Placing the Festival: A Case Study of the Toronto International Film Festival

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Geography
University of Toronto

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Abstract

Economic geographers researching the film industry have focused on the dual spatial pattern of film work that has arisen since the sector restructured in the 1970s. The new geography of film has been characterized simultaneously by concentration (i.e. major clusters) and dispersal (i.e. ‘runaway’ production). During this time, film festivals have proliferated in cities across the globe, yet remain largely unexplored. This presents a need to better understand major film events as important, if temporary, nodes in the cultural production system.

Adopting a festival-centric approach, this case study of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) yields particularly rich insights on the potential value festivals create for the film industry, festival participants, and the host region. In part, this is because TIFF is connected to a global festival circuit and is embedded in a city with established local film production. My research takes up the growing interest in events, extends conceptualizations of value-creation, and considers how TIFF brings together international actors from across the film value chain. The research foregrounds the role of an active audience in valorizing an experiential cultural product, and in building the reputation of local film.
This research contributes three major findings. First, it finds that TIFF acts as a temporary cluster, which creates opportunities for networking, relationship-building, and industry learning. It is also an important site for selling and promoting work, and creating pipelines to access non-local knowledge, markets and resources. Second, this research explores the expanded role for consumer influence, and finds that audience engagement with films at TIFF creates an information-rich environment, which influences business decisions, professional development, and marketing activities. Third, this research finds that TIFF contributes to place-making and culture-led urban development. These findings have implications for policy, practice and research across industry, government and academic communities.
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Fort Collins, Colorado

16 June 2017
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Chapter 1
Introduction: Film Festivals as More than Movies

1 Introduction

Recent attention has highlighted the importance of localized knowledge, institutions and buzz for competitive clusters of cultural production. Global networks are recognized as critical for connecting local production centres to global markets, capital circuits, and innovative practices. This dissertation considers film festivals as significant nodes within a cultural industry’s production system. The premise for this work is that film events foster learning and relationships by bringing together actors with roles across the global value chain. Drawing on empirical findings from a Toronto case study, I theorize film festivals as ‘temporary clusters’ which present an opportunity to consider novel practices of value creation. In this dissertation, I argue that film festivals are key institutions in an increasingly polycentric commercial film industry. I situate my work in the context of research on cultural industries, particularly economic geography’s treatment of film.

1.1 Research Questions

My project is motivated by the need to better understand the roles major film festivals play for the film industry, festival participants, and the host region. In particular, I explore three overlapping questions: 1) How do major international film festivals operate as temporary clusters for the film industry? 2) How is the public film festival audience active in contributing to valorization processes? 3) How does the film festival, as a major serial event, contribute to place-product connections and local economic development in the host region?

Initially, I was interested in knowing whether, and how, Toronto’s vibrant ecosystem of film festivals contributes to the local film and television production industry. Indeed, it seems likely that locally grounded film festivals contribute to the local ecology of film production. However, little research has explored what happens at festivals.

Despite previous work on trade fairs and fashion weeks, economic geographers have not yet extensively studied cultural industry events as legitimate sites of economic activity. Before we can answer if and how festivals contribute to local creative production activities, we must first
learn something about festivals. My research represents this important first step towards theorizing and assessing the potential contribution of recurring, temporary cultural industry events in generating productive capacity, stimulating innovation, and locally grounding economic benefits within and across related sectors. To achieve this, it is useful to explore festival processes, activities and events through a qualitative case study of the event, sustained over time.

1.2 Film Research

Many scholars have been interested in film and filmic representations of places across several fields, including art history, film studies, cultural studies and geography. For instance, researchers in film and cultural studies critically engage connections between space and cinema, unpacking urban representations on film which contribute to how we understand places, their meanings and (envisioned) geographies (see Kredell 2012a). Similarly, film geography has arisen as a subfield since the 1980s (see Kennedy and Lukinbeal 1997, Lukinbeal and Zimmermann 2006). Urban and cultural geographers have made significant study of film, including the filmic representations of the urban fabric (see Doel and Clarke 2007, Mathews 2010). Engaging film and filmic abstractions of spaces and bodies, geographers have unpacked the power of film to configure urban modernity (San Juan and Pratt 2002).

Critical engagement of film is an increasingly common practice in geography teaching and research. Pratt and San Juan (2014) have made an important contribution on the interconnections between urban geography and film. Pratt and San Juan (2014) unpack the politics and affects of making and consuming film in urban space. These are but a few examples of recent research on film, and the intersection of film and geography is clearly a critical and rich research arena.

This thesis draws more immediately on the economic geography literature and its treatment of the film industry. This literature review offers a thematic account of the shifting treatment of film by economic geographers. It provides an overview of the film industry’s trajectory from its ‘golden age’, characterized by vertically integrated studio production, through its transition following anti-trust legislation, and the changing geography of film production in the contemporary period. While substantial research has explored the industrial organization and spatiality of film, little research has been done on Toronto’s film economy. Another issue is that there is a productionist bias overall. As a result, important aspects of the film economy, such as
distribution and consumption, have been neglected. My work contributes to these gaps in the literature, exploring the role of festivals in the film economy in Toronto.

1.2.1 Hollywood’s Golden Era of Film Production: Major Studios and Vertical Integration

The ‘golden age of Hollywood’ refers to the period of the Los Angeles motion picture industry prior to the 1950s. Despite its glamorous moniker, film production in this era was large-scale and highly routinized (Storper and Christopherson 1987). From the 1920s to the 1950s, the industry was a concentrated oligopoly. Seven vertically integrated major studios controlled exhibition (i.e. theatre chains across American cities), as well as production, largely based in Los Angeles. Film industry control was thus highly concentrated. With market control, studios were able to secure long-term labour contracts. The scale and scope of in-studio production was supported by permanent staff, performing pre-production, production and post-production within the firm. Permanent staff, including writers and production crews, could generate content (i.e. scripts and movies) in high volume (Christopherson and Storper 1989). This industrial context represented significant sunk costs by firms, as well as generated significant economies of scale and scope for the region (Scott 2005).

The vertical integration of film work within the studio system was tied to a standardization of film products and the routinization of the production process. The industry’s workforce was generally stable, well paid, and craft-oriented (Christopherson and Storper 1989, 333). Unions and guilds supported skilled workers within the studio system. Consistent with factory-style mass production, the organization of film work was rationalized, and similar scenes were filmed together to achieve efficiencies. In sum, ‘Classic Hollywood’ at its peak, was a “dense interlocking system of production companies, anchored in geographic space by its own virtuous circle of endogenous growth” (Scott 2005, 11).

While the particular reasons why Los Angeles became the heart of U.S. film production are debated, Scott (2005) argues it was partly due to Southern California’s suitability as a shooting location. The major studios were spatially concentrated in Los Angeles, and California accounted for nearly 90% of U.S. employment in the motion picture industry in 1937 (Scott 2005, 27). However, this stronghold on film production within the region, and particularly by a small number of large studios, was soon challenged by anti-trust legislation.
1.2.2 Motion Picture Industry Anti-Trust Legislation: Industrial Restructuring Catalyst

As Scott (2005, 34) states, “old Hollywood fell into crisis after 1948.” Box office sales peaked in 1946, but what really challenged the studio system was an anti-trust decision by the U.S. Supreme Court, which “forced studios to divest themselves of their theatres” (Christopherson and Storper 1989, 334). No longer were markets guaranteed for film production companies, since the legislation effectively separated the activities of film production and exhibition. Alongside other factors, this decision served as a catalyst for organizational change and vertical disintegration within the film industry. A hybrid structure emerged, comprised of major studios and independent producers.

In this new environment, major studios largely retained control over the financing and distribution of high-budget theatrical releases, but production was decentralized (Storper and Christopherson 1987, 106). This new film industry was characterized by small, specialized co-located firms, a structure referred to as ‘flexible specialization’ (Storper and Christopherson 1987). Drawing on insights from other industries, Storper and Christopherson (1987, 106) suggest that some degree of disintegration was beneficial for the film industry, in terms of contracting-out specialized inputs and additional capacity. Independent film production grew as a share of films produced between the 1960s and 1980s. Similarly, greater product differentiation emerged. Market research and other specialized services became valuable to the local industry (Storper and Christopherson 1987).

Creative, craft and administrative work, which had previously been arranged by full-time work teams internal to the studio, were increasingly provided by a growing set of specialized firms, who were contracted by the production company (Christopherson and Storper 1989). This change had dramatic consequences for, not only how films were made, but also how the film industry itself was structured. For example, the practices of hiring short-term labour and subcontracting were increasingly common. As well, studios would buy and release completed films produced by independent companies. Labour and capital inputs were made more flexible through this period of restructuring, but the result was a significant split between core and peripheral workers in the industry (Christopherson and Storper 1989, 345). As Christopherson and Storper (1989) argue, new institutions were needed to ensure the resulting labour insecurity did not become a problem for the industry.
The emerging production system involved a growing number of direct and indirect suppliers, providing a wide range of services (e.g. editing, lighting, post-production) (Scott 2002, Storper and Christopherson 1987). Scott suggests that ‘new Hollywood’ was bifurcated further, both in terms of firm structure (e.g. small independents and multinational media conglomerates) and spatial scale (e.g. Hollywood’s relatively small cluster versus the global reach of location shooting) (Scott 2002, 965).

### 1.2.3 Changing Geography of Film: Spatial Agglomeration and ‘Runaway’ Production

Scott (2002, 2005) offers a conceptualization of the ‘new Hollywood’ which accommodates both flexible specialization and traditional studio production systems. In his unified vision, Scott (2002) reconciles the split spatial tendencies within the industry, towards both industrial agglomeration in core cities, and geographic dispersal of production activity globally. Research emphasizes that not all film work tends towards spatial concentration, particularly the location of filming. Storper and Christopherson (1987, 112) argue that economic pressures that differently constrain independent and studio film production drive the observed, split spatial pattern, in which film work is geographically dispersed, yet film power remains consolidated in Los Angeles. This provides the foundation for significant film research focused on what is now termed ‘runaway’ production.

As discussed in the literature, there are a variety of film centres, including mature, established clusters such as Hollywood, centres which have grown up to service film productions (e.g. ‘Hollywood North’ in Vancouver), and places which have more recently arisen to attract film production work, such as New Zealand and South Africa. These newer centres attract investment by undercutting production costs and offering financial incentives (Lukinbeal 2006, Christopherson and Rightor 2010).

As noted, significant activity remains concentrated in Los Angeles. Christopherson and Storper (1986, 1989) examine the role of institutions as one explanation for the concentration of production companies, financing and film talent and Los Angeles. Transactions linking firms and individuals working on specific projects within the film industry “often have geographically dependent cost structures”, and specialized industrial agglomerations emerge in response to such cost constraints (Storper and Christopherson 1987, 108).
The tendency for cultural industries to cluster in order to benefit from greater access to localized assets and reduced transaction costs is well documented. Scott (2004a, 2004b, 2005) explains Hollywood’s longevity in terms of the strength of its supporting institutions, its creative workforce, location and regional milieu. He describes the Hollywood motion-picture production complex as an economic agglomeration with “massive external economies of scale and scope”, providing (local) firms with competitive advantage within a “tightly knit institutional fabric” (Scott 2004a, 38). As a cluster, both the major and independent film production companies are present in the same place. Both benefit from strong geographic and symbolic resources (see Scott 2000a, 2000b).

On the other hand, as noted earlier there is also a resulting tendency toward the spatial dispersion of film work. Christopherson and Storper (1989) argue that local institutions, such as unions, structure industry wage rates and work hour limits. Producers use location shooting as a way to circumvent these rules. As a result, there has been a rise in so-called ‘runaway’ production (Christopherson and Storper 1989, Christopherson and Rightor 2010).

The shift of shooting to less expensive jurisdictions is evident in Coe’s (2000a, 2001) research on Vancouver as a satellite production centre. Coe (2000a, 2000b, 2001) examines Vancouver’s film industry complex, often referred to as ‘Hollywood North’. This work troubles the notion of ‘local’ labour by showing how labour markets are connected to, and constituted by, external relations and networks.

Coe describes how Vancouver, with its temperate climate, varied landscapes, and West Coast time zone, is a suitable site for location shooting. Coe (2001, 1760) argues that this practice became self-reinforcing and was supported by improvements in camera technologies. Pressures for decentralization are heightened by technological advancements such as digitization, which lowers transaction costs. There has also been a maturation of satellite production centres, with increasing quality and a growing breadth in specialized labour. State funding also contributes to anchoring the project-based film economy in satellite regions. Christopherson and Rightor (2010) foreground new instruments and fiscal innovations, which accelerate ‘runaway’ production as a spatial fix for the film industry.

Research on the Vancouver context finds evidence of industrial upgrading, as local producers leverage financial and social capital, which they accessed through doing service production for
U.S. film projects (Coe 2001). However, as the local industry rapidly expands, problems arise which point to resource limitations (e.g. public funding, crew-depth and ‘location-burnout’). Research also cautions that Vancouver and other Canadian cities will likely find themselves competing internationally for this ‘runaway’ film production work (Coe 2001, Scott and Pope 2007).

Largely in response to this research on Vancouver’s film industry, Christopherson (2002) argues that project film work is vulnerable and can be drawn to low-cost jurisdictions with skilled-labour. The Vancouver example shows how satellite production complexes remain beholden to foreign interests, since core firms are headquartered in Los Angeles. A similar pattern emerges elsewhere (e.g. Toronto and Sydney). In these jurisdictions, labour accords, favourable currency exchanges, and economic development subsidies have attracted filming, particularly of “low cost generic products” (Christopherson 2002, 2008). Despite the trend to ‘runaway’ production, Christopherson (2002) suggests that claims about the devastating impact of ‘runaway’ production on California’s industry are overstated. Power remains concentrated in Los Angeles and intermediaries located in the city continue to play crucial and complex roles in project-oriented production systems.

Scott (2001, 20) acknowledges that “further intensification of globalization processes may well be associated with a markedly more polycentric and polyphonic system of cultural production than has been the case in the recent past”. At present, however, Scott (2005) asserts that the primacy of Hollywood remains. Despite this assertion, little attention has focused on Toronto as a production centre and potential connections between new spatial patterns of film work and the rise of film festivals globally.

1.2.4 Research Gaps: Toronto and Film Festivals

Recent research makes some progress towards diversifying the scope of film regions explored. Addressing the agglomerative tendencies of film, case studies of film production centres beyond Hollywood have begun to emerge. As Lorenzen (2007) suggests, we collectively know quite a bit about the film industry; however, we have yet to adequately connect the film industry with globalization. As such, there is plenty we do not know about the film industry, even as some nodes within it are well documented.
For instance, little is known about centres like Toronto, which are not strictly ‘runaway’ production centres, but have a combination of foreign and domestic production. Vang and Chaminade (2007) provide an empirical portrait of the Toronto film production cluster, which, they argue indicates growing an indigenous sector which goes well beyond the city’s construction as a satellite production centre for ‘runaway’ films.

There is some literature on the Toronto film industry (e.g. Toronto Film Board 2007, TFTO 2011, Vang and Chaminade 2007, Davis 2011, Davis and Kaye 2008). Toronto has a film production legacy of making inexpensive ‘runaway’ films for Hollywood since the 1930s, but this was heightened since the 1997 fiscal innovations, which established tax credits that incentivized filming in Canada (Davis and Kaye 2008, 253). Despite suggested opportunities for learning and industrial upgrading through service film production, Davis and Kaye (2008) argue that runaway production has created long-term structural legacies for the Canadian audio-visual industry. In focusing on foreign film production, a very footloose activity, Davis and Kaye’s (2008) findings are broadly consistent with Vang and Chaminade (2007). Davis and Kaye (2008) present Canada’s history of making foreign service films as having “failed to produce a competitive domestic film industry [despite Toronto’s capacity as a] genuine full-service audiovisual cluster” (2008, 258-9).

In their overview of runaway film and television production in Canada, Davis and Kaye (2008) find that Canadian producers have a position of limited power relative to their Hollywood counterparts, and have few opportunities for industry learning and property monetization. As such, they lack “credibility on the creative side in Hollywood” (Davis and Kaye 2008, 258). Despite this, their report largely echoes industry concerns voiced around the same time period about the need to reposition Toronto’s film and television cluster toward a sector that competes on quality rather than cost (Toronto 2007). Much of this research is dated, blurred between industries (e.g. media, television, film) and cross-cuts geographic scales (e.g. urban, provincial and national). As a result, the need for further research on the Toronto cluster remains. This is especially true for research that explores the role of locally centred institutions that have historically been neglected, such as the Toronto International Film Festival.

Integrating a Toronto case study may also provide an opportunity to trouble dominant narratives. In Canada, foreign location and service film production account for only 34% of total television
and film production volume, while foreign sources of finance represent only 8% of total industry financing (CFTPA 2009). These are not negligible amounts, but are by no means the majority of film activity in the city. When combined with anecdotal evidence of recent commercial success of Canadian co-productions (in film and television) that have polish and star-power on par with Hollywood productions, it is likely that the relationships and dynamics in the industry are more complex than the discourse of runaway production suggests. More generally, co-productions are on the rise (see Morawetz et al. 2007). Recent policy interventions call for a shift away from competing on cost to competing on quality (Toronto 2007). This strategic shift reflects public and private industry interests, yet current film research does not consider how film events might help regional production centres shift inexpensive service sites to centres of excellence.

The economic geography literature on film emphasizes the production activities in Hollywood (Scott 2002, 2004a, 2005). It gives little attention to film events. While Scott (2004a, 41) states that “film festivals are nowadays important venues in which independent producers and distributors come together to make deals with one another”, the dynamic nature of this process is not explored in detail. Festivals are important sites that support production, as well as other aspects of the film value chain.

Film festivals have played a variety of roles over time and across space. A birds-eye view of film festival transition recounts how film festivals have shifted from being showcases of national culture starting in the 1940s towards being examples of consumer culture and global cinephelia (De Valck 2007).

There are a variety of festivals around the world. Table 1.1 includes all the film festivals accredited by the International Federation of Film Producers’ Associations (FIAPF), as well as key festivals commonly cited in research on the American film industry (see Finnie 2010). FIAPF is based out of Brussels, and consists of film industry representation from 31 countries. It advocates for the international film production community and serves as a self-appointed regulator for international film festivals (see FIAPF.org). While FIAPF does not rank film festivals, it categorizes them based on their focus (e.g. geographic scope, genre) and whether they host competitions. While some important American festivals, such as Sundance and Telluride, are not FIAPF accredited, it is unclear whether or not those festivals have applied for accreditation. Nonetheless, FIAPF remains a dominant voice in the international film festival
context, and provides one of the few sources for comparative information about festivals cited in research papers (see De Valck 2007).

Table 1.1: List of Major International Film Festivals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>Founded</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Palm Springs International Film Festival</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Palm Springs</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International Film Festival Rotterdam</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Rotterdam</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sundance Film Festival</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Park City</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goteborg International Film Festival</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Goteborg</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Berlin International Film Festival*</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cinequest Film Festival</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>San Jose</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Cartagena Film Festival*</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Cartagena</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guadalajara International Film Festival*</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Guadalajara</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sofia International Film Festival*</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Sofia</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SXSW Film Festival</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Austin</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tampere Film Festival*</td>
<td>1970</td>
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<td>Finland</td>
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<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Istanbul International Film Festival*</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Istanbul</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fajr International Film Festival</td>
<td>1982</td>
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<td>Brussels International Fantastic Film Festival*</td>
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<td>Jeonju International Film Festival*</td>
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<td>May</td>
<td>Cannes Film Festival*</td>
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<td>1986</td>
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<td>August</td>
<td>Kitzbühel Film Festival*</td>
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<td>Locarno International Film Festival*</td>
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<td>Montreal World Film Festival*</td>
<td>1977</td>
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<td>Sarajevo Film Festival*</td>
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<td>Telluride Film Festival</td>
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<td>Venice Film Festival*</td>
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<td>Eurasia International Film Festival*</td>
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<td>Festival international du film francophone de Namur*</td>
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<td>New York Film Festival</td>
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<td>October</td>
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<td>Molodist Kyiv International Film Festival*</td>
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<td>Mumbai Film Festival*</td>
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<td>November</td>
<td>American Film Institute Film Festival*</td>
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<td>Bilbao International Festival of Documentary and Short Films*</td>
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<td>Cairo International Film Festival*</td>
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<td>International Film Festival of India*</td>
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<td>Stockholm International Film Festival*</td>
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<td>Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival*</td>
<td>1997</td>
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<td>Torino Film Festival*</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Torino</td>
<td>Italy</td>
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<td>AFM: American Film Market*</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>USA</td>
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| December | Courmayeur Noir Film Festival* | 1991 | Courmayeur | Italy |
| Dubai International Film Festival | 2004 | Dubai | UAE |
| Havana Film Festival | 1979 | Havana | Cuba |
| International Film Festival of Kerala* | 1996 | Kerala | India |

Source: Author compiled this list of 66 film festivals based on data collected from FIAPF reports (2007, 2008 & 2009), research interviews, individual film festival websites and industry media sources. Note: BOLD film festivals have a market component, while ‘*’ indicates FIAPF accredited festivals.

From Table 1.1, it is evident that the earliest film festivals were founded in Europe between 1932 (Venice) and 1951 (Berlin). In later decades, film festivals outside of Europe began to emerge. TIFF was among the first wave of international film festivals founded in North America. Other important North American film festivals, including Telluride (1974) and Sundance (1978), were founded around the same time as TIFF (1976). More recently, large film festivals with coinciding markets have emerged in urban centres outside of North America and Europe, such as Busan (1996) and Dubai (2004). Film festival growth is relatively recent, as shown in the above table and echoed in the literature (Stringer 2001).

Film festivals take place each year in the same host cities at a consistent time within the industry’s calendar of events, as shown in the above table. Many of these locations are small, remote resort towns (such as Cannes and Telluride), while others are major urban centres (such as Busan and Berlin). A cursory glance at this list of festivals shows how older festivals tended to take place in Europe, while subsequent waves of film festival proliferation occurred elsewhere in the West, across North America, and then internationally in the East and Global South. These
waves of festival proliferation are noted in interdisciplinary film festival research (Stringer 2001, De Valk et al. 2016).

Not all film festivals serve the same functions. For instance, niche genre festivals cater to particular audiences (e.g. Sitges International Fantastic Film Festival), competition festivals cater to tastemakers (e.g. Venice Film Festival), while formal markets cater to industry (e.g. American Film Market). Several scholars in cultural studies have explored the fragmentation of film festival functions, although no firm hierarchy or typology has assumed dominance (see Stringer 2001, De Valck 2007, Loist and De Valck 2010). Generally, research distinguishes between large, major film festivals and small, niche events (see Stringer 2001, Loist and De Valck 2010). In many ways, the current FIAPF accreditation listing is a key way to categorize film festivals globally. Many of the early European film festivals were established to showcase the host nation’s film culture, and to emphasized film as culture (De Valck 2007). As such, the major established European festivals typically have an official selection of films from which a critical jury awards a prize to the top films based on artistic and cultural merit. TIFF is a bit of an unusual festival in this context, because while TIFF is not classified as a competitive festival, it does give awards for Canadian film.

TIFF is one of the few film festivals which has a corresponding film market, suggesting it is an important site of business activity and film buying. As an industry-active festival, TIFF is comparable to Sundance and American Film Market (AFM) in the United States, Cannes, Berlin and Rotterdam in Europe, and Busan and Dubai internationally. Importantly, TIFF has a prominent spot on the festival calendar since September corresponds to the launch of the film awards season leading up to the Oscars. Among the international film festivals that have proliferated in cities across the globe in recent decades, TIFF stands out as an important, core event within a competitive international festival circuit (Stringer 2001, 138).

Film festivals thus represent a major gap in the current range of economic geography research on film, reflecting a relative lack of research on events more generally within the field. Recent

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1 Formal film markets are separate events which may coincide with major international film festivals (e.g. Cannes) or occur independently (e.g. American Film Market). These events are marketplaces for film sales.
interest in event geography has stimulated research on festivals, conventions, shows and happenings in other cultural industries (see Gibson and Connell 2015, Bathelt and Graf 2008, Weller 2008, Currid and Williams 2010). However, there is no research to date on how TIFF acts as a temporary cluster for the film industry. This is an excellent opportunity to contribute a case study of Toronto’s largest film festival.

My research takes up the growing interest in events as temporary constellations of significant economic activity, but also extends the traditional emphasis on film production, to consider how film festivals bring together actors from across the film value chain. An emphasis on festivals also underscores the role of the audience in valorizing an experiential cultural product. Finally, my research also highlights the role of festivals in forging a local film and city reputation.

1.3 Research Context

1.3.1 Toronto as a Film City

The primary reason for selecting Toronto as a case study is that it represents a gap in the current research. Even though Toronto is both a major centre of film production and a key film festival site, little research explores Toronto’s film economy. As well, Toronto is a leading example of the uptake of creative city strategies. It has mobilized significant resources towards its cultural economy, and focused attention on its reputation as a place of culture and creativity. This situates TIFF in a supportive municipal policy context that has treated creative industries in favorable terms. Broad support for investing in Toronto’s cultural industries is reflected in recent architectural renovations at its major cultural institutions, as well as culture plans (e.g. Creative Capital Gains 2011) which prioritize culture and creative industries. This provides a cultural industry context at the urban scale which is diversified, institutionally rich, and exemplifies policy-leadership.

As noted, Toronto is also a key centre of film production. Film and television have been identified as a key industry cluster for Toronto since the early 2000s, boasting economic contributions to the local economy in excess of $1 billion annually (Toronto 2011). This includes nearly $950 million in total spending on local film production and location shooting of major productions (84.5%), commercials (14%) and music videos (1.4%) in 2004 (Toronto 2011). By 2010, total production spending in Toronto ($903 million) was slightly more diversified, with
growth in animation productions. Major productions in 2010 includes both domestic and foreign projects, of which nearly $173 million was spent on feature films (TFTO 2010). In terms of total production spending and economic contributions, Toronto’s film and television sector ranks third in North America, and has a skilled labour force of 25,000 (see Toronto 2006, Toronto 2011).

The city and local industry stakeholders recognize that Toronto has many facets which support film production. The local talent base is made up of experienced film professionals involved in production, including producers, directors, location managers, assistants, and a large multicultural acting pool. The city also has a large supply of professionals in post-production, including sound engineers, visual/special effects specialists, editors and colorists, as well as skilled technicians (e.g. professional crew, trades and suppliers). The city also has independent production companies, pre-production talent, and major distribution companies (e.g. Alliance Atlantis and Mongrel Media). In terms of employment numbers, Toronto ranks third behind Los Angeles and New York (Toronto 2013, 36). This indicates the relative importance of Toronto as a major North American production hub for film (Scott 2005, 84). This local skill base offers technical expertise within a sector comprised of mostly small to medium production companies (Vang and Chaminade 2007, 409). A 2011 study of Toronto, one of Canada’s major media metropoles, provides a baseline of Toronto’s media cluster and finds that Toronto is a beta-media-city as compared to alpha media cities elsewhere in North America (i.e. Los Angeles and New York), and Montreal and Vancouver which, Davis (2011) argues, are smaller and more specialized centres of media production. While this study relates to film production, it encompasses a wide set of creative industries, including magazines, books, television and interactive media (Davis 2011).

Film and digital media is a high-value sector for Toronto, attracting both foreign investment and tourists (Toronto 2013, 26). A range of financial incentives offer stackable tax credits on labour, animation, special effects, and other expenditures, as well as tax breaks for foreign-controlled corporations. There is also a fixed (and favourable) exchange rate on municipal services (Toronto 2011). Ontario and Canada were leaders in developing these fiscal innovations, which have since been emulated in other jurisdictions, such as New Zealand, South Africa and Romania, as well as many U.S. states (e.g. New Mexico, Connecticut, and New York) (Toronto 2007, 20). Recently, significant soundstages and studios have been built in Toronto, such as Cinespace and Pinewoods.
Toronto is also an institutionally rich film community. Toronto film and screen-based media also benefit from a range of local institutions which train talent, including Seneca College, Ryerson University, Humber College, York University, University of Toronto cinema studies, and the Canadian Film Centre. The city is also home to over seventy annual film festivals, including several which are prominent within their niche subject or genre (Donkin 2013). The Toronto International Film Festival in particular has a strong international reputation. Examples of other annual film festivals held in Toronto include Hot Docs, Planet in Focus, Inside Out, imagineNative, Reelworld, After Dark, CineIran, Ekran, and Blood in the Snow. Film festivals are part of the set of institutions which structure the local film sector. This complex includes local offices such as the City Film Commissioner and the Toronto Film and Television Office. It also includes provincial institutions such as FilmOntario and the Ontario Media Development Corporation (OMDC), and national institutions such as TeleFilm and the National Film Board. There are also a range of labour market intermediaries, including ACTRA, Writer’s Guild, and Director’s Guild.

1.3.2 A Brief History of TIFF

The Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) is currently heralded as one of the most influential and prestigious film events in the world. The notion of TIFF’s importance and prestige is frequently cited in the media and recited by industry leaders, such as film producers and critics (see Ebert 2008). Founded in 1976, the Toronto International Film Festival started out as a “Festival of Festivals”. It selected what it considered the best films from all over the world, largely curated from other film festival programs, which effectively sidestepped the thorny issue of competing for film premieres. These films were shown in Toronto to passionate film goers, whose choices of what to watch in theatres were limited. This limitation was in part due to the dominance of American theatre giants (e.g. Paramount and Famous Players) that exerted control over film exhibition (Enright 2013). There was also high demand for film in a multicultural city and with the young generation (out of the 60s and 70s) that was interested in foreign films (Berry 2015). Even in its inaugural year, TIFF was an ambitious event. In 1976, TIFF played 127 films from 30 countries to 35,000 cinema enthusiasts. By 2009, the festival had grown dramatically, programming 336 films from 64 countries to a 500,000-strong audience (TIFF 2009). The growth of TIFF, in stature and attendance, has been attributed to its film curation, as well as its timing in the film festival calendar. TIFF is “position[ed] at what is widely considered the onset
of the annual film awards season” at which it serves as a crucial launching pad for films (Smith 2013).

From the mid-1970s onwards, TIFF evolved considerably. It offered an alternative way to see great films, including a strong showing of Canadian movies that programmers sought to profile. The inaugural film festival did not have notable celebrities or blockbuster movies. Dominant American studios snubbed the festival, considering it redundant given the prevailing industry perception of Canada as part of the American domestic market. Media reports suggest that Canadian pride and cultural nationalism flared in reaction to this dismissive treatment of TIFF, which garnered headlines and additional support for TIFF in its early years (see Berry 2015). Soon after, Hollywood stars such as Liza Minnelli and Donald Sutherland began to attend. By the 1980s, TIFF was establishing a reputation for itself and cementing its identity as an alternative venue for screening Canadian and global cinema. The festival became a meeting place for discerning cineastes to watch films together (Enright 2013, Berry 2015).

Similar trends were going on elsewhere, including in Montreal, where the World Film Festival was founded in 1977. Both Montreal and Toronto film festivals take place in early fall (end of August and early September) and feature international films. Over 50% of their programs screen world or international premiers. While Montreal and Toronto are the two North American film festivals accredited by the International Federation of Film Producers Associations (FIAPF), Montreal’s World Film Festival is a competitive festival with a juried award, whereas TIFF is accredited as a non-competitive festival. The implication of these festivals being differently categorized and accredited means that they ought to be different in character and not in direct competition with each other (for critical reception or film submissions). Films seeking critical acclaim and recognition through industry tastemaker’s awards would, logic suggests, tend to premiere at competition festivals. In contrast, films seeking to reach new audiences or mass markets would release at public film festivals (rather than the industry festival circuit). Not having a formal, juried competition sets TIFF apart not only from Montreal, but also from Cannes, Venice, Berlin and other notable juried festivals. Interestingly, despite its lack of juried awards TIFF has become one of the most important film festivals for the industry.

2 Author calculations based on 2009 FIAPF (International Federation of Film Producers Associations) data.
TIFF is one of only two non-competitive international feature film festivals accredited by FIAPF. This distinguishes Toronto from other prominent international film festivals which have formal jury prizes, including Cannes’ Palm D’Or, Venice’s Golden Lion, and Berlin’s Golden Bear (Smith 2013). The big three – Cannes, Venice and Berlin – are historically considered the most prestigious awards film festivals (Loist 2016). However, these festivals are largely positioned as industry events, with screenings limited to accredited film industry professionals and journalists. The difference between TIFF and other major festivals reflects their different origins. Unlike the European cadre of festivals, TIFF co-founders sought to program better, international films, which would appeal to Toronto as a multicultural city. TIFF was conceived as a contrast to Berlin and Cannes, which TIFF co-founders felt “treated everybody terribly” and “were just nationalistic expressions of local film culture” (Berry 2015). Over time, TIFF has gained prestige. It remains distinct from industry festivals, although it is of similar importance.

In tandem with the festival’s growing popularity and visibility, TIFF launched several initiatives over the years which expanded its breadth. In addition to periodic seminal retrospectives (e.g. Quebec cinema in 1978, Strange Objects of David Cronenberg’s Desire in 1993, and In the Realm of Oshima in 2008), the festival created and curated new programs, including: Contemporary World Cinema (1983), Perspectives Canada (1984), Midnight Madness (1988), and City to City (2009). This gradual expansion of cinematic breadth coincided with the festival’s organizational growth. Over the years, several local film resources were folded into an expanding TIFF. In 1990, the festival assumed management for the Ontario Film Institute (now Cinematheque) and the Film Reference Library. TIFF launched several related initiatives, both at the festival (e.g. Reel Talk, Pitch This!, Canada’s Top Ten, and Talent Lab) and beyond (e.g. Sprockets children’s film festival, Special Delivery, Student Film Showcase, and Reel Comfort) (TIFF 2009).

With such expansion in TIFF and the increasing range of industry and community programming, it is not surprising that TIFF began to commission films in 2000 and even build its own theatre. TIFF Bell Lightbox is a combined exhibition space, theatre and organizational headquarters. It also has a film archive, reference library, gift shop and condominium tower. Plans were unveiled

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3 Vienna is the other international film festival accredited by FIAPF as a non-competitive feature film festival.
in 2003. Ground was broken in 2007, and the festival was held in its new permanent home in 2010. The building cost an estimated $196 million and now serves as an anchor in downtown Toronto, ensuring a year-round venue for film (Toronto 2006, 19). TIFF is clear about its expanded mission – “to transform the way people see the world.” The festival remains dedicated “to presenting the best of international and Canadian cinema to film lovers” as it pursues its vision “to lead the world in creative and cultural discovery through the moving image” (TIFF 2009).

The objectives of the festival are clear. Reflecting on the impetus to start TIFF, Henk Van Der Kolk (festival co-founder) points to his desire to make feature films in Canada. He reflects on the challenges he encountered as a filmmaker. Frustrated at being labelled an ‘upstart’ and not being taken seriously, he co-founded the festival in an effort to bring legitimacy to Canadian cinema (Berry 2015). Van Der Kolk states, “We needed to get noticed. How the hell do we get the world to realize we’re here, and how do we get a Canadian film industry? That’s why it started, really” (quoted in Berry 2015). This vision was shared with his friend and TIFF co-founder, Bill Marshall, who envisioned a thriving Canadian film industry that extended beyond documentaries and B-movies (Goffin 2017). It is no surprise then, that TIFF created industry programming to support the business end of film. The festival’s continued commitment to industry programming demonstrates significant growth from the initial filmmaking workshops in its first year, which were attended primarily by B-movie directors (Cooper 2012). Early on, the organization also began to support the domestic film industry. TIFF launched an annual symposium to serve as Canada’s largest business conference for filmmakers in 1978, and later it introduced the Trade Forum, which ran from 1979-1991. Over the years, the festival expanded its industry programming (e.g. workshops and panel discussions) as a core component of the festival. In particular, it targeted professional development for rising talent among directors (i.e. Talent Lab), actors (i.e. Rising Stars), and filmmakers (i.e. Filmmaker Boot Camp). These events coincide with the formal festival each September (TIFF 2017).

In its early years, the festival struggled with issues of censorship until it was granted full exemption from the Film Review Board in 1978 (Enright 2013). TIFF resisted censorship pressures by screening the uncut In Praise of Older Women (1978) to a sold-out theatre for its premiere (Berry 2015). After the festival received an exemption, TIFF made full use of it by screening films which pushed comfort zones, such as Not a Love Story (1981), which offered a
stripper’s view of the porn industry. In doing so, the festival helped to spark debates about difficult issues (Enright 2013).

Despite its origins, TIFF has grown outside of the domain of the industry’s traditional tastemakers and gatekeepers. As an unorthodox festival, TIFF was not readily welcomed by the domestic and international press when it began, but has built relationships over time (Berry 2015). The Hollywood establishment were dismissive of festivals (for giving movies away for free) and perceived Canada as part of the domestic (American) market (Berry 2015). At the time when TIFF was established, “Hollywood simply didn’t respect or acknowledge North American film festivals” which resulted in TIFF having better access to independent and artsy films, rather than blockbuster movies in its early years (Cooper 2012). According to Bill Marshall (TIFF co-founder), Hollywood majors were skeptical of festivals and Toronto in particular, and so offloaded properties they did not value to the festival. However, he suggests that “nobody in Hollywood knows anything: all the movies that they gave us that they thought were dogs went on to become Oscar contenders” (Berry 2015). Early on, TIFF organizers also turned to other film festivals, such as Edinburgh and Berlin, which helped cement TIFF’s reputation for sourcing artsy and foreign cinema (Cooper 2012).

Today, the festival emphasizes curation and thoughtful exhibition (i.e. with proper soundtracks and cast present), which though now common and reflected by FIAPF accreditation, this was not consistently done across festivals around the time that TIFF was founded (Berry 2015). This adds value to the film experience, and contributes to TIFF’s strong audience reception, especially early on for films that were not expected to be commercial or critical hits, such as Chariots of Fire (1981) and Diva (1981).

Gradually TIFF earned a reputation for recognizing a ‘diamond-in-the-rough’. Once the interpretive value of TIFF was recognized, studios and marketing departments “started using the festival as a way to test-drive their product with what they had called a ‘real’ audience” (Berry 2015). In other words, it became increasingly common for the film industry to look to TIFF and Toronto audiences to interpret the value of films. Films such as Cousin Cousine (1975), The Big Chill (1983), American Beauty (1999), and School of Rock (2003) initially confused established stakeholders, but became major hits following their success at TIFF. Screening films with the cast present was important in developing the identity and reputation of the festival.
As a result, TIFF is now North America’s most popular film festival. It is also the most influential fall film festival. Some even argue it is “the most influential film festival period” (Keegan 2007). This accolade is a result of TIFF’s distinction from other important festivals. In the media, TIFF is described as having “the star power of Sundance and the foreign flare of Cannes” (CBS News 2009).

Over the years, the Toronto International Film Festival (as it was renamed in 1995) has felt the effect of industry trends (TIFF History 2009). For instance, in the late 2000s, when many important independent and foreign film distributors closed their operations, the famous film critic Roger Ebert wrote that TIFF served “not only as a launching pad, but as a lifeboat” for the independent film world (Ebert 2008). He went on to note, “since the festival essentially acts as a convention for the continent’s film critics and show-biz specialists […], a great small film can open here and emerge as a winner” (Ebert 2008). For film critic Roger Ebert, “the high point of my festival is when I wander into a completely unheralded film and emerge enthusiastic” (Ebert 2008). He is not alone. For many film critics, industry professionals and dilettante enthusiasts alike, discovering a festival gem is a highlight of their festival experience. TIFF is recognized as “having a large cadre of expert programmers” who curate good movies and program a selection that rivals Cannes (Ebert 2008). As such, TIFF programmers have established and sustained a reputation for excellent quality curation.

TIFF thus has a long, locally grounded history. The festival has grown, evolved and become embedded in the local institutional context of Toronto’s film economy and broader cultural sector. Today TIFF is described as second only to Cannes on the international film circuit (Toronto 2006). However, unlike Cannes, Toronto has a sizable film industry which therefore provides opportunities for investigating the potential linkages between festivals and the local production cluster. Considered in this context, Toronto is a strong place to study film economy dynamics, and key international film festivals in particular.

1.4 Methodology

My dissertation explores the function of festivals in Toronto’s film economy through a case study of the Toronto International Film Festival. This research responds to calls for applying an understanding of the cultural construction of the economy (see Castree 2004, Gibson 2003). Through candid discussion and reflection on my research practice, I participate in research
dialogue that will sustain and deepen discussion of economic geography methods (Barnes et al. 2007, 2).

I draw on qualitative research methodologies, including case study research, which is now standard in economic geography (Barnes et al. 2007, 21). Qualitative research emphasizes multiple meanings and interpretations, over the discovery or imposition of one correct or dominant view (Hay 2000, 6). Qualitative research methods are useful for investigating and understanding human behaviour and experience (Winchester 2000), which is crucial to the social context of cultural industry milieus – whether they be production centres, systems of valorization, or sites of consumption. These methods are helpful to “elucidate human environments, individual experiences and social processes” and make possible an examination of “structures and processes on the one hand and of individuals and their experiences on the other” (Hay 2000, 2-5).

Studying the social milieus of cultural industries is challenging because they are always in flux, both socially and spatially. As a result, some key studies of cultural sectors have tended to embrace an ethnographic approach to observing unique art worlds (e.g. Lloyd 2005), design environments (e.g. Molotch 1996), and (sub)cultures (e.g. Hebdige 1979). Often such studies are conducted at the urban scale (e.g. Currid 2007). However, these studies have been criticized for suffering from the ‘small numbers’ problem. In particular, the generalizability of research findings may be considered a weakness (Currid and Williams 2010). While true, it is not the intent of this type of inquiry to directly apply findings to other places, peoples and contexts (Creswell 2009). Rather, the value of qualitative research lies in its contextualized richness, its particularity. In combination with additional or other case studies, context specific qualitative research can be used to generate broader theory, and in some cases (with clear documentation of qualitative procedures) be repeated in new settings (Yin 2003).

Given that my research has an exploratory dimension, and seeks to capture the richness of what is always already going on in place, the potential criticism that this research suffers the small number problem is less significant. Despite lacking a comprehensive vantage point and large sample size from which to draw generalizable conclusions, the current dearth of research on film festivals points to the need for rich case studies. Although this research approach generates “place-specific ethnographic data inherently lack[ing] a counterfactual by which to judge
whether the findings are part of a larger pattern or story” (Currid and Williams 2010, 424), it opens up alternative perspectives. Due to the complexity of film festivals (as plural and contingent events), it made sense to begin with an exploratory case study. This dissertation is based on an in-depth qualitative case study of the most prominent film festival in the local film economy: the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

A single case study approach is an appropriate research strategy for investigating questions of how and why (Yin 1994). A case study approach permeates the current research on the film industry in economic geography (e.g. Coe 2001, Scott 2005, Lorenzen and Taube 2008). Given this previous research, the case study approach affords opportunities for comparative work (Eisenhardt 1989, 1991), and thus opens up the possibility for further insights and impacts beyond the research site alone. Extending the single case study through time (i.e. covering multiple festival cycles over three years of fieldwork) allows for “a protracted temporary commitment to field sites,” while considering its connections across scale (i.e. connecting the local to global processes through film festival circuits), and offers a deep qualitative treatment that is not consistently achieved within economic geography (Barnes et al. 2007, 22).

Aware of the potential challenges of qualitative case studies and ethnographic approaches, I am candid about my research in hopes of promoting “high degrees of transparency and reflexivity [which currently] lags the uptake of qualitative methods” in economic geography (Barnes et al. 2007, 22). For example, in preparing for my fieldwork, I actively engaged in ‘methodological talk’, reading reflections on methods (e.g. Tickell et al. 2007) and speaking to colleagues (faculty and graduate students alike) about researcher positionality and their field experiences researching cultural industries in interview and participant observation settings. Mirroring personal and published reflections on research methods, numerous published articles adopt qualitative methods, further supporting exploratory fieldwork and inductive qualitative data analysis techniques as important research practices. Alongside research design texts, these examples confirm case studies are strong approaches for research exploring processes, activities and events, while ethnographic approaches are well suited to the “examination of broad culture-sharing behavior of individuals or groups” (Creswell 2009, 201).

For this case study, three data collection methods were used: interviews, participant observation and textual analysis. Each are discussed in turn below.
1.4.1 Interviews

Interviews are used as the primary research method to gain information about opinions, events and experiences. Using in-depth interviews in qualitative research “gives voice” to individuals and “allows viewpoints to be heard which otherwise might be silenced or excluded” (Hay 2000, 6). The TIFF case study was investigated using interviews with key informants who attended the festival or who represent local institutional perspectives. Informants held different positions within the film industry (e.g. writers, producers, distributors, buyers) and within the wider value chain associated with film (e.g. film critics, festival programmers, industry consultants). Several interviews were conducted on a referral basis using snowball sampling, where I asked people interviewed to suggest others from their networks who would be suitable to approach for additional interviews.

I also specifically sought out key stakeholders to interview, such as city officials and film festival programmers because their perspective is especially relevant to my research themes. In some cases, it was difficult and took several tries to access key informants. For example, the City of Toronto was undergoing staff turnover, which meant I needed to be persistent and pursue experienced personnel for interviews. As well, my initial attempts to make contact with festival staff and programmers at TIFF were channeled through their communications department. However, once I was able to access one TIFF programmer, they referred me to others in the organization and provided introductions via email, which greatly facilitated research access. My experience resonates with what Mayer (2008) describes when conducting production studies research. I had difficulty accessing high profile interviewees. Where possible, I drew on secondary literature to incorporate relevant perspectives from industry leaders through media interviews and industry reports.

While some institutions were supportive and provided access to data (e.g. Ontario Media Development Corporation, City of Toronto) others were guarded about their information. For example, FIAPF did not share current film festival data, while TIFF did not provide back issues of its annual reports. As well, many potential film festival data sources (e.g. IMDBpro, Cinando and FIAPF) are restricted by membership, which is often based on verified industry credentials and significant fees. I did what I could to overcome these limitations, including using the TIFF film library resources and archives.
My research interviews were flexible, and were adapted to capture what the interviewee felt was important. My interview guide was designed to touch on the major themes of my research, and included sections on background information, film festivals, audience, location characteristics, and policy. A copy of the interview guide is included at the end of this chapter in Appendix A.

In addition to contacting people via email, I used industry-only spaces, such as the Filmmakers’ Lounge and industry screening cinemas, as a space to identify and approach people for interviews. I also used delegate guides and regions’ promotional catalogues to identify potential interviewees. Cold calling and emails were the least successful, while snowball sampling and referrals were the most effective way to secure interviews. Making contact in person to set up an interview was well received, even if the interview was declined. Often, industry stakeholders would speak to me informally.

I did not select participants based on gender. 76% of participants were male, which reflects a wider industry bias. Because TIFF draws industry professionals from all over the globe, I wanted to ensure that perspectives from local and foreign interests were captured. I anticipated local and international viewpoints would likely differ, and so I selected participants from these regions, as shown in the table below.

Table 1.2: Breakdown of Interviewees by Gender, Geography and Professional Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geography</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Filmmaker</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producer</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film festival (not TIFF)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIFF staff</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film consultant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fifty qualitative interviews were conducted over two festival cycles (2011, 2012). Interview duration ranged between twenty minutes and two-hours. Interviews were typically sixty minutes long, and were conversational and semi-structured. Interviews were conducted face-to-face where possible, or alternatively over the phone following the festival. They were audio-recorded with the participant’s permission. Where denied, extensive notes were taken during and immediately following the interview. Transcription of recorded interviews was conducted by myself, as was analysis and interpretation of the research findings.

Before beginning interviews, I attended a wide range of additional Toronto-based film events to gather information about the local film industry and the practices of different intermediaries (e.g. OMDC events, industry meetings and workshops, film openings). Staging the interview phase after preliminary research improved my effectiveness as researcher. This helped me prepare to interview potential elites (see Harvey 2010). Conducting fieldwork in phases over a three-year period (2010-2012), involved shifts back and forth between conceptualization and empirical fieldwork. This practice supports the “iterative and explorative character of [the] research [that] prioritizes conceptual openness over methodological consistency and notional rigidity” as exemplified in other economic geography research on the social milieu of knowledge intensive industries (Grabher et al. 2008, 257).

A major strength of interviews is that they identify what the informant considers to be relevant (Dunn 2005). The intent was to capture a range of perspectives, reflecting the breadth of the festival delegates attending TIFF, in terms of their professional experience and geographic home-base. This allows for potentially corroborative, conflicting or inconsistent points of view to emerge. Informally, I spoke with anyone who would speak to me at the festival. More formally, interviews were conducted with TIFF industry delegates and key local stakeholders who were not necessarily in attendance at the festival. This exploratory study was designed to engage a range of industry delegates, so that multiple roles (e.g. filmmaker, producer, writer, buyer, critic), regions (e.g. Toronto-based, Canadian, American, international), and stakeholder
perspectives (e.g. film festival, industry intermediaries, emerging filmmakers, established film consultants) could be included.

In terms of interview sampling techniques, given that this research was exploratory in nature, quantitative rigor was not crucial. I was not concerned with ensuring a ‘representative’ sample of industry stakeholders attending the event, in part because some stakeholders (e.g. talent agents) were deemed peripheral to the key questions driving my research, whereas others (e.g. emerging filmmakers) had experiences more centrally linked to my research themes. I did not gain access to certain segments of the industry, in part because I lacked the networks and social capital to gain access to interview them (e.g. A-list celebrities and major financiers). Given the relatively small sample size (n=50) in context of the scale of the event (each festival cycle comprised of roughly 4,000 domestic and foreign industry delegates, over 1,000 official press, plus thousands of audience members, festival workers and volunteers), my aim was not to get a representative sample, but rather to use the combined research approach of sustained case study, event observations, interviews and media analysis to unpack what is going on at the festival.

1.4.2 Participant Observation

Participant observation is an important supporting methodology, which is particularly relevant for research on events (e.g. festivals). It is also particularly helpful in highly-reflexive and performative industries (e.g. film). Participant observation has been successfully used in research on textile trade fairs (e.g. Rinallo and Golfetto 2006) and fashion weeks (e.g. Entwistle and Rocamora 2006). Through immersion in particular settings, participant observation offers a forum in which multiple viewpoints can be heard (Winchester 2000, 6). As well, the relationship between participants can be observed. When participating in industry events, my role tended towards passive observer. I purchased an industry delegate festival pass, which granted me access to people and spaces. Participant observation was an important aspect of my research approach, both in terms of the evidence and insights gleaned at the event, but also in terms of helping me gain access to potential interviewees. It helped me to identify names and organizations, and make personal contact with key informants. The setting can be categorized as ‘uncontrolled’ since I was not limited to specific observations, even though I was guided by overarching research goals and cognizant of ethical concerns (Kearns 2000, 106).
My observations were not limited to counting instances of a particular activity (e.g. attendance at a particular workshop). Rather, I was interested in observing how different film festival venues and spaces were being used, and the social interactions between festival delegates across a range of formal and informal festival spaces. I observed how delegates interacted, whether they were engaged in social or professional conversation, who they engaged with and how, and what they discussed (e.g. industry information and gossip). I spent a lot of time observing at the Filmmakers Lounge, TIFF organized industry workshops, industry parties, hotel lobbies and screening venues. Observing conversations and interactions in these spaces was quite revealing about business practices, knowledge sharing and social norms. I also spent time loitering in and around festival spaces. By spending time at screening venues, alongside the red carpet, in line at nearby cafes and eateries, and other public spaces, I was able to observe how specific festival and public spaces were being used. These observation practices reflect key themes of my exploratory research on the role and function of film festivals for the industry, audience and host region.

Data collection through repeated visits at international trade fairs, has been fruitfully applied in economic geography. Similar to Power and Jansson’s (2008) study on furniture trade fairs, I focused on direct observation, as well as an analysis of documents produced for the fair, such as festival guides, press releases, and industry catalogs. Conversations with visitors, exhibitors, and organizers were also conducted. These conversations varied in terms of level of formality. Some were collected, while others constituted small talk. I was open to everyone willing to engage me at the event, and conducted observations at both formal festival venues and additional off-site activities, such as parties not directly affiliated with TIFF. Iterative and immersive fieldwork facilitated my ability to stay flexible and take up emerging themes and unexpected opportunities, as suggested by the methodological reflections of economic geographers who study the social milieu of creative industries (see Power and Jansson 2008; Grabher et al. 2008).

Attending three festival cycles (2010, 2011 and 2012) was valuable. I was able to repeat observation at similar events, sites and spaces over time, which is rare for research on temporary events. This means I could discern consistent themes and emerging trends in what I observed, as well as improve my effectiveness as a researcher in the field. By conducting sustained participant observation at the TIFF, I was able to observe a wide range of experiences, as well as witness a variety of embodied strategies for capitalizing on and coping with the deluge of opportunities at
the festival. As a festival participant, informal conversations that I observed and engaged in seemed at times to be performative in their rehearsed character, but also at other times were incredibly candid. Participant observation was an important element of my empirical fieldwork, which provided opportunity to witness the embodied performances of culture-sharing behaviour of festival delegates, both individually and in groups (Creswell 2009, 201).

In conducting participant observation, I was able to note specific details, observe the experiences of those attending, and solicit their perspectives. Because the observations were sustained over the course of a week during each run of the film festival, I sought to cultivate a friendly and professional rapport with participants. As anticipated in the research methods literature, engaging in friendly, simple conversation served as a “less threatening entry” into the social milieu (Kearns 2000, 117). Often, repeated encounters across festival venues (e.g. workshops, film screenings, industry lounge) provided an opportunity for me to consider who I might approach for an interview, as well as conferred a level of acceptance, which I found made delegates more inclined to meet with me for an interview or refer someone in their networks for an interview.

During the festival fieldwork, I attended festival events (i.e. films and industry programming), as well as spent time with festival delegates in a variety of festival venues (i.e. filmmaker’s lounge, screening cinemas), informal urban spaces (i.e. Hyatt hotel lobby, nearby cafes and restaurants, streets and sidewalks near cinemas and gala venues), and private parties (i.e. hosted by countries, production companies, and related cultural industries via OMDC). A typical day of fieldwork started around 9 a.m., with movie screenings and casual observation of delegates in festival and public spaces near TIFF headquarters, and carried on through the evening (often ending between 11 p.m. and 2 a.m.). This fieldwork was sustained for eight days in each of the three festival cycles between 2010 and 2012. Because the observation complements the interviews, the analysis of this work largely consists of “quotations or descriptions that assist interpreting findings derived from other sources” (Kearns 2000, 118). I kept a journal of field-notes during the participant observation research, comprised of written and oral (audio recorded) notes.

1.4.3 Media, Industry and Promotional Materials

As a complement to interviews and participant observation, this research draws upon textual analysis and critical readings of promotional materials, media, industry reports, trade publications and policy documents. Promotional materials include official publications,
advertisements, pamphlets and imagery from TIFF, industry stakeholders and Toronto-based media outlets. An analysis of popular media was also conducted.

Critical reading of textual and visual material is frequently used as a methodology in geography, which has historically emphasized the importance of reading texts critically (Forbes 2005). Texts, whether visual or linguistic, contain facts, ideas and metaphors. Deconstructing texts can reveal multiple meanings behind what is immediately depicted. Representations of human experience and space are necessarily partial and simplified. Geographers not only construct such representations (e.g. make maps), but also deconstruct them, and interpret their intertextuality (Forbes 2005). Deconstruction of texts in this project pertains primarily to the discourse analysis, to determine not only what is immediately communicated in a text, but also unpack the layers of meaning and potentially different interpretations embedded in the texts and images. It is also important to examine what is excluded or absent with texts.

In this case, both visual images and video are considered, as well as written texts. Textual analysis of media (e.g. blog posts), industry reports (e.g. urban policy documents) and promotional materials (e.g. posters and advertisements), reveals the general treatment of a subject as well as potentially makes visible underlying tensions and unanticipated meanings.

The use of multiple methods, including interviews, participant observation and textual analysis facilitates a triangulation of data. This allows for a cross-checking of facts and adds richness and complexity to the analysis.

1.4.4 Reflections on Fieldwork

According to Mayer (2008), when conducting ethnographic research in film production studies, the practice of beginning interviews “below the line” (i.e. industry labour that is typically behind the scene) and progressively “studying up” (i.e. to core creative talent), granted her better access within the firm or film project. Not only were practitioners that were higher up (on the film production hierarchy) more apt to perform their self-worth and offer packaged responses, but at a certain level, they would also issue memos that denied her (as a researcher) access to other workers in the firm or project (Mayer 2008, 145). This research experience is echoed by Caldwell (2008), who finds that the film industry is particularly experienced in presenting itself
to the public. Those who are higher up the hierarchy are more likely to give scripted answers in interviews and thus be less instructive for research.

These insights informed my decision to sequence some of the participant observation fieldwork at TIFF prior to interviewing festival officials and stakeholders. I conducted a small number of initial practice interviews with subjects working in the Toronto film and television sector with whom I was acquainted. These are not included in my project findings. Instead, practice interviews provided the opportunity to revise the interview guide. This was done for two reasons. First, it is my experience in conducting interviews that as the researcher progresses with their project, they develop greater familiarity with the general substance of the field, and a higher level of comfort and confidence in conducting the interview itself. Second, I anticipated creative workers in the film economy to be both practiced at representing themselves and reluctant to discuss sensitive themes. This was true for my experience conducting research interviews about TIFF.

Qualitative research on serial events, such as film festivals, presents unique challenges. Unlike single events or project-based research (e.g. Hawkins 2011), the window of opportunity for conducting fieldwork does not have a discreet end-date. Such events have momentum and a local context, which evolves over time. However, they are not permanent and are only in-place for brief, intensive periods.⁴ Serial events have been studied through repeated visits and close dialogue (Power and Jansson 2008, Grabher et al. 2008). As such, to capture participant observation and interviews – roughly equivalent to a month of intense and immersive fieldwork – requires three festival cycles or three calendar years.

Additionally, though anticipated in conducting research on cultural industries, gaining access to individuals and venues was at times difficult. Access was facilitated (somewhat) by showing visible cues of belonging (e.g. wearing an industry festival pass, being inside restricted areas), as well as blending in through small performances (e.g. researcher’s dress, use of technology). Although I attended in the capacity of a researcher, I felt pressure to pass as a film industry

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⁴ The context of TIFF challenges the notion of a temporary and serial event, since TIFF is increasingly rooted (e.g. building TIFF Bell Lightbox) and is expanding its program of other events throughout the annual calendar.
professional or creative worker. While similar performances are acknowledged in economic geographers’ work on cultural industries (e.g. Currid 2007), it was nonetheless a real challenge for conducting fieldwork. Such small performances provided richness to my research by adding insight into the experience of those individuals who are working in various sites and spaces at the festival, as well as credibility and access among festival industry delegates. Festival delegates who had seen me in industry spaces during the festival were receptive to candid, informal conversations at a later time. For example, one delegate specifically commented on my approachability in terms of my smile and eye contact. Another person I kept bumping into throughout the festival agreed to an interview and provided referrals after a few random encounters, while yet another presented himself in a paternal fashion, stating he felt an obligation to mentor younger people in the industry. As a result, they gave time to my study.

It is also worth noting some practical aspects of conducting this fieldwork. Frequently, industry delegates were reluctant to meet for formal interviews, but were amenable to social interaction. They answered my questions informally. I observed what happened in festival spaces, and as part of my observations, I went where delegates went. If they lined up, I lined up. If they took coffee, so did I. If they snuck into a gala screening, I followed suit. If they pretended to check emails on their smart phone in hotel lobbies, I emulated that behaviour. It also meant that as I observed and emulated the social behaviours of the industry, I was able to pass for a creative (i.e. someone in the film business) and my embodied performances – a smart black blazer with fitted jeans, black heels, scarf and smartphone in hand – granted me access to speak with people and enter venues in a way that was different from the formal access granted me by my TIFF Industry Delegate pass. It also afforded me knowledge of industry lingo and some common ground as a basis for conducting interviews.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my positionality as a young woman. While my gender did not impact the balance of interviews I conducted (in terms of type of industry stakeholder, their geography or gender), I did notice that in informal settings, men were more receptive to conversations about the festival and industry, as well as more likely to inform me of, or invite me to, additional industry events outside of the formal slate of TIFF organized events. The very activities of seeing a film together, having a bite to eat or chatting over cocktails can seem almost date-like in that they occur in a blurred work-social space typical of creative industries. This behavior was consistent with the festival setting and descriptions of what to expect when
researching cultural industries (Currid 2007, Mayer 2008). I do not believe it interfered with my research. I never felt in danger or compromised, but was aware of these dynamics while in the field.

As an academic studying the social constitution of a cultural industry, at times I experienced uncertainty about my research process, even while aware that obfuscation and lack of methods dialogue can limit one’s ability to emulate good practice. Such insecurities in academic practice are not anomalies, but broadly felt issues, which feminist work within the discipline recognizes as important (Parizeau et al. 2016). The point of this reflection on fieldwork is twofold. First, it reflects my concerted effort to make research practice visible and to engage in methodological talk, which I believe is important in economic geography. Second, this reflection helps give life to the substantial qualitative research this study represents, and the significant amount of relevant data gathered.

1.5 Structure of Dissertation

A case study of TIFF reveals that film festivals are more than movies. Key international film festivals with industry components are economic drivers and sites of industry learning, which create value for the industry and for the host region. This case study research reflects a single project and draws on the same broad base of empirical evidence. However, I have organized the findings, arguments and contributions of this research into three chapters. Each of these chapters contributes to a distinct body of literature and highlights discreet contributions of my research to these arenas. Individually these chapters allow for deep focus on key elements of the rich case study. Taken together, these chapters contribute to current economic geography literature by expanding what we know and how we think about film festivals.

Chapter 2 sets out the conceptual groundwork, arguing that film festivals operate as temporary, cyclical clusters. Drawing significantly from economic geography literature on clusters and learning, in conjunction with relevant research from cultural studies and business, I theorize film festivals as temporary clusters that afford the film economy significant opportunities for industry learning, professional development, networking and business transactions. The main argument of this chapter is that TIFF operates as a dynamic temporary cluster for the film industry, bringing together local and global industry actors from across the film project value chain. Evidence presented draws on industry data, interviews and promotional materials circulated at the festival.
The main finding of this chapter is that TIFF functions as a key site for industry learning and market processes in the local cluster, whilst facilitating the development of global pipelines.

In chapter 3, I explore the role of consumers at TIFF. Within economic geography there is growing interest in the role of consumers. This case study affords a unique perspective on the range of feedback and inputs consumers of cultural and experiential products have in the film value chain. Film festivals are centred on the viewing experience. As a large, public film festival, TIFF provides insight on the role of consumers within an industry-active, temporary cluster. In this chapter, I argue that audience engagement with films at TIFF creates an information-rich environment, which benefits industry actors and influences business decisions, professional development, and marketing activities. This research also finds evidence that TIFF actively cultivates sophisticated demand among its audience.5

In chapter 4, I consider the connections between TIFF and the host region. Typically, film festivals and cultural events are discussed as sites for spectacular consumption within the city, generating economic impacts via tourism. Festivals also create opportunities for place-making and the creation of urban identities. The main findings of this chapter are that TIFF contributes to the symbolic cachet of Toronto’s film identity. As well, the festival, and its physical headquarters, anchor culture led-redevelopment in Toronto’s Entertainment District.

In what follows, the case study context for TIFF in Toronto provides insight into the film economy outside the spaces of film production, which have tended to dominate economic geography research on the film economy. Temporary events are key moments in for cultural industry, which make important contributions to industry learning, value creation and processes of valorization. Findings from this research shed light on the important roles which film festivals play as industry intermediaries. This research contributes to economic geography as well as the interdisciplinary field of film festival research. My findings also have implications for

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5 I recognize that the language of “sophisticated” demand may be seen as problematic, especially in reference to cultural goods. The term, as I use it, derives from similar language in the economic geography literature on lead-users and consumers influence in innovation and industrial upgrading (see Chapter 3). However, “sophisticated” may imply a normative concept, which is not how I mean the term in this research project.
practitioners – such as film festival organizers and regional policy-makers – that aim to understand festivals and their contributions to film communities and regional development.
Chapter 2
Festivals as Temporary Clusters: A Case Study of the Toronto International Film Festival

Rather than view trade fairs as outliers to localized models of economic development or freak extra-local happenings… they should be seen as interlinked microphenomena that aggregate to form vital planks in global value constructions (Power and Jansson 2008, 425).

The event economy combines multiple industries and sectors; forges new relationships between firms, states, and institutions; and alters processes of knowledge transfer (Weller 2008, 119).

2 Introducing the Festival as Temporary Cluster

Film festivals are hybrid and complex cultural industry events which have proliferated in recent years. Despite being characterized as sites of spectacular consumption, I argue that they are significant nodes within the film production system. Studying major film events as key economic moments is relevant to cultural industries for two main reasons. First, work on the cultural industries tends to be structured through a mix of firms, institutions and projects, which creative workers navigate in constructing their careers. Second, cultural industries, and the art worlds which constitute their production systems, have important events (e.g. openings, festivals).

This work builds a case for the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) as a temporary and cyclical cluster situated within global industry circuits. TIFF is an excellent case in part because the film festival is large, important on the global circuit, and industry-active. Temporary industry events function as key spaces for knowledge creation and market processes within the global film industry. This is due, in part, to the coming together of actors from across the film value chain. This research also suggests that workers, firms and regions attend festivals as a strategy to gain access to important industry knowledge, partners and assets, that may not be accessible in the local contexts where they work. Although film festivals are short-lived events, they have lasting consequences for the organization of markets, the viability of projects, and the career development of creative workers who operate within the global film economy.
This chapter is organized into five main sections. I begin by summarizing the literature on temporary clusters. Stemming from this, I describe the specific structure of TIFF and differentiate it from the circuit of film festivals in which it is situated. I then argue that TIFF functions as an important temporary cluster and draw on evidence of the festival’s characteristics and attendance. I then turn to the specific roles which TIFF plays in creating key spaces for knowledge creation and market distribution. I point to ways in which TIFF contributes to the local cluster’s dynamism, and provides valuable opportunities to festival participants and the local film community. Finally, I conclude that TIFF illustrates how film festivals act as important nodes and temporary clusters for the film industry.

2.1 Temporary Cluster as a Global Pipeline

In this section, I review the literature on clusters and their benefits to firms and regions, and discuss the need for both local and trans-local networks. A growing research area stemming from this literature explores how temporary industry events – like fashion weeks and trade shows – create important trans-local connections, helping foster dynamism in a local cluster. I situate my research within current efforts to understand the ways in which events contribute to processes of valorization within cultural industries. Cultural industry event case studies remain few, although there have been studies of fashion (e.g. Weller 2008), textiles (e.g. Rinallo and Golfetto 2006), and furniture (e.g. Power and Jansson 2008). In context of the film industry, local cluster studies across regions point to the importance of trans-local knowledge flows and relationships (e.g. Bathelt and Graf 2008, Lorenzen and Mudambi 2012).

My research on major film festivals fills a gap in the literature, in terms of building knowledge of film events. This case study of TIFF illustrates how the festival is connected to a global circuit of festivals within the film industry, and locally connected to Toronto’s film production cluster. This chapter focuses on clusters as a descriptive concept in economic geography, specifically a knowledge-based theory of spatial clustering.

2.1.1 Clusters as a Core Concept

Cluster theory, with its location focus, has been adopted by economic geographers, and is a prominent influence on policy-makers. For policy-makers, the concept is appealing for regional economic development because of its potential to stimulate a nascent cluster, replicate a

Porter (2000, 253) defines clusters as “geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers and service providers, firms in related industries and associated institutions (e.g. universities, standards agencies, and trade associations) in particular fields that compete but also cooperate”. However, the specific characteristics and scale of a cluster are vague. As such, some clusters may not be readily visible or acknowledged. While individual clusters vary in form, they necessarily comprise related and supporting industries, factor inputs, local context and demand conditions (Porter 2000, 258).

Regional clusters help explain the apparent paradox that place is increasingly important in a global era (see Porter 1990, 1998, 2000). The cluster concept shift the conversation about competitiveness beyond the firm, and unsettles conventional wisdom about firm configuration to consider the local context within which companies operate, giving a prominent role to clusters as part of the landscape for competitive advantage (Porter 1998, 78). Cluster theory suggests that productivity is increased by greater ease in accessing inputs and information, coordination among related firms, as well as benchmarking and stimulating progress (Porter 1998).

Institutions may contribute to the reputation of a region, as well as enhance the productivity of firms within it. The networked structure of clusters allows for a more flexible model of accessing expertise than vertical integration, without compromising the host of linkages between cluster members. While a virtuous, self-reinforcing cycle of growth is possible, clusters are also at risk of stagnation and decline, which may result from internal rigidities, technological discontinuities, or external threats. Despite support from civic entrepreneurs and policy-makers, research suggests that simple co-location of firms is insufficient for achieving regional economic advantage (see Martin and Sunley 2003).

Broadly understood, clusters are “geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field” (Porter 1998, 78). Stemming from this premise, more sophisticated analyses of clusters highlight the importance of related diversity, the interaction of firms within clusters, and the development of social milieus for learning and networking, as
particularly relevant for the effectiveness of clusters (see Wolfe and Gertler 2004). As economies grow more complex, knowledge-intensive and globally competitive, clusters are useful for understanding economic geography and regional difference (Porter 2000, 254).

Geographers have elaborated on the cluster concept. For example, Maskell (2001) emphasizes the value of clusters for learning and enhanced knowledge creation. Along a horizontal dimension, competing firms producing similar goods benefit from co-location. The cluster facilitates access to information from disparate sources and reduces challenges arising from information asymmetry. Competing firms enjoy the “advantages of proximity arising from continuous observation, comparison and monitoring what local rival firms are doing, which acts as a spur to innovation” (Wolfe and Gertler 2004, 1077). Co-located competitors need not interact to learn from each other. Rather, spatial proximity provides, at little cost, opportunities for learning by monitoring. Spontaneous observation is qualitatively interpreted by peers and competitors within the field. As Malmberg and Maskell (2006, 6) suggest, competitors can “appreciate the fine points in the relationships between inputs and processes and learn from what is considered an attractive revealed performance” which helps distinguish a successful experiment and identify a promising avenue.

Firms also benefit from vertical connections. The vertical dimension comprises firms connected across the industry’s value chain through up- and down-stream linkages, and a network of supplier, service and customer relations. In principle, clusters provide the benefit of spatial proximity to related firms offering specialized services and supplies. This knowledge-based conception of spatial clusters suggests they will grow over time, acting as a magnet drawing other related specialized firms to the region.

As a counterpoint to the suggested ‘death of distance’ and related claims that globalization is eradicating the impact of space, clusters foreground the relevance of local context. Context serves as a set of “localized capabilities that enhance learning” (Malberg and Maskell 2006, 2). It also provides a set of possible benefits, that firms with similar characteristics may achieve by locating near to one another. Localized learning “outlines how conditions and spatial proximity between actors enables the formation of distinctive cognitive repertoires and influence the
generation and selection of skills, processes, and products within a field of knowledge or activity” (Malmberg and Maskell 2006, 1).

2.1.2 Knowledge Flows through Local and Global Buzz

While local linkages are important, there is a growing recognition of the need for both local and global knowledge flows, which consist of ‘buzz’ and ‘pipelines’, to keep industrial clusters dynamic. Conceptualized as two distinct forms of knowledge-creation, dependent on iterative interaction between firms and related actors within an industry or cluster, these ideas have been applied to clusters, ranging from European film and television (Turok 2003, Bathelt and Graf 2008) to Swedish biotechnology (Moodysson 2008). Geographers have emphasized how certain kinds of knowledge (e.g. tacit knowledge) are best communicated in the local context (Bathelt et al. 2004). In contrast, other forms of knowledge (e.g. codified knowledge) may be easily communicated across great distances in a relatively frictionless manner. This dual character of knowledge creation is important for firm learning and industry innovation.

In general, “spatial proximity makes face-to-face interaction easier (less costly, time consuming, tiresome) and tends to carry with it an element of social, cultural, and not least cognitive, proximity” (Malmberg and Maskell 2006, 5). Such immediate non-transactional learning is facilitated by spatial proximity, which “increases the likelihood of fruitful unanticipated encounters among key players outside the workplace and helps incorporate insights, opinions, and ideas from a broader community of informed observers” through the horizontal and social dimensions of proximity (Malmberg and Maskell 2006, 5). What Malmberg and Maskell describe here as a “neighbourhood effect” has been similarly recognized as important by Grabher (2002) as “noise”. Owen-Smith and Powell (2004) refer to it as “local-broadcasting.” Bathelt et al. (2004) call it “local buzz”, as do Storper and Venables (2004) who originally used the term. Gertler (2003) refers to it as “the undefinable tacitness of being (there)”. While “participating in the buzz does not require particular investments”, it also does not a guarantee that local knowledges will be effectively accessed or interpreted, since communities and trust mediate communication in a cluster’s social context (Bathelt et al. 2004, 38).

The rich knowledge flows which are transferred through face-to-face interaction within clusters is emulated in virtual and temporary contexts (Bathelt and Turi 2011). In particular, Bathelt and
Schuldt (2010) develop the concept of ‘global buzz’. While the concept of temporary clusters is developed more fully below, such global industry events provide a context in which information, ideas, knowledge and gossip is shared by event participants. Through intensive, repeated and often brief interactions at the event, global buzz “involves unique processes of knowledge dissemination and creation through interactive learning and learning by observation” (Bathelt and Spigel 2012, 20).

Global buzz varies in quality and quantity across space. For instance, Bathelt and Spigel (2012) suggest that global buzz is strongest at international events, but may exist at other events. Major international events bring together both industry leaders and less established players, granting both access to global buzz information ecology. Because of this, buzz-based learning represents a unique value proposition of international events, beyond the potential for specific business transactions, deals and sales (Bathelt and Spigel 2012).

Beyond constituting distinct types of knowledge flows, co-existence of local and non-local (i.e. ‘global’) knowledge flows develop feedback loops, which can augment continuous knowledge circulation, with potential benefits for local clusters and economic development through new knowledge, creativity and innovation (Bathelt and Cohendet 2014). The potential for global buzz to influence the dynamics of knowledge formation complicates traditional conceptual divisions between “local knowledge building and global knowledge accessing practices in economic contexts” (Bathelt and Cohendet 2014, 879). Global buzz, then, is an important concept when considering the productivity and creative capacity for knowledge intensive and cultural industries.

Agglomerative tendencies are apparent across cultural industries. As Currid and Williams (2010, 424) argue “the social milieu requires a particular type of dense proximity. People need to be in the same geographical place, at the same time, constantly interacting. Social interaction, in other words, acts in situ and in real time.” In the context of cluster concepts, it is possible that either permanent or temporary co-presence is needed. Cultural industries are characterized by high degrees of symbolic and aesthetic value (Scott 2001, 2008). Cultural production systems thus depend heavily on social milieu because of their taste-driven nature and associated high-degree
of cognitive content. The result is significant spatial clustering among cultural industries in particular places.

As with other knowledge-intensive industries, cultural production benefits from spatial proximity due to the high degree of tacit knowledge and un-codified information, which co-location facilitates. Additionally, face-to-face contact in both cultural production and consumption contributes to “the valorization of cultural goods and the place in which they are produced” (Currid and Williams 2010, 428). Case studies on fashion in New York (Rantisi 2004), and film in Los Angeles (Scott 2005), support the argument that geographic concentrations of social networks establish locally embedded conventions, which reinforce clustering tendencies for regions, cities and neighbourhoods (Currid and Williams 2010).

In cultural industries, knowledge is a strategic asset. Forms of knowledge that are difficult to replicate or transfer, such as embodied or aesthetic knowledge, can be considered an intangible factor for economic development. As with other place specific conventions which shape innovation, such intangible assets can be part of untraded interdependencies, as opposed to traded interdependencies (e.g. user-producer relations) typically associated with agglomeration economies. Where the untraded interdependencies are localized, the region itself becomes an element of the learning and innovation. This reinforces the value of place, suggesting that the institutions which shape innovation are contextually specific and locally embedded (Morgan 1997). Notions of temporary clusters extend this rationale to impermanent industry configurations, such as trade fairs (see Bathelt and Spigel 2012, Bathelt et al. 2014, Henn and Bathelt 2015, Rinallo et al. 2017). However, in the film festival context, the scope of key actors investigated (e.g. industry delegates, festival intermediaries, public audiences) is broader than the exhibitors and visitors which typically garner attention when exploring market related learning processes, as summarized by Rinallo et al. (2017).

Global pipelines are also critical for lively, outward looking clusters (Bathelt et al. 2004). They provide external knowledge flows that are important for a cluster to remain dynamic, since “external sources of knowledge are often important triggers to stimulate growth within a cluster” (Bathelt et al. 2004, 33). Such external channels of communication need to be built. It takes intention and resources for firms to establish trust with new, distant partners. To be effective,
new pipeline development is often driven by a specific focus (e.g. learning objective) and limited by cost considerations (Bathelt et al. 2004, 43). Clusters with both local buzz and global pipelines may be better able to capitalize on global and local exchanges of both tacit and codified knowledge, especially if they have the local absorptive capacity to make use of external knowledges (Bathelt et al. 2004).

The more that local firms generate trans-local pipelines, “the more information and news about markets and technologies are ‘pumped’ into internal networks and the more dynamic the buzz from which local actors benefit” (Bathelt et al. 2004, 41). The implication is that global pipelines can help curb a local cluster’s tendency toward over-embeddedness and encourage local actors to transcend localized routines. There are of course limits to the number of external linkages an industry player (whether firm or individual) can handle (Grabher 2002). As such, institutions that can act as a cognitive filter for abundant information can help local actors evaluate new knowledge inputs from non-local sources. As Bathelt et al. (2004, 43) observe, “partners on both ends of a global pipeline have to develop a joint interpretative context in order to engage in interaction.” TIFF may facilitate this interpretive work, in part because the festival convenes both ‘ends’ of the pipeline in a temporary setting. Also, given its dual role as film curator and industry intermediary, TIFF may be well positioned to create and mediate trans-local knowledge, where the festival itself acts as a temporary cluster and global pipeline.

2.1.3 Temporary and Cyclical Clusters

One important means of accessing global pipelines is through participation in temporary events, such as film festivals. The work of Maskell et al. (2006) advances the cluster literature by theorizing trade fairs, conventions and conferences as temporary clusters. Their work has stimulated other research on events, including Power and Jansson’s (2008) study of cyclical clusters in the furniture design industry.

Maskell et al. (2006) emphasize temporary events as critical economic moments. By comparing temporary and permanent clusters, Maskell et al. (2006) present a compelling argument that “these short-lived hotspots of intense knowledge exchange, network building and idea generation” act in comparable ways to permanent clusters (2006, 997). Seeking to better understand how inter-firm knowledge relationships (both local and global) are organized
spatially and temporally, the authors conclude that the basic, functional similarities between temporary and permanent clusters “cannot be denied” (Maskell et al. 2006, 1008). Both fundamentally support the creation and dissemination of knowledge, which may be either local or foreign in origin. In both their permanent and temporary configurations, clusters are spatial phenomena. Moreover, as Maskell et al. (2006) demonstrate, even in the temporary form, clusters necessarily create co-presence and proximity that support certain forms of knowledge creation and exchange, especially those dependent on face-to-face contact and social context.

The notion of temporary cluster has been taken up and adapted. In their comparative case study, Bathelt and Schuldt (2008) contrast how trade fairs operate as temporary clusters between two different German industries: lighting and meat. Across both industries, Bathelt and Schuldt (2008) find that proximity remains a central feature of trade fairs. This is important, they argue, because it allows for ready communication that might otherwise be difficult. In particular, trade fairs facilitate new product demonstrations and help identify emerging design trends in the sector. Their study finds that trade fairs are valuable because they show a process through which global pipelines are created. Trade fairs reflect contemporary forms of professional mobility, including “temporal geographic proximity [which] enables information and ideas to be efficiently communicated back and forth” (at trade fairs) between industry actors who are, typically, geographically distant (Bathelt and Schuldt 2008, 855).

Temporary clusters thus function to help firms establish and maintain trans-local connections (Bathelt and Schuldt 2008). These events are important sites for inter-firm learning, which benefits the industry as a whole because it fosters a rich ecology of knowledge flows (Bathelt and Schuldt 2008, 856). In these settings, information, industry reports, informal gossip, and opinions are circulated among competitors, peers and customers. These events offer opportunities to scan emerging trends and keep on top of what competitors are doing. Such localized learning occurs through direct contact, but also through indirect means, such as observation during the trade fair.

Another relevant example is the design intensive furniture trade fair case study by Power and Jansson (2008). They argue that these events are connected along global circuits. Trade fairs function as marketplaces, and create lasting consequences for the industry (Power and Jansson
Extending the ‘temporary cluster’ concept, they suggest the term ‘cyclical cluster’ to refer to “spaces that are timed and arranged in such a way that markets and innovations can be reproduced and continuously renewed over time” (Power and Jansson 2008, 426). Advocating for this notion, they argue that “global trade fair circuits are central components of the architecture within which different industrial and market relations are mediated and connected” (Power and Jansson 2008, 426). Considering industry events this way draws on the related ideas of overlapping spaces and a continuous cycle of events.

Economic geography has sought to understand the production context within which disparities between places are manifest. Temporary clusters address these concerns directly, adopting a relational approach commonly used in the discipline (see Boggs and Rantisi 2003, Bathelt and Glucker 2003). Emphasizing firm interaction and how industries organize in place, this agency-centred approach helps explain clustering and regional difference more fully than simple cost-considerations (Rinallo et al. 2017, 95). Acknowledging the internal and external linkages, not only between firms, but also between regions (i.e. spatial clusters), suggests a more nuanced ecology of trans-local linkages that underpin large, dynamic clusters (Rinallo et al. 2017). In particular, the work of Bathelt (2007), Balthelt and Glucker (2011) and Maskell and Malmberg (2007), conceptually develop different forms of knowledge flows in this context. Trade shows have thus been identified by economic geographers studying industrial clusters and markets, as a key “missing link that connects internal cluster processes with external agents and knowledge pools” (Rinallo et al. 2017, 95).

Given that firms intentionally seek to build global pipelines and establish connections to non-local knowledge, research examines strategies by which firms and actors systematically seek to acquire and access new knowledge flows (see Maskell et al. 2006, Bathelt and Schuldt 2008). Trade fairs and shows exemplify a critical site in which industry actors gain access to markets, connect with customers and suppliers, and learn about technological change in their industry. Trade fairs, as temporary clusters, are thus multidimensional and relational spaces, characterized by organized co-presence (i.e. proximity) that facilitates the intensive interaction relevant to their daily industry practice (back home), which Bathelt and Schuldt (2010) refer to as ‘global buzz’. Large, global trade show events in particular provide an opportunity to learn about the practices and products of competitors, which may help particular industries benchmark and stimulate
innovation in other regions (Bathelt and Schuldt 2010). Broadly, this literature suggests that firms that establish global pipelines (e.g. attend international trade shows) can disseminate this trans-local knowledge through connections locally, thus promoting industry learning across the local cluster or regional industry (Rantisi 2014, 958).

The reason I emphasize the temporary aspect is because some of these events rotate where and when they are held. Others are semi-permanent fixtures on a specific industry circuit of events. Much remains unknown about trade fairs, festivals and other temporary clusters. There is the sense that “participants rarely attend only one event” (Power and Jansson 2008, 427), and yet we know little about actual attendance patterns in particular sectors. It may be the case that more established players attend multiple events, while new entrants and small firms might participate in only one annual event. I think it is important for this new conversation about economic events to remain open to a range of events (e.g. shows, fairs, openings, happenings, festivals, conferences, conventions, summits, markets and so forth) which are only beginning to be explored among academics and researchers in increasingly rigorous and interesting ways.

Using a case study of Australian Fashion Week (AFW), Weller (2008) significantly advances the case for cultural industry events as serving critical functions. Such events, she argues, function as a site for valorizing and enhancing production systems. Big fashion events bring together stakeholders from across the industry (e.g. media, designers, consumers), which helps the industry to express ideas, construct markets and enhance the value of design intensive and highly aesthetic fashion products. Because cultural industry events are not as confined to one sector, Weller (2008) suggests they frequently fall out of sight by researchers using theories that trace social networks or commodity flows within an industry. As such, Weller (2008, 104) draws attention to events in which industries, markets and intermediaries ‘touch down’ and suggests that they are “sites at which diverse specializations meet to concentrate and amplify mutually reinforcing circuits of value.”

Her argument is twofold. First, the trans-sectoral character of cultural industry events makes them distinct from other sites of value creation for a single commodity. Second, she demonstrates that we have yet to adequately study the ties which underpin the observed economic synergies (Weller 2008, 105). By emphasizing flows of value, her research disrupts
historically linear understandings of the value creation process. While situated within the cultural economy and industrial organization literatures, the impact of Weller’s work is far-reaching. She avers that “analyzing events provides a means to access relationships and processes that are beyond the control of production systems … exploring the shifting relationships between firms, industries, and sectors” (Weller 2008, 109). From Weller’s (2008) perspective, this approach to events is a welcome complement to research elsewhere on how events contribute to innovation and knowledge transfer (i.e. temporary clusters, communities of practice, spatial industrial agglomerations).

This is especially relevant for cultural industries where consumer products are significantly imbued with symbolic value. In these industries, consumers and intermediaries play a key role in creating value, constructing brands and markets (Rantisi 2004, Weller 2008, Power and Hauge 2008).

Other research on fashion events has generated related insights. In their study of London Fashion Week (LFW), Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) draw on Bourdieu’s notion of the field. Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) stress the performative nature of such events. Specifically, they argue that “one’s appearance does not simply mediate ones’ individual position but institutional position as well” (2006, 748). In other words, bodies act as expressions of both personal identity and economic role within the field (i.e. fashion industry), because embodied experiences are performatively expressed and reinforced during the event.

On the topic of New Zealand designer fashion, Lewis et al. (2008) argue that New Zealand Fashion Week (NZFW) is embedded in a contingent political project of (strategically) making neo-liberal subjects. They argue that fashion events are caught up in key political projects, including globalization, the knowledge economy, creative cities and social development. As a government sponsored event, NZFW supports the construction of narratives of regional culture and aesthetic value, which provide a “catalyst and a glamourous façade for reinventing the clothing and apparel industries via design and cultural/place reference” (Lewis et al. 2008, 52). While their research is largely critical of cultural industry events, they still take these sites seriously. Lewis et al. (2008, 56) observe that “although rarely studied by geographers, spectacles such as NZFW offer real possibilities, sites and moments for making visible and
tracing the co-constitution of political projects and emergent configurations of spaces and subjects of government.”

In context of cultural industries, commodity values are understood relationally and “generated in reflexive relationships between producers, products, and potential purchasers” (Weller 2008, 109). Weller describes how “each place-specific Fashion Week occupies a designated time and place in an annual event calendar, positioning it as a … node in a global mosaic and annual timetable” (Weller 2008, 111). This observation from fashion corroborates a similar conceptualization of event circuits in other cultural industries, such as furniture design (Power and Jansson 2008), textiles (Rinallo and Golfetto 2006), and film (Stringer 2001). Weller (2008) argues that fashion events impact the local industry, and are “instrumental in generating localized ‘knowledge communities’ that stimulate cultures of innovation” (Weller 2008, 115). This insight emphasizes the importance of studying events, since they create spaces of proximity, which lend legitimacy and create value flows for the attending industry, related lifestyle products, and local site (in terms of place marketing and promotion).

Taken together, this literature suggests that these events represent a new and important site of contemporary capitalism. As Weller (2008) argues, “focusing on events as nodes of economic interaction and flows of value provides a means of analyzing economic relationships that exist beyond the material value-added chain of any single commodity and beyond the day-to-day, socially embedded relational practices of firm networks” (Weller 2008, 119). I draw from this and conceptualizations of ‘temporary clusters’ (Maskell et al. 2006) and ‘cyclical clusters’ (Power and Jansson 2008) in developing a deeper understanding of film festivals as events with significant industry activity.

Inconsistent attention is paid to external knowledge sources and global-local linkages in film cluster studies (see Scott 2002, Vang and Chaminade 2007, Bathelt and Graf 2008, Lorenzen and Mundambi 2012). Especially in light of new research on temporary clusters, explorations of the temporary and spatial contexts of industry learning and business activity for film festivals is a welcome contribution. My research on TIFF draws from economic geography research which highlights the mix of local and non-local knowledge flows as critical for establishing valuable learning milieus (Malmberg and Maskell 2006), new knowledge creation (Bathelt et al. 2004),
project ecologies (Grabher 2002, 2004), and the growth potential of cultural industry clusters (Bathelt and Graf 2008). Moreover, it contributes to a growing research conversation about temporary clusters across a range of industry settings.

2.2 Situating TIFF within the Global Film Festival Circuit

There are two major elements that are missing from the above literature. First, film festivals have been neglected, even though they are a longstanding practice within the film industry. Second, potential connections between the event economy and its host region represent an avenue that needs further study. The literature focuses on how events bring together the global industry within a sector and has begun looking at how such events can build local capacity in the place where the temporary cluster is located (see Weller 2008). I contribute to these research gaps through my work on TIFF, which examines the film festival as a temporary cluster and considers the connections which are fostered in the event’s milieu and the film economy in which it is rooted.

**Figure 2.1: Growth of Number of International Film Festivals Founded from 1932 – 2013**

Source: Author calculations based on FIAPF data, research interviews, festival websites and industry literature. This list is not exhaustive, but reflects the major international film festivals included in Table 1.1 in the introduction of this thesis.
Above, Figure 2.1 shows the trend for growth in the number of international film festivals founded in between 1932 and 2013. This graph focuses on film festivals that have an international scope and industry relevance (based on either FIAPF accreditation or their specific mention in industry publications and research interviews during TIFF). Beyond this list of festivals, there has been a corresponding massive proliferation of film festivals globally since the 1980s (Stringer 2001, De Valck 2007). There are currently over 6,000 film festivals in operation across the globe (Loist 2016, 59).

As previously mentioned, film festivals have become more prominent and numerous since the post-war period when film festivals first emerged in Europe (De Valck 2007). Core international film festivals are also situated as specific sites within an industry calendar. Some industry delegates I spoke with argued that the film festival calendar started in the fall, since that is when festivals kick-off the awards season (Interview, Film Industry Consultant). Despite this, in the tables below I present the festival circuit as starting in January to correspond to the calendar year. TIFF is embedded in the global film industry’s calendar, a global circuit of similar and related events. Below I situate TIFF within the global film festival circuit and provide context for differentiating TIFF from other festivals.

2.2.1 The Core Film Festival Circuit: An Industry Calendar of Key Events

The growing prominence of film festivals brings with it a (new) privileging of cities as key nodes within the international film economy (Stringer 2001). However, Stringer (2001, 137) points to challenges in mapping the core film festival circuit, which, he contends, is a “metaphor for the geographically uneven development that characterizes the world of international film culture”. For some, the notion of a circuit corresponds to the metaphoric loop in which films travel, showing at different festivals. However, in this research I adopt the more prominent metaphor of the film festival circuit, as a series of sequential film festivals through which the industry (i.e. people) circulate (see Loist 2016). Festivals, and the circuits in which they are embedded, are simultaneously temporal and spatial phenomena. These recurring events are held in a predictable and consistent manner each year. This is consistent with Power and Jansson’s (2008, 45) key insight about cyclical clusters: that such industry events “should be seen as interlinked microphenomena that aggregate to form vital planks in global value constructions”. Cyclical clusters are conceived in this research as place-based temporary clusters that re-occur with
predictable frequency. As such, they are temporary events with history that build in place over time, and are situated in a circuit of similar events.\textsuperscript{6}

TIFF is not a stand-alone event, but one among many such film festivals and industry markets, which serve different communities and geographic locales. TIFF is connected to the local circuit of Toronto-based film festivals. It is also connected to the circuit of internationally accredited film festivals, and the circuit of festivals pertinent to the American film industry. The core festival circuit includes those select festivals which register as important among both the North American and global film industries.

\textsuperscript{6} In some cases, the temporary, cyclical cluster is situated within more than one circuit which operate at multiple scales. For example, TIFF is interlinked with other film festival circuits at the local, national and global scale.
Table 2.1: Core International Film Festival Circuit, Comparative Baseline Data (2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FILM FESTIVAL DETAILS</th>
<th>FILMS</th>
<th>CAPACITY</th>
<th>PRESS</th>
<th>BUYERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Month</td>
<td>Film Festival</td>
<td>Year Founded</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Berlin International Film Festival</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Cannes Film Festival</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Cannes</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Karlovy Vary International Film Festival</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Karlovy Vary</td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Moscow International Film Festival</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Locarno International Film Festival</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Locarno</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Montreal World Film Festival</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Venice Film Festival</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>San Sebastián International Film Festival</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>San Sebastián</td>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Toronto International Film Festival</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>AFI Fest *</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data compiled from film festival websites and FIAPF Annual Report 2009. Author’s calculations. Premieres data shown includes world (first screening) and international (first screening outside of country of origin) premieres. Note: *AFI Fest is the American Film Institute film festival, which while a separate event is loosely affiliated with AFM. AFM is the American Film Market, which is a major film market event in the United States. (See Loist 2016 for a discussion of the AFI / AFM affiliation.)
For my research, I have included international film festivals which are both FIAPF accredited and were specifically mentioned during research interviews in discussion of the film festival calendar by American film industry insiders, so as to capture the most important film festivals to both the American and global film industry. The notion of an industry film festival calendar was explicitly discussed and clearly conceptualized by TIFF delegates. For example, one industry consultant went so far as to diagram their festival calendar indicating the relative importance of key festivals, from their perspective (Interview, Film Industry Consultant).

TIFF is one of only ten festivals on the core film festival circuit, and as such it is an important event that crosses over between the American and global industry interests. The core festivals are listed chronologically in Table 2.1. These festivals reflect the top ten ranking FIAPF accredited film festivals in terms of those screening the highest proportion of film premieres.⁷

As argued earlier, its position in September as the final large festival in the core circuit calendar makes TIFF an ideal launching pad for Oscar award campaigns. While AFM takes place later in the calendar year, its associated festival is comparatively small, less than one third the size of TIFF in terms of number of films screened, and only 12 percent of screenings are premieres. In contrast, TIFF immediately follows other prominent festivals in August, such as Haugesund, Telluride, Locarno, Montreal, and Venice. This means that buzz around a film, which may have begun elsewhere, carries forward to TIFF. This came up during research interviews, as did the notion that conversations about potential sales begin at other festivals and conclude at TIFF. This perspective was frequent, but not universal, and seemed more common among industry professionals who actively work the circuit, rather than filmmakers who said they typically attend fewer than three festivals a year.

One example of a Canadian film that built momentum and benefited from this trans-festival buzz is Wetlands (2011) by Guy Édoin. His first feature film was highly regarded at its world

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⁷ To arrive at the list of ten film festivals I have included in the core international film festival circuit, as used in this research, I have selected those films which overlap both the North American and International film industry. Literature review and research interviews informed my interpretation of which festivals were important to the North American film industry, while FIAPF accreditation was used as a proxy for my assessment of which festivals were important to the International film industry.
premiere at the Venice International Film Festival, and the buzz about the film and Guy as an up-and-coming Canadian filmmaker carried over, with the film and the industry professionals who had first seen it in Venice, days before it had its Canadian premiere at TIFF (Fieldnotes). Alongside Nathan Morlando (Citizen Gangster, 2011) and others, Guy Édoin was part of a Telefilm-sponsored TIFF panel discussion of emerging Canadian filmmakers, in which they spoke of their experiences and challenges making feature films in Canada (Fieldnotes). This visibility augmented buzz about the film, and represents one way in which TIFF showcases Canadian cinema; in fact, Guy Édoin got his start screening short films at TIFF (Barnard 2011).

Considered in terms of the proportion of films which premiere at the festival, TIFF counts as a top-tier event among the small cadre of core international film festivals on the circuit. As shown in Table 2.1 above, TIFF has over 50% of its films screening as world and international premieres (a figure that has been generally consistent over time), which ranks TIFF in the top five international film festivals alongside Cannes, Venice, Montreal and Berlin. Having film premieres reinforces the festival’s relevance to industry actors. As one TIFF programmer explains,

> Any festival programmer who tells you they’re not interested in premieres is lying. That’s what you do, particularly if you have a large industry component. Premieres are like being graded: that shows that somebody believes you can do the most for their film. ... It makes you a destination point. If you don’t have those premieres, then the industry people won’t be coming. If you’re talking about servicing a particular audience then premieres are not that important. But if you’re talking industrial terms, then they’re quite important (Interview, TIFF Programmer).

This quote helps contextualize the importance of TIFF as a festival with a high proportion of film premieres in its program. This is especially notable because TIFF does not have a juried award for its official selection, which means films debut at TIFF even without the potential draw of film critic awards.

### 2.2.2 Differentiating TIFF from Other Core Film Festivals

This combination – the lack of a juried award, the large size of public attendance, and the high proportion of film premieres – differentiate TIFF from its peers. Additional baseline data from 2009 is presented in Table 2.2 below, which helps contextualize the market activity at TIFF within the cadre of core festivals and their associated film markets.
Table 2.2: Core Festival Circuit Film Markets, Comparative Baseline Data (2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Film Festival</th>
<th>Market Type</th>
<th>Exhibitors</th>
<th>Market Screenings</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>European Film Market (EFM)</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>1,027</td>
<td>6,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Cannes Film Market (Marche du Film)</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>1,476</td>
<td>9,907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Toronto International Film Festival</td>
<td>de facto</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>American Film Market (AFM)</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: FIAPF Annual Report 2009 data. Author’s calculations. Note: *AFI Fest is the American Film Institute film festival, which while a separate event is loosely affiliated with AFM. AFM is the American Film Market, which is a major film market event in the United States. (See Loist 2016 for a discussion of the AFI / AFM affiliation.)

TIFF is a bit unusual because it is not an official or formal market, which explains why no market data is included in Table 2.2. While TIFF is considered a market among industry delegates interviewed, it is described as a ‘de facto market’. This way of describing the TIFF market by delegates attending the event resonates with the characterization of TIFF as a quasi-market in the interdisciplinary film festival literature (Loist 2016). In terms of the number of buyers attending TIFF as compared to other core festivals, in 2009 TIFF (1,353 buyers) had more buyers in attendance than Venice (174 buyers). As well, TIFF buyers are overwhelmingly attending the festival from regions beyond the domestic market (95% foreign buyers). The strong showing of buyers attending TIFF is the major feature which differentiates it from other prominent fall festivals like Locarno, Montreal, Venice and San Sebastien.

TIFF is an industry-active film festival. In some film festival research, this may also be referred to as a business festival (see De Valck et al. 2016). This simply means that industry interests attend, and that a focus of the film festival is on business activity, rather than solely on film exhibition. As an industry-active festival, TIFF has an informal or ‘de facto’ market for films (e.g. acquisitions, sales, presales, distribution rights, etc.). At TIFF, while festival organizers promote business meetings and industry workshops, general industry activity coincides with the
festival proper, and has grown (and waned) organically. Informal markets also take place at other film festivals, such as Telluride and Sundance.

In contrast, formal markets (e.g. Cannes Film Market) typically coincide with premier film festivals (e.g. Cannes Film Festival). They bring together industry interests, with the aim to function as a business hub. There are few formal film markets worldwide. While films exhibited in the major festivals may be for sale, the formal markets feature exhibitors, films, projects and studios that are not part of the Official Selection of the associated film festival. In this way, formal markets are functionally and spatially similar to trade fairs and industry conventions. Formal film markets emphasize the business of film, and are distinct from the critical and cultural validation aspects of premier film festivals, which curate a limited Official Selection of films that contend for juried awards (e.g. Palme D'Or at the Cannes Film Festival).

While over twice the number of press attend Venice than TIFF, the timing of TIFF directly after Venice means that industry delegates attending Toronto can potentially capitalize on the international press coverage and industry buzz from Venice, and funnel that energy into sales deals. The same rationale applies to other early fall festivals. Because Berlin, Cannes and AFM are formalized markets that separate out films for sale from films screened as part of the festival’s official selection, TIFF data is not directly comparable. However, the number of buyers aligns TIFF more with market festivals (e.g. Berlin) than critical non-market festivals (e.g. Venice). In fact, the baseline data in Table 2.2 suggest that TIFF is most similar (in terms of admissions, proportion of foreign press, and number of attending buyers) to Berlin. Other film festival markets which are not part of the core global circuit, and thus fall outside the scope of this study, include Sundance and Busan. Sundance in particular, is characterized as a quasi-market of particular importance for the independent film industry (Loist 2016).

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8 The extent of this separation and distinction between market and festival, and whether it will change over time at TIFF and elsewhere, is an issue for ongoing research and discussion.

9 A future comparative study of Berlin (1951), TIFF (1976) and Busan (1996) would be a fascinating contrast of first, second and third wave festivals, that are industry-active and take place in large cities in Europe, North America and Asia.
Unlike Cannes and AFM, the largest formal markets in Europe and North America respectively, TIFF business happens in a range of disparate spaces rather than focused at a convention centre. As a result, the extent that TIFF business happens in hotel lobbies, at parties, at screenings, and at private meetings behind closed doors is likely even more pronounced than at formalized film markets. TIFF convenes the business stakeholders, but does not organize a convention centre market as a specific place for industry deals and transactions. The press covers sales at TIFF, and high value properties sold at TIFF garner additional media attention. With market participants ranging between 6,000 (Berlin) and 10,000 (Cannes) participants, formal film markets in 2009 are roughly comparable to North American trade fairs in other industries, which report comparable attendee figures in 2007 (Bathelt and Spigel 2012, 28).

2.3 TIFF as a Festival Cluster: Global Reach and Local Representation

In this section, I draw from industry delegate attendance to show that TIFF has the elements necessary for it to serve as a vibrant temporary cluster. The breakdown of industry delegate attendance at TIFF reflects professional roles from across the whole film value chain, as well as key stakeholders at local, national, regional and global scales. Finney (2010) outlines how the film value chain is conceptualized and describes the range of key stakeholders involved at different stages of the chain and the work they do. This is important as it makes up the necessary context within which industry learning and business deals take place. As such, this study of TIFF and Toronto affords a novel investigation of the film festival as a rooted temporary cluster.

Adapting the visual representation of ‘local buzz’ and ‘global pipelines’ from Bathelt et al. (2004, 46), I have developed a similar conceptual diagram for TIFF as a temporary cluster. This conceptualization of the film festival as a temporary cluster has a shared local (temporary) context, social milieu and external connections (pipelines), as shown below in Figure 2.2. This conceptualization of the festival temporary cluster is more porous than the conceptual diagram developed by Bathelt and Schuldt (2008, 856). This is because in a trade fair environment, event boundaries are confined by the convention centre in which trade shows happen (Rinallo et al. 2017). In contrast, my exploratory research finds that industry activity at TIFF, a cultural industry festival, spills over from official TIFF venues into third spaces (e.g. nearby hotels and cafes), and the wider urban environment (e.g. public streets).
There are several key components of temporary clusters which extend the functional benefits of local clusters (Bathelt et al. 2004). Participating in the festival as a delegate affords industry actors the opportunity to learn, in a variety of ways, how to manage their film projects and professional careers. There is formal industry programming arranged and hosted by TIFF, including industry talks, panels and workshops. The festival also acts as a meeting place for the industry. It provides a range of environments, suitable for formal meetings through impromptu interactions, and presents opportunities for people working in the industry (in a variety of roles from across the globe) to establish a professional community based on shared values, norms, languages and performances. Because industry delegates attend from all over the world, the festival provides channels to access external knowledge and markets. Also, because the festival gathers a cross-section of film industry professionals, the event is relevant to many players working at different stages of the film value chain. These aspects reflect the specific structure of TIFF. Some of these features are absent or differently configured at other film festivals.
Two key findings are significant for understanding the effectiveness of TIFF as a temporary cluster. Firstly, TIFF not only touches down each September in Toronto, but is also connected to other places and nodes through the festival’s embeddedness within a global circuit of international film festivals. Second, TIFF connects Toronto to the global film community through embodied networks. Media discourse, attendance figures, industry accreditation and research interviews support the notion that TIFF counts as a key node on a core circuit of film festivals. Drawing on this evidence, I demonstrate how global circuits offer an apparatus for building and strengthening trans-local connections.

2.3.1 The Range of Industry Professionals Attending TIFF

My work finds that a wide spectrum of the industry is present at TIFF, reflecting a range of professional capacities and geographic territories. Figure 2.3 below makes visible how research emphasizing film production privileges the work of some professionals (e.g. director, cast, producer, crew, editor) over others (e.g. writer, financier, talent agent, broadcaster, distributor, territorial rights holder, exhibitor, critic). As argued earlier, the productionist bias reflected in geographical research on film (e.g. Coe 2000, Scott 2005, Vang and Chaminade 2007, Christopherson and Rightor 2010) may not adequately capture key players in the film economy whose work is particularly important for valorizing the film product. In particular, there has been little research on actors holding key positions of power within the value chain (e.g. financier, broadcaster, rights holders, distributors, exhibitors).

For instance, financiers (public and private) may prevent a film project from getting green-lit, while players who control access to the film projects’ exhibition (i.e. control its monetization) may prevent distribution because they lack faith in the film (e.g. think it will be unsuitable for consumers). In some cases, they will buy and purposefully shelve films which compete with others they have financed.10

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10 This practice was not directly observed or corroborated, but did come up during interviews as a strategy of predatory business practice that is sometimes used by well-funded independent production companies and studios (Interviews). This is interesting, even if only rumor, because it suggests competitive practices within the sector, which may be a based in knowledges gained at festivals.
For the film to make a profit, or at least to recoup its costs for investors, the latter phases of the film project value chain are extremely important. The greatest opportunities for profit are found in international sales and licensing, distribution and exhibition (Finnie 2010). Investors want to see how a film plans to make money. The significant emphasis placed on the marketing and distribution plan was evident during the festival; awareness of the tail end of the value chain, including aspects of monetization, were stressed at TIFF industry panels and professional development workshops (Fieldnotes). This was also evident in interviews, especially in contexts where broadcasters can trigger public funding and where formalized co-production may complicate international rights ownership.

During interviews, filmmakers expressed frustrations associated with a film not being taken up, implying there were detrimental impacts on both their own capacity for future work and the strength of their social networks. Filmmakers judge potential collaborators based on their track records. As one screenwriter notes,
Basically, these [filmmakers] are people that are making films, but either they are really bad and don’t even play at festivals, or … they don’t know how to market, so they don’t go anywhere. Generally, if you work with a team, a production company, [where] their previous work has travelled a little bit, their future work will travel (Interview, Screenwriter).

Interview comments reflected sensitivity to the personal and cultural validation associated with successfully navigating the consumption-side of the value chain, and the potential for impacts on a filmmaker’s career. As one film festival organizer comments, “When you’re talking creatively, that [not exhibiting at festivals] could just totally forestall a filmmaker and they could give up. It’s a sensitive thing” (Interview, TIFF Programmer). In this quote, the festival organizer demonstrates sensitivity to the personal and practical challenges associated with the artistic and creative work involved in filmmaking. These quotes illustrate some of the ways filmmakers benefit from learning about and successfully navigating the consumption-side of the value chain.

At the festival, I met filmmakers who were there promoting their film, but who did not have a clear idea or strategy for what would happen next. Although most films have ambitions for distribution in some form beyond a festival premiere, many films never get distributed.

Empirical data suggests that a variety of representatives from across the film value chain are present at TIFF. As shown above in Figure 2.4, a significant number of number of buyers, producers, film festivals, sales agents, filmmakers, distributors and exhibitors attend TIFF. Given the self-reported nature of the industry delegate registration data, some participants registered as ‘other’ or indicated very specific professional roles (e.g. archive footage provider, film critic, post-production/visual effects, 3D specialist) or roles in related cultural industries (e.g. music composer, video game executive, blogger, artist, stylist, literary agent). The variety of participants reflects the range of skills and roles involved in making the movie-business come to life.
Recalling the film project value chain, certain elements of the film project (e.g. financing and pre-sales) are complex and require multiple stakeholders (e.g. producers, agents, broadcasters and financiers) to develop a shared understanding and mutual, time sensitive agreement about key project details. In some places, all of these decision-makers may co-locate (e.g. Los Angeles). However, in most places it is likely that not all of the stakeholders involved are locally accessible. A festival brings them together, even temporarily, and can be valuable to film projects and their creative teams. As pressure for international co-production rises, this function of TIFF may become increasingly important.
The cluster literature suggests that co-location and spatial agglomeration of such specialized services is part of what lends competitive advantage to established film producing centres. I argue that evidence from TIFF delegates suggests how industry-active festivals serve as an alternative temporary constellation of industry professionals, representing specialized knowledges and services, analogous to other cluster formations.

Many film industry professionals I interviewed self-identified as having multiple core professional roles (concurrent or sequential). This tendency for hybrid professional personas is reflected in the fact that 30% of the industry reported multiple professional roles when attending the festival.¹¹ For example, ‘buyers’ were also commonly distributors, exhibitors, film festivals or producers.

This trend in the data was echoed during interviews. In the words of one film consultant, “I work in the film business. I don’t really work. I buy films sometimes. I sell films sometimes. I produce films sometimes and I consult to people who do all those things” (Interview, Film Industry Consultant). This quote points to the flexibility of roles within the film economy.

Individuals can leverage their experience and networks to pursue multiple opportunities. For instance, during fieldwork, I frequently observed film colleagues catching up on casual conversation. These interactions were framed in terms of film projects and firms, but also commonly addressed professional positioning within the industry. Specifically, providing current information about personal relationships was coupled with details about firms which had dissolved, projects which had ended, current employers, festival itineraries (e.g. screenings and parties) and future plans (e.g. new projects and participation at other film festivals). Communicated casually in passing, sometimes literally, this up-to-date information is useful as creative workers situate themselves and others within the field. Given the risky nature of the film industry and its waves of restructuring in face of new technologies and economic downturns, this information is particularly relevant among social and professional networks in a project-based creative industry.

¹¹ Author calculations based on TIFF industry registration data (2012).
As well, some delegates presented and promoted their film work in a different capacity than that in which they attended the festival. For example, one Canadian filmmaker I interviewed attended TIFF in their professional capacity as film critic, which granted them access to film screenings, interviews and information about films that would not open for months in North American cinemas. This allowed them to collect material for the upcoming year and even pre-write film reviews they anticipate being contracted to do for their employer. As part of their professional activities as a freelance journalist, they sought to meet and build relationships with publicists, a major gatekeeper and essential interface between media and the film industry. This individual expressed an interest in connecting with the media, because they could need coverage from critics in the future.

However, this individual also had very clear plans for making their first feature film and explained how they attended TIFF with the intention to better learn about the context for film financing, especially shooting outside of Canada. In this capacity, they attended industry programing (i.e. panel discussions, workshops), met with film promotion agencies and government representatives from different regions (i.e. Ontario, Mexico), and hoped to meet people and learn from the experience of peers (i.e. other emerging filmmakers) (Interview, Film Critic / Filmmaker). This is consistent with research at other industry trade fairs, where participants benefit from industry learning and access to global buzz at temporary international events (Bathelt and Spigel, 2012). As well, this scenario illustrates that film festival participants not only attend with multiple learning objectives in mind, but that the types of non-local knowledge they intend to access relates to both vertical and horizontal dimensions of the temporary cluster.

Over 1,000 accredited members of the press attend TIFF. Historically, core festival personnel have worked to develop relationships with the press (Berry 2015), and the festival organizers acknowledge that “all the important press are here” (Interview, TIFF programmer). A wide range of media covers TIFF, including journalists and critics from major film industry trade publications (e.g. Variety, Screen, IndieWire), stringer press (e.g. The Canadian Press), film critics (e.g. Cineaste), major talk shows (e.g. E!Talk), local media (e.g. CBC) and even blogs (who were recognized for their influence on those controlling more traditional media outlets).
2.3.2 Global Reach: International Attendance and Promotion

Beyond representing a mix of occupational roles and expertise, the collective industry delegates attending the TIFF represent a massive, if temporary, coming together of the global film industry.

Figure 2.5: Global Film Industry Delegate Attendance at TIFF (2012), Count by Country

As shown above in Figure 2.5, the United States (1,392) and Canada (1,081) dominate in terms of industry attendance at the festival, followed by significant film producing countries in Europe, including the United Kingdom (234), France (193), and Germany (131). Nations with growing film production centres also attend, such as Japan (102), Australia (47), South Korea (47), China (38), India (35), and Mexico (33). There is nonetheless a long tail that reflects significant global reach. The festival connects established film producing regions and serves as a pipeline to
regions with nascent film industries (e.g. Caribbean). These data support my argument that TIFF acts as an important node for the global industry.

Based on industry delegate registration information from 2012, 62% of the industry delegates attend TIFF from across Canada and the United States; however, the remaining 38% came from 75 countries across the globe. Along with the fact that the single largest group of industry professionals are international buyers, this strong attendance by global film interests lends credibility to the claim that TIFF is an international event.

Regional agencies, such as the Ontario Media Development Corporation (OMDC) and Toronto-based film assets take out advertisements in festival media and programs during the event. Foreign film institutes and government agencies also take out ads and attend in large numbers, as shown in Figure 2.4. Sales agents and government agencies take hotel suites as identifiable sites for business meetings and film sales, many of which take place in private meetings behind closed doors (Interview, International Buyer). Government agencies promote their films (product and production capacity) through promotional materials prepared specifically for TIFF and circulated at the event. Different film producing regions promote themselves as sites for location shooting. Regions have booths stocked with promotional material, and often a representative who can provide information and answer questions about the incentives for making films and co-productions there. They also promote films from their region which are screening at TIFF, and many more which are not part of the festival program. An example of this type of promotional campaign, which advertised Spanish cinema at TIFF in 2010, included promotional flyers, posters and brochures depicting Madrid’s film production capacity and films screening at TIFF under the umbrella of a unified ‘Cinema from Spain’ brand at TIFF 2010.

These promotional materials from Spain reflect a concerted campaign to promote the Spanish film industry abroad. This campaign also serves to invite foreign filmmakers to work in Spain,

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12 Author’s journal fieldnotes from participant observation at TIFF industry programming panel discussions.
13 Author’s calculations based on 2012 TIFF delegate registration data.
14 Specific images are not included in this dissertation due to copyright limitations. However, they may be available online in digital formats or in hard copy at the TIFF Library Archives.
whether as service ‘runaway’ production or in co-productions. High-gloss and visually appealing material promotes Madrid-based production companies featured at TIFF. A complimentary Film Production Catalogue provides more information about the breadth of feature, documentary, animation and short films from Madrid-based companies which, at over 200 pages plus a DVD, represents the concerted efforts by PromoMadrid to showcase culture and the film industry, reflecting the acknowledged interests of the Madrid Regional Government, chamber of commerce, business confederation, and banks.

However, there is also evidence of a more (pro)active role among tourism and economic development interests at TIFF. These actors put their support behind organizing additional industry workshops (e.g. pitch sessions, professional development workshops, industry panels, and meetings between filmmakers and distributors).

One example is the Asian Film Summit, a TIFF-organized, parallel industry event, held at the Shangri-La Hotel in downtown Toronto. It launched in 2012, the same year that the big-budget US-China co-production *Looper* (2012) opened the festival. The Asian Film Summit reflects both the growing Asian film industry and the interest among North American filmmakers in accessing Asian markets (Wong 2012). Acknowledging the industry trend towards increasing co-productions (for both television and movies) and growing influence of global film markets, the Asian Film Summit is emblematic of a new suite of industry events that coincide with TIFF in Toronto each September.

The Asian Film Summit reflects TIFF’s efforts to mediate industry learning and networking, by providing an explicit platform for the regional segments of the industry. Panel topics include emerging trends and strategies for navigating them. As a premier international film festival, TIFF is a likely candidate for the role of industry bridge between East and West. However, the festival’s suitability is augmented because it takes place in Toronto, a large and multicultural city. Further, Canada’s reputation among the international film community as close and “familiar to the US but distinctly not American” (Interview, TIFF Programmer), makes Toronto a successful site for such exchanges. TIFF artistic director, Cameron Bailey comments,

> We have to learn how to speak each other’s languages, if not literally, then at least culturally. And I think that’s something this summit [Asian Film Summit] will help do.
… Toronto is uniquely placed to be a part of the conversation about that change [i.e. global industry trends and rise of Asian co-productions] because of our population, our audience is here and how outward-looking we are. Being a city of immigrants, being a festival that shows films from so many different countries each year, [attracting] audiences that are familiar with movies from the West and the East, I thought this was the perfect place to do it (Cameron Bailey, TIFF Artistic Director, quoted in CBC media coverage by Wong 2012).

While the Asian Film Summit is perhaps the biggest and most visible tandem event, it is certainly not alone. Several such promotional events happen alongside TIFF. Given that these events mobilize social, cultural, and financial assets in their planning, it seems likely that they might reflect and reproduce the inequalities that already exist in the uneven global film landscape. The well-funded efforts and polished promotional materials exemplified by the Ontario Media Development Corporation, PromoMadrid and the Asian Film Summit, suggest that industry resources and attention are being re/circulated among regions with established film power.

However, my research finds evidence that nascent film regions are also taking part, organizing tandem events, and attending TIFF films and industry programming with the explicit intent to develop their industrial capacity back home. This is interesting because it unsettles the dominant uneven-development narrative typical of critically engaged film research (e.g. Stringer 2001, Christopherson and Rightor 2010), and shifts the research gaze away from Hollywood and its satellite production centres.

Another avenue through which TIFF facilitates the creation of trans-local connections, is through its involvement in the Producer’s Lab Toronto. Producer’s Lab Toronto was jointly created in 2010 by the trade body European Film Promotion, the Ontario Media Development Corporation (OMDC), and the Toronto International Film Festival. Designed to bring together Canadian and European filmmakers to explore the co-production potential of select projects, this initiative reflects the increasing role which industry intermediaries are playing at TIFF.

Media coverage of this event presents a very clear metaphor – a Canadian magnifying glass searching Europe on a globe (The Hollywood Reporter, Special Edition September 2010). This represents the Canadian film industry seeking partnership opportunities in Europe. An avid promoter of local creative industries, the OMDC is active in co-sponsoring the Producer’s Lab
Toronto, which is designed for independent producers with a track record of success. It entails a “three-day programme of meetings, pitching sessions, case studies and panel discussions to encourage the financing, production and distribution of co-productions between Canada and Europe” (THR 2010).

As well as foreign countries, the local region (i.e. Toronto and Ontario) also promotes and advertises their film capacity at TIFF. The city’s advertisement in the 2012 TIFF Film Program featured a busy and crew-filled location shoot, which shows not only immediately identifiable urban features (e.g. TTC sign), but also the skilled local labour force upon which vibrant film production depends. Similarly, the OMDC advertisement showcases films which are made in Ontario. This serves to clearly communicate to the local and non-local industry professionals attending TIFF that Ontario is a region which invests in the film industry and produces quality films.

This signals important information about the maturity of the local film production context to local and non-local industry present at TIFF. It challenges pre-conceptions foreign film industry players may have about Toronto, in particular the notions that it competes solely on cost or produces mainly service films. The range of films shown in the ad clearly demonstrates that the region produces indigenous films of high quality. These advertisements present a clear and visible message that Toronto and Ontario are open for business. They also provide contact information for those interested in pursuing film work locally. These advertisements indicate ways in which the temporary cluster supports the development of the Toronto cluster and the Ontario and Canadian film industries more generally.

In context of the TIFF cluster, embodied trans-local knowledge flows circulate, as if through pipelines, within and across territories and clusters (see Bathelt and Glucker 2011). This relational perspective applies to the trans-local knowledge flows that are happening at TIFF, at both the scale of regions (e.g. economic linkages across territories) and of individuals (e.g. embodied project-based configurations of learning). The scale and global scope of industry delegate attendance at TIFF is the most significant and direct form of trans-local connection created at TIFF. This circulation of mobile industry professionals, whose movements embody knowledge flows and network connectivity, is critical. Global buzz about industry trends,
innovation and business practices is transferred between TIFF in Toronto and 75 countries around the world. However, the nodes of these connections are at an urban scale, and especially concentrated in some cities.

2.4 Cities as Nodes for Global Knowledge-Flows

Not only are there patterns at the national level, but also the urban scale. It is increasingly actors from major film cities that feature on the international film production landscape. Figure 2.6 below depicts density of film industry participation at TIFF on an urban scale. While geographically dispersed, there is strong regional coverage from the Greater Toronto Area and Great Lakes region. Toronto (778) and Los Angeles (303) represent the two largest cities of origin for industry delegates. This suggests that TIFF acts as a meeting place for the North American film industry, where players based in Los Angeles and Toronto mingle and can build and strengthen networks.

While industry delegates attend TIFF from other major Canadian media metropoles, Montreal (101 delegates) and Vancouver (29 delegates) have lower attendance figures than one might expect, considering TIFF is a major festival that connects the domestic and international film industry. One possible explanation for this could be the fact that both Montreal and Vancouver host film festivals of their own, that may serve film professionals based in those cities.

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15 Author’s calculation, based on 2012 TIFF industry delegate registration data. Roughly 94% of delegates self-reported this information.
Figure 2.6: Global Film Industry Delegate Attendance at TIFF (2012), Count by City

Source: Author’s calculations based on 2012 TIFF delegate registration data. Map created by author using MapsData.co.uk.
A global map of TIFF industry delegate attendance is presented above, in Figure 2.6. This illustrates the scale and city of origin for TIFF delegates in 2012. A high proportion of delegates come from cities which represent central places of film production internationally. The top twenty cities ranked by industry delegate attendance are shown in Table 2.3. This list includes top-tier global cities (e.g. New York, London, Paris, Tokyo) and other large beta-cities (e.g. Toronto, Los Angeles, Montreal, Seoul, Berlin, Rome, Amsterdam, Stockholm), as well as new and emerging film locales. This suggests embodied knowledge flows are possible between large, small, established, and emerging sites of film production.

**Table 2.3: Top 20 Cities Ranked by Industry Attendance at TIFF (2012)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>CITY</th>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>COUNT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Beverly Hills</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Santa Monica</td>
<td>USA</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Tokyo</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Seoul</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>West Hollywood</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Munich</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Mexico City</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Copenhagen</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s calculations based on 2012 TIFF delegate registration data.

At a global scale, a similar pattern emerges. This is depicted above in Figure 2.6. Included in this constellation of inter-urban connections are key global cities and major international centres of cultural production. However, many smaller cities with fewer delegates (e.g. Winnipeg (16),
Chicago (9), Halifax (7), Edmonton (5), San Jose (3), etc.) also attend, attesting to TIFF’s accessibility and appeal beyond the Hollywood establishment that traditionally attend the global circuit of international film festivals (Stringer 2001). In fact, nearly half the cities shown in Figure 2.6 are represented by a single industry delegate at TIFF.

The spatial pattern revealed by looking at TIFF industry delegate attendance encompasses both major centres where film production concentrates, and a range of dispersed places which have been characterized in terms of ‘runaway’ service production (e.g. Canada, Australia) or discreet markets (e.g. Bollywood in India, Nollywood in Nigeria). Therefore, TIFF also acts as a meeting place for many film producing regions that are at different stages of development, ranging from nascent to established. As well, these maps illustrate that national film industries are anchored in particular cities such as London, Paris, Tokyo, Seoul and Stockholm. The data also shows that film talent is geographically dispersed; 81% of the cities represented have five or fewer delegates at TIFF. In this section, I have made the case that TIFF is a focal point which brings together the global film industry in a specific space and time. I now turn to making the argument that TIFF operates as a significant temporary cluster for the industry, and important locus of business learning and decision making.

The fact that so many Toronto-based film industry professionals attend TIFF points to its relevance for the local film sector. In 2012, 778 Toronto-based delegates attended TIFF. Many more attended festival events, parallel workshops, parties and screenings. The cluster literature consistently states there is a benefit to cluster participants gained from simply ‘being there’. Given co-location, participating in a cluster is a relatively inexpensive way for local industry players to access the intensive interactions and iterative learning, since such knowledge flows (i.e. local buzz) are ubiquitous in the shared milieu. I argue that this is a major way that the TIFF cluster supports Toronto’s local film cluster, because it provides a crucial point of entry for local film industry firms and workers to tap into the rich context of local and global knowledges which coalesce at the film event. This is consistent with arguments in the temporary cluster literature, and helps explain the significant participation of Toronto-based film professionals at TIFF. Recalling the industry attendance data previously discussed (see Figure 2.4), there are certain film professionals whose local participation in TIFF is particularly strong. These data support the claim that local industry players take advantage of the easy access to the TIFF as temporary cluster in their home base, as shown below in Table 2.4.
Table 2.4: Toronto Industry Delegate Attendance at TIFF by Professional Category (2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Category</th>
<th>Local Representation</th>
<th>Local Count</th>
<th>Total Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writer</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Maker</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate/Legal</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributor</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producer</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Crew</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Finance</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Festival</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion Agency</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talent Agent</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Agent</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibitor</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buyer</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov't Agency</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Commission</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s calculations based on 2012 TIFF delegate registration data.

Certain creative roles within the film industry had significantly more local representation. The above table shows Toronto-based actors (71%), writers (65%), and filmmakers (61%) dominated in terms of their professional category represented at TIFF. While some key acting talent may be involved in early stages of pre-sales and financing, the majority of actors and cast participate primarily in the film production element (see Figure 2.3). The relatively high-showing of Toronto-based actors at TIFF is thus distinct and may represent a benefit which ease of access to the local event provides industry professionals who might not otherwise travel to attend a film festival, especially if they are not actively promoting a film in the program. This explanation resonates with insight from my fieldwork, where I encountered Toronto-based actors, writers, and post-production workers at events and parties that coincided with the festival who told me
they attended peripheral film industry events, but were not formally attending the festival (Fieldnotes).

In these social settings, I observed actors networking with other (also local) filmmakers and production companies. One actor I spoke with mentioned that she was attending events peripheral to TIFF with the intent to maintain relationships and hopefully influence how people she knew in the industry perceived her. In other words, she used TIFF events as an informal way to connect with local filmmakers and advocate for her ability to act in action and comedic roles, in an effort to overcome being typecast as the nerdy Asian girl (Fieldnotes). This interaction suggests that local pipelines are actively developed in informal TIFF spaces. In context of TIFF, a core international film festival akin to global hub trade fairs described by Bathelt et al. (2014), industry events designed to act as global nodes also create spaces and opportunities for local knowledge circulation. Similarly, the participation of significant number of Toronto-based writers (65%) and filmmakers (61%), corroborates insights from fieldwork observations and interviews that a lot of networking, learning and business deals which take place at TIFF parties and ancillary events pertain to projects in early stages of development and pre-financing.

As well, Toronto-based industry delegates accounted for 57% of the industry delegates who self-identified as ‘other’ in their professional category. Based on my observations attending TIFF, I believe it is likely that this ‘other’ category includes a significant number of emerging film professionals (e.g. students, filmmakers who have yet to make a full-length feature) and people who work in roles that remain peripheral to the industry (e.g. voice actor, stylist, blogger). Relatively costless access to information-rich TIFF events provides these local (potentially emerging and peripheral) workers with opportunities to learn a lot quickly, including how they might participate in the film industry effectively. Many local producers (259), film festivals (73), and buyers (72) also attend. These examples of participating in the TIFF temporary cluster illustrate the ease of tapping in to global buzz at the festival. As well, these observations suggest that in a festival context, the relationship between events, their industry and surrounding economic geography, may be less clearly delineated than typologies of traditional, mature trade shows suggest (see Bathelt et al. 2014).
2.5 Industry Activity at TIFF: Local and Global Buzz and Pipelines at Work

By 2014, industry registration had risen substantially from previous years (TIFF 2014a). Similarly, industry programming at TIFF has grown, both in terms of what the festival provides (i.e. over 70 hours of panels and 250 guest speakers) and in terms of industry delegate participation in these activities (i.e. a 57% increase in attendance at industry panels between 2013 and 2014) (TIFF 2014a). There are also increasingly targeted regional efforts, such as the Asian Film Summit at the Shangri La Hotel, which began in 2012. By 2014, this summit had coincided with a 217% increase in Chinese delegate attendance from the previous year (TIFF 2014a).

Full access to TIFF industry programming costs as little as $400 (CAD) for the early-bird conference pass (with limited access to screenings) and up to a maximum of $985 (CAD) to purchase the premium industry pass on-site during the festival (TIFF 2017). During the interviews, TIFF was frequently described as accessible. It was never described as expensive, in contrast to some European film festivals. Rather, the general attitude among delegates seemed to be that spending around $700 was good value (Interview, Canadian Filmmaker). Some filmmakers interviewed mentioned that they accessed public support to offset the cost of participating in TIFF (Interview, International Filmmaker). For example, this practice was observed by filmmakers from the Caribbean, an emerging filmmaking region, whose countries worked together to access grants and private funding (e.g. Invest Barbados) to sponsor young Caribbean filmmakers’ participation at TIFF (Interview, International Filmmaker). In speaking with economic development agencies from that region, they voiced optimism that cultural industries (e.g. film and music) may be avenues for economic diversification beyond agriculture and service industries (Interview, Government Agency).

Overall, the accessibility and openness of TIFF was emphasized during interviews. In the words of one filmmaker, TIFF was “informal and allowed people in. Very few festivals have that access… TIFF is very welcoming” (Interview, International Filmmaker). Participants contrast this with their experience at other festivals, where they felt unwelcome because “the organizers were so haughty” (Interview, International Filmmaker). The notion that TIFF was accessible was repeated by Canadian and international delegates. However, as one Canadian filmmaker...
observes, “overcoming one’s fear of being shunned” is critical to benefiting from TIFF (Interview, Canadian Filmmaker). It was evident through interviews and participant observation that participating in the festival did not translate directly into a sense of belonging within the industry.

As one might expect, not all industry festival delegates benefitted equally or in the same ways. One international delegate expressed their frustration with TIFF saying, “it is overwhelming how organized you have to be, and in the end, the bottom line is money” (Interview, Filmmaker). They outlined the costs – printed materials, kits, professional presentations – which an independent filmmaker assumes in addition to travel, hotels and registration. Given these up-front investments, they expressed frustration about being treated poorly or, in some instances, simply dismissed as unknown by other industry delegates (Interview, International Filmmaker). Despite participating in industry programming, spending time networking in the Filmmakers’ Lounge, and seeking advice from film consultants, some filmmakers still found the festival experience challenging. One filmmaker describes the festival experience as akin to “weav[ing] your way through the maze” (Interview, International Filmmaker).

Despite this complexity, TIFF plays important roles in terms of fostering networking, learning and business transactions. In the next section, I present evidence for three key roles that TIFF serves. They are: (1) networking and building relationships, (2) industry learning, and (3) selling and promoting work. I develop these themes below.

2.5.1 Networking and Relationships: Developing ‘Know-Who’, Trust and Reciprocity

Networking emerged as an important aspect of the work which film industry delegates do at TIFF. However, it was repeatedly suggested that successful networking depends on preparation. Networking is facilitated through repeated interactions. Richer information is communicated in an interpersonal context, and reciprocity in social settings engenders professional bonds. Touching base with colleagues in a face-to-face environment is an important function of TIFF. Because the industry is characterized by many small firms and project-based work, it is important for professional networks to stay current in terms of knowing who is in which positions across the industry. This extra dimension of ‘know-who-now’ helps to qualify the relevance of ‘know-who’ in a cultural industry that is constantly in flux. ‘Know-who’ is often
tacit knowledge and difficult to communicate, yet creative industry professionals and researchers view it as crucial, alongside ‘know-how’ (Asheim et al. 2007, Gertler 2003). In particular, the symbolic knowledge inherent in cultural industries foregrounds the importance of ‘know-who’.

One film industry consultant who works the festival circuit specifically states that they make it their business to know people. They call this practice “collecting faces” and consider it an essential aspect of their work (Interview, Film Industry Consultant). It seems some filmmakers are aware of this practice, suggesting networking lets others “put a face to me” (Interview, International Filmmaker), while other delegates eschew impromptu networking in favour of a busy schedule of pre-planned meetings (Interview, Buyer). Faces came up repeatedly in terms of being able to recognize others in the industry. Unlike fashion, where personal style or branded clothing may signal one’s personal identity and economic position in the industry (Entwistle and Racomora 2006), film industry leaders (who frequently work offscreen) may be harder to identify at first glance. As one filmmaker notes, “Harvey Weinstein could be right beside you. You have to know who’s who already” (Interview, Canadian Filmmaker). This raises the importance of advance preparation, so that one is ready for the accidental encounter.

Through interviews, a range of perspectives about the effectiveness of networking at festivals emerged. Some industry professionals felt “smaller parties are better for networking” (Interview, Film Festival Organizer). Others said they “tend to avoid formal networking sessions [because] everyone is primed for those and ‘on their game’” (Interview, Producer). Regardless of where and how you do it, interviewees agree that making connections in person at TIFF is important. As one industry insider notes,

I actually think it [meeting face-to-face] gets more important the less we do that. The more that you’re separated, technology makes you believe you are really connected with people when you’re not. And face-to-face really means something different. It’s not via Facebook or email. Things like Facebook make you feel like you’re connected to them, but you get a Facebook request and you’re like: “who are they?” And then: “oh, yeah, I know them quite well, I just didn’t recognize the picture.” But you know them because you met them privately, not because you remembered an email. And that actually makes that [face-to-face meeting] more significant. (Interview, TIFF Programmer)

This quote highlights the importance of face-to-face interactions when making an initial impression that may be later developed into a more substantial relationship. As one Canadian
As a result of the film industry’s dual arts/commerce character, networking is necessarily best qualified in social environments, where subtle information about aesthetic tastes and cultural values can be more readily communicated. As one Canadian delegate describes, networking in the film industry is about “forg[ing] a community. There is a business side of it, yet an artistic side” (Interview, Filmmaker). While some delegates suggest they are open to new encounters, others tended to stick with established peer groups. For instance, one producer comments that “anybody who made the effort to approach me, I give them the time and help them out” (Interview, Producer). Not everyone experiences such reception. Even though the potential for making good business contacts was widely recognized, it could be at times intimidating or awkward. As one filmmaker admits, “it is not so easy to make contacts at TIFF” (Interview, Filmmaker). In this context, it can be valuable to be part of a group at the festival, especially for emerging filmmakers with little reputation and fledgling networks. As one filmmaker put it, “when you come as a group, people hear about you, and that is important” (Interview, Filmmaker). The implication is that if you are part of something bigger, more recognizable, new industry contacts may give you more time or credibility. This arose with a Los Angeles-based film composer who maintains strong ties to the Canadian film community, which was instrumental in their education and early career (Interviews).

TIFF programmers are also aware that they can facilitate relationship building in support of Canadian filmmakers. Programmers identified several established Toronto-based and Canadian filmmakers with which TIFF has fostered a relationship over time, particularly in terms of programming “openings” and “prominent spots” in the festival program schedule. Some of these include Atom Egoyan, David Cronenberg, Richard Lewis, Bruce MacDonald, Mike McGowan and Deepa Mehta (Interview, TIFF Programmer). Younger talent is also encouraged and supported by TIFF through the festival’s annual ‘student showcase’. As one programmer explains, TIFF promotes making connections between emerging and established Canadian film talent by pairing student short films with appropriate features in the TIFF program (Interview, TIFF Programmer). This practice has also proven effective in introducing student short filmmakers to established feature filmmakers. For example, in pairing a student short film with work by Jennifer Jonas and Leonard Farlinger from New Real Film, the student “ended up
getting his next short produced by them because it was a connection that was made directly at the [TIFF] screening. [He] got his producer by being linked up through the program” (Interview, TIFF Programmer). Examples like this one show that specific connections are made at TIFF.

One mid-career film promoter told me they attend TIFF using personal (unpaid) leave from their formal job (at a film company based in New York City). Attending TIFF is a priority for them. They explain that attending TIFF is important because it allows them to maintain personal and professional relationships with colleagues that they do not see on a day-to-day basis. The rationale they provide for investing in professional networks and sustaining relationships when attending TIFF was that networks are crucial for navigating their career development path (Interview, Film Promoter). They alluded to small firms and lean projects contributing to job insecurity, even within an established film production centre such as New York City. This evidence suggests that developing and sustaining professional networks may be of greater value to individual workers than to the firms which employ them. During our interview over lunch at a restaurant in the main festival district, we were interrupted twice. Once they gave tickets to an event to someone in the industry, and another time they were given tickets to an event that an industry colleague could not attend (Fieldnotes). This type of swapping was recognized as important for building social capital among peers and gaining access to a peer’s network.

Film industry professionals connect at a range of sites and spaces across the festival. Launch parties were described as a good venue for meeting a lot of industry and media, while TIFF’s Filmmakers Lounge happy hour was described by one filmmaker as “a mob scene, with people trying to be part of the scene and drink free booze” (Interview, Canadian Filmmaker). While many of these social environments were described as fun, and important for meeting people, they were also generally characterized as poor venues at which to deepen professional relationships. Rather, trust is built over time through repeated interaction, work practices, and reciprocity.

The festival serves as starting point for building work relationships. For example, a screenwriter says they do small pieces of work for people they met at the festival as a favor, with the view that it presents an opportunity to demonstrate their professionalism and craft. Their strategy paid off; they have been brought onto projects in this way (Interview, Screenwriter). As another delegate observes, “a lot of creative positions are not full-time for a company … The more freelance you are, the more you go to those things” (Interview, Canadian Filmmaker).
For instance, in one interview with an emerging (foreign) filmmaker currently living in Toronto and volunteering at the festival, they mentioned couch surfing as an example of reciprocity at festivals. By offering their sofa to an out of town friend in the industry, they were able to solidify existing relationships with an industry colleague (based out of New York) and were even able to make use of their industry pass to access industry screenings and programming towards the end of the festival, after the flurry of industry activity has dwindled and their friend had returned to New York. There were many examples of reciprocity, and a blurring of social and work spaces. They were especially prominent among emerging and mid-career industry professionals. Regarding the making of their first film, one filmmaker describes, “it was mostly friends from film school and based on reciprocity… There was very little money involved for crewing” (Interview, Canadian Filmmaker).

Another example is from a film composer, who is now based in Los Angeles, but had significant work experience in Canada. They specifically mentioned TIFF as a major point in their calendar that is important for cultivating new relationships. In this context, where “friends introduce me to their friends” (Interview, Film Composer), the ability to extend Los Angeles and Canadian networks at TIFF (e.g. securing party invitations) matters. He notes, “you start a relationship that way… you remember you had a good time… You can’t replace that human touch” (Interview, Film Composer). However, “building trust doesn’t happen at festivals.” (Interview, Film Composer). Rather, trust is established through how you work with others. After all, as one foreign filmmaker puts it, “you learn over a cup of tea” (Interview, Filmmaker).

2.5.2 Industry Learning: Examples of Knowledge Diffusion

TIFF provides many environments and opportunities for learning and developing know-how. Industry programming events were described by one Toronto-based filmmaker as an industry “crash course [which] helped educate and give me the lingo” (Interview, Filmmaker). As well, participating in TIFF as an industry delegate grants access to industry programming. Industry programming, panels and workshops, were a major site for industry learning and professional development.

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16 TIFF was mentioned alongside the Banff World Media Festival in this context. (Interview, Toronto-based Filmmaker).
Although attendance numbers are not available, in the field I observed that these sessions were well attended, often to capacity. In the words of one delegate, “all industry programing is very helpful, with high caliber producers in the sessions [that you] wouldn’t [otherwise] have access to. It is a dream come true” (Interview, Toronto-based Filmmaker). Many TIFF organized workshops specifically addressed topics of interest to Canadian filmmakers, such as film financing and co-production panels. These workshops and panels frequently featured guest speakers and panelists, representatives from Canadian film funds (e.g. Telefilm) and prominent Canadian filmmakers, directors and producers who spoke about their experiences making and selling Canadian cinema. As well, there are formal and informal opportunities throughout TIFF to practice presenting oneself and introducing film projects at different stages, and observe others doing so. As one filmmaker put it, “working on pitches with colleagues helps your pitch. You get feedback from them in a safe environment, and they are aware of cultural relevance” (Interview, Toronto-based Filmmaker).

Filmmakers from regions with nascent film economies emphasized the value of the learning opportunities they get from participating in TIFF. As one such filmmaker says, “be[ing] a fly on the wall and participat[ing] at some screenings exposed me, first hand, to the high quality of films” (Interview, International Filmmaker). Having worked mostly in children’s television programming before, this filmmaker valued that experience as they transitioned into making independent short films. They used TIFF as a learning opportunity, which was especially valuable given their view that “the size and professionalism of the film sector” in Toronto was greater and more established than their film sector back home (Interview, International Filmmaker).

Another filmmaker from the region commented “in the Caribbean we don't yet have a film industry. It's more of a sector or a scene” (Interview, International Filmmaker). In particular, they learned about professional conduct (e.g. business interactions, how to discuss films with peer filmmakers). This comment was not self-deprecating, but simply reflected how much of a learning opportunity it was to be at TIFF.

2.5.3 Selling and Promoting Work

TIFF is a major hub for the industry, and the festival serves as a de-facto market. As such it provides an important site for filmmakers seeking to promote and sell their work. TIFF is not a
traditional film market, such as Cannes or the AFM (American Film Market), where thousands of non-festival films are offered for sale in specified trade-fair like conference hall kiosks. Instead, the active market at TIFF is informal, with business meetings and sales deals happening largely through personal networks and at private meetings.

Speaking about the “informal market” at TIFF in contrast to AFM, one American Filmmaker says,

> In particular, one of my [projects] takes place both in the United States and Europe. So, I am really looking for, in addition to financing, I’m also looking for a European co-producer. And because it [TIFF] is not just a market, but also a festival, it attracts a broader base [of participants] and I’m able to meet with international producers as well. And there were some talks about tax credits, for example a conversation with Italy around tax credits in Italy. So, it [TIFF] is a much broader experience (Interview, Filmmaker).

In this quote, this filmmaker expresses the value of being able to access multiple stakeholders at once at TIFF. At the festival, they were able to meet with and build relationships with potential collaborators based in Europe, as well as speak directly with representatives from the regional institutes which invest in and subsidize film production abroad, such as in Italy.

Interestingly, the less formal character of TIFF’s market supports a wide range of sales, including pre-sales and early stage financing. One Toronto-based filmmaker interviewed had a film project at the treatment stage which motivated their industry networking and learning at the festival. In terms of networking, they attended specific industry events that coincide with TIFF, where they “focus on connecting with Canadian government funders” (Interview, Filmmaker). This suggests they sought to make connections between development and financing pre-sales. They also sought specific information (i.e. codified knowledge) about OMDC’s tax credits for shooting in Northern Ontario. Given their later comments on the importance of presenting as “committed” and “serious” in face-to-face interactions, it is likely this filmmaker intuitively sought out information about tax credits as an opportunity to informally promote their project at an early stage of development. This Toronto-based filmmaker argued that their purpose in attending TIFF as, “to be entertained [see films], network, and sell the film” (Interview, Filmmaker).
This experience of networking with the intent to sell film at different stages of the project was corroborated through participant observation in industry settings, such as the Filmmakers’ Lounge, and informal third spaces, such as the main festival hotel lobby. The Hyatt lobby was a busy environment throughout the festival. I observed business meetings over coffee, drinks and dinner in the lower-level Hyatt bar, which seemed to occur in between film screenings. As well, I observed several informal meetings in the hotel lobby, where small groups (often two to five people) would sit together (on lounge chairs, couches, on the edge of a fountain) to discuss current and prospective film projects. These pitches were shown as screeners on tablets, or as leaflets with core cast and some preliminary context shown in a binder, while the filmmaker gave a verbal pitch of the film. This mix of pitching and selling seemed targeted at both offering sales of completed films (not shown at the festival) to specific geographic territories, as well as securing pre-sales (across geographic territories and media platforms) for as-yet incomplete film projects.

Economic impact assessments of TIFF strongly emphasize industry sales, findings that a bulk of the festival’s economic impact is the result of anticipated business transactions by the film industry attending TIFF, totaling $112 million in direct and indirect economic value (TCI 2010, 3). This independent study reinforces the notion that “TIFF acts as an industry forum where people expect to network and discuss various business arrangements [and where] direct feedback from attendees at the Festival indicates that TIFF is an extremely important venue for business deals” (TCI 2010, 10). Beyond interviews and industry reports, the media discusses TIFF as a film market as well.

Significant film acquisitions take place at TIFF, which is why TIFF has become known to the industry as a “de-facto market” (Interview, Film Consultant) and “gateway to the North American market” (Interview, TIFF Programmer). For example, the industry media outlet IndieWire reported several acquisitions during TIFF in 2016. Magnolia Pictures acquired the North American rights to the documentary, I Am Not Your Negro (by Haitian director Raoul

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17 The report describes expected industry expenditures as money that firms anticipate spending in Canada as an outcome of sales, deals and business transactions that occur at TIFF (e.g. signing film distribution agreements). However, the analysis was vague about how it measured and extrapolated such expected expenditures, and whether the economic benefits would accrue at the national, regional or local scale (TCI 2010, 10).
Peck). Netflix made a deal for the drama, *Message From the King* (by Belgian director Fabrice Du Welz). Canadian directors also sell their films at TIFF. For example, the U.S. rights to Philippe Falardeau’s *The Bleeder* were sold to IFC Films, while home entertainment rights for Kim Nguyen’s film, *Two Lovers and a Bear* were secured by Fox. Foreign language films were also bought and sold at TIFF, such as *I Am Not Madame Bovary* (by Chinese director Feng Xiaogang), for which North American distribution rights were acquired by Well Go USA Entertainment after its world premiere at TIFF. World rights for the documentary *In Exile* (by Myanmar director Tin Win Naing) were picked up by Toronto-based Syndicado (Erband 2016).

This is just a sample of the sales at TIFF in 2016. Sales such as these have been taking place at TIFF for years, and are now commonly reported by industry trade publications.

This research finds that TIFF acts a de-facto market for film sales. It also establishes important connections and deals pertaining to pre-sales and financing of films which are in earlier stages of development. These financing and presales deals are important for the viability of specific film projects, and rely on relationships and networks fostered at TIFF.

### 2.6 Conclusion

I began this chapter by identifying the need to investigate how international film festivals function as temporary clusters. Throughout this chapter, I argue that TIFF exemplifies how film festivals function as temporary clusters within the global film industry. I addressed how festivals are conceptualized as temporary clusters. I situated TIFF within the global film circuit, and showed how TIFF is linked to parallel film festival circuits across global and local scales. I outlined the characteristics of a successful cluster and provided evidence of TIFF encompassing a range of roles within the industry. I argue that the festival has representation of both local and global interests, necessary for a dynamic cluster.

Furthermore, I assert that TIFF, as a core international film festival on the global circuit, has implications for those cluster participants who attend the festival. In particular, I outline the roles which TIFF plays and highlight the benefits it confers, including how TIFF creates opportunities for networking, industry learning, and selling and promoting work. Consistent with a knowledge-based theory of clusters, TIFF acts as conduit, connecting Toronto filmmakers to external communications and knowledge. As well, the festival facilitates connections and knowledge flows between non-local industry participants at the festival. These findings clearly indicate that
TIFF functions as a temporary cluster, with industry benefits to those participating by virtue of their delegate attendance at TIFF or their local proximity to the festival as temporary cluster within the host region of Toronto.

In conclusion, this chapter argues that major international film festivals act as important temporary clusters situated within a global circuit of serial events. This research finds that temporary industry gatherings function as key spaces for knowledge creation and market processes within the global film industry, in part due to the coming together of actors from across the film project value chain and geographic territories. This research also suggests that workers, firms and regions attend festivals as a strategy to gain access to important industry knowledge, partners and assets, which may not be accessible in the local contexts where they work. In other words, not only do film festivals function as temporary clusters, but they serve as key points of accessibility into cultural industry microcosms which may be particularly important for emerging filmmakers and those working in peripheral regions. Although film festivals are short-lived events, they are part of a broader cycle of events (i.e. global film festival circuit) and operate as grounded, serial temporary clusters which have lasting consequences for the organization of markets, viability of projects, and career development of the creative workers who operate within the film economy.

In the next chapter, I unpack the festival audience as an element of the festival cluster which is locally embedded and developed through TIFF.
Chapter 3
Audience Matters: Exploring the Role of Film Festival Audiences

People are always asking me how they can get tickets for Cannes. The answer is, most of the time, you can’t (Roger Ebert, 2008).

The Toronto International Film Festival is the best place to make people aware of your films (Oprah Winfrey, CBS News 2009).

3 Introduction

One key aim of this research is to investigate the roles the audience plays in fostering rich environments for learning and decision making at film festivals. TIFF is distinctive in that the public is a driving force at the festival, which sets it apart from other big festivals. Starting from the position that the audience is an active player, this study explores audience influence in learning and knowledge creation, as well as the validation of experiential cultural goods. My research indicates that the Toronto film festival audience has both direct and indirect effects on the development and success of films. Evidence from this exploratory study suggests that audience engagement with films influences business decisions (e.g. acquisitions), filmmakers’ professional development (e.g. opportunities for learning, collaboration and inspiration), and marketing (e.g. generating buzz). This research also finds evidence that TIFF actively cultivates sophisticated demand among its audience. The result is a mutually reinforcing relationship between the strength and reputation of TIFF as a key festival and Toronto as a public audience.

Despite growing interest within economic geography regarding the role of consumers, the film audience remains a relatively understudied topic. There is a pervasive sense that users (consumers) play certain roles in the innovation process with respect to product development. This situates consumers in a largely pre-production phase. Alternatively, consumers are theorized as end-users, whose feedback can be incorporated as input for future iterations of the product. While studies explore the sites and relations which constitute these roles, the potential for consumers to play an influential role in other parts of the commodity chain – such as dissemination, distribution and marketing – is less well developed. A large, important and public film festival such as TIFF presents the opportunity to explore consumer influence in a festival.
setting. Festivals bring together stakeholders from across the film business, as well as the mass of public film consumers. Given the rise in film festivals, this research offers insights from a highly commodified cultural industry on the relevance and impact festival audiences exert in other parts of the value chain.

In this chapter, I suggest that audiences contribute to industry learning and product validation through their consumption practices at the festival. This is largely due to audience reactions, which can be informative and generate buzz. They signal to a cross-section of stakeholders, including buyers at later stages of the value chain, the film’s potential for critical and commercial success. The case of film is interesting because film is a high-risk industry and it is difficult to predict the success of any one film ahead of time. Films are complex and experiential products. This makes consumer feedback very important.

The Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) is currently one of the most influential and prestigious film events in the world. Founded in 1976, the festival originally curated great films from other film festivals to be shown in Toronto to passionate moviegoers. Choices of what to watch in Canadian theatres were then limited (Enright 2013). Since then, TIFF has become the premier public film festival in the world. As argued earlier, it is a major node on the circuit of international film festivals, ranking alongside Cannes and Venice. TIFF is unique, or at least distinguished from its peer festivals, insofar as it is the largest publicly attended international film festival in the world. It is a massive event. Held in Toronto, Ontario for roughly a week each year starting on the first Thursday following labour day, TIFF hosts thousands of industry professionals (4,000 in 2012) and film enthusiasts (400,000 attendees in 2012). It typically screens around 300 films, roughly half of which are world premieres (140 in 2012) (TIFF 2013). It also serves as a major anchor for Toronto’s film economy, contributing to the institutional milieu of organizations which support and promote film locally.

TIFF and the Toronto audience have grown up in tandem. TIFF now enjoys a strong reputation for savvy and supportive film publics that have a track record for recognizing quality films. Toronto audiences often identify films which go on to enjoy wider commercial and critical success. In this chapter, I argue that the film festival audience is an important asset to the festival, because of the influence which audiences (often unknowingly) exert on filmmakers and
business decisions. Furthermore, I suggest that the audience is a localized asset that is cultivated by TIFF, which sets Toronto apart from other film festivals.

3.1 The Role of the Consumer

The role of the consumer is of growing interest in economic geography. This literature review highlights the different ways in which consumers can influence production, design and innovation. Despite the contribution of recent work in economic geography to challenge the traditional perception of consumers as passive recipients at the end of a commodity chain, there remains a gap in empirical research. Few studies explicitly explore the relationship between the consumer and the distribution of cultural goods. In what follows, I describe what has been written about the role of the consumer and demonstrate the need for an expanded view of consumers.

3.1.1 Innovation and Consumer Demand

Historically, economic geographers presented a stylized characterization of the customer’s role in innovation. Three dominant types of consumer in the literature were the ‘anonymous consumer’, the ‘smart neighbor’, and the ‘principal’.

The anonymous customer serves as proxy for aggregate demand. This conception is found in territorial innovation models, such as in the literature on industrial districts. In these milieus, global demand is seen as volatile. The anonymous customer is ubiquitous, yet individually elusive, with little physical or relational proximity to producers. Consumers are largely absent from these studies (Amin and Cohendet 2004, 87), even when nonlocal knowledge sources are considered (e.g. Amin and Thrift 1992).

The smart neighbor also represents a passive proxy for demand. These conceptualizations depict a more sophisticated buyer, who inhabits the space where innovation occurs. Within clusters, having access to sophisticated buyers lends firms greater competitiveness. It gives companies an ability to interpret and respond to more immediate knowledge of customer trends (Porter 2000). By shaping market demand, consumers play a role in swaying the general trajectory of innovation. This conception of the smart neighbor informs an emphasis on demand as a component of regional innovation systems (Lundvall 1992). In such characterizations, customers provide relevant feedback to producing firms.
A third common archetype, the principal, is more directly involved in innovation. Characterized by strong relational proximity, the principal plays an active role, by providing essential resources to producers. This is common in knowledge intensive services (Sassen 1994), but is also prevalent in sectors characterized by project-based work, such as new media (Grabher 2002). Here, producer-customer interaction emphasizes temporal co-presence and relational proximity over spatial co-location.

The notion that the firm is the source of all innovation has been challenged in the last several decades. There is growing recognition that consumers qualify and reconfigure products, both through their use of goods, as well as their reviews of them. Evaluation and customization of products by consumers is key in the contemporary period. More active consumers extend the potential for more direct input and feedback on product development and innovation. This has been shown through empirical work on user-led innovation (Grabher et al. 2008). Conceptualizing consumers in more nuanced ways has helped identify how individuals and communities can play a more active role in innovation.

On the production side, research on innovation has shifted away from processes internal to the firm, to a broader set of relationships between firms and institutions. Joint ventures and strategic alliances have been a topic of investigation. These collective knowledge pools illuminate how innovation processes extend beyond the firm. Considerations of such external knowledge pools have given rise to significant discussion among geographers regarding the extent to which such assets are grounded in place or result from virtual interaction (Grabher et al. 2008). This discussion reflects growing interest in the expanded influence which consumers and users may exert on the innovation through their iterative interactions and relationships with producers.

Early groundwork for conceptualizing the active role of the customer was done by von Hippel (1976, 1978), who emphasized the role of lead users. von Hippel (1978) described the presence of tight-knit communities based on long-standing relationships. Lead users are not only a source of ideas for new product development and improvement, but have also gained access to a wider set of tools and technology, which may democratize innovation since they remove the reliance on a corporate entity for product development (von Hippel 2005). As the barriers between consumer and producer crumble, consumers are increasingly characterized as actively engaged in product development and customization.
Recent conceptualizations of consumer-producer relations expand on earlier consumer typologies. Grabher et al. (2008) identify a new era of innovation in which companies tap into rich knowledge pools that are readily accessible, or what Surowiecki (2004) calls the ‘wisdom of crowds’. Grabher et al. (2008) posit a typology of user-producer interactions, which they characterize as ‘codevelopment’. Stemming from this, Grabher et al. (2008) identify a range of user-induced practices, which they organize according to the degree of user involvement. They identify a more active customer who is involved in innovation processes through communities of practice. In particular, they highlight the expressive user, the lead user, and the professional user.

The expressive user offers insight on the experience of using the object. Because the expressive user’s knowledge is often embodied, it is missed by traditional market research approaches. However, expressive users’ experiences can push codevelopment through “testing prototypes in a real-life context, so the user can be observed instantaneously while interacting with the product” (Grabher et al. 2008, 264).

The lead user is important for codevelopment for two reasons. The first reason is that, as early adopters, they are ahead of the market and can point to the potential for successful adoption. The second reason is that lead users have high-level knowledge and technical proficiency with products. They also often develop workarounds, resolving issues arising from practice. A pioneering physician is cited as an example of a lead user. Their knowledge and problem solving (e.g. of medical scanner) in particular work settings can inform design. Importantly, “physical co-presence at the site of usage is indispensable” (Grabher et al. 2008, 266). The lead user is different from the previous archetypes, in that users are central to driving innovation.

Professional users are the final category. Open source projects include quintessential examples of knowledge generation by professional users, such as the Mozilla web browser and Linux operating system. As Grabher et al. (2008, 268) argue, “users not only contribute to design knowledge, but also […] generate knowledge of how to produce the solution collectively”. This begins to unpack the specifics about how and where user knowledge becomes apparent and can be usefully incorporated into innovation processes. Examining user-producer interactions presents a rich social laboratory for economic geographers investigating themes related to knowledge creation.
Another major arena for the study of consumer input is in entertainment oriented products, which have established and often enthusiastic consumers. Examples emphasize sports equipment (e.g. Luthje et al. 2005, von Hippel 2001, Hienerth 2006) and video games (e.g. Prugl and Schreier 2006, Aoyama and Izushi 2008).

3.1.2 Constructing Quality: Role of the Consumer

Consumers are acknowledged to demand high quality in the commodities they consume, but also to participate in the process of conferring quality. As Hauge and Power (2013, 1) argue, “quality is always a value co-constructed in a negotiation between the consumer and producer.” This foregrounds the role of users in constructing quality. In their case study of the winter sports industry, Hauge and Power (2013) affirm the view that competitiveness is not solely a firm-driven phenomenon. Notions of (product) quality and difference, they argue, are constructed spatially and can imprint on place, with lasting effects for regional development, since these (co-constructed) ideas are embedded in social contexts and cultural spaces (Hague and Power 2012, 4).

As one example, winter sports users construct notions of quality in the products they select. They also demand novel and advanced equipment for sporting activities. Research finds that leading producers and professional athletes are involved in product design and radical innovations (Hague and Power 2012, 8). Part of what grounds regional reputations for quality, Hague and Power (2012) argue, is that particular places (i.e. certain ski resorts) serve as a testing ground for new products and also as social spaces, where information about products and their adoption is disseminated (Hague and Power 2012, 10). They argue that products ought to be conceptualized as processes, since their value is significantly based on the immaterial aspects of product quality and differentiation.

This extends their previous research on consumer-producer relationships within the fashion industry, where there is also mutual and reflexive construction (Power and Hauge 2008). Adopting an institutional perspective in their research on the fashion industry, they advance the idea that “consumers are … active participants in the construction of brands” (Power and Hauge 2008, 126). They argue that brands are cultural phenomena that create value and are strategically deployed by firms. However, brands (and their associated meanings) are susceptible to appropriation by consumers (sometimes in unanticipated ways) (see Power and Hauge 2008,
Hauge and Hracs 2010). Collectively this research makes an important intervention within economic geography, which has tended to emphasize supply-side processes, privileging the firm’s involvement in product-innovations.

Cultural industry firms have historically been active in efforts to identify consumer demand, as demonstrated with Nintendo in the video game industry (Aoyama and Izushi 2003). Aoyama and Izushi argue that before Nintendo became a household brand in the 1990s, Nintendo actively reached out to consumers at toy stores, one city at a time, which gradually influenced retailers to do business with the firm.

Their research identifies a lack of market knowledge as a major reason for firm failure in the video game industry. Demand for cultural products is frequently chaotic and unstable (Aoyama and Izushi 2003, 428). Anticipating consumer demand is both important and tricky, since manufacturers engage in risky guess-work each time they introduce a new product (Aoyama and Izushi 2008).

In their research on the video game industry, Aoyama and Izushi (2008) thus point to sophisticated demand as both potentially beneficial and detrimental for industry innovation. On one hand, the gaming fans and hobbyists are connected through the internet. They can create, develop, modify and adapt content. This allows the industry to observe and respond to player actions (online). However, Aoyama and Izushi (2008, 9) caution this can lead to lock-in, since without troubling the status-quo, firms will become complacent and miss out on important breakthroughs which are only possible through “choosing not to listen to users” as they demonstrate in the example of the success of the Nintendo Wii console.

However, the main point of their article is to caution that the relatively new literature on user-led innovation suffers from hype, which may overstate the potential benefits of user-led innovation. They argue that “our understanding is still limited as to its applicability and benefit… particularly [for] firms making consumer goods” (Aoyama and Izushi 2008, 2). They point out that “while discussions on benefits … abound, any negative impact of new communal consumer involvement has been largely left out by the user innovation literature” (Aoyama and Izushi 2008, 3). This is a welcome intervention in a largely positive narrative about the potential benefits of consumers in context of user-led innovation.
Important contributions regarding the qualification of products (Callon et al. 2002) have been fruitfully applied by scholars researching the fashion industry (Entwistle 2006, Leslie et al. 2015). For Callon et al. (2002, 197), a product comes into being through a process in which its components, meanings and usefulness changes as it passes through different stages of production, circulation and consumption. This is especially the case where such products are imbued with aesthetic or cultural value through the course of the object’s life. Thus, Callon et al. (2002) argue that the positioning or (re)qualification of goods is a critical element of both their constructions of value (i.e. perceived quality) and their relative standing in competitive markets.

Importantly, this process of constructing notions of quality is not something imposed by the supply side (i.e. producers), but rather is shaped through interactions and reciprocal influences between consumers and producers (Callon et al. 2002, 201). Dispelling “the idea of a radical separation between supply and demand”, Callon et al. (2002, 202) argue that product qualification necessarily depends on the joint work of many actors, including consumers, in the construction of product qualities. Ultimately, consumers are active participants in the process of product differentiation because they are enmeshed in social networks through which consumption tastes and preferences are developed and refined (Callon 2002, 203).

Callon et al. (2002, 206) also point to how ‘attached consumers’ make choices based on routine, and seek out products with stable and familiar qualities. Disrupting consumers from their routines and engaging them in the requalification of meanings (i.e. product qualities) can be confusing or uncomfortable. Producers and suppliers might intentionally destabilize ‘attached consumers’ with the hope that a new round of product qualification will favour their product at the same time that it interrupts prior consumer preferences. For Callon et al. (2002, 207), “in the economy of qualities, this struggle for attachment and detachment is at the heart of competition”. Relationships are the mechanism which organizes the (re)qualification of products (whether goods or services). The conceptual paradigm for understanding the qualification of products developed by Callon et al. (2002) is also relevant for differentiating consumption practices in cultural and experiential goods.

For example, the fashion industry provides a useful context for extending Callon et al.’s (2002) idea that product qualification is influenced by different actors at multiple stages. Fashion buyers hold an important role in qualifying cultural goods because their decisions impact the inclusion
(or exclusion) of particular goods in the retail marketplace. Buyers are influential in shaping, defining and transforming fashion trends (Entwistle 2009). Fashion buyers make sense of design trends to differentiate between aesthetic products and qualify their position in current and future markets. They communicate this assessment to wider audiences within the sector. These actors are forward looking and active in shaping tastes, both in terms of both what goods are available and also in terms of how they are presented in retail context (Entwistle 2009). Informing Entwistle’s (2006) research on fashion buyers is the important recognition that encounters with products, suppliers and consumers inform and mediate the fashion qualification process. This disrupts the largely linear way that qualification processes have been treated (Entwistle 2006).

In their study of the rise of slow fashion in Toronto, Leslie et al. (2015) explore the increasing role for cultural curators in alternative retail outlets. Boutiques establish close relationships with customers. They not only develop the aesthetic sensibility of consumers, but also educate them on the importance of slow fashion. New actors and spaces are increasingly recognized as influential within the literature on consumption, which foreground the importance of (consumer) experiences. Experiences can contribute to the construction of consumer identities, as well as differentiating products (and firms).

In contrast to fast fashion, slow fashion emphasizes high quality, local production, and substantial customer interaction. These independent retail spaces are typically located in alternative, bohemian neighbourhoods and market via word of mouth (Leslie et al. 2015). Such characteristics of slow fashion further illustrate the cultivation of close relationships with customers (Leslie et al. 2015). Lessons from fashion are helpful in generating insights relevant to other aspects of cultural product qualification and consumption.

3.1.3 Cultural Consumers and Film Demand

Elsewhere, Aoyama (2009) argues that tourism functions as a key economic driver, which promotes cultural consumption and helps locally embed cultural industries. Drawing on a case study of flamenco (dance and music), Aoyama argues that a combination of tourist consumption, state subsidies, and talented leaders within the industry anchor and sustain the art form (Aoyama 2007, 2009). In contrast to suggestions that globalization homogenizes consumer tastes, she argues that “the rise of cosmopolitan consumerism, i.e. the demand for distinctive cultural experiences particularly in advanced industrialized societies” invigorates an otherwise
marginalized cultural product, flamenco, and its staged authenticity in Spain (Aoyama 2009, 81). Through cultural consumption practices, tourists connect the global with the local, by accessing regional culture in a search for authentic cultural experiences. Flamenco festivals serve to regionally embed the flamenco economy because of their ability to focus international demand for flamenco activities. While this marks a departure from her previous work on user-led innovation, this research still reiterates the value of having a strong fan base in cultural industries.

Little research specifically addresses consumer demand for film. In a rare case study of film demand and the potential for industrial upgrading, Barnard and Tuomi (2008) argue that local consumer demand can either facilitate or hinder economic upgrading within the local film industry. Similar to Aoyama and Izushi’s (2008, 651) insights from the video game industry, they caution that “large and sophisticated markets carry the risk of lock-in.” Using comparative case studies of the Nigeria and South African film industries, they argue that Nollywood thrives because “local consumers are receptive to lower quality products [and] a market exists for domestic film” (Barnard and Tuomi 2008, 648). In contrast, despite significant state subsidies, they suggest that the South African film industry has had difficulty promoting an indigenous film sector because there is a mismatch between consumer demand and the caliber of locally produced films. Due to greater exposure to international cinema, they argue that the nascent sector has struggled to find an audience because “local consumers have high expectations of the production and narrative quality of films” (Barnard and Tuomi 2008, 648).

This example suggests that consumer demand thus does not necessarily encourage local industrial development and product innovation. Based on this research, they argue that “learning takes place best within some ‘middle ground’ where the differences are significant enough for meaningful new knowledge to be introduced, but where the similarity between partners can facilitate integration” (Barnard and Tuomi 2008, 650). They also emphasize that film consumption is socially embedded, and that the context within which film is viewed can significantly qualify the experience (Barnard and Tuomi 2008, 652). Their main argument is that when consumer demand exceeds local production capacity, it is difficult to establish a feedback loop which meaningfully incorporates consumer input.
Studies within the film industry also call for greater attention to the (expanded) role of consumer demand. In their review of recent motion-picture industry research, Eliashberg et al. (2006) identify the need to better understand the role of film audiences as a critical managerial issue for the film industry. While pre-release market evaluation tools have been (provisionally) useful in generating predictive insights for exhibitors and distributors, such models are limited (Eliashberg et al. 20006, 656). So too are studies on the adaptive behaviour of exhibitors and audiences in American film markets. With such limited predictive capacity, the authors argue that cinemas begin to manage film offerings akin to a portfolio of diversified assets. To better understand consumer decision-making (in terms of selecting films and theatrical environments), and potentially increase customer loyalty, they suggest the industry needs more studies on “consumer movie-going behaviour” and on how information about movie quality circulates to affect sales (Eliashberg et al. 2006, 658).

Different disciplines treat film audiences in very different ways. For instance, from a management perspective concerned with movie marketing, Davis et al. (2016) survey fans of The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey (2012). They examine both the pre- and post-cinematic release to unpack notions of film enjoyment, disappointment and loyalty among the fantasy fan base. In contrast, Wong (2016) unpacks film publics (and counter-publics) through Habermas’ lens of the bourgeois public sphere, as well as the activist, subaltern cinema publics, which periodically erupt in reaction to it. In some ways, the disparity between these engagements of the film audience reflects the disconnect between conceptualizing the audience as a group of fans versus as a group active in (de)constructing public spheres. As well, it reflects the challenge of transferring insights about film consumers across different consumption contexts, such as a suburban cinema versus an activist festival at a university campus.

Perhaps more centrally relevant to this research, Kredell (2013) unpacks the notion of audience-festivals which are not on the international film festival circuit. Based on an example of the Calgary International Film Festival (CIFF), Kredell confirms wider conceptions within film festival studies that smaller, audience-festivals are typically characterized by the absence of business stakeholders, such as sales agents, distributors, film funds, or an international media presence (Kredell 2013, 589). However, from an audience perspective, smaller festivals like CIFF play an important role in bringing international cinema to audiences who might not otherwise have access to it. Smaller festivals also constitute an alternative exhibition system for
art-house and international cinema (Kredell 2013). The cultural work such festivals do thus relates to providing audiences with exposure to alternative films.

Conceptualizing the role of the film festival in this cultural work, De Valck (2016) argues that as taste-makers, festivals cultivate a certain disposition that influences and (re)produces both the films screened and the attending audiences at film festivals. This raises notions of a film festival’s programming role in audience development, and points to the tendency to divide film research between industry festivals (i.e. core circuit) and audience festivals (i.e. smaller festivals). TIFF, as a major industry and public audience festival provides an opportunity to consider how the audience and industry interact and influence each other’s activities in the film festival setting.

There are a number of examples of how consumers validate experiential products and serve as suitable test markets outside of film. In a comparative case study of New York and Toronto, Rekers (2012) argues for a qualitatively different role which alpha and beta cities can play in cultural product development. In so doing, she challenges the linear characterization of the contemporary global urban hierarchy. Drawing from research on musical theatre, Rekers (2012) contends that the local cultural industry scenes in New York and Toronto serve different functions. Whereas New York (an alpha city) is an important site for validating musical theatre experiences, Toronto (a beta city) is very suitable as a test market for new ventures. Toronto has unique strengths at earlier stages in musical theatre production, pertaining to development and experimentation. She argues that “sophisticated audiences need to build an experience base in order to interpret, appreciate and enjoy cultural products” (Rekers 2012, 1926). The quality of consumer demand, combined with the off-centre position of beta cities, contributes to the set of qualities which makes Toronto a valuable site for cultural industry experimentation (Rekers 2012).

Despite geographers’ interest in the role of the consumer, the film industry and film festival setting remain largely unexplored. Also, there is little work on the role of consumers in the distribution end of the chain. While Toronto is identified as a test-market for cultural and experiential goods, little attention is given to how sophisticated demand is cultivated through audience development (see Rekers 2012). In this chapter, I explore several questions about consumer demand in context of the Toronto International Film Festival. In particular, I examine
how sophisticated demand functions in a film festival context. What value does it contribute? How is demand created within the space of the festival? These questions address gaps in the above literature about the expanded role of consumer influence.

3.2 Differentiating TIFF Screening Experiences

At a large film festival like TIFF, you have several screenings going on at once, in different venues to multiple audiences. As one media commentator puts it: “Which festival? Even under the best conditions, TIFF is too large for any single filmgoer to tackle comprehensively” (Longworth 2010). Even Roger Ebert, a seasoned film critic and TIFF veteran, describes himself as feeling paralyzed when confronted with the TIFF festival program (Ebert 2009, 833). Taken as a whole, TIFF can be overwhelming. It is therefore useful to know something about the different spaces in which films are screened at TIFF. The range of venues contextualizes how film is consumed and qualifies the range of audience reactions.

The most individuated viewing experience at the festival is available to press and industry delegates. This is to watch films on individual computers wearing headphones in a TIFF venue room with several cubicles dedicated for this purpose. This experience is more akin to being in a library carrel than a cinema. It is a strategy to accommodate scheduling conflicts and watch a very high number of films at the festival. During fieldwork, I experienced a wait list to screen films in this manner, suggesting that some delegates do use private screeners.

In contrast, the most public festival screenings are red-carpet gala events hosted at Toronto’s major cultural venues, such as Roy Thomson Hall and the Princess of Wales Theatre. Gala presentations are described in the TIFF festival program as: “Movie stars. Red carpet premieres. Major audience interest.” (TIFF 2012:52). These high-profile screenings are typically held in massive theatres. They feature the leading cast and creative talent from the film (e.g. actors and directors). These figures attend the screening, and participate in a Q&A discussion following the film. It was not uncommon for press and industry delegates to attend galas.

The most common way that films are viewed at TIFF is at either industry screening venues (e.g. Scotiabank Theatre, TIFF Bell Lightbox) or screenings at public venues (e.g. Bloor Hot Docs Cinema, Isabel Bader Theatre, Jackman Hall, Ryerson Theatre). The press and industry screening schedule caters to over 1,000 members of the press and more than 4,000 industry
delegates in attendance (TIFF 2014a). Confined to industry-only screening venues, the press and industry (P&I) program does not play for a public audience. By comparison, the public screening schedule is completely open, and ticket holders can be either public or industry. TIFF estimates public attendance at 500,000 in ticket sales (TIFF 2014a). Many industry festival passes include admission to regular screenings, especially via the rush line. Unlike the ticketed public screenings, admission to industry screenings is on a first-come, first-serve basis. Frequently during interviews and fieldwork, industry delegates mentioned that they secure public tickets for films despite their access to press and industry screenings.

Beyond providing some context for the range of venues and types of shared experiences of watching festival films, it is relevant to note that film festivals such as TIFF are hybrid events, with multiple audiences (e.g. press, industry, public) and several forums for viewing. As noted, the two most notable audience groups are the public and industry. Public audiences can be anybody, regardless of their profession, demographic characteristics, or where they call home. The industry audience comprises critics, buyers, distributors, filmmakers and many other industry professionals, including media. The media can include the accredited press ranging from independent bloggers to journalists writing for industry publications such as Screen and The Hollywood Reporter. Regardless of their professional roles, the industry, press and public attending films at TIFF have different degrees of film knowledge and consumer preferences.

A major audience segment at TIFF comprises thousands of industry professionals who come from all over the world to attend the festival. As previously discussed, the presence of industry players at TIFF allows the characterization of TIFF as a de facto market. Significant film sales occur outside the traditional trade fair formats in Cannes or the American Film Market; the informal yet active markets during the festival are a feature which TIFF and Sundance share (Loist 2016). TIFF attracts a wide range of industry professionals who are involved in both the business (e.g. buyers and broadcasters) and cultural validation (e.g. critics and film festivals). A large and distinct industry audience, with their own screening schedule and venues, creates a dedicated space for industry insiders at the festival. The TIFF industry audience splits their time between press-and-industry screenings, industry-targeted festival programming, and a range of more- or less-official industry parties and networking venues. However, as a film audience, the professional press and industry delegates tend to be quite focused in their film-viewing at industry venues (e.g. Scotiabank Theatre).
It is not uncommon in industry screenings to see a majority of the audience on their smartphones or taking notes throughout the film. Such screenings are dim with glowing PDAs and mini flashlights. As well, aside from a few highly-anticipated films which were over-capacity for industry screenings, I frequently observed industry delegates entering and leaving films mid-way through, apparently having completed what they set out to get from the film. Often, they were on their way to another screening. This set of behaviours created an atmosphere of split-attention. Conversations in industry screening lines were often very frank business discussions. These conversations were as much about the films being screened, as about relationships with others in the film industry.

Throughout my research (interviews and fieldwork observations), it was apparent that some industry delegates have a limited range of experience, both in their roles, but also in terms of their seniority and work experience in the field. Many industry delegates are green. As such, there is significant blurring between novice film consumers who work in the industry and well-seasoned cineastes who attend as general members of the public. TIFF is a core film festival with substantial industry and public attendance numbers, which is unusual. Berlin is the only other festival on the core circuit which compares to TIFF in terms of both the presence of buyers and public admissions (see Table 2.2). The audiences which attend TIFF consist of a mass of cineastes, film students, fans, freelancers, part-time film festival organizers, and creatives who work across roles. This is important because it suggests that the TIFF audiences, whether in industry or public screenings, have some interest (if not aptitude) in qualifying the films they are consuming. To use Callon et al.’s (2002) notion of the ‘attached consumer’, film audiences who attend TIFF are self-selecting to be active participants in disrupting the familiar consumption routines. They intentionally seek the opportunity to requalify film products.

There are a wide range of audiences at TIFF beyond the ‘expert’ industry audience. My research finds that the range of audience expertise which make up the TIFF audiences, are important for the event’s capacity to absorb, validate and disseminate culturally inflected interpretations of the films. It helps to have somebody who is passionate and knowledgeable about film serve as an interpretive buffer between film experts and the novice consumer. In contrast to other cultural industries where gatekeepers and tastemakers set trends, which trickle down to mass public consumers (see Leslie et al. 2015), film festivals present an opportunity to immediately test the traction of a cultural product with its intended (mass) consumer audience. However, most
audience festivals screen films which have already played elsewhere (see Kredell 2013). As such, they do not present the opportunity to screen film premieres to a wide and public audience. In contrast, the film festivals with the most premieres tend to have limited public (versus industry) attendance (see Table 2.1 and 2.2). However, having a gradient of expertise amid the audience facilitates communication of tacit knowledge and subtle judgements about the film at the festival. This is supported by the flurry of media attention at TIFF, which invigorates buzz, gossip and discussion of festival films across the industry and public audience.

Cineastes attending TIFF serve as unofficial intermediaries between industry and public audiences, translating and interpreting specific knowledges about the film industry and film trends. For example, I was frequently informed about the value of particular films while waiting in lines, either for a film, a coffee, the bathroom or for a street light to change. Throughout TIFF and its associated spaces, movie-goers actively recite and negotiate film quality. After all, it was on a street corner in early September 2010 where I was convinced by a stranger that The King’s Speech (2010) would win the Oscar for best picture (Fieldnotes). Similarly, my initial impression that Stone (2010) was interesting was promptly corrected by overhearing industry gossip upon exiting the theatre (Fieldnotes). Statements which qualify the films one sees at TIFF are in constant circulation, while silences about films are also telling.

The excitement and judgements articulated by the film industry, attending public, and media outlets at TIFF contribute to the buzz surrounding specific films screened at TIFF. Film passionate audiences at TIFF are expressive lead-users that make up sophisticated local demand for film. They are important for buzz and valorization processes, because they represent a reserve army of interpretive and performative consumers who translate a variety of meanings. For example, hearing one definitive negative assessment of Stone by an industry insider and no other buzz about the film helps to validate that the film was a flop, whereas frequent consistently excited gossip and discussion of The King’s Speech from many perspectives helps triangulate and confirm the validity of that cultural assessment.

While attending the festival, one is consistently engaged in similar processes of interpreting, negotiating and qualifying the cultural products and experiences consumed. This applies to both on-screen cultural moments (e.g. Was that satire funny or mean? Is that angle shot a cunning homage or just derivative?) and in-life cultural interactions (e.g. What attire communicates I am
creative yet successful? How should I behave when confronted with an important industry figure?). The latter were more commonly observed in industry-dominated spaces, such as the Filmmakers’ Lounge and the Hyatt Hotel lobby (Fieldnotes).

As the largest publicly attended core festival in North America, TIFF admissions to public screenings number nearly 500,000 (TIFF 2014a). With such a broad-based attendance, the TIFF audience is more diverse than the characterization of other core film festivals, which traditionally cater to industry insiders (Stringer 2001, Wong 2016). In contrast to elite industry festivals such as Cannes, one does not require a film industry credential or contact to gain access to see films in the festival’s official program (Ebert 2008). Also, as a large and accessible city, attending films at TIFF does not necessarily involve specific travel to a remote resort location (as is the case for Telluride). While many tourists come to Toronto to see films at TIFF, the festival also caters to locals.

While I did not directly interview the audience at public festival screenings, I did spend time doing participant observation in several spaces during the festival (such as public streets, nearby restaurants and cafes, the line for public and rush film tickets, inside theatres, and as an audience member of public film screenings). In these spaces, I was able to observe and converse with public audience members. I could witness their excitement at the event and hear their interest in specific films. In some instances, these public consumers were completely new to international or avant-garde cinema, while in other instances they expressed deep film knowledge, including film students and long-time festival veterans.

In public screenings, the festival audience applauds in recognition of TIFF volunteers, collectively jokes during piracy warnings, and shoots mean glances at those using cell phones or talking during the film. These social behaviours were prevalent across public screenings and promote a sense of belonging. Through these utterances, individuals in the audience affirm that they are here to watch and engage seriously with the film.

The TIFF audience at public screenings is widely regarded as ‘keen’. Reflecting on the prominence of TIFF and its public nature, acclaimed film critic Roger Ebert writes,

There is another factor in Toronto’s ascendancy. From the very first years, the festival has been aimed primarily at audiences of - well, moviegoers. To see a film at Cannes you allegedly must possess some sort of industry credential. Toronto is open to the public.
Ordinary people with ordinary funds can gorge on movies... It's a rare Toronto screening of even the most obscure film that isn't sold out (Ebert 2007, 851).

The virtue of TIFF’s public audience is cited frequently in research interviews, informal conversations, urban promotional materials, and official TIFF documents. As Piers Handling, TIFF CEO, notes, “We're most famous for our eager, avid, passionate, discerning audience who by the hundreds of thousands fill our cinemas year after year” (Hembrey 2011). In this quote, Piers Handling emphasizes the audience as key to the festival’s reputation. In particular, he recognizes both the quality and quantity of the audience. Similarly, film industry delegates attending TIFF recognize the particular value of a public audience during interviews. As one film producer notes,

When I go to a general public festival like TIFF […] I try to go to public screenings, because that’s the real audience for these films. Sure, I like to be in a setting where there are aunts and uncles, lawyers, dentists and little kids, mothers with babies… because that’s the best gauge for how film has succeeded in engaging their audience (Interview, Producer).

This statement acknowledges film as a shared and experiential cultural product. It also recognizes that films are evaluated through their consumption. During interviews with film industry professionals, the relevance and value of the TIFF festival audience was frequently mentioned and recognized.

It should also be noted that an alternative festival audience is present at TIFF, namely the fans who line the streets in front of hotels and gala venues hoping to catch a glimpse of famous actors and international celebrities. Both the public audience and fans play an important role in confirming the stature of TIFF and generating film buzz. The public is invited to participate actively in the film festival and is encouraged by TIFF campaigns to take ownership of the event. The messaging which connects TIFF, celebrities and the Toronto public (both audience and fans) is repeated in the festivals slogans, celebrity comments, and event images, as well as in TIFF festival trailers.18

18 Specific images from these promotional materials are not included in this dissertation due to copyright limitations. However, they may be available online in digital formats or in hard copy at the TIFF Library Archives.
Figure 3.1: “Festival Trailer: TIFF 2016”

In this video, the public audience, both inside cinema spaces and in the street, feature prominently, and specifically mention the Toronto audience’s love of film. Presented alongside this, are clips in which participating filmmakers specifically mention how screening films at TIFF is something they enjoy. The representation of TIFF movie-goers as an enthusiastic public is evident in the video “Festival Trailer: TIFF 2016”. However, it also emerged as a distinctive asset during interviews.

19 A screen capture (only) is included in this dissertation to keep with ‘fair dealing’ guidelines (i.e. education, research, criticism) outlined by the University of Toronto Office of the Vice-President and Provost. Source: TIFF Promotional Video “Festival Trailer: TIFF 2016”, Retrieved from YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZ_OKI5h4RE
3.3 Audience Engagement: Why Screenings Matter for the Industry

TIFF is at once a space of consumption of films and site of social learning about films. A particular strength of TIFF is its accessibility, both in terms of industry and public participation. As well, it is relatively inexpensive. Film critic Roger Ebert suggests "to launch a film at Cannes can cost twice or three times as much as giving it a good push-off at Toronto … [while] just getting up in the morning can save you 75 percent on your first cup of coffee, and a stalwart Canadian bran muffin will cost you half as much as a croissant" (Ebert 2007, 851).

In the 2012 TIFF program Director’s Welcome, the festival leadership writes,

> Each September, for eleven days, something magical happens in Toronto. Daring filmmakers, emerging artists, actors, producers, scriptwriters, agents, buyers and sellers are drawn to this city from the four corners of the world. Festival theatres fill with enthusiastic, passionate and discerning audiences. The magic happens in the meeting of these two worlds. At the end of the day this festival is for you, the audience. Your support and love for film are what drive us, sending our programmers around the globe to seek out the best cinema and bring it home to you (TIFF 2012, 13).

Aside from being a succinct description of the festival and its commitment to a Toronto audience, this quote is interesting in that it recognizes the interaction between the film industry and its public. Based on my research, this interaction is indeed key. What role does the audience play at festival screenings? How does screening for a live audience matter and why?

TIFF is not about one single type of consumer, but about bringing together several consumers which creates a rich context for industry activity and learning. The size and diversity of the Toronto audience sustains and energizes TIFF. By extension, TIFF is often described in interviews, conversation and the press as having an engaged, savvy and discerning audience. The cultivation of the Toronto audience (and its good reputation) was attributed to the influence of TIFF in teaching Toronto about film. But what does this actually mean?

Audience engagement was mentioned in interviews as a key reason why filmmakers enjoy screening their films at TIFF, and therefore continue submitting their films to the festival. Toronto audiences can be depended on to ask relevant questions, which is strongly valued by the filmmakers. During one Q&A following a documentary screened at TIFF that I attended as part of my fieldwork, I observed the director thank the audience and comment on how appreciative
they were to have the audience to engage their work in this way. In concluding the Q&A, the filmmaker stated that this kind of reception was an uncommon and important experience for him. This demonstrates how filmmakers derive tremendous gratification from screening their work in such a venue. This in turn is important for sustaining the festival. For example, one Canadian filmmaker I interviewed indicated that screening their film at TIFF to an engaged public audience was a positive experience and influenced their decision to submit their subsequent film to TIFF (Interview, Canadian Filmmaker). It follows that interest among filmmakers to submit their work to TIFF and participate in festival conversations and Q&As, feeds back into the rich viewing experience for the public audience which attends, and which public audiences at TIFF have come to expect.

For some, Toronto audiences are best because they show up. The theatre is often full for festival screenings. Toronto is big enough and diverse enough to get ‘bums in seats’ for niche films. During my fieldwork, I attended a screening of the Canadian foreign-language film, *War Witch* (2012), in the company of an emerging foreign filmmaker. As we waited in line for the screening, he told me how extraordinary he found the experience of lining up to see a foreign language film. With a joyful and disbelieving tone, he told me how earlier in the festival he had walked right up to the front doors, assuming that the long line outside the theatre was for something else. Never in his prior experience would he have imagined everyday people lining up for more than a block outside of a cinema to watch a foreign film or a documentary. This experience, he told me, was extremely gratifying. The knowledge that a large North American audience was interested in and supportive of foreign films helped him feel what was he was doing was valued. Individual experiences like these not only sustain delegates from the international film community, but also reinforce Toronto’s reputation of having a good audience.

This is due in part to the historical legacy of film festivals in the city throughout the year, as well as the cultural diversity of the city itself. Filmmakers and festival organizers remarked in interviews on how Toronto’s diversity translates into an interest in and openness to experiencing new films and different types of stories, as well as generally supportive diaspora communities.

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20 During interviews, filmmakers mentioned the benefits of watching films together. Where industry delegates I approached to interview suggested watching a film together as part of the process, I tried to accommodate.
who attend films by international filmmakers. The effect of Toronto’s multiculturalism emerged as an interesting theme in my research.

Toronto’s diversity is appreciated by film festival organizers, who appreciate the importance of local demand for diverse films. Festival programmers commented on the value of programming an international film festival in a multicultural setting. As one TIFF programmer notes,

> It [Toronto] is a very film savvy public, which is great. … The other thing about Toronto in particular is that it is a multi-ethnic city and that interest in film extends across a variety of ethnicities and backgrounds. It makes it really easy to program TIFF because there is always a crowd that is particularly interested (Interview, TIFF programmer).

The recognition of cultural diversity among TIFF and Toronto film audiences is reflected more broadly in the festival’s programming and leadership, which was suggested in interviews to be making a noticeable effort to be more inclusive: open, accessible and interested in diverse stories. In particular, TIFF Artistic Director Cameron Bailey, a man of Bayesian descent, seems to embody this emphasis on multiculturalism. As one producer states,

> When Cameron [Bailey] came in, he – and this is a horrible cliché – he changed the complexion of that festival. He literally brought such a different way of looking at TIFF’s conventional audiences, and I think there has been greater change at TIFF since Cameron came along. Before Cameron’s time, I could see a lot of incremental change going on, but since he’s come on he has really rattled the cage in terms of programming (Interview, Producer).

One filmmaker described Cameron Bailey’s leadership role at TIFF as “incredibly humbling and inspiring … [to see] a young Caribbean person now [in a] senior management role at a major artistic event and hallmark for North American culture” (Interview, Filmmaker). I observed his inspiring benediction first hand, as he gave a toast at a Caribbean film industry event saying, “there is a place for your stories here” (participant observation fieldnotes).

This personal commitment to showcasing diverse stories reappears more formally by TIFF featuring Lagos, Nigeria in the festival’s City to City programme in 2016. This marks the first time a major film festival celebrates Nigerian filmmakers and the Nollywood industry. In a brief TIFF-produced video about the spotlight on Lagos, Cameron Bailey says: “This is one of the
major filmmaking voices in the world that isn’t being heard loudly enough.”21 Bailey presages a new wave of Nigerian cinema that taps into notions of the Black Atlantic, and goes on to explain,

If there is a diasporic context for the Lagos spotlight and for what we’re seeing from filmmakers like Nate Parker, Nick Cannon, Julie Dash, from Ava DuVernay and many others, I think it’s coming from a thirst and an impatience, a need to see our own images and stories on-screen and characters that not only look like us, but talk like us, who have stories that resonate with us. You’re not always having to make that transference when you watch movies - if you're Black (Cameron Bailey, TIFF website interview).22

Together, these comments and observations suggest that diversity is noticed and emphasized at many levels: the festival organization, the films it programs, and the audience which attends.

Despite some critical grumblings of pandering to Hollywood, the festival supports international and experimental films year after year. Film industry professionals I spoke with mentioned both their own experiences and their perspectives on multiculturalism and the trend in TIFF programming towards greater inclusivity. As one producer states,

Without a doubt, TIFF is conscious of where it sits and I see that in the programming. Every year they are actively trying to increase their audience. They are actively reaching out to ethnic communities in and around Toronto that may be starkly not a traditional TIFF audience, or even a traditional film audience. The social programs, the international spotlights that they are doing... I see that they are very engaged in that, and very conscious of the city that they’re in (Interview, Producer).

Participant observation at public screenings of a range of international and foreign language films between 2010 and 2012 supports this perspective. Whether a Spanish sci-fi, Portuguese epic, Israeli thriller, French drama or Finnish comedy, the Toronto audience shows up in droves.

From my experience attending screenings during fieldwork, Toronto public audiences were very enthusiastic about foreign language films. English-language films more traditionally aligned with Hollywood did not guarantee a strong audience reception. For example, the Gala screening of

21 TIFF promotional video: “Share This Journey: support Nigerian filmmakers at TIFF 2016“. Retrieved from TIFF website, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUF-SIX_1g4

Clint Eastwood’s *Hereafter* (2010) was met with tentative applause and moderate enthusiasm during the Q&A, despite the participation of both Matt Damon and Clint Eastwood, who are major Hollywood celebrities.

In contrast, the participation of major international film celebrities from other regions was a source of great fandom among the public audience at TIFF. One incident from my fieldwork comes to mind as evidence for how Toronto’s cultural diversity translates into TIFF audience support of international and foreign language films. The most exciting Gala event I attended was the Special Presentation screening of *Countdown* (2011), a South Korean film starring two of the country’s top actors, Jeon Do-youn and Jeong Jae-young. What made this event so energetic – beyond the style, wit and pace of the movie – was the audience’s remarkable enthusiasm for the film. Fans lined the street outside before the film and the venue was filled to capacity. There were so many Korean speaking fans in the audience that the Q&A following the film screening was effectively conducted without any translation into English that was audible over the fans’ cheers and laughter. This contributed to a very positive and high energy atmosphere which seemed to visibly surprise and humble the actors on stage.

The enthusiastic embrace of foreign language films at TIFF, as exemplified in the above vignette, corroborates the notion expressed by Cameron Bailey and discussed above, and again reiterated by Salma Hayek in the “Festival Trailer: TIFF 2016” video discussed above, that the global film industry needs to change to reflect greater diversity.\(^{23}\) The fact that TIFF audiences are diverse and supportive of viewing different stories in multiple languages, points to the likely readiness of TIFF audiences to engage, (re)qualify and validate increasingly diverse film, especially with the guidance of film festival programmers who mediate the process.

Overall, the size and breadth of the Toronto audience energizes the festival and enhances its relevance as a key industry event. Film attendance by regular people throughout the festival is considered an asset by filmmakers and others in the industry who use TIFF screenings to gauge public reception of a film. The in-situ audience is valuable to experiential cultural goods, which

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\(^{23}\) Source: TIFF Promotional Video, “Festival Trailer: TIFF 2016”, Retrieved from YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZ_OKl5h4RE
is relevant for considering the audience influence in terms of business decisions. My study finds that the activity of watching films together in a festival setting is important. As one filmmaker states, “cinema is a public art and so absolutely the film has to work with an audience. If a film doesn’t work with an audience, doesn’t engage any kind of audience, then I think it needs to be considered a failure” (Interview, Filmmaker). This quote expresses an attitude prevalent among interviews and informal observations. However, a film can ‘work’ by engaging its audience in multiple ways. Different types of audience engagement generate insights that influence business decisions, industry learning, and product marketing. What kinds of learning, relationship building, and business deals are influenced by festival film screenings? It is to these themes that this chapter now turns.

3.3.1 Audience Engagement: Influence on Business Decisions and Film Sales

Most of the films which screen at a festival like TIFF can already be considered a success insofar as they have been made. They have gone through the complicated and difficult stages of development, financing and production. However, these films still have an uncertain future. Many films, even those fortunate enough to be selected and screened at major film festivals, are not bought and do not move forward with further distribution or exhibition. In other words, the second half of this cultural product’s life – that which comprises most components of exploitation and monetization associated with consumption – never comes to light following the festival.

However, findings from my research suggest that the audience can play a critical role in determining the potential for success, not just in terms of an audience liking a film, but in whether the film will be acquired by distributors for exhibition. Filmmakers and buyers alike mention that screening a film at TIFF provides both the curatorial element of the festival pre-selecting what is likely to be a good film, as well as the opportunity for the buyer to see how it plays with an average audience. While true for all film, this was mentioned as especially important for comedy, action and experimental genres, where audience reaction is essential in distinguishing a hit from a miss.

Notably, filmmakers, producers, directors, and writers interviewed mentioned that having their film screened to a public audience with film industry buyers also in attendance is critical. They
explain that in such settings, industry professionals who represent or influence business decisions can observe and interpret – through audience reaction (e.g. gasps, laughter, screams, cringing) – whether the film is a success. This experience relates back to the literature on embodied knowledges, which are difficult to capture using conventional market research (see Eliashberg et al. 2006). This theme arose frequently in interviews. However, its significance became clear to me through participant observations during fieldwork at the festival, as illustrated by the following concrete example.

The film *127 Hours*, which premiered at TIFF in 2010, is an on-screen adaptation of the real-life story of a mountain climber who had to amputate his own arm after becoming trapped under a boulder (Kgnet 2010). Despite the real-life story’s popularity and the film’s star-appeal (i.e. James Franco), the film screened at TIFF to mixed audience reactions. The explicit scene in which Aron Ralston, the mountaineer played by Franco, is shown hacking at his trapped arm and then snipping the tendons with pliers was shocking, so much so that several film fans fainted at multiple screenings (Kgnet 2010, *Toronto Sun* 2010). For some in the audience, this realistic, graphic and gory depiction on film was too much, and film critics took note of this audience reaction in their press coverage. As one reporter writes, “You could clearly see people in shock, struggling to stay in their seats, working to get past the intensity of what was going on in front of them. The sequence is never gratuitous, just very realistic… These were clearly audience members who could not take it” (*Toronto Sun* 2010).

Based on interview comments from among film industry professionals, this type of reaction is evidence that the film – as public art – worked. It successfully engaged the audience. However, such audience reactions apparently raised concern among other film industry professionals downstream. A few days after the film’s premier, I was seated in one of the press and industry cinemas. I arrived a few minutes early to watch a different film, and observed the general social interactions and discussions of the other film industry delegates in that space. One man, recognizing another man near to me, approached him. In the brief conversation that followed, it became clear that the first man was a distributor and the second an exhibitor.

The distributor was seemingly interested in acquiring the distribution rights for *127 Hours*, but hesitant to do so. He said he saw and enjoyed the film, and then mentioned concern over the audience reaction at TIFF public screenings and wondered whether there would be adequate
public appetite for the film. He asked for the opinion of the second man, given the latter man’s professional experience in exhibition (apparently, the exhibitor owned or represented a chain of cinemas). The exhibitor confirmed that he had seen the film, and thought it was a good film. Despite some difficult scenes, he assured the first man that he would definitely screen it at his cinemas. They talked briefly about the viability of a long run or limited release, followed by brief pleasantries before returning to their seats as the film began.

Whether this observed interaction represents hypothetical questions or actual concerns, I cannot say. This interaction demonstrates how real-time information sharing occurs in an informal setting, where asking such a question is relatively easy and requires neither scheduling a meeting nor any sort of on-record written correspondence. Candid opinions and assessments are willingly shared in this informal atmosphere. As well, raising concerns based on audience reaction in this face-to-face setting allows both parties to gauge the other’s assessment of how significant the audience reaction is for business decisions at other nodes in the chain. Ultimately, the film went on to become profitable, with a limited release in the United States. It earned over $18 Million at the domestic box office, and was nominated for six academy awards, including Best Picture at the 2011 Oscars (The Numbers 2010, IMDB 2010).

This brief interaction at the festival demonstrates the kinds of information sharing that occurs at a festival like TIFF, where you have audience engagement with a film and the co-presence of stakeholders (such as distributors and exhibitors) who are interested in the monetization of the film. This example illustrates how multiple stakeholders were able to gather information pertaining to the questions which affect their immediate business decisions. Once a film is made, stakeholders ask “If I buy it, will you show it? And if you screen it, will people watch it?” This type of immediate knowledge sharing between industry professionals facilitates timely business decisions regarding film rights acquisitions across geographic territories, sequential release windows, and distribution platforms. It also allows for that information to be qualified based on the social and relational interaction of the stakeholders.

Recalling the different film viewing environments, some information is easily shared about audience reactions. This can take place outside and after the public screening. During my fieldwork, I observed a marked difference in engagement with a film between a general, public audience and a working, industry audience. This is somewhat to be expected, since different
audience groups have different expectations and purposes in attending TIFF films. This experience was echoed in industry interviews. For instance, in the words of one producer,

I only go to industry screenings if I miss the public screenings, or if I’m running out of time. And I find industry screenings to be – they’re work. Everybody who is there is either a journalist or a fellow filmmaker, and they are there to work. They’re not there to enjoy the film as film. They are there to critique the film, review the film, dissect the film. They’re not really there to enjoy it. I go to these industry screenings, and when the lights come up, people just get up and leave. There is no sitting around and talking about it. Half of them have been using small flashlights and paper and taking notes mostly through the whole thing, so it’s very distracting. … For me, it’s really public screening and seeing how the audience engages, the real audience (Interview, Producer).

This description is representative of my experience attending the festival. This work attitude seemed less acute as the festival carried on, and certainly varied a lot. However, the industry audience is qualitatively different from a public audience. Screening to one audience type or another can have dramatic implications for the film industry’s ability to gauge audience engagement with the film, and thus interpret its likelihood for success during release.

As one Canadian filmmaker notes, public audience engagement is critical for influencing industry decisions. They contrasted their experience with two films which both screened at TIFF in different years. Their first experience was with a dark comedy. It had several public screenings early in the festival program. They explained that this was important, since many industry professionals, including buyers, only attend TIFF through the first weekend. The filmmaker secured public screening tickets for prospective industry buyers, who then watched the film in a live audience context. They could observe that the jokes and comedic timing landed, based on audience reactions. The filmmaker felt this was a successful festival screening. They sold the distribution rights to the film, and were very happy with its overall success in terms of monetization and critical reception.

In contrast, this filmmaker describes their second experience – also screening a dark comedy at TIFF – as a failure. While the film was selected by TIFF programmers, and did screen to enthusiastic public audiences during the festival program, the film rights were not acquired and the film did not see further distribution. The filmmaker attributed difficulty selling the film to scheduling in the festival program. The first public screening of their film was not scheduled until after the first weekend of the festival. This posed a problem for the filmmaker because the industry professionals were only in town for the first part of TIFF. As a result, the filmmaker was
unable to show their work to prospective buyers in public screenings, where the audience serves as proxy for a general public. Instead the prospective buyers only experienced the film in context of industry screenings. The filmmaker expressed their disappointment and frustration as they watched their film alongside potential buyers in front of an industry audience – people who are primarily there to work and not easily impressed, shocked or amused. They described a sinking feeling as jokes fell flat in an industry screening venue that later prompted laughter and audience engagement at public screenings (Interview, Filmmaker).

This vignette is very telling because it contrasts a successful and unsuccessful festival market experience, and identifies the critical role of an engaged public audience in demonstrating to industry professionals the viability of a film’s broad appeal.

Other filmmakers and producers identified audience reaction as an important aspect of film festival screenings. As one producer put it,

[Audience reaction] is absolutely crucial to a film. The kind of response – because there will be a range of responses depending on the kind of film that it is. Not all films are the same. There will be standing ovations, films without applause at the end of it. There are going to be films where people are going to be sitting in their seats for several minutes after the lights [turn on] just pondering what it is they’ve seen, putting all of the pieces together from what they’ve seen, because it is a thoughtful or slightly provocative film. Now that’s clearly for a filmmaker the response that they wanted, so I would consider that to be successful audience interaction (Interview, Producer).

Audience reaction is important to assessing the success of a film. The audience assumes a potentially critical role in communicating tacit aspects of film success. As a whole, audience reaction at the end of the screening communicates something about their engagement with the film. However, interviews also suggested that audience reaction was similarly revealing and instructive in terms of interpreting the success, innovativeness or nuance of a film (or specific shots and cinematic techniques).

3.3.2 Viewing Opportunities: Industry Learning and Professional Development

Filmmakers engage in extensive professional development at film festival screenings, with public and industry audiences alike. They learn from how the audience reacts. During interviews,
there were various ways in which audience reaction was interpreted and seen as an opportunity for learning by filmmakers.

Most immediately, filmmakers attending TIFF are themselves audience members, for whom watching films presents learning opportunities that may impact their professional development. A long-time TIFF programmer highlights how watching film screenings may be especially useful for “a younger, emerging or neophyte filmmaker” who may have fewer business meetings during the festival and take advantage of the opportunity to “see a lot of films that might be hard to find, even with the internet and Netflix” (Interview, TIFF Programmer). Interestingly, in my casual conversations during TIFF fieldwork, it was often the younger filmmakers and those from regions with nascent film production centres that spoke of the value of learning about filmmaking from watching films during the festival. One young filmmaker explained to me that seeing how a new technique (pan shot or cut scene) plays to the audience was inspiring and helped them think of framing and sequencing shots in their future film projects (Interview, Filmmaker).

During interviews, filmmakers also mentioned the shared experience of viewing films with prospective collaborators as among the best ways to gauge compatibility for working together on future projects. Because film production is an intense and risky project-based endeavor, the shared experience of watching films together was suggested as a way to see if potential collaborators are on the same page. Watching and discussing films together at TIFF provides an opportunity to immediately assess whether you share aesthetic values and find similar film elements (whether technical or narrative) interesting. TIFF provides a venue for this type of experience by convening creative professionals from different countries and across great distance, to view film amid public and industry audiences. In particular, this was mentioned in a context where filmmakers either have interest in, or feel pressure to, work on international co-productions. In general, international co-productions are becoming quite commonplace in film and television media.

It was also mentioned in interviews and informal conversations at the festival, that film industry professionals (including but not limited to festival programmers, distributors and producers) use the festival as an opportunity to follow the career trajectory of particular filmmakers – whether they are emerging, from a foreign country, or a bit more experimental – to see how their film
work is maturing and whether there is a rapprochement between their work and the market (Interview, Producer). It was strongly implied during interviews that this strategy of keeping tabs on films was done in the industry to assess competition, consider collaborations, and potentially identify properties to acquire and shelve (in order to limit direct competition with other titles in a predatory business climate).

This direct observation and scanning for information applies to regions, genres, subjects and specific filmmakers. For example, one producer mentioned they make a point to see all the films of a particular Nordic filmmaker, which only show at festivals (Interview, Producer). Similarly, one festival programmer I spoke with seeks out genre films and scours the Midnight Madness program, looking for films which may suit their festival. In this setting, filmmakers learn about the current film zeitgeist, new themes and techniques, as well as about their peers and colleagues. Much of this is learned from watching the film itself, either in context of a public audience or screening with industry peers.

3.4 Audience Reputation: the ‘Good Audience’ Unpacked

The construction of Toronto as a ‘good audience’ or a ‘sophisticated audience’ is present in TIFF official promotional materials. In some cases, these were actual pictures of film fans and audiences, while in others, they were stylized visual representations of audience members. For instance, the 2010 TIFF Program cover depicts individual moviegoers, while the 2012 TIFF Program cover shows the audience as a group sitting inside a theatre venue. Together, these images reiterate important aspects of the Toronto audience, including its cultural diversity, and size. The 2010 TIFF visual imagery and text highlight the theme of audience diversity, in terms of language, gender and ethnicity. These traits are depicted in a simple and stylized way. This representation of the festival audience echoes the value of screening in Toronto, a large and culturally diverse urban setting.

In the following promotional statement, TIFF presents itself as imminently public, where the audience is a strength and mark of distinction for the festival,

24 Specific images of the TIFF Festival Program Covers from 2010 and 2012 are not included in this dissertation due to copyright limitations. However, they may be available online or in hard copy at the TIFF Library Archives.
Starting out in 1976 as a collection of films from other festivals -- a ‘festival of festivals’ -- the Toronto International Film Festival has become one of the most successful cinematic events in the world, universally regarded as an ideal platform to premiere films. Boasting a public eager for the best in contemporary film, as well as international attention from media, distributors, producers and buyers along with a galaxy of stars, the Toronto International Film Festival is considered the premiere film festival in North America. The festival has been described as ‘the most important film festival in the world – the largest, the most influential, the most inclusive.’ (TIFF 2011a)

Conventional wisdom suggests that TIFF is a good launching pad for Academy Award campaigns. It was suggested that TIFF is ideal for generating buzz about films. Film consultants and producers particularly remarked on the suitability of TIFF as a launching pad for further awards and the Oscar campaign season. While the Academy Awards ceremony, now referred to as the Oscars, is an event that takes place in Los Angeles, California each February, the awards campaign season begins in the fall of the previous year.

Launching Oscar hopefuls at TIFF is a strategy that capitalizes on the festival’s timing and the buzz generated by attending public audiences and press. In terms of timing, TIFF coincides with the start of the Oscar season, which means many likely Academy Award contenders will screen and be seen by thousands over the ten-day festival run (Ebert 2007, 850). As well, TIFF is the final event of the year on the core international film festival circuit, and so marks the final opportunity to launch a film at a major festival of interest to the North American film industry before the window for consideration closes at the end of December.25 This is particularly relevant for foreign language films which do not require an American release for consideration, yet still need the visibility and attention which screening at TIFF can provide.

TIFF is an ideal opportunity to see most, if not all, of the likely awards candidates. However, it is not just the opinion of the international press, industry media, and film critics which matters. TIFF foregrounds the public opinion. The combination of curated film quality, attending mass of industry and major press, and an avid film audience has helped secure TIFF’s position in the film circuit. For instance, Roger Ebert reports that in the late 1990s, “Cannes was rumored to be considering a switch to the autumn. But the hard reality, even then, was that if the distributors of

25 The core film festival circuit is explained and discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.
the major Oscar season pictures had to choose, they would choose Toronto. Cannes backed off from the confrontation.” (Ebert 2007, 851).

The buzz surrounding specific films which launch at Telluride or Venice (just days before TIFF kicks off in early September) is amplified in Toronto when they screen at TIFF to the benefit of film sales (Interview, Industry Consultant). Similarly, the Telluride-Venice-Toronto combination makes TIFF an ideal opportunity for promoting films with critical aspirations. Launching at TIFF, amid the massive media and public viewers in attendance, “make a film seem bigger than it is” (Interview, Industry Consultant). The media and marketing buzz surrounding films at TIFF is significantly amplified by the audience’s reception of films.

3.4.1 The People’s Choice Award: TIFF Audiences Vote

TIFF is widely known for its People’s Choice Award – the main award given during this non-juried public festival. Over time, it has come to signify the predictive power of TIFF. This award supports claims surrounding the quality of TIFF’s audience. Such claims are prevalent in popular and industry media, as the National Post reports,

   The Toronto festival differs from other high-profile film fests in that there is no slate of ‘competition’ films vying for a jury-awarded golden palm (Cannes), bear (Berlin) or lion (Venice). The audience award – with its promise of higher ticket sales and Oscar glory – is the de facto top prize at TIFF (Knight 2012).

Starting in 1978, just two years after the festival’s inaugural run, the People’s Choice Award began. The award grew in tandem with the festival. By the early 1980s TIFF had demonstrated, through screening films such as Outrageous (1977) and Best Boy (1979), a reputation for predicting critical and market success of Canadian cinema (Enright 2013). This trend of a film’s success at the festival as precursor to the film carrying on to receive other accolades was also true for foreign films. The 1981 film Chariots of Fire was awarded the TIFF People’s Choice Award and went on to win an Academy Award for Best Picture. More recently, every film nominated for an Oscar in the category of Best Foreign Language Film in 2013 had screened as part of the program at TIFF in the fall of 2012. The reputation for picking winners continued and over the years many films that received People’s Choice Awards became runaway hits and garnered Oscar nominations.
Taken together, the 39 films which have won People’s Choice Awards between 1978 and 2016 have gone on to perform well at the Academy awards, receiving 154 nominations and 52 wins, including 10 nominations plus 4 awards for Best Picture. Similarly, the People’s Choice Award has highlighted films early on – such as *The Princess Bride* (1987) and *Strictly Ballroom* (1992) – which have since become iconic in terms of cultural and commercial performance beyond the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.\(^{26}\)

Major funders, such as Blackberry and Cadillac, endorse the People’s Choice Award, recognizing its prestige and high-visibility. As well, TIFF actively promotes the People’s Choice Award and invites the public to participate in identifying the “next big film”. Showing iconic stills from previous winners of the award reinforces the message that public opinion at TIFF is credible. This image was common in published event materials (e.g. 2011 TIFF Program) and posters throughout the festival area.

Those within the industry recognize the award’s significance in terms of validating an experiential, cultural product. Upon winning the People’s Choice Award for the film *Silver Linings Playbook* (2012), director David Russell acknowledges that the award is an honour, and specifically thanks the Toronto audience for embracing the film at a press function. This points to the value of TIFF’s public audience. There were many statements by industry at TIFF acknowledging how the People’s Choice Award differentiates TIFF from other festivals, and has itself become a unique value proposition for the TIFF festival brand. TIFF’s reputation contributes an important element in validating films as prospective award contenders. In fact, industry publications suggest that successful awards campaign strategies observed at TIFF are being emulated elsewhere in the hopes of generating comparable marketing momentum and critical success leading up to the Oscars (McClintock 2013).

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\(^{26}\) For example, *The Princess Bride* was inducted into the National Film Registry for preservation in the Library of Congress in 2016 due to its cultural significance. Also, *Strictly Ballroom* won several awards (e.g. AFI, BAFTA, CANNES) and remains one of the most commercially successful Australian films.
3.5 Audience as a Localized Asset: Cultivating Cultural Consumers

Below I demonstrate that TIFF, as a festival, plays a key role in audience formation. With a forty-year track-record of cultivating film consumers at TIFF, the festival is a key player which mediates and shapes Toronto’s film community and festival audience. Repeatedly occurring in a place, year after year, the extent of this education work is happening on a much larger scale than elsewhere (see Entwistle 2006, Leslie et al. 2015). Particularly in context of film festivals, the role of the programmer is directly one of curation, which film scholars recognize as more than mere expressions of taste, but rather an idea that stems from the Latin ‘to care’ and thus linked to ideas of spiritual guidance and caretaking (Rastegar 2016, 176). While this may sound overblown, it is certainly true that film festival curators operate within contested cultural, political and social contexts, especially where the programming imperative is about more than industry or economic agendas. Historically, TIFF has demonstrated stewardship of its audience. Its current mission reflects belief in the transformative power of film to bridge communities (TIFF 2017). As well, TIFF is a major festival, which anchors the local film festival community of over 70 annual film festivals, and plays an important role in developing the Toronto film festival audience which sustains these events (see Donkin 2013).

Overwhelmingly, film festivals remain a forum for watching films together. This is especially true for TIFF. In contrast to the shared viewing experience at film festivals, contemporary media is consumed via all sorts of formats: large cineplexes, single screen cinemas, and increasingly streamed on laptop computers, on televisions, or watched on tablets and smart phones. In these latter formats, film is watched alone, thus de-emphasizing the theatrical experience. The practice of watching movies together at film festivals is relevant because it bucks the trend towards an individualized way of experiencing film. Speaking of industry trends and the role of film festivals, a senior programmer at TIFF notes,

> It is hard to predict what will happen. Older people don’t like to watch movies on their cell phones, but younger people don’t seem to give a shit. So. You know, [that] raises questions about what they’re actually seeing. I mean, you can download Twilight and not lose too much visual texture, but downloading a Jean-Luc Goddard film or anything with subtitles would be extremely painful and impossible to watch. So, there is a schism between what the output formats are and how people are looking at things and how they are accessing stuff. And festivals are still really linked to the in-theatre experience, and what is really key about the movies – that sense of, not necessarily urban, but even if you
go alone to see a movie you are still part of a community, even if you are the only person in the theatre, or there’s only 5 of you. It is a different thing, it is a theatrical experience as opposed to at home, where you pause it when your kid wakes up. It is a different kind of concentration. And that’s just TV. On a cell phone it is completely different, or [on] any of those [devices] (Interview, TIFF Programmer).

This quote not only demonstrates an awareness among TIFF programmers that film festivals promote an in-theatre experience, but also emphasizes how that shared experience engenders a sense of community among movie-goers at the festival. It also expresses the need to cultivate the value of a theatrical experience. This social experience helps cement a sense of belonging among the individual film festival goers who, through their attendance, develop a point of connection or relationship with the festival (TIFF) and the place (Toronto) where they watched these films. It is also possible that as people increasingly watch media alone on non-traditional formats, such as their phones, that the shared film experience in the theatre is even more valuable, meaningful, special or memorable to those who attend TIFF as part of the public audience. By experiencing film as part of the TIFF festival community, that experience has the potential to influence and shape the identity of filmgoers, and their relationships to the city (Toronto), each other (film community), and the festival (TIFF).

The festival is very accessible to the public audiences. The public film community develops from the simple act of showing up and watching a film at TIFF. In some ways, this accessibility is mirrored in the festival’s film programming. Films at TIFF screen to the public on a relatively level playing field. This is because TIFF has no official selection or juried award (beyond a few for Canadian films). In contrast, Cannes screens films in a highly differentiated manner, based on a tiered film program. Describing the Cannes Film Festival, one TIFF programmer explains “they have an official selection, which is their competition, and then they have a series of sidebars, which are… important industrially, but not significant to the public” (Interview, TIFF programmer).

27 TIFF does offer a few awards for Canadian films: Best Canadian Feature, Best First Canadian Feature, and Best Canadian Short (Interview, TIFF programmer).

28 The tiered film program at Cannes comprises fewer than 100 films which are ‘officially there’ as part of the Official Selection and Un Certain Regard. Many more films are present as festival sidebars, including: Director’s Fortnight and Film Critic’s Week. There are an additional seven to nine thousand films in the (separate) market.
The festival programmers invite the public to engage the full slate of film programming, and while they do set categories to help contextualize films (e.g. Midnight Madness, Gala Presentations, Contemporary World Cinema, TIFF Docs, Wavelengths, etc.), these films are all programmed as peers. By programming all festival films as different, but comparable cultural products, this festival structure facilitates breaking down audience preconceptions about what good cinema is. As one TIFF programmer said during interviews, “Basically no film is perceived as more significant or being, like in the abstract, as being more significant than another film. It’s a level playing field: you’re in, you’re official, you’re there” (Interview, TIFF Programmer).

While this level playing-field is certainly relevant for how industry professionals in attendance perceive and engage films, it is also relevant for public reception.

Once curated, TIFF films are considered and presented as peers, despite varied film budgets for promotion. This is potentially empowering for the audience because it allows the public audience to consider TIFF programmed films as different, but equal. To a certain extent, this theme of accessibility is even echoed in the urban fabric since Toronto is a large city with extensive infrastructure that can be easily accessed from foreign places and traversed locally. In contrast, festivals such as Cannes, Venice, and Telluride were described during fieldwork as difficult to get to and expensive. As well, it was suggested during interviews and informal conversations at the festival that Toronto’s local cultural diversity helps extend a welcome to non-traditional film communities and even shrinks perceived cultural distance between Toronto and the many nationalities represented in the official film program.  

TIFF has a track record of making good Canadian and international films available to Toronto’s film-curious public in an alternative exhibition format. It is reasonable to argue that TIFF has influenced the quality of local film demand, in terms of film literacy and general support for the medium. This locally cultivated knowledge and attitude towards film is an embodied asset.

An interesting and novel research finding is that the current strength of the local audience is (re)produced in Toronto at the film festival and directly supported through TIFF programming activities, which impact audience development. In many cultural industries – whether classical

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29 There were 691 films from over 46 countries featured at TIFF in 2014 (TIFF Annual Report).
music, football or video games – professional players and organizations must address the challenge of how to access and cultivate their audience. This audience development refers both to expanding audience numbers and deepening their engagement with the cultural product. In other words, building an audience is both about reaching certain demographics, as well as teaching the audience about the cultural product they are consuming. Increasing the sophistication and potential for fandom among cultural consumers helps sustain the industry and contributes to potential monetization of cultural products. Below I develop this argument, drawing on research interviews, and a critical analysis of TIFF promotional images.

3.5.1 Festivals do Audience Education Work: Insight from Interviews

With a forty-year history and privileged position as an important festival, TIFF is recognized as playing a key role in contributing over time to the breadth and quality of Toronto’s film audience. At other audience-festivals, the role of the film programmers and curators is acknowledged as a source of audience education work (see Kredell 2013, Rastegar 2016). In context of TIFF, the programmers play a very important role in shaping audiences. As one Canadian producer states, TIFF programmers, creative heads – Cameron, Piers, their predecessors – they have done a lot of work educating Toronto audiences about how to watch and engage with films. It is now so self-evident even in public screenings at TIFF. People really know. They really watch films with a discerning eye. They’re thoughtful. They take them seriously. […] By and large, there are great questions in the Q&As afterwards. These are audiences who have been, for the past however long TIFF has been – is it 25 years? – have been extremely well educated by the programmers on how to watch films. How to choose films to watch and how to watch films and engage with them. I find it such a delight, to be in a screening where there is that kind of audience participation. You know, in those kinds of settings, they really are interacting. They really are interactive sessions. … These audiences are not passive. They’re really engaged. Other festivals that I’ve been to I’d see that the programmers are working on that, and programmers are doing what they can toward this audience education, but that is really a core part of the festival programmer and director’s job: they are training new generations of movie-going audiences (Interview, Canadian producer).

In this quote, this perspective among the Canadian film community recognizes the historical evolution of a big and quality film audience in Toronto that is not only interested in and supportive of film. As well, the public’s film engagement practices shaped by the structure of film festival activities. This audience-education work has been going on in Toronto for decades and is now recognized by those in the industry. Toronto-based film festival organizers remarked
that TIFF socializes local festival moviegoers about expected behaviour in cinema lines, screenings, and during Q&As. This helps make other film festivals in Toronto run smoothly.

However, most interview comments spoke more directly to TIFF’s role in promoting film literacy among the public audience. This audience appetite for a broad range of films – shorts, auteurist, blockbusters, foreign language, documentaries, avant garde, genre, etc. – is recurrent. It is now part of the local institutional complex supporting the film sector in Toronto at TIFF and beyond.

Locally, this audience capacity has developed over time. Similar industry-specific institutional complexities (e.g. shared norms, language, behaviours) are apparent among performative consumers. This self-evident quality of an interactive audience is (re)cited and (re)produced through media narratives and embodied practices at TIFF each year, evolving (growing and changing) over time. TIFF festival programmers have in shaping audience enthusiasm for film, and importantly, developing new audiences – reaching new demographic groups of potential cultural consumers (who may in time become producers and tastemakers in the film industry).

Through its programming, TIFF continues the legacy of its original mandate, to bring the best of global cinema to Toronto audiences. The result of programming a range of international movies at TIFF over the years has contributed to the development of local audience appetites for film beyond the typical Hollywood fare. Currently, Toronto audiences sustain over 70 local film festivals each year that cover a range of topics, regions, and genres. The importance of cultivating a receptive audience, with an open attitude towards non-mainstream films was noted as a particular strength of TIFF. Among industry delegates, the interest in foreign films was repeatedly noted as a virtue of the Toronto film public during fieldwork. This now self-evident and established interest in film was recognized as important among local film stakeholders and international industry interests alike.

Locally, other Toronto-based film festival organizers acknowledged the breadth and quality of Toronto’s film audience as important in sustaining Toronto’s significant local circuit of film festivals. Although it is not claimed that they do it alone, the work of TIFF programmers in service of pushing the audience’s comfort zone and developing their collective cultural capital or film competence (akin to film-knowledge literacy) was specifically articulated as important in capacity-building for Toronto’s film audience. As one producer explains,
They’re challenging assumptions and preconceptions about what film is or should be. You know, at TIFF, TIFF programs 10, 20, 30 conventional Hollywood story places, definitely. It is that kind of festival now. But they also program 30-40 international features, Canadian features, short films that are extremely unconventional, or a little bit harder to cipher, or a bit on the experimental side, or blurring the line between documentary and drama. And that’s where festival programmers are doing their educational work. They are forcing audiences to reframe what film – what good film and good cinema is – and breaking their preconceptions. It is not all Pixar and Tom Cruise (Interview, Producer).

The above quote highlights the important intervention which film festival programming makes in shaping the minds and attitudes of movie-goers. TIFF programmers act as tastemakers by curating festival films. Their good reputation is recognized among the international cinema community. This lends credibility to their programming selections as having artistic and cinematic merit, as films, as cultural product. However, cinema is vast. Cultural products may not be easily or immediately understood, interpreted or validated. By engaging the Toronto audience in films they would not otherwise access, TIFF acts as both curator and educator within the film community (see Callon 2002, Entwistle 2009).

TIFF remains one of few premiere festivals, which sign each slated film. In other words, a specific programmer puts their name behind each film they select for the festival. In this way, there is an identified tastemaker (festival programmer) associated with each film at TIFF. Festival programmers are aware of their curatorial role and its impact, both in cultivating film literacy among public audiences and in inviting each movie-goer to approach film they might not otherwise encounter. As one TIFF programmer explains,

The founders [of TIFF] and every director since then knows that having Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, despite traffic foul-ups and people going ballistic over whatever, maybe the film will work or not work in front of a crowd. But it means something, it does trickle down to a younger filmmaker or a more adventurous filmmaker. Like, the Toronto audiences are – there is a perception that there is a difference between the people who go to a Gala and the people who go see a Bela Tarr movie, and that’s not necessarily the case. Some of the Gala people, they’re people who just go to galas and want to see stars, but there’s also people who will go see a Cronenberg movie – which is a Gala and will have William Hurt, Viggo Mortensen, whoever is in the film – and then go see a Bela

30 Few exceptions include some gala films which are selected by committee.
Tarr movie. They’re not so separate. There’s a lot of ways those intersect and overlap (Interview, TIFF programmer).

In the above statement, one TIFF programmer illustrates how the high-profile film, with celebrity actors and famous filmmakers, attracts public audiences. However, they also recognize that the value of that high-profile film extends beyond the story it tells. Regardless of whether it succeeds in playing well to its audience, such a film is of additional value (from the festival organizer’s perspective), because it offers a familiar entry-point from which the public begins to engage other films and go beyond what they might traditionally expect of film. This idea was reiterated by others. As one filmmaker states,

A Viggo Mortensen-Cronenberg apocalyptic film is, I think, a great stepping stone for an audience to move away from the next James Bond film to, say, the next Werner Hertzog film. This is what a good programmer and festival director does. They have a range of stuff, diversity of stuff, so that an audience will make these incremental baby-steps away from the stuff [films] that they’re happy and comfortable with into these new domains, kinds of thinking where their head explode – not literally. ‘My God – I never would have gone to the Cineplex to see a film like that, but wow. Next time I might go to the Rep House, or to the Hot Docs cinema and take a look at feature documentary that I might otherwise not’ (Interview, Filmmaker).

This quote is particularly insightful and articulates the role of the festival in introducing different film offerings to a local community, which over time begins to sustain demand for more varied films. This quote underscores the process of audience development.

Below I explore three sets of official TIFF promotional imagery which, when read critically, demonstrate the audience education work that festivals do. Taken together this imagery is evidence for how film festival audience development becomes a localized asset to the host region.

3.5.2 Displaying Film Literacy: Visual Imagery of TIFF

The first set of official TIFF promotional imagery, is presented in context of the festival screening schedule.31 In the festival setting, it is a visual supplement that accompanies the act of choosing which films to see. As was suggested in interviews, part of TIFF’s education work

31 Specific images are not included in this dissertation due to copyright limitations. However, they may be available online or in hard copy at the TIFF Library Archives. Source material retrieved (September 2012) from: http://tiff.net
includes teaching audiences how to select films to watch. This involves encouraging film selections which are approachable to a public audience, but also push their film sensibilities. When read critically, the promotional image as text comprises stills from three very different films, which are representative of the range of film programming TIFF encompasses.

This image includes stills from films curated by the festival programmers. At first glance, this image is high-quality and visually appealing. The image communicates the notion that the three films are of comparable quality, albeit very different in character. By presenting three distinct images together, this visually reiterates the notion of TIFF films being presented on a level playing field at the festival. Each piece is of equal size and without further knowledge, it might be difficult to interpret and differentiate them. Without unpacking the image further, it offers a preview of what one might watch at the festival and hints at the film experiences to be had by the audience.

This framing shows familiar celebrities alongside more obscure images from films that push the audience’s comfort zone. In fact, these three images refer to films that are quite distinct and may even appeal or be recognizable to different audience segments. The image depicts an international documentary, a Canadian auteurist film, and a major Hollywood movie. When each frame of the above image is considered separately, this example shows (from left to right): a still from *The Act of Killing*, a feature-length documentary about the Indonesian paramilitary leader; a still from *Antiviral*, the first feature film of Brandon Cronenberg; and a still of Emily Blunt and Colin Firth in the American feature film *Arthur Newman* (TIFF Program 2012, 125,133,238). This image invites potential audiences to broaden their film experience. In other words, these images suggest the breadth and appeal of films included in the TIFF official program.

### 3.5.3 TIFF Audience Personalities: An Illustrated Guide

The 2013 TIFF official promotional imagery also emphasizes the audience. This depiction of the audience further supports my argument that TIFF builds local cultural capacity through

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32 Specific images are not included in this dissertation due to copyright limitations. However, they may be available online in digital formats or in hard copy at the TIFF Library Archives.
audience development. These promotional materials visually instruct the audience on how to act as film consumers.

The TIFF-produced images, depicting individual festival-goer archetypes, constitute a major component of the festival promotional materials in 2013, which were featured on the festival website and on banners throughout the festival’s exhibition venues. They were also displayed in industry spaces and in the city during the festival. These images suggest that the film festival itself functions to develop the Toronto public audience. This set of official TIFF promotional imagery features a selection of the festival personality types which the TIFF audiences comprise. The images offer a continuation of the 2012 images. However, this later imagery more explicitly aims to shape consumers, with depictions of different film audience types. They hint at how to perform one’s consumption at the festival. These images depict individual audience members from different ethnic backgrounds, echoing the theme and relevance of Toronto’s audience diversity.33

These images illustrate the active role TIFF plays in cultivating and promoting the audience through their official promotional imagery. The ‘veteran’, ‘record-breaker’, ‘arbiter of taste’, ‘le cinephile’ and ‘the adventurer’ each name different consumer identities. Such a variety of festival personalities underscores the importance of a broad base of users who actively engage with the products they consume. Such sophisticated demand is important for the festival.

Depicting a selection of the film festival audience personality types, the TIFF imagery invites individual film consumers to see themselves in these idealized models of film consumerism, and potentially recognize their part in the consumption of film. Notably, the ideals portrayed are not of specific behaviours, but rather portray embodied identities. This aligns with the concept of the expressive user, whereby consumers partake in the active construction of brand and product quality. They provide cues that categorize consumer identities and legitimate a range of film experiences. The tag line: “What’s your festival personality?” asks the audience to articulate their relationship to the festival. The campaign models ways to perform such personalities.

33 The imagery discussed here is meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive, of TIFF promotional materials. While many of these promotional images show men, there are examples which portray women as well.
These images of bodies offer examples of how (and who) to be. They offer ways of approaching festival participation, as well as of self-identifying as consumers at the film festival. In this way, TIFF cultivates a key local asset – a massive, discerning, film-going public – upon which the festival’s success significantly depends. An important ingredient of strong cluster is sophisticated demand. In context of film festivals, that demand takes the form of the audience.

This audience feeds into the value of the film festival. As argued, TIFF has become and is now recognized among the international film community as an excellent gauge of potential in terms of both critical and commercial success. This strength has evolved over time. This imagery also illustrates the role which TIFF plays in actively shaping the bodies, minds, attitudes, aesthetic and cultural values of the local film-going public.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the range of audiences and viewing environments at TIFF. Overall, Toronto audiences have a reputation for being open, supportive and engaged. TIFF audiences are also seen as diverse. This generates positive experiences for filmmakers. It also creates an information-rich environment for industry delegates who make business decisions at TIFF screenings. I argue for a positive and mutually reinforcing relationship between the strength and reputation of TIFF as a key festival and Toronto as a public audience.

The first major insight is that the audience plays an important role in fostering rich environments for industry learning and decision making during the film festival. Observed audience reactions during public screenings make visible otherwise elusive information about the films being consumed. Audience engagement with festival films informs interactive learning and product validation. Evidence from this exploratory study suggests that consumer reactions to films at TIFF influence business decisions (e.g. distribution deals), filmmakers’ professional development (e.g. opportunities for learning, collaboration and inspiration), and marketing (e.g. generating buzz).

A second major insight developed in this chapter is the idea that the audience strength is cultivated as a localized asset of value to TIFF as a festival, and the industry which attends the event. As the premier public international film festival, the reputation of TIFF is augmented by the Toronto public audience’s track record of identifying films which carry on to critical and
commercial success. Interestingly, this research finds evidence that TIFF shapes public attitudes toward film and film festival behaviours through festival programming and promotional materials. Through educating film consumers, TIFF develops the localized, embodied asset of sophisticated demand. This local reservoir of film literacy in turn differentiates and sustains the Toronto International Film Festival’s reputation as an influential film festival. The strength of TIFF audiences may also contribute to Toronto’s identity as a film city. In the next chapter, I consider the implications of connections between the film industry and host city.
Chapter 4
Festival Place: Establishing Reputation Through Serial Events

I believe you are one of the most vibrant and globally exciting festivals, if not the most globally exciting festival, in the world (Ralph Fiennes, Actor).

Thank you, Toronto. Thank you, Film Festival, for having us. As always, we’re just thrilled to be here. It’s just such a great city, and a great film city. You feel it the minute you arrive here (Tom McCarthy, Director).

Second only to Cannes in stature, [TIFF’s] real strength is its grassroots feel, despite its size and popularity (Creative City Planning Framework 2008, 38).

4 Introduction

This chapter looks at the role of film festivals in urban economic development. Major film festivals have been neglected by geographers studying culture-led urban revitalization and economic development, even though such events can have significant economic impacts and strong ties to municipal cultural policy development, as I demonstrate in Toronto.

Many cities host major international film festivals. For instance, Cannes and Telluride each call to mind the influential film festivals which go by the same name. In fact, it is primarily through the reputation of the film festivals that the places register among people who do not live in these relatively small and remote resort towns. Other cities such as Venice, Berlin, Toronto and Busan, may be recognized as bustling cities in their own right, as well as sites of major film festivals. In each case, there is a strong element of shared reputation between a major film festival and the host city.

Serial events are rooted in the places which host them. They therefore provide an opportunity to examine how urban-identities and place-product connections develop over time. Major annual cultural festivals – like Coachella (Coachella Valley, California), SXSW (Austin, Texas),

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34 Ref: Sept.11th Highlights, Festival 2014: https://vimeo.com/channels/tiff14/106008464
35 Ref: Sept.11th Highlights, Festival 2014: https://vimeo.com/channels/tiff14/106008464
*Burning Man* (Black Rock Desert, Nevada) and *ComicCon* (San Diego, California) – serve to develop a place-identity and geographical imagination of the regions in which they are situated. These festivals are also big business. As significant levers for local economic development, I argue that major cultural events find traction among urban policy-makers and regional development interests. In the contemporary context of competitive and entrepreneurial urbanism, cities treat cultural industries as instruments for achieving culture-led urban (re)development.

In this chapter, I demonstrate that the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) is an anchor for culture-led urban revitalization. On its path of rising cultural prominence, I argue that TIFF strategically deploys three of its core characteristics: its international reputation, its public nature, and its economic impact. This discourse has proven successful in establishing TIFF as central to Toronto’s film identity. More importantly, it points to an emerging trend in municipal cultural policy in which culture is not only instrumental, but generates both public good and economic value.

This research explores connections between film festival and place identity through the emerging narratives which link TIFF and the wider city. Supporting evidence is drawn from industry reports and financial records, as well as TIFF promotional materials, Toronto’s cultural policy documents and promotional campaigns, and popular media. In this chapter, I make the case that TIFF builds on and strategically deploys its position within Toronto and the international film community to reinforce its relevance.

This chapter begins by providing a theoretical background for cultural industry connections to place, emphasizing place-product connections, culture-led urban (re)development, and the proliferation of film festivals. Following this, I outline how TIFF builds Toronto’s reputation as a film city. I review Toronto’s cultural policy development and tourism literature, as well as empirical data and media discourses to illustrate TIFF’s influence. I provide an analysis of how TIFF achieves this by strategically deploying its international reputation and economic impacts. The final empirical section provides insight on the TIFF Bell Lightbox, the permanent home for TIFF, as an anchor for culture-led urban revitalization at the urban- and neighbourhood-scale. I conclude by considering implications of TIFF’s rise, signaling a new direction in municipal cultural policy, within the broader community of Toronto’s film festivals and cultural organizations.
4.1 Theoretical Background

The idea that culture is a valuable urban asset and that cultural industries contribute to regional economies is well established. Geographers are interested in how place – at various scales – matters. While geographers have done a lot of research on the growing prominence of cultural industries and their connection to particular places, this chapter draws on three streams of research which set the context for understanding the role of TIFF in Toronto’s cultural policy landscape.

4.1.1 Place Making: Hard Branding and Reputation Building

Place branding is central to the creative city. Prominent across North America and Europe, marketing practices and advertising logics are increasingly transferred into the space of municipal governance as cities try to differentiate themselves (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2005). This builds on a long tradition of ‘boosterism’ and reflects an increasing urban focus on catering to consumers, whether tourists or residents (see Jonas and Wilson 1999, Eisinger 2000, Garcia 2004, Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2005). Place branding develops a local narrative and promotes certain associations with place that influence how people relate to the city.

Hannigan (2003, 354) argues that instead of promoting “local historical and cultural events and facilities, [cities] enhance the urban landscape with arts and entertainment destinations that are globally branded”. Akin to the emergence of themed urban entertainment destinations in post-war American cities, a new wave of branding entertainment, shopping and leisure destinations was evident in North American shopping centres from the mid-1980s onward (Hannigan 2007, 51). With strong competition between cities (places, complexes and projects), Hannigan (2007) concludes that the upsurge in fantasy cities has recently dwindled in North America, but flourished internationally. However, Hannigan (2007) points the rise of culture-driven urban regeneration and creative cities as a new outlet and (perceived) panacea for capturing middle class fantasies of consumption. Culture-led urban regeneration caters to residents’ consumption practices over that of investors and tourists. Alongside new forms of creative and extreme tourism, Hannigan (2007) argues that new models of urban development privilege collaborative consumption and new experiences to relieve ennui.
Similarly, Evans (2007) suggests that the shift from culture cities to creative cities (from the late 1990s onwards) has had an associated shift away from heritage tourism, museums and cultural districts towards creative urban spaces which showcase cosmopolitan culture, creative clusters and neo-bohemia (Evans 2007, 61). Nonetheless, the “fantasization of the everyday” and “commodity fetishism” associated with consumer products is extended geographically to places through hard-branding (Evans 2003, 417). While historically limited to few key sites of explicit commodity place-branding (e.g. NikeTown, Asterixland, SegaWorld), and places with particularly strong producer associations (e.g. Motown, Nashville, Hollywood), Evans (2003) argues that through cultural city designations and widespread arts and culture-led urban renewal, the practice of hard-branding has become ubiquitous.

Branding urban quarters and cities helps link individual identity with a wider sense of socio-cultural ‘belonging’ (Evans 2003). As such, cities and urban entertainment centres brand themselves with the dual goals of place-differentiation and mass appeal. The expansion of the European Union’s ‘cities of culture’ program has emphasized cultural redevelopment and hard branding as an explicitly political and development oriented project (Evans 2003, 426). The outcome, Evans argues, is that hard branding the culture city combines practices of commercial branding, entertainment and an emphasis on urban design and (star) architectural form in culture-based urban redevelopment. This tendency is heightened by an entrepreneurial urban (policy) environment.

As with hard branding the city of culture, Evans finds, in a comparative study of creative city initiatives, that symbolic and semantic associations with cultural industries are being mobilized by urban initiatives to revitalize once-declining urban areas and formerly industrial districts (see Evans 2009, Rantisi and Leslie 2006, Scott 2006). As well, emulation and policy transfer occurs for both city of culture and cultural industry focused (re)development, even though these practices touch down differently in context of actually existing creative cities (see Evans 2009, Pratt 2011).

In another arena, the spectacular consumption of culture is explored by Currid-Halkett and Scott (2013), in their work on celebrity and glamour and the cultural geography of large, global cities. In contemporary society, Currid-Halkett and Scott (2013) argue that the notion of celebrity is increasingly commodified and democratized. As well, celebrity and its affiliated trappings of
glamour and fandom, constitute potential developmental effects for the local scenes, districts and cities in which they manifest. They argue this results from the fact the celebrity is inherent in cultural production systems (2013).

Rather than a bi-product of cultural industries or element of cultural-capital, as Currid-Halkett and Scott (2013) conceive it, celebrity and glamour play a role in sustaining the competitive advantage of cities. This is especially relevant in context of globalization and inter-urban competition. In the current cognitive-cultural economy, not only are global cities the key site of economic value creation (i.e. productivity in cultural and creative industries), but celebrity and glamour are the whetstones which keep the cutting edge of capitalism sharp. The specular consumption of goods by elites is itself a source of value creation; “celebrities and the glamour that they radiate are now essential components of the commodity system of capitalism” (Currid-Halkett and Scott 2013, 3).

Thus, celebrity and glamour contribute to the construction of social meaning and fetishization of goods, which extend beyond a particular celebrity’s fan base (Currid-Halkett and Scott 2013, 4). As sites of symbolic capital, cities are the major nodes of spatial clustering in the cultural industries. The result is that sites of celebrity contributions to commodity culture are similarly uneven, concentrated in global cities and subject to spatial clustering. This is because, while images of celebrities are ubiquitous, the star-system itself is rooted in a distinctive geography, which contributes to the competitive advantage of cities (Currid-Halkett and Scott 2013). Importantly, Currid-Halkett and Scott (2013, 8) argue that the urban cultural economy in conjunction with celebrity and glamour “is almost always the fountainhead of a sort of urban mythology that accumulates layer by layer over time and that exerts powerful place-branding effects.”

Celebrities and the suite of cultural meanings which their personal brands invoke, represent a novel and potentially important element in the processes of commercializing symbolic forms in contemporary society. Hard-branding extended the fetishization of product brands onto place, and it is likely that celebrity brands and glamour may be similarly extended to imbue places with cultural meaning. This enables consumers (tourists and residents alike) to differentiate between places. Toronto and TIFF provide an example where place branding and identity formation are influenced by a mix of global urbanism, cultural cachet, celebrity glamour and hard-branding.
Cities are undoubtedly an important site and source for creativity within a context of the growing prominence of cultural industries and creative fields (see Hesmondhalgh 2002, Hesmondhalgh and Pratt 2005, Currid 2007, Scott 2008, Scott 2010). Cities constitute an important spatial articulation of creative fields, which includes the social networks, specialized inputs, intermediary institutions, and wider urban environments that support the development of particular cultural practices and industries in certain locales (Rantisi 2004, Breward and Gilbert 2006, Scott 2010). However, the interplay between culture and city is variegated and extends beyond the production of goods and services which are cultural, symbolic or aesthetic in character.

In certain cities, the local context influences cultural production. Rantisi (2004) argues that the city-fashion nexus was critical for New York City fashion. Such place-advantage can be reinforced by virtuous cycles of symbolic and functional agglomeration, and is especially acute for cultural industries which have high levels of symbolic content (Currid 2007, Currid and Williams 2010). Places, especially cities, function as creative fields, which influence semiotic expression, build up reputation and differentiate the production of symbolic forms (Scott 2001). This applies both to the making of products, as well as the symbolic development of specific sites (Molotch 2002).

For example, Italy’s reputation for fine food and marble has been widened to other forms of craft and quality production. Similarly, Leslie finds that innovative firms in the Canadian furniture design industry emphasize place-based signifiers to differentiate their product in terms of design and marketing (Leslie and Reimer 2006). Molotch (2002, 678) notes, “favorable geographic stories, certified or not, create entry barriers for products from other places.” In some cases, the place-signifier is misleading. Products from one region (e.g. cars from Detroit) may intentionally draw on the symbolic notions of another region (e.g. Chevrolet ‘Malibu’) (Molotch 2002, 679). Ultimately, local character gets imbued through design and marketing. Hard-branding extends similar notions of meaning to place (Evans 2003).

4.1.2 Culture-Led (Re)Development: Entrepreneurial Cities Compete Through Culture

Research on the connections between culture, creativity and the city suggests the potential for cultural amenities and vibrant cityscapes to attract and retain educated, skilled and creative
workers (Florida 2002, 2002a, 2003). This is salient in post-industrial cities where the role of culture in urban economies has expanded and where cultural industries are increasingly viewed as strategic resources for economic development (Hannigan 2003, Leslie and Rantisi 2006). The result is that culture is increasingly intertwined with economic development and place-making in a context of heightened inter-urban competition. The shift to entrepreneurial regimes of urban governance influences urban policy formation by focusing on public-private partnerships (Harvey 1989).

Urban policies grounded in culture have had three main rationales over time. In the 1950s and 1960s, cultural policy focused on subsidies to institutions of high art. Policies were guided by the view of policy-makers that art and culture were inherently valuable. Cultural policy shifted in the 1970s, and increasingly served as an instrument for achieving social and political objectives. By the mid-1980s, the economic value of culture for urban regeneration dominated the rationale for policy (Leslie and Rantisi 2006, 313). Despite the changing nature of policies, urban agendas consistently treated culture as an instrument for achieving other ends.

Today, there are a variety of strategies for cultural development (e.g. Mommaas 2004, Evans and Shaw 2006) and city branding (e.g. Evans 2003, Hannigan 2003, Zukin 1995). David Harvey cautions that “place-specific projects [may] divert concern and even resources from the broader problems that beset the region” (1989, 9). While several scholars now ask questions about the socio-spatial inequalities which culture-driven (re)development may (re)produce (e.g. Zukin 1995, MacLeod 2002, Miles and Paddison 2005), others focus on the value culture brings to cities (e.g. Florida 2002, Quinn 2005, Markusen and Shrock 2006). Either way, culture is a significant (if contested) tool in contemporary urban policy.

Culture is folded into formulas for achieving physical regeneration, symbolic reimagining, and economic competitiveness (Garcia 2004). However, the impacts of cultural policy on the physical landscape, urban image, and local economy are inconsistently assessed (Evans 2005). This interest reflects an uptake in the topic by policy-makers who frequently see culture-led urban (re)development as “an insurance policy against future decline, … as a value-added distinction and as an accelerator of development” (Evans and Shaw 2006, 6). Implicit in these strategies is the perception that place-value declines if left idle. Culture-led regeneration is thus consistent with other spatial fixes and concerns about “historical tension between progress and
its absence, growth and its immanent other – decline” (Beauregard 2003, 4). In light of the rise of culture and creativity in urban and economic development, cities around the world are turning to cultural strategies in order to redress the development deficits attributed to global outsourcing and de-industrialization (Power and Scott 2010).

As one example, city of culture regeneration strategies combine physical redevelopment, iconic architecture, and cultural flagship projects with city branding. This type of strategy reflects a city’s desire for recognition as a global city with cultural status, and focuses investment on the arts. However, it is not always applied with investment in infrastructure and civic amenities. Such regeneration strategies are at once a reaction to and outcome of globalization pressures. They create unique cityscapes, but are often designed by international ‘celebrity’ architects. There is disagreement among scholars whether this imposes external visions of culture, “sapping the city’s own creativity [and] uniqueness” (Evans and Shaw 2006, 7). Also, it is debated whether iconic architecture generates superficial or potentially powerful and long-lasting symbols of cultural creativity. Much of this research surrounds the European Capital of Culture program, as it has been conceived and applied (see Evans 2005, Garcia 2005).

Cultural districts are another type of culture-led regeneration strategy. Cultural districts form in an area of the city and are often organized around cultural industries. Cultural districts relate to cultural production, consumption, or both. Through spatial concentration, McCarthy (2005) argues that these areas benefit from agglomeration economies. This type of strategy is particularly associated with the revitalization of post-industrial urban areas. This cultural clustering marks a “shift from a policy aimed at organizing occasions for spectacular consumption, to a more fine-tuned policy, also aimed at creating spaces, quarters and milieus for cultural production and creativity” (Mommaas 2004, 508). Key sites of this type of culture-driven revitalization in Toronto include the Distillery District (see Mathews 2010) and Liberty Village (see Leslie and Catungal 2012). The risk of cultural regeneration leading to gentrification is acute, since they involve the explicit “recoding of a district as a cultural quarter” which “can easily be read as a zone of affluence” (Miles 2005, 890). This is especially true when the initiatives emphasize cultural consumption over production (Mommaas 2004).

Cultural dynamism, a third type of regeneration strategy, involves promoting the characteristics of a creative city. This approach is strongly associated with Richard Florida’s creative class
theory (2002) and Charles Landry’s notion of the creative city (2000). Arguing that diversity and creativity are fundamental to regional growth, Florida (2002) has shifted focus away from the firm, towards talent as an economic driver. The ‘creative class’, a broad category of creative professionals, is presented as both economically significant and mobile. This offers cities two reasons for investing in amenities aimed at creating cultural dynamism. First, cultural amenities help attract and retain the creative class who, Florida argues, are drawn to creative places. Second, investing in cultural industries may support the sectors of the economy in which the creative class works (Florida 2002, Florida 2003).

The creative class thesis is criticized by scholars for being descriptive, vague, and rhetorical (Markusen 2006, Peck 2005). As well, creative cities tend to have greater income inequality, which raises issues about the viability of sustaining this type of development (Donegan and Lowe 2008). Criticism of the creative class concept blurs into criticism of cultural dynamism as an urban strategy which aims to make places ‘cool’ or ‘hip’ (Peck 2005, McCann 2004). Critical engagement with creative city scripts echoes concerns about building urban cultural assets that cater to a tourist class (Eisinger 2000, Pratt 2011). However, through cultural dynamism, the meanings of culture and creativity become confused, and the anticipated impacts of regeneration are primarily economic. In Toronto, the idea of creative cities is influential and reflected across the City’s cultural planning documents (e.g. Creative City Workprint 2001, Culture Plan for the Creative City 2003, Creative City Planning Framework 2008, Creative Capital Gains 2011).

As with other culture-led urban strategies, Garcia (2004) calls for a more inclusive, participatory and inclusive approach to applying culture for regenerative purposes, with the aim to “avoid the feeling of alienation, misrepresentation and lack of ownership that surrounds most current approaches to city regeneration and branding that prevents them from being distinct, credible and sustainable” (Garcia 2004, 324). This call is relevant for the Toronto’s recent emphasis on TIFF as a cultural brand for Toronto’s film identity and anchor for culture-led redevelopment in the city’s entertainment district.

4.1.3 Festivals on the Rise: Interdisciplinary Research Insights

The growth of TIFF reflects a wider trend. In recent decades, there has been a massive proliferation of film festivals across the globe. Festivals are cultural phenomena that represent alternative sites and spaces for film exhibition. As Stringer observes, “they bring visitors to
As hybrid events, festivals constitute a crossroads in which diverse players interact. These events offer insight into a broad range of themes, including the nature of media, audience practices, technological evolution, institutional power relations, and industry trends (see Entwistle and Rocamora 2006, Power and Jansson 2008, Currid and Williams 2010). Festivals also offer opportunities to examine relationships between governmental and commercial entities, and flows of capital, information, bodies, and influence (see Larner et al. 2007, Weller 2008, Gibson and Connell 2015, Kredell 2012). The interdisciplinary research on film festivals calls for research which connects across disciplinary boundaries in productive ways (see Loist and De Valck 2010, De Valk et al. 2016).

There is an ‘aura of exclusivity’ associated with historic festivals like Venice (founded in 1932) and Cannes (founded in 1939 and first held in 1946). As Stringer (2001) notes, these early festivals “could be attended by a jet-setting elite of filmmakers, cultural attaches, distributors, royalty, and journalists – that charmed circle of the great and good” (Stinger 2001, 137). Despite the proliferation of film festivals, the core ‘festival circuit’ remains strong as a concept and construct (i.e. actual series of events through time and space).

Stringer (2001) presents a critical and geographically grounded treatment of the international film festival circuit that reflects and (re)produces uneven relations of (cultural and economic) power. The festival circuit is thus an allegorization of space which reflects a highly-unequal festival map which (re)deploys the ethos of inter-urban competition observed in city planning and urban policy. Importantly, Stringer (2001, 138) argues that “it is cities which now act as the nodal points on this circuit, not national film industries.” He suggests such a connection between the film festival and host city is more likely to “lead to the establishment of a touristic and commodified aesthetic” rather than “produce a genuine local city identity based around a shared sense of cinephilia and an engagement with dynamic processes of cultural exchange” (Stinger 2001, 140).

On this landscape of film events, urban-scale festivals compete, reinforcing patterns of uneven development without necessarily generating film industry growth in the nation and region which hosts them (Stringer 2001). This is particularly true for places with nascent film sectors, which
are distant from the global cities (Stringer 2001, 139). Nonetheless, festivals proliferate and become an additional axis for place differentiation and competition, as they vie for international recognition and global event status. The result is a two-tiered system, in which a few major festivals attract global media and industry attention, while most smaller festivals cater to specialized niche audiences. Despite their ubiquity, Stringer (2001, 2003) argues that film festivals raise important questions regarding cultural production and consumption, particularly for global cities.

Festivals include both mega-budget international film festivals, alongside a significant number of specialized niche, micro-festivals. Such inconsistent growth (both big and small) raises questions about the function of film festivals (De Valk et al. 2016, Porton 2009, Kammermeier 2008), as well as concerns over digitization and its impacts for festival organizing (Roddick 2009, Peranson 2009). Several case studies of specific film festivals exist within this growing body of literature, yet it is rare to find research addressing Toronto’s film festivals (see Kredell 2012 for an exception). Prominent among the emerging literature are emphases on festival space (i.e. cities, tourism and publics), the red carpet (i.e. spectacle, stars and glamour), business matters (i.e. industry, distribution and markets), and film reception (i.e. audiences, communities and cinephiles) (see De Val et al. 2016). These themes also feature in my research on TIFF.

4.2 TIFF Builds Toronto’s Reputation as a Film City

Toronto’s prominence as a site of both film production and consumption, provides an opportunity to explore the connections between place and product. In particular, this chapter considers how TIFF mediates and amplifies the reputation and status conferred to the host region. This research explores three main aspects of how TIFF builds Toronto’s reputation as a city of film. First, film in general and TIFF in particular are increasingly prominent in cultural policy-making and in how Toronto presents itself to the world. Second, TIFF focuses Toronto’s film identity, drawing significantly on its international reputation. Finally, TIFF Bell Lightbox is an example of how culture anchors urban revitalization. As well, the anticipated symbolic slippage between the reputation of TIFF (as a festival) and Toronto (as a place) is observed. This contributes to a reservoir of images, which is (re)cited through media discourse, as well as the visual and discursive representations of the festival.
4.2.1 Toronto Showcases Film in City Policy and Promotional Campaigns

Toronto’s media and policy discourses communicate the idea that film is a key component of Toronto’s cultural identity. This reflects how Toronto has come to showcase film in its official cultural planning documents, media and tourism promotion campaigns.

Toronto has a legacy of cultural policy development, which lays the foundation for foregrounding cultural industries. Toronto was among the first places to develop municipal cultural policies in the 1970s (Kredell 2012, 23). To date, provincial and federal interests remain influential on cultural matters. The 1974 ‘Silcox Report’ set the trajectory for Toronto’s cultural policy development. In this era, culture consisted primarily of the arts, which was viewed as a social good that contributed broadly to local quality of life. This early period of Toronto’s cultural policy did not consider the economic value of the arts and set the municipal government’s role primarily as benefactor for the arts community.

Parallel to the periodization noted by Gibson and Kong (2005), there was a shift in the rationale for supporting culture in the 1980s. In later iterations of Toronto’s cultural planning, the arts were increasingly discussed in terms of economic rationales, frequently using the language of ‘capital’, ‘assets’ and ‘industry’. This shifting treatment of the arts reflects an ambition to become a ‘creative city’. Embracing notions of the ‘creative city’, urban policy-makers in Toronto promote economic vitality and quality of life through investments in quality of place. Despite criticism of the new mantra of creativity (see Peck 2005, Boudreau et al. 2009, Leslie and Catungal 2012), there was strong support for these ideas in Toronto.

For the next decade, Toronto’s Culture Division mobilized resources to promote culture and cultural industries. This vision is expressed in Toronto’s Creative City Workprint,

> The Culture Division’s task in re-imagining Toronto is particularly important. In a world of global sameness, competition now occurs on the field of meaning: the great cities of the future will be driven by the unique efforts of their cultural or creative industries, not their steel mills (Toronto 2001, 3).

This excerpt articulates Toronto’s intention to both foreground the cultural industries in Toronto’s place-identity. The report states, “the City needs to change its relationship with our major cultural institutions, from donor/beneficiary to partners in Creative City building” (Toronto 2001, 9). This impetus continues in later iterations of the city’s culture plans.
The film industry and TIFF are emphasized in these documents. For example, plans to build a permanent home for TIFF at King and John streets in downtown Toronto were part of Toronto’s wider architectural renovation of its major cultural institutions. This combined physical revitalization was heralded as Toronto’s ‘cultural renaissance’. As noted in the *Culture Plan for the Creative City*, “these icons of urban regeneration through culture can launch a cultural renewal of civic pride” (Toronto 2003, 2).

In these plans, TIFF was discussed alongside the City’s ‘major’ cultural institutions (e.g. Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto Symphony Orchestra), although TIFF would only be granted similar ‘major’ status by City Council vote in 2008. TIFF was presented as a community partner working with the city to benefit the region in terms of economic impact, international image, youth engagement and social inclusion (Toronto 2008). By 2011, Cameron Bailey, a representative from TIFF’s leadership, sat on the advisory council for both the City’s culture plan and the Tourism Board. Not surprisingly, TIFF featured prominently as a key cultural event of value to the city, described as a “major economic and tourism catalyst” (Toronto 2011, 28).

TIFF is also aware of its role as a partner in city building. In the 2008 annual report, TIFF Director and CEO Piers Handling writes, “We aspire to be the global centre for film excellence. Bell Lightbox will help us achieve this goal. […] As we embark on our contribution to the city-building of Toronto, we will act as a hub of innovation and creativity. Bell Lightbox will be a centre for tourists, a beacon for the film industry, and a place where communities meet. It will enhance our civic pride – and it will also bring significant economic benefits to where we live. It will champion Canadian film artists and provide an international platform for their work.” (TIFF 2008).

TIFF also presents itself as part of the community, throughout its annual reports and festival imagery. TIFF emphasizes both the financial benefits and community contributions it makes. As stated in the 2013 Annual Report, “TIFF represents an essential component of the city, province, and country, but our economic impact is only a part of the picture — though an important one.

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36 Those cultural institutions which the City designates as ‘major’ are eligible for greater amounts of dedicated municipal funding. In 2016, the eleven major cultural organizations received over $8 Million in municipal grants. (City of Toronto website: Arts & Culture, grants)
TIFF engages with the community because we are a part of our community” (TIFF 2013, 34). The public aspect of TIFF is crucial to its positioning as a major cultural institution in Toronto. While TIFF is aware that it is an important source of tourist spending, the fact that TIFF commissions periodic assessments of its economic contributions, demonstrates how the festival promotes its significance within local policy circles (see Strategic Council 2003, TCI 2010).

TIFF is also successful in mobilizing financial support. Having established its relevance in terms of the city’s cultural identity, TIFF emphasizes its economic value. A recent study estimates that TIFF festival activities directly contribute $105 million in expenditures to the local economy, generating further indirect economic contributions to Ontario’s GDP (TCI 2010, 3). TIFF reiterates this, stating in its annual report, “Given that we have an annual local economic impact of $189 M, it’s clear that we’re adding value to our hometown” (TIFF 2013, 34). TIFF Group (i.e. including the festival and broader programming) generates millions of dollars annually in economic impacts, but its symbolic contribution to Toronto as a city of film is even more profound (Toronto 2006, 19).

While Toronto’s cultural planning documents repeatedly mention the economic impact of TIFF, the latest report’s major policy recommendation pertaining to Toronto’s film sector is actually about building Toronto’s reputation for film. The report identifies the strength of Toronto’s film audience, where “Torontonians are among the world’s greatest film lovers” who sustain an ecology of small film festivals in addition to TIFF, alongside the city’s key film assets (i.e. TIFF, Bell Lightbox, Hot Docs, Canadian Film Centre) (Toronto 2011, 42). Based on this, the report recommends putting forward an application for membership in UNESCO’s Creative City Network as a ‘City of Film’ (Toronto 2011, 42). Establishing Toronto as a ‘City of Film’ would, according to the report, assist in positioning Toronto as a creative capital, and leverage Toronto’s film brand internationally (Toronto 2011, 31).

This policy recommendation strongly supports the notion that Toronto seeks to brand itself as a film city through TIFF. Currently, there are no UNESCO ‘City of Film’ designations in North America (UNESCO 2017). Toronto has since resumed its bid to designate Toronto as a

UNESCO ‘Creative City of Media Arts’ (Toronto 2017). However, in pursuing such status, Toronto would join cities like Busan and Rome. Montreal is already part of the creative cities network as a ‘City of Design’ (UNESCO 2017, Leslie and Rantisi 2008). Toronto’s Creative Capital Gains report (Toronto 2011, 31) also advises Toronto city-builders to work together (including Tourism Toronto and TIFF). There is evidence of a general tendency among Toronto’s cultural and tourism stakeholders to work together, throughout the media and policy material considered in this chapter.

4.2.2 Public Investment in TIFF and Toronto Film Brand

In part, TIFF belongs to the Toronto public because local citizens underwrite it. Although it received less than $300,000 in municipal grants in 2000, by 2008 TIFF had been re-designated by Toronto’s City Council as a ‘major cultural institution’ which confirmed its standing within Toronto’s cultural community on par with the Art Gallery of Ontario, Canadian Opera Company, Pride Toronto and others. This designation also changed TIFF’s eligibility for cultural grants, effectively doubling its access to municipal funds (Kredell 2012, 35). By emphasizing its economic impact and public appeal, TIFF has access to substantial sums each year from the City, Province and Federal Government. These grants make up a large portion of TIFF’s revenue streams over time. Provincial and Federal grants are the largest share of public funding, especially between 2006 and 2010 as TIFF was ramping up the capital campaign for its Bell Lightbox. TIFF financial revenue data is shown in Figure 4.1 below, as well as Appendix B.

Data from the Canada Revenue Agency in Figure 4.1 below, show TIFF’s total revenue hovering around $10 million between 2000 and 2004, before the festival grew substantially between 2005 and 2010. Current TIFF revenue is consistently well above $40 million, and has been since the TIFF Bell Lightbox was opened in 2010. From 2005 through 2010, the marked increase in federal and provincial grants relates to TIFF’s capital project development of the TIFF Bell Lightbox.

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38 The bid for Toronto to be designated as a UNESCO City of Media Arts is ongoing. Details are available online at: http://www.torontocreativecity.ca/
Figure 4.1: TIFF Revenue Streams from 2000 to 2015

Nearly ten years in the making, the TIFF Bell Lightbox opened to the public on September 12, 2010. Although the Reitman family had begun conversations with TIFF about building a permanent home for the festival in 2001 (Viessing 2010a), the financial reports only begin to show a pronounced increase in fundraising and public grants starting in 2005. Major government grants from the Province (in 2006, 2007 and 2009) and Federal Government (in 2008, 2009 and 2010) contributed to the $196 million fundraising campaign for the TIFF Bell Lightbox (TIFF 2013b). The data show that while major grant increases from the federal and provincial governments between 2006 and 2010 were temporary, this period resulted in increasing and sustained grants at the municipal scale. Figure 4.1 illustrates the growth and diversification of TIFF revenue streams over time. Notably, certain revenue streams (e.g. memberships, sales and fundraising) have grown since TIFF opened the Bell Lightbox. TIFF memberships relate to accessing the festival’s year-round programming based out of the Lightbox, while sales from the TIFF boutique, restaurants and leasing cinema space, are newly possible with a permanent venue.
While this data clearly shows growing municipal support for TIFF in terms of grants, this is only part of the story. Having actively established its reputation as a local and public anchor for film culture, TIFF began to pursue new forms of municipal support. Starting in the fall of 2012, TIFF sought support from Toronto City Council of a private member bill (Bill Pr27) seeking tax relief that would eventually go before the Province. As part of this process, the benefits of TIFF (festival) were presented to City Council as rationale for its possible exemption from property taxes of the TIFF Bell Lightbox (venue). City Council documents express support for these efforts, and articulate City Council’s perspective that TIFF activities “align with the City’s economic growth strategy” and “enhance Toronto as a visitor and film production destination” (Toronto EX31.10 2013).39

The motion was put forward by former Mayor Rob Ford and carried without opposition on April 23, 2013. Bill Pr27 received Royal Assent in April the following year (Marchese 2014). With this permissive legislation, provincial and municipal governments had the choice to provide TIFF with tax relief in addition to the 40% property tax rebate it is entitled to as a registered charity. With its new building downtown, TIFF stands to benefit from an estimated $900,000 in additional assistance annually, split between the City and Province (Toronto EX31.10 2013). Commercial (e.g. boutiques, restaurants) and residential (e.g. condominium tower) parts of TIFF Bell Lightbox do not qualify for tax relief. A City Council report lays the foundation for new financial support for TIFF. It states,

The Toronto International Film Festival provides significant benefits to the City and is recognized as a significant economic generator, and major cultural organization. TIFF Bell Lightbox is a key piece of economic and cultural infrastructure for Toronto and has transformed the immediate neighbourhood and reinforced Toronto’s reputation as a worldwide cultural destination (Toronto 2013a).

In the supporting documents informing this City Council’s Executive Committee motion, several aspects of TIFF are highlighted. For example, TIFF is rated as a top employer (especially for young people) and outperforms Toronto’s other major cultural organizations in terms of generating international attention, and its number of both participants and volunteers.

39 See for example: Staff Report, Motions to the Executive Committee (e.g. MM26.8), and Executive Committee Actions (e.g. EX31.10). Retrieved from http://app.toronto.ca
Although such tax exemption is not singular, it is also not common. Currently, most square footage owned by Toronto’s other major cultural organizations is exempt. However, this is largely a legacy of tax exemptions made prior to amalgamation in 1998. Post-amalgamation, only three other charities received exemption status under the new City of Toronto. They are primarily community service organizations, and together account for roughly $74,000 in foregone annual municipal tax revenue (Toronto, Staff Report, Nov. 14, 2012, p7).

The approval of TIFF’s tax exemption status, and the City’s foregoing an estimated $500,000 in annual tax revenue is a departure from the past. This precedent set by TIFF is significant in two ways. First, the scale of Toronto’s foregone tax revenue as a means for financially supporting culture is massive, privileging large and landowning cultural organizations. Second, the discursive treatment of TIFF as simultaneously an engine for economic growth and cultural asset for the public shifts attention to cultural projects, which can deliver both economic and social benefit.

Following TIFF’s example, it is likely that other cultural institutions will seek similar treatment. Toronto’s Aga Khan museum, which opened in 2014, is already doing so (Cross 2015). Justification for this annual tax exemption draws heavily from the discursive treatment of TIFF as central to Toronto’s film and cultural identity. As well, the shifting nature of public investment in TIFF at a municipal scale reflects a new treatment of the festival. In 2008 the City formally recognized TIFF, the festival, as a major cultural organization through a change in funding treatment. Again in 2014 the City changed its tax treatment of TIFF Bell Lightbox, as a community charitable organization. Ultimately, by building a permanent home for film, TIFF has shifted the urban policy landscape in which it operates. Thus, a tax break for TIFF’s physical building implicitly underwrites the festival activities, which build Toronto’s reputation as a film city. As well, this represents an alternative avenue through which public resources align with private property development, both of TIFF Bell Lightbox and the surrounding Toronto Entertainment District, as discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

40 Coverage of this issues was included in local media (see Moloney 2013).
4.3 TIFF and Toronto’s Film Reputation: International and Glamourous

4.3.1 Symbolic Slippage Between TIFF as Toronto, and Toronto as TIFF

During interviews and participant observation, the ‘Toronto International Film Festival’ was referred to as ‘TIFF’ and simply ‘Toronto’. Common statements, such as “we met in Toronto” or “he was in Toronto promoting a film” refer to the Toronto International Film Festival rather than the city. Whether or not this symbolic slippage was intended, the practice of using Toronto and TIFF interchangeably creates an opportunity to develop shared meaning.41 Such casual utterances open up a space for blurring the lines between film, festival and city.

Many promotional images reinforce the glamour and red carpets associated with TIFF. However, the images produced by TIFF present more intentional messaging. This promotional imagery is featured prominently in festival banners throughout Toronto, festival programs and online. To these respective audiences – Toronto citizens, film industry professionals, and potential international tourists – the festival imagery conveys important ideas and messages about TIFF as a festival and Toronto as a city. Considering the frequent symbolic slippage between Toronto and TIFF, such promotional imagery contributes to lasting impressions of not only the temporary festival, but the city which is TIFF’s permanent home. Examples of this imagery include the TIFF festival program covers from 2011 and 2013, as well as TIFF festival posters and promotions from TIFF 2012.42

Such promotional imagery exemplifies and emphasizes the excitement associated with the festival. This festival imagery suggests that the meeting place happens ‘here’ in ‘Toronto’. The practice of using Toronto to refer both to the city and the festival results in a reputation of glamourous edgy films being conferred simultaneously to Toronto as both a place and event. The events that TIFF hosts and the promotional images it produces are examples of the specific

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41 Both “Live With Culture” (2006) and “The Views are Different Here” (2017) exemplify the intentional dual meaning deployed in major ad campaigns by Tourism Toronto.

42 Specific images are excluded from this dissertation due to copyright limitations. However, examples of the promotional imagery discussed here (e.g. TIFF Festival Program Covers for 2011, 2012 and 2013, and TIFF 2012 campaign posters), may be available in digital formats online or in hard copy at the TIFF Library Archives.
cultural infrastructure which underlies the fandom of celebrity glamour and commercialized cultures (see Currid-Halkett and Scott 2013). With TIFF campaign posters that have verbal cues like “Where seeing meets believing” and “Where OMG meets WTF”, the combined imagery and text promotes a reputation that is at once edgy and subversive. These promotional materials exemplify how TIFF official imagery conjures red carpet glamour and the excitement of celebrity sightings. The production and circulation of such images, repeated over time, represents a key avenue through which TIFF contributes to Toronto’s film reputation.

4.3.2 Celebrity Endorsements and Buzz in the Media

This blurred reputation was also evident in popular media, news and policy documents. Beyond its economic impact, TIFF creates value for the host region in terms of international visibility, film cachet, and cultural legitimacy. Throughout the festival, media and promotional materials create narratives of edginess and international celebrity status, which are simultaneously conferred on Toronto as a festival and city.

External validation is often sought by individuals and urban communities alike. Such is the case for Toronto. For instance, one TIFF programmer noted the dismissive treatment of Canadian films (at Canadian festivals and especially the domestic box office) despite the strong showing and critical reception of Canadian films internationally (Interview, TIFF Programmer). This observed tendency to value the perception of others is also evident in media discourses surrounding Toronto and TIFF.

In particular, Toronto draws on the cultural capital of TIFF in asserting its cultural vibrancy. Alongside celebrity photographs from TIFF, the prominent website www.SeeToronto.com headline reads “The World’s Leading Public Film Festival” (SeeToronto.com). The website features movie guides, pro-tips, and the scoop on the red-carpet experience, which together invoke the sense of being an ‘insider’. Images show celebrities promoting their films at TIFF, and snippets of the text tempt the reader to sample the festival glamour, with the following,

The Toronto International Film Festival is the biggest and brightest public film festival on the planet. World premieres, cutting-edge film, galas and industry schmoozes all go into making TIFF the illustrious event it is. Whether you’re a cinephile or just love to see the celebs, TIFF is the place to be. … [With] films ranging from star-studded Hollywood dramas to raw and unscripted documentaries, TIFF has something for every type of film buff. … From the flashing cameras to the screaming fans to the designer dresses,
experience the complete red-carpet spectacle at TIFF. … TIFF is coming to Toronto in September – and so are the Hollywood stars. Find out what your favourite TIFF celebrities love about Toronto (SeeTorontoNow 2017).

This media discourse is consistent with culture-led urban revitalization literature, both in terms of its messaging, which emphasizes spectacular consumption and a reliance on tourism, as well as in terms of its supporters. The campaign is visibly endorsed by government and corporate sponsors (e.g. City of Toronto, Via Rail Canada, Air Canada, Mississauga, Brampton, Ontario Travel, Porter Airlines, the Greater Toronto Hotel Association and the Government of Ontario) and prominently features a link to find hotels. TIFF thus provides public and private partners in creative city building an opportunity to amplify Toronto’s international reputation for film. The website also features a high-production value video, a still image of which is shown below in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: “A Home Away from Home: Celebrities at TIFF Talk Toronto”

Source: YouTube, Tourism Toronto (2014), URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWpqQwfEmyw

43 A screen capture (only) is included in this dissertation to keep with ‘fair dealing’ guidelines (i.e. education, research, criticism) outlined by the University of Toronto Office of the Vice-President and Provost. Ref: “A Home Away From Home: Celebrities at TIFF Talk Toronto” by Crucial Pictures & Rogers Radio. Tourism Toronto. Retrieved from YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWpqQwfEmyw
Such promotional media are important in circulating and legitimating public discourses of Toronto and TIFF as a destination for film. As well, it reflects how savvy economic development interests leverage the international reputation, energy and celebrity draw of TIFF by creating a video that “mixes festival highlights and celebrity comments with the broader story of this cosmopolitan city” (Tourism Toronto 2014, 14).

The video communicates celebrity perspectives about TIFF and Toronto. It features recognizable A-list stars endorsing Toronto. It cuts together a mix of celebrity statements which endorse Toronto’s cultural vitality, diversity and amenities, and also includes visual representations of the city’s waterfront and major sports venues. The promotional video provides a positive depiction of Toronto as an exciting place to live in and visit, consistent with Harvey’s (1989) arguments for cultural consumption as a driver of urban growth.

Groups of happy children, culturally diverse youth, and local buskers depicted in the video, convey cultural diversity, public engagement and artistic vitality consistent with quality of life ideals and creative city scripts (see Gibson and Kong 2005). Public displays of affection and rainbow flags during Pride Toronto attest to the city’s tolerance, which has elsewhere been linked to attracting creative workers (see Florida 2002). Angelina Jolie, emblem of Hollywood glamour and UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador, celebrates Toronto’s diversity in the video.

Other stars mention the food and cultural institutions. In the video, celebrities such as Scarlett Johansen, Reese Witherspoon and Jake Gyllenhaal, speak to their experiences of Toronto and its cultural assets while at TIFF. In doing so, they touch on the key components of culturally-inflected economic development scripts, affirming Toronto’s cultural status and infusing the urban imaginary narratives with glamour and legitimacy. The video includes shots of a street performance and the iconic architecture to illustrate these urban assets. While the comments featured in this promotional video are curated by the city’s tourism interests, they echo sentiments which arose during interviews. Similarly, the TIFF 2014 festival trailer, offers
another media portrayal of celebrity endorsements, and a glimpse of the festival experience.44 A still image from the 2014 TIFF Festival Trailer is shown below in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: “Festival Trailer: TIFF 2014”

Source: YouTube, TIFF (2014), URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOTyqsGLc9c

Together, these promotional videos illustrate how “the talent that comes to Toronto each year to support the Festival are providing invaluable support for the organization [TIFF] by bringing profile, prestige and media attention to the festival and puts our city on the world stage” (TIFF capital campaign press kit 2008). This reflects the appreciation among industry players of the value which celebrity can confer, as suggested by Currid-Halkett and Scott (2013). It is not surprising then, that TIFF-produced festival trailers also feature international film celebrities to

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44 A screen capture (only) is included in this dissertation to keep with ‘fair dealing’ guidelines (i.e. education, research, criticism) outlined by the University of Toronto Office of the Vice-President and Provost. Ref: “Festival Trailer: TIFF 2014” Retrieved from YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOTyqsGLc9c
capture the glamour of Toronto and TIFF’s film reputation. However, celebrity attendance at TIFF also provides Toronto with valuable industry exposure.

Asking celebrities to comment on Toronto whilst they attend TIFF promoting films, contributes to the symbolic slippage between Toronto as a festival, city and even as a centre of film production. For instance, in his brief comment – “this city has always been so great to me” – it appears that Hugh Jackman blends his experiences of Toronto, as a place, festival and film production scene. Someone unfamiliar with how his film career and Toronto are linked, might take the comment at face value, as a suggestion that Toronto is a welcoming place. However, knowing his professional career trajectory puts this comment into context. Hugh Jackman’s first role as Wolverine in X-Men (2000) was filmed in Toronto and was a career-making role for him. This points to the expectation that some connection exists between industry events and their underlying place-based industries, even if not formally recognized as interdependent influence (Bathelt et al. 2014, 80).

In fact, that first X-Men film was also great to Toronto. The TIFF library archives have substantial news clippings about the shooting of X-Men, and how its production, post-production and special effects generated substantial work at a pivotal time in Toronto’s film production sector growth. This perspective was reiterated in casual conversations during TIFF fieldwork, which mentioned that first X-Men movie as big for job creation (Fieldnotes). The shared perception of Toronto as a good place for film, whether through exposure at TIFF or via film production locally, was mentioned as helpful for securing future film projects in Toronto (Interview, Toronto Government Official).

The presence at TIFF of those working in local production was noted by filmmakers based elsewhere. One filmmaker describes their perception of TIFF as an instrumental gateway for making connections with the Canadian and Toronto-based production community. In discussing the events and parties associated with TIFF, an emerging filmmaker based in New York City states, “I will end up working in Toronto more [because I] met a lot of filmmakers… and technical people [at TIFF]” (Interview, Filmmaker). They articulated an awareness of Toronto’s skill base for film production, and specifically noted getting film permits, location scouting, and sound recording, as aspects of filming in Toronto which they identified as useful for future projects (Interview, Filmmaker). Their prior film projects had been largely achieved by
leveraging social capital during film school and relationships based in New York. The relationships they developed and information they gathered while attending TIFF was influential in their decision to pursue future film projects locally.

The impact of personal experience of Toronto while at TIFF occurs for emerging filmmakers and established talent alike. The international reputation and visibility that comes with having 4,000 global industry delegates descend on Toronto for one week each September is considered valuable to those who promote local film production. Speaking to the local industry impact of TIFF, a long-time Toronto government official says,

Having TIFF here invites the best opportunity to have… American producers, studio executives, directors coming to find out that Toronto is not a bad place to come to. So, as you’re competing on attracting a [film] project to come here, and somebody can go [elsewhere] or come to Toronto, someone can say ‘I love Toronto, I want to be there and work for three months. Do I want to be in Raleigh or Toronto?’ And having been here and seen it [while at TIFF] … is a plus. A-list actors come and experience it [Toronto] and they often play a role in the final decision. If you hire on Al Pacino, Al Pacino doesn’t like working outside of the United States. He doesn’t make a lot of movies outside of the United States. So, if he gets cast in a role, he might just say ‘No I’m just not going there.’ Whereas if a film was made and he has to come here to promote the film at the Festival [TIFF], he has a good experience at the hotel and he eats good food, he goes out onto the street and there are no paparazzi around and nobody harasses him, he might think: ‘Wow, that would be a nice place to go.’ You land a project that you wouldn’t otherwise have landed (Interview, Toronto Government Official).

In this quote, an experienced city official emphasizes how personal experience of a place can influence key players’ decisions to accept a project or approve its shoot location. Similarly, a “major Canadian filmmaker was meeting with a major star to be in their next film, and so the filmmaker was watching their new film to gauge where the actor was, and the actor was meeting with [the filmmaker] during the festival” to discuss the project (Interview, TIFF Programmer).

For Toronto, exposure to the city among actors and film talent who have such sway occurs at TIFF. Some actors and filmmakers, such as Hugh Jackman and Guillermo del Toro, have blurred their positive experience between Toronto’s production scene and TIFF. For instance, Hugh Jackman is vocally supportive of his appreciation for Toronto as a film centre, which he first experienced through work. Similarly, Guillermo del Toro “had trouble posting Pans Labyrinth and ultimately… ended up posting here in Toronto at Deluxe. … It worked out really well. It got an Oscar… So, he experienced Toronto by working here, and he has come back… He filmed
Pacific Rim here” (Interview, Toronto Government Official). By teaching master classes at TIFF, Del Toro contributes to the local talent education and outreach. Such ready acceptance of TIFF and Toronto by industry insiders makes pitching future projects based in Toronto an easier prospect. As a Toronto government official notes,

It has been easier for us [Toronto Film and Television Office] to sell Toronto to [the] A-list because they’ve seen it on TV, or because Brad Pitt comes here for a couple of days because he’s promoting Moneyball [at TIFF], or whatever. And somebody – a colleague – who’s getting pitched and that producer says ‘Toronto’, then maybe they’ll say, ‘let me think about that.’ And maybe [he/she] calls Brad and asks: ‘How horrible was it?’ I think that does happen and that sort of exposure [for Toronto as] a big city … is part of that (Interview, Toronto Government Official).

Taken as a whole, promotional materials link TIFF’s international film reputation with Toronto’s cultural dynamism and quality of life. Themes of cultural diversity, urban amenities, and support for the arts reflect the celebrity comments, but also echo urban amenities mentioned in interviews about the value of hosting TIFF in Toronto. For example, by having hotels which cater to the likes of Madonna and hostels which accommodate international film students, Toronto’s infrastructure supports the festival. Moreover, these themes align with Toronto’s cultural policy agendas and tourism campaigns, which I have shown reflect the desire to use culture as an economic lever for creative city building. However, the reputational blurring discussed in this section is multidirectional. Celebrity endorsements, film workers, festival organizers, citizens, fans, government officials and tourism offices all contribute to the practice of building Toronto’s reputation as a city of film.

4.4 TIFF Bell Lightbox: Anchoring Culture-led Urban Development

In 2010, TIFF officially moved its festival from Yorkville to the Entertainment District, where TIFF built a new permanent home: the TIFF Bell Lightbox.

4.4.1 Building the TIFF Bell Lightbox and Branding the Neighbourhood

TIFF Bell Lightbox is an example of how culture anchors urban revitalization. TIFF Bell Lightbox is the concrete manifestation of TIFF and Toronto’s film identity. In context of applying for tax exemption, city officials drew heavily from TIFF’s economic contributions (both in generating tourism spending and creating jobs associated with building the Lightbox), in
justifying further financial support for the festival. Touting the benefits of TIFF and the Bell Lightbox, a City of Toronto staff report states,

TIFF has a significant impact on the local economy, attracting international visitors, investors and media contributing to the growth of the $1.3 B film industry. The TIFF Bell Lightbox is strategically located in Toronto’s Entertainment District at King and John Street. Designed by Toronto-based Bruce Kuwabara of the architectural firm Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg (KPMB), the TIFF Bell Lightbox received in 2012 an Award of Excellence by the Ontario Association of Architects. In 2011, the TIFF Bell Lightbox won a Toronto Urban Design Award and Best in Show at the Pug Awards. Construction of the 165,000 square foot facility generated an estimated 500,000 person hours of employment over a 40 month period. The TIFF and the TIFF Bell Lightbox continue to receive international media coverage with a mission to transform the way people see the world. Since 2009, TIFF’s operating budget has grown by over 65% from $22.4 M to $37.2 M with the opening in 2010 of their year-round facility, employing 275 full time employees and garnering the support of 2,500 volunteers each year. (Toronto 2012, 9)

The report emphasizes the potential for tourism and architectural stature of TIFF Bell Lightbox. This is reminiscent of Toronto’s key policy documents which, as previously noted, laid the foundation for Toronto to strategically deploy cultural industries in service of economic growth and (re)development. By 2008, Toronto’s cultural plans anticipated the potential for stimulating urban revitalization (Toronto 2008a). At that same time, TIFF was in the middle of a capital campaign in an economic downturn. Despite this, the TIFF Bell Lightbox press kit (2008) states,

Bell Lightbox will be an essential meeting place for film professionals, educators and film lovers from around the globe. It will serve as the home for all of TIFF’s existing programmes, new initiatives and community and industry events. Designed … and structured around the experience and history of cinema, the dominant medium of the twentieth century, Bell Lightbox is located at Reitman Square on the corner of King and John Streets in the heart of Toronto’s Entertainment District (TIFF Press Kit, 2008).

In the TIFF Bell Lightbox capital campaign press kit (TIFF 2008), TIFF positions the new building as a key cultural asset for Toronto and “star cultural attraction for residents and visitors alike.” It is centred on film, which TIFF describes as the most democratic and accessible art form. By asserting that film is transformational and that the moving image is challenging the written word as a means of communication in modern society, TIFF also positions the Bell Lightbox as a critical piece of cultural infrastructure (TIFF 2008).

In September 2010, when the TIFF Bell Lightbox opened to the public and hosted its inaugural festival, Piers Handling wrote his welcome in the official TIFF film schedule,
This year will mark a culmination of a decade’s work – and be the single largest step in TIFF’s history since its founding in 1976, as the Festival of Festivals. When we move into TIFF Bell Lightbox, our new permanent home this September, the impact and excitement of the eleven-day Festival will extend to programming activities throughout the year. An amazing array of Canadian and international films will be presented on a daily basis – but this will only be the tip of the iceberg. Gallery shows, exhibitions, learning opportunities, lectures, workshops, multi-media events, and much more will fill the various cinemas, studios, galleries and public spaces of TIFF Bell Lightbox, enriching the experience inside and outside the cinema; adding depth and context to our film programmes (Piers Handling, TIFF Director & CEO).

Nearly ten-years in the making and costing close to $200 million, the TIFF Bell Lightbox is a new permanent home for film in Toronto. The media describe it as a ‘towering achievement’. However, film scholar Kredell (2012, 31) remarks that “the very hybrid nature of the structure is a stark visual reminder of the ways in which the city builds around culture while at the same time using it (in this case, quite literally) as the foundation for private development.” TIFF Bell Lightbox serves as headquarters for TIFF, but is also the lone film-focused policy recommendation in Toronto’s first cultural planning document (Silcox 1974), which called for a centre that housed a film library, archive and exhibition venue. As the TIFF annual report states,

We have a lofty goal: We don’t simply want TIFF Bell Lightbox to be the global centre for film culture; we want every film lover to feel a sense of ownership of that centre. We aim this high because of our confidence in the local, provincial, national, and global support system that has enabled the journey thus far (TIFF 2013a, 34).

Such media discourse produced by TIFF and recited by the City establishes the value of TIFF in terms of its economic impact, international reputation, and public nature. In other words, the role of the Bell Lightbox as catalyst for neighbourhood-scale revitalization is not the dominant narrative about TIFF’s contribution to Toronto’s film identity. For example, on the cover image of the first issue of the ‘TIFF Bell Lightbox’ magazine in September 2010, TIFF Bell Lightbox is depicted in the spotlight, surrounded by fans with a red carpet in front.45 In fact, the main themes (e.g. film glamour and public fans) depicted in this image are consistent with other promotional imagery produced by TIFF.

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45 Specific images are excluded from this dissertation due to copyright limitations. However, they may be available online or in hard copy at the TIFF Library Archives.
During the festival, industry delegates hold meetings in nearby cafés and hotel lobbies, while the public more broadly makes use of public spaces (e.g. sidewalks, parks) and the many eateries located across the street in what is known as ‘restaurant row’ (TED Master Plan 2015, 84). By creating a map of festival screening venues, hotel and hospitality partners, which is included in the 2012 TIFF Press and Industry Screening Schedule, TIFF is active in creating a mental and physical map of the “Festival Village”.46 This type of representation of the urban environment as identifiable villages is reminiscent of branding Toronto’s ethnically defined Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) (e.g. Corso Italia, Greektown) as a mechanism for invigorating retail and real estate markets (see Hackworth and Rekers 2005).

Situated in downtown Toronto, the TIFF Bell Lightbox and ‘Festival Village’ benefit from abundant and nearby urban amenities. These urban features – including public transit infrastructure, sufficient taxis, restaurants and a variety of accommodations (ranging from affordable hostels to upscale boutique hotels) – play a role in supporting local events and are crucial to the smooth running of major serial cultural events, such as TIFF. Although some industry delegates lamented the geographical shift of the TIFF festival venues away from Yorkville towards downtown and the newer Entertainment District, the area surrounding the festival’s new home in the TIFF Bell Lightbox on King Street West was highly anticipated.47 Speaking about the venues the festival formerly used, one TIFF programmer notes,

> There used to be a significant cluster around Bloor and Yonge and that, a lot of those theatres were closed and it has been drifting south because that is where stuff has been built. You know, the new theatres. That has changed slightly. And the hotels too. There are more hotels south than up at Bloor and Yonge which didn’t use to be the case – more new hotels for sure around King and Queen, and side streets, especially the boutique hotels. So that drift has been happening for a while (Interview, TIFF programmer).

Given the urban policy emphasis on culture as catalyst for local redevelopment, one expects that the Lightbox serves as a tool for reinvigorating the surrounding entertainment district. In a 2010 interview for The Hollywood Reporter, Cameron Bailey explains “the new thing this year is the

46 The specific map image is excluded from this dissertation due to copyright limitations. However, it may be available at the TIFF Library Archives. Source: TIFF Press and Industry Screening Schedule (2012).

47 This view was not prevalent, but did come up during a few interviews with industry delegates and was observed during 2010 fieldwork in casual conversation and observations at the festival.
festival neighbourhood, the fact that we will be in our own building, with a new hotel next door, with all the press conferences there” (Viessing 2010b, 12). In this quote, Bailey emphasizes the benefits of geographic concentration. In another interview, Bailey suggests that as TIFF grew, and “expanded from Bloor-Yorkville to a wider part of the city” the festival lost some of its walkability and opportunities for accidental encounters with people on the streets (Mudhar 2010). Regarding the move to a new location which can accommodate the contemporary scale of TIFF, Cameron Bailey states, “it feels like, with the new building, we’re going to be able to build back some of that more tightly focused experience” (cited in Mudhar 2010). TIFF went from having 33 screening facilities in 2009 (FIAPF 2009), to just 9 listed venues in 2012, located mostly in Toronto’s Entertainment District and nearby downtown, according to the ‘Festival Village’ map created by TIFF as part of its Press and Industry program schedule in 2012. Given this, the suggestion that TIFF’s relocation promotes spatial proximity in the urban context is reasonable.

However, the relocation formalizes a transition from Yorkville to downtown that has been happening for years. At the neighbourhood scale, this reflects a shift from the Bloor-Yorkville BIA to new commercial markets, namely the Downtown-Yonge area, where several public screening venues, including the Elgin theatre are located, and the Toronto Entertainment District, in which the TIFF Bell Lightbox is situated.

4.4.2 Toronto's Entertainment District: Leveraging TIFF Lightbox and Festival

While the specific location and mix of urban amenities that are used by film festival goers during the festival run have evolved and shifted over the years, nonetheless it is useful to have a mix of amenities which can accommodate where people stay, eat, watch films and do business while in town. Toronto and the Festival Village have varied urban amenities that offer multiple, accessible spaces for showing and (re)citing the shared reputation of film. As such, mundane spaces in the urban environment, such as street corners and sidewalks, lines for coffee or films, areas adjacent to the red carpet, and hotel lobbies become sites with potential for the energy and reputation of international film and celebrity glamour to enrich the local reservoir of cultural cachet. Relocating from Yorkville-Bloor to the Entertainment District presents opportunities for downtown tourism and local businesses to promote their offerings. This is true for downtown screening venues indicated on the Festival Village map, as well as for the area immediately
surrounding the TIFF Bell Lightbox. Local businesses seek to benefit from the increased foot traffic and influx of tourists who come to TIFF to celebrate film.

As the cover of the September 2010 issue of Where, a Toronto-based tourism magazine, TIFF transforms downtown into a playground for film and cultural consumption. The issue cover depicts a band of film outlining the iconic downtown Toronto skyline, alongside a headline that reads, “Reel City: the Toronto International Film Festival transforms downtown into a playground for movie-buffs and star-seekers”.

Similarly, ads taken out in TIFF programs by nearby business interests, such as the Toronto Entertainment District (TED) business improvement area (BIA), further reinforce the expectation that people attending TIFF will spend their money in the surrounding Entertainment District. One such ad, is the full page TED ad taken out in the 2010 TIFF Festival Program, which reads, “You can have it all in the Toronto Entertainment District during the Toronto International Film Festival. Welcome to the neighbourhood TIFF!” The verbal and visual cues in this Toronto Entertainment District ad promote related cultural experiences, including music, architecture, cuisine, night life, photography and fashion.

Promotion of TIFF as a major cultural event connects to other discourses and redevelopment plans in Toronto’s downtown. For instance, the new home base of TIFF (at King St. and John St.) is now centred in the Toronto Entertainment District (TED). The district was previously site to Toronto’s garment industry and subsequently zoned to allow for night clubs in the 1980s. As such, the neighbourhood is quite large, boasts a mix of heritage assets (buildings and streets), and has an established planning rationale to vertically integrate a mix of uses in residential developments. As reported in the Toronto Star when the TIFF Bell Lightbox opened in 2010, “from clubs to condos to culture is how the latest narrative for this city’s once beleaguered Entertainment District is shaping up, with the … Bell Lightbox cited as the crown jewel that will galvanize the downtown core” (Mudhar 2010).

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48 Specific images are not included in this dissertation due to copyright limitations. However, they may be available online or in hard copy at the TIFF Library Archives. Source: Where Magazine issue cover (September 2010)

49 Specific images are not included in this dissertation due to copyright limitations. However, they may be available online or in hard copy at the TIFF Library Archives. Source: TED Ad, 2010 TIFF Program.
Coinciding with the building of the TIFF Bell Lightbox, the Toronto Entertainment District (TED) BIA underwent a consultation process as part of developing a Master Plan for the district (TED 2015). The plan was first released in 2009, but subsequently amended (Merritt 2009). In many ways, the development goals of the TED master plan reflect the new role of TIFF Bell Lightbox as cultural anchor for the immediate area. The Bell Lightbox is located immediately next to ‘restaurant row’ in the theatre area (TED 2015, 75). The plan also identifies the open public space across the way from TIFF Bell Lightbox as relatively underused and proposed it as a site for developing a ‘festival plaza’ that, designed as flexible space, would both support the festival functions of TIFF, which spill out into the street and public spaces during the 10-day festival run, but would also create an identifiable urban anchor to the corridor on John street, coming down from the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) and ending near TIFF Bell Lightbox (TED 2015, 56).

In particular, the TED BIA Master Plan identifies the TIFF Bell Lightbox as “present[ing] a tremendous opportunity to leverage the new home of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) and to provide a complementary public space by redesigning the current underutilized north-west corner of Metro Hall and David Pecaut Square” (TED 2015, 16). The plan identifies the area as a priority and includes design guidelines, which consider how the proposed plaza, street intersection, and new Bell Lightbox building can be connected through design in the public realm. In the plan, TIFF Bell Lightbox is situated in a designated ‘theatre area’ and directly abuts the proposed ‘Cultural Corridor’ along John Street extending from the Art Gallery of Ontario all the way to the Waterfront, which is envisioned as pedestrian oriented and supportive of festivals that require road closures (TED 2015, 6).

TIFF Bell Lightbox sits at the prominent corner site intersection of two priority commercial enhancement areas in the master plan: John Street and King Street (TED 2015, 70). John Street is envisioned as a pedestrian oriented corridor (i.e. narrowed roads and increased landscaping), with a suite of retail programming intended to complement the cultural character of the area (e.g. dining, bars, cafes, galleries, boutique retailers) (TED 2015, 74). This vision aligns with residents’ reported strong preference for specialty food shops and public space over daily retail amenities (TED 2013,76). Overall, the general impetus and design orientation of the proposed redevelopment of the retail and public areas immediately next to the TIFF Bell Lightbox, as outlined in the TED Master Plan (2015) clearly fit within creative city scripts, and do little to
dispel concerns articulated within the culture-led urban regeneration literature that such strategies may privilege the needs of developers, visitors and urban elites (see Peck 2005, Gibson and Kong 2005, Evans 2009, Pratt 2011).

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have couched my analysis of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) within the broader context of the rise of film festivals and the place branding and reputation building practices associated with culture driven revitalization. For Toronto, this discussion is strongly connected to the growth of municipal policy supporting culture as a vehicle for urban and economic revitalization.

I argue that TIFF is both an exemplar and anchor for this sort of culture-led urban revitalization. In particular, I develop the argument that TIFF advertises its international reputation, public nature and economic impact to leverage new forms of municipal public support. TIFF’s broadly public character, in conjunction with its significant regional economic impact, informs the City’s justification for awarding TIFF substantial municipal grants and property tax exemption. Changes in the nature of TIFF funding reflect the organization’s dual character as a key cultural industry event and community cultural organization.

Importantly, TIFF’s international reputation influences Toronto’s reputation as a city of film and place for cultural consumption. As demonstrated by the recent bid to designate Toronto as a UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts, city-builders in Toronto have been active in building and leveraging Toronto’s film brand through TIFF. There is a relationship between Toronto’s reputation and the media and promotional images surrounding the festival. This chapter finds the infusion of celebrity status and glamour associated with TIFF influences the formation of place-identity. As well, efforts by TIFF and Tourism Toronto actively solicit, represent and recite the cultural cachet of TIFF’s reputation.

Overall, TIFF acts as a key node in the international film festival circuit, drawing not only important industry actors, but also major film celebrities to the city. This analysis shows how cultural industry organizations take root in the city, and can mobilize economically driven cultural policies to establish permanent physical venues which offer institutional permanence to core film festivals. This has implications for culturally-inflected neighbourhood revitalization. In
particular, building TIFF Bell Lightbox shows how the discourse for culture-led (re)development can also be deployed to mobilize new types of public investment. This may point to a new trend within urban cultural policy, which privileges large, property-owning cultural organizations that serve the dual purpose of creating economic value and public good.
Chapter 5
Conclusion

5 Overview of Research Contributions

At the outset, this dissertation began with identifying the need to better understand the roles major film festivals play for attending participants and the host region. A festival-centric approach, such as the one I develop in this work, has the potential to improve our understanding of the social and geographic forces at play in structuring the film economy. Relatively little work in economic geography has considered film events or the impact of demand in relation to economic upgrading of regional film economies. Historically, a productionist bias has influenced how economic geographers approach film industry research. The result is research on the new geographies of film production, and a split spatial pattern exhibiting simultaneous tendencies towards agglomeration and dispersal.

Shining the spotlight on the changing geography of film production casts other aspects into shadow. Specifically, urban-scale film festivals have proliferated and become critical nodes for the industry. Through the case study of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), this research provides a novel glimpse at the role of international film festivals in the chain.

This dissertation explores TIFF in context of temporary clusters, consumer influence, and reputation building, in order to shed light on the social and spatial processes which structure the film economy. My analysis suggests that TIFF is an increasingly important intermediary at both the global and local scales. I foreground the benefits to the industry and local film community of the festival’s activities. I also argue that TIFF has been strategic in deploying and promoting its actions to further develop support for the organization.

Examining festivals illustrates that film is a simultaneously spatial, temporal and relational phenomenon. The primary focus of this research concerns TIFF as a temporary cluster for the film industry, and how the festival creates value for the attending industry. TIFF draws on the public audience’s film knowledge and Toronto’s urban film identity. The main research findings are organized into three main themes. First, as a core, industry-active international film festival, TIFF operates as a temporary cluster, which benefits the participating delegates and local industry. Second, as the largest public film festival, public screenings contribute to value creation
for the film value chain and the festival. Finally, TIFF as a premier film event reinforces Toronto’s place-identity as a ‘film city’ through hard-branding the city.

In Chapter 2, I present a temporary cluster conceptual framework to interpret the industry activity that takes place at TIFF. With significant global and local industry interests present, TIFF – as a constellation of festival screenings, events and spaces – is primed to support the knowledge sharing, industry learning and business decisions characteristic of a vibrant temporary cluster milieu. TIFF is characterized as an accessible festival that brings together the global industry. Within this context, my research finds that creative workers, firms and regions attend TIFF as a strategy to gain access to key industry knowledge, partners and assets, which may not be accessible elsewhere. This insight is critical in developing a more nuanced understanding of how alternative global pipelines are forged to access non-local resources in a cultural industry context of project work. Although film festivals are short-lived events, they are part of a broader cycle of events (i.e. global film festival circuit). They operate as grounded, serial temporary clusters which have lasting consequences for the organization of markets, the viability of projects, and the career development of attending creative workers.

Pertaining to the eminently public nature of TIFF, Chapter 3 develops a key aim of this research: to investigate the role the audience plays in creating value for the industry. Better understanding the role of the consumer is of growing interest to geographers and a priority area for film industry research. I highlight how audience engagement creates buzz and information rich environments, which help industry stakeholders attending TIFF interpret otherwise intangible and difficult to codify knowledge. I argue that the Toronto audience is a localized asset. Festival programmers cultivate and educate the Toronto public audience. Over time, this has developed a pool of embodied film knowledge that distinguishes Toronto from other film festivals. Because film is a high-risk industry and it is difficult to predict the success of any one film ahead of time, consumer feedback at festivals can be critical.

From there, I consider how TIFF has acted as a partner in creative city building, developing Toronto’s identity as a film city. TIFF deploys its international reputation and celebrity cachet to recite and validate the narrative of Toronto as a cultural city. This in turn provides a rationale for substantial, new public investment in TIFF. This is taking place at the municipal scale. Building the Bell Lightbox as a permanent home for the festival roots TIFF locally, anchors culture-led
urban redevelopment in the entertainment district, and stimulates cultural consumption. However, the Bell Lightbox also coincides with TIFF’s expanding mission to encompass aspects of youth engagement, community outreach and education, which are reminiscent of previous notions of art and culture as public good, suggesting the new direction of municipal cultural planning may require both economic and civic value in the cultural industries it supports.

Toronto is potentially unique as a film city, because it is a major centre of film production. It is connected to the international film economy through key film festivals situated on global film festival circuits, and has a supportive local film community (public citizens, film institutions, major studios, and City government). Toronto also has a significant local film ecology, with over 75 annual film festivals, almost double the number of festivals in 2000 (Donkin 2013). This combination means there is tremendous institutional complexity and local capacity supporting the film economy across the spectrum of its value chain. This institutional richness is locally embedded and embodied.

5.1 Implications for Policy and Practice

While direct transfer of insights from a single case study should be cautioned, this dissertation marks a significant initial contribution to our understanding of the roles that major international film festivals play, and the ways in which they contribute to the film industry and the host region. Below I describe some key implications for three communities – film festivals, film industry professionals, and urban policy-makers – which I anticipate will be interested in this research.

Film festivals, both within and beyond Toronto, have proliferated in recent decades. As a result, there are more festival organizers as festivals themselves grow. A new sector of firms and organizations have arisen which serve as intermediaries between film festivals and local film communities. Organizations and networks, such as Cinando and Festival Scope, serve as portals for their members which connect the global film industry, including film festivals. Locally, the Toronto Film Festival Association (TFFA) is a new umbrella organization which seeks to promote and support Toronto’s film festival community. These new intermediaries may be especially well suited to gather information, communicate lessons regarding good festival practice, share resources, and advocate collectively for increased public support and industry influence. Currently, policy mobility is largely transferred through embodied knowledge, where
film festival organizers learn from other festivals at which they attend, volunteer and work. Organizations like TFFA are in a good position to organize workshops during TIFF targeted to the film festival community, and to develop shared information about industry trends which many smaller niche festivals may not have the internal capacity to develop. In this way, TFFA could emulate the practice of forging global pipelines, which this research found is already ongoing for regions with nascent film sectors.

Firms, intermediaries and individual creative workers in the film industry will be interested in this research and its implications for understanding industrial and spatial organization of the contemporary film economy. This research demonstrates that film industry professionals, both representing firms and working independently, attend TIFF and benefit from the value it creates as a temporary cluster. Some research insights are relevant for those involved in distribution and exhibition. The film industry calls for more research on film audiences (e.g. markets and consumer behaviour), yet has not made explicit how film festivals may serve as potential sites for interpreting audience reaction and consumer influence. Paying greater attention to public festivals, exhibitors may be able to qualify the current portfolio management approach to cinema programming and generate more diversified film screenings in theatres. This is already happening with digital distribution platforms, such as Netflix, which have growing international cinema and documentary offerings.

This research also finds that freelance and emerging creative workers in the film industry benefit from attending industry-active film festivals. Festival research insights are relevant for those involved in film production. Considering film festivals as temporary clusters which augment industry learning and networking may help filmmakers, freelance workers and firms alike, perceive the value of attending key festivals. Greater acceptance of the professional development which occurs at festivals may encourage employers and regions to promote and subsidize filmmakers’ participation in these events. Throughout my research, participants were universally curious about my research and interested in a summary of its findings. Consistent with film festival studies as an emerging field, this reinforces the notion that little research or discussion directly addresses the role and impact of film festivals for those who work within the industry.

This research is also of likely interest to urban policy-makers. The Toronto case study demonstrates a significant and sustained appetite for culture-led revitalization efforts which may
benefit a city’s local cultural industries, boost tourism, and contribute to urban vibrancy. Urban policy-makers may be interested to learn about events as temporary clusters, as an alternative or supplemental strategy to support and boost other local industry clusters. At a basic level, cities may connect local festivals with regional cultural industry institutions, promote the events and festivals, or make available public space for their use. As well, the novel set of financial supports, which TIFF has mobilized locally (e.g. grants and tax exemptions), may serve as examples for other jurisdictions seeking to promote and support cultural industries. However, geographers caution about the fraught nature of fast policy transfer and criticize urban policies which cater to elite and tourist interests over broad citizen concerns. Such concerns are relevant and important to consider in context of urban policy-makers’ interest and application of insights from this research.

5.2 Future Research Directions

Geographers have demonstrated a growing interest in cultural industries and in events. Research on film festivals brings these two concerns together. My exploratory study illustrates that there is tremendous opportunity for new research. Below are a few key areas I identify as important streams of future research.

Directly stemming from this exploratory project, is the need to explore the impact of TIFF on the local film community. Empirically expanding research insights from my project involves a different research design. It would be useful to assess three specific dimensions of how TIFF contributes to the local film cluster. First, this would involve examining the local cluster (i.e. industry) perspective on the value which TIFF brings to the Toronto film economy. Second, it would be useful to identify through surveys, the specific connections (economic, social) between Toronto and non-local film industry actors made or nurtured through TIFF (professional networks, film projects, etc.). Third, it would be useful to explore the intermediary role that TIFF plays in Toronto’s film community in terms of its education and outreach activities, its connections with film schools, youth programs and other local film festivals, as well as its ongoing professional development for local film talent.

Another major avenue for future research involves harnessing data to better understand film events. Significant information about attendance at specific industry workshops, screenings and delegates is collected by film festivals. However, gaining access to this information may prove
challenging. Beyond institutional analysis, exploring patterns and relationships in the data may provide insight on how creative workers and firms within the film industry are using international film festivals as temporary industry clusters. Working in concert with festival organizers prior to the event may also create opportunities to generate new information gathering tools. Accessing and analyzing this data with greater granularity would lend insight into how flexible specialization and globalization forces are being mediated by workers in the sector. This could be supplemented by social network analysis (e.g. using IMDB pro database) of film project work between non-local and Toronto based film talent (e.g. collaborations, location shooting, employment of production capacity). Exploring patterns of film work using large databases could illustrate spatial patterns over time (e.g. consider impact of policy changes, film incentives, currency exchange), or through a social network lens (e.g. consider relationships which make and sustain project work in creative industries).

Finally, there is a lot of potential for conducting comparative research. Given the case study nature of research on film festivals, there are opportunities to collaborate with researchers exploring other film festivals (e.g. Berlin, Busan). It would also be possible to do comparisons of a single event over time to explore the effectiveness of new festival initiatives, such as the Asian Film Summit at TIFF. As well, economic geographers exploring major festivals and events in other cultural industries (e.g. music, fashion) may be interested in collaborations that compare case studies across cultural industries. As well, there is potential to examine how the different film festivals in Toronto relate to each other and form a creative event ecology as part of the local institutional milieu.

In conclusion, this research has explored major themes surrounding a little studied topic: major international film festivals. It offers many useful contributions to the industry, festival organizers, regional development interests and academic community. However, it also draws attention to many more questions which merit future study. It is my hope that this dissertation will be useful as a stepping stone towards future work.

50 A preliminary inquiry into IMDB Pro suggests that a subscription to access to the industry-relevant information on the database can cost upwards of $10,000. However, there may be interest by IMDB to support research using its database, research grants to offset this cost, or access through established institutions (e.g. TIFF Film Reference Library) which already have subscriptions.
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Toronto Sun (2010 September 15) TIFF viewers faint after “127 Hours”. Toronto Sun, Retrieved from http://www.torontosun.com


Appendices

Appendix A: Research Interview Guide

Toronto – Film Festival Interview Guide

Name: 
Company: 
Job Title: 
Date: 
Contact information: 
Time: 
Name / context of referral: 
Location: 
Audio file ref #: 
Other comments: 

Travel Directions: 

Background Information
➢ To begin, tell me a bit about yourself and your career within the film industry.
➢ Could you tell me a bit about the work that you do? What is your position? How does that fit within the festival (organization), and within the larger film industry?
➢ What about the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF)? How do you perceive TIFF? Where is TIFF situated in the international film festival circuit?
➢ What about now with the Bell Lightbox as TIFF’s home for film?

If Toronto-based:
➢ What about Toronto? Why live / work in Toronto at this stage in your career?
➢ How much of your time are you here in Toronto? Do you travel to maintain relationships that are important for your work? Expand.

Film Festivals & Industry Events
➢ Discuss your perspective of TIFF as a major film festival and industry event.
➢ Who are core festivals targeted to? Who benefits directly from film festivals? Who benefits indirectly? How so?
➢ What is the significance of key film industry events? Importance for film projects and workers? Any specific relevance to Toronto’s film economy?
What are the direct and indirect impacts / benefits of TIFF?

Who are core festivals targeted to? Who benefits directly from film festivals? Who benefits indirectly? How so?

What elements of major festivals are geared to industry professionals? What aspects of the film industry? Have you ever attended industry events or workshops associated with film festivals? How have you benefited from these? (prompt: contacts, learned skills)

What do you think is the major / important function of these festivals / events for Toronto’s film industry?

In your experience, do festivals help connect Toronto’s film industry to an international / global film industry? Describe / examples. (prompt: access to financing, relationship for co-productions or other projects, information on industry trends – substantive and aesthetic, etc.)

What role do you think film festivals play in Toronto’s film sector? Does the international reputation of Toronto film festivals help the local industry? How so? Describe / examples.

Are there any (other) events that are important to Toronto’s film industry?

Audience

TIFF is a large public festival. Does the public audience matter? Why / How so?

What is the role of audience? What is Toronto’s film (festival) audience like? What is its reputation locally / globally? Why does that matter? Describe / Examples.

How / does audience quality connect to TO’s ability to produce / sustain film festivals? To its reputation as a film city? To its local film scene in terms of productions?

Can you describe / explain the continuum of (TIFF) festival attendance / consumers in terms of: (film) producer > (festival) programmer > (festival) volunteer > (film & festival) audience (consumer)?

Location Characteristics

Does Toronto have a local (spatial) cluster of film production? Where would you identify clusters of film industry activity in Toronto?

Are major festivals and events connected to local production (industry cluster)?

Are these clusters connected to other places? How so?

One concept used to interpret industry events (e.g. film festivals) is a “temporary cluster”: where the above spatial concentrations come together for a period and then dissemble. Does that seem like a useful analytical lens to you?

What do you think are the benefits of concentrated film industry activity – screenings, workshops, parties, etc. – during the film festival? Describe / Examples?
➢ How important are these types of activities? Other benefits?
➢ Could you discuss any concerns you may have in relation to ‘decentralization’ of production in the film industry?

Policy & Government Involvement
➢ What are some of the key challenges you confront in your work / business?
➢ Are you aware of any initiatives aimed at helping your sector? Have you benefited from any in your business? How? Describe / Examples.
➢ Please discuss your views about any policies you feel are particularly beneficial to Toronto’s film industry and/or festivals.
➢ Do any policies make it difficult to conduct film work in Toronto?
➢ In your experience, what levels of government policy most affects the film industry?
➢ Do you have any suggestions about policies that you believe would be particularly useful to Toronto’s film industry?

Big Picture – Film Industry / Production in Toronto
➢ In terms of film production, what is Toronto’s reputation?
➢ What are the key strengths of the film industry in Toronto?
➢ What are the greatest challenges facing Toronto’s film industry?

Conclusion // SNOWBALL: referrals

Are there other people, firms or organizations that I should be in touch with during the course of my research? Can you suggest contacts? Can I use your name as a reference for them? (If not all, specify which)

Thank you for your time. Your comments have been valuable.

Leave them with my business card. Follow up thank you email next day.
## Appendix B: TIFF Financial Revenue Data (2000-15)

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<th>Revenue Breakdown</th>
<th>2000</th>
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<th>2002</th>
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<td>212,512</td>
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<td>209,279</td>
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<td>520,143</td>
<td>475,033</td>
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