

8. On Studying Film Festivals and Migration: Borderlands and Beginnings

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Abstract: Film festivals are constituted by borders: the flow of films and resources permitted by globalised “free” trade, and the circulation of narratives that represent borders and their transgression. This chapter asks how approaches to studying film festivals change when we allow them to be led by notions of migration. It advocates for the treatment of such notions as fluid rather than fixed, creating a “borderland” of meaning and, ultimately, research that remains open to transience, contradiction and ambivalence (Anzaldúa, 1987). I explore data-driven and case study-based methodologies, discuss the understandings of migration and the film festival network produced by each, and consider how we might bring both together in an iterative “pluriverse” of film festival studies (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

Keywords: decolonization, migrant crisis, migrant modalities, slow time

Beginning

The simultaneous dissolution and hardening of borders is often considered one of the defining paradoxes of our age, founded on the contradiction between globalized “free” trade and heavily policed migration (Amin 2018; Rose 2007; Bauman 2000; Appadurai 1990). This contradiction, too, characterizes the film festival network, the 10,000 or more film festivals worldwide, differentiated but interconnected through flows of films, people, culture and capital (including symbolic capital).¹ To be globally “networked,” film festivals

¹ This should be differentiated from a film festival circuit, which presents an intensification of the interconnectedness of the network. A circuit is a grouping of film festivals that share, and sometimes compete over, similar sources of funding, audiences, and pools of films. On networks and circuits, see Iordanova (2009) and Loist (2016).

depend upon the kinds of border crossings permitted within globalized “free” trade. Globalization, however, continues to be rooted in imperialist practices, be that through the extractive industries, import of migrant labor, or the continuing dominance of film industries in the global North (Amin 2018; Patel 2021; Hill and Kawashima 2016). This entanglement of globalization and imperialism has conditioned the development of the film festival network itself, the movement of films around it, and the organizational models of festivals within it—in other words, precisely the border crossings that may or may not be permitted along the network. This is exemplified by the condensation of a section of festivals into a Eurocentric “short circuit” (Nornes 2013, 151), the festivals and the films they exhibit endowed with a continuing “cultural hegemony” (Vallejo 2020, 158).²

However, film festivals are not only constituted by border crossings, they also represent the transgression of borders and the people that either do or have done so (migrants, refugees, and the diaspora). Film scholars have long demonstrated a concern with the role film festivals play in representing migrants and migration, for example through the cultivation of cinemas of migration (accented, exilic, and diasporic cinemas, for example); the production of paratexts that center on themes of migration; or the nurturing of intercultural understanding between migrant and “settled” communities. Over twenty years ago, Hamid Naficy (2001, 23) highlighted the importance of film festivals to the development of that which he terms “accented cinema,” filmmaking characterized by “artisanal and collective production modes and [...] filmmakers’ and audiences’ deterritorialized locations.” Marijke de Valck (2013, 1502) has since observed that film festivals are migration cinema’s primary network of exhibition, crucial also for industry networking and intercultural community building. As well as contributing to the development of cinemas of migration, film festivals can reproduce or challenge dominant discourses about migration through their own practices. Monia Acciari (2017, 211) has proposed ways in which a film festival’s programming might invoke a “cosmopolitan assemblage” informed by notions of deterritorialization. Meanwhile, Dorota Ostrowska (2019) and I (Johnson 2020) have each interrogated the “gazes” certain film festivals have constructed in relation to migrants through programming, choice of location, and production of paratexts for migration films.

These contributions have created a valuable foundation for research into film festivals that is sensitive to the uneven power relations involved

2 On the relationship between colonialism and the historical development of film festivals in Europe, see Dovey (2015).

in border crossings of all types, and, in particular, those enacted through human migration. How might we build on this foundation to analyze the relationship between film festivals and one of the defining paradoxes of our times? Such an inquiry might require us to reframe the question that has animated research in this area so far. Rather than asking what film festivals can tell us about migration and migration cinema, we might consider what thinking *through* migration can tell us about film festivals. How might we conceive of connections between film festivals within the network, as well as the practices of specific festivals, if we allow our analysis to be led by a notion, or notions, of migration?

We cannot ask these questions without evoking definitions of migration and film festivals respectively, and thus participating in the institutional construction of each. Decolonial scholarship has long warned against imposing a fixed meaning, a singular truth, onto peoples and situations, as doing so often participates in an imperialist construction of the “other” (Tuhiwai Smith 1999, 2). These considerations multiply in research involving migration, a reality deeply touched by the pasts and presents of colonial power, and the representation of which, when fetishized, has been described as a form of “slow violence” (Pérez-Melgosa 2016). These concerns are also pertinent to film festival research, particularly that which aims to apprehend something so heterogeneous as the film festival network. Scholars such as Lindiwe Dovey, Joshua McNamara, and Federico Olivieri (2013, 3) affirm that “making broad sweeping statements about what film festivals are, or defining film festivals within a rigid Eurocentric model, fixes the meanings—and political potentialities—of festivals.”³ Thus, rather than producing a fixed definition of migration through which to study film festivals, or a fixed definition of film festivals through which to study migration, we might allow our inquiry to be animated by plural and ultimately fluid conceptualizations of each, such that we do not reproduce the unequal power relations often involved in discourses about either. Through this emphasis on plurality, we might seek to create a “borderland” of meaning: a shared and transient territory open to contradiction, ambiguity, and ambivalence (Anzaldúa 1987). This has important implications for methodology, and even the place from which we begin our research. How can we approach the study of migration and film festivals in such a way that enables transience, contradiction, and ambivalence?

3 Antoine Damiens’s (2020) study of LGBTQ film festivals raises similar questions regarding the role of definitions and legitimization in film festival studies’ methodologies and theoretical frameworks.

This chapter at once proposes and enacts an experimental, iterative research process, a process that proceeds cyclically rather than linearly, that has its ideas and assumptions undone as it progresses. (Meaning here, is enabled to “migrate” across conceptual borders.) As such, it creates a dialogue between conceptualizations of migration and of film festivals, allowing each to transform the other as the essay proceeds. I do not offer a fixed definition of migration, but allow facets of it to emerge discursively throughout. In lieu of this definition, I begin with a provisional review of trends in the film festival network—an indication of the different types of festivals that typically engage with migration as a topic, theme, or cinema. Then, I suggest examples of specific film festivals that either fit within these trends or challenge them—to consider the exigencies of studying film festivals through migration, and the complexities that have emerged through my forays into this research.

I reflect on two approaches to constructing such a dialogue—approaches that begin differently but, when pursued iteratively, may not necessarily finish in different places. The first begins with externally-produced definitions of migration, from dominant media discourses and agencies’ reports to migrant-led cartographies. This approach uses external definitions as a starting point for large-scale (and likely data-driven) research that traces changes in the film festival network—for example, the coincidence between the so-called “migrant crisis” and increase in the number of European film festivals that take migration as their primary theme. However, through subsequent iterations that engage with the practices of particular film festivals within the network, this approach at once understands film festivals through, and considers how they might enable us to re-evaluate, such external definitions. Because of its movement from the external to the internal, I designate this an “outside-in” approach.

I compare this with an “inside-out” approach. This procedure begins with conceptualizations of migration produced within film festivals—for example the London Migration Film Festival’s reframing of migration through the lenses of slow time and climate change. As well as festivals dedicated to migration as a topic, I consider film festivals which instantiate “migrant modalities” (loosely defined as modalities of movement, the subaltern, and sub-national). I suggest that this approach, pursued in a decolonial framework of “knowing inwardly” (Minh-ha in Chen 1992, 82), and working with film festivals that might be typically overlooked or marginalized within the context of imperialism, can create counter-hegemonic notions of migration that might also enable us to conceptualize the film festival network.

Tracing the axes of time and space, I offer preliminary findings from each method to reflect on film festivals and migration. My application of each approach, and the findings I share, are informed by the commitment to “desire-centered,” rather than “damage-centered” research advocated by indigenous scholar Eve Tuck (2009). Desire-centered research moves beyond analyses that center only on people and institutions’ reproduction of colonial power. Instead, it acknowledges the messy, complex intersections between reproduction and resistance, and seeks to foreground the “wisdom and hope” of historically marginalized communities (Tuck 2009, 416). As such, while I acknowledge the colonial histories, hierarchies, and practices constitutive of film festivals (and even the network as such), below I present an aspirational account, one that seeks to highlight and strengthen festivals’ capacity to challenge hegemonic power structures. I extend such aspiration to film festival research, concluding that both outside-in and inside-out approaches can offer a way into researching film festivals through migration, and that, through a shared, iterative philosophy, they might contribute to an open and decolonial “pluriverse” in film festival studies (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 3).

Type

However we approach the subject, studying the film festival network through migration entails the study of film festivals—but which? To begin, we need a provisional sense of which film festivals might be at once defined by and participate in the process of defining migration. Below, I share some preliminary observations of trends in film festivals’ engagement with notions of migration, above all as a theme—a subject represented in films or in festival paratexts such as catalogs or live events. This is but another starting point for inquiry; later iterations will reveal examples of film festivals that do not necessarily fit within the trends outlined here.

The obvious film festival type that engages with ideas of migration is migration film festivals—festivals such as the CineMigrante Film Festival in Argentina, the Izmir International Refugee Film Festival in Turkey, or the United Nations’ Global Migration Film Festival. Beyond festivals that address the concept, migration, we can also consider those that address the people: migrants, or the diaspora. This can range from festivals made specifically for refugees, such as the Sahara International Film Festival (FiSahaha) held in the Sahrawi refugee camp in the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, to the numerous diasporic film festivals around the world. Indeed, comparing these festival types—such as those “by and for” refugees, and diasporic film

festivals—raises productive questions about different migrant identities and audience address (Breyfogle 2020; Acciari 2017). A third typical case would be festivals that show sustained engagement with migration primarily as a social or humanitarian “issue.” These are typically human rights film festivals. As Sonia Tascón (2015), de Valck (2017), and Ostrowska (2019) have noted, migration is a prevalent, even constant, theme at such festivals, although the politics of their various “gazes” remains contested.

Migration, diasporic, and human rights film festivals seem to provide the baseline of the network’s engagement with migration, numbering approximately 1,491 film festivals worldwide according to the industry website, FilmFreeway. However, the phenomenon of film festivals representing migration is much more extensive than this number suggests. Several other kinds of film festivals evoke notions of migration, programming films and special events dedicated to the topic, particularly in the last decade. In fact, one of the most productive features of migration cinema may be its ability to traverse disparate areas of the film festival network, crossing not only geographical borders, but borders of festival type as well. Understanding which borders migration films can or cannot cross, and on which conditions, is vital to understanding film festivals’ relationship to, and constructions of, migration. The curation of migration cinema may be influenced by mode, as suggested by the prevalence of migration films at documentary film festivals (Vaughan 2020). It may be conditioned by understandings of the intersectionality of identities reproduced through identity-based film festivals such as the International Queer & Migrant Film Festival, or special events such as the “Troubled Sanctuary” discussion and screening of *Un-settled* (Tom Shepherd 2019) at Frameline Film Festival in 2019. Alternatively, the appearance of themes of migration at a variety of festivals may be determined by topicality: the need for film festivals of all kinds to engage with contemporary political debates in order to retain relevance, as noted by de Valck (2007, 205–6) and Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong (2011, 1). As I have argued elsewhere, this is exemplified by the European “A” circuit’s programming and awarding of migration films and effusive discourses about migration during the peak of the so-called European “refugee crisis” (Johnson 2020).

Time

In considering film festivals’ programming of migration cinema during periods in which migration is considered “topical,” we move from conceptualizing

the film festival network in terms of type to conceptualizing it in terms of time. That the film festival network changes over time hardly bears repeating; new festivals emerge, their different aims and interests subtly reshaping the plural mosaic of film festivals that culminate in that which we might call a network. However, through the lens of migration, these changes become at once more defined and more complex. Indeed, as we move onto questions of time, particularly the time of migration, we enter heavily contested territory. As decolonial and indigenous thinkers have shown, time can be conceptualized as linear and measurable or non-linear, experiential, cyclic (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 3). The time of migration, too, is contested: is it the linear time underpinning analyses of peaks in rates of migration, a migration conceived only at the border? Or the cyclic time underpinning the colonial conditions that predicate migration—from political instability to the climate emergency created by imperialist, extractive practices, making migration not a singular moment in time, but a “return of the repressed” (Bettini 2019; Strongman 2008)?⁴ Below, I reflect on what taking different approaches to time, migration, and film festivals might entail, before further complicating these through notions of space.

Taking an outside-in approach, we can analyze how factors identified in externally-produced, often but not always hegemonic, discourses of migration might intersect with developments in the film festival network and the circulation of films around it. Thus, in relation to time, we might investigate whether the last decade of reported “peaks” in both rates of migration and media attention to it correlates with an increase in film festivals expressing an explicit interest in or dedication to these themes (UNHCR 2021; Triandafyllidou 2017). Adapting Franco Moretti’s (2013) method of distant reading, for example, we might observe that, the majority of the 360 film festivals that include the keywords “migration,” “migrant,” “refugee,” or “refugees” in their descriptions and calls for film submissions on FilmFreeway were founded in the last three years. This number decreases steadily the older the festival, with just four film festivals (2.5 percent) founded fifteen or more years ago. This contrasts with film festivals that mention “diaspora,” the proportion remaining the same between festivals founded over fifteen and those founded over three years ago (48, or 34.3 percent). While a preliminary exercise, this keyword search suggests that one area of growth for the film festival network may be through the founding of festivals that explicitly engage

4 Adeyanju and Oriola (2011) also provide an important account of this formation, without investing in the psychoanalytical terminology of “the repressed.”

with themes of migration—a change that corresponds with UN reports of the last decade as a “peak” in both rates of border crossings and media attention on the topic.

Rather than approaching the question of film festivals and migration through notions of an external truth (in this case, “peaks” in migration, assumed to condition the development of the network), we can approach the question from the inside, from the truths that film festivals construct. Working from the inside-out would highlight plural truths that may challenge external, dominant, narratives of migration, including in relation to time. The programmers of the London Migration Film Festival, for example, seek to reframe the time of migration, bringing their lived experiences as migrants to bear on their curation of migration cinema (Parrott and Stahnke 2021). This includes programming films such as *Ága* (Milko Lazarov 2018), which shows the relationship between the slow time of climate change and migration, or *Bangla* (Phaim Bhuiyan 2019), which depicts experiences of migration that last long after the physical journey captured in the notion of rates of migration. While LMFF also programs films that document migration as a time-limited journey across a border, in placing such films in dialogue with those such as *Bangla*, the programmers seek to complicate dominant notions of migration that would construct it only at the border. Their programming aims to create a conversation between the multiplicity of forms of migration, suggesting an intention towards the decolonial plurality and complexity I have discussed above.

Another common challenge to notions of measurable or linear time in film festivals is experiential time—the time of the festival itself. Ostrowska (2019, 272–3) analyzes this in relation to the “migrant festive chronotope,” a specific iteration of the time-event of the film festival that is founded on the transitoriness of the event and its production of a threshold of experience, at once a temporary “home” and site of revelation. We can extend this to consider the ways in which film festivals can create times out of historical time, and how this can, itself, challenge the external time of migration contained in reports of so-called “crisis” points. Although I will discuss this in more detail in relation to space, it is crucial to note that research with indigenous and migrant-led film festivals can show how festivals might inscribe non-linear epistemologies into their apparatuses, challenging hegemonic notions of time in their very modes of practice. Such research can also highlight the various modalities through which film festivals might construct migration and/or time, illuminating a plurality of practices within the film festival network.

Space

The study of film festivals and migration invites, too, an investigation of space. As I argue above, film festivals are constituted by border crossings, and a focus on migration can attune our research to the different modes of border crossing permitted, or not, across the film festival network. This may also suggest a parallel between migratory routes for people and circulatory routes for films. From the outside-in, then, we might work from accounts of migratory routes and chart parallel maps of the film festival network as well as migration films' movement through it. This cartographic approach would respond to the "spatial turn" in film and media studies (Avezzù, Castro, and Fidotta 2018, 85), most recently expressed in the data visualization and mapping techniques used in research on film circulation (Loist 2020). Such approaches are often underpinned by traditional considerations of film festivals as events taking place in fixed locations and thus within certain national contexts.⁵ While this emphasis on location may risk further entrenching national borders, recent research on migration and cartography highlights ways in which an outside-in approach can challenge hegemonic accounts of migration at its outset. This depends upon the maps that we choose to begin from. Instead of using migration authorities' often dehumanizing maps of migratory routes, such as the controversial "Frontex map," we might begin from cartographies that chart movement from migrants' perspectives (van Houtum and Bueno Lacy 2020). This would include the "fictional cartographies" exemplified by the Migration Trail map, a map which traces migrants' emotional journeys as well as their movement across Europe (Toffano and Smets 2022). Beginning from rich cartographies such as these, we may uncover alternative maps of the film festival network—maps reconstructed through the lens of migrants' experiences.

We can deepen the understandings created through such maps by moving from the outside in, focusing on specific film festivals that appear along the cartography we have traced. Like any process of selection, this implies assumptions about significance or legitimacy. This next iteration thus necessitates a further re-evaluation of the geography of the film festival network, and assumptions concerning the significance of the festivals that constitute it. Building on the work of decolonial scholars, we might deliberately focus our attention on those festivals or regions that challenge

5 Studies which consider film festivals in their national context are innumerable, evidence, perhaps, of the productivity of notions of "the nation" in film festival studies and beyond. For a small sample of such research, see Czach (2004), Chan (2011), Ahn (2012), Peirano (2016), and Stevens (2016).

dominant notions of geography, and even the “legitimate” film festival.⁶ Pursued in this way, an outside-in approach can also reveal new connections between film festivals within the network, as well as alternative frames through which to consider migration. The Slum Film Festival in Nairobi, for example, is not a migration film festival *per se*, but shows films “made by film-makers from the slums and marginalized areas around the world” (FilmFreeway, 2019). While a crucial site for the cultivation of slum filmmaking, the festival’s emphasis on marginalized areas more generally enables it to support other kinds of filmmaking too—including films made by and about migrants (Dovey, McNamara, and Olivieri 2013). In 2017 the festival awarded Best Film Kenya, Best Script in Feature Film, and Best Actress to *It has Killed my Mother* (Patient and Hortence 2017). The film was directed by Abdul Patient and Aminah Rhwimo Hortence, founders of Exile Key Films, a film production company based in the Kukuma refugee camp in Kenya. This case highlights a possible intersection between slum and refugee filmmaking, further complicating dominant ideas of migration as located solely at the border.⁷ In doing so, it also challenges our assumptions about which film festivals might be relevant to the development of migration cinema, including the very notions of “type” that this chapter began with. Thus, through its movement inwards, an outside-in approach can bring to the fore ambivalences in frames of migration as well as in frameworks for analyzing the film festival network.

Which assumptions, and which definitions of space and migration would we find if we were to take an approach that begins from the inside? What would we find if we were to consider migration not only as a geopolitical question, but as a modality of movement? Working with film festivals attuned to displacement, such as migrant and indigenous film festivals, can highlight modalities that privilege mobility and fluidity over fixity.⁸ For example, the *Ambulante Film Festival* is not held in one place, but travels around Mexico, privileging not capital cities but marginalized places often overlooked by the state. Further disrupting notions of fixity, the festival’s program changes as it travels, adapting to the audiences and regions it

6 I refer to the work of such scholars throughout this chapter. In addition, see Olivieri (2011), Petty (2012, 2020), Falicov (2010), Peirano (2016), Sendra (2020), and Esteves and Oliveira (2021).

7 We should complicate even this notion, however; as films such as *Bangla* highlight, migrants and refugees live not only in slums or camps either, but often in large cities. Indeed, the relationship between city-based migrant film festivals, filmmakers, and audiences is a vital area for further research.

8 On indigenous film festivals, displacement and alternative modalities of programming, see Peirano (2017) and Córdova (2017).

visits. The festival has been described as animated by a “wandering spirit” which crosses regional and socio-political borders (Brown 2019). While not “migrant” in the sense of crossing national borders, the festival engages with displaced indigenous filmmakers and migrants at the sub-national level (that is, within Mexico, yet not recognized as “Mexican”). This is complemented by the itinerant modality of the festival itself, a modality that challenges common notions of film festivals as fixed to a city, national identity, or even a defined programme.

Moving our attention towards other areas of the film festival network, we can contrast the itinerant modalities of the *Ambulante* festival with film festivals such as the Human Rights Watch Film Festival (HRWFF). Such festivals also operate at a sub-national level, but in very different ways, instantiating different conceptualizations of space, border crossing, and migration. I include this example not only to demonstrate the iterative work of moving between film festival types, but because it suggests the contradictory power dynamics contained in notions of the transnational that I alluded to at the beginning of this chapter. The comparison provides, in other words, a foundation from which we might start thinking through some of the paradoxes of the film festival network. HRWFF is typical of many human rights film festivals, in that it is organized in association with international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), is hosted in international centers for human rights, and is involved in networking for human rights film (de Valck 2017, 210). Through its association with the international Human Rights Watch NGO, and hosting of editions in various cities, the festival crosses national borders. It is certainly transnational, although I would not say that it “migrates.” This is because HRWFF is transnational in a way that appears to maintain notions of fixity while framing global Northern cities as centers of power. HRWFF brings a predetermined program of films to a series of cities (usually capital cities) in the global North (Amsterdam, Berlin, Geneva, London, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Oslo, San Diego, and Silicon Valley). These cities constitute a sub-national network of centers for festival editions and the advocacy for human rights.

Therefore, while the *Ambulante* film festival appears to work on the sub-national level in the sense of subaltern—i.e., working “from below,” privileging people, places, and practices unrecognized by the state (Spivak 2005, 476, 482; Sharp 2011)—HRWFF works on the sub-national level in a different way, transmitting a fixed program through a global network of “media capitals” (Neves 2012). Although crossing national borders, it does not appear to undo them. Rather, the organization of this festival instantiates the concept of migration as a human rights issue to be advocated for (and thus

addressed) in the global North. Comparing these two film festivals through the lens of mobility, border crossing, and two concepts of the sub-national, we can notice the contradictory notions of migration and space that might animate different parts of the film festival network, as well as human rights policy more generally. It suggests the plurality and power dynamics of the network, and (thus) the necessity of apprehending it through an iterative (re)engagement with a variety of film festival types, sites, and modalities.

Coming Full Circle

In this chapter I have argued for the relevance of studying film festivals in relation to concepts of migration and vice versa. I have suggested some trends in the circulation of migration cinema around the film festival network, and reflected on what this might tell us about film festivals—be that types, times, and spaces of festivals or of the network as a whole. Moreover, I have considered some of the methodological challenges involved in studying film festivals through migration. I have compared two possible approaches, an outside-in and inside-out approach. The former starts from ideas of migration produced outside of film festivals and then looks inwards to examine how these factors might condition the development of the film festival network and the activities of film festivals within it. As the examples above suggest, such external definitions are often, but not necessarily, hegemonic—they can encompass official statistics that perpetuate notions of “peaks” in rates of migration, but may also include counter-hegemonic maps that trace alternative, experiential maps of migrants’ journeys. The focus on the external, and likely scope of such research, invites large-scale, data-driven methods such as Morettian (2013) distant reading, applied to festival paratexts and calls for submissions, or the circulation research pioneered by Skadi Loist (2020). The inside-out approach, by contrast, invites the case study-based approach common in film festival research, but seeks to move beyond an analysis of singular festivals and enable comparative research that apprehends the film festival network more broadly. This approach ultimately aims to leave aside dominant ideas of migration and even the epistemologies on which they might be founded—epistemologies of linear time or geopolitical space (e.g., the nation state). Such ideas can shape film festivals, and research may attend to the tensions between activist aims and persistent, dominant epistemologies often at play in festivals’ treatment of migration (for example HRWFF, above). However, the analysis I propose typically seeks out practices and modalities of film festivals—particularly

those in the Global South—that might offer alternative, counter-hegemonic conceptualizations of migration. Working with such film festivals, we may then discover new ways of seeing film festivals and the network.

Through an iterative movement between inside and outside, both approaches offer the possibility of complicating the concepts they began from. This movement seeks to analyze film festivals both holistically and comparatively, considering their complexity as events that might simultaneously resist and reproduce colonial power relations. In doing so, it furthers Tuck's work of "thirding" the resistance/reproduction dichotomy, refusing to reduce festivals to just one side of it. Further research in this area should, therefore, go beyond the examples I have given above, and consider the complex interactions between festivals' different facets: their organizational structures, internal hierarchies, programming, locations, engagement with audiences, and place within local/regional cultural industries.

If we move between the outside-in and the inside-out, we find ourselves coming full circle. While these two approaches begin from different places, they need not be mutually exclusive. Within the same project, we might find a movement from the outside in through Lev Manovich's (2011) notion of "close reading" individual objects (e.g., film festivals) within a large dataset. This process of close reading might surprise us, even challenge some of the assumptions through which the dataset was created. Alternatively, moving from the inside out, we might investigate how the concepts or modalities we discover within specific film festivals might apply across the film festival network, or if they are complicated. We also need not pursue this research alone: rather than an individual project that seeks to "do it all," we might create space for a network of plural projects that work in dialogue with one another. In doing so, we would find ourselves contributing further to the "pluriverse" of film festival studies, animated by both its multiplicity of approaches and the dialogues between its members. Whether working inside-out or outside-in, being pursued within one study or through dialogue between many, these approaches have the potential to meet in an iterative, open pluriverse of film festival studies, bringing new, migratory awarenesses to bear.

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