issue was the relationship between customer loyalty and customer satisfaction. It has been asked how satisfied the filmgoers are with their cinema theatre, and from the results it seems they are relatively satisfied. Of the elements ranked as most important, 80% stated that the cinema is ‘good’ (50%) or ‘very good’ (30%). A hypothesis can be that most cinemagoers are only loosely connected to cinema. 10% of the audience is composed of high frequency users, and 13% is very interested in cinema (Statistics Norway 2012), but the majority does not have this tight relationship with the cinema theatre. In marketing terms, it can be assumed that customer loyalty is low. If this is really the case, the quality of the experience as a cinema visitor is crucial and must be increased. A goal for cinemas may be to try and raise the proportion of that audience who claims they are very satisfied with cinema services (Kinoundersøkelsen 2015).

With Nordisk Film’s acquisition of Oslo Cinema in 2013, almost 1/4 of the market was moved from municipal to private ownership. In 2012, municipal-driven cinemas had 82.6% of visits and 78% of the halls. Only four years later, local municipal-based cinemas had 57.4% of the visits, while the private cinemas competed with a percentage of 42.6. Concerning the overall number of the halls, the proportion between municipal and private rooms in 2016 is respectively 65% and 35%. From 2015 to 2016 there had been no significant changes in the proportions between municipal and private cinemas.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2015-16	2015-16 %
Municipal*	10,019,738	6,945,892	6,427,125	6,905,433	7,530,410	624,977	9.1%
Non-municipal	2,104,270	4,856,770	4,658,009	5,132,441	5,594,658	462,217	9.0%
Total	12,124,008	11,802,662	11,085,134	12,037,874	13,125,068	1,087,194	9.0%

Figure 3.14. Number of visits in municipal and non-municipal cinemas 2012-16. Source: Årbok 2016

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2015-16	2015-16%
Municipal	144	141	139	141	141	0	0.0%
Non-municipal	44	51	52	52	53	1	1.9%
Total	188	192	191	193	194	1	0.5%

Figure 3.15. Number of theatres in municipal and non-municipal cinemas 2012-16. Source: Årbok 2016

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2015-16	2015-16%
Municipal	325	279	278	283	288	5	1.8%
Non-municipal	90	143	147	151	151	0	0.0%
Total	415	422	425	434	439	5	1.2%

Figure 3.16. Number of rooms in municipal and non-municipal cinemas 2012-16. Source: Årbok 2016

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Municipal	82.6%	58.9%	58.0%	57.4%	57.4%
Non-municipal	17.4%	41.1%	42.0%	42.6%	42.6%

Figure 3.17. Market share results in municipal and non-municipal cinemas 2012-16. Source: Årbok 2016

*Municipal: municipal cinemas are considered to be all those cinemas where the municipality has at least 51% ownership. This means that some cinemas belonging to the private cinema chains in

this context are counted as municipalities. We are talking about Bergen, Sandnes and Stavanger, all of which are part of both SF Kino and Kino Sør; in Kristiansand, Arendal and Farsund, where the theatres are part of the chain Nordic Film Cinema, the ownerships are shared between private chains and municipalities, and the municipalities own the biggest part of the shares.

Chapter 4: The surveys

4.1 The company's structure of today

Film & Kino represents cinemas in Norway and works for the cinema's interests and terms. It is an industry and member organisation for both municipal and private cinemas. The organisation was founded in 1917 under the name of *Kommunale Kinematografers Landsforbund* (KKL), and it also runs Bygdekino, the national mobile cinema. Film & Kino works for theatres' position and own tasks such as: administration associated with the operation of digital cinemas, promotion and industry activities, technical assistance and competence building, development of cinema industry, consulting and skills development, film rental negotiations for small cinemas, information and public relations. The affiliated cinemas, 196 to the present day, need to pay a volunteer membership fee to be members of Film & Kino. Nowadays municipal cinemas are getting funds from both the Government and the local municipalities, while Film & Kino is financing everything excepting Bygdekino (Holst 2017).

Bygdekino is a travelling cinema which offers screenings in places that do not have their own permanent cinema; it has its own mobile equipment and shows films in all types of rooms. Like any other cinema in Norway, it shows digital films, and offers 3D performances. The mobile cinema is an easy way to provide places with film screenings for the people they live in. All that is needed is a suitable room and specific conditions to respect in order to get regular visits. The mobile cinema provides films, cinema machines and all the necessary display equipment if the visited place does not have it.

The company is the country's only travelling cinema. It shows films ranging from gymnasiums and community houses to beautiful cultural houses with amphitheatres and permanent cinema facilities. The venues are very different both in comfort and services. In some of them a little kiosk is run by local people. With around 120,000-150,000 visitors a year and 188 venues, Bygdekino is a major cinema in a country scale (Figure 4.1). The mobile cinema is also the country's most flexible cinema. Companies, organisations and teams can easily hire company's equipment in order to perform cinema exhibitions wherever they wish. The company has also the possibility to arrange classroom performances, and to show films related to festivals and other events outside of the regular film programming.

Cinema	Admissions in 2016	Admissions in 2017	Variation	Ticket income 2016	Ticket income 2017	Variation	Ticket price
Nordisk Film Kino, Oslo	1,736,641	1,704,779	-1.8 %	200,480,716	200,799,684	0.2 %	117.8
Bergen kino	839,014	763,152	-9.0 %	92,651,159	87,610,644	-5.4 %	114.8
Trondheim kino AS	634,613	572,182	-9.8 %	69,917,312	63,694,977	-8.9 %	111.3
Stavanger: SF Kino	396,486	356,199	-10.2 %	46,542,679	42,427,649	-8.8 %	119.1
Nordisk Film Kino, Drammen	317,957	288,761	-9.2 %	35,851,417	32,990,279	-8.0 %	114.2
Kristiansand kino - KinoSør AS	289,194	246,779	-14.7 %	30,826,742	26,781,764	-13.1 %	108.5
Lillestrøm: SF Kino	267,728	239,092	-10.7 %	30,867,728	28,937,556	-6.3 %	121.0
Sandnes: SF Kino	266,675	237,847	-10.8 %	31,774,227	29,108,154	-8.4 %	122.4
Fredrikstad kino	238,285	215,014	-9.8 %	22,160,334	20,404,475	-7.9 %	94.9
Tromsø: Aurora Kino Fokus	221,656	213,287	-3.8 %	24,017,351	22,611,797	-5.9 %	106.0
Sandvika: SF Kino	230,364	209,065	-9.2 %	26,486,117	24,808,871	-6.3 %	118.7
Ski: SF Kino	219,020	187,566	-14.4 %	25,071,150	22,483,445	-10.3 %	119.9
Nordisk Film Kino, Tønsberg - Kilden	193,904	177,653	-8.4 %	21,037,594	19,221,299	-8.6 %	108.2
Haugesund: Edda Kino	167,126	154,808	-7.4 %	14,719,260	13,468,612	-8.5 %	87.0
Hamar Kino KF	170,437	138,197	-18.9 %	17,367,935	14,663,975	-15.6 %	106.1
Nordisk Film Kino, Ålesund	128,706	121,907	-5.3 %	14,504,545	13,700,476	-5.5 %	112.4
Sotra: SF Kino	120,714	119,154	-1.3 %	13,510,530	13,633,753	0.9 %	114.4
Ullensaker Kino	116,773	105,094	-10.0 %	11,902,623	10,891,335	-8.5 %	103.6
Lillehammer kino	105,475	100,641	-4.6 %	9,647,955	9,526,062	-1.3 %	94.7
Bygdekinoen	119,965	97,449	-18.8 %	10,577,724	8,240,900	-22.1 %	84.6

Figure 4.1. The figure reports the total number of admissions and total income from ticket sales for every cinema of the country. The final column on the right indicates the ticket price. The complete list is not reported here; to consult it, please visit Film & Kino website. Source: Film & Kino 2017



Figure 4.2. Municipalities visited by Bygdekino in 2017. Source: Bygdekino website

The mobile cinema shows fresh and current films that can reach a wide audience, but some narrower films are also shown in some places which express this specific will. It must be said that the mobile cinema is especially aimed at children and adolescents, since they compose the biggest part of its audience. The operators of Bygdekino usually host two performances in each cinema venue. The first one is addressed to the youngest audience and families, since the first screening is usually a children film – often of national production. The second screening is, instead, directed to adults. There are 12 projectionists in total, and each of them travels around a well-defined area within the country - for example, Oslo's area is included in ring no. 101. Every autumn, the team of Bygdekino sets up the squares for next year's film shows.

Film screening is still licensed, this means that municipalities must give their license before the company starts showing films in each place. A fundamental prerequisite is that there must be some visitor potential at the site, and the second essential condition is that a suitable venue is available, so that an acceptable screening can be planned. What is more, the venue should have a central and easily-reachable location within its site. A local team must prepare the room, ensure that posters are hung up, assist in ticket control and provide their own equipment – if they already own one; usually it is necessary that everything is ready at least an hour before the first screening is due. Occasionally, the company's equipment is rented by permanent theatres through some special agreements.

It is expected that the venue will contribute with local marketing efforts. The venue will pay a fixed price of NOK 1,750 from January 2018 plus a 25% of tax income per screening night. If the total screening income for a night reaches the amount of NOK 1,100, the venue will earn a 25% over the excess amount. Since the average ticket price is NOK 100, this means that local people need to sell approximately 100 total tickets to earn over the screenings (Inderhaug 2017). The following list provides a detailed overview of the necessary conditions the mobile cinema requires for the venues to be visited:

- The venue must pay a fixed amount of NOK 1,750 plus 25% of tax income per screening day (usually two performances).
- The locals must ensure that the venues are kept clean and clear (cleaning, heating). They should provide snow clearance and good parking at the entrance.

- The locals must take care of poster placement, help hang them in (and out), and set up the room. Locals must be present to help with some heavy lifting.
- The venue will be assisted with ticket control, and local people will provide security during the performances. Local contacts must also be familiar with fire instructions, power plans and the other necessary security measures.
- The local contact must be in the venue and the room must be opened at least one hour before the first screening. The local contact must also be present before, during and after the performance.
- Cancellations must be notified to the company in reasonable advance. Cancellations that occur less than 14 days before the planned date will have to pay the fixed amount of NOK 1,750 plus 25% tax income.
- The venue must notify the mobile cinema if the posters have not been received one week before the day of the screening.
- The venue must have an organisation number.

In addition, the mobile cinema commits itself to:

- Inform the venues of any change of the scheduled screening days in reasonable advance.
- Send posters for future performances at least one week in advance.
- Inform the audience and venues about film programs on their own website.
- Pay the venues 25% of the net screening income (excluding 12% VAT) for over NOK 1,100 per screening day. This applies to places that are not VAT registered.
- Pay the venues 25% of the screening income (excluding 12% VAT) for over NOK 1,100 per screening day. For venues that are VAT registered, VAT is also paid.
- Provide two free passes for the local people who arrange poster hanging.
- Not require the payment of the fixed amount for the screening days if mobile cinema itself declines.

The agreement is valid for the entire calendar year and may be terminated on a monthly basis.

4.2 Figures from the recent years

4.2.1 2016: a record year

For Bygdekino, 2016 performed as a record year. Since 1990, the number of screened films had never been so high. It was also a year in which many popular Norwegian films were produced, attracting community cinema audiences widely. As a matter of fact, the percentage of tickets sold for Norwegian films was 53%. The national films in 2016 managed to be watched by a total amount of 82,117 visitors – approximately half the total admissions of the year (Figure 4.3). Children movies keep maintaining their popularity; the most watched were *Snekker Andersen* and *Julenissen*. In the next places came the *Kongens Nei.* and *Børning 2*.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2015-16	2015-16%
Overall visits	116,405	111,399	122,592	120,950	152,604	31,350	25.5%
Admissions for Norwegian films	36,492	55,332	62,656	50,070	82,117	32,047	64.0%
Norwegian share	31.3%	49.2%	50.7%	40.8%	53.3%	-	-
Number of performances	3,578	3,696	3,780	3,760	4,028	268	7.2%
Number of venues	171	177	171	174	177	3	1.7%

Figure 4.3. Bygdekino's figures 2012-2016. The venues are visited by 12 mobile cinema systems.

Bygdekino also serves four cinemas with their own permanent facilities. Source: Bygdekino figures 2017

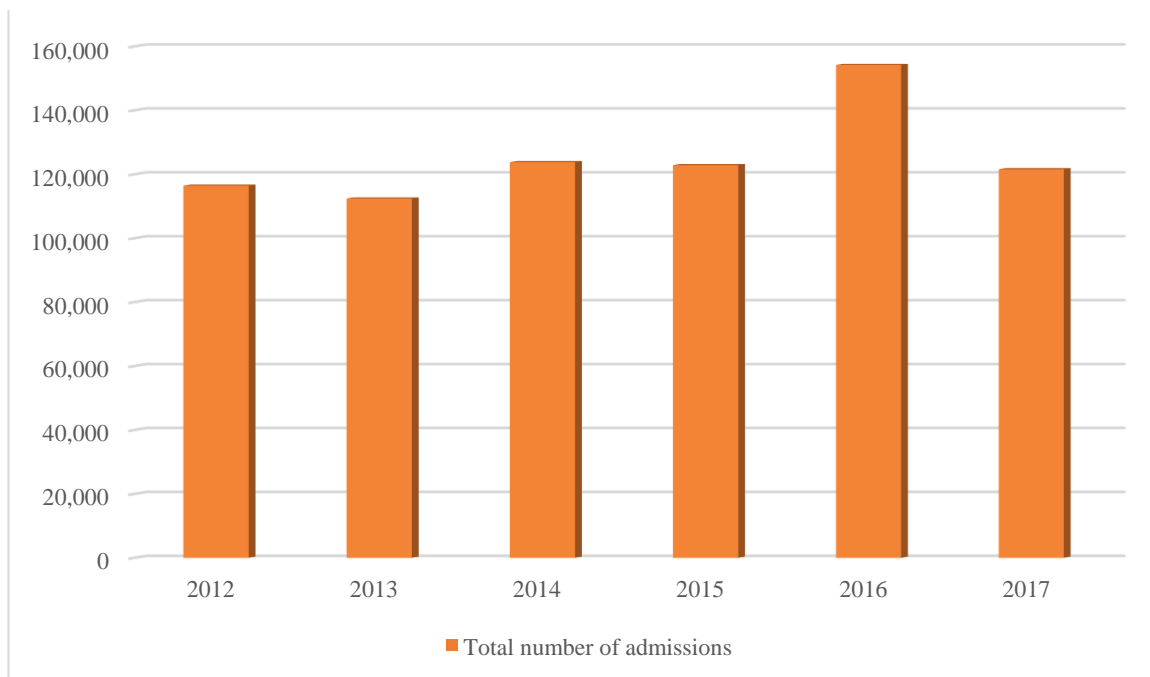


Figure 4.4. Total number of admissions for Bygdekino 2012-2017. Source: Bygdekino figures 2017

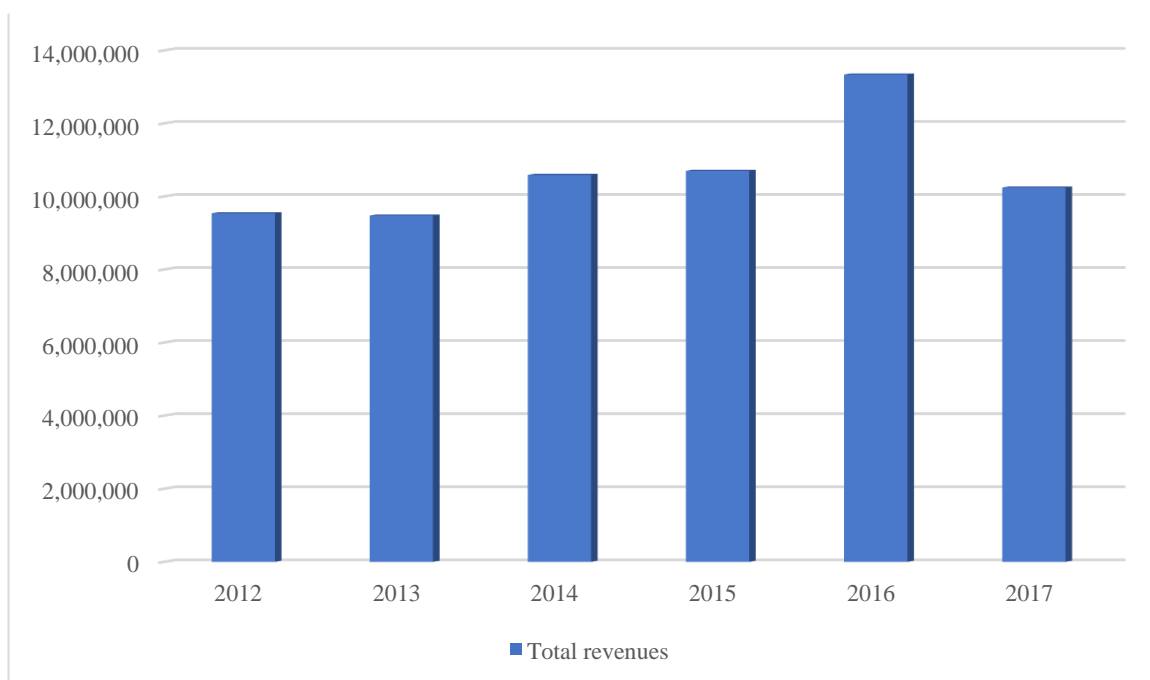


Figure 4.5. Total revenues for Bygdekino 2012-2017. The values are expressed in NOK. Source: Bygdekino figures 2017

Unlike 2016, statistics in 2017 appear to have returned to the average level for both total income and admissions, at least regarding the period stretching from 2012 to the present day,

although in 2016 ten fewer places had been visited than in 2017. As the overall summary shows, the remarkable increase in both income and number of admissions of 2016 does not seem to be related to any particularly high increase in the number of films screened (Figure 4.7) or in a superior number of visited venues (Figure 4.8). The reason why 2016 went so well in the total admissions' figures is probably to be found in the fact that a good percentage of what was screened has been capable of attracting great groups of visitors (Inderhaug 2017).

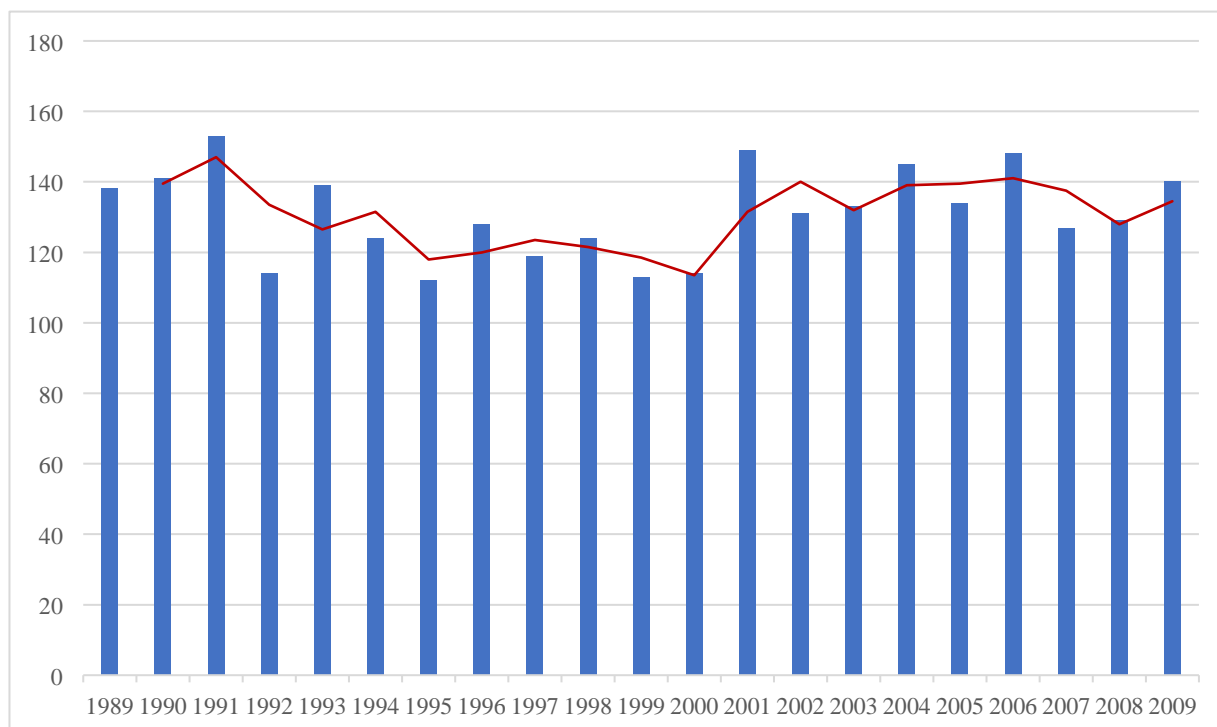


Figure 4.6. Number of admissions 1989-2009. Source: Bygdekino figures 2017

4.2.2 Admissions

As well as for venues, also admissions registered their all-time records during the first decade of the company – in 1953 the number of visitors reached 900,000. The number of admissions has remained quite constant since 1988, and despite its being relatively fluctuant (Figure 4.6), it never went below 112,000 total admissions. As far as audience per screening is concerned, the average number during the last years (2012-2017) kept quite constant, floating between 30 and 35 people, exactly how it was in 1952 (Nyhus 1984) – with 2016's exception of 38 people (Figure 4.11). Among the highest average number of visitors per screening ever reached by the company, it is worthwhile to mention 1956-57, when it amounted to 62.7 and 63.3 respectively (Nyhus 1984).

2012	3,578
2013	3,696
2014	3,780
2015	3,760
2016	4,028
2017	3,990
2016-17	-38
2016-2017 %	-0.9%

Figure 4.7. Number of performances 2012-2017. Source: Bygdekino figures 2017

4.2.3 Venues

Albeit, the number of destinations seems to be quite fluctuating. During the first two years of the company (1950-1952), an impressive boom took place, visiting up to 700 venues from the starting 100. Between 1952 and 1960, the growth kept slower yet constant, and the company broke its record reaching up to 900 places, thus nearly decoupling the number of venues. As already explained, the introduction of television and new cultural activities led to a dramatic and constant decline after the '60s: in 1987, the number of visited venues had fallen to 334. After that, the decrease has been slow but constant, until the average number of 176.8 venues resulting from the figures over the last 5 years (Figure 4.8).

2012	171
2013	177
2014	171
2015	174
2016	177
2017	188
2016-17	11
2016-2017 %	6.2%

Figure 4.8. Number of venues 2012-2017. Source: Bygdekino figures 2017

4.2.4 Audience's average distribution over the year

More specifically, the annually trends of admissions distributed along the months in 2016 show that the films that mostly have captured visitors' attention and presence were released in October and November 2016 (Figure 4.9). On a general level, figures from the period 2012-2015 tend to show that October and November are the most productive months – while in May, June and July the number of admissions decrease dramatically (Figure 4.10). This is probably explained by the fact that people prefer to spend their spare time in outdoor activities (Inderhaug 2017); in the very first year of the company, on the contrary, the number of visitors increased during summer. This happened because the biggest cinema chains were not usually operative during summer, and a lot of people from the larger towns used to spend their holidays in the countryside areas (Nyhus 1984).

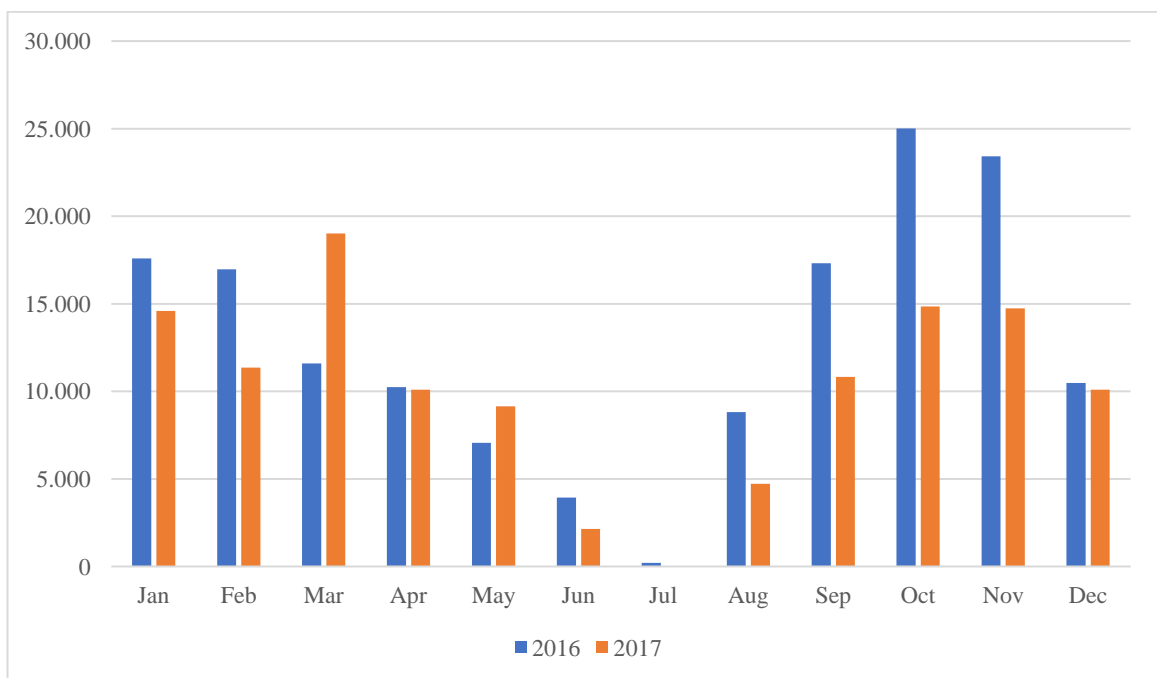


Figure 4.9. Number of visits distributed per months, 2016-2017. Source: Bygdekino figures 2017

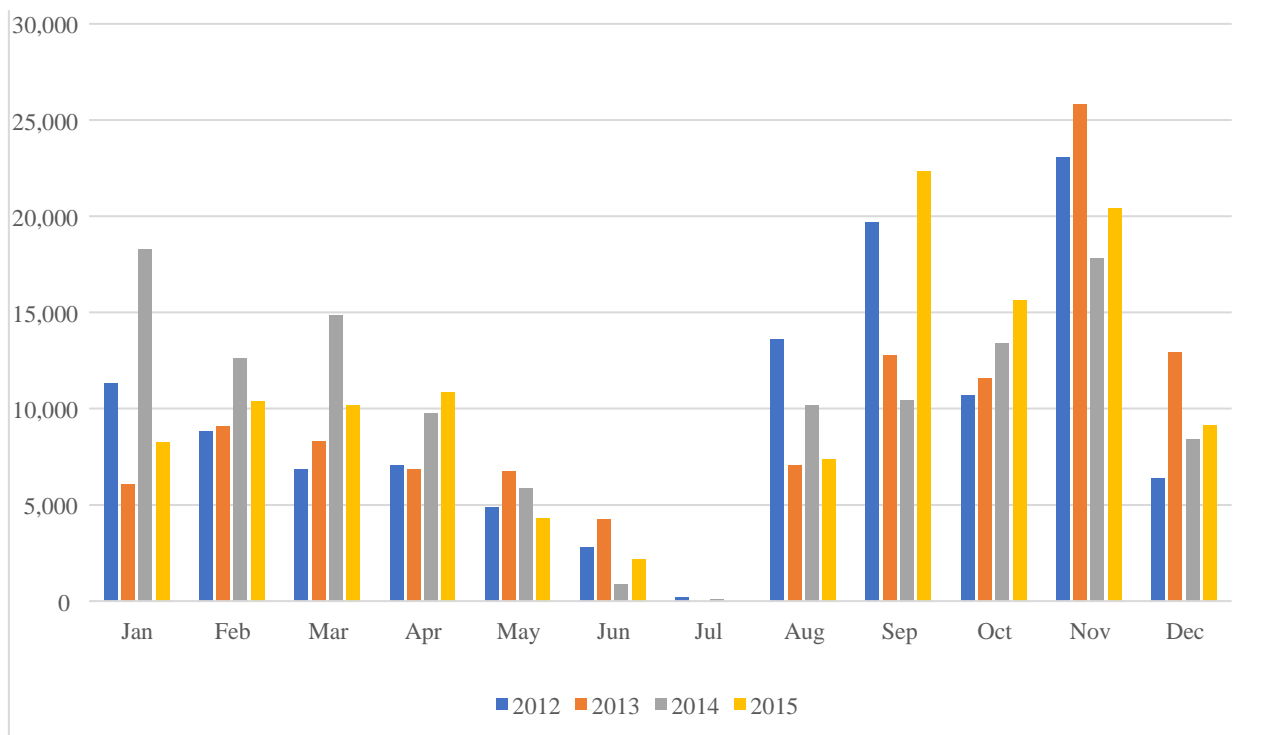


Figure 4.10. Number of visits distributed per months, 2012-2015. Source: Bygdekino figures 2017

2012	32.53
2013	30.14
2014	32.43
2015	32.16
2016	37.88
2017	30.46

Figure 4.11. Average number of visitors per performance, 2012-2017. Source: Bygdekino figures 2017

4.3 The budget

The largest part of Bygdekino's positive income depends on Government's public fund and on ticket sales. In 2017, the company could sustain its operations thanks to NOK 7.5 million from the public authority, NOK 10 million coming from the sold tickets, NOK 500,000 originating from advertising and finally NOK 2,750,000 collected from the membership fees paid by the affiliated municipalities and from equipment's renting (Figure 4.12). Venues' rent is covered for 1/3 by municipalities, for another 1/3 by privates with municipalities' support, and for the remaining 1/3 by privates (local voluntaries, etc.). From the next year, Bygdekino

will be granted with NOK 7 million from the Government, as stated in the White Paper of October 2017. The total amount of income allows the company to cover the operating costs – from the personnel salaries to the office’s rent to the maintenance of the cars and the films’ rent.

Governmental support	NOK 7,500,000
Ticket sales	NOK 10,000,000
Advertising	NOK 500,000
Other incomes (renting and membership fees)	NOK 2,750,000

Figure 4.12. The company’s operating income. Source: Bygdekino figures 2017

4.4 The company’s key strengths

From the advent of television, Bygdekino had to cope with a slow but constant decrease in total venues and number of admissions, resulting in the final quantity of 188 visited places in 2017. Nevertheless, the company was able to resist thanks to the introduction of very smart measures which assured its existence. The three main reasons why it happened are probably to be found in the following ones: first, the merge with the National Film Board first and then with Film & Kino during the ‘80s; second, the digitalisation of the film industry across the country – and a big change towards the contents of film programming (a natural consequence of digitalisation); third, the national perseverance of the principles of decentralisation and democratisation of culture all over the country.

As far as my research has let me observe, some essential key points, which have given new life to the company in the recent past and contribute to keep it alive in the present years, have been identified.

4.4.1 Content: turning towards national production

Surprisingly, the most successful films’ genres have been changing considerably over the years: indeed, because of the peculiarity of Norwegian cinema industry – which had not invested on national film production for a long time, unlike the other Scandinavian

neighbouring countries – the number of national films screened in 1960 by Bygdekino only constituted a 10% of the total.

Figures are nowadays totally different. From the '00s, national production started to be strongly boosted through the adoption of a new national film policy. In 2001, the public distribution company KF and the Norsk Film A/S were both closed down. State funding of film production was to be channelled through a single administrative organisation called the Norwegian Film Fund, according to a decision made by the Ministry of Culture. This decision was motivated by the goal to get visitors to see more Norwegian films; still, in the second half of the '90s, national films only constituted 5-6% of the market share. The new public-support funding model introduced a 50/50 plan: if a production company could finance 50% of the costs, the Fund automatically would provide the remaining 50% (Hjort and Lindqvist 2016). The new model, aimed to encourage national production, was similar to the already operating Danish scheme, considered to be very successful.

The first comprehensive Government White Paper on Cinema appeared in 1984. In there, the Government pronounced cinema to be a source of artistic expression as well as a manifestation of national identity and accepted to be responsible of being in charge of the financial support of Norwegian films. Furthermore, infrastructures of cinema production and administration were reinforced, through the establishment of the *Statens Studiesenter* for Film (Centre for Film Studies) and also through the merger of the National Film Board and the Film Institute into the Norwegian Film Institute in 1994. Reaffirmed through the White Paper on Culture (1993) and the White Paper on Media (1994), respectively, both production and exhibition of films were thus securely affirmed and assigned as a public responsibility in Norway (Aas 1998). What made the industry grow even more has been the establishment of the first cinema school of the country, opened in Lillehammer in 1997 (Næss 2017). This helps explain why today the scenario is completely reversed.

In the last 15 years, Norwegian films' market share has at least triplicated, if not quadruplicated, compared to 90's figures (Figure 4.3); in 2016, admissions to national films exceptionally constituted slightly more than the half of the total. And for Bygdekino, admissions to Norwegian films are even higher than the national average, representing more than 50% of the total (Inderhaug 2017).

4.4.2 Context: cultural democratisation and public responsibility

As previously observed, the conception and realisation of the company itself has been a direct outcome of the national cultural policy formulated by the Labour Party already in the '50s. The policy was mainly focused on the principle of equity in distributing cultural goods to population, so that everyone would be guaranteed to have access to cultural forms to the largest possible extent and at the same time.

Nowadays, these principles demonstrate to be still quite alive, as it can be observed from the recommendations expressed in the official Norwegian report on cultural policy (2014):

The committee considers it particularly important to strengthen local cultural arenas and proposed that future cultural policy should take the form of a local cultural initiative. (...) This means that central government will also have to focus more strongly on the local cultural sector and allocate more financial support for its development.

The committee emphasised the social importance of expressive culture and pointed out that maintaining and strengthening the cultural infrastructure is a precondition for a viable democracy. In the committee's view the three main national cultural policy objectives should be democracy, equity and diversity.

In order to be legitimate, a cultural policy should promote an inclusive cultural life that reflects society's cultural diversity; thus, the Government is considered to be responsible of establishing and building cultural institutions, but also of ensuring that the large cultural institutions are more inclusive (Official Norwegian Report on cultural policy 2014). Even more than for mere geographical reasons, Bygdekino has managed to survive until the present days for its being a direct consequence of this deeply-rooted cultural policy (Solum, 2017).

4.4.3 Digitalisation

The digitalisation process invested Norwegian cinema industry and was completed in 2011, making Norway the first country to have a 100% digitalised cinema. This has given new

life to the travelling cinema company under a democratisation of culture point of view, since Bygdekino was included in the renovation process. Digitalisation is a phenomenon deeply in relation to the principle of equity in cultural goods distribution among the Norwegian population because it made possible to assure the access to culture to everyone at the same time.

Thanks to digitalisation, every cinema, in particular medium and small-sized ones, could finally show the same films simultaneously, regardless of their position, thus filling the gap with the permanent theatres of the biggest cities; of course, also Bygdekino has been able to take advantage of this change. Indeed, thanks to a procedure through which films can be digitally transferred, each of the 12 projectionists working for the company can gain access to them from their laptops by using a virtual key (not needed for Norwegian films, which are instead key-free).

4.4.4 Flexibility

The travelling cinema company is the country's most flexible cinema, for both content of screenings and 'shape'. This means that Bygdekino's cars can reach the planned destinations and make use of their full or partial technical equipment, and the same equipment can be potentially rented by permanent theatres which want to organise particular or outdoor exhibitions. It is also possible that no equipment is needed, since sometimes Bygdekino is asked to be in charge of hosting occasional screenings in theatres that are no longer full time active.

Each venue is given at least one or two screenings per month. As far as film programming is concerned, the company is not bound to any particular decision at all even though its funding partially depends on the Government; nevertheless, tendency is to select the latest and most popular films, given that the chances of attracting wider audiences increase. In some venues, digital polls in Facebook groups or direct requests for specific films to be screened happen to be submitted; usually, under these circumstances, Bygdekino's offices are contacted and an agreement is likely to be arranged (Bakke and Næss 2017). The company also hosts film premieres, just as the biggest fixed cinemas of the country.

4.4.5 Social experience

In order to differentiate film from television, theorists as well as the industry have talked of film-going as an 'event'. The act of going out is itself intrinsic to the event of cinema-going (...). The pleasures of the evening are not exhausted by the experience of watching the film, and cinema-going is most often a group activity—rarely do people go to the cinema by themselves. A sense of release and separation from the world is provided even by films which we do not much like. The charge of escapism which is often levelled at film is probably based on the sense of separation from reality, which is highlighted as we leave the cinema, as much as on a close analysis of the content of the majority of films (...). We sit in the dark, within a group but still separated from them by the fact that they are not easily visible; we watch realistic images which are nevertheless vastly oversized representations of the real; we sit in comfortable seats, our attention focused on the screen and with no competitors for that attention. The avidity of our gaze is inevitable; the physical structure of the theatre itself implies the strength of the audience's desire to consume the sounds and images which will be projected in front of them. Sociologists such as Andrew Tudor (1974) have argued that the intensity of the image/ sound message, the comfort of the viewer, and the heightened sense of occasion, all make the viewer more susceptible to the power of the message. High-culture critics of popular culture have employed this avenue of attack to raise worries about the psychological effects (or, more accurately, the ideological effects) of the medium. (Turner 2009)

Cinema represents a social space where people can meet and mingle. Moreover, cinema is a public space, where many private, even intimate affairs are transplanted in by the audience. The trends of blurring the borders between public and private spaces, which has become one of the central characteristics of media culture, started with the cinema. People do not go to the cinema only to consume films, but also to meet other needs. Cinema has taken over the role of other more traditional spaces for socialising, establishing contacts and interacting, such as theatres or churches. Of course, Bygdekino is perfectly included in this social ritual. And, even more for the mobile company, its audience is more likely to be composed of people that already know each other, since the visited places are usually small, rural communities.

4.4.6 Building a network

No firm exists that is autarchic. All firms must necessarily interact with other organisations (and individuals) in their environment and therefore they have inter-organisational (or inter-firm) relationships. These relationships can evolve without any clear strategic intent or tactical calculation, but most managers agree that actively determining the nature of their external relations is a significant part of what strategizing is about. Even avoiding relations with some external parties can be an important strategic choice. (De Wit and Meyer 2010)

An essential factor for a semi-public company such as Bygdekino is the establishment of a strong network of relations with the actors of its environment. As the actual CEO Arnfinn Inderhaug already made clear in the '00s, it was necessary to clarify both the company's type of relations with the relational actors and also the relational objectives of the company. With the whole budget of Bygdekino financially depending for 1/3 on the support given by the Government, it is fundamental that the company's figures and data are constantly collected and recorded in order for the relationship to be transparent. To achieve this goal, even for the projectionists is compulsory to update the outcome of each screening night with the number of admissions and the quantity of sold tickets (Inderhaug 2017).

Concerning instead the network of relations to establish with the local communities, a fundamental role is played by the local person in charge of the marketing work. Regarding this matter, before and especially during the digitalisation process of cinemas in Norway, a high number of additional prints for modern films was bought. Popular films thus managed to double their admissions because they took advantage from this *Rikslansering*. Bygdekino benefited from it too, owning newer and more prints of the most recent films (Holst 2017). The program stopped after the digitalisation, since the copies of the posters started to have an affordable cost.

The wider portion of community are they able to reach through different channels, the greater will be the chances to have large number of spectators at the screenings. An efficient work can truly make the difference. Through the establishment of occasional cooperative relations with the local municipalities, it is more likely that the intent to attract the largest possible audience, that is the company's main aim, will be realised.

4.4.7 Unicity and proximity

Geographical proximity to the venues where the screenings are hosted can be seen already as a great advantage as far as the expectation of receiving large audience living nearby is concerned. Moreover, the irregular intervals between the screenings – in each place approximately 40 films per year are screened (Inderhaug 2017) – contribute making them ‘unique’. This special feature can hypothetically help the company achieve higher quantities of total admissions (Holst 2017).

4.4.8 Competitive on price

If compared to the average price of the fixed, permanent cinemas – especially of multiplexes located in the biggest cities – the cost of Bygdekino’s screenings makes it much more competitive. To the present day, the average price for the first screening is NOK 80, whereas the second one reaches up to NOK 100. Nevertheless, from 2018 on, it has been established that higher prices will be imposed (Inderhaug 2017).

4.5 The questionnaires

This last section firstly presents some results collected after my personal participation to some of the company’s screenings; secondly, the answers to a questionnaire are commented and analysed. The questionnaire was submitted to Bygdekino’s audience in 25 different places in total and the answers were collected over almost three months. In addition, I was also able to take part in the exhibitions held in Flateby on October 3, 2017 and in Sørumsand on October 1, 2017. In Appendix B some of the photos I personally took during my research trip are attached; in the Appendix A instead, pictures taken by the photographer Marius Nyheim for the recent publication of the book *Bygdekinoen I Norge: En Reise I Utkanten Av Lerretet* (2016), are included, with permission of the authors.

Date	15.9.2017
Place	Ringebu, Kaupanger

Population	4,502
First screening	35-40
Second screening	25-30
Additional notes	The screenings are hosted in a cultural community centre. Concerts, music lessons, conferences and similar activities are organised here. A little kiosk is run by locals.

Date	16.11.2017
Place	Geiranger, Norsk Fjordsenter
Population	250
First screening	18
Second screening	2
Additional notes	The screenings are hosted in an exhibition house, that is only open in summer for touristic purposes. There is a little kiosk run by locals.

Date	17.11.2017
Place	Fjørå, Fredheim
Population	Less than 1,663
First screening	35
Second screening	23
Additional notes	The screenings are hosted in community house. A little kiosk is run with the help of some volunteers, and a good feeling of community meeting is felt.

Date	19.11.2017
Place	Smøla, Smølahallen
Population	2,160
First screening	45
Second screening	4

Additional notes	The screenings are hosted in a community house's gym. A little kiosk is run for the screenings.
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Date	20.11.2017
Place	Kyrksæterøra, Kulør'n
Population	2,563
First screening	106 (sold out)
Second screening	21
Additional notes	The screenings are hosted in a new cultural house, representing a true meeting point for the municipality. Lot of activities take place here, from music to dance lessons - and the place is run by some local teachers. The first screening usually gets sold out.

The questionnaire submitted to Bygdekino's audience was formulated along the same lines of a report made for Regional Screen Scotland in 2015/2016. The report presents the findings about the general impact of the Scottish mobile cinema company called *The Screen Machine*, and it is also an exploratory study into the experiences and effects of local cinema in the country – the first step taken by Regional Screen Scotland to develop wider understanding of the role and contribution of cinema to local communities. The Screen Machine is an 80-seat, air-conditioned mobile cinema which brings the latest films to audiences in some of the most remote and cinema-deprived communities in Scotland. Presenting the Scottish project some similarities with Norwegian Bygdekino, it was therefore considered to formulate a questionnaire in the same way.

The answers to Bygdekino's forms were collected from the middle of November 2017 to the end of December 2017. The places where the answers were assembled from are the following (25): Atløy, Averøy, Barmen, Bykle, Eidsvåg, Eikefjord, Fiskå, Fjærland, Fjørå, Geiranger, Halså, Harøy, Hellesylt, Innvik, Kjølaldalen, Kyrksæterøra, Langevåg, Lauvstad, Norddal, Ringebu, Sandshamn, Skjolden, Smøla, Tofte, Værlandet. The age group of the interviewed varies from 9 to 70 years old. The surveys were submitted in Norwegian; a translation of the original form is here reported. The comments to the resulting figures were written in January 2017 with the digital support of professor Anne-Lise With, chief executive

officer of Film & Kino Guttorm Petterson, and chief executive officer of Bygdekino Arnfinn Inderhaug.

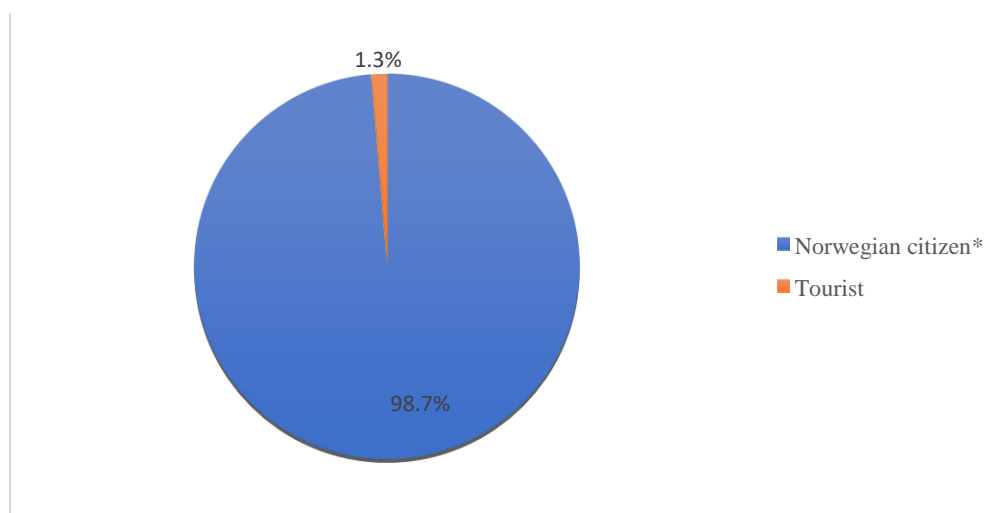


Figure 4.13. Percentage of Norwegian citizens and tourists filling the form. Total answers: 305

Norwegian citizen*: for the sake of simplicity, it was decided to collect under ‘Norwegian citizen’ category all people of various nationalities who live in Norway, while under the category of ‘tourist’ those who do not live in Norway.

As can be hypothesised, the majority of respondents lives in Norway. Only 1.3% of the total number of respondents was at the time of the interview at the venue as a tourist.

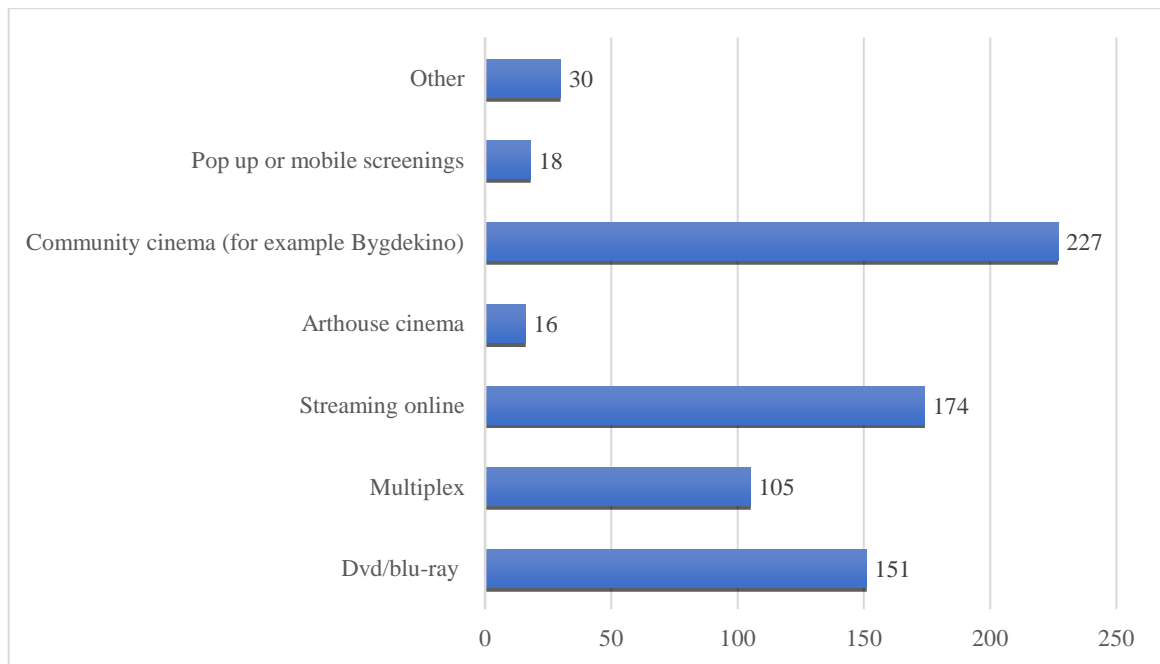


Figure 4.14. Where respondents have watched films in the last 12 months. Total answers: 304

To the question of where the respondents had watched films in the last 12 months, the answers result to be quite interesting to comment (Figure 4.14). Even though people are watching films through different platforms, this does not seem to discourage them from going to the nearest venue (Inderhaug 2017). On the contrary, with the sharp majority of 227, the favourite way to watch films is at Bygdekino's screenings. More than outdoing the company's performances, the digital channels (DVD/Blu-ray and streaming online) seem rather to come up beside them, with 325 total replies. Among the interviewed, 105 still attempt to head for the nearest permanent theatre, when possible.

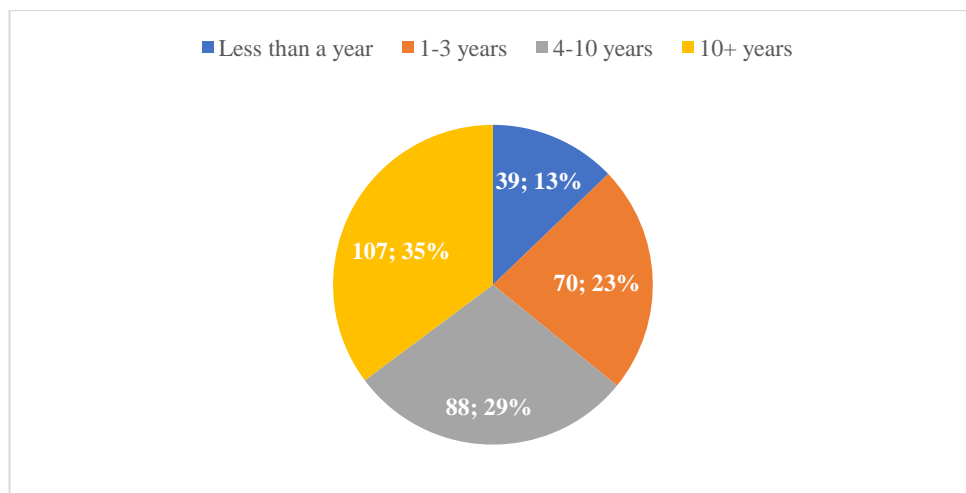


Figure 4.15. How long have the respondents been visiting Bygdekino. Total answers: 304

Bygdekino's audience proves to be composed of very affectionate spectators, more than even expected by the company's CEO (Inderhaug 2017). Indeed, the majority has been participating to the company's mobile screenings for at least 4-10 years (29%), up to more than 10 years (35%). Despite this, a remarkable 36% of the respondents has been visiting Bygdekino for shorter time (0-3 years). Thus, on the one hand, figure 4.15 shows that a good level of customer retention has been established over time, fulfilling the plan initiated in the '80s, when the company decided to put major effort on the creation of a stronger connection with the locals. On the other hand, showing a certain continuity, it may be hypothesised that the retention policy has stayed the same, and that the remaining 36% will hopefully continue to attend the screenings over time, strengthening the abovementioned network by showing the same affection as the others.

When it comes to the reasons for attending the screenings, three answers out of six sharply stand out (Figure 4.16): 67.2% of the interviewed goes to the venue for pure entertainment; 58.7% to spend quality time with friends or family; 55.1% to check out the last releases. Very limited importance is given instead to the other four options: the company's audience appears to be more interested in cinema as a source of entertainment, of social gathering or being updated with the most popular films. The last feature was made possible above all thanks to the process of digitalisation of cinemas: every local community visited by Bygdekino gets the chance to see what is screened on the same day in Oslo or in Bergen. What is more, considering the preferences of the respondents for visiting the local venues, it is assumable that film programming is appropriate, since it is manifestly orientated towards fresh, popular films and children comedies (Inderhaug and With 2017).

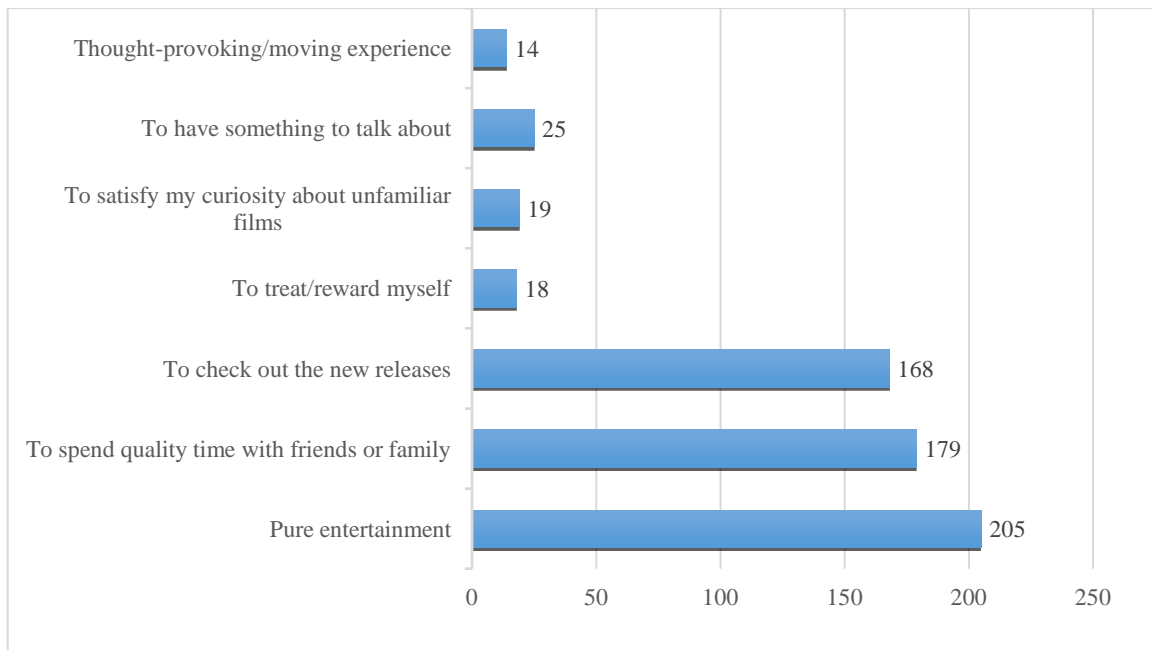


Figure 4.16. Reasons to go to Bygdekino's screenings. Total answers: 305

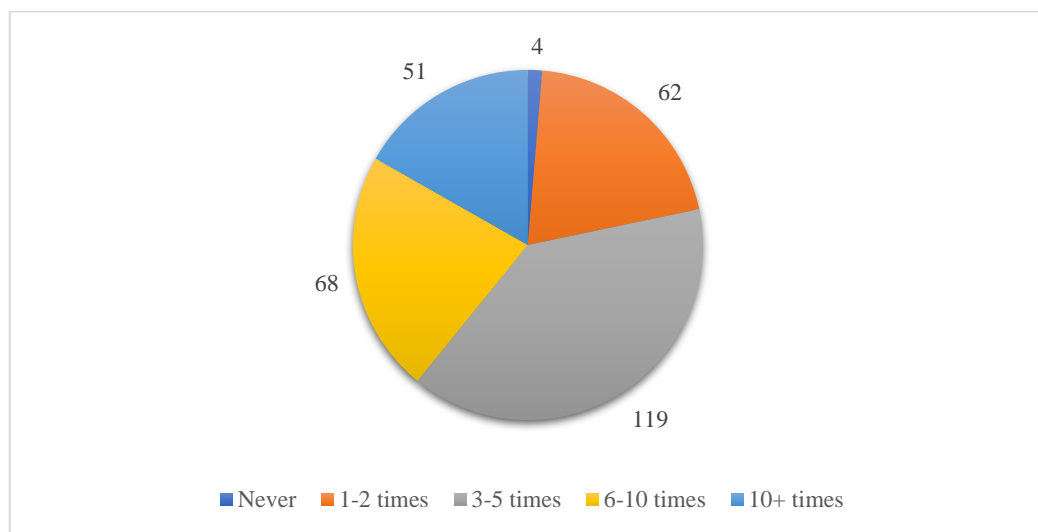


Figure 4.17. Times the respondents have been to Bygdekino's screenings in the last 12 months. Total answers: 304

Figure 4.17 shows very high average numbers of audience attending the company's screenings each year: 78.3% of the respondents has been to a screening from 3 up to 10 times in the last 12 months. Consequently, this means that 39.2% of the respondents to this questionnaire goes to the cinema more often than the 2016 national average number of 2.8, as shown by the Norwegian Cultural Barometer (Figure 4.18); the other 59.5% of the interviewed

goes to the screenings from 1 up to 5 times per year, positioning itself on the average national numbers.

1991	1994	1997	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016
4.3	4.3	3.6	4.3	4.1	3.6	3.0	2.8

Figure 4.18. Average number of visits to cinema on a national level over 12 months, 2016. Source: Norwegian Cultural Barometer

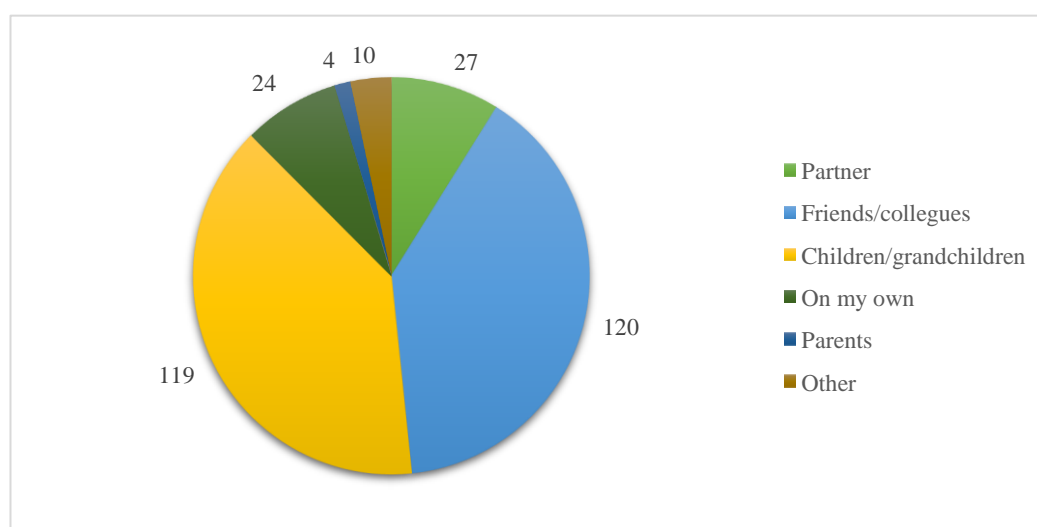


Figure 4.19. Who respondents usually go to Bygdekino's screenings with. Total answers: 304

Figure 4.19 strongly demonstrates that cinema is primarily considered as a social activity (Inderhaug 2017) – 87.5% of the respondents does not attend the screenings alone –, and also confirms that families or groups of friends or colleagues tend to show up with the highest percentages, 39.1% and 39.5% respectively. In answering what prevents the respondents from going more often to the screenings, the most voted is ‘availability’, with 65% of answers (Figure 4.20). ‘Cost’ (24.5%), ‘no one to go with’ (16.6%), and ‘they do not offer what I want’ (13.7%) immediately follow.

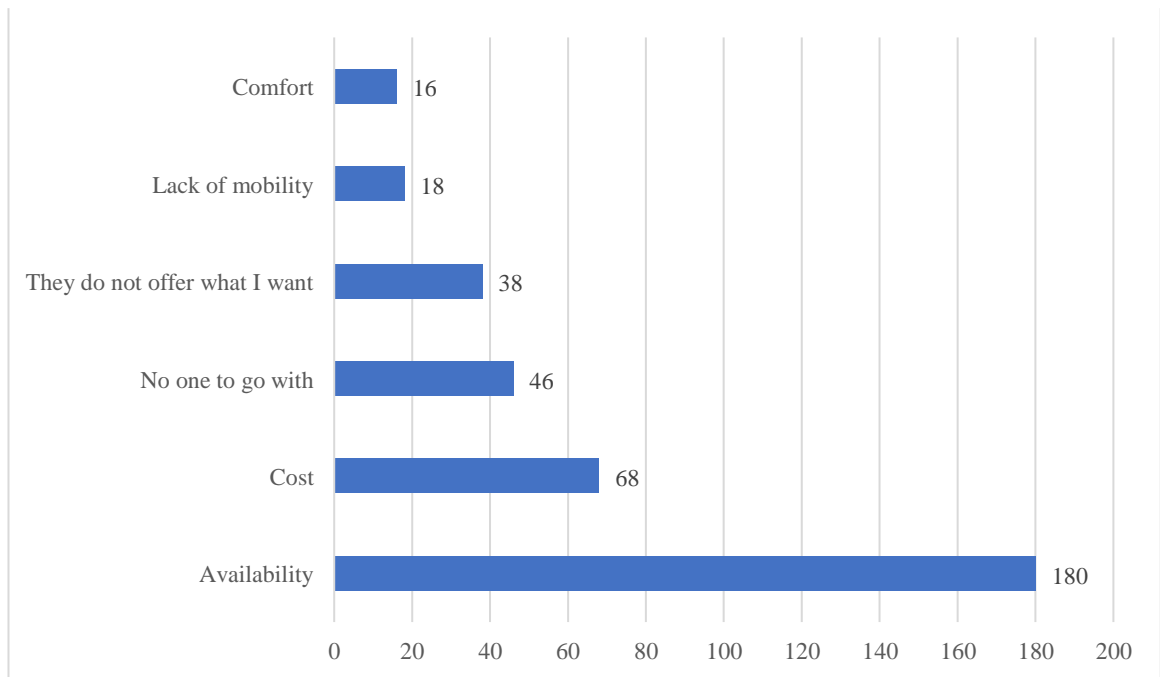


Figure 4.20. Barriers which stop spectators from going to the screenings. Total answers: 277

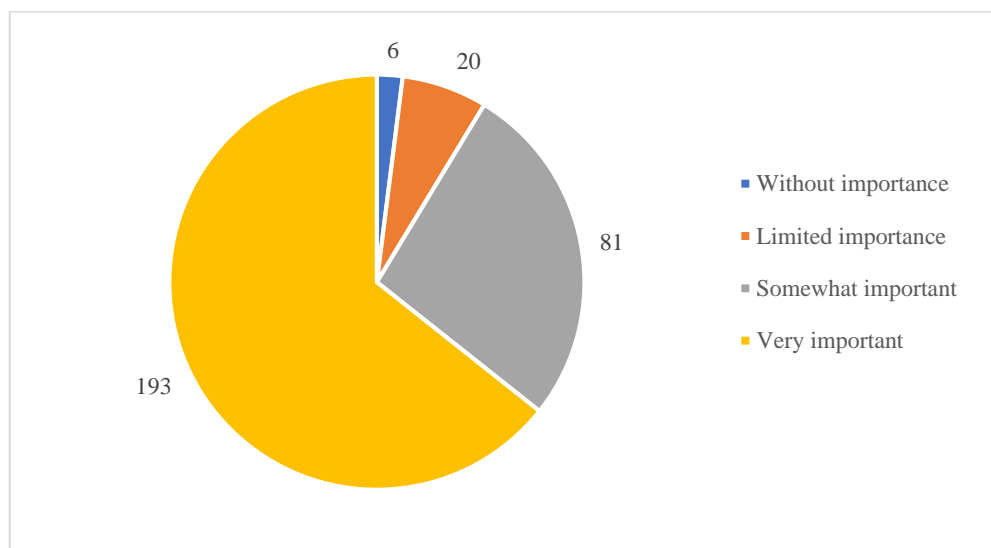


Figure 4.21. Importance of Bygdekino's presence for the local community. Total answers: 300

A restricted minority among the respondents, 8.7% out of 300 answers, thinks that Bygdekino's presence in their local community is unimportant or of limited importance (Figure 4.21), whereas the sharp majority affirms that the company is somewhat important (27%) or very important (64,3%) for their local community – resulting in 91.3% of respondents having a positive attitude towards Bygdekino. Most of the audience contemplates the activity of going to the company's screenings as both a social and a cultural activity (Inderhaug 2017).

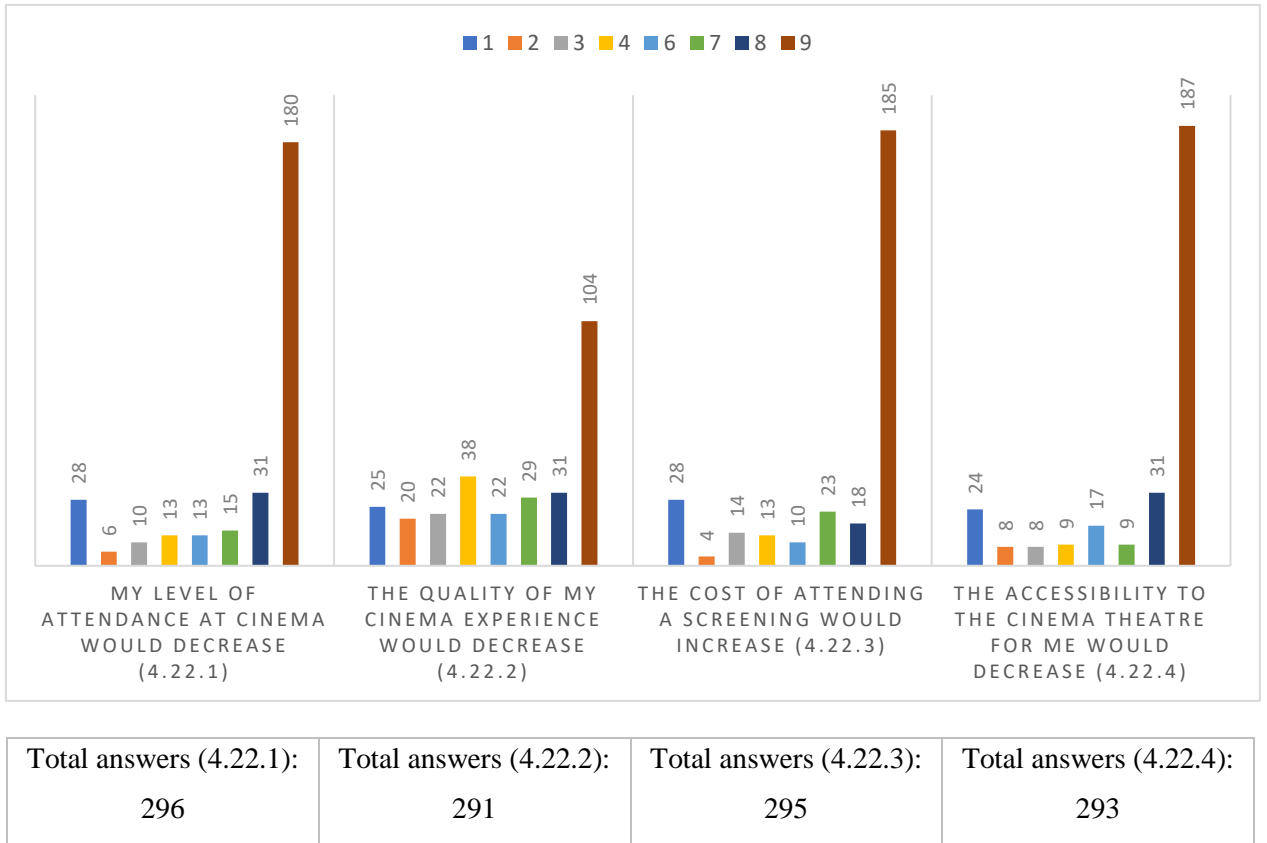


Figure 4.22. The consequences for respondents in case Bygdekino was closed down, where 1 stands for ‘very unlikely’ and 9 stands for ‘very likely’

A further confirmation of Bygdekino as the favourite service for experiencing cinema comes from Figure 4.22, and in particular from Figure 4.22.1: indeed, for 180 people out of 296, i.e. 60.8%, their level of attendance at cinema would decrease to the highest level. Figure 4.22.3 and Figure 4.22.4 both illustrate similar results.

A remarkable difference is recorded in Figure 4.22.2: the quality of respondents’ cinema experience would decrease to the same, maximum level only for 104 people, 38.4%. This proves that for 105 respondents the quality of their cinema experience would not decrease significantly, regardless of where they would experience it, be it through traditional or digital channels. This result is not absolute, as 186 people reckon that their fruition would be affected by a hypothetical disappearance of the company.

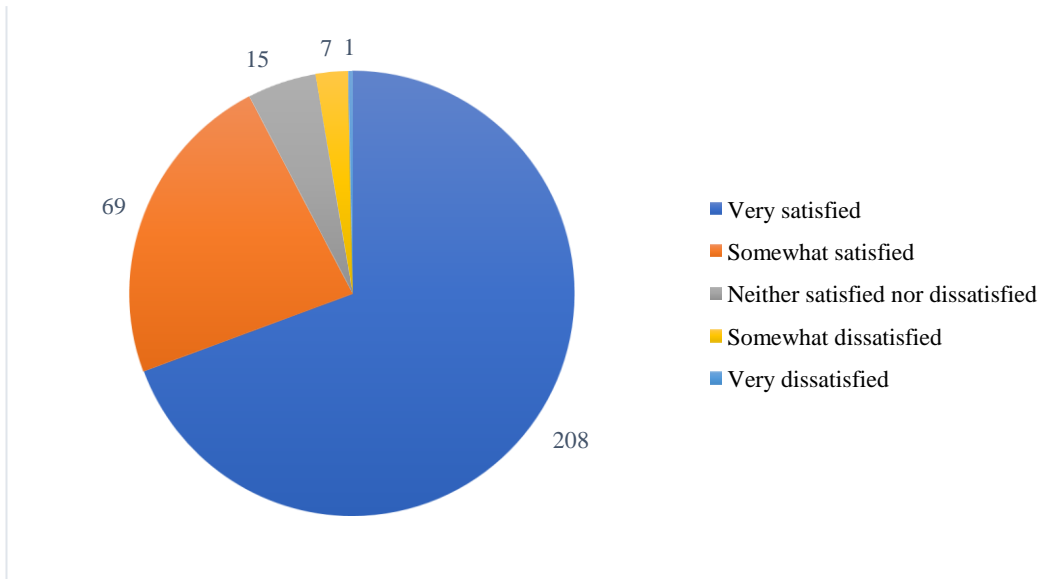
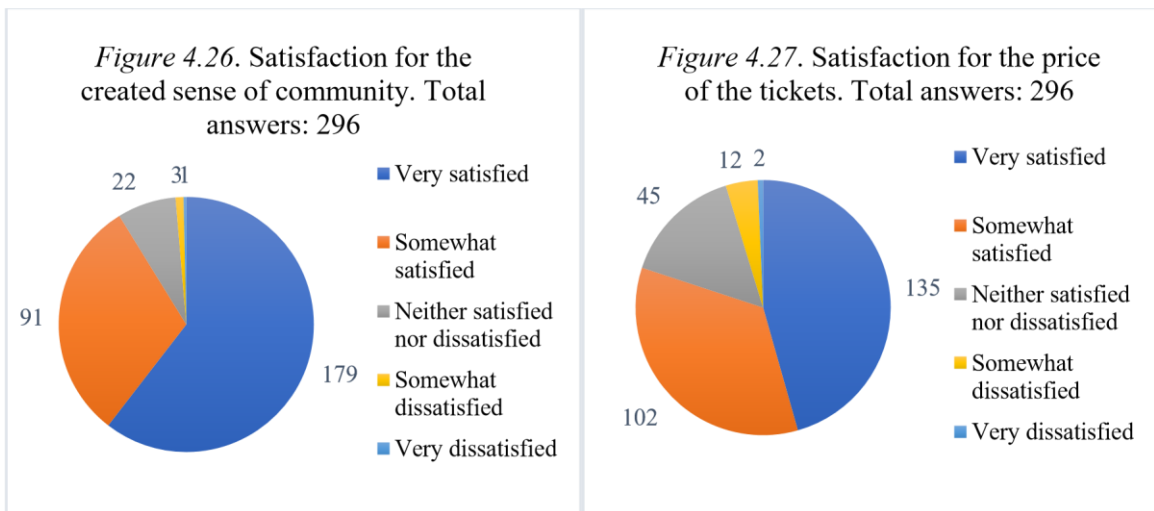
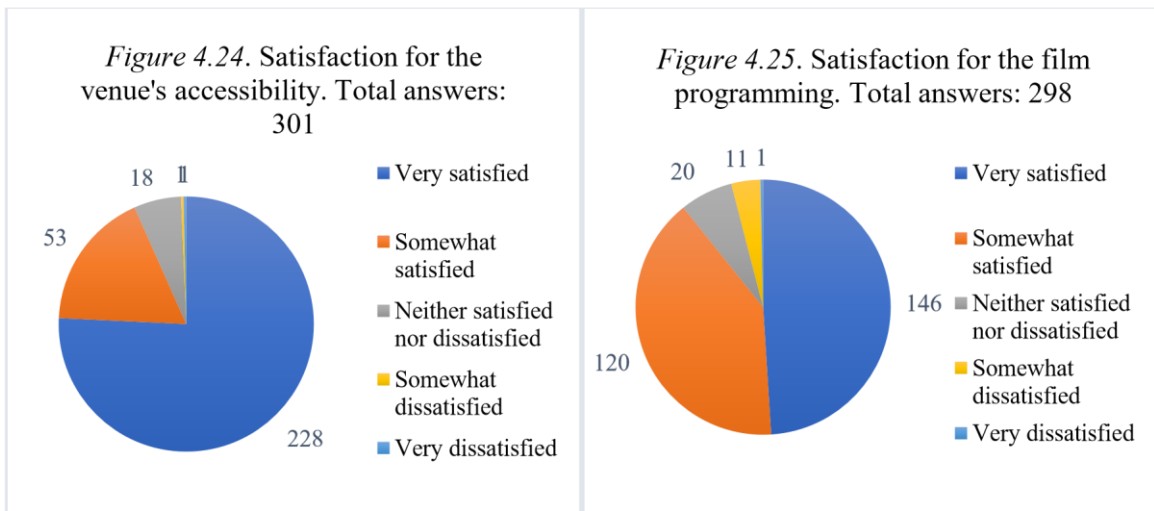
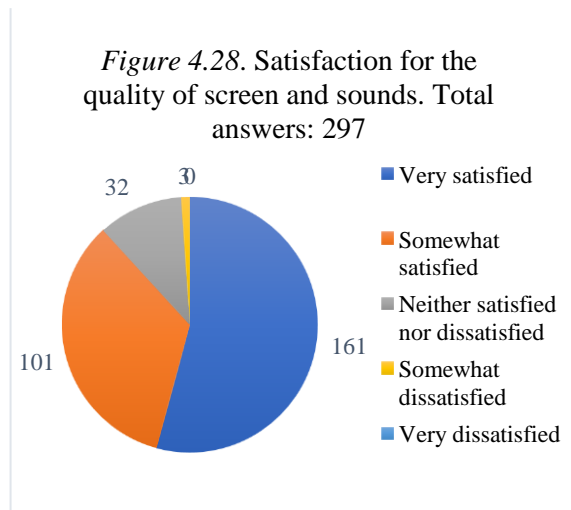


Figure 4.23. Satisfaction for the overall cinema experience with Bygdekino. Total answers: 300





As far as the average satisfaction for the overall Bydegkino cinema experience is concerned (Figure 4.23), the interviewed appear to be extremely positive: 69.3% is very satisfied, and 23% is somewhat satisfied. In contrast with a 92.3% pleased audience, the remaining 7.6% is either impartial (5%), little satisfied (2.3%) or unsatisfied (0.3%). Similar deductions can be formulated regarding the satisfaction for the accessibility to the venue (Figure 4.24), whereas the average level of satisfaction about film programming in Figure 4.25 is still positive, although the number of the very satisfied consumers diminishes (146) in favour of the somewhat satisfied consumers (120). Still, the overall level of satisfaction is very high (89.3%). The evaluation may help formulate in the next future a film programming closer to the audience's preferences. Regarding the price of the tickets (Figure 4.27), it is to be found the highest percentage of impartial, little satisfied and dissatisfied consumers (8.7%), but they still represent a low percentage, while the general impression confirms that the majority is greatly satisfied by the service (80.1%). Evaluations concerning the level of satisfactions about the sense of community created (Figure 4.26) and about the quality of the screen and sounds (4.28) resemble those of Figure 4.25, with 88.2% and 91.2% of satisfied spectators respectively.

Very interesting observations can be expressed for Figure 4.29. Indeed, in comparing Bydegkino's cinema experience with the other cinemas', for 41% of the respondents it is quite similar. Theoretically speaking, this is possible thanks to the phenomenon of relocation, accurately described by Francesco Casetti (2015):

Therefore, cinema is not only a ‘machine’: it is also an experience in which other factors—cultural, social, aesthetic—play a role (...). I would like to use the term *relocation* to refer to the process by which the experience of a medium is reactivated and reposed elsewhere than the place in which it was formed, with alternate devices and in new environments. I am thinking of the newspaper: No longer necessarily made of paper, I am now able to peruse its pages on the screen of my iPad, but even from this new site it continues to allow me to experience the world as an infinite stream of news. I am thinking of the radio: No longer a domestic appliance or transistor-powered device, but rather an extension of my television or tablet, it nonetheless continues to supply the soundtrack of my life. And, naturally, I am thinking of cinema: No longer only in a darkened theater and tied to rolls of film stock running through a projector, but now available on public screens, at home, on my cellphone and computer, it is still ready, in these new environments and with these new devices, to offer screened moving images through which we get a sense of proximity to the real, an access to fantasy, and an investment in what is represented. In all these cases, the ‘system of sensations’ that traditionally accompanies each medium finds a fresh outlet. Thanks to a new medium—thanks to a new support or a new device—an experience is reborn elsewhere, and the life of the previous medium, in its fullness as a cultural form, continues. It is in this way that we can think of ‘being at the cinema’ and ‘watching a film’ even in bright light in front of a digital screen.

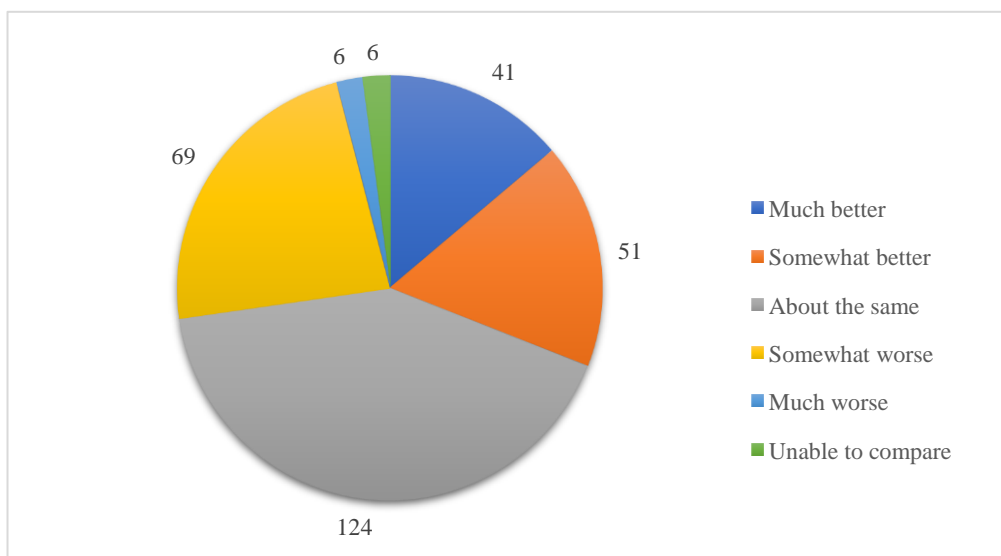
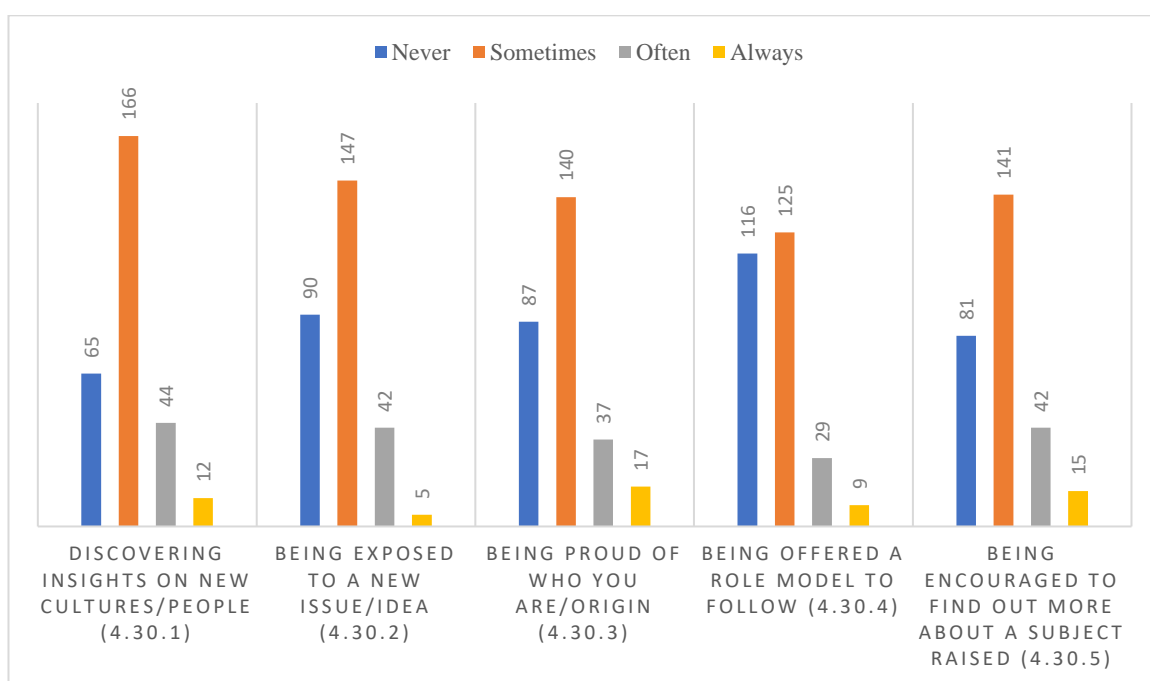


Figure 4.29. The quality of Bygdekino's cinema experience compared to the quality of other cinema's experience. Total answers: 297

The most surprisingly result, though, is that for 92 interviewed out of 297 – almost 1/3 of the total number of answers – the cinema experience at Bygdekino’s screenings is somewhat better (17.2%) or even much better (13.8%), probably because a strong sense of social community gathering is more likely to be felt. On the other hand, for 69 respondents out of 297 (23.2%) the experience at Bygdekino’s screenings is somewhat worse; this answer is probably caused by the inconstant presence of technical favourable screening conditions. Indeed, the qualitative adaptability of the venues to the projections can remarkably vary from place to place.



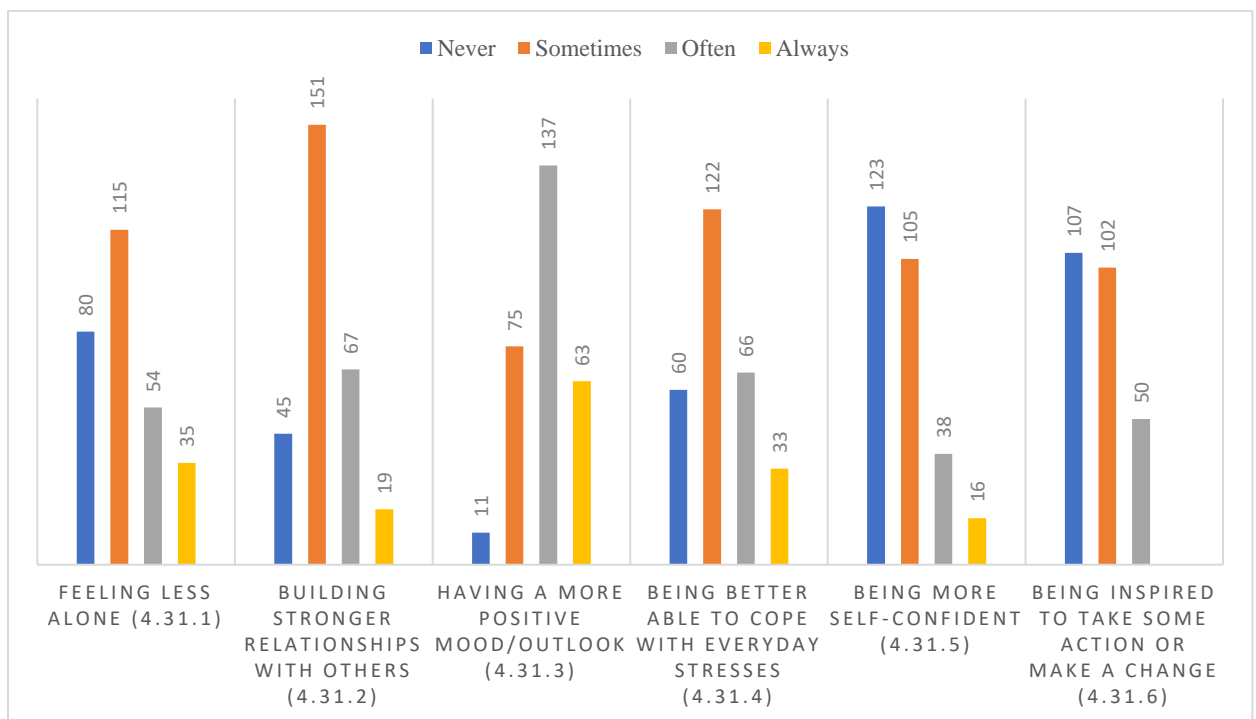
Total answers (4.30.1): 287	Total answers (4.30.2): 284	Total answers (4.30.3): 281	Total answers (4.30.4): 279	Total answers (4.30.5): 279
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Figure 4.30. Individual benefits generated by Bygdekino’s screenings

Attending a Bygdekino screening proves to generate strong positive reactions among audience members. 77.3% of the respondents reports receiving inputs for discovering more about new cultures (166 sometimes, 44 often, 12 always), 68.3% reports being exposed to a new idea (147 sometimes, 42 often, 5 always), 69% reports being proud of their origin (140 sometimes, 37 often, 17 always), 58.4% reports being offered a role model to follow (125

sometimes, 29 often, 9 always), and finally 70.9% reports being encouraged to find out more about a subject thanks to films screened at Bygdekino’s venues (Figure 4.30).

Audiences, however, have also reported a range of beneficial social effects that go beyond entertainment and escapism (Figure 4.31). The most widely reported benefits include ‘a more positive mood or outlook’ (96.1%), ‘building stronger relationships with others’ (84%), ‘being better able to cope with everyday stresses’ (78.6%), and ‘feeling less alone’ (71.8%). On the other hand, audiences do not appear to receive significantly impacts neither on self-confidence (Figure 4.31.5) nor on being inspired to take some action or make a change (Figure 4.31.6).



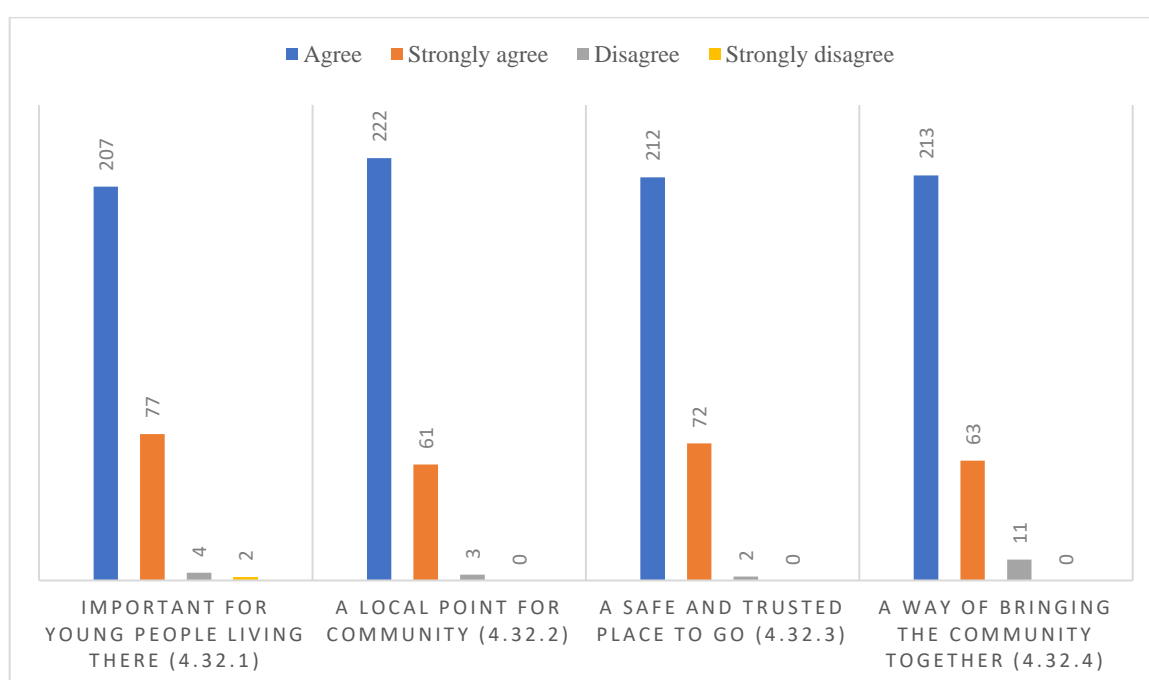
Total answers (4.31.1): 284	Total answers (4.31.2): 282	Total answers (4.31.3): 286	Total answers (4.31.4): 281	Total answers (4.31.5): 282	Total answers (4.31.6): 275
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Figure 4.31. Social benefits generated by Bygdekino’s screenings

The shared screen experience at Bygdekino appears to contribute to audiences’ collective sense of identity, place and community (Figure 4.32 and Figure 4.33). The survey results for 2017 are very encouraging in this respect, highlighting the extremely important role

that the company plays in fostering this sense of community. Audiences now describe the mobile cinema company as:

- A safe and trusted place to go (99.3%)
- A local point for the community (98.9%)
- Important for young people living there (97.9%)
- A way of bringing the community together (96.2%)



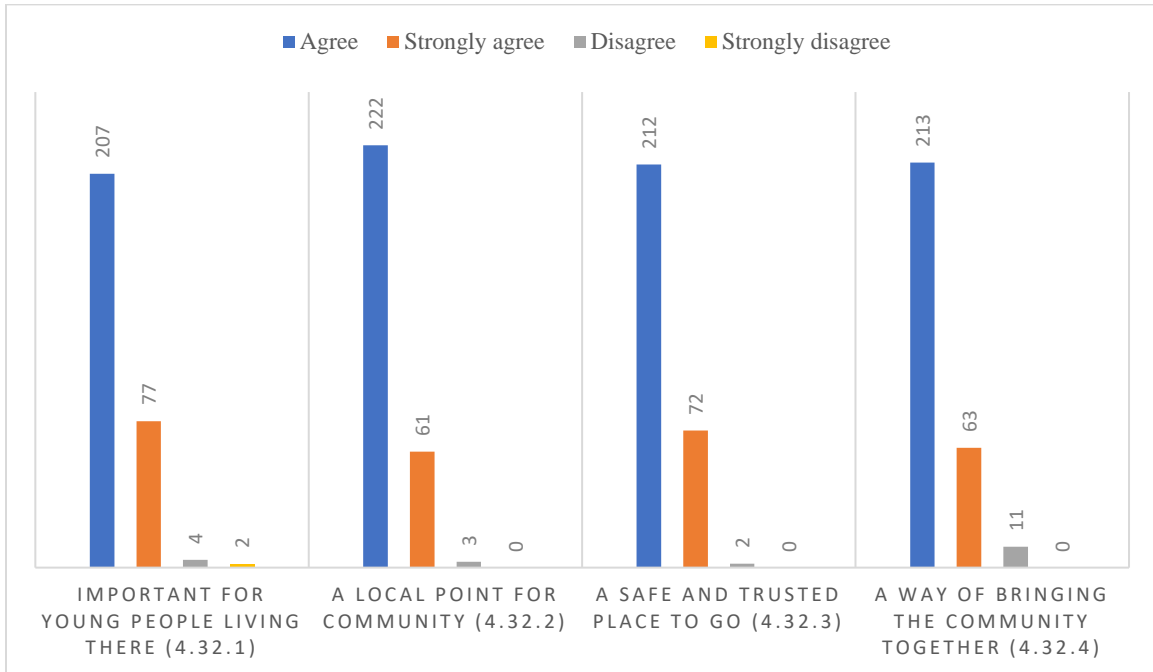
Total answers (4.32.1): 290	Total answers (4.32.2): 286	Total answers (4.32.3): 286	Total answers (4.32.4): 287
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Figure 4.32. Community benefits generated by Bygdekino’s screenings

Moreover, the audience continues describing the presence of Bygdekino within their municipality as (Figure 4.33):

- Central to the identity of the area (78.6%)

- Influencing people’s decision to locate or stay in (72.5%)
- Commanding a strong sense of affection locally (79.7%)
- A venue of local heritage and significance (78.6%)
- A source of pride for the community (84.8%)



Total answers (4.33.1): 281	Total answers (4.33.2): 280	Total answers (4.33.3): 276	Total answers (4.33.4): 280	Total answers (4.33.5): 277
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Figure 4.33. Additional community benefits generated by Bygdekino’s screenings

Appendix A

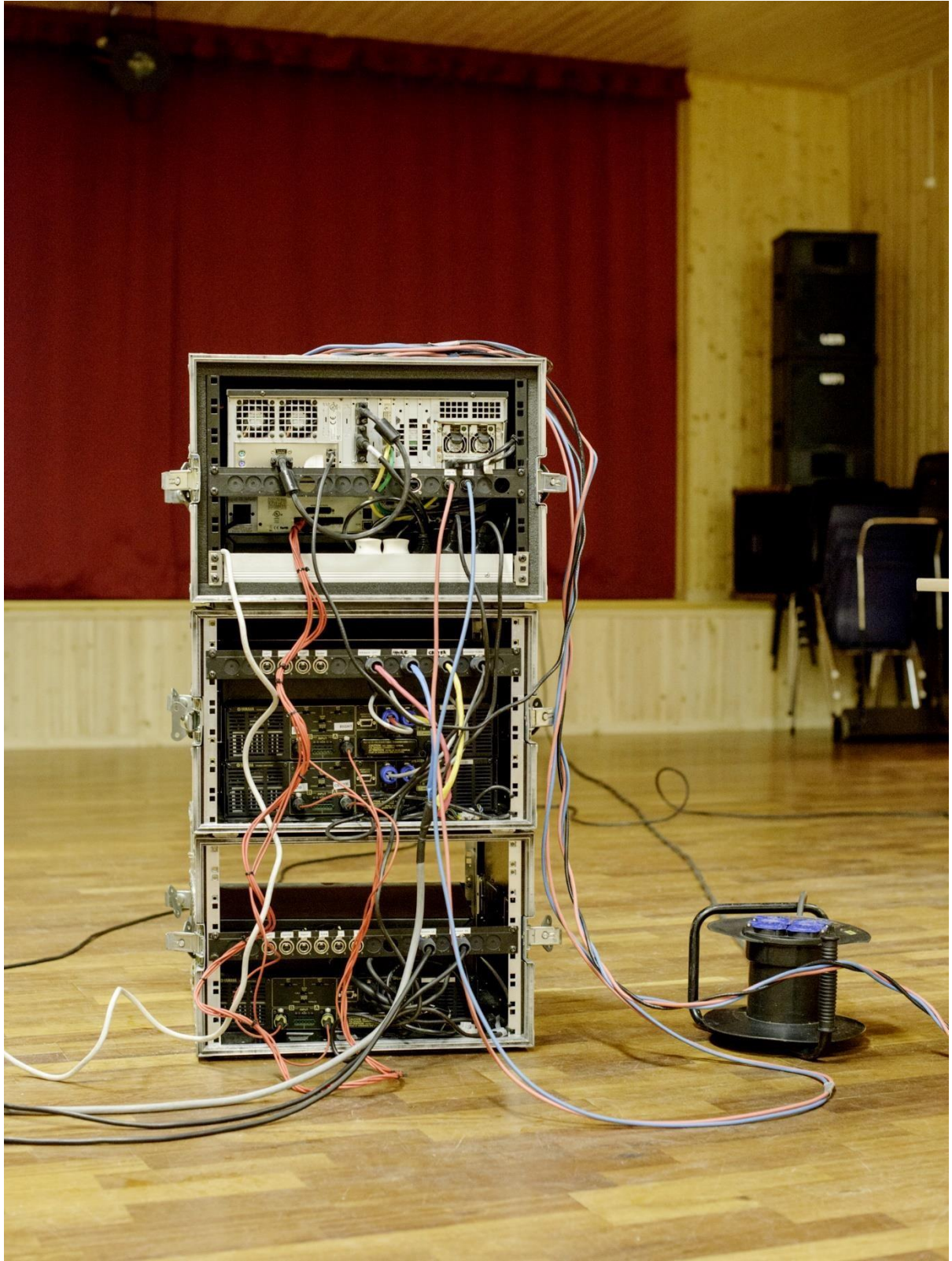
All the following photos were taken from the photographer Marius Nyheim for *Bygdekinoen i Norge: en reise i utkanten av lerretet* (2016).

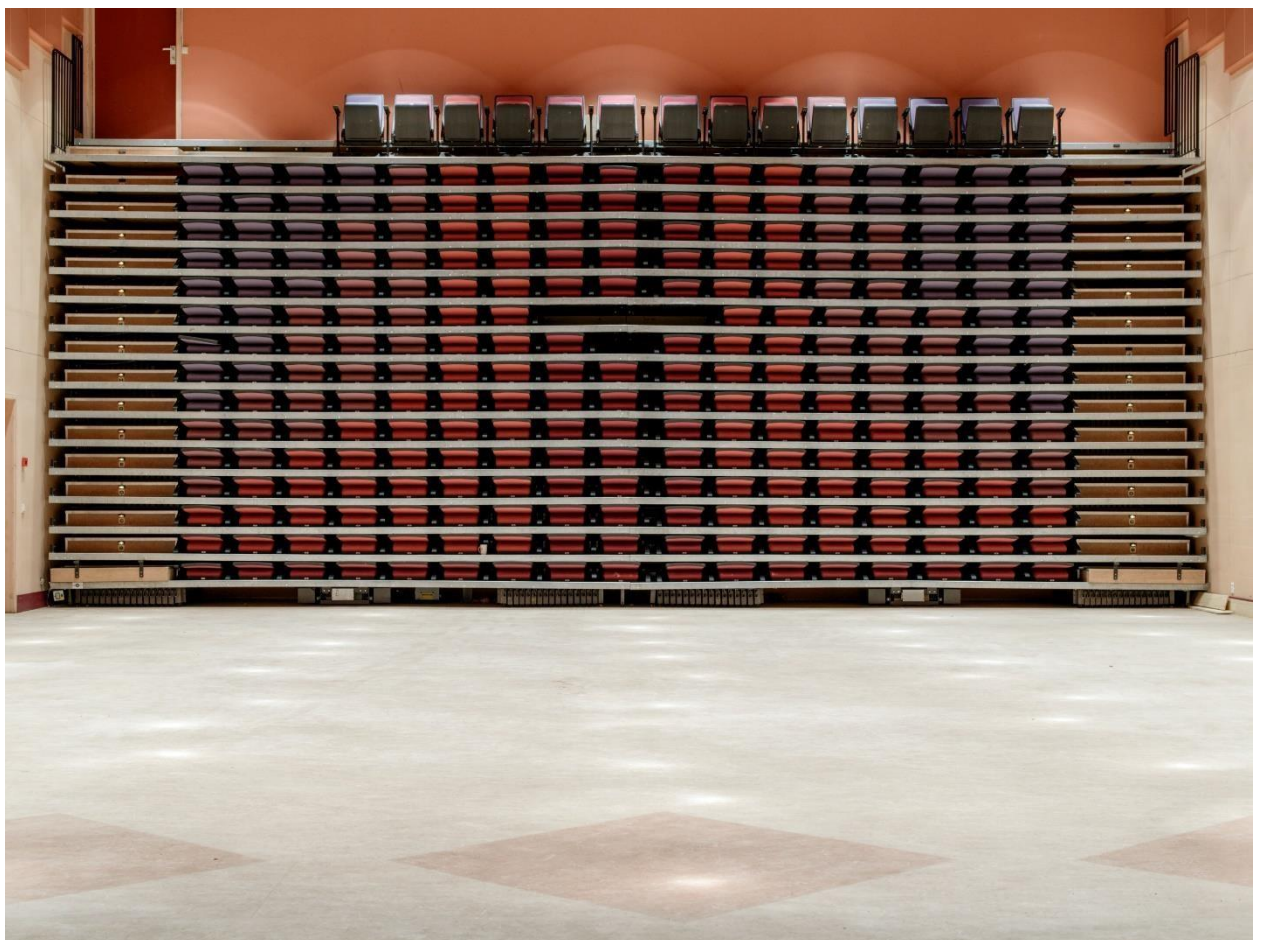
















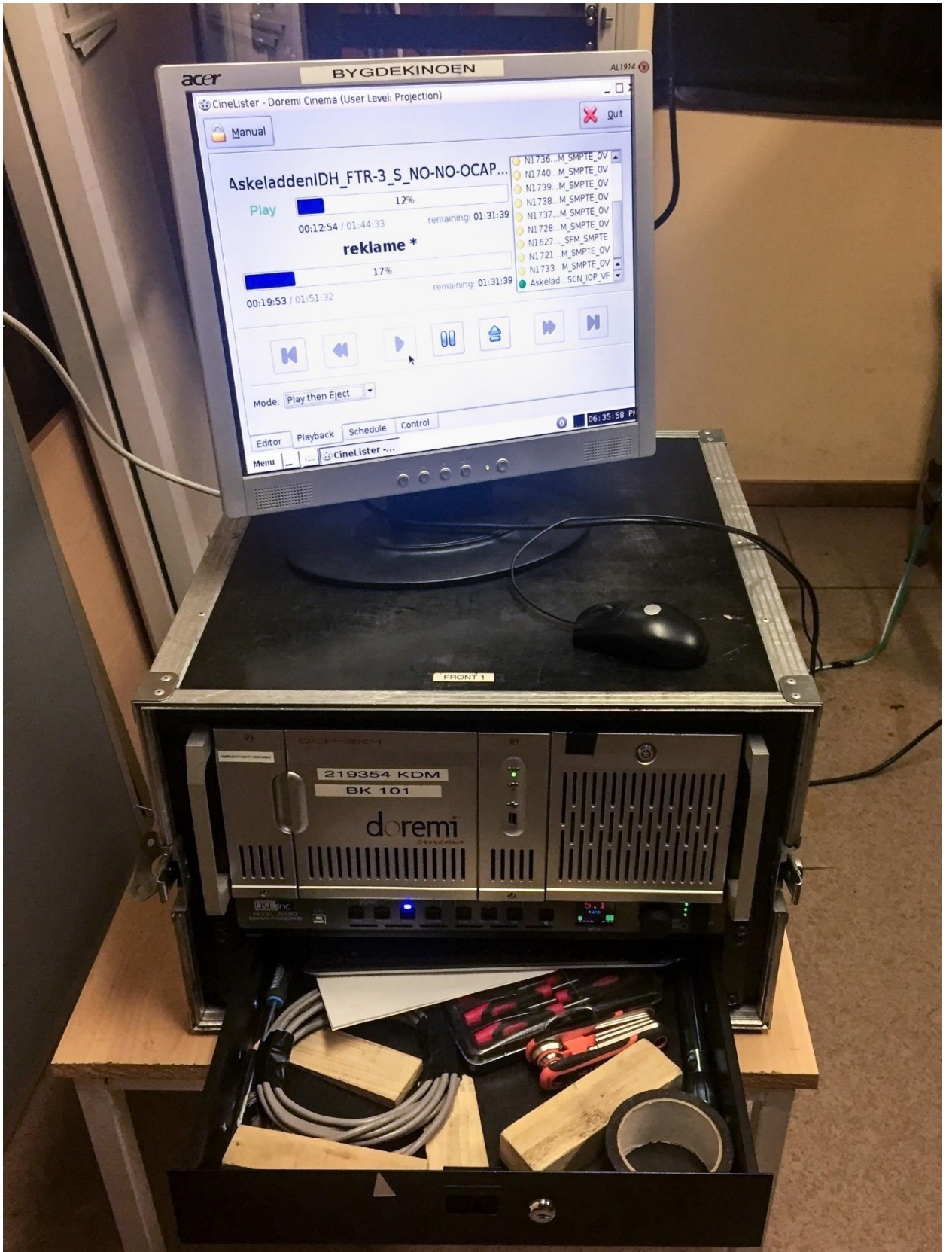


Appendix B

All the following pictures have been taken during my personal trips to Flateby (3.10.2017), Fjøra (17.11.2017), Kyrksæterøra (20.11.2017), Ringeby (15.9.2017) and Sorumsand (1.10.2017).





















Appendix C

List of counties visited by Bygdekino in 2017 with number of admissions. Source: Bygdekino's figures 2017.

County	Admissions
Os	6,615
Kautokeino	4,002
Austevoll	2,374
Lom	2,363
Fiskå	1,985
Løten	1,840
Evje	1,837
Aure	1,752
Nittedal	1,728
Seljord	1,704
Nes på Hedmarken	1,687
Kyrksæterøra	1,641
Moelv	1,637
Skreia	1,627
Manger	1,533
Nesodden	1,429
Åmot	1,424
Fyresdal	1,400
Tofte	1,317
Hovden	1,307
Tokke	1,275
Treungen	1,268
Snåsa	1,262
Leksvik	1,204
Gausdal	1,198
Kirkenær	1,194
Rognan	1,194
Hurdal	1,191
Furuflaten	1,166
Åfjord	1,128
Austrheim	1,103
Selbu	1,100
Andenes	1,097
Smøla	1,085
Bjørkelangen	1,084
Prestfoss	1,078
Flateby	1,077
Fitjar Sentrum	988
Ringebu	970
Oppeid	964
Trøndelag	957

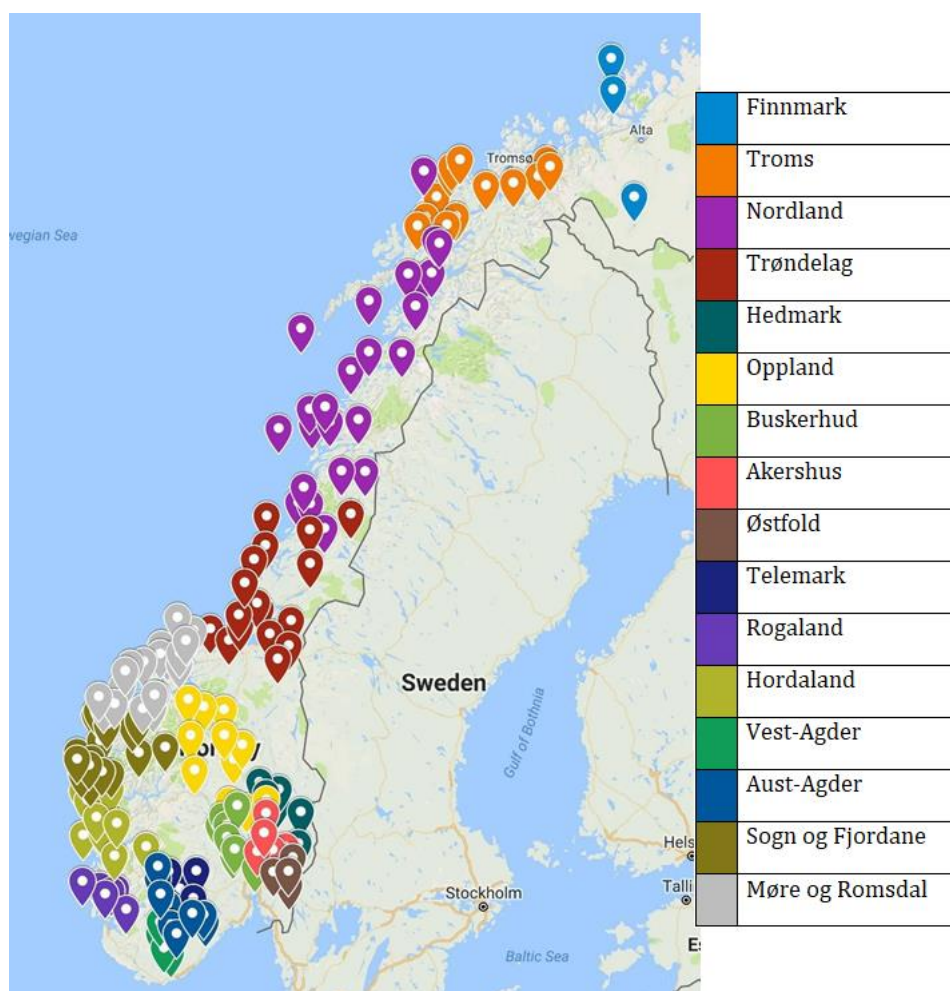
Valle	931
Ørje	885
Bømlo	851
Ålen	827
Dalsøyra	816
Agder/Telemark	799
Frosta	787
Åseral	776
Hardbakke	751
Meråker	745
Stadsbygd	735
Bokn	731
Ramsund	725
Langevåg	705
Longva	698
Bykle	681
Vågland	651
Harøy	642
Lesjaskog	641
Myre	618
Gudbrandsdalen	610
Hvitsten	605
Lesja	600
Eidsvåg	596
Løkken Verk	590
Vik i Sømna	587
Sørbøvåg	571
Averøy	565
Strandebarm	564
Terråk	560
Mo	547
Rennesøy	534
Lavik	527
Røyrvik	515
Trofors	507
Skotselv	504
Sørreisa	503
Skjolden	498
Hamnvik	489
Sørumsand	488
Bygland	488
Borkenes	487
Troms	485
Eide	483
Tårstad	482
Lauvstad	478
Byremo	476

Holmefjord	476
Værlandet	468
Ytre Stadlandet	467
Bud	461
Norddal	459
Fjon	458
Hedalen	457
Vestmarka	452
Vang i Valdres	450
Hordaland	448
Atløy	439
Tovik	439
Rømskog	439
Skånevik	433
Vegårshei	428
Fjærland	413
Herøy i Nordland	400
Fjørå	399
Krøderen	397
Lovund	395
Åmli Sentrum	388
Dovre	387
Austafjord	385
Røldal	376
Hattfjelldal	370
Solheim	367
Hellesylt	361
Flå	358
Eikefjord	355
Aremark	354
Sørhørsfjord	348
Kvelia	345
Eggedal	340
Kjøpsvik	337
Utsira	333
Bruvik	331
Øyslebø	330
Ågskardet	325
Øksfjord	323
Iveland	319
Oteren	316
Flatanger	316
Hellevik	314
Ålfoten	313
Dønna	309
Skibotn	305
Nesna	305

Drag	302
Heidal	301
Tydal	300
Skaland	299
Bjoneroa	299
Kjølsdalen	297
Tvedestrand	294
Hasvik	294
Lygra	286
Nordland	273
Trones	264
Bjordal	262
Onøy	257
Espa	250
Ormåsen	240
Foldvik	238
Rogaland	236
Høylandet	233
Storsteinnes	230
Flemma	228
Skaun	225
Batnfjordsøra	219
Nygårdsjøen	218
Gjesdal	207
Geiranger	205
Leinesfjord	188
Grunnfarnes	177
Meløy	177
Næroset	167
Sogn og Fjordane	165
Skiptvet	162
Nes i Ådal	160
Gryllefjord	155
Østlandet	142
Vangsvik	137
Innvik	133
Sildhopen	122
Østlandet	120
Sandshamn	115
Finnøy	114
Kornsjø	106
Utvik	101
Selje	92
Søgne	89
Flesnes	87
Vestre Åmøy	66
Bjarkøy	62

Sjoa	51
Moldefjorden	42
Barmen	40
Møre og Romsdal	33

Municipalities visited by Bygdekino 2017.



Bygdekino's film repertoire, 2017. Source: Bygdekino's figures 2017.

Film	Admissions
Askeladden - I Dovregubbens hall	8,611
Dyrene i Hakkebakkeskogen	7,921
Ekspedisjon Knerten	6,893
Marcus & Martinus - Sammen om drømmen	6,798
Karsten og Petra - ut på tur	6,734
Biler 3 (3D norske stemmer)	6,116
Vaiana 3D (norske stemmer)	5,260
Skjønnheten og Udyret 3D (tekstet originalversjon)	4,612
Fast & Furious 8	4,240

Snømannen	3,892
Karsten og Petra lager teater	3,591
Pirates of the Caribbean: Salazar's Revenge 3D	3,058
Trio - Jakten på Olavsskrinet	2,782
Sameblod	2,763
The Boss Baby (3D, norsk tale)	2,691
Grusomme meg 3 (3D, norsk tale)	2,635
Richard Storcken	2,547
Elias og Storegaps hemmelighet	2,511
Smurfene: Den Hemmelige Landsbyen (3D, norsk tale)	2,324
Gråtass redder gården	1,977
Hundreogtårningen som stakk fra regningen og forsvant	1,835
Den 12. mann	1,773
Snekker Andersen og Julenissen	1,477
Paddington 2 (Norsk tale)	1,425
Star Wars: The Last Jedi 3D	1,383
Kong: Skull Island (3D)	1,364
Bigfoot Junior (2D, norsk tale)	1,161
Emojifilmen (3D, norsk tale)	1,144
Hva vil folk si	1,125
Lego®Batman filmen (3D, norsk tale)	1,117

Appendix D

Interview with Anne-Marie Otter, Arfninn Inderhaug and Grethe Næss at Bygdekino's offices, 7.09.2017, Oslo.

Inderhaug: The different colours stand for the different rings, and one ring indicates one projectionist/one car/one same equipment.

Næss: We have 12 projectionists in total; some of them are 100% paid, and some are 50% paid. Some of them are standing when we have someone that wants to have some days off. Oslo area for example is ring 101. We have different rings for different places. The white ones are local cinemas we don't run anymore. The projectionists going up there have a very long way to drive and to reach the places there, as you can imagine.

I: There is a big difference in the distribution of the population in Norway: in the Northern part, 5 or 6 thousand people live, while the rest (more than 5 million) are living all together in Oslo area or in the biggest cities. Thus only 10% of the total population live up there.

N: The country is very full of mountains, as you can see. This is somewhat a different kind of job, lonely job: the projectionists drive alone, they finish around midnight and they have to sleep over or to drive directly home. It's long days, but they start in the afternoon. It depends on how far they have to drive. Usually they come at least an hour before the first screening to set up the equipment at the places they visit. There are local representatives who help them with setting up the equipment in the local places. Some places among them have their own equipment, but our projectionists are in charge of the actual screening.

I: The projectionists also need to update every night their personal schedule with the number of sold tickets and the number of admissions of the night.

N: We also visit some places that have their own equipment and are also in charge the screenings, but we prepare the film programming. We have different ways of doing it: for some we do just the programming, for others we bring the equipment and do everything. It's two films per screening day: one for children and one for youth/grown-ups.

Question: Back to 50 years ago there has been the need to control over the content of the movies. Now how do you choose the programming?

N: We do not usually program small movies or films that would be screened in Oslo. We tempt to find blockbusters, comedies, action movies. The children are our most big audience. All our venues are very different in comfort: some of them have plastic chairs, some do not even have pillows. Some have the screenings in the schools, so they just have to sit on the floor. Where we have more comfort, we have more grown-ups, of course. Art movies do not usually go in these venues. We are the everyday movies. We also organise screenings outdoor - in winter and summer also. In summer we have sometimes very

late screenings because it doesn't dark until late midnight. Also, it happens that some fixed cinemas ask us to organise some outdoor screenings, so they rent our equipment and our projectionist, but they do the rest: they book the film, and so on. We have to pay a fee to the distribution companies. But if a fixed cinema rents us, then they will have to pay for it, we will only take care of the rest. Different distributors have different fees for different films, some are more expensive, some cheaper. We are digital now; everything is transferred on the internet (the movie transit box). Every projectionist owns that. There is a digital key to open every file - every projectionist has it. Sometimes the key doesn't arrive on time. For Norwegian films they are key free.

I: Film & Kino is the organisation for all the films in Norway. We call it a Norwegian cinema system – it is a kind of different system. Only the 20 biggest cinemas of Norway are making enough profits for themselves. If not, they receive some support from the local municipalities and that's how the usual system works. In Norway there are approximately 200 fixed cinemas, and we have 175 places to cover, because we are a very small country in population. In the last 10 years the biggest cinemas of the towns have been bought by Sweden and Denmark companies, but behind this there is probably some American interest. They look at our cinema as part of the cultural policy. We are a system outside of the traditional industry: we are partly supported by the Government. One third of the income comes from the Government, one third comes by the membership fees paid by the locals, one third comes from the ticket income.

N: We have more and more tickets sold for Norwegian films. Few years ago, the share for Norwegian films was only about 3-4% of the box office. But the industry has grown and since we got our film school in Lillehammer things got better. In general, we also produce better films now. The interest from the public is great and especially for us screenings go very good with Norwegian films, in particular with children movies.

I: Most of the Norwegian films are supported by the Government, even the commercial ones. You sell one for NOK 100, you receive from NOK 25 to NOK 50 for selling that ticket. To get the ticket support you have to sell more than 10 thousand tickets per film.

N: The Government thinks every Norwegian should be able to go to the cinemas in their local community, so that's why there are fixed cinemas but also Bygdekino.

I: Norwegian films make about 20-25% box office per year. Bygdekino's programming has more than 50% Norwegian films. Sometimes, if people want specific movies they arrange it with the projectionists and then they call us and we set everything up for an agreement.

N: Also, if somebody produces films locally, we would screen them there and we might have lot of people coming. The Government thinks it's a good cultural politics in general, so probably things won't change. Last year we had our best year ever in the last 20-30 years.

I: 2016 was the best probably because of the film programming that attracted a lot of people.

N: In the 60's we were 10 times bigger than now. We had no television, so we had no competition to fear. Last year we had over 150 thousand euros in box offices, with about 80 screened titles. Now we

are in a difficult period for the second screening of the day: we have the blockbuster and then something in between that doesn't get any high box offices anywhere. But if we have really big blockbusters it's easier. We have average movies and that's difficult for us. Especially for the second screening they are much more difficult to get out of the house. They are very picky about what they want to see. We also have some children movies based on fairy tales of Norway that also attract grandpas and grandmas. Everything is based on the titles.

I: We have 175 places to visit but only 12 cars and in summer we don't screen movies, because usually people prefer doing outdoor activities; most of the activities in summer are located in schools. We screen circa 40 movies per year in a place. And in Norway they show 200-250 films premiere every year and we usually look at the blockbusters from these.

N: The smallest places have only 1-2 screenings per month. Some have even less. These projectionists take ferries to go to islands. When places call us, we have to look to demographical data. We have an internet form to see the requests, but we do not want to step on biggest fixed cinemas. We have to take a lot of things into consideration before saying yes. It also depends a lot on our local representatives, how much they do on Facebook. These are the posters we send 2 weeks before, so the representatives can hang them. Of course, all the data are on website and a link on Facebook is provided for every community. We send also a big poster per place for those who want them. This is a very important marketing move. But of course, Facebook gets more importance right now. Every representative or helper gets one ticket free from us - they don't get paid, it's just based on if they want to work with us. Some places are youth-driven/community-center (it is private, not public), in some other municipalities take care of it.

N: Most places have their own kiosk and they sell lemonade, popcorn, and they make money from that too. Twice a year we send out the whole ticket sale programme to them because every time we come they pay a fee to us, so to avoid 'going under' they have to sell a lot of tickets - most of them don't. We have a few places that go really well. Not everybody who wants to be part of the project understand the commitment. It is a contract system: we sell the tickets, we pay the taxes, the rest of the money we give 25% of the income to the local place. It means you have to sell at least a hundred ticket to stay up. The municipality will cover the unsold tickets but some of them decide not to host screenings anymore. We don't earn money either. It's a cultural project. 1/3 of the costs is from the Government. This is not a thing you would do to make money, but to give something cultural to the community.

Interview with professor Ove Solum at University of Oslo, 8.09.2017, Oslo.

Solum: I haven't done any particularly study about Bygdekino actually. There is a DVD about Bygdekino in Norwegian. It was established in 1948 and it is politically linked to the social democratic parties and democratisation of culture that was important for the party- Bygdekino and similar institutions which travel. And it is also discussed in Municipalisation.

Question: Before they wanted to control the content the screenings. But then with television the position changed, so it became more about ‘providing society with artistic contents’ – a positive involvement. It worked well for over a century.

S: Now the system is changing, in the whole Scandinavia. The Swedish cinema traditionally is ‘national’. Norway was the ‘little brother’ when it came to cinema, Denmark was the leading country. In Norway there is this strange system and there is no real film industry in the early years. Before World War I probably 8 films were produced in Norway – you can’t talk about film industry. What politicians thought was that there was no reason to say that the movie business supported production. There was no link production – distribution -. Why should it go to private owners? They established the local licenses. The low art could support high art- the national theatre in Oslo, for example. The production sector was weak. But film culturally developed around the ‘20s. Sweden started making films on Norwegian literature and they started thinking film could have artistic means. Municipal cinemas didn’t take responsibility from film production; they took the profit to build museum or sport stadiums. Then the cinema organisations (KKL, 1917) started to address the community to take their responsibility for the production. In 1922 they started a production company Norsk Film, an inter-municipal company. There was a very strange situation – public – at the end of 1930s. And then you had a very special situation in World War II when Norway was occupied – they developed a different system, it was called Bolshevik system. In 1945 they re-established everything like before. Then also the directors and the film community complained that there was too little money to produce film in Norway, and in 1950 the Government decided to establish a national company. The number of produced films after that increased a lot. A State subsidy to support Norwegian films was initiated; now probably around 25-30 films are produced annually, and they are State supported films. In 2005 there was a shift in support system. One of the main changes was that if producers could finance 50 percent of the cost, the State would cover the other 50 percent; so, production raised again. Bygdekino is a part of cultural policy that was established after WWII. It was a part of how to democratise culture, since municipal cinemas were important and supported by Labour party. Keeping local communities going is very different from Norway and Sweden; it is the opposite. Norwegian want people to live all around the country, and in order to keep the local communities where people like to live you have to give them culture. This is one of the reasons why these travelling institutions were developed. Democratisation and emphasis on local community are still very important in Norway.

S: It was a consensus to keep these institutions alive actually. Even if cinema industry changed in Norway, they would want to keep Bygdekino going on.

Q: What kind of films they screen? They say it’s difficult to make profit after art films; the company screens more children or popular films.

S: It has to do with digitalisation: the equipment is now available to everyone (for local productions). There are very few get national distributors. You’re definitely right about the children movies, they are

one of the most successful screenings for Bygdekino. Probably they also emphasise films that you can read about in the national newspapers. Norway has been the first country to digitalise all cinemas.

Q: Could the system change by political parties?

S: The thing is that politicians won't interfere with productions, at all. Even the extreme right. It would be very noisy, if something similar happened. The political and cultural context is important. Decentralisation is a key issue still today in Norway. The European Union would probably contribute to centralisation and transferring a lot of decisions to Bruxelles, that's why decentralisation is a very important part in Norway – more than in other Scandinavian countries. Why should we repair something that works? It is part of a political development. Conservative parties have been the first to go against this and sell out to private. In Oslo there is conservative party majority and also in Bergen. In Trondheim the Social Democratic is the biggest and you still have a municipal monopoly in film industry there. It is all part of local policy, which has been important for the development and has to do with history back to cinema in '30s - in order to run cinemas, you need to have a local license. Municipalities took over the licenses themselves.

Q: Mobile cinema system would make sense anyway without this peculiar geographical situation?

S: Geography is important, but also general consensus emphasis on decentralisation and local communities to be kept alive, even more than geography, I think.

Interview with former director of the Norwegian Film Institute Jan Erik Holst at Film & Kino's offices, 28.11.2017, Oslo.

H: First everything was municipal. The Norwegian cinema industry is pretty much unique in the world. The Cinema Act of 1913 was created to do some control over the contents of the films. This made municipalities take directly over the business and run their municipal cinemas. Now the system is still municipal-licensed, but things are very different. The money collected from the municipalities were used to finance the 'high arts': for example, they financed museums, swimming pools, theatres, opera, and so on. Then film started to be taken as a national responsibility. The national cultural policy was based on the fact that everyone could have the access to cultural activities in the same way. That is why they established the touring institutions: one for cinema, Bygdekino, one for theatres, one for concerts and one for art exhibitions. So, this was a result of the national cultural policy that was formulated by the Labour Party. Thanks to digitalisation the money collected were used to sustain the exercise of films, in particular the small and medium-sized cinemas and they were also used to renovate the cinemas. 2007 has been called 'American high' because things went particularly good for cinema industry in Norway; before the digitalisation a lot of new posters of modern films were bought – additional copies all over the country – and also Bygdekino benefited from that, since the posters of the most popular films were able to double the total admissions. This project was called *Rikkslansering*. The tax on video renting in the past has been of 2.5%, and it is the same today. Nowadays, things are very different because for the

first time Danish and Swedish companies are competing outside their national country and they are using Norway, in particular Oslo, as competition ground. It was the Conservative Party the one which pushed towards a privatisation of such activities and sold 100% of cinemas in Oslo to the foreign chains. Now the Nordisk film owns about 80% of the market share. But it is not like this in all the country. For example, in Trondheim, the main party is still the Labour party, so Trondheim's cinema system is still 100% municipal. Bergen has also a very peculiar situation.

H: Scandinavian chains have a very peculiar way to compete. Indeed, they do not compete with different film programming, but they instead compete, for example, on comfort or on types of sweets sold at the kiosks. It is a very Scandinavian attitude. Film & Kino is an association for municipal and private cinemas and every theatre can be a member. They need to pay a membership fee. Film & Kino is also in charge of organising projects and hosting festivals or conferences. The projects are directed to everyone and everyone can apply. Then the financing support will be given from the Norwegian Film Institute. Bygdekino is part of Film & Kino, but it is not financed by it. Film & Kino finances everything excepts Bygdekino, which instead is supported from the Government. From next year it will receive NOK 7 million as public fund. The biggest audience for Bygdekino are children. The fact that Bygdekino comes once in a while contributes in making the screenings more unique: it is part of the thinking within art system. Probably people from Oslo who might go to cinema everyday if they would, do not do that often and do not see it as something unique, an event. In the next future, it is more likely that a combination between municipal and private cinemas will set in Norway, rather than a privatisation of every cinema chain.

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