

Imagination as a social practice

Contemporary Latin American films in the Netherlands

Master Thesis Latin America and Caribbean Studies
Universiteit Utrecht

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28-07-2009
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Acknowledgements

This masters' thesis is the product of nine months of hard work, loads of stress but also a lot of support, without which I could not have done it. First, I would like to thank my tutor, Elisabet Rasch, for her assistance, helpful observations and support during every phase of my research.

As was the case during my bachelor fieldwork in Guatemala last year, my friends and family supported me while constructing my research proposal, conducting my fieldwork and writing my thesis. The only difference here is that this time my research did not take place in a country far away but literally close to home. Even my research population included, amongst others, my friends and relatives. Nevertheless, conducting fieldwork turned out to be hard work yet again and the same obstacles, less language, needed to be overcome. My friends and family supported me by keeping in touch while I was too busy to maintain a social life and by participating in my focus groups. For that I am very grateful.

Moreover, my interviews and focus groups did not only include my friends and family members, I need to thank all my respondents for sharing their thoughts with me. The mutual interest in Latin American cinema has surprised me, making my research not only interesting but also a fun experience.

An important factor which has highly influenced my research is the traineeship I was able to attend in the organisation of the Latin American Film Festival. I would like to thank the whole staff of the LAFF for offering me the opportunity to work with them for five months. It was an experience I will never forget, not in the least because the festival was a great success and the teamwork was both fruitful and congenial.

Floor Mulder, 28-08-2009

Introduction

“Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand.” (Albert Einstein)

As globalization processes continue, people, commodities, images and ideas increasingly cross former boundaries and travel across the world. This has major consequences for the way people view themselves and the world around them. Through the global streams of capital, people, commodities, images and ideas local people are enabled to (re-) shape their images of other countries and cultures. This is not an entirely new feature, as people have always constructed and shared images of what is outside their daily lives. But while ‘old’ images may continue to exist, the new information offered by globalization processes may cause adaptations to the way people view the world, adaptations to the shapes their imagination takes.

Although they may not be very aware of it, everyone has their own imaginary of Latin America. In this increasingly modernizing world it is almost impossible to never have heard from Latin America. While some pieces of information seem to stick to your mind, other pieces are forgotten right away. There is an enormous amount of sources that provide us with information about Latin America and everything related to it. From all of these specific pieces of information, we are able create our own image about Latin America, aware or not.

Throughout the world, Latin America is represented, among other things, through contemporary ‘cultural commodities’, such as movies, books, music, dance and art. Latin American cinema is also one of these cultural commodities that increasingly flows across the world. They are important sources of images about the continent. Latin American cinema has evolved in many different ways and its international popularity has grown over the years. After a period of crisis, Latin American cinema has re-emerged and re-invented itself in the last two decades. Latin American filmmakers increasingly get the opportunity to show their films to an international audience. This raising international popularity is interesting on its own, but it is even more interesting as a research object because it reflects broader processes of globalization. In many studies on transnational cultural flows, the circulation of media and commodities within and between non-western countries have been largely underestimated. The debate is still dominated by a focus on centre-periphery cultural flow, simply put: ‘from the west to the rest’. Hannerz (1989) extensively expounds this underestimation as he argues: ‘world cultural flow, it appears, has a much more intricate organization of diversity than is allowed in a picture of a

centre-periphery structure with just a handful of all-purpose centres' (Hannerz 1989: 39) This means we have to revise the normal theoretical conceptions in which 'the West' dominates global cultural flows (Appadurai 1990, Hannerz 1989, Larkin 2005)

Even though my research does not focus on the influence of Western exported cultural products on non-Western, traditional societies, it is still of relevance to the academic debate according to the considerations made by Hannerz. But my research also does not focus on cultural flows within and between non-Western countries as is the case with Larkin (2005). By looking at the cultural flow of Latin American cinema towards the Netherlands, I focus on a cultural flow from a non-western country towards a western country. As this objective differs from the majority of cultural studies on globalization processes, it may come out as a relevant and additive study within the academic debate.

My masters' research concerned the way the daily social lives of the Dutch people are influenced by the global cultural flow of Latin American cinema. Although this is only a small-scaled global cultural flow with limited presence in the Netherlands, it can indeed obtain importance in the Dutch cultural field and imaginary. Film is a powerful medium for it has the ability to show its audience an alternative life and the audience is able to identify with these images. An important theoretical concept in this research was the idea that the imagination can function as a social practice, a concept as introduced by Arjun Appadurai (1990). Through images presented to them in Latin American films, the Dutch audience is able to adapt or complement their imaginary about Latin America and they take these images back into their daily social lives and even socially act upon them. The central goal in my research was to find out how this 'acting upon' took place in practice. My central research problem therefore focuses on the ability of the imagination to serve as a social practice:

How do Dutch film viewers actively incorporate the images that are introduced to them by contemporary Latin American films, into their daily social practice?

During a four-month period of fieldwork, I have conducted a research among the Dutch film audience in the Netherlands in reference to their experiences with Latin American cinema and its representation in the Netherlands. My research population is defined very broadly, only limited by age, nationality and language. The population consists of adults older than eighteen, who possess a Dutch passport and have mastered the Dutch language. Of course, another boundary is that my research population is somewhat familiar with Latin American films. They have watched a minimum of three Latin American films. In this masters' thesis I will focus on how these films

have affected the imagination about Latin America and especially how this imagination influences their daily social life. To reach this goal, I proposed four research questions (see [attachment I](#)), originally there were five questions, but one perished during my research as it turned out to be difficult to research and slightly irrelevant to my subject matter. The remaining four questions each focus on one of the four themes that are central to the imagination of the 'other'. The first theme is the political and social concernment with Latin America; the second theme is leisure and travel to Latin America. The third theme concerns the possible existence of social contact between the Dutch film viewers and Latin Americans. The fourth theme concerns the involvement of Dutch film viewers in Latin American art and culture. In this masters' thesis I will answer these questions and in the end I will give an insight in the way Latin American cinema may influence the daily social lives of the Dutch people.

To answer these questions I have used different methodologies. In the beginning I have mainly used literature study and reading reviews, participant observation through visiting Latin American film viewings and festivals and watching contemporary Latin American films as a preparation. Through these activities, I was able to form a broad image of Latin American cinema and the place it takes in the Netherlands. Next to these methodologies I have interviewed research participants and some experts on the subjects as well. But the most important and informative methodology I have used were the focus groups, small groups of participants who watched a film together and afterwards they functioned as a focus group as we discussed the specific film. Through these focus groups I was able to gather interesting, specific and often surprising information because the interaction between the participants often led to topics I had not thought of myself. I let the informants do most of the talking and wandering.

The thesis is structured as followed. In the first chapter we take a closer look at the academic debate in which the subject moves. In this chapter we touch upon some important theoretical concepts that will aid us in the understanding of the research findings. In the second chapter we will turn to Latin American cinema itself, how it has evolved on an international level and within the Netherlands. The chapter is structured around two important concepts that are central in the answering of my research question, namely the search for a sense of sameness and second exoticism or othering. In the following two chapters we will see how the different images of Latin America that are constructed through these processes are connected to the daily social practices of the Dutch people.

Chapter I: Theory

What consequences do Latin American films in the Netherlands have on the way the Dutch people view Latin America? Moreover, how do people use these new images in their daily life? To be able to answer these questions and to fully understand their meaning, we have to take a closer look at the underlying processes of globalization and imagination as a social practice. These two concepts offer an insight in the role Latin American films play within the Dutch society, a role that contains more than what it looks like at first sight. Films, in general, offer more than recreation as their viewers turn out to be active subjects.

In this theoretical framework, I will take a closer look at the processes of globalization and imagination. With the information presented in this chapter, we will thereafter take a look at the research findings and be able to interpret them better. This theory chapter is structured by first looking at some important theoretical concepts that are relevant to my research and in general to the academic debate. In the introduction, I have already spoken about the way national and cultural borders are increasingly crossed. In this theoretical framework, I take a closer look at these global cultural flows and the way they influence imagination processes. Global cultural flows are a central theme to my research because the meaning(s) a global cultural flow eventually receives in a new local context turns out to be the outcome of a negotiation between the local audience and the specific commodity. In my research, this is the interaction between the images and meanings presented in the Latin American films and the spectators that interpret the films by themselves through mediating them with their own images.

But how does an audience make sense of the foreign images presented to them? People may identify with certain images, but not everything is familiar. To understand how people make sense of images that are not familiar to them we will need to look at the concept orientalism, introduced by Edward Saïd (1978). In this concept, the own society functions as the frame of reference and every exotic image is compared to their own culture or society. This has consequences for the ways images are constructed and the ways people socially act upon these images as my research findings will show.

In this chapter we will also take a closer look at the functioning of the imagination as a social practice. As people make sense of the images from global cultural flows by themselves, they are enabled to affiliate with the worlds presented to them. The images influence their social actions as these worlds start to form part of their social life, making the imaginary not merely a fantasy but rather a practical tool in daily social life. To see how the images from Latin American films might influence the daily social lives of the Dutch film viewers, we first need to understand what this imagination process entails and how it has become a social practice. The chapter

concludes with an explanation of which place media and specifically films take in this academic debate before we turn to Latin American cinema in general.

§1.1 Cultural flows

Globalization processes have impeded and accelerated global streams of capital, people, commodities, images and ideas. One of these increasing global streams is Latin American cinema, which increasingly crosses borders and reaches a broader audience. Arjun Appadurai (1990) has offered a theoretical framework for these streams, which he calls 'cultural flows'. In this framework he distinguished five dimensions of cultural flows: ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, financescaples and ideoscaples. The suffix –scape indicates an important characteristic of the global cultural flows, namely their fluid and diverse character, but also their subjective value. These 'scapes' do not have fixed or objectively determined meanings, but are dependent on the perspective of the different sorts of actors involved, who interpret them within their local contexts. In this process, the individual is the last actor or agent 'who both experience and constitute larger formations, in part from their own sense of what these landscapes offer' (Appadurai 1990: 51). An individual film viewer that is faced with a Latin American film does not simply take over the intended meanings of the film maker as he is an active actor in the process. He interprets the images from the film from his own frame of reference.

Ulf Hannerz (1989) introduces two possible scenarios of long-term effects of global cultural flows: *saturation* and *maturation*. First, the scenario of saturation refers to an increasingly adjustment of peripheral cultures. The periphery would increasingly assimilate to dominant imported meanings and forms, which would cause an ongoing process of cultural homogenization. This theory refers to media imperialism, a new form of cultural imperialism, a cultural homogenization resulting from a cultural dominance of the west (Alexander 2003).

The domination and rising popularity of popular western culture throughout the world seems to confirm this theory. Because this seems to be true for some parts of (popular) culture, the theory of saturation is not entirely unfounded. But as we look further, we see that the Hannerz' scenario of saturation still has its flaws (Hannerz 1989, Alexander 2003). With appointing the individual as the most important actor in the process of global cultural flows, Appadurai acknowledges that the meaning of cultural flows is eventually determined by the different audiences they reach (Appadurai 1990: 53). The viewers, readers and listeners that receive the cultural flows, do not simply adopt cultural meanings, but they make sense of global cultural flows by themselves (Hannerz 1989, Alexander 2003). Audiences are not powerless viewers, they are active agents. Therefore the idea of global cultural flows 'taking over' local

cultural expressions entirely seems rather unlikely. Sometimes it happens, but most of the time it is rather a supplement to the existing culture. This also explains how global cultural flows can exist from 'the rest to the west', from non-dominant countries to more dominant countries such as the flow of Latin American cinema to the Netherlands.

Peripheral cultures do not cease to exist; they are not simply replaced by Western cultural flows in total. People interpret global cultural flows by themselves, doing this from their own cultural perspective. In doing so, they adapt the imported meanings and forms to their own standards. The existing cultural meanings do indeed change as new global flows are introduced to another culture, but culture is a fluid concept and is therefore allowed to change. Hannerz' second possible scenario of maturation fills in the cracks his saturation theory left. The scenario of maturation treats the peripheral local people as active players: '[...] as people would evolve their own way of using them [imported cultural elements, ed.] in a manner more in line with a culture of fundamentally local character' (Hannerz 1989: 43). According to this scenario, people actively choose and adapt cultural flows, conforming to the fluidity of global cultural flows that Appadurai (1990) explained earlier. The meaning(s) a global cultural flow receives in a new local context is therefore the outcome of a negotiation between the local audience and the specific commodity presented to them. There is an interaction between the images and the spectators, who interpret the films by themselves through mediating them with their own images (Kulick & Willson 1994).

Global cultural flows, impeded by globalization processes, thus affect local cultures as people actively consume and even incorporate foreign cultural elements into their daily social lives. As imported cultural commodities are inactive objects, they are not active players within society. Rather, local people choose and select these commodities, and incorporate cultural elements by their own. In the cultural field, people always remain active players and do not simply copy foreign cultural meanings. They select and adapt according to their own points of view which affects the meanings cultural flows obtain in different localities (Hannerz 1989, Alexander 2003). Therefore, there is no such thing as one 'cultural evolution' applicable to the whole world as Tsing (2000) points out, we always have to situate the changes. Therefore it is required 'that we study folk understandings of the global [...] rather than representing globalization as a transcultural historical process' (Tsing 2000: 469). In my research I focus on a global cultural flow in a specific local context, adopting the ideas of the individual as an active player and the importance of locality. The ways in which the meanings of Latin American films are interpreted vary locally.

People construct their own ideas and images based on the information provided by global cultural flows. The shapes these images may take are diverse and infinite, but there are academic ideas about how the creation of images of the 'other' have taken place in the West, and continue to do so. People make sense of the images presented to them through global cultural flows by interpreting them in their own way. They construct an imaginary, an idea of 'the other', based on these interpretations. The process of how people construct this imaginary follows certain patterns. An important concept connected to this process was introduced by Saïd in 1978: Orientalism. It refers to the way people view the (exotic) other and how they construct images of this Oriental other. In the following paragraph I will unravel this concept and its place within the academic debate. Latin American cinema is a global cultural flow that shows its Dutch, western audience images of a foreign, exotic continent that is partly unknown to them. The ways people construct their own imaginary from these images partly follows the path of orientalism.

[§1.2 Orientalism](#)

Viewers of 'foreign' films actively identify with the world that the filmmakers offer them (Larkin 2005). They need to identify with the actions presented to be able to create an understanding of what is happening. People search for identification, comparing the images to their own experiences. Filmmakers are able to (un)consciously construct a filmic style that crosses ethnic, cultural and even linguistic boundaries. The experienced familiarity allows the viewers to incorporate foreign images into their social lives and thus to socially act upon them. Larkin (2005) offers a clear example of this theory. He conducted research among the Hausa, an ethnic population and language in Northern Nigeria. In this research, Larkin focused on Hausa popular culture and especially on imported Indian *masala* films, which are very popular in Nigeria. Larkin shows that although the religious and cultural differences are obvious, the Hausa nevertheless are able to identify with the Hindu Indian culture represented in the films, because certain parallels do exist between the cultures.

But this does not necessarily mean that people always search for familiar elements that correspond with their own backgrounds. In general, the viewers may not affiliate with everything that is presented to them and also these images have an influence on the imaginary of the viewers. It is also the exotic, unknown elements that appeal to many people, in fact, it seems to be rather the exotic element that feeds the imagination. As globalization processes continue, old notions of communities, inclusion and exclusion do not seem sufficient anymore. But people still feel the need to construct a sense of sameness and, at the same time, a sense of difference. Even in a modern setting, people keep on creating criteria of inclusion and exclusion although they are

not based on daily face-to-face relations anymore but on an imagined affinity spread around the globe (Inda & Rosaldo 2002). The exotic images can strengthen a sense of difference, a distinction between us and 'the other', creating an image of this 'other'. The making of this distinction is called 'exoticising' or 'othering'. These two concepts are central in the discourse of 'Orientalism', a concept introduced to the academic debate by Edward Saïd in 1978.

Saïd (1978) defined Orientalism as the construction of images of the colonies in the Orient by the Western people and institutions. The process of image-making is not an objective or academic process. It is rather a public discourse, a term introduced by Michel Foucault (1972). A discourse is a concept that refers to a public exchange of ideas. Through this exchange, mutually determined truths and falsehoods are constituted. Frankly put: through this public exchange one conceived 'reality' is constructed. This means that a discourse can never be totally objective and scientific, because it is an ideological and thus a subjective construction (Turner 1994). In Orientalism, the public discourse means that the created images are not the products of an actual learning process. Therefore, images became stereotyped and on many occasions false and biased. The literal description offered by Saïd shows an important characteristic that is inherent to Orientalism: power relations. "The corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority of the Orient" (Saïd 1978: 3). It aided western politics of imperialism and endorsed the image of western superiority. Orientalism thus functioned as a practical tool to justify the colonial positions.

After the introduction of the concept by Saïd, it became clear that this discourse was not only apparent in the understanding of the Orient, but that it was also applicable to other parts of the world. The concept 'orientalism', without capital O, became the broader version of the discourse as explained above. This discourse was defined more broadly than Orientalism. In this case we refer to a constructed image of a group of people or culture understood as different from the own group. We could name three main features of this concept starting with a constant 'othering' or 'exoticising'. These concepts refer to the process of creating difference, between 'us' and the exotic 'other' as explained before (Gupta & Ferguson 1997). The second feature is an essentialist understanding of this 'other', the group is viewed as an immutable, homogenous whole. This means the behaviour and character of every member can be brought back to the essence of a whole society. This understanding inevitably leads to stereotyping, wherein one rigid image of the other is created. The third and last important feature of the orientalism discourse is rather a combination of the former two. In this discourse, the own society functions as a basis, as

a standard to measure other societies, people or cultures by. As the 'other' is measured by this standard, this process evolves in a perception of 'exotic' societies and cultures as radically different from their own (Saïd 1978). In this viewing point, possible interactions between societies are neglected altogether, because they are conceived as immutable and rather isolated.

As I pointed out earlier, Saïd saw the function of Orientalism as to justify western imperialism and superiority (Saïd 1978). The exotic imagination of the 'other' in Orientalism thus not only functioned as a fantasy, but it became a practical tool that people could use in their daily social lives. The imagination can be more powerful than it seems at first hand. The discourse of orientalism, without capital O, continues to be apparent in the daily social lives of the Dutch people. Exotic possibilities still speak to the minds of the people, offering them access to a new and unknown world. This discourse is not just fantasy, people are enabled to imagine different possibilities and use it as a practical tool in their daily social lives. In the following paragraph I will show how the imagination in a globalizing world became a powerful tool in daily social life.

[§1.3 Imagination as a social practice](#)

According to both Hannerz (1989) and Alexander (2003), people actively choose and select elements from the global cultural flows. Through recognition and orientalism, people make sense of with the world presented to them and therefore these worlds start to form part of their social lives. The created images influence their social actions, making the imaginary not merely a fantasy but rather a practical tool in daily social life. Globalization broadened the horizon but people still feel the need to construct a sense of sameness and of difference. Therefore people keep on creating these criteria although they are not based on daily face-to-face relations anymore, or even on indirect communication. They are rather based on an imagined affinity spread around the globe (Inda & Rosaldo 2002). Moreover, globalization processes have broadened the range of possibilities, of alternatives to the daily lives of people. The world has become smaller and reachable. Therefore the foreign or the exotic 'other' is not only part of the imagination anymore, these fantasies have changed into possibilities (Appadurai 1990). People have gained the opportunity to consider possible alternatives to their daily social practice through their imagination.

The term imagination can be defined as 'the mental faculty forming images or concepts of objects not existent or present, the creative faculty of the mind'¹. According to Appadurai (1990), in a globalized world the imagination no longer only addresses to 'mere fantasy [...], simple escape [...], elite pastime [...], and no longer mere contemplation.' Thus, the imagination no

¹ The Oxford Dictionary of Current English, Oxford University Press, 1984

longer serves solely as a practical tool in daily life, but it has outgrown that function. "The imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labour and culturally organized practice) and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility" (Appadurai 1990: 49). As people are active agents and interpret foreign images by themselves, within and through imagination, people are enabled to negotiate their social life.

Larkin's research on imported Indian films among the Hausa in Nigeria offers an interesting example of what role the imagination may take within the globalisation debate. One outcome of his research was that the Hausa consider alternative lives based outside their own locality. They do this by affiliating with the Indian culture and religion presented to them in imported films (Larkin 2005). Thus in this case the imagination is no longer just a practical tool in social life. In a globalized world the imagination has obtained a new role within daily social life, as I pointed out above, the imagination now functions as a social practice. To understand this we have to turn back to the 'scapes' introduced by Appadurai (1990). The theory of imagination as a social practice refers to the way individuals in local contexts use and interpret global cultural flows (Alexander 2003). Both Larkin and I borrow this view on the imagination as a social practice from Appadurai (1990), who defines this as followed: "[...] the imagination has become an organized field of social practises, a form of work, in the sense of both labour and culturally organized practice, and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility" (Appadurai 1990: 49).

In my research, Dutch film viewers are faced with foreign images through the Latin American films they watch. As they are active agents, they can use the information and images presented to them as practical tools in their daily social lives. The concept of imagination as a social practice as described above is therefore a valuable context in my research. But before we take a look at my research findings, it is important to first look at the influence of (global) media and especially film on the imagination process. We now understand that the receivers of global cultural flows are active agents, who make sense of the images by themselves through processes of recognition and orientalism. Furthermore, they can use these interpretations as practical tools in their daily social life.

In pre-modern times, the 'other' was still far away and information about the 'other' reached the large public only scarcely. But modernisation processes have changed these distances by speeding up the information exchange. People are increasingly enabled to reach information about the 'other' through accelerating global cultural flows. Latin American cinema is an international medium that crosses former borders and influences the imagination of foreign

people about the 'other'. Thus media, and especially international mass media, are important sources for information about the 'other'. In the next paragraph, I will outline the influence of (global) media on the imagination process to see how Latin American cinema could influence the imaginary of the Dutch people about Latin America.

[§ 1.4 Media and the imagination](#)

Media, and especially international mass media, are important presenters of experiences abroad. Where explorers and cultural anthropologists used to be the main suppliers of representations of the world, nowadays the international mass media seem to have taken over this occupation (Askew 2002). Media increasingly cross borders and offer people alternatives from all over the world. When we speak about media in the academic debate, we refer not only to presenters of global news such as newspapers, television programs and magazines. We rather refer to a broader interpretation of the concept media, 'an intervening substance through which impressions are conveyed to senses'.² This substance can indeed be a newspaper or news broadcast on television, but this definition also applies to the popular arts, namely television, films and music. These cultural products are also exported increasingly and form an important framework in the creation of foreign images (Alexander 2003).

Much has been written about the dominance of the United States within this context, referring for example to Hollywood films and CNN. Their dominance is indeed undeniable but with this preoccupation we risk missing out on many other important global cultural flows and the interaction between them. As Alexander points out: 'Economic control does not necessarily imply cultural control' (Alexander 2003: 162). So even small-scaled global cultural flows can obtain importance within the global cultural field. This is visible in the case of the earlier mentioned Hausa, among whom Indian films are more popular than Hollywood films. But we also see this closer to home where, for example, Dutch people also watch Japanese action films next to the regular Hollywood films.

Transnational cultural flows within the periphery, as the presence of Indian films in Nigeria exemplified, can be of great importance. Moreover, the cultural flow 'from the rest to the west', as shown by the popularity of Japanese action films in the Netherlands, is the opposite of cultural imperialism. It shows us that cultural products from the periphery can also gain importance in the centre. Latin American films also increasingly enter the western markets, as I will show in the next chapter. This transnational cultural flow moves in the very same direction the Japanese films do: from the rest to the west.

² The Oxford Dictionary of Current English, Oxford University Press, 1984

Both Larkin (2005) and Appadurai (1990) centralize the ability of *media* to create parallel modernities. We can conclude from the previous paragraphs that the imagination itself becomes a social practice in a globalized world. Expanding cultural flows create a broadening range of possibilities, the globally defined fields of possibility (Appadurai 1990). These global cultural fields offer people a range of options and possibilities which individuals can imagine and thus act upon. This means that people are enabled to construct connections between themselves and foreign people and cultures and become part of a so-called imagined community. This concept was introduced by Benedict Anderson in 1983, stating that nations are socially constructed communities (Anderson 1983). These communities are imagined by the people who perceive themselves as being part of that nation. As globalization processes continue, the world gets smaller and we are increasingly faced with foreign images. Imagined communities can cross existing borders and we can create interconnections between us and others belonging to one imagined group. In my research I have found that people can identify with people and cultures far away, without necessarily having face-to-face relations with them. Recognition is an important way to be able to identify with foreign images and to create interconnections. Media can create interconnections between societies, based not on face-to-face relationships or experiences in their own locality but on a range of imported experiences.

The idea of internationally imagined communities stands opposite to the discourse of orientalism as introduced by Saïd (1978). Central to the concept imagined communities is not the creation of the 'other' and thus of difference, but rather the creation of a sense of sameness. In orientalism the process of exoticising stood central. In imagined communities, the idea of recognition is a central concept. In the chapters three and four I will show how these two opposite concepts are apparent in the creation of interconnections between the Dutch and Latin America through the global cultural flow of Latin American cinema. It becomes clear that these opposites do not necessarily exclude each other but can exist together. But first there is another subject we need to discuss in order to understand the way the Dutch people construct images and perform social practices about Latin America influenced by Latin American cinema. This is Latin American cinema itself.

Globalisation has impeded and accelerated global cultural flows, which has major consequences for the way people view themselves and the world around them. In this theoretical framework, I discussed the different aspects of these consequences. We saw how the imagination became a powerful tool in daily social life, how (global) media is an important medium in this process and how orientalism and imagined communities are important concepts to the imaginary about Latin

America. In this context, film is a very powerful medium because it contains both image, sound and sometimes even texts. Through global cultural flows, Latin American films increasingly find their way to the western hemisphere and the Netherlands. This has consequences for the way the Dutch construct images about Latin America as media present us with new images we can use in our daily social lives. Latin American films offer the Dutch new images, which has consequences for their general imaginary and social practices connected to Latin America. The new images can cause adaptations or additions to the imagination of the Dutch, which they take with them into their daily social practices. Their imagination not only offers them the possibility to fantasize, but it also hands them a form of agency as they are enabled to socially act upon the new images. In the following chapter, we will take a closer look at Latin American cinema to see which images are available to my Dutch population through this global cultural flow. If we have a general idea of what Latin American cinema entails in the Netherlands, we can create a better understanding of the Dutch imaginary about Latin America.

Chapter II: Latin American cinema in the Netherlands

Through globalisation processes, global cultural flows increasingly enter the Dutch society. These flows provide the Dutch population with new images about Latin America. They can interpret and give meaning to these images themselves by mediating them with the images and meanings they already have (Kulick & Willson 1994). Media are important presenters of foreign images and play a big role in the spreading of global cultural flows as I explained in §1.4. In my research, I focus on the global cultural flow of Latin American films, a medium that increasingly enters the international market. My research concerns a small part of this small global cultural flow moving from the periphery to the west by looking at the Dutch receivers of this flow. Alexander (2003) showed us that even a small, peripheral cultural flow can gain importance on an international level. The small cultural flow of Latin American cinema can indeed gain importance in the Netherlands in both social and cultural respect.

In this chapter I will discuss Latin American cinema, starting with its historical and contemporary position on the world market. As this is a very broad subject, I will offer only a small overview of the development of Latin American cinema in a global context, as to illustrate the complexity of the relationship between globalization and global cultural flows. In the second part of this chapter I will discuss a more specific field of research, Latin American cinema in the Netherlands. I will give an insight in the characteristics of this subject in the Netherlands to understand which images are available to the Dutch audience. By doing so, we can create a better understanding of which images can influence their imaginary about Latin America.

§ 2.1 Latin American cinema and modernity: access to the world market

Latin American cinema increasingly obtains space within the global cultural market due to increasing globalization processes. As I have discussed earlier, globalization processes speed up global cultural flows, between and within the centre and periphery and in both directions. But this has not always been the case for Latin American cinema. On the contrary, Latin American cinema has experienced different crises, caused by different reasons before it could obtain its present position. These crises have had their effects on the international and regional distribution. During the 1990s, the pace in which the world economy expanded became more and more rapid. The new global market changed the rules entrepreneurs had to apply to; free trade economic policy, privatization and the need for rapid economic profits were inevitable. With this economic expansion, media globalization also grew increasingly, and local and regional cinemas from all over the world increasingly met transformations (Shaw & Dennison 2005). Cultural productions also had to follow the rules of the new economies, which was reflected in the film policies of

Latin American countries. Before 1990, the majority of Latin American governments held a policy of almost absolute state control on local film production. This state policy had many negative effects, such as state repression and censorship. But when this policy changed in the 1990s for a more liberal approach, the local film industries had to face the ideology of free trade which initially shattered Latin American cinema.

Latin American film industries suffered an enormous decline in the 1990s due to the changing film policies. With the absence or limitation of state funding, the upcoming popularity of the television industry and the increasing competition with Hollywood (Alvaray 2008, Elena & Díaz Lopez 2003), Latin American film makers had gained their artistic freedom, but lost their secure position on the market. The new economic and cultural approach promised economic progress, but rather reached a crisis in Latin American film production in the whole region. In more recent years, Latin American cinema seems to have re-emerged and re-invented itself. In the long run, economic and cultural globalization offered new possibilities to Latin American film makers. With the modern creation of a total absence of, or at least limited, state funding, they were faced with the first difficulty in the early 1990s. They had to find alternative or additional sources of income to finance their projects, or these would cease to exist (Shaw & Dennison 2005: 2). The most promising of these solutions was to turn to foreign film makers and organizations for financial support. International co-production arrangements became heavily popular in Latin American cinema and continue to be so (Barrow 2005, Elena & Díaz Lopez 2003, Stock 1997). These international co-productions increased the presence of Latin American films in the international field.

But it were also the aesthetic innovations and a need for new markets that provided the Latin American cinema with an access to the international film screen. The themes used by contemporary Latin American film makers differ personally, regionally and nationally, which makes it hard to subscribe characteristics or even to speak of a 'Latin American cinema'. Such a term leaves out the important differences between diverse film traditions across Latin America. But when we are able to view cultural flows as fluid, multifaceted and changeable streams, we could apply the same dimensions to 'Latin American cinema' (Elena & Díaz Lopez 2003). Save for the differences, Latin American cinema does have some characteristics that, in a certain way, we could see as continental. A strong focus on nationality is one of these. When we look at history, an interesting explanation can be found. When film was introduced on the continent, not long after its invention, Latin America found itself in a turbulent social period: Independence (Armes 1987). "Across Latin America domestic film production has often been seen as a central component of the national project" (Shaw and Dennison 2005: 5-6). Film was seen as a possible

tool in the creation of national self-consciousness (Armes 1987). Amongst other explanation, this is an important reason why Latin American films show a strong concern with social, economic and political developments. Although the messages are most often hidden in small, human stories, they often bring up shocking themes such as violence, to show the true present situations in their homeland (Elena & Díaz Lopez 2003).

International co-productions gave Latin American cinema an international presence yet again (Elena & Díaz Lopez 2003). Or, in other words, globalization, modern developments and even neoliberal reforms by Latin American governments introduced the world to a new cinema and nurtured the interest of foreign viewers. Latin American cinema is a global cultural flow moving from a peripheral region towards the west. The volume of this flow is rather small if we compare it to the amount of films flowing within the western hemisphere. But as I pointed out before, even small-scaled global cultural flows can be of importance within the global cultural field (Alexander 2003).

As is the case for many foreign films, Latin American films find their way to the regular Dutch movie theatres only scarcely. The films that do accomplish this have to take up the heavy competition with popular Hollywood blockbusters. Most of the films that succeed in this process are the product of co-productions between Latin American film makers and foreign film corporations, such as the Brazilian/ France *Cidade de Deus* (2002) and the Brazilian/ Italian *Estômago* (2008). Although some films do reach the regular screens, the major part of the Latin American films shown in the Netherlands still only appears on some international film festivals and local art house theatres, or not at all. Latin American films in the Netherlands, whether they are shown on festivals, on DVD or in the film theatres, are subtitled in Dutch or English most of the time. This broadens the possible audience the films may reach, as the majority of the Dutch population does not speak Spanish or Portuguese. And even if they do, they are likely to appreciate subtitles in their mother's tongue, as I was told by some of my research participants who did master the Spanish and/ or Portuguese language.

[§ 2.2 Film Festivals](#)

Over the last few years, film festivals that focus primarily on (a part of) Latin American cinema are increasingly organised in the Netherlands. This illustrates the increasing amount of (small-scaled) global cultural flows that reach the country through globalisation processes. It also illustrates the re-appearance of Latin American cinema on the international cultural field as discussed in the first paragraph. These film festivals appear next to already existing international

film festivals in the Netherlands such as the International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR), the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) and the Movies That Matter Film Festival (formerly Amnesty International Film Festival) in The Hague. The international film festivals show films from all over the world, including Latin American films. The shared objective is to make foreign, non-Hollywood films accessible to a bigger audience. The same objective is true for the smaller film festivals that focus primarily on Latin American cinema.

In 2005, two enthusiastic Dutch women felt there was a gap in the Dutch film circuit concerning Latin American cinema. Judith van den Burg en Jessica de Jaeger therefore felt the need to establish a new film festival which gave attention to these films and would tempt people to see Latin American films so they could also be convinced of their beauty and fervour.³ After five years, some changes have occurred in the organisation with the parting of Judith and the joining of the new financial leader Eva Laurillard, but the festival is still living, developing and expanding. The most important reason Judith and Jessica organised the Latin American Film Festival (LAFF) in Utrecht for the first time was to bring the Latin American cinema to the Dutch audience, showing an overview of contemporary Latin American films annually. This objective has not changed.⁴ According to Jessica, Latin American cinema is often of great quality and films are a good means of communication to offer the Dutch audience understanding of Latin American culture.⁵ Another important objective of the girls is to show Latin American film productions during the festival in the hope that this stimulates the local Dutch distributors for release and distribution in the Netherlands.⁶ The quality of the films is evolving as we speak and as the festival obtains more and more experience in the field, the cinematographic quality of the festival program has arisen.⁷ Their last aim is to create a meeting opportunity for (Latin American) filmmakers, film fans, film professionals and Latin America lovers. During the festival the organisation welcome different film makers from the continent to introduce them to the Dutch audience and to broaden their involvement with Latin American cinema.⁸

With the LAFF, Jessica told me that they feel they have succeeded in all of these goals. Moreover, they are enabled to offer Latin American filmmakers the opportunity to show their films in the Netherlands through the festival.⁹ After five years, the organisation of the LAFF has broadened its objectives by also trying to stimulate and support film production in Latin America through the development of special programs such as *Cine Abierto* and a student movie

³ Open interview with Jessica de Jaeger, 14/07/2009

⁴ Open interview with Jessica, 14/07/2009

⁵ Informal conversation with Jessica, 07/04/2009

⁶ Eindrapportage Fourth Latin American Film Festival 2008, p. 5

⁷ Interview by Olga Ketellapper with Jessica de Jaeger and Eva Laurillard, in: LA Cine, 07/05/2009

⁸ Informal conversation with Eva Laurillard, 31/03/2009

⁹ Open interview with Jessica de Jaeger, 14/07/2009

program.¹⁰ If it is up to the two enthusiastic girls and their crew, the festival will at least go on for another five years.

Except for the Latin American Film Festival in Utrecht, most of the Latin American film festivals in the Netherlands just focus on one country or filmic style within the continent. In April 2008, the film festival Camera Mundo was organised for the first time in Rotterdam, showing the work of young Brazilian film makers to the Dutch film audience. In 2006, the art house theatre Rialto in Amsterdam tried to do the same for new Argentinean cinema (Nueve Cine Argentina). As we can see, the three initiatives mentioned above are all relatively young. As the new Latin American cinema boom is also very recent, it is not strange that they have only recently reached the Dutch audience and impeded initiatives such as the three mentioned above.

Films that are shown in a film festival context are often combined with other cultural expressions. The different film festival organisations tend to invite film makers from of whom films are screened during their festival. Discussions, Question and Answers rounds and talk shows are organised to allow the visitors to meet the film makers and ask them questions. Moreover, film festivals often offer their audience other cultural expressions as well such as live Latin music, food and dance performances. For example, the Camera Mundo festival in Rotterdam tries to appeal to its audience through offering them a “Brazilian atmosphere”.¹¹ Another striking recent example is Brazil Rotterdam, a cultural programme that will give Rotterdam a Brazilian atmosphere in the summer of 2009. In this summer programme, different cultural expressions are combined; the intention is to bring Brazilian culture closer to the inhabitants en visitors.¹² Among these cultural expressions, one is Latin American cinema. During the summer, Latin American films are screened in the open air which makes it very accessible to a large public.

Latin American cinema in the Dutch film festival scene is still in an early stage, but we see that it is expanding and gaining importance over the years. This illustrates the re-appearance of Latin American cinema on the international cultural field as discussed before. But more important, it illustrates the way in which the global cultural flow of Latin American cinema is enabled to increasingly reach the Netherlands through globalisation processes. The initiatives described above all make grateful use of the possibilities the globalising world offers. Although the film festivals are very important for the introduction of Latin American films in the Netherlands, film festivals are not the only way these films are available to the Dutch audience.

¹⁰ Source: Project plan Latin American Film Festival 2009, Jessica de Jaeger en Eva Laurillard. Translation: ed.

¹¹ “De Braziliaanse sfeer is tijdens Camera Mundo gelijk in de foyer al te voelen. Je kunt dagelijks genieten van Braziliaanse hapjes, drankjes én muziek verzorgd door de DJ’s Machintal, Hi-Hat en gast-DJ’s.” www.cameramundo.nl

¹² Mai Elmar, Chief marketing officer Brazil Rotterdam 2009

[§ 2.3 Film theatres](#)

As I mentioned earlier, eventually only a few Latin American films are released in the regular Dutch film theatres. For example, only seven out of the forty-five new films shown during the Latin American Film Festival in 2009 are being released in Dutch theatres after the festival. Even worse, two of these films are not even actual Latin American, but USA co-productions with a Latin American subject, namely *Che Part One* (Spain/ France/ USA, 2008) and *Che Part Two* (Spain/ France/ USA, 2009). The other seven films are released in Dutch art house theatres. So even in the smaller Dutch art house theatres Latin American cinema only forms a very small minority. Of the films that are eventually released in the regular Dutch film theatres, the major part is formed by Brazilian films as I will work out further in §2.5. Although some Latin American films are available through film theatre screenings, we have to keep in mind that the major part of the Latin American films are only offered to the Dutch audience through the international film festivals mentioned earlier and do not reach the film theatres at all. The small amount of Latin American films that is eventually released in Dutch art house theatres are most of the time treated the same as most other (art house) films. They are shown for a limited period of time and most of the time, they are not combined with other cultural expressions.

The previous two paragraphs gave us an idea about in what ways Latin American films are available to the Dutch audience. That still leaves us with the question of what these Latin American films are exactly. Which films are shown in the Netherlands, what are their features and why are these specific films shown. In the following three paragraphs, I will give an indication of the different features that characterize Latin American cinema in the Netherlands.

[§ 2.4 Genres and Countries of Origin](#)

As pointed out earlier, we can say that the Latin American films that make the regular Dutch film circuit since the 1990's are predominantly Brazilian productions. The films that are distributed in the regular film theatres often turn out to be box office successes. For example the films *Central do Brasil* (Brazil, 1998), *Cidade de Deus* (Brazil, 2002), *Carandiru* (Brazil, 2003), *Cidade dos Homens* (Brazil, 2007), *Estômago* (Brazil, 2008); to only name a few. It is not strange that of all the movies shown during the Latin American Film Festival in Utrecht in 2009, the opening film *Linha de Passe* (Brazil, 2008) is one of the few films that was released in Dutch (art house) theatres after the festival. *Linha de Passe* is yet another film from Brazilian star director Walter Salles, the director of among many others *Central do Brasil* and *Diários de Motocicleta* (Argentina/ USA/ United Kingdom/ Germany/ Mexico/ Chile/ Peru/ France, 2004). The dominant presence of Brazilian

cinema in the Netherlands is only strengthened by the increasing organisation of Brazil related events such as the earlier mentioned Camera Mundo festival and Brazil Rotterdam.

Other countries of origin that are represented most within the Dutch film circuit, although still on a limited scale, are Mexico and Argentina. Together with Brazil, these countries contain the three major film industries of the continent (Alvaray 2008). It is therefore not strange that we find them represented in the Dutch film circuit more than, for example, Chilean or Peruvian films. These countries have film industries that are still in development, only producing a limited amount of films each year and it is therefore not strange that they are less represented in the Dutch film circuit.

If we look at the short list of Brazilian films above, we see that these are all feature films. Nevertheless, Latin American documentaries also do reach the Dutch audience, only in smaller amounts than feature films. In the inquiry set out during the LAFF 2009, we also see that the Dutch audience seems more attracted to the feature films than to the documentaries (See [table XI](#) in Attachment III). But this could also be a consequence of the different amount in which these two genres are represented at the festival. The LAFF 2009 showed 34 feature films against only fourteen documentaries. Nevertheless, the documentaries that were present were valued very highly, as is exemplified by the documentary *Coyote* (Guatemala/ Mexico, 2008), which won two of the annual festival awards (the Latin Angel Audience Award Best Documentary 2008 and Latin Angel Youth Award).

But also outside the film festival circuit, Latin American documentaries seem to occupy a smaller range of interest than feature films. As is the case for *all* foreign documentaries, they seem to remain typical festival films or films you can watch on television, although Latin American documentaries rarely reach the Dutch television. Sometimes though, foreign documentaries find their way to the Dutch television screens through cooperation between Dutch film festivals and television stations. This is also the case for Latin American documentaries. Moreover, there is another subgenre within the documentary genre that is represented in the Netherlands. This is the nature documentary, films about Latin American nature, flora and fauna life on the continent are broadcasted by international broadcasting companies such as the National Geographic Channel and Animal Planet, stations that are also available to the Dutch audience.

Latin American films are almost always solely released in art house theatres. This has also complications for the kind of Latin American films that are released in the Netherlands. Art house films are often more “experimental” and “slow” according to my research audience. In some of the Latin American films they recognize these characteristics, such as in *Temporada de*

Patos (Mexico, 2004). Moreover, art house films are different from Hollywood films due to their subject matter as the quote by Stefanie also illustrates.

With the modern creation of a total absence of, or at least limited, state funding, in the early nineties Latin American film makers were faced with a problem. They had to find alternative or additional sources of income to finance their projects, or these would cease to exist (Shaw & Dennison 2005: 2). Thus, many Latin American film makers turned to foreign film makers and organizations for financial support. International coproduction arrangements became heavily popular in Latin American cinema, and continues to be so (Barrow 2005, Elena & Díaz Lopez 2003, Stock 1997). These co-productions have had an influence on the characteristics, form and messages conveyed in Latin American cinema. If we look at *Diarios de Motocicleta* (Argentina/ USA/ United Kingdom/ Germany/ Mexico/ Chile/ Peru/ France 2004) it shows international coproduction to the maximum. Although the film has a Brazilian director, Walter Salles, the film has a “very Hollywood look”, as some of my research participants described it. One participant told me that this film was as ‘smooth’ as a Hollywood film. Nevertheless, they thought it still contained messages that conformed to the ideas the Dutch film viewers have about Latin American cinema. It conveys a strong social and political message, showing the wrongs that were going on in the continent, which eventually made the protagonist Che Guevara fight for revolution. This message seems to be very clear to my audience and conform to their idea of social and political engagement in Latin American cinema. But it is also possible that a co-production has effects on the film that turn out negative. For example, in the film *Maria llena eres de gracia* (Colombia/ United States 2004) the main subject is drugs smuggling between Colombia and the United States. In [case study I](#) on the next page, we see how the participants seem to think that the United States is represented as “too positive” in the film, as it is actually “not that good to illegal immigrants”. They think that the film shows an image of the United States that is not genuine. This could be the (negative) consequence of co-productions with the United States.

The United States

In a small village in Colombia, the unmarried seventeen year old Maria gets fired. As she has no perspective of finding a well-paid job, she decides to work as a drug smuggler to earn money for her family. She flies to the United States with sixty-two pellets of cocaine in her stomach. But the trip does not go as planned. This is the story that is told in *Maria Llena Eres de Gracia* (Colombia/ United States, 2004). When I show this film to my focus group, my three participants feel sympathy for the poor girl who risks her own life and the life of her unborn baby to earn money illegally so she can support her family. But they have no sympathy for the big drug lords who let poor girls suffer and even die, so that they can earn loads of money without much risk. The discussion after the film viewing soon turns to the war on drugs and the position the United States occupies in this war. In the film they see the girl obtaining her freedom and a better future for her baby in New York, due to just one operation as a drugs smuggler. My participants think the film does show sympathy for drugs smugglers, as long as it stays a one time operation. Therefore it is different from the U.S. approach to the war on drugs as it underlines why people turn to illegal activities, as there is no alternative. Nevertheless, the story is too optimistic, too much of a “happy ending” as Jasmijn describes it. “The U.S. is not that good to illegal immigrants”.

Focus Group 24/02/2009

Social and political engagement is not a genre as such, but it is a characteristic that seems to be present in many Latin American films. It is therefore not strange that the Dutch film audience makes this connection. The three films that are the most popular among this audience, *Y Tu Mamá También* (Mexico, 2001), *Cidade de Deus* (Brazil 2002) and *Diarios de Motocicleta* (Argentina and others, 2004) all contain very strong social and political messages about injustice and poverty that the audience can pick up easily.¹³ My research participant Stefanie described it as following: “Hollywood films hebben minder zware onderwerpen, terwijl de thema’s van Latijns-Amerikaanse films niet zwaar genoeg kunnen zijn. Geweld, drama en sociale en politieke betrokkenheid zijn thema’s in Latijns-Amerikaanse films. Liefde en humor eerder in Hollywood films.”¹⁴ Watching a Latin American film can influence the way Dutch people view Latin America. Stefanie had a strong image about Latin America, which concerned mostly violence, social and political repression based on earlier Latin American films she had seen. Watching a Latin American film that did not concern these subjects (*Un Novio Para Mi Mujer*, Argentina,

¹³ These three films were mentioned by name the most among my research participants. Furthermore, they were released in the regular Dutch film theatres and released on DVD with Dutch subtitles.

¹⁴ “Hollywood films have less heavy subjects, while the themes in Latin American cinema can not be heavy enough. Violence, drama and social and political engagement are themes present in Latin American films. Love and laughter are more for Hollywood films” (Translation by author)

2008), broadened her perspective on Latin America. This film basically concerned love and humour and the only violence shown was one punch on the nose. By actively interpreting the images shown in the movie by her, by drawing her own conclusions, she is enabled to make adaptations to her imaginary about Latin America. As Hannerz (1989) showed us, the theory of *maturation* is of influence here. The global cultural flow is interpreted in a local context, it does not change the whole imaginary that existed, but it can cause adaptations or expansions of that imaginary. Films do not always only show its audience some pretty pictures or a lovely story, the major part of the films also seem to convey a message for its audience. Social and political engagement, as mentioned before, is an important feature of Latin American film. These films try to present the viewer with a social or political statement, which can influence their imaginary about the social and political situation in the continent. In the next paragraph we will take a closer look at the messages Latin American films can contain. This is interesting to my research because the audience might recognize certain messages as we saw in case study I. But films can also contain messages that are not intended by the film maker, but are the products of the viewers' interpretation as they always remain active actors and do not simply copy the meanings themselves. They can also ascribe meanings to images that were not intended by the film maker. All of these messages are interpreted by the viewers themselves, which has consequences for the way they construct their imaginary about Latin America and the way they commit social practices.

[§ 2.5 Messages from Latin America](#)

As I have explained in the theoretical framework, media, and especially the international mass media, are an important presenter of experiences abroad. To step on the international field has consequences for the way people interpret the images presented in these media. As Appadurai (1990) showed us, global cultural flows do not have fixed or objectively determined meanings, but are dependent on the individual who interprets the provided information within his own local context. In this way, even if the makers of the media do not deliberately want their product to obtain a specific social, political or cultural message, the product can still provide its audience with new images and ideas about Latin America. In the theoretical framework, I argued that the meaning(s) a global cultural flow eventually receives in a new local context is the outcome of a negotiation between the local audience and the specific commodity. The images and meanings presented in the Latin American films are mediated with the images and meanings the audience already has (Kulick & Willson 1994). Therefore it is possible that the audience sees meanings or hidden messages that were not originally the intention of the filmmaker. To explain this, I would like to refer to [case study II: Hollywood](#) underneath..

In this case study, we can see an example of a probably unconscious influence of a Latin American film on its Dutch audience. Even if Latin America is not really apparent in a film like it was the case in *Un Novio Para mi Mujer* (Argentina, 2008), it does provide the audience with a new image about Latin American cinema. Therefore the film has an unconscious effect on its audience. The three participants actively adapted their imaginary concerning Latin American cinema by adding the possibility of a more Hollywood genre. The filmmaker might not have foreseen this effect of his film, but even if he did, this does not mean that the audience interpreted his message the way he intended. Filmmakers sometimes want their films to contain a specific message, but this does not immediately mean that the audience interprets this message the same way. An audience does not simply adopt cultural messages presented to them, but they make sense of global cultural flows by themselves (Hannerz 1989, Alexander 2003). Audiences are not powerless viewers, they are active agents.

Case Study II

Hollywood

"In *Un Novio Para Mi Mujer* (Argentina, 2008), recognizable and highly awkward situations form a subtle, dry comedy which will make you leave the cinema smiling". The description appealed to the three girls visiting my tenth focus group in a row. But as we got started, the DVD did not function as planned and throughout the whole movie, the words "For Screening Use Only" was showed in annoying big white letters in the middle of the screen. But this does not seem to bother the girls, as they desperately want to know the ending of this 'romantic comedy', as they call it. After the boy seems to get the girl and a happy ending is succeeded, all three girls turn to me with a hint of surprise in their eyes. "Was this really a Latin American film?" Rachel asks me, "You wouldn't say!". Putri agrees with her on this point: "Put Jennifer Aniston there and you have Hollywood!".

Focus Group 22/06/2009

In the previous paragraphs I have introduced some of my research participants, but before we continue to take a look at my research results provided by them I would like to draft the characteristics of my research population, the Dutch film audience. We have seen what kind of Latin American films are shown in the Netherlands and in which contexts this happens. But who are the people that watch these films? What are their characteristics and could this have an influence on the way they construct their imaginary about Latin America?

[§ 2.6 The Dutch film audience](#)

Film festivals and art house cinemas, the last name already implies it, mostly do not aim for great commercial successes (although they do not aim for commercial failure of course) but see film rather as an art form than as social entertainment (Papadopoulos 2000). This also has implications for the characteristics of its Dutch audience. The inquiry set out during the fifth edition of the LAFF in 2009, in which over 300 visitors participated, showed the main characteristics of the visitors of the festival. In [Attachment II](#), you find the LAFF 2009 inquiry itself and in [Attachment III](#) you can find the outcomes and tables of this inquiry. The LAFF only shows contemporary Latin American films and it is therefore probable that the audience of this festival reflects the Dutch film viewing population that is somewhat familiar with Latin American cinema. Moreover, inquiry shows that the major part of the visitors mentioned the feature films and/ or documentaries as the main reasons to visit the festival. (See [table XI](#) in Attachment III; percentage Documentaries plus Feature films).

A prominent outcome of the inquiry is that the majority of the audience is highly educated. These results are represented in [Attachment III: 5. Education](#). Of the festival visitors the major part has a university degree (bachelor or master) and more than a quarter has another degree in high education, that is to say Hoger Beroeps Onderwijs (HBO). That leaves only a minority of the audience with a lower degree. But the inquiry also gave other explicit outcomes that are probable to indicate the main characteristics of the Dutch audience of Latin American films. From the results of the LAFF 2009 inquiry in [Attachment III: table I](#), we can conclude that more than half of the visitors are between nineteen and thirty years old. This is similar to the results from inquiries set out during earlier editions of the festival.

The inquiry also gave other results concerning the characteristics of the LAFF visitors (see [Attachment III: In general](#)). The proportion male and female visitors of the festival is also interesting. All over the years, women seem to have obtained the biggest part of the audience of the LAFF. The major part of the visitors of the LAFF indicated to be childless. Another outcome that is interesting to my research is the amount of visitors that had visited Latin America before coming to the festival (see [Attachment III: Latin America](#)). A surprising high percentage indicated that they had visited Latin America before. Following, almost a quarter of the visitors indicated that they had never visited the continent, but they also claimed they did have plans to do this in the future. Only a minor part claimed that they never visited the continent before and neither had plans to do so. This characteristic of the Dutch audience could be of influence on the way people construct their imaginary about Latin America. In chapter III I will show what influence travel experience in Latin America has on this process. The inquiry also proved that a

part of the festival visitors participated in cultural activities associated with Latin America other than the LAFF, but the major part said not to be involved in any other cultural activities focused on Latin America. But these outcomes do not have to be correct as many people are not aware of which activities are culturally bound with Latin America.

If we put together the characteristics described above and the others described in the attachment, we can create our average LAFF visitor. She is a film lover, not particularly of Latin American films, but more a general film lover. She lives in the city Utrecht, has just finished her university degree and is about twenty-five years old. She has no children yet so she is able to visit the LAFF for the second time this year, of which she heard from a close friend last year, when she went for the first time. She is not especially concerned with Latin America, but she loves travelling and has visited Latin America before. Therefore she enjoys watching a Latin American feature film or a documentary once in a while. She is also interested in music, visiting both music and film festivals, with a preference for Latin music but she also likes other sorts of music. But she is not certain if she knows other cultural activities related to Latin America, she once took a salsa lesson and loves tacos, is that also a Latin cultural activity?

If I take a look at the woman I just described, it is striking how I recognize some of my research participants in the description. Overall, the participants in my research more or less represented the different outcomes of this inquiry. Just to name an example, the division male-female seems to be the same. In only one of my focus groups the female participants were outnumbered by the males although in the most focus groups at least one or two participants were male. Therefore I believe it is probable that these characteristics account for the main part of the Dutch population as defined in the introduction of this thesis.

The LAFF inquiry also contained some open questions, among which was the question “*What do you like about the festival?*”¹⁵ (See [Attachment III: 11. Remarks by visitors](#)) The answers to this question also show that the combination of cultural expressions is an important aspect. Over half of the visitors answered this question with ‘atmosphere’.¹⁶ This was also the case in inquiries set out during earlier editions of the festival. Of the other answers given, only less than a quarter was related to the quality of the films, which is in fact the main objective of the LAFF.¹⁷ Other aspects mentioned were the Latin American approach and the different side events: music, dance, cocktail bar, decorations, talk shows and debates. The combination between screening Latin American films in combination with other cultural expressions such as the LAFF does has its influence on the Dutch film festival audience. The LAFF 2009 inquiry showed that almost a

¹⁵ Original question: *Wat vindt u leuk aan het festival?* Translation: ed.

¹⁶ Original answer: *Sfeer*. Translation: ed.

¹⁷ Open interview with Jessica, 14/07/2009

quarter of the visitors indicated that the main reason to visit the festival was the (Latin American) atmosphere. (See [table XI](#) in Attachment III). Furthermore, also the side events of the festival, the debates, lectures and talk shows and the presence of Latin American film makers were named by small minorities as the main reasons to visit the festival. Although these outcomes are relatively small, it shows that people appreciate the other cultural expressions that are organised next to the film screenings.

In this chapter we saw that Latin American cinema increasingly enters the western and Dutch society, although it remains a small flow. Nevertheless it is increasingly gaining attention through co-productions, international film festival initiatives and combinations with other cultural expressions. The Latin American films that are available to the Dutch audience can contain images, messages and meanings about Latin America, which influences their imaginary about the continent. But audiences are not powerless viewers, they are active agents. The two case studies introduced in this chapter gave us examples of how people interpret Latin American films in their own way. In the following chapters I will show how the Dutch people actively create and adapt their imaginary about Latin America and how they use these images in their daily social practices.

The global cultural flow of Latin American cinema offers the Dutch people a range of images, which they actively interpret by themselves as the paragraph on Latin American messages showed us. But how does this interpreting take place? My research has showed that the theories of orientalism and imagined communities are applicable to the process of giving sense to the images presented in Latin American films by Dutch film viewers. In orientalism, the process of exoticising was an important feature, referring to the construction of 'the other' as a sense of difference (Saïd 1978). For the creation of imagined communities the opposite is true, instead of difference, people search for recognition (Anderson 1983). In the following chapter I will show how these two supposedly opposite concepts are evident in the creation of interconnections between the Dutch and Latin America through the global cultural flow of Latin American cinema.

Chapter III: Exoticism and Recognition

Although maybe not consciously, everyone has constructed their own imaginary of Latin America. In a globalizing world it is almost impossible to never have heard from Latin America. This imaginary consists of different images, deriving from different sources. These images are not only apparent in Latin American films, there are also loads of other sources that can provide the Dutch with (new) images of Latin America. The imaginary people already have forms their frame of reference when watching a Latin American film. They compare their own experiences with the images from the film in order to identify with them. This comparison can both lead to both recognition of the images as being familiar and, at the same time, exoticism. Before we look at these concepts, how people handle new images from Latin American films, we will first look at their frame of reference. The previous chapter gave us an idea of what Latin American films are available to the Dutch audience, but as I pointed out before, there are more possible information sources. In the first paragraph of this chapter these sources stand central.

In the following three paragraphs we will take a closer look at how Dutch people handle the new images presented to them through Latin American films. In order to create an understanding of the images, people need to identify with the images in the films. This identification takes place in different ways. In the second paragraph, we will take a look at what this means. Although the world globalizes increasingly, people still feel the need to have their own identity and therefore to construct a sense of sameness and, at the same time, a sense of difference between themselves and others. In the theoretical framework, we saw that the concepts exoticism and imagined communities were central in the construction of images concerning other cultures, people and countries. These concepts apply to Latin American films and the imaginary as well. In the creation of imagined communities, people search for a sense of sameness (Anderson 1983); they search for recognition. The images in Latin American films can be seen as known, allowing the viewers to identify with them in a sense of sameness instead of difference. In exoticism the opposite accounts as people construct an image of 'the other'. Instead of searching for a sense of sameness, they create a sense of difference (Saïd 1978). When people watch a Latin American film, they can classify certain images as being different from themselves, creating an idea of the other and themselves. In both ways, people try to identify with the presented images by comparing them with their own experiences. My research will show that these two opposites do not necessarily exclude each other, but can exist together. People (re)create their imaginary about Latin American cinema based on different images, both known and unknown, presented to them through global cultural flows.

§ 3.1 Sources of Latin American images

Everybody has his own range of information sources and everybody makes their own selection of these pieces of information to create an imaginary of Latin America. The continuing global cultural flows supply us with an indefinite range of images. This means we obtain our images not only from global media flows, but from all five dimensions of cultural flows: the ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, financescaples and ideoscaples (Appadurai 1990). It is therefore impossible to speak of just *one* true shared image of Latin America that would exist among the Dutch film viewers. Moreover, images always remain adaptable and changeable, a process that depends on new information and points of view. Therefore we must rather speak of an infinite range of images about Latin America existing among the Dutch film viewers. It is impossible to find that one true image that the Dutch people have constructed of Latin America. Nevertheless what we can do is search for (abstract) communalities, elements that the Dutch audience share in their imaginary about Latin America.

People always look from their own frame of reference, this paragraph offers the reader an understanding of what this frame of reference exists of. It offers an insight in the possible sources of information, the possible global cultural flows that are available to the Dutch audience. These flows provide the images the Dutch may use to construct their imaginary about Latin America. This imaginary forms the frame of reference in which the Dutch place the new images from Latin American films.

Travel Stories

Cries such as "... has visited that city!" or "I heard something about that from ..." were not rare during the film viewings and discussions in my focus groups. When I asked the participants of my research about their main sources of information about Latin America, many of them started to talk about experiences that were not their own. Stories from travellers who shared their experiences back home, showing pictures and telling exciting stories they witnessed to basically everybody who would listen. The stories of friends and relatives, often full of exciting details, left impressions on the Dutch people who stayed at home, far away from Latin America. The stories provide them with images of Latin America. To understand the way travel stories from Latin America influence the imaginary about the continent, we should make an important division here. About half of my research participants never visited Latin America themselves and were therefore dependent on the travel stories of others. The other half of my research participants did create their own travel stories about Latin America through their own travels. As my research

progressed, I experienced that this division is very important as it influences the way people create their imaginary about Latin America. This is illustrated by the following case study.

Case Study III

Travel Stories

For one focus group I invited Selma, Yke and Jasmijn over to my place to eat a Mexican dish and watch a Latin American film together. We chose to watch *Maria Llena Eres De Gracia* (Colombia/ United States 2006). One of the first images that appears on the screen is a big, coloured 'chicken bus', an old America school bus that is an important way of public exportation in Colombia and lots of other countries in Latin America. Selma and Jasmijn enthusiastically start to revive memories about their travels in Guatemala and Mexico by telling sometimes terrifying stories about chicken busses. Yke has never visited Latin America but she listens to their stories with great interest as she is planning to travel to Latin America next summer.

Focus Group 24/02/2009

In the case study, Selma and Jasmijn actively compare the images shown in the film to their own travel experiences. They continued to do this throughout the whole film, serving as a source of information for Yke's imagination about Latin America. For people who did visit Latin America by themselves, this seems to be the first and foremost important source of information about the continent. If they receive new information about the continent, for example when they watch a Latin American film or eat a Latin American dish, they immediately tend to make a comparison between their own experiences and the new images presented to them. However, people who did not visit Latin America also tended to compare their own experiences with the continent to the new images. Yke did not have travel experience in Latin America, but she also participated in the short conversations during the film, asking the others about their travel stories and she sometimes referred to the travel stories of her boyfriend. The latter were of influence on the imaginary she already had about Latin America. The new stories she heard complemented and adapted this image.

Social contacts

Some of my research participants knew people from Latin America who had immigrated to the Netherlands, or people with a Latin American background or family still living on the continent. If this was the case, it appeared that these friends were often the main source of information about Latin America for the research participants who had not visited Latin America themselves.

For example, Douwe told me about a college friend who was originally from Bolivia. This girl was now living in the Netherlands since she was a teenager, studying together with Douwe at the University of Amsterdam. Although she is totally integrated in the Dutch society, a large amount of family members is still living in Bolivia. As they see each other very often, she often tells Douwe about her family in Bolivia. As the political situation was very sensational the last time they spoke, political developments of the country quickly became part of her stories. To Douwe, these conversations were the first time he heard about Hugo Chávez and other political developments in the region, according to him even before the news was printed in Dutch newspapers. These newspapers also form an important source of information as will be explained in the next paragraph.

Social contacts make connections between the Netherlands and Latin America exist. Through contacts with immigrants or Dutch people with Latin American backgrounds, Dutch people receive specific information about the continent. But there is another form of social contact which is not situated in the Netherlands. This mostly concerns, yet again, the people who have visited Latin America themselves. Sometimes these visits have resulted in social contacts with local people, which are maintained after their return through e-mail, telephone etc. This has influence on the way people are concerned with Latin America. People are more likely to follow local news of Latin America if they know people living there and they receive more recent information through their social contacts 'in the field'. The information provided through social contacts influences the way Dutch people construct their imaginary of Latin America. It often provides them with more specific, smaller-scaled information about certain regions of the continent which enables them to form a more detailed image.

News

Many of the Dutch people I spoke with told me that to them the Dutch news, by which they meant both on television and in newspapers, was only a scarce source of information about Latin America. According to them, news about Latin America is only rarely apparent in the regular Dutch news sources. Startling here is that they emphasized that this was less the case for news from other continents beside Europe and the United States, such as Asia or Africa. Compared to Latin America, news from these continents, especially from the Middle East, is very apparent in the Dutch news according to some of my research participants. This with the exception of so-called 'hot items' such as the war on drugs, news with a highly entertaining character, and news concerning both Latin America and the Netherlands. These forms of news do appear in the regular Dutch news sources. To explain what they meant by hot items, many research

participants referred to the Dutch girl Tanja Nijmeijer who joined the Colombian guerrilla movement FARC, which was all over the news in the Netherlands in 2006. The research participants who indicated the overall absence of Latin American news in the Dutch media also stressed that they would very much like this to change. This because they would be interested in political and social developments in Latin America if it was provided to them through the regular news flows. Despite this interest, Dutch people rarely use other sources such as the Internet to find news about Latin America.

Books

Another possible source of information about the continent are Latin American books. There are different kinds of books to be mentioned here. As some of my research participants were actively involved with Latin America through their studies, academic books are of great influence on their imaginary about Latin America. But also novels written by Latin American authors, or novels situated in Latin America, are important in the construction of the imaginary of my research participants. The following case study gives us a striking example of how books concerning Latin America can influence the imaginary.

Case Study IV

Films and prisons

My very first focus group existed of five girls and a guy. Sasja had travelled to Brazil a year earlier and was very happy I chose to watch a Brazilian film, *Estômago* (Brazil/ Italy, 2007). The other five did not really seem to care which country or language I chose, as nobody spoke Spanish or Portuguese or had visited Latin America. But this did not mean they did not love the film. In the discussion afterwards, they all praised the film for its humour and pretty pictures. There was only one aspect they did not like. The four participants that had no travel experience in Brazil could not relate to the circumstances in the prison shown in the movie. They thought that this could not be a truthful image of a Latin American prison. But then Sasja had read a book about a Bolivian prison (Rusty Young: 'Marching Powder' (2002)) when she planned her trip to Brazil. Reading this book earlier made it easier for her to relate to the almost unbelievable images shown in the film. This book gives a witness report of an American man sentenced to jail in Latin America. Prisoners have to pay an entrance fee and buy their own cells (the alternative is to sleep outside and die of exposure), prisoners' wives and children often live inside too, high quality cocaine is manufactured and sold from. Through the book, Sasja knew that prisons in Latin America can differ greatly from European prisons and sometimes even form 'cities within cities'.

Focus Group 30/01/2009

This example shows the influence books can have on the imaginary about Latin America. The people who had not read this book thought this could not be a realistic image of a prison as it did not correspond with their idea of a prison. Through the book, Sasja knew that Latin American prisons can differ greatly to prisons in the Netherlands. She could provide the other participants of this focus group with detailed information about this Latin American subject. With her reading experience she could convince the other participants that this could be a truthful image of a Brazilian prison. The book had an influence on her imaginary about Latin America and this, together with the images presented in the film, influenced the other viewers as well.

Music, Dance and other cultural expressions

In [Case Study III: Travel Stories](#) we saw how travel stories can influence the way people watch Latin American films and the way they construct their imaginary of the continent. During that same focus group, another source of images came clear. A few screenshots after the chicken bus had entered the screen, the film music changed to happier, Latin spirited sounds. This made Yke smile and ask me: "Do you know the name of this band, I am sure I have heard this music before!". Cultural expressions such as music, language and dance increasingly appear in the Netherlands through global cultural flows. People are faced with these expressions on festivals, concerts or even during a sunny day in the park.

Films

The last, but certainly not least, the source of information about Latin America is the source that is subject to this thesis. Documentaries and feature films from Latin America or documentaries and films with the subject Latin America or a specific region of the continent are important providers of images and ideas about Latin America. In [chapter two](#) I have outlined the presence and availability of Latin American films in the Netherlands. The amount of Latin American films that Dutch film viewers watch differs greatly, moving between one film and as much as twenty-five. As was the case for the different Dutch media sources, some of my research participants complained about the limited availability of Latin American films in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, many of my research participants stated that Latin American documentaries, or at least documentaries about certain aspects of Latin America, were often accessible through television channels such as the National Geographic Channel or the Dutch public broadcasting companies. But besides this source, Latin American films are only distributed on a limited scale in the Netherlands.

In this paragraph I have outlined out all the possible sources of information about Latin America I have come across in my research. It showed us where people obtain the information to (re-) create their imaginary of Latin America. The images derived from these sources form a frame of reference for the Dutch film viewers. When receiving new images about Latin America, they can use this frame of reference to compare and select the new images. When watching a Latin American film, they unconsciously compare the images in the film to their own experiences. They always search for recognition, in order to identify with the image. This comparing process can thus evolve in two opposite directions, however they can still occur at the same time. The first is the search for a sense of sameness with the images. People want to connect to the shown images by searching for communalities between their own experiences and the film images. The second direction is rather the opposite, whereby people actively search for differences. Through exoticising they construct an image of Latin America as 'the other', that is different, more exotic than themselves. In the following two paragraphs I will point out how these processes are apparent when Dutch people watch Latin American films. Through a sense of sameness and exoticism, people are enabled to interpret the images and give them a place in their imaginary about Latin America.

[§ 3.2 Identification](#)

Films have the ability to show its audience alternative lives, which the audience can identify with. As I have already indicated [paragraph 1.2](#), viewers of 'foreign' films actively identify with the world that the filmmakers offer them (Larkin 2005). The images are interpreted by the audience on an individual basis. A common way to do this is to search for a form of recognition. People try to understand a film by identifying with the elements they recognize. They seek for commonalities between their own frame of reference and the images shown in the films.

This search for identification can take different forms. As explained in chapter two, the Dutch audience seems to share certain images of Latin America. When watching a Latin American film, people try to match their own experiences with the images shown in the film. There is a big difference with reference to the perception of Latin America between research participants who visited Latin America and them who have not. The first group namely bases their imaginary about Latin America on their own travel experiences. When they watch films concerning Latin America, even if these films are produced in countries or regions they did not visit (yet), they actively search for identification. They see their own experiences affirmed in the film. It turns out that everybody searches for identification when presented with new information, even if they have not travelled in Latin America. The difference is that people who

visited Latin America almost always compare it to their own travel experiences while people who did not rely on a wider range of experiences. The latter search for the presence of other things they recognize from their own experiences, outside Latin America. They try to recognize things they know through travel stories of friends and relatives or cultural commodities known to them by the global market of import such as music, food etc. In case study III we saw how Yke tried to recognize elements in the film although she had never travelled to Latin America. She did however know Latin music. Partly because this music was present in the film, she was able to identify with the images presented in the film.

But this does not mean that the imaginary of people with travel experience in Latin America solely relies on these experiences. This group also receives information through other sources, just like the other group. These images are also integrated in their imaginary. Nevertheless, travel stories seem to have the most impact. Everybody who visited Latin America that attended my focus groups eventually reflected on their own experiences abroad during the group discussions. Moreover, people who did not visit Latin America also seem more willing to adapt their views to new information. People who visited Latin America have actually seen the continent and position these images as the truest because they do not rely on media. It is harder for them to adapt the parts of their imaginary that are based on their travel experiences. sight

In this paragraph it came clear that Dutch film viewers actively search for familiarity and identification in Latin American films. The identification process can take different shapes. People always search for recognition in the films in order to identify with the image. This comparing process can adopt two shapes that seem opposite at first hand. The first shape is the search for a sense of sameness between themselves and the images presented in the film. People want to connect to the film by searching for communalities between themselves and the images. The second shape is rather the opposite, whereby people actively search for differences. Through exoticising they construct an image of Latin America as being different, more exotic than themselves. Although these two shapes seem to be opposites, they can still occur at the same time. Films can contain both familiar and exotic images. It is not one or the other, it is rather the experienced identification with both familiar and exotic images that allows them to incorporate foreign images into their daily social lives and to socially act upon them. What these social actions entail will be the subject of the next chapters. In the following two paragraphs, we will take a closer look at these two components of which the identification process can subsist.

[§ 3.3 A sense of sameness](#)

When receiving new images about Latin America, people use their own frame of reference to compare and select new images. They actively make comparisons between new images and the imaginary they already have of Latin America. As explained in the previous paragraph, this comparing process can evolve in two directions. The first direction is a search for recognition of the presented images. People can be enabled to identify with the images shown in the film by searching for communalities between themselves and the film images. In the theoretical framework we saw that when imagined communities are created, people search for a sense of sameness (Anderson 1983). The images in Latin American films can be regarded as familiar, allowing the viewers to identify with them in a sense of sameness instead of difference.

Dutch film viewers actively search for a form of identification, whether familiar or exotic. But there are also cases where the Dutch audience is unable to relate to the images in Latin American films at all. The images shown in the film can totally differ from their expectations, from the imaginary they already had. We already saw this in [Case Study II: Hollywood](#), where the participants had formed images of Latin American cinema as being different from Hollywood films, concerning more severe subjects such as violence and poverty. When the film showed a love story, they were surprised because they could not recognize the images in the film based on their own experiences. If this is the case and people do not succeed in the recognition process at all, they are likely to doubt the Latin American origin of the film. This was the case in [Case Study II: Hollywood](#), where the three girls doubted if the film was a Latin American production as it did not confirm their ideas about Latin American cinema. But when certain aspects confirm to their own ideas of what is Latin American and other aspects do not, people are more likely to doubt their own imaginary or at least to discuss its validity. This is what occurred in many focus groups, which is strikingly illustrated by [Case study VI: Not even in Latin America](#) below.

Not even in Latin America

Two guys and a girl volunteered to participate in my focus group showing the feature film *La Buena Vida* (Chile, 2008). The three actively recognized Latin American elements while watching the film. They found that many aspects conformed to their own imaginary about the continent. Nevertheless, there was one part of the film that they found very unlikely at first sight, as was the case with the Brazilian prison in the other focus group. This part was the story was about a poor, AIDS-infected woman, probably a prostitute, who had to take care for her baby son. In one of the first scenes, we see her at a hospital asking for help. A doctor tells her she can get medical help, totally financed by the clinic, but they do not compensate for day care for her son. As she does not have any money to pay this herself, she can not be treated for her disease and returns to her flat, still sick, caring for her baby. In one of the last scenes of the film she is found dead on the streets by a passing woman, she left her baby crying in their apartment. Then a news flash appears on the screen, a baby boy is found dead after three days of negligence. The three participants of the focus group are shocked and can not believe this could actually happen, "even in Latin America". The closing credits show that the stories in the film were based on actual events. As the three participants discuss the film afterwards, they accept the matter because they found the rest of the film very believable and very "Latin American". Lisanne ends the discussion by saying: "So it must at least be partly true".

Focus Group 16/06/2009

After watching the film the three participants of the focus group talked about the validity of the film. They found this one episode of the film illustrated in the case study very shocking and they did not believe it could be truthful. In their own experiences, a serious case like this could not occur, not in their own society but also not in Latin America. In their imaginary, Latin America was very different from their own society, but in a certain sense it was the same. They thought Latin American societies would not allow a baby to die of negligence as it would not in their own society. The rest of the film did however confirm their imaginary about Latin America. As they found the rest of the film very believable they chose to redefine their imaginary. The participants of this focus group actively searched for a sense of sameness between themselves and the people and society presented in the film. When this sense of sameness was shattered by the striking event in the film, they were shocked and doubted the validity of the film.

People do not always search for images that correspond with their own background. The films also contain images that are exotic or strange. As I have argued in the theoretical framework, it is rather the exotic element that feeds the imagination. In my research, this theory has been proven

as the Dutch film viewers are not familiar with all the images presented to them in the Latin American films. During the viewing sessions and in the discussions, they did not only react on the elements of the film that they were familiar with. They also reacted on images that did not correspond with the images they meet every day in their daily social lives. In the next paragraph we will take a look at the role exoticism can play in the identification process.

[§ 3.4 Exoticism](#)

Searching for sameness is not the only way how the Dutch film viewers incorporate cultural images into their imaginary about Latin America. It is also the exotic elements that appeal to many. While watching a Latin American film, people try to match their imaginary about Latin America with the images shown in the film. But their imaginary does not necessarily consist of only images that are familiar to them, which they experience in their daily social lives. People can also construct an imaginary about Latin America based on images they find exotic. An example is the idea of “white exotic beaches, beautiful people, the deep blue seas and colourful cultures”.¹⁸ When watching a Latin American film that contains similar images, they find recognition in these exotic images but they do not identify themselves with these images as the images belong ‘the other’. Another way to take up and interpret images from Latin American films is through exoticism (Saïd 1978).

People try to recognize the film images in order to give them a place in their imaginary. They do this by comparing them to their own experiences. In the first paragraph we saw how this comparison can be drawn between their personal experiences and the images, as to create a sense of sameness. But people can also have experiences that are not connected to their own practices. Recognition can also take place when exotic but known images are shown in a film. An example here could be the film *Motorcycle Diaries* (Argentina/ USA/ United Kingdom/ Germany/ Mexico/ Chile/ Peru/ France 2004) which shows much of the exotic environment of Latin America that differs greatly from the Dutch nature. When I showed this film in a focus group, people were faced with exotic images about Latin America. Nevertheless, a form of recognition took place and their imaginary of Latin America was affirmed. Although all three people had not visited Latin America the images in the film confirmed their expectations of Latin America that was based on their imaginary of Latin America as “an exotic continent with a lot of nature”.¹⁹ Their own experiences with global cultural flows that provided them with environmental images of Latin American (see [paragraph 5.1](#)) caused them to create an environmental imaginary of Latin America as being exotic. When watching a film that confirms this image, people actively find a

¹⁸ Quote from Open Interview with Rian (30/06/2009)

¹⁹ Quote from Focus Group discussion (09/04/2009): David

sense of sameness, recognizing the images. Moreover, they do not need to adapt their imaginary about Latin America, but they can complement it with new images from the film.

In orientalism, the essence is the creation of an image of the 'other'. In the theoretical framework, we named the three main features of this concept. In my research I have indeed found these features in the means of how Dutch people react on Latin American films. Although this means were also a subjective construction, it was not as severe as Said (1978) saw it to support western imperialism and superiority. Nevertheless, I often found that that the Latin American 'other' was measured by the standard of the own society, which in some cases led to subsided stereotyping. The first feature of orientalism was a constant 'othering' or 'exoticising'. People feel the need to construct a sense of difference, to make a distinction between 'us' and 'them'. While watching Latin American films this distinction was indeed often made by my participants. They talked about 'here' and 'there', and set differences between 'them' and 'us'. For example in one of my focus groups, a participant told me that 'over there' (meaning Latin America in general) you have a lot of poverty, which we do not see much 'over here' (meaning the Netherlands).²⁰ These clear distinctions make it harder to identify with the images shown in the film like the way it happens with recognition. The second feature of orientalism was an essentialist understanding of this 'other', whereby 'the other' is a homogenous group to which rigid characteristics can be ascribed. The quote from the girl before is yet another example of this understanding. She sees Latin America as a rigid concept, they all know a lot of poverty. The third feature was that the own society functions as a standard to measure other societies, people or cultures by. In Case Study III we see an example of how this exoticising, conform to all three features, takes place in practice. In this example we see how the participants actively search for recognition in order to give meaning to the images presented to them. They recognize certain elements but find that they are not able to identify with them because they are practiced in a different, more exotic way. The film viewers in this case study clearly compare the images presented in the film to their own society. They compare the ways modern techniques such as Botox injections are used in Latin America in the film to the ways they are used in their own society. This happens all the time, whether consciously or not, the Dutch people compare images presented in Latin American films to their own experiences but also to their own society and culture. This can lead to subsided stereotyping if the images presented in the film are generalized to the whole Latin American society. Many Latin American films shown in the Netherlands contain violence, poverty and drugs. This has consequences for the way Dutch

²⁰ Quote from Focus Group discussion (30/06/2009); Hennie

people view Latin America, especially concerning violence, and the way they commit social practices related to the continent.

People actively search for differences between the images in the films and themselves. They hereby construct an image of Latin America as 'the other', that is different and more exotic. We saw this exemplified in [case study V: The West with a Latino touch](#). This 'othering' process does not necessarily mean that their original imaginary has to be adapted to the images from the films. The imaginary about Latin America can also contain exotic meanings as it contains images from other sources. When watching a film, people actively search for confirmation of their imaginary. It is therefore possible that people keep an exotic image of Latin America and at the same time feel a sense of sameness regarding other elements. The two processes of exoticism and 'sameness' can thus co-exist within the identification process. The imaginary is a product of both exoticising and recognition. If a film contradicts their imaginary of Latin America, whether familiar or exotic, people can doubt the validity of the film as we saw in [case study VI](#).. Through new information from global cultural flows like Latin American cinema, people are able to adapt their views and even to change their daily social practices. In the following chapters we will look at what social practices the Dutch film viewers participate in and how these are related to Latin American films. In chapter four I will look at the political and social imaginary about Latin America among the Dutch and what consequences these images have on their daily social practices. In chapter five I will do the same for the cultural and environmental imaginary about Latin America.

The West with a Latino touch

After watching *La Buena Vida* (Chile 2008), the film viewers discussed what they had seen in the film. According to them, what stood out the most was the combination between Latin and Western aspects. When I asked them to explain this to me, they found this difficult but nevertheless tried to. A lot of 'stuff' they identify as being from the West makes an appearance in the film. Lisanne pointed out that the only difference here is the context in which the stuff is presented and how the products are used: "In a different, more Latino way". I asked her to give me an example from the film to clarify her ideas to me, but she could not think of any. Lucas however did find an example for her. In this example, he referred to a specific scene in the film. In this scene, a middle-aged man works as a hairdresser in a beauty salon, where women come to make themselves look more beautiful and younger. A very modern, Western remedy is the use of Botox injections, which is applied only by doctors in the Western world. In the movie, the hairdresser gives his girlfriend random shots of Botox in a non-sterile room. The third participant, Douwe, added another example to clarify their views. In the film, a woman is standing before an auditorium filled with prostitutes. She gives them information about the use of condoms. To my film viewers, the way she does this is very different to the way it would be done in the Netherlands or the western world in general. The woman seems to stand there without any preparation, in front of an audience full of uninterested prostitutes trying to persuade them to use condoms. "Here (the Netherlands) an informing such as this would be executed in a very different way, especially the preparation part". They found this both funny and shocking at the same time.

Focus Group 16/06/2009

Chapter IV: Political & social imaginary and daily social practices regarding Latin America

The most common response to the question about their political or social ideas about Latin America is that the Dutch people do not know much about the current political or social situation in Latin America. During my research, I also often met this response. Almost everybody has constructed unconscious images on this subject. What image has the Dutch population created out of the pieces of information presented to them through global cultural flows? As I argued before, there is no use to look for just one true image. We will rather take a look at the communalities between the different existing images. In this chapter, we will first take a look at the political and social images of Latin America. We will see which role Latin American cinema plays in the construction of this imaginary. In the second paragraph, we will take a closer look at what the Dutch film viewers actually do with these (new) images in their daily social lives. My research has shown that watching Latin American films can have consequences for the way people carry out daily social practices concerning Latin America. Through watching a Latin American film, people are enabled to (re-) construct their imaginary about Latin America through processes of exoticism and/ or recognition as explained in the previous chapter. Following, these newly shaped images can be employed in daily social actions.

What does the concept daily social practice mean exactly? This is a very difficult question to answer, as even its inventor Appadurai (1990) remains vague about the definition. To the least, the concept refers to the daily social interactions between people, whether they are face-to-face or more remote. It refers to everyday actions through which people negotiate their social lives. The way people act within a social context differs and changes over time and space and it is therefore responsive to (foreign) influences. A response to a film is already a social practice if people actively react on the film in a group, which yet again influences the way the other viewers look at the film. As these reactions remain more or less limited, the social practices most commonly come up after the film, when the actual social interactions appear. In this chapter we will look at the imaginary and daily social practices of the Dutch people that are connected to the political and social imaginary about Latin America.

[§ 4.1 Political and Social image of Latin America](#)

The images of “poor slums, undernourished children and unemployed labourers fighting for their rights”²¹, makes an intriguing impression on the minds of the Dutch film viewers. Some of the people I spoke to also mentioned wealth when thinking about Latin America, especially

²¹ Quote from Focus Group discussion (11/06/2009); Ricky

combined with extreme poverty. According to the Dutch film viewers the difference between rich and poor is enormous in Latin America. Many people referred to the Brazilian films *Cidade de Deus* (Brazil 2002) and *Cidade dos Homens* (Brazil 2007) while explaining this image. These two films show the great difference between rich and poor in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Films like these emphasize the big differences, not only within Brazil or even within Latin America, but also between ourselves and the people shown in these films. But also other important aspects of the social and political imaginary about Latin America come to the front in these two films; that is criminality, drugs and violence. One woman told me that some of these characteristics also came up in the documentary *Sin Tregua* (Switzerland/ France 2008) which we watched together during a focus group. She told me that watching this documentary refined her exotic and idyllic image of the continent immediately and in a great way. She would not like it if one of her daughters decided to visit the city shown in the movie as to her it seemed like a very dangerous and violent environment.²² These negative and precarious features turn out to be very common in the imaginary about Latin America. Criminality, poverty, drugs and violence seem to be among the first things that come to mind when Dutch people are asked about the social situation in Latin America. But even when asked about Latin America in general people often turn to the precarious social circumstances.

Not only the social conditions in Latin America have very negative features in the imaginary of the Dutch. Latin American politics are also often associated with negative features such as repression, dictatorial regimes and military and political violence. Repression is a subject that keeps flourishing in Latin America. It started during the colonial age, continued into the military coups in the twentieth century and even nowadays repression is still apparent on the continent, as the recent case in Honduras shows. In June 2009, in the middle of my research, the Honduran president Zelaya was displaced during a military coup, which threatens democracy in the country. The serious case reached the international mass media and was on the Dutch news for weeks. The example of the Honduras case is an important image that came up in all of the most recent focus groups. Nevertheless, there is also a political image that continues to speak to the minds of the Dutch film viewers in a more positive way. Che Guevara and the Cuban revolution continue to be popular subjects among the Dutch audience, regardless if they agree with the contemporary political situation in Cuba. The film *Diarios de Motocicleta* (Argentina/ USA/ United Kingdom/ Germany/ Mexico/ Chile/ Peru/ France 2004) might have aided this process as the case study on this film shows. This [case study](#) shows how almost everybody knows Che Guevara and the Cuban revolution and attributes positive meanings to these images

²² Open Interview with Rian (30/06/2009)

although not everybody knows the background of the event. The film inserted a more detailed image into the imaginary Rian had about Che and the revolution.

Case Study VII

Che without the Revolution

After watching *Diarios de Motocicleta* (Argentina/ USA/ United Kingdom/ Germany/ Mexico/ Chile/ Peru/ France 2004) together with three other people, we talked about the beautiful environmental and cultural images the film showed. After I while the very positive comments were changed into less positive comments on the social and political situation that was illustrated in the movie. Rian commented that she now had a better idea what Che Guevara fought for during the Cuban war. She said that everybody knew Che and what positive things he had done, but this film gave her a better idea where this willingness to self-sacrifice came from.

Focus Group 09/04/2009

The imaginary of the political and social situation in Latin America is mainly shaped by information provided by Dutch news on television and in newspapers, or through more international news channels such CNN or the BBC. Although many research participants declared that there is only little Latin American news available through these channels, newspapers and television still remain the most important information source for political news and images. This can be illustrated by the Honduras situation again. Next to these news sources, academic books and University colleges are of great influence on the imaginary, although they are often less up to date than news broadcastings. Travel stories, as heard from friends and relatives, seem to be of none or only little value to the imaginary about Latin American politics. On the other hand, people who have visited Latin America by themselves, seem to be more interested in Latin American politics and are often more up to date about the political situation in a specific region. This is especially true for the political knowledge of the countries or regions they visited themselves. Milou told me she was going to join an exchange program with Costa Rica this summer. In the months preceding her departure, she was actively seeking for information about this country, especially about the political and social situation as she was very interested in these subjects. As Costa Rica is not very present in the Dutch news channels, she turned to academic books, the Lonely Planet and the Internet to find specific information.²³

Films have a big influence on the way Dutch people shape their imaginary about the social situation in Latin America. The Dutch film viewers share the thought that the images

²³ Open Interview Milou; 06/04/2009

created by the Latin American film makers is very reliable. Most of the time these films show images of the continent that the audience finds very believable. Many people associate Latin American cinema with violence, drugs and war. This is partly a consequence of the Latin American films available to the Dutch audience. As I explained in chapter two, social and political engagement is a characteristic that is present in many Latin American films. This means that a lot of Latin American productions contain strong images of violence, drugs and social injustice. This influences the ideas the Dutch have about the continent, especially concerning safety. Some people told me that many of their friends and relatives believe that it is safer to travel in Asia for example than to go backpacking through Latin America. When they did decide to travel there nonetheless, their environment often responded with the question if it was safe to travel in Latin America. Maintaining a violent, negative image of Latin America that is influenced by global cultural flows such as Latin American cinema can thus have negative consequences for the daily social practices the Dutch undertake. But a social image of Latin America as being poor and repressed can also cause people to undertake social practices that aim for improvement of the social situation in Latin America. In the following paragraph, we will look at the daily social practices the Dutch people undertake regarding Latin America to see how the political and social imaginary influences their actions.

[§ 4.2 Political and social daily social practices regarding Latin America](#)

In the previous paragraph I have tried to reconstruct the political and social imaginary of Latin America in the Netherlands. In this paragraph I will show how these images are used in the daily social practices of the Dutch. As I have pointed out earlier, many people at first claim that they are not politically or socially concerned with Latin America. But when I ask further about this subject, it turns out they just do not find themselves up to date with Latin American political and social developments. Most of the time they do have a vivid image about the social circumstances in the continent and do act upon this imaginary. One way to do this is to give financial support to charity that supports, sometimes among others, Latin American causes. The imaginary Dutch people have of Latin America seems to be influenced by this charity giving and the other way around. One research participant, Rian, even told me that, when she was young, she contributed to a "social year". Seventy five percent of her annual salary went to a charity organisation for a year. People who applied to this project could choose the charity by themselves. Rian chose to support the CLAD (Centro Latino Americano de Administración para el Desarrollo)²⁴, an international Latin American trade union, which stands up for the rights of local labourers.

²⁴ <http://www.clad.org.ve/>

Nevertheless, she told me that this choice was not influenced by a special concern with the Latin American social situation, but rather with a concern with labourers' emancipation in general.²⁵ Rian felt a sense of sameness between the social situation in her own society, where she also supported the trade union, and the labourers in Latin America. Not having a special concern with Latin American charities seems to be the case for many Dutch film viewers. More general charities such as Unicef, Amnesty International and Terre des Hommes are popular among the Dutch audience. They are not actively involved in how their money is spent. On participant, Hennie, told me that he did give money to charity, but was not totally sure to what charities as he changed them every once in a while. Last year or the year before he gave money to a charity he forgot the name of, the charity aided glue addicted children in Latin America, because he saw an item on the good works of this charity on television.²⁶ The imaginary Dutch people have of Latin America is influenced by this charity giving. But it can also be the other way around; the ways and amounts in which charity is supported by the Dutch can be influenced by their image of Latin America. People who view Latin America as a poor, violent place as I have explained in the previous chapter, are more likely to 'want to help' and therefore give to charity focused on Latin America.²⁷

This feeling of 'wanting to help' we can also see reflected in the popularity of volunteer work in Latin America. Although only two of the people I have spoken with actually had committed volunteer work in the continent, others also claimed they would like to do something useful when travelling to Latin America. The two girls went to Latin America partially because they wanted to do volunteer work. They said this was influenced by their image of Latin America as a poor, Third World continent where they could do useful work. Sasja told me that she had seen the film *Cidade de Deus* (Brazil 2002) before her trip to Brazil. It gave her the idea that the country was very poor and the public health care system was not that good as she was used to. Partially based on this experience she chose to follow an internship in Brazil. Over there, she worked in a hospital for study credits, but it also gave her the idea that she helped local people in change for her stay in Brazil. The reason to choose for could be ascribed to her interest in health care in the Third World.²⁸

If we connect these research findings to the concepts of identification and exoticising in the previous chapter we can draw the conclusion that many Dutch people exoticize when it comes to the Latin American social and political situation. They compare the situations shown in

²⁵ Open interview with Rian, 30/06/2009

²⁶ Focus Group 30/06/2009

²⁷ Quote from open interview with Milou, 06/04/2009

²⁸ Open Interview Sasja, 26/02/2009

the films to the political and social situation in the Netherlands, concluding that there are many differences. From these exotic images, people are enabled undertake social actions. Based on the images reconstructed in the first paragraph, it seems like many Dutch film viewers have a very negative image of Latin America partially based on Latin American films like *Cidade de Deus* (Brazil 2002). It seems like it is principally a violent, drugged, extremely poor and politically repressive continent to their eyes. These negative images cause the Dutch people to undertake social practices to 'help' the people in Latin America. They do this through passive actions like giving money to charity or more active actions like volunteer work or the example Rian gave us.

The image of Latin America as a violent, drugged, extremely poor and politically repressive continent is indeed part of the imaginary Dutch people have of Latin America, but it is not complete. Next to this image there exists another image of Latin America. This image has a totally different, more positive character. It is the cultural and environmental image of Latin America, stray from the political and social problems the continent is concerned with. In the next chapter we will take a look at this part of the imaginary of Latin America and which social practices are undertaken with these images.

Chapter V: Cultural and environmental imaginary and daily social practices regarding Latin America

Based on the images reconstructed in the previous chapter, it seems like many Dutch film viewers have a very negative image of Latin America, partly based on Latin American cinema. But next to this harsh and precarious image there exists yet another imaginary about Latin America. This image has a different, more positive character. It is the cultural and environmental image of Latin America, stray from the political and social problems the continent is concerned with. In this chapter we will look at what this image entails and how it influences the daily social practices of the Dutch audience.

[§ 5.1 Latin America as a tourist destination: Cultural and environmental imaginary](#)

Although the Dutch seem to share an image of Latin America as being violent and dangerous, travellers still love Latin America. With its “white exotic beaches, beautiful people, the deep blue seas and colourful cultures” it is a popular tourist destination.²⁹ My respondents who travelled to Latin America were impressed by the virginal nature on the continent, the colourfulness of nearly everything and the truly white beaches. They who have not visited a Latin American country (yet), who have never set foot on the Macchu Picchu or visited the rain forests of Brazil could also dream about Latin America. From the 2009 LAFF inquiry, it came clear that the major part of the audience had visited Latin America once or more. Interesting was that almost a quarter of the audience indicated that they had not visited the continent yet, but were planning to do so. Only a small percentage indicated that they never had visited Latin America and did not have plans to do so either.

But where do these exotic and romantic images come from then, when people have never actually visited Latin America? Again, the travel stories of friends and relatives, especially when combined with showing loads of pictures, are very important. Moreover, Latin American films also play an important part in this part of the imaginary process. As nature and climate are important aspects to tourists, nature films and documentaries are of great influence, as is information from tourist bureaus like brochures. Nature documentaries that focus on Latin America broadcasted by the National Geographic Channel can also serve as a source of images about the Latin American nature and environment. As is the case for the popular Latin American film *Diarios de Motocicleta* (Argentina/ USA/ UK/ Germany/ Mexico/ Chile/ Peru/ France 2004), a feature film which shows the Latin American nature from Argentina all the way up to

²⁹ Quote from an open Interview with Rian (30/06/2009)

Venezuela. In [case study VII: Che without the Revolution](#) we saw how the first reactions to this film concerned the environmental image. During the same discussion, the respondents also expressed a preference to travel to Latin America due to its nature. Nienke claimed she would like to visit Argentina 'if it is indeed as beautiful as the film shows'.³⁰ In an interview one person even expressed the dream to travel through Latin America by motorcycle, inspired by the film.³¹

Latin American art does not really have a very vivid image in the minds of the Latin American film viewers in the Netherlands. Only small Inca statues seem to come to their minds, but they doubt if this is 'art' and not just a pretty souvenir made for tourists. But occasionally the names of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo come up, although they do not know very much about their artwork. Victoria mentioned the film *Frida* (USA 2002) which gave her an idea, although very limited, about whom this Mexican artist was and what her work looks like. Although they do not have a very apparent idea of Latin American art, the Dutch audience assumes that it must be very colourful and probably has an ancient history. When I asked Victoria where she thought these ideas came from, she answered with the very difficult concept: 'It's culture'. For the Dutch audience, Latin American culture seems characterised by its colourfulness, ancient traditions and the hospitable character of the inhabitants of Latin America.

Nevertheless, the violent and dangerous image of Latin America also influences the ideas Dutch film viewers have about Latin America as a tourist destination. Jasmijn told me that she always has to defend Latin America when it comes to travelling. People seem to believe that it is dangerous to travel through the continent, especially for backpackers. Another respondent told me to also have heard these beliefs, as she pointed at the many beach resorts and organised travels there are in Latin America. Her explanation was that people want to visit sunny, luxury and safe resorts, but that they are scared to visit 'the real' Latin America because they think it is dangerous and violent. Yke, who had no travel experience in Latin America yet mentioned that the Latin America shown in the movie is actually exotic and inaccessible to foreigners. When I asked what she meant by this, she replied: "It creates an image of Latin America that we, as tourists, will never be able to see. We will never belong to them."³²

[§ 5.2 Daily social practice: cultural activities](#)

In the 2009 LAFF inquiry, one of the outcomes was that more than forty percent of the festival visitors participated in cultural activities associated with Latin America other than visiting the

³⁰ Quote from Focus Group (09/04/2009); Nienke

³¹ Open Interview Douwe, 17/02/2009

³² "Het schept een beeld van Latijns-Amerika wat wij (als toeristen), nooit zullen zien. We zullen nooit bij hen horen" (Translation by author); Quote from Focus Group (24/02/2009); Yke

festival. These activities form part of the daily social practice of the Dutch audience. More than half of this group participated in Latin American dance classes such as tango and salsa. Study- and work related cultural activities were also mentioned by the visitors. A minority indicated that they regularly visited debates and lectures connected to Latin America. Language lessons in Spanish or Portuguese, both teaching and following courses, also scored marginally in the inquiry. (See [Attachment III: Participation](#) for more information about the outcomes of the inquiry).

On the other hand, more than half of the visitors indicated that they did not participate in cultural activities associated with Latin America. Although this amount concerns more than half of my population, it does not necessarily mean that Latin America does not form part of their daily social lives. For one part it is possible that people are not aware that certain activities are related to or have originated in Latin America. Furthermore, Latin America can be represented in daily social life in other ways than cultural activities, for example through cultural commodities.

[§ 5.3 Daily social practice: dance, music and language](#)

Next to Latin American cinema, the Dutch are active in a variety of cultural activities associated with Latin America. Dancing is one of these activities and is a very popular activity among the Dutch as there are over 150 dancing schools for salsa, zouk, tango and other Latino dances spread out over the country. Indeed many of the people I have spoke to told me to have taken salsa, zouk and tango lessons and some others were planning to do so. Remarkable is that some of them had visited Latin America and learned the basics over there. One respondent told me that he had never visited Latin America and did not have a specific interest in the continent, but he was still planning to take salsa lessons. His reasons for this were to surprise his girlfriend, who did visit Latin America and loved dancing.³³

The same accounts for different sorts of Latin American music, which the Dutch people associate mostly with sunny summer days. The 2009 LAFF inquiry has shown that the major part of the festival visitors that year chose Latin music as their favourite genre ([Attachment III: Music Style](#)). Many of the people who have visited Latin America have special memories associated to the different kinds of music, which reminded them of their travels. But also the people who did not visit Latin America themselves were familiar with Latin American music styles. This became apparent in the focus groups, where people actively responded to the music used in the films. It was not uncommon that people wanted to finish the closing credits because they liked the background music so much. They wanted to wait until the author of a specific song came in the

³³ Informal conversation with Steven, 16/06/2009

screen so they could remember the name and look the music up on the Internet. On one occasion, Luuk even sang along with a song while watching *Temporada de Patos* (Mexico 2004)

A cultural activity that deserves special attention here is (the mastering of a) language. For a small group of Dutch people, learning a language forms a special cultural activity which they associated with Latin America. Some Dutch people even attend special evenings organised to meet other people and to practice Spanish and/or Portuguese. If people have already mastered Spanish or Portuguese, this is of great influence on their frame of reference with respect to the Latin American films. In the focus group where *Un Novio Para Mi Mujer* (Argentina 2008) was showed, Rachel immediately reacted on the Argentinean Spanish she was familiar with. She told me she loved to hear the accent again.³⁴ People who know the language watch films from another point of view, as they partly focus on the use of this familiar language. They actively try to understand the words without reading the subtitles. As was the case with other film viewers, they recognize their own experiences, in this case with the Spanish or Portuguese language, in the Latin American films.

[§ 5.4 Daily social practice: travel and leisure](#)

The outcomes of the 2009 LAFF inquiry also showed that more than half of the visitors of the festival had already visited Latin America themselves. This outcome is also reflected in my research population. About half of the people I have spoken with have actually travelled to Latin America themselves. The major part of the other half indicated that Latin America would be a possible and attractive travel destination, as I mentioned before with the outcomes of the inquiry. Among the people I spoke to Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Cuba formed the most popular countries of destination. This preference is based on a wide variety of reasons. The reasons why they want to visit a certain country differ greatly. For example, Hennie told me that he has always wanted to visit Chile, a country he actually knows very little about. When he was just a child he wrote an essay for geography at school. He does not remember why anymore, but he chose Chile as his subject and he has wanted to visit this country ever since.³⁵ In another interview Sasja told me that if she could go to Latin America, the first thing she would like to visit were the Galapagos Islands close to the coast of Ecuador. When I asked her why, she answered that she had once seen a documentary film on television about these islands and they seemed so beautiful to her. The image of the green islands never slipped her mind.³⁶ Latin American films, especially documentaries and nature films, have a big influence on the preference of Dutch people for

³⁴ Focus Group 22/06/2009

³⁵ Open interview with Hennie, 12/06/2009

³⁶ Open interview with Sasja, 26/02/2009

certain Latin American countries and regions. Although I have not found many examples of people who visited a certain area in Latin America because they had seen in a film beforehand, I believe that Latin American films can be of influence in the choice of travel destinations. But this is not necessarily a positive influence such as the two examples above. As I have pointed out earlier, Latin American films shown in the Netherlands often contain much violence, drugs and poverty. The film *Cidade de Deus* (Brazil 2002) for example. Many people have told me that they saw the actual slums of Rio de Janeiro for the first time in this film. The violence and the gangs in these films are not very enchanting and might scare possible travellers away from Rio de Janeiro, or at least from its slums. Another consequence of these sorts of films is that people take more precautions and do not want to travel alone in Latin America.

Over the years, the popularity of travelling by airplane has grown.³⁷ More and more people go on vacation by plane, making the world smaller and more accessible. Among other faraway destinations, Latin America has become an easier option for a sunny holiday or a cultural journey. The Central Bureau of Statistics in the Netherlands carries out an annual research on the travel habits of the Dutch (see [attachment IV](#)). From the information provided by this research in 2006, we can conclude that Latin America, which forms part of the 'other countries' in the table, only partook a minor part of the foreign vacations of Dutch people in 2006. For their part the Caribbean countries partook one percent. Although these numbers remain very small, we can conclude that as the Dutch people travel further and further, they also increasingly visit Latin America.

The presence of social contacts between Latin America and the Netherlands is also influenced by this travel behaviour, and the other way around. Not only do Dutch people visit Latin America, Latin Americans also visit and live in the Netherlands. Almost all of the people I spoke to knew someone recently living in Latin America or at least someone with a Latin American background living in the Netherlands. Some of them listed these contacts as very important for their imaginary about Latin America. For example, Douwe told me that he had befriended a Bolivian girl who is recently living in the Netherlands. He does not know a lot about Latin American politics, with the exception of Bolivia through his contact with this girl. This appears to be the case for many Dutch people who have not visited Latin America (yet). Most of the Dutch people I have spoken to were highly educated and many of their social contacts were made at university or higher education. Some told me that they came into contact with Latin

³⁷ “Om hun vakantiebestemming te bereiken, nemen mensen steeds vaker het vliegtuig. In 2006 werd 37 procent van de reizen naar buitenlandse lange vakantiebestemmingen per vliegtuig ondernomen. In 2002 was dit nog 30 procent. Ook voor korte vakanties wordt steeds vaker het vliegtuig genomen: in 2002 bij 10 procent van de vakanties en in 2006 bij 14 procent.” Source: Statline, Kerncijfers CVO

Americans through exchange programs. Others referred to their Spanish or Portuguese teacher as being their main social connection to Latin America.

[§ 5.5 Daily social practice: "The Cultural stuff"](#)

Apart from joining in cultural and social activities related to Latin America, there are other ways to be connected to Latin American culture while staying in the Netherlands. Many people throughout my research indicated they were not very aware that they used, owned or knew 'cultural stuff' from Latin America. These cultural commodities are available to the Dutch through global flows of trading. For the Dutch people I spoke with, the first thing that came to mind while speaking about Latin American cultural commodities was often food. Dutch film viewers lay a connection between Latin America and food. The "cultural stuff" is therefore mainly associated with Latin food ware, which is not very uncommon in the Netherlands. Especially tortilla's, tacos and coffee are popular Latin American products in the Netherlands. Nevertheless not everybody seems to connect these products immediately with Latin America or a specific country or region. Many people turned to me to ask whether for example guacamole or kidney beans were typical Latin American products. In [Case Study VIII: Real Latin American espresso](#) you find a striking example of how this can lead to misunderstandings. Yet again I experienced a different approach to Latin American food products between people who had visited Latin America themselves and the people who had not.

Case study VIII

Real Latin American espresso

In the first interview I had with Douwe, we came to discuss Latin American 'cultural stuff'. My participant turned out to be a great fan of Latin American food, as he loved tacos and tortillas. When I asked him if he could name other stuff, besides these examples, that he related to Latin America he had to think very hard. But then it came to his mind that he always bought real Colombian coffee, because it was of such good quality. He described the package to me, convinced that it was of Colombian origin.

A day after our interview, he called me up and told me that he had made a mistake during the interview. Back home he had taken another look in the cupboard to look at the coffee package. The coffee he was so fond of, turned out to be real Italian espresso.

Interview with Douwe, 17/02/2009

Besides products they use in their daily lives, the Dutch people I spoke with also mentioned the colourful blankets and other gifts they received from friends and relatives who brought it from

their travels in Latin America. Many of the people who visited Latin America themselves told me they had also brought appliances and souvenirs from their travels such as these popular colourful blankets, but also jewellery, fortune puppets and food in cans were named regularly. These souvenirs continued to have a role in their daily lives. For example, Selma told me that every time she wore the jewellery she brought from Guatemala, it reminded her of their travels and experiences in Latin America.

The known 'cultural stuff' from Latin America as described above is also a way for the Dutch film viewers to actively connect with the images shown in the films. While watching films during the focus groups, people tried to recognize the 'stuff' shown in the films. Not only the 'authentic', cultural things, but also the more modern, western commodities that are very familiar to them. If we connect this with the concepts introduced in [chapter III](#), we see that in this case people try to identify with the 'stuff' shown in the film. They recognize things they know themselves, and are therefore enabled to create a sense of sameness. In [Case Study V: The West with a Latino touch](#) we saw an example of how Dutch film viewers might affiliate with the images presented to them through known western 'cultural stuff'. Although the three participants of this focus group recognized and identified the modern techniques of Botox injections and SOA informing, they were surprised by the way they were applied in the film. Yet again both identification and exoticism turn out to play a major role. They are able to identify themselves with the stuff presented in the film, but they also create a feeling of difference because they can not identify with the ways these commodities are used.

In the previous two chapters we have reconstructed the imaginary of the Dutch film audience regarding the political, social, cultural and environmental aspects of Latin America. Moreover we have indicated how these different images can influence their daily social practices concerning Latin America. People apply the imaginary they have created about Latin America into their daily social lives in various ways. They can choose to give to charity, buy tacos or plan a vacation to a white Mexican beach. These examples illustrate the versatility of the social practices the Dutch people operate in their daily social lives.

Conclusion

Latin America is represented in the Netherlands through, among other things, contemporary 'cultural commodities' such as movies, literature, music, dance and art. Latin American cinema is one of these cultural commodities that increasingly flows across the world, crossing borders and reaching international audiences. In this thesis it has become clear that this has consequences for both the way these films are understood locally as for the way images of Latin America are reconstructed by the v. Dutch film viewers do not simply adopt the meanings presented to them, they make sense of the film by themselves. But how do the Dutch actively incorporate images from contemporary Latin American films into their daily social practices? This question formed the central problem of my research.

As globalization processes continue, old notions of communities, inclusion and exclusion do not seem sufficient anymore. But people still feel the need to construct a sense of sameness and, at the same time, a sense of difference. The construction of these notions stands central in the identification process which occurs when Dutch people are presented with new images of Latin America. According to the scenario of *maturation* (Hannerz 1989), people actively choose and adapt cultural flows, conforming to the fluidity of global cultural flows. "Audiences are not powerless viewers, they are active agents." People try to understand a film by identifying with the elements they recognize. Whether consciously or not, they always compare the images with their own experiences. They seek for commonalities between their own frame of reference and the images shown in the films. This search for identification and the way the imagination is shaped can take two seemingly opposite forms. In the first scenario, the Dutch viewers actively search for familiar elements in the Latin American film. When they find communalities between themselves and the images, they construct a sense of sameness. In this sense, film viewers make comparisons between the film images and their own society and culture. But it is not only communalities they search for, it is also the exotic that appeals to many. In the second scenario the way the imagination is shaped involves the concept 'exoticising' or 'othering'. When watching a Latin American film, people also search for exotic elements to create a sense of difference between themselves and the exotic 'other'. Through both searching for sameness and difference, people make sense of the world presented to them.

The possibilities presented in the Latin American films speak to the minds of the Dutch, offering them access to a new and unknown world. Through Latin American films, people are enabled to imagine different possibilities and next to just fantasizing, they can act on it. The familiar or exotic images they create can be implemented in their daily social lives (Appadurai 1990). The imagination in a globalizing world has become a social practice. People are active

agents and interpret foreign images by themselves. Within and through imagination, people are enabled to negotiate their social life. The theory of imagination as a social practice thus refers to the way individuals in local contexts use and interpret global cultural flows (Alexander 2003). The Dutch audience can consider the alternative possibilities that are presented in Latin American films. They take the images from the films with them and socially act on them. But then how do the Dutch film viewers actively incorporate the images that are introduced to them by contemporary Latin American films, into their daily social practices?

In chapters four and five I outlined the various images and social practices connected to Latin America that the Dutch undertake. Important to notice here is that people actively adapt, replenish and reconfirm their existing imaginary when watching Latin American films. The ways these adaptations take place can evolve in two ways, through the search for sameness and through exoticism. The imagination and daily social practices are interconnected, so watching a Latin American film can have consequences for the amount, way and frame of reference from which the Dutch film viewers approach their cultural activities, commodities and social contacts regarding Latin America. New images deriving from films can cause people to buy Latin music for example or to consider travelling to the country presented in the film. The different images the Dutch have of Latin America influence different kinds of social action. Political, social, cultural and environmental images all have their own effects.

The Latin American films that are available in the Netherlands are often politically and socially engaged. People actively compare the images from the films with their own experiences. The often shocking political and social messages stand in great contrast with the safe and politically stable situation in their home country. This influences the image Dutch film viewers have of Latin America. This negative, 'othering' image subsequently can lead to negative social action as well, such as a fear to travel to Latin America. On the other hand, the comparison can also lead a feeling of sameness and a wanting to help. This can cause more positive social action such as giving money to charity.

The same accounts for the environmental or cultural imaginary. Latin American films influence this imaginary and, following, the social practices of the Dutch. Opposite to the often negative social and political imaginary, the cultural and environmental images that the Dutch share of Latin America is often very positive. They share an exotic image of colourful cultures and exotic white beaches. This strong sense of 'otherness' is often appealing to the Dutch. The exoticising image can be strengthened by Latin American films such as *Diarios de Motocicleta*. This imaginary can lead them to consider diverse social actions such as considering to travel to Latin America, buying Latin products or listening to Latin music.

Latin American cinema only obtains a small spot in the Netherlands but we must not underestimate its possible effects on the daily social practices of the Dutch people. As Alexander described it: 'Economic control does not necessarily imply cultural control' (Alexander 2003: 162). So even small-scaled global cultural flows can obtain importance within the global cultural field. This thesis has shown that even a small-scaled global cultural flow 'from the rest' such as Latin American cinema can be of great influence on the imaginary and the daily social practices of its audience 'in the west'. Nowadays, the imagination can serve as a practical tool in the decision about if, how, which and where Dutch people commit social practices connected to Latin America. Latin American cinema influences that very imagination of the Dutch people and is therefore important to notice when we look at their daily social practices concerning Latin America.

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Nederlandse Samenvatting (Dutch Synopsis)

We leven in een wereld die door globaliseringsprocessen in toenemende mate bereikbaar is, de wereld wordt steeds kleiner. Mensen, voorwerpen, beelden en ideeën overschrijden oude grenzen en bewegen zich over de wereld. Dit heeft grote gevolgen voor de manier waarop mensen zichzelf zien en naar de wereld om hen heen. Mensen zijn in staat om beelden van andere landen en culturen te (her-) vormen op basis van de enorme hoeveelheid informatie die globale stromen hen bieden. De nieuwe mogelijkheden die deze processen hen bieden zorgen voor aanpassingen van de manier waarop men de wereld ziet, aan de vormen die hun verbeelding aanneemt.

De centrale thematiek van deze thesis is het dagelijkse sociale handelen met betrekking tot Latijns Amerika. Het kijken van een film kan directe gevolgen hebben, zoals het becommentariëren of bespreken van de film. Maar het kan ook gevolgen hebben die pas later aan bod komen. Hierbij is beeldvorming een essentieel onderdeel.

Iedereen vormt een eigen beeld van Latijns Amerika. Dit beeld wordt door elk individueel opgebouwd uit allerlei stukjes informatie uit een verscheidenheid aan bronnen. Het is dus onmogelijk om te spreken van één beeld van Latijns Amerika. Van die grote verscheidenheid aan informatiebronnen vormen 'cultural commodities' slechts een klein deel. Latijns Amerikaanse films, boeken, muziek, dans, producten en kunst bereiken steeds vaker het westen en beïnvloeden hier de beeldvorming. In deze thesis behandel ik de invloed die hedendaagse Latijns Amerikaanse films hebben op de beeldvorming over Latijns Amerika door het Nederlandse filmpubliek en vooral welke consequenties dit heeft voor hun dagelijks sociaal handelen.

In deze thesis betrek ik concepten als exotisering en het creëren van 'a sense of sameness' om weer te geven hoe mensen omgaan met de nieuwe beelden uit de films. Mensen willen zich identificeren met de beelden, ze willen een zekere herkenning hebben. Dit kan enerzijds door naar overeenkomsten met zichzelf te zoeken en anderzijds door overeenkomsten met een 'exotisch' beeld te zoeken. Beiden manieren hebben gemeen dat er een zekere mate van herkenning is en dat men bevestiging zoekt van het bestaande beeld. De bevestiging of aanpassing van het beeld van Latijns Amerika kan consequenties hebben voor het sociale handelen van mensen. In de laatste twee hoofdstukken van deze thesis bespreek ik de politieke, sociale, culturele en milieukundige beeldvorming over Latijns Amerika en het mogelijke dagelijkse sociale handelen dat hieraan verbonden is.

Hoewel Latijns Amerikaanse cinema nog slechts een minimaal plaatsje heeft veroverd in de Nederlandse samenleving, heeft het toch invloed op de beeldvorming over het continent met als mogelijk gevolg sociaal handelen van het Nederlandse publiek. Dit geeft aan dat zelfs een kleine globale culturele stroom uit de periferie van belang kan zijn in het westen, in het centrum.

Attachment I: Research questions

How do Dutch film viewers actively incorporate the images that are introduced to them by contemporary Latin American films, into their daily social practice?

1. What is/ are the existing image(s) about Latin America among the Dutch film audience?

- *What political and social image do the Dutch film viewers have of Latin America?*
- *What are the opinions of the Dutch film viewers about travelling and spending leisure time in Latin America?*
- *What are the ideas among the Dutch film viewers about the existence of social contact between themselves and Latin American art and culture?*
- *What image do the Dutch film viewers have about Latin American art and culture?*
- *What image do the Dutch film viewers have about the Latin American 'exotic other'?*

2- In what ways are the contemporary Latin American films shown to the Dutch audience?

- *What media are used to present the Dutch audience Latin American films?*
- *In what settings are the Latin American films shown in the Netherlands?*
- *What kind of contemporary Latin American films are shown in the Netherlands?*
- *What are the central themes and elements of contemporary Latin American films?*
- *From which countries are the films imported?*

3- Which elements of the Latin American films appeal to the Dutch audience?

- *Which images shown in Latin American films appeal to the Dutch audience?*
- *Which genres of Latin American movies are preferred (fiction/non-fiction/etc.) by the Dutch film audience?*

4- What is the daily social practice of the Dutch (in reference to Latin America)?

- *How are Dutch film viewers politically and socially concerned with Latin America?*
- *To what extent the Dutch film viewers travel to and spend leisure time in Latin America?*
- *Which kinds of social contact exist between the Dutch film viewers and Latin Americans?*
- *In what cultural and activities other than Latin American cinema do Dutch film viewers participate?*

Attachment II: Inquiry Latin American Film Festival 2009

Enquête LAFF 2009 (pagina 1/2)

Geachte heer/mevrouw,

We vragen u vriendelijk aan deze enquête mee te doen. Uw antwoorden op onderstaande vragen helpen ons om ons aanbod te verbeteren en naar uw wensen te luisteren. **Data verzameld via deze enquête worden vertrouwelijk & anoniem behandeld** en zullen alleen gebruikt worden door medewerkers van LAFF en Putumayo World Music. Wij vragen u vriendelijk het vakje aan te vinken dat het dichtst bij uw keuze ligt.



1. Geslacht

man vrouw

2. Leeftijd

6 - 12 13 - 18 19 - 25 26 - 35
 36 - 45 46 - 55 56 - 65 > 66

3. Woonplaats

4. Land van herkomst

5. Heeft u kinderen?

ja nee

6. Uw opleiding

Basisschool MAVO/VMBO HAVO
 VWO MBO HBO WO

7. Heeft u het Latin American Film Festival in Utrecht al eerder bezocht?

Ja, in 200_ / 200_ / 200_ / 200_ / 200_ Nee

8. Hoe weet u van het bestaan van het festival af?

- flyers/posters in:
- artikel in:
- internet (website):
- via vrienden en kennissen
- voorgaande edities
- studie
- anders, namelijk:

9. Hoeveel dagen bent u van plan het festival te bezoeken?

1 2 3 4 5 >5

10. Wat was de hoofdreden om het LAFF te bezoeken (max. 2 aankruisen)

- speelfilms
- documentaires
- debatten/ lezingen/ talkshows
- aanwezigheid van gasten
- sfeer
- anders, namelijk:

11. Wat is uw mening over de LAFF ticketprijs?

laag	<< ----- >>	hoog
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. Welk aspect van het festival had u graag anders gezien?

13. Wat vindt u leuk aan dit festival?

14. Welk soort festivals heeft uw voorkeur?

- muziek film theaterfestivals
 kunst anders, namelijk:

15. Neemt u ook deel aan andere activiteiten gericht op Latijns-Amerika buiten het LAFF?

ja, namelijk:

nee

16. Heeft u ooit Latijns-Amerika bezocht?

- ja nee, maar ik ben van plan het te doen nee

17. Bent u bekend met Putumayo World Music?

- ja, ik ken hun muziek ja, ik heb ook een CD van Putumayo World Music nee, niet bekend

18. Welke (wereld-) muziekstijl heeft uw voorkeur?

- Latin Midden-Oosten Europees
 Afrikaans Reggae Blues/Jazz
 Aziatisch anders, namelijk:

19. Maakt u gebruik van social online communities zoals Hyves, Facebook of Myspace?

- ja nee

Indien uw antwoord 'ja' is, ga verder met vraag 20. Indien uw antwoord 'nee' is, ga door naar vraag 22.

20. Van welke community sites maakt u gebruik?

- Hyves Myspace Netlog
 Facebook Twitter anders, namelijk:

21. Hoe vaak maak je gebruik van deze sites?

- dagelijks paar keer per week een keer per week
 1-2 keer per maand bijna nooit

22. Mogen we u via nieuwsbrief en e-cards op de hoogte houden van interessante ontwikkelingen bij LAFF en/of Putumayo?

- ja, voor beiden
 alleen voor Putumayo
 alleen voor LAFF

Uw naam:

Uw email adres:

Weet u dat u in ruil voor mooie welkomstcadeaus en vele voordelen vriend van het LAFF kunt worden en dat u met uw bedrijf een bedrijfsuitje kunt boeken bij het LAFF? Voor meer informatie over het LAFF bezoekt u www.laff.nl. Meer informatie over Putumayo kunt u ook vinden op internet op www.putumayo.com

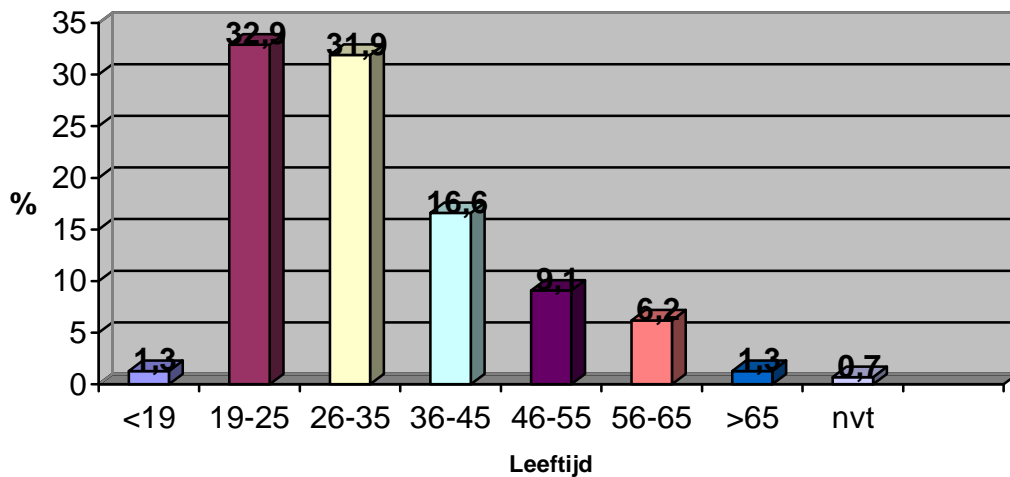
Attachment III: Results LAFF Inquiry 2009

During the Latin American Film Festival 2009, random visitors were questioned by volunteers. These interviews took place based on an inquiry that was composed by Floor Mulder, in co-operation with Putumayo World Music. In total, 307 inquiries were filled in. Below you will find a summary of the most important aspects that came to front in the results. Where possible, the results are compared with results of previous years.

1. In general: the proportion male/female visitors of the festival in 2009 was: 33% male en 67% female. (To compare: 2008: 43% male, 57% female; 2007: 39% male, 61% female). The major part of the LAFF visitors does not have children: only 17,9 % does.

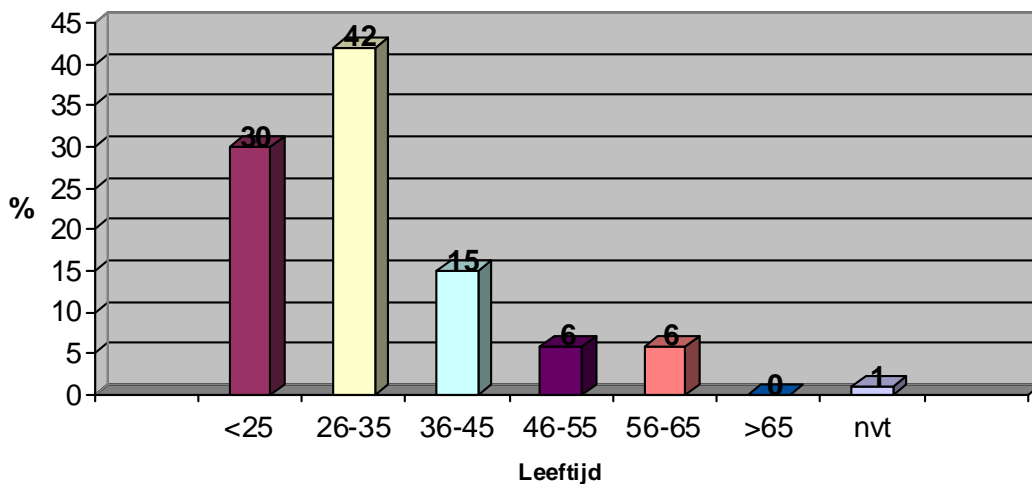
2. Age

Table I: Age division visitors LAFF 2009
Source: Inquiry LAFF 2009



From table we can conclude that the age of more than half of the visitors is between twenty and early thirty. This is comparable to previous years. But there are more striking differences with the data that was gathered in previous years.

Table II: Age division visitors LAFF 2008
Source: Inquiry LAFF 2008



In table II we see the results of 2008. If we compare these with table I, some things stick out. The most striking is the shifting in the age category 26-35. This category has decreased with 10 %. In the evaluation of 2008 it said that there was a prominent shift towards the category late twenties instead of early twenties. This year this shifts seems to be partly undone; where the category late twenties have declined with 10%, the percentage adolescents (<25) has increased with over 4%.

The category 36-45 and has almost not changed (1,6 % increase) and the category 56-65 has not changed at all. The share of 46-55 visitors has lightly increased this year (3,1 %).

In general we can state that the strong decrease in the category 26-35 is mainly visible in the category adolescents until 25 years (+4%) and the categories 45 years or older, which together increased with 4% in comparison to 2008.

3. Place of residence

Table III: Place of residence visitors LAFF 2009
Source: Inquiry LAFF 2009

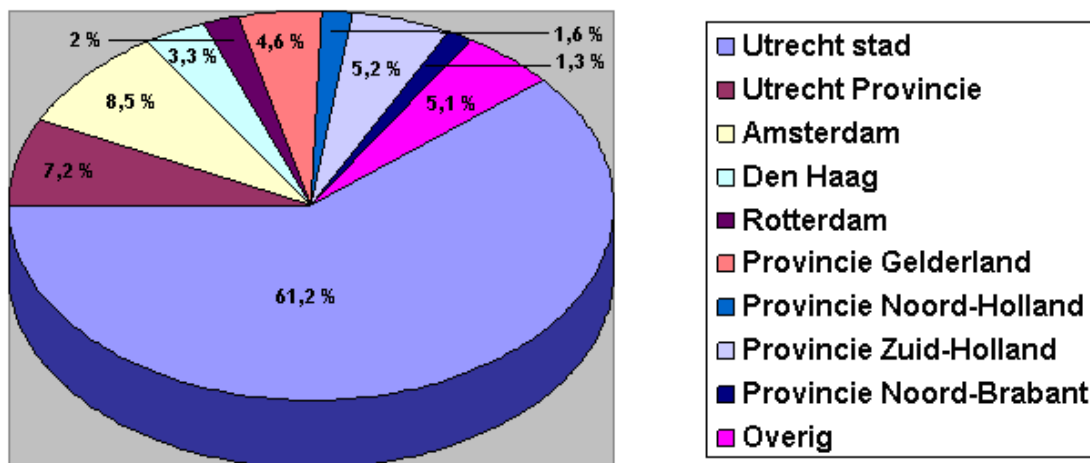
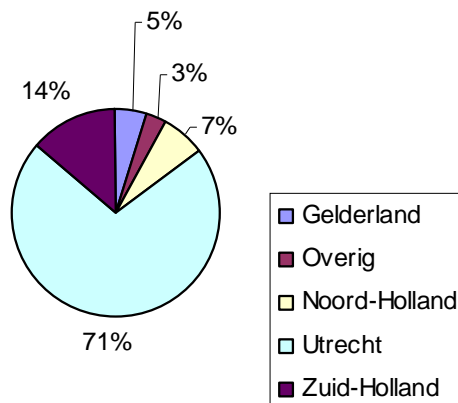


Table III: Place of residence visitors LAFF 2009
Source: Inquiry LAFF 2009

Woonplaats bezoekers



In table III we see a division in the places of residence of the LAFF visitors in 2009. More than half of the visitors come from the city of Utrecht (61,2%), where the festival takes place. Furthermore, 7,2% come from other villages and cities in the province of Utrecht (68,4%). The province of Utrecht thus accounts in total for 68,4%. In 2008, this share was comparable, namely 71 % (see table IV). In 2007 it was also 71 %. The share the province Gelderland occupies has also remained stable: 5% in 2008 against 4,6% in 2009. The province Zuid-Holland obtained a share of 14 % in 2008, this

year it has declined to 6,9% (Province + Rotterdam and Den Haag). The share of the whole province of Noord-Holland (Province + Amsterdam) is 10,1%, in 2008 this was only 7 %. Striking is the great amount of people from Amsterdam in the LAFF public, who together obtain a greater share than the villages and cities surrounding Utrecht, namely 8,5 %.

Last year only 3% of the LAFF public was subdivided in the category 'overig' (other). If we take a look at table III, we see a shift. The category province Noord-Brabant (1,3 %) was component of the overig category in 2008. If we combine the percentage of Noord-Brabant with the percentage 'overig' in 2009 they together score 6,4%. This means a doubling of the share.

Although the LAFF is obviously a festival that attracts mainly people from its direct surrounding (Utrecht and Province), it seems like the festival also increasingly attracts public from the rest of the Netherlands and even a few from abroad (1,3 %).

4. Nationality

The major part of the visitors of the LAFF 2009 was this year of Dutch origin, as was the case in previous years. The Netherlands accounted for 82% against only 11,4% of South-American background, of who 8,5% was from Latino background (Suriname, Aruba and Curacao are not Latino). The remaining 6,7 % were nationalities from over the whole world. To compare: in 2008, 10% of the LAFF visitors was Latino and in 2007. 9%. This percentage remains stabile. Nevertheless, the low percentages 'Latino' measured seem to conflict with the feeling the visitors have about their appearance. According to many visitors it seems and feels like there are more Latinos present at the festival. This difference could be partly explained by the fact that some interviewed Latinos were born in the Netherlands and therefore are not counted as the Latin American visitors.

5. Education

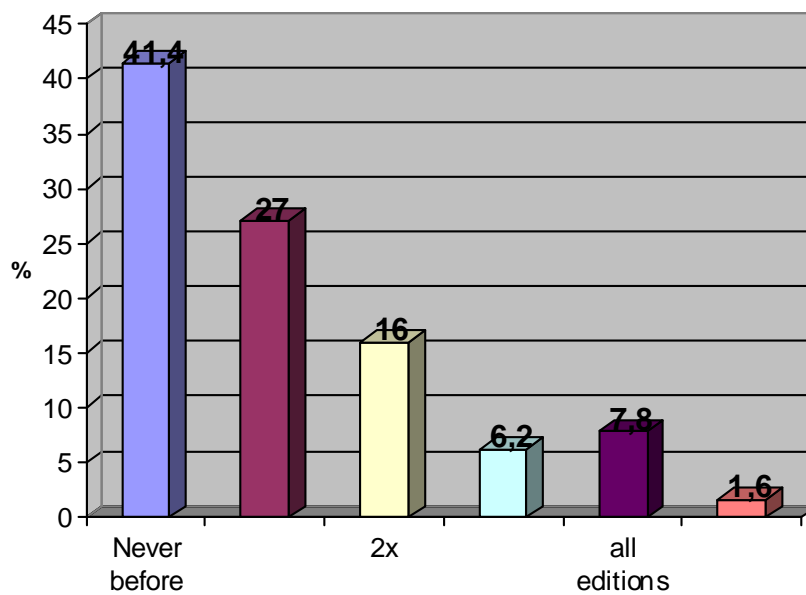
From the inquiry it came clear that the major part of the LAFF visitors in 2009 is highly educated. Only 2% indicated that they had an education level MBO or lower

63,5 % WO
26,1 % HBO
4,9 % VWO
2,9 % HAVO
2 % MBO or lower

6. Festival visits

More than half (58%) of the LAFF visitors in 2009 already visited earlier editions of the festival. For 41,7% of the visitors this was the first year they visited. In table V we see that more than a quarter of the visitors has visited the festival one time and 16% two earlier editions. Striking is that more people (7,8%) visited the festival all five editions than people who visited three out of the five editions (6,2%).

Table V: Visit LAFF earlier editions
Source: LAFF inquiry 2009



Among the visitors who visited the LAFF earlier (58%), 2008 is with 38,6 % the most popular year. Followed by the edition in 2007 with 33,5%. The editions 2005 and 2006 have lower scores, 11,4% and 16,5%.

(Important: In this case, not 307 but 334 forms 100%, as this accounts the total amount of visits. Example: If five visitors have indicated they visited the festival in 2005 and 2006, this amount has to be doubled, in total there were 10 visits.)

Striking is that a part of the respondents (4,9%) thought that the first edition of the festival already took place in 2003 or 2004 instead of 2005 (and that they thought they had visited that year).

7. How do people know the festival

In table VI we can see how the LAFF visitors know about the existence of the festival. Of all the possibilities, through friends and relatives was mentioned the most (33,5%). In 2008 this was also the most heard answer, “via via” (see table VII: 31%). The same accounts for flyers and posters, (23% in 2008 against 18,5% in 2009), internet (16% against 13,4%) and articles (7% against 5%).

In 2009, the question has expanded with the categories ‘study’(5,5%) and ‘earlier editions’ (14,4%). In 2008 these categories belonged to the category ‘other’, but were also often mentioned and therefore added to the inquiry. If we add these for comparison to the category ‘overig’ (total 15,8%), we find that the percentage has decreased in comparison to last year (23%). The shift has occurred steady to all four other categories.

Table VI: How do the 2009 LAFF visitors know the festival
Source: LAFF 2009 inquiry

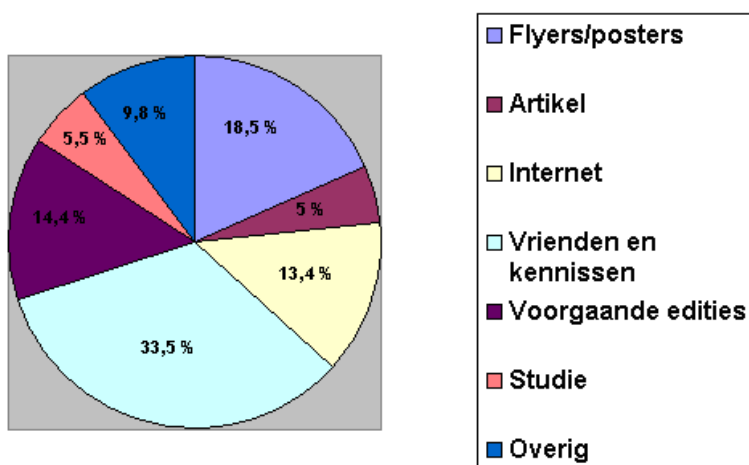
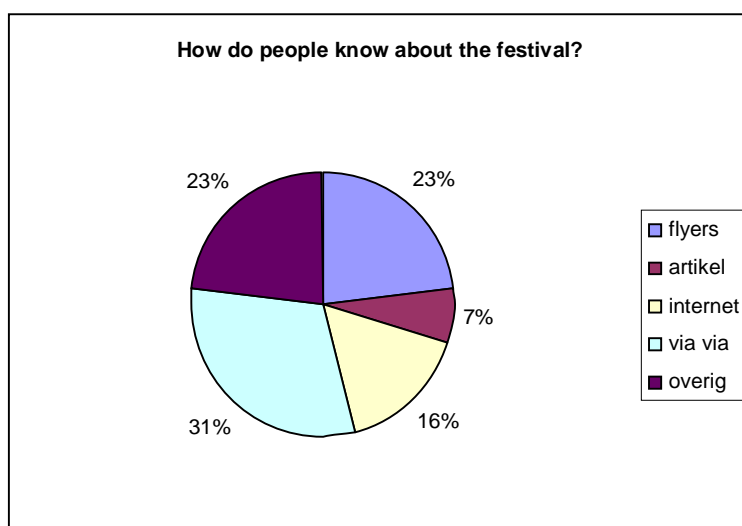


Table VI: How do the 2008 LAFF visitors know the festival
Source: LAFF 2008 inquiry

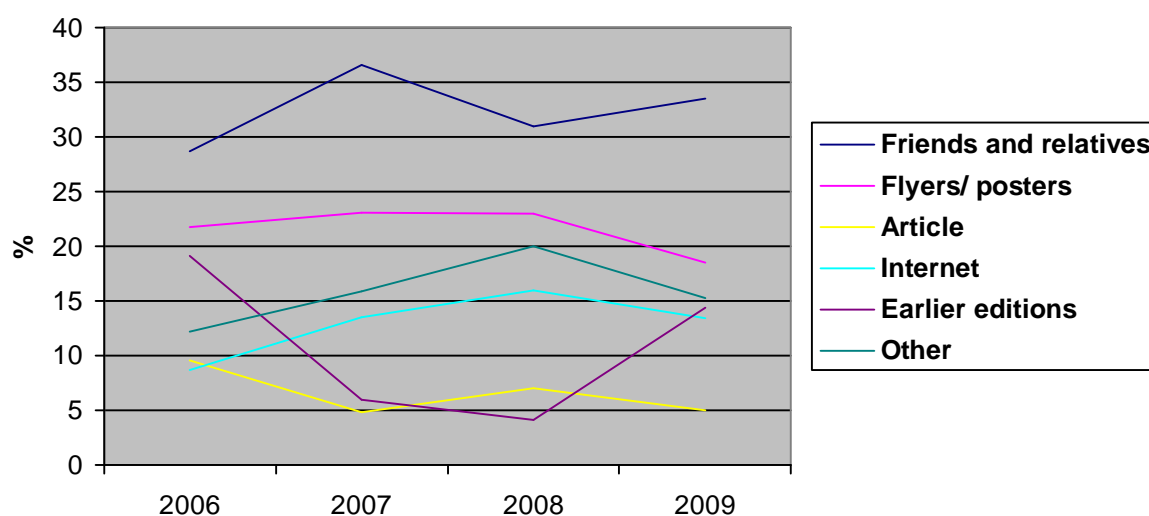


The people who know the LAFF through flyers and/ or posters indicated that they had seen these mainly in Utrecht and/ or in the Louis Hartlooper Complex (LHC). For the articles accounted that they read these in the newspaper (Volkskrant/ Trouw/ AD). For websites laff.nl and the LHC website were named.

Other ways people knew the LAFF:

- Through work; partners of the LAFF
- Through organisation members
- Walking by the Ledig Erf or sitting on the LHC terras
- Through volunteers (both from 2009 or volunteers themselves in earlier editions)

Table VIII: How do the LAFF visitors know the festival (2006-2009)



In the table above we see an overview of how people know the LAFF over the past five years. It comes clear that friends and relatives are the most important in the spreading of the name of the festival. But also the distribution of flyers and posters adds to the fame of the LAFF. The results of the 2005 inquiry are left aside, because they were unreliable (only 13 respondents)

8. Amount of days visiting the festival

In table IX we see that 37,8% of the LAFF visitors in 2009 visited the festival one day (comparable to 40% in 2008). The major part of the visitors (61,2%) visited the festival multiple days. The major part came for two (25,1%) or three days (17,9%). These percentages also differ little from the results from 2008 (respectively 21% en 16%, see table X).

Striking is that the amount of people who visited for four days decreased greatly, from 13% to 5,9%. The amount of people who visited the festival for five or more days has slightly increased, from 10% to 12,3%. The strong increase in category four has caused slight increases in the categories two, three and five or more days.

Table IX: Amount of days visiting the festival
Source: LAFF 2009 inquiry

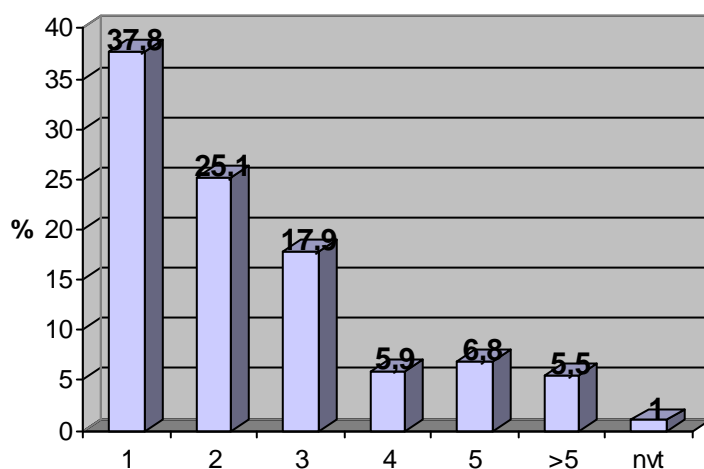
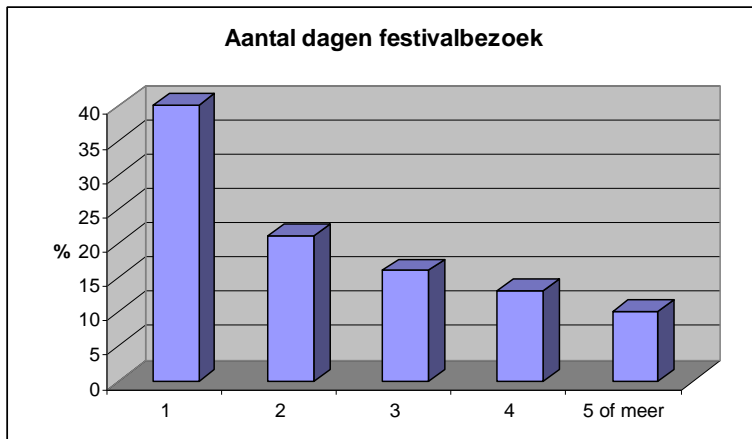


Table X: Amount of days visiting the festival
 Source: LAFF 2008 inquiry



9. Main reason of visit

If we compare table XI with XII, we see that the reasons to visit the LAFF have changed only a little. Feature films are still mentioned the most (41,3%), where atmosphere takes second place (23,9%). The only thing sticking out is the increase in the category presence of guests, this percentage has been cut in halve. That less guests attended the LAFF this year might explain this.

Table XI: Main reason of festival visit 2009
 Source: LAFF 2009 inquiry

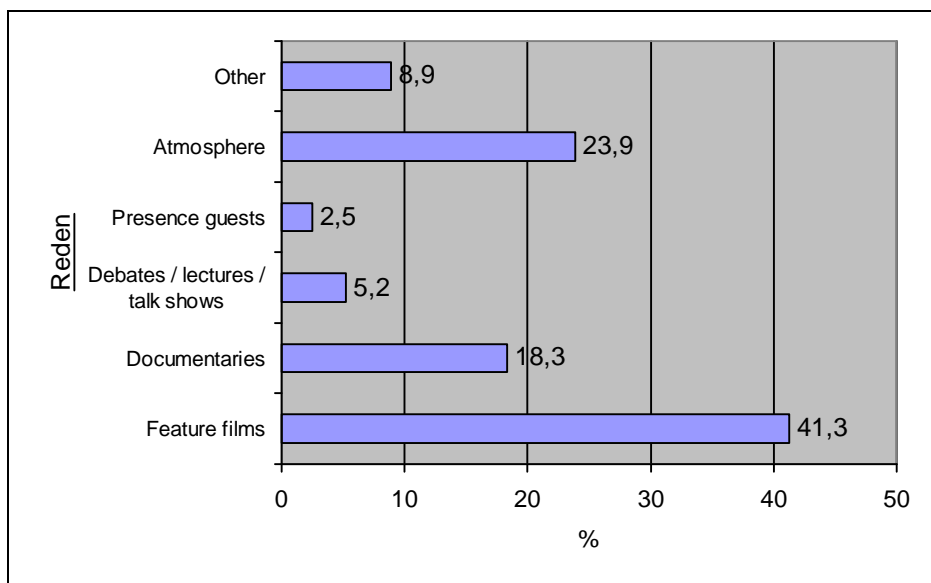
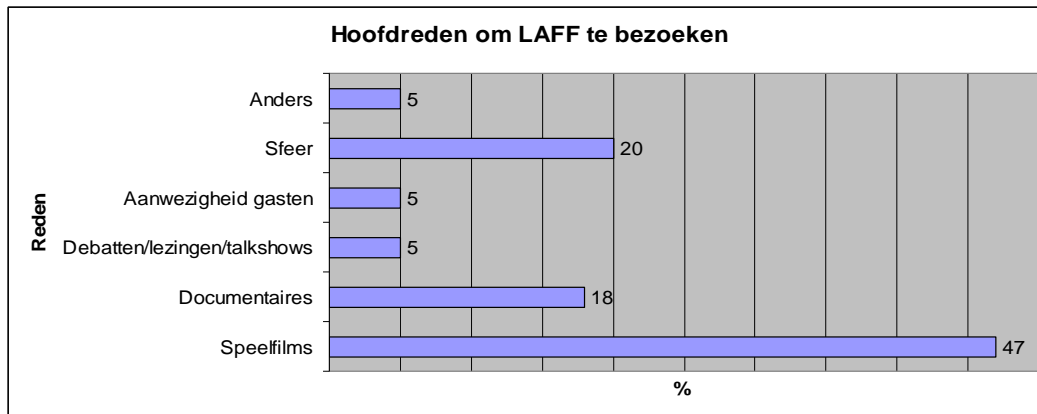


Table XII: Main reason of festival visit 2008
 Source: LAFF 2008 inquiry



In the category ‘other’, mainly ‘work’ and ‘volunteering’ (both for the LAFF and Noticias) were named. Furthermore, bands and live music are attractive to the public.

10. Ticketprice

For the first time the LAFF inquiry also asked the visitors their opinion on the ticket prices of the LAFF. People could indicate five categories, running from low until high. From the inquiry follows that half of the visitors find the ticket prices normal (table XIII). But more than 37% finds the ticket prices higher than average or even high, while only 8,8% finds the prices low or lower than average. If we take a look at table XV, we see that the median (the red line) lays high in the section ‘average’. We can conclude from this that the LAFF visitor finds the ticket prices as moderately high.

Table XIII: Evaluation ticket prices LAFF visitors 2009
 Source: LAFF 2009 inquiry

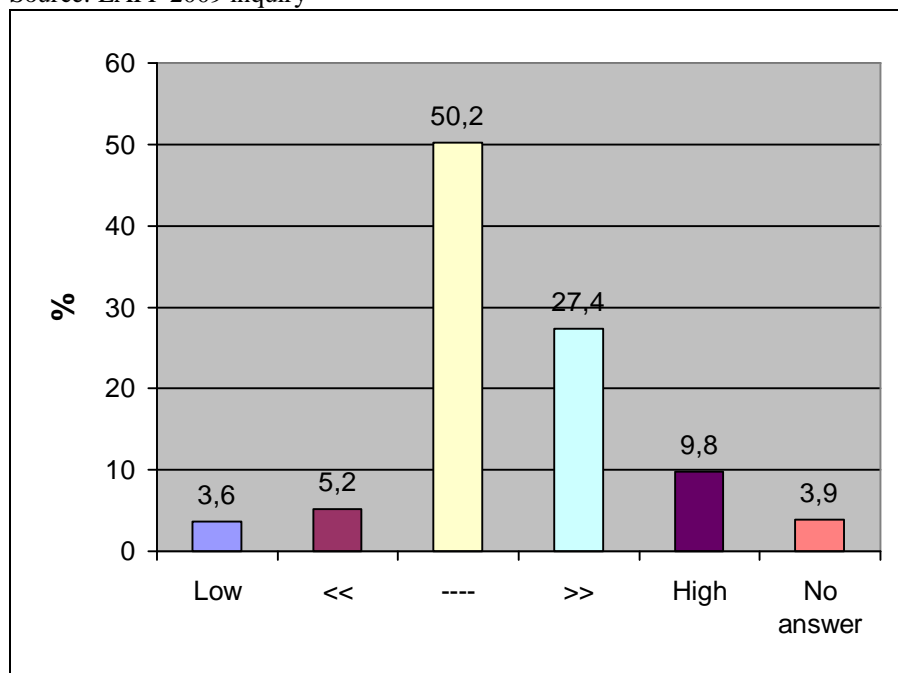
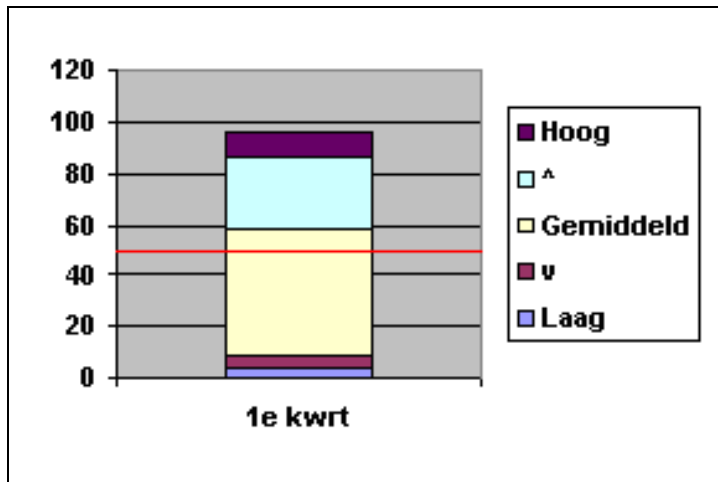


Table XIII: Evaluation ticket prices LAFF visitors 2009
 Source: LAFF 2009 inquiry



11. Remarks by visitors

Which aspect of the festival would you have liked to see differently?

(Welk aspect van het festival had u graag anders gezien)

More than half of the visitors could indicate what they liked about the LAFF but could not think of any comments. The people who did, mainly commented on the ticket prices. Other aspects that could be changed according to the visitors were mainly 'positive' changes. People seemed to mainly more LAFF: more music (12,5%), more programming outside (5,4%), more programming in general, more days, more editions, more evening program, etc.

What do you like about the festival?

(Wat vindt u leuk aan het festival?)

More than half (50,2 %) of the visitors indicated that they liked the atmosphere of the LAFF the most. In 2008, this aspect was also appreciated by the public, it attracts people. After atmosphere, the supply of films is named the most (22% of het total amount of the remarks had to do with this). Furthermore, the Latin American approach is appreciated. The extra activities (music, dance, talk shows and debates, cocktail bar, decoration) are also popular answers.

12. Festival preference LAFF visitors

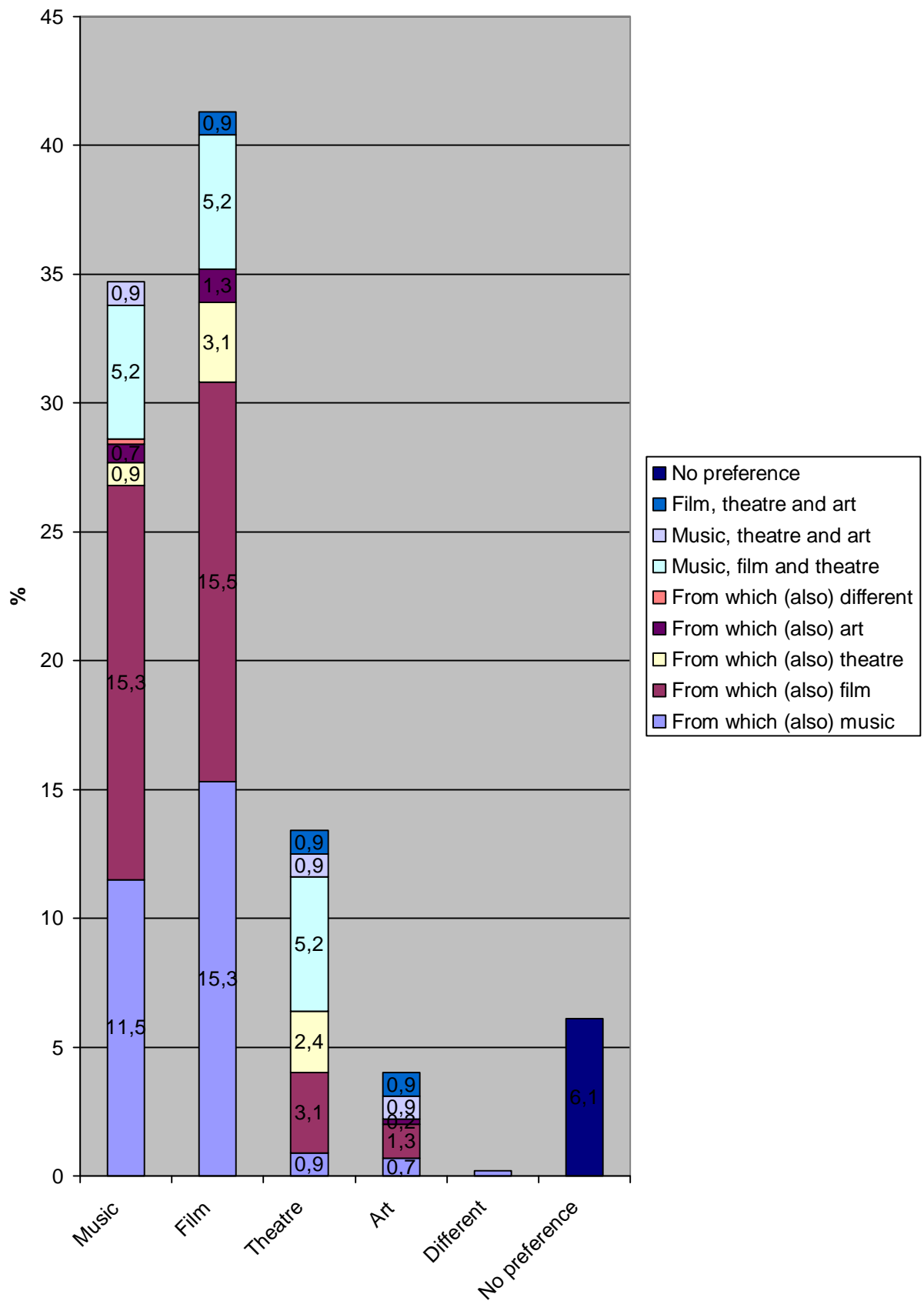
To get a better image of the target group, the LAFF visitors were also asked for their festival preferences this year.

In table XIV we see a division of the preferences named by visitors.

A short explanation of this table: In the first column we see that in total 34,7% of the preferences were for music festivals. But of these preferences, 'music festival' was only indicated as the only preference by 11,5%. Next to the preference for music festivals, 15,3% also had a preference for film festivals, 0,9% also for theatre festivals, 0,7% also for artistic festivals, 5,2% also for film- and theatre festivals, 0,9% also for theatre- and artistic festivals and an almost invisible 0,2% for a different festival next to film festivals. There was not limited amount of preferences indicated on the inquiry (next year!), this explains the complexity of the graphics.

Striking is that of 41,3% of the preferences, people preferred film festivals (among others). The LAFF is a film festival of course, but apparently the LAFF attracts also 'filmfestivaladdicts' Furthermore, the combination film and music festivals was the most popular (15,3%). We also see this in the remarks of the visitors, who would like more music and dance on the LAFF.

Table XVI: Festival preferences visitors LAFF 2009



13. Participation in other Latin American activities

*Do you also participate in other activities that are related to Latin America besides LAFF?
(Neemt u ook deel aan andere activiteiten gericht op Latijns-Amerika buiten het LAFF?)*

No	57,3%
Yes	40,4% (36,2 % specified)
No Answer	2,3 %

From the results above we can conclude that more than half of the LAFF visitors do not participate in other activities related to Latin America, or at least not consciously. 40,2% of the visitors does participate. Of this group 16,9% names “Dance” (tango, salsa, etc.), The same percentage accounts for “Travel”. Study and work related activities are mentioned by 17,8%; debates and lectures by 8,9%. Also language courses score 8,9%.

14. Latin America

The major part of the LAFF public has already visited Latin America, namely 67,8%. Less than a quarter (23,8%) of the visitors indicates they never visited the continent, but do have plans to do so. Only 6,5% say they never visited the continent and do not have plans. (1,9% did not wish to answer).

15. Music style

In a request from Putumayo, the inquiry also contained questions about their acquaintance with the brand and their use of social online communities. This data is not relevant for the LAFF or my research. But the question concerning the musical preference of the public is possibly interesting as the festival offers the visitors also music next to films. Latin music was ticked of by 68,4% of the LAFF visitors, for 20,5% this was their only preference.

Attachment IV: Long outbound holiday trips of the Dutch by season and country of destination 2006 (Source: CBS Nederland)

Tabel 3.1.3
Buitenlandse lange vakanties van Nederlanders per seizoen naar land van bestemming, 2006
Long outbound holidays trips of the Dutch by season and country of destination, 2006

	Winter- periode	Zomer- periode	Totaal	Winter- periode	Zomer- periode	Totaal
	x 1 000			%		
België	290	610	900	6	7	7
Luxemburg	40	110	140	1	1	1
Frankrijk	450	1 740	2 190	10	20	16
Spanje	530	930	1 450	11	10	11
Portugal	70	150	230	2	2	2
Oostenrijk	660	470	1 120	14	5	8
Zwitserland	150	190	340	3	2	2
Groot-Brittannië	140	230	370	3	3	3
Noorwegen, Zweden, Finland	70	210	280	2	2	2
Denemarken	40	140	170	1	2	1
Duitsland	590	1 050	1 630	13	12	12
Italië	150	680	820	3	8	6
Griekenland	100	540	640	2	6	5
Hongarije	30	90	120	1	1	1
Tsjechië	120	210	320	2	2	2
Turkije	220	420	630	5	5	5
Egypte	120	80	200	3	1	2
Verre Oosten	140	100	240	3	1	2
Verenigde Staten	170	160	330	4	2	2
Caribisch gebied	120	100	220	3	1	2
Other	460	720	1 170	10	8	9
Totaal	4 630	8 890	13 520	100	100	100

Bron: ContinuVakantieOnderzoek.

Inlichtingen: CBS (088) 570 70 70.
 Voornaamste publicatie: Vakanties van Nederlanders 2006.
 Frequentie: jaarlijks.

Attachment V: Topic Lists

1. Open Interview Topic List

For my graduation research, I have interviewed Dutch people who have experience with Latin American cinema. The questions in this topic list are meant to find out how the participant is connected to Latin America and, especially, what role Latin American cinema might play in this involvement.

Involvement in Latin America

- Do you have a special interest in Latin America?
 - If so, when did this special interest occur?
 - If so, why do you think you are so close to Latin America?
- Have you ever visited Latin America or are you planning to do so?
- In case you are, which country or region do you prefer and why?
- In case you are not, could you name the main reason why?

- Do you participate in other cultural activities that are connected to Latin America other than Latin American cinema?
- In case you are, which cultural activities do you participate in?
- Do you use other 'cultural stuff' in your daily life that is connected to Latin America?
I give them some simple examples and ask them if they can think of more of these cultural commodities that they use in their daily lives.
- What do you think are the main reasons to do this?

- Do you actively follow the news about Latin America in general?
- In case you do, through which channels do you do this?
- Do you passively follow the news about Latin America (p/e, through daily television news, newspapers and magazines)?
- Are you interested in Latin American news, and in case you are, why?

- Do you have any relatives or friends who are living in Latin America as we speak?
- How do you keep in contact with them, and how often does this contact take place?
- Do you master a language that is spoken in Latin America; Spanish or Portuguese?
- In case you do, what was the main reason to master this language?
- Do you think this influences your relationship with Latin America?

- Do you have business relations with Latin America, and to what extent do you have contact with them?
- Do you support a political or social organization that is involved in Latin America?

Through the next few questions, I would like you to describe your personal image of Latin America.

- What are the main characteristics you ascribe to Latin America as a continent?
- What are the main characteristics you ascribe to Latin Americans as a population?
- What are the main characteristics you ascribe to Latin American culture?
- What are the main characteristics you ascribe to Latin American politics?
- What are the main characteristics you ascribe to Latin America as a touristic destination?
- Where do you think these images come from?
- Can you think of a specific example where your overall image of Latin America was influenced?

Latin American cinema

- How often do you watch Latin American films?
- Can you estimate how many Latin American films you have seen in total?
- Which cinematic genres do you know?
- Overall, which cinematic genre do you prefer and why?
- Which genres did the Latin American films you have seen represent?
- If you can remember, in which countries were these movies produced?

- Which media do you use to watch Latin American films (for example local cinema, art house theatre or at home on borrowed/ bought/ downloaded DVD or VCR)?
- Have you ever visited a film festival which, possibly among others, exhibited Latin American films and did you visit a Latin American film at that occasion?
- If so, do you remember why you chose this film?

- What characteristic do you like best about Latin American films?
- Do you have a preference for specific Latin American films from specific countries?
- If so, why do you think this is?

2. Participant Observation Topic List

During my research, I have held twelve focus groups with respondents. In these focus groups, I showed a Latin American film to the audience and let them discuss the film and their views on Latin America afterwards. To make sure I got all the information I needed, I used the topic list underneath during the focus group. For the discussion I also used some questions from the topic list above to give some input when the discussion would fall silent.

- Which medium is used to display the film?
- Which language is spoken in the film and are there subtitles available?
- Is the film an international coproduction?
- In what way was the film financed?
- Which genre is represented?
- Does the movie contain a clear message?
- If so, is this message recognized by the audience?

- Is the film viewing combined with other cultural expressions?
- If so, which cultural expressions and how do they relate to the movie shown?

- How big is the audience (approximately)?
- What are the main characteristics of the audience (ethnicity, age, gender, education)?
- What are the responses of the audience to the film?
For example: do some walk away before the ending, do they applause near the end, do they actively pick up emotions presented in the film (humour, tragedy, tension etc.), are they concentrated on the movie or on other things, do they discuss the film afterwards, etc.

- Where does the film maker come from?
- Is the film maker internationally renowned or else?
- Does the film maker actively aim for an international audience?
- Is the objective of the film maker influenced by international cooperation?