CINEMA XXI

The Politics of Collectivity

Authorless Cinema Manifesto 2.0

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traducido por Nuria Rodríguez

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1. Preliminary Notes

A Brief Overview of the Authorless Cinema Collective

2007
The CsA (Cine sin Autor - Authorless Cinema) collective came into existence through the initiative, efforts and investment of its four co-founders: Daniel Goldmann, David Arenal, Eva Fernández and Geardo Tudurí. It worked along the lines of the classic activist framework: its members worked in other jobs and invested their time and money in producing films with people who don’t usually have the opportunity to do so. While making films with non-authorial methods, they also started to develop a cinematic theory to cover the whole enterprise. This was how the first three Authorless Cinema projects were carried out.

2009
In 2009, Emmanuelle Trepagny joined the core team. After working in Madrid she moved back to her native city of Toulouse, in France, where she decided to set up a local Authorless Cinema project.
The production framework remained activist-vocational, and the project continued to advance in Madrid and in Toulouse.
The Madrid team decided to base their operations in the Tetuán area (of Madrid) and to implement a larger-scale venture in the neighbourhoods of Ventilla and Valdeaccederas. Aside from a few breaks, that’s where we remained until 2012.
In May 2012, Helena de Llanos joined the CsA collective, putting her humanities PhD on hold in order to learn and make Authorless Cinema films.

After producing several filmic documents in the Ventilla area of Madrid, the collective was totally overwhelmed by the social response to its work. Our human and financial limits forced us to rethink our project. We began to implement our production model.
2012

In the midst of the crisis, we decided to take a step forward and create a more sustainable framework.

Our aim was to find a cultural institution that would house our activities and, most importantly, provide three coordinates: a headquarters that would offer a clear point of reference; an ongoing context that would break away from the activist nomadism and precarity of working from our homes or studios in our spare time; and the foundations for a financial basis for our operations.

This requirement led to the idea of setting up the first Authorless Cinema Factory as a prototype for social film production. And this could be done by transforming film production and management operations into social operations that are open to the participation of ordinary people in general, and can be carried out collectively.

In May 2012, the Intermediae team invited us into the Matadero Madrid Contemporary Art Centre and provided the basic means to set ourselves up and operate for the first three months. This made the first Authorless Cinema Factory possible. Also during this time, Davide Crudetti, a film student from the University of Bologna, joined the Madrid team.

In October, our colleague Helena de Llanos launched a Authorless Cinema project in Blanca, Murcia, called ¿Hacemos una peli?

2013

At the time of writing, the Authorless Cinema Factory at Intermediae Matadero Madrid is in the production stage of its first six films, which will continue until around July-August this year. The warm welcome that the project has received and the high quality of the films that are being generated, in the midst of a serious financial crisis, have more than proven our capacity to offer an alternative model for social film production and for restructuring the social system underlying the film world. But the massive crisis in Spain
the swindle and structural plundering - remain a threat to the sustainability of our project.

At present, aside from the core team, around a dozen collaborators volunteer their time and efforts to keep the project going. We’ve received no funding so far, other than the use of the premises and some communication and publicity support. Even so, our work is allowing us to design an improved Authorless Cinema Factory 2.0 model, which we see as the next stage in the validation of our model of social film production.

Given the difficult situation that the country is going through as a result of political and financial delinquency, it is difficult to say how long it will take us to establish the foundations. But we are sure that we will.

The text

This manifesto is intended as a tool with which to build and develop the social organisation that will lead to an alternative model of film production.

In it, we set out a series of basic concepts that have been gleaned from our studies - which began over seven years ago and are always in progress - and from our practice as the Authorless Cinema Collective, which has been operating for over five years through various projects in Madrid and Toulouse.

1) Like all texts, this one gives a written account of a series of convictions that should probably be experienced in person, developed and described at each step along the way, and that the Authorless Cinema collective itself continues to review, improve and expand at the time of writing.

2) These concepts have allowed us to gradually deactivate the factors that conditioned our understanding of film (as spectators and producers), and we now offer them as a conceptual system that can allow other individuals and groups to embrace a new social mechanism for filmmaking in the 21st century.
3) Since 2009, we have posted weekly articles on our blog (cinesinautor.blogspot.com) as a way of theorising out loud about the history, theories, aesthetics and practices of the cinema that precedes us. A compilation of these articles can be downloaded from our website in their original form (“ideas derramadas” book.blog), and provide some background on the foundations that underpin our vision of cinema. We also have a website: www.cinesinautor.es.

4) The main references we will mention in this text are primarily from Western, Euro-American cinema. As far as possible, we have also looked at some marginal experiences, without by any means considering them to be minor or lesser examples.

5) This text is signed by Gerardo Tudurí. As this could lead readers to assume that he is the author of the book in the usual sense, we would like to point out that his name merely plays a functional role. In other words, within the Authorless Cinema collective, Gerardo Tudurí is the person whose role it is to generate concepts and systematise the reflections arising from the practice and study of film.

It is more useful to allocate a person to work with forums and collective spaces of debate, sharing and debating the knowledge that has been acquired collectively, and to ensure that this work is carried out in an organised way. It is also the task of this “false author” to compile the contributions from other individuals and groups, as this can both expand and amplify the discourse. His signature does not signify personal ownership of the discourse generated. The ideas set out herein are the fruit of the social buzz that has produced us. An inexorable 21st century buzz.

Authorless Cinema Collective
2. Introduction

Towards a film-producing society.

2012. We have just finished this text. Social uprisings are flaring up and spreading like wildfire in many parts of the world. Is this the collapse of the capitalist paradigm? We don’t know. We only know that the current regime is still generating too much death.

We have been spectators. Spectators of financial operations, of political management. Television spectators. Spectators at concerts, performances, museums. Spectators in a world that has been designed by and features a handful of others. In many cases, we had become spectators of our own lives.

The film industry that developed in the West strengthened and contributed to this spectatorship through its business-based social operations, its politics of exclusion and its commercial warfare. For a hundred years, society’s potential for self-imagination through film was deadened by the dynamic of the spectacle, implemented by a handful of businessmen who were determined to entertain us.... on a mass scale... to distract our being.

And what we’ve learnt during all these years of active cinematic conspiracy is to re-purpose film, to challenge and short-circuit it, to bring it into conflict, to make it vulgar, to strip it of its glamour, to put it out of joint and, above all, to release it from its inherited bonds. We already know how cinema goes crazy. We know that it wasn’t intended for certain things, and we know that it becomes childish and loses all its power in certain situations.

It is precisely among ordinary people, among traditional film audiences, that cinema has
never managed to actively exist, that is, to be produced. This it never knew. Aside from the odd exception, the first hundred years of film history has simply consisted of the output and imposition of minority groups and industry professionals.

And when an attempt is made at producing films by people from the majority who are not specialists, professional methods prove clumsy and their formality appears neurotic. Film has never known how to produce itself through any imaginary other than that of the ghetto of its professional industry and authors. This becomes evident if we are to believe its own history.

No confrontation has ever taken place in the war between the audiovisual imaginaries of producer and spectator. The spectator imaginary has never stepped onto the battlefield. There was no battle, because there was imposition. Without denying the quality and diversity of the cinema that has preceded us - which we also love, valuing its enormous richness - we draw attention to a fact that is inescapably bound to this history: the majority of people have only played a passive social role that goes no further than watching films, even if they watch critically.

This manifesto describes the path that has led us this far, but above all it points to a journey that we are still to make, as the Authorless Cinema collective and as a society. It consists of the key concepts that we hope will become the basis for a new Politics of Cinema that is appropriate for today’s social and technological conditions, and that tends towards the total democratisation of processes of artistic representation, particularly cinematic representation. We no longer want to be sheep-like followers of the visions and fantasies of others. In any event, we have decided to build our own visions and our own fantasies.

Leaving Culture behind.

All the things that we had learned from the capitalist mode of production had plunged us into the misery of alienated production, into political indifference about the social nature of our works, into an exhausting, competitive war to win a
place in the limbo of institutions and reviews, into an emptiness that turned us into aesthetic vagabonds burdened with objects, desperate for fans, followers, readers, spectators, buyers.

We believe that it is unacceptable for an artist’s fate to be reduced to simply turning the creative self and its ghettos into a profitable company or a private professional lab. Commercial anxiety and solo professional success in the field of elitist authoritarian culture no longer have any real meaning for us.

It was this constant coming and going of goods, the fetishism that shook us dry and isolated us in our arrogant creative solitude, that set the alarm bells ringing and made us react and get organised.

The very same hordes that have stopped being mere spectators of an order constructed by minority elites will take over the space and time of that authoritarian culture and its institutions.

Our first revolutionary act as 21st century creators should be to commit cultural suicide: to kill the old author, the individual, hermetic, proprietary author who is unwilling to share his strategies and creative processes, unwilling to allow “non specialists” to participate in his work. Heirs to unjust social divisions, we reject elitist Culture.

We needed to realise an evident fact! Everything we do is simply the result of many other things that have been done before, of many other people, of many other works. We had distanced ourselves from inherited practices and know-how. We are not looking at the old horizons, and we do not aspire to them. By committing suicide in the public square of the commons we have opened the doors to a different model of production, a different way of engaging with culture and life itself, alongside the people around us.

What is the point of interminable debates that aren’t expressed as an immediate reaction and don’t bring about an urgent reorganisation of cultural production, now that the time to act has come?
The bored mantra.

People have been talking about the death of cinema since the seventies, but what has really been ailing is its “forms of money”.

Given that in a hundred years of filmmaking we have been unable to construct a living social imaginary that offers an alternative to the capitalist model we are immersed in, and given that twenty-first century film production seems to have nothing more in store for us than the whimsical creations of its industry and authors, it seems clear that something has gone wrong with the overall system and the social purpose of this profession.

And it went wrong right from the start. Until the digital mutation, film had represented nothing but the profitable imaginary (profitable in financial or career terms) of its minorities and, at best, the “deserter” imaginary of dissidents, which was usually a limited, individual and minority imaginary in itself. Above all, cinema has been the aesthetic enterprise, the expressive tool and the colonising entertainment of its producers, investors and executives, and of a particular social strata of professionals.

But we love cinema; this is why we are taking action. If we simply continue to support and subject ourselves to the forms of audiovisual representation that we are already familiar with as spectators, to the almost arrogant (because it is the only one) output of industry and authors, we will be denying ourselves the right to the free determination of our society’s imaginary.

We’re not saying that film has to adapt to the new world order. Rather, the emerging social world must meet the challenge of creating a totally new kind of cinema.

That said, anybody who wants to remain entrenched in old models of production has every right to historically repeat him or herself.
The spread of the “Lumière gesture”

Cinema's initial gesture involved capturing reality in a succession of photographic images, developing them in a laboratory, and projecting them to an audience.

Circa 1895. A string of inventors in the USA, England and France, officially consummated in the photographic company founded by the Lumière brothers, brought cinema into our midst and turned it into a business. The first social order that sprung up around cinema was entrepreneurial: Lumière, Méliès, Pathé, Edison, Gumont... The business model based on corporate studio was virtually the only social mode of film production that cut through the entire 20th century. A handful of factories were set up, and the rest of the world were spectators from the start. After the first public projection, the entire world was instantly the film market.

Private companies immediately broadened their reach, as with the Lumière brothers, who took less than a year to reach Mexico, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, Cairo, Bombay, Shanghai... in spite of the much slower transport and communications at the time.

Méliès and his company of tricks. 1905, the first empire of Charles Pathé, who would reign until World War I. Edison’s monopolist mafia. The flight of pro-independent producers to the south of the USA. The massive Hollywood empire, its fatigue and diversification in the late fifties. The break away from the big studios with the arrival of the sixties and its explosion of nations and authors. The digital mutation. The present.

Go back to the particular, partial, official history of European-North American film that we’ve been told. Look over it again and you’ll see.
Cinema was created and organised as big business, to attract the masses. And that was the start of an ongoing story of domination, always accompanied by ever-present but very minor dissidents.

After a first decade in which cinema was basically a fairground attraction, the narrative formulas of “industrial money-film” would shape the imagination in movie theatres. The creation of the big Hollywood factories left no doubt as to cinema’s spectacular power. Rather, there was suspicion of its ethics, its colonialist links, its commercial expansionism, its dependence on the banking system, and its effects on us as we shaped our vision through film.

Our cinematic gaze grew out of the engineering of the elites in THEIR films. A mirror that built a world out of images and sounds for us to consume, to their liking. Film history is the history of THEIR interests. Theirs. We won’t go into detail here. That’s already been done in the stories, reviews, theoretical studies and corporate journalism that have done nothing but promote and fan the flames of oligopolistic and authorial film productions.

Influenced by a small list of figures who tried to democratise cinema - and who were always steamrolled by all those insatiable magnates - we are working towards a kind of cinema that is not about their films, their production hierarchy, their spectator, their image. Cinema without Cinema, but more specifically, 21st century Cinema.

We exercise our right and appeal to the free audiovisual self-determination of ordinary people. We open up the possibility for a mass occupation of film production.
3. Politics and Cinematic Subjectivity

Preamble

Until very recently, filmmaking was based on stories, it was the product of the imagination. It was all produced as if there were no such thing as reality, as the non-fictionalised events.

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Our common interest lies in trying to discover how things are around us; without it appearing banal.

****

Knowledge is not enough. Artists have to look at reality through the lens of coexistence. The need for coexistence may go back to ancestral experiences, but in our case - as storytellers, scriptwriters, directors - we are concerned with setting up profound relationships with other people and with reality. We want to achieve a new type of artistic relation that will not only transform our art, but also produce consequences in life itself, bringing about greater coexistence between human beings...

... The individual sitting across from me in the empty compartment irritates me; then he says “May I open the window?” and everything changes. And the more deeply we explore reality, the more we analyse people and situations... In short, the reason we work is to escape from abstractions.

***

How can we express this reality in cinematic form?...

Any relationship we have with what we want to transmit is a relationship that entails a choice and, as such, a creative act by the subject in question. But in our case, the subject consummates the coitus on the spot - in situ - rather than starting it in contact with the object and then going to finish the deed elsewhere. This is what I call “cinema of encounters”.

This way of working can lead to a twofold result: 1) in regard to moral habits, the men of cinema would go out into the world, in direct contact with reality. Some may remain in the first stage, others in the second and others in the third. But in the forest of life, the filmmaker is always trying to hunt down the golden stag - the social reality that has the power to move his creative strings. From that point, each will recreate reality in his own way; but we can be sure of two things: their will have unleashed their cry in the forest, not seated at a desk; and we will have ensured moral continuity in
Two approaches to the politics of production have been defined and put into practice in European and North American cinema, becoming hegemonic: the politics of the big studios and the politics of auteurs. Two ways of understanding cinema that have underpinned and driven its development.

a) The politics of the big studios established its hegemony in the Hollywood factories and was the sole model until the first half of the 20th century. It shaped and structured film production in its own version as a big multinational factory (assembly lines based on the Fordist mass production model). All films produced through the politics of big studios were (are) actually made through a collective processes, but one that it is structured in a capitalist way: with a tyrannical, hierarchical organisation of the production process that is geared towards obtaining as much profit as possible for its investors. Spectators of these kinds of films will be attracted by the star system, by the standard publicity and genres, the persuasively engineered construction, etc. A series of operations and variables that are exploited with extreme efficacy. The tyranny of the Studios required (and still requires) the involvement of a considerable number of people, with the production, distribution and exhibition aspects strictly controlled by its entrepreneurs. This big studio politics prevailed in the film world ever since the initial business expansion of the Lumière Brothers. And while it did change over time, it never lost its obsession for total control over all of its activities by those who manage the production.
process. From the outset, this approach was defined by the irresistible temptation to secure “all the viewers of the world” as the potential sales market for every film produced.

**Industrial productive subjectivity**

Studios were structured around the feelings, ideology, vision and interests of the groups of producers and investors, who influenced productions according to their own business models and desires. The process involved (still involves) filmmaking through a collectivity made up of industry investors and professionals. Brought together under what is usually a commercial agreement or contract, they produced (produce) films in their temples of manufacturing, within pre-defined deadlines, in specific locations. And they made sure the processes were inaccessible to ordinary people, except at the exhibition stage.

**b) The politics of authors or ‘auteurs’** emerged in France through the scriptwriters that later became New Wave filmmakers. Although as a theory it barely lasted a decade, it took hold as a particular way of making films that revolved around the directors and their small teams.

The politics of *auteurs*, André Bazin wrote, “essentially consists of highlighting the personal factor of artistic creation as the key criteria, and then postulating its permanence and even its progression from one work to the next.”

It seems reasonable to think and feel that *auteur* cinema is, to some degree, aimed at a minority group of film lovers who are more cultured than the norm in a certain critical spirit and aesthetic refinement. These audiences seek other types of experiences that will take them away from the simple prisons of entertainment, the narrative commercialism of genres, the systems of audiovisual persuasion and attraction that are created under the conventions of business. This is cinema for dissident minorities who turn their backs on the
hegemonic aesthetic.

In one sense, it is certainly true that the auteur gesture of the 50s and 60s allowed the individual, individualist nature of film production to emerge. The production team was swallowed up by a single individual - the director - who could even come to eclipse the stars of the film.

It was a new politics that added a new focus of attraction, a lens through which to read films and a motivation to “watch films”, but generally flopped in the theatres.

A filmmaker with a small team under his command generally took most of the financial profits or professional kudos. Even though Godard cast Brigitte Bardot in Le Mepris and Jane Fonda in Tout va bien, the films bore the undisputed stamp of Godard's intellectual and aesthetic value.

“The politics of auteurs” was the step towards individualisation that Western cinema had never formally considered. In the decades that followed, the intellectual value of the auteur was gradually swallowed up by his or her commercial value. It was an action that changed the criteria by which films were judged, but it was also an aesthetic expansion of cinema as a whole, and also an expansion of the market.

In short, the politics of auteurs granted cinematic status to individual subjectivity. Even though in the West this politics was first theorised in Truffaut’s text, directors were already making auteur cinema before it was published. From Howard Hawks and Alfred Hitchcock in the US to Yosuiro Ozú in Asian cinema, there existed a kind of filmmaking in which the director’s personality determined the style of the films.

Authorial productive subjectivity

The subjectivity of these two types of politics in European and North American cinema was driven by the professional, intellectual and artistic interests of the directors. The territory and operations of the big studios were no longer the inaccessible temple of film subjectivity. Instead, the temple shifted to the directors’ subjective world, an interiority that was (and is) often just as
despotic as the tyranny of the senior executives and directors in factory-style filmmaking.

**The weakening of the old politics.**

The two types of 20th century film politics have not been inclusive in terms of the social ownership and participation of people in processes of production, management and profits, which have been set aside for the minority investors and professionals. Nonetheless, their representations have been assumed to be a reflection of society. But although this may be true to some degree, they are only a reflection of that tiny section of society. As a result, cinematic representation has been enormously partial when it comes to encompassing the diversity of the population. Although the works of any filmmaker or group of filmmakers will always soak up and reflect many of the complexities of the social, cultural and political moment in which they are made, we cannot consider them to be an expression of society as a whole. And this is so regardless of whether or not audiences later identify with the content and the style of a particular film. Even if audiences identify with a film on a massive scale, the content and the style will always be a reflection of a minority, personal universe.

In order for a work to reflect a particular group or collectivity, its production processes must necessarily have included the required mechanisms for participation, decision-making and management, allowing individuals from these sectors to actively participate. It is one thing for spectators to relate to films and to have a series of experiences through their perceptions, but to say that these films represent them is something different altogether. Aside from a very few exceptions, cinema has never offered a “politics of social participation” as an approach to production and management. This is a profound social deficit that cinema still owes us. Its forms of appraisal and analysis have largely been based on the social and economic framework in which its activities were carried out.

The Politics of Collectivity that we propose seeks to clear a path for a new
way of organising the film and audiovisual system, one that overhauls its formal elements and frees up its production models. We’re not calling for an end to commercial or auteur cinema as a form of expression, but we believe that a critical revision of the foundations of cinema, along with a different politics, could lead to a new type of production that allows for the coexistence of different approaches to filmmaking, and, above all, allows for these approaches to be more democratic.

Film in the dole queue.

These 20th century politics of cinema, as they are today, contain and underpin much of the official production conglomerate. To a large extent, new generations are trained to continue to fuel these production platforms that fulfil last century’s rituals. Film school enclaves generally train people in these closed production methods. All those who are interested in being part of this world know that they must be prepared to wait outside the private factories of the old forms of production until a door opens slightly and a voice from within calls out the name of the next five or six chosen ones who will start their career by obtaining a decent job in the film production system. Today’s technological, cultural and social conditions open up the opportunity to leave behind these zones of industrial “maquila” or auteur elitism. Cinema, TV and mass entertainment and information media outlets have lost the absolute, exclusive influence that they have had in the past.

If filmmakers do take up the opportunity to structure film production and management democratically, taking its images from the grassroots and from everyday life, with people who organise to this end, cinema will finally have been able to enter the second stage of its history of production, and its vitality will be boosted as never before.
Social movement of the film image.

The way audiovisual images function in society has undergone major changes, and there has been a remarkable shift in terms of the two types of politics described above.

In the Politics of Studios of early film history, the images that emerged from the subjectivity and manufacture of tiny minorities became floating, volatile, imperial images that sought to conquer audiences on a massive scale. Images that moved along the elitist commercial highways of the market and hovered over different groups of people through the privatised networks of their movie theatres. Thoughts, feelings, sensibilities, imagination and memory became the fertile ground from which films could elicit human responses. In this type of politics, the spectator becomes a voluntary container of the fictions of the people who work for, or own, the studios, and must pay them in order to have an audiovisual experience of cinema - of “their” cinema.

In the Politics of Auteurs that followed, the production hub shifted to individuals and small production teams who began to make films that diversified both form and content. But the social structuring of the production system did not change. The author maintained the same type of relationship with his audiences and, aside from a very few exceptions, did not countenance any kind of audience participation in the production process.

But a Politics of Collectivity such as we are proposing here sees the current situation as the first stage towards a social system of production in which sections of the general population - who had previously only been consumers or spectators - acquire the means of production to the point of being able to create their own images and narratives.

Introducing a Politics of Collectivity

The New Wave precursors shook up cinema through a strategy that could be
summed up as follows:

a) They identified the things that bored them about existing filmmaking, which they also admired.
   b) They specified new values and critical criteria for cinema.
   c) They re-interpreted film history through the lens of these new criteria.
   d) They embarked on making films based on the new foundations they had defined.

They realised that unless they created a new cinematic discourse, their films risked becoming invisible for the cinema world that they loved.

With the Politics of Collectivity, we are working on a similar strategy. We are creating an initial body of discourse in order to spark debate around a new kind of cinema that must find its place in the midst of existing politics. It must coexist with these and, obviously, it must sometimes radically diverge from them.

The audiovisual representation of the world is no longer based solely on a commercial subjectivity or that of a small group of professionals, but from a subjectivity that originates in the people. There is a new flow of deeply rooted, immersed sounds and images that stem from the grassroots and rise towards the cinema’s production elite. Unlike the images that this elite creates in order to be spread massively, today’s social images are produced on a mass scale.

But this first stage of new social audiovisual representation is largely produced individually, without a politics that can give it a communal meaning. People do not come together to make films, although they still come together to watch films made by others. In spite of rapidly changing habits, they continue their social behaviour as spectators without imagining themselves in the role of collective producers.

These images drawn from the grassroots of society are the ones that we believe should be boosted by a Politics of Collectivity that would provide a
framework to ensure a production model based on the collective social subject, self-organised in order to produce its own audiovisual world. A Politics that provides a theoretical, critical, historiographical and methodological framework that is legitimising from the point of view of the existing forms of production, which tend to marginalize any kind of creation that does not follow their established rituals, or that moves away from their own forms and aesthetics. A Politics that brings about new models for living, producing, and managing the cinematic realm.

As we set down the key ideas behind this new Politics, we felt that we needed to critically review cinema: the way it puts together its stories, an archaeology of its critique and its theories - the monoform, as Peter Watkins calls it - the development of its journalism and dissemination, its imperial business operations. Nearly all previous approaches ignored the possibility of any kind of broad-based social participation from the start. This means that if we want to build a different future history, we have to tear down the arguments that prop up its hermetic tendencies, and argue its current owners and professionals towards a profound democratisation of cinema.

21st century film will require a new breed of cinema lovers, a new film criticism, a new historiography and new theories, if we genuinely want to avoid simply repeating the history that we are already familiar with.
4. Film People. The Deactivated Spectator. 

Towards a producing society.

“A spectator who participates can no longer be a consumer, and by becoming a participant he ceases to be a spectator and becomes a living part of the dialectical process between the work and the recipient. If the work achieves integration, it alters the person who receives it, who in turn alters the work by contributing his own human and social experience. The comments and critiques that people share with us at social screenings made us change the films we were making... We ourselves have been changed more than we intended to change others.” 

JorgeSanjinés. Theory and Practice of a Cinema With the People

“People constantly talk about the “audience”, but I don’t know it, I don’t see it, I don’t know who it is. And the things that have made me think about the audience are the big failures, resounding failures like... Les Carabiniers, which only eighteen people saw in fifteen days. So when there were eighteen spectators... You wonder: who the hell were they? That’s what I wanted to know... I don’t think Spielberg can think about his audience. How can you think about 12 million spectators? His producer might think about twelve million dollars, but to think about twelve million spectators... is absolutely impossible!” 

Godard, late 1970s

“...many industry commentators are quick to add that as the public grows increasingly apathetic, apolitical, jaded and cynical, movies designed for their delectation would naturally follow suit... The press, in order to justify its own priorities, maintains a vested interest in viewing the audience as brain-dead.”

-Jonathan Rosenbaum

“All existing equilibrium is brought back into question each time unknown people try to live differently. But it’s always far away. We learn of it through the papers and newscasts. We remain outside it, confronted with just another spectacle. We are separated from it by our non-intervention. It is makes us quite disappointed in ourselves. At what moment was choice postponed? When did we lose our chance? We haven’t found the weapons that we needed. We have let things go. I have let time slip away. I have lost what I should have defended.”
Guy Debord in the film Critique of Separation

Resignifying the grassroots.

Although all sorts of people interact with cinema, only a small minority produce it. The history of film is simply a description of the relationship between these small minorities and audiences as a whole.

“Peoples’ cinema” refers to the body of films that the producer-elites have manufactured for the rest of society, which originally meant the working classes. Even the most adventurous entrepreneurs and producers usually think about their own interests and needs when they make their films, and at most about the “audience figures” they imagine.

The earliest cinema audience, particularly in the case of the three major hubs of production in the Western world (France, England, North America) was the lower classes: workers, craftsmen, poor migrants. We would now see the work of an independent producer such as William Haggar in the early days of cinema - from 1900 to 1905 he created his own travelling movie theatre in which to screen films that he made himself, targeted at an audience made up mainly of miners from the towns he travelled to - as a profitable local film venture.

But even so, those early family companies in Britain were based on the same structure: the owners of a spectacle-business making films for workers and craftsmen who did not participate or influence the production of the material they watched.

When we talk about the grassroots or people’s cinema, we are referring to what is known as “cine popular” in Spanish, and in this language the term “popular” that has several meanings: 1. pertaining to or regarding the people. 2. peculiar to the people or arising from them. 3. pertaining to the less privileged social classes. 4. within reach of those with lower financial or cultural means. 5. appreciated by, or at least familiar to, the public in general. 6. pertaining to a particular type of culture, which the people consider to be their own, and which constitutes their tradition.
So if when we talk about “peoples’ cinema” we are referring to “the less privileged social classes” to those “with lower financial or cultural means”, then it should be an activity that belongs to the people, that should “arise from the people”, that they “consider to be their own” and that is “within reach” of these social groups. But Cinema has never belonged to the people.

Under a Politics of Collectivity, cinema must become an activity that is managed in all its complexity by people in their neighbourhoods and associations, in their families, in schools and among groups of friends. It must be produced and exhibited in their immediate environment. A bit like the William Haggar model, but without William Haggar as the owner. It is not just about ownership of the technical means to produce films, but also about the social organisation that makes it possible.

Cinema must be made by people who are cultured and people who are not, by those who are knowledgeable about film and those who are not, overcoming what Guattari called a “reactionary concept of culture”, of culture as value: “a value judgement that determines who has culture and who doesn’t; or whether one belongs to cultured milieu or to uncultured milieu.”

Analysing the origins of French cinema, Noel Burch said that “During the first decade, film was the ‘theatre of the poor’ and attracted almost exclusively the lower classes (craftsmen, workers) of the urban centres.” He goes on to list some of the reasons that explain why the well-off classes did not go to the cinema in France, the country that had created it: the short duration of early films, the differences between the cinema and the theatre of the time, the venues were it was shown (circuses, music-halls, cafés, concerts, fairgrounds) and even, he writes, the “famous Charity Bazaar fire in which Parisian high society lost quite a few of its numbers.” All of these factors intimidated the bourgeoisie and prevented them from seeking out the lower class venues where early films were screened.

French mainstream newspapers, Burch continues, had no doubts about the purpose of film: “With the cinema, for a few coins, sometimes even without leaving the pub, workers who have toiled all day long can see the hope that they need in the most surprising forms.” The idea was to profitably fill the leisure time of the lower classes, who were kept busy working all day to survive.
The people’s cinema originally was and still is the films that the cultured minorities who own the knowledge and means to create and disseminate their culture - their cinema - offer the rest of the spectator society.

This tolerated and apparently inoffensive alignment has prevented us from discovering what representations the spectator-general public is capable of creating. The people’s production imaginary is uncharted territory. We have not had the politics, methods, or production and management plans that could allow it to emerge. We do not know what content or what aesthetic “ordinary people” are capable of producing in an organised context.

The remote spectator.

A “remote spectator” is a spectator who does not participate in producing films, but sees them once they are finished. A spectator of the work of others. This type of spectator is alienated from film production and the activity is structured around him. He has to pay for his ticket.

He is a generic category, an enunciation. The consequence of a business activity, he is born as a commercial reality. A stranger, who has to be persuaded through all kinds of formal and narrative techniques designed to keep him in his chair and to give him a positive experience that kindles his enthusiasm and ensures he will return to the movie theatre. A vague, hypothetical spectator defined by hazy categories, audience figures, and market research. A spectator as a fait accompli: the person who saw such and such a film at this or that place. The remote spectator was officially born on 28 December 1895 at the Salon Indien, at 14 Boulevard Des Capucines in Paris, the first time he paid for a ticket to see the projection of the Lumière Brothers. Apparently few people attended, but even so the gesture became history and made its place among us.

There are all kinds of spectators. Nobody is a film spectator 24 hours a day. In reality, there are only fleeting, intermittent bursts of “being-a-spectator”, which last as long as the film being watched. At best, a spectator will be affected by the film he has just watched, which will become part of his emotions, his thoughts, his sensory world.
As a social phenomenon, film spectators or audiences are a group of people who share a love for certain types of films. These days, audiences are seen as entities that are created like fictional characters, and are even given autonomy of thought and action as a group: **audiences want to see this, audiences do not want to see that, the audience may change the channel or stay away from movie theatres, audiences have preferred...** as if the audience were a group that comes together to decide what it likes and what it will do, and then transmits these decisions every day. In reality, audiences are simply large groups of people who temporarily share certain tastes and go to certain places.

The phantom-audience that we conjure up is really just us.

So cinema was established as an activity that was doubly strange. On one hand, the group of producers and spectators who are unknown and unfamiliar to each other. On the other, the group of people who go to screenings, most of whom are also strangers and never have the chance to develop relationships that go any deeper than the epicentral and quite unhealthy links between fans and their films, directors, actors and actresses.

In our current social structure, we are also spectators of social life, politics, the economy, company offshoring, the speculation of financial elites, the invasion of a country, the precariousness of millions of unemployed people, the vehemence of television debates, the culture of a museum... The large majority of us aren’t actively involved in “doing” these activities that make up our lives.

We are not taught to be active producers of our own existence. Instead, we learn to see it as if our day-to-day lives did not belong to us. We are trained to work in all types of places. Very few of us are brought up to run them. We are taught to use the money, but not to have a thorough understanding of it.

**MONEY-CINEMA** exploited (exploits) this same social mechanism. It settled us into a theatre seat, in some free time between work and other activities, and invited us to immerse ourselves in the sounds and images created by somebody else. We have not turned our back on the responsibility of creating our own audiovisual representations -
this right has always been deliberately denied to us.
If we are to awaken from the spectator-state and become producers of our own images, we must dismantle “the old politics of cinema” that are embedded in our habits, and replace them with habits that will shape our productive mode of being.
What we aim to do in this text is to provide a series of clues that will gradually lead us to a different political attitude.
A political attitude that will in turn lead to and organise the social commons around film production, and shape the Politics of Collectivity.

The present spectator

If we think back to villa Lumière and the other studios of those early inventors, we can imagine that the advance screenings of those first moving images must have created the first spectators, who watched them without paying. Technicians, relatives... surely they must have seen the filmic image before anybody else. They were the first spectators, the spectators who were present (in the production).
And under the new conditions of film production, a great many people are now the first spectators of the audiovisual production that is taking place on a mass scale. The audiovisuals that we make with our own devices.

Filmmaking has always been an intense, fascinating activity that was only enjoyed by film professionals. A radical democratisation of its operations must open up these production activities to the enjoyment of the population in general, and not just minority groups.
Everybody has the right to use the same techniques to express their own vision of the world.
In a new politics of production there will be no structural distinction between producers and spectators. Anybody will be able to take either role, depending on the circumstances.

The communicative act of cinema will be the act of sharing its own production
with fellow men and women. As producers, we will be spectators of other
producers.

The Politics of Collectivity shifts the focus of film work from the remote
spectator to the first or present spectator, which becomes its driving force.

The voluntary spectator suicide (by those who want to become producers),
and the spectatorial murder by industry professionalism (that creates the
conditions for the spectator to become producer) are the ways to trigger a
substantial change in the class relations that cinema has been based on since
its origins.

**Non-persuasive narrativity. Cinema without spectators.**

In order to deactivate this old version of the spectator, a Politics of
Collectivity must set up a new series of conditions based on a critical position
in which:

a) cinema does not need remote spectators in order to exist. It does not need
to base the meaning of its production only on the “fleeting moment” during
which people attend a projection. If cinema does not necessarily need to
persuade somebody, then “the cinematic” can develop in other directions,
simply as the expression of a group of people. And even if cinema does not
lose its interest in remote spectators, films can be seen as a social creative
environment in which the most important thing is shared expression. These
people’s strong links to cinema can prioritise its potential in terms of
participation, production, relations, innovation, imagination and politics.

b) the technology can allow the “old” spectators to have new experiences in
cinema, beyond simply watching programming proposed by the same old
producers.
c) the team of professionals favours and stimulates all these possibilities equally, “dying” or abandoning its former position of proprietary authorship.

5. Social Collectivities of Cinema.

Ephemeral groups

“What a life… We meet, we work together, we love each other, and then… as soon as we grasp something… pfft… it’s gone! See? It’s no longer there…”

Valentina Cortese as Severina, in a scene from Truffaut’s *American Night*

Ephemeral collectivity in cinema

In order to produce its films, cinema did and still does constantly generate “ephemeral groups” of professionals, which last only for as long as they are required. The people in these group generally enter into a relationship under a commercial contract, or through a professional commitment or personal interest. These ephemeral communities of professionals are basically organised for the purpose of creating a film.

The time that determines film production is unlike ordinary time. In the midst of reality, the professionals involved in a film shoot appear as visitors in a hurry, immersed in a particular reality that has been pre-planned by somebody.

Film operations involve a start date and a completion date.

Everything that surrounds a shoot emphasises its own methods, which are closed in social terms, given that nobody can enter the operational area without permission from
the owners of the process.

Cinema tends to generate an inside and an outside - physical and fictional - and becomes a spatial and temporal interruption of life. Producers and directors decide what can take place and what will be left out, depending on the dictates of their imaginations. They create a temporary reality governed by the rules of the ephemeral collectivity of cinema, under the supervision of a director.

They are temporary communities, programmed for a particular working plan, and their features are familiar to us:

1) Its members are professionals, if not mercenaries, of filmmaking.
2) Their situation is not generated by a shared imaginary, it answers to the specific needs of a professional project or a particular business venture.
3) The bonds between the people involved are determined by money or professional interest.
4) These groups usually exist as a result of an investment seeking financial profitability, or of an interest in personal expression and development.
5) They are hierarchical groups with internal class divisions based on the professional role or the investment capacity of each member.
6) The kind of subjectivity they give rise to is that of a director or an investor and his team.

Social collectivities of cinema.

In a Politics of Collectivity, production is organised around Social Collectivities of Cinema as the basis for the entire audiovisual system. These groups have the following characteristics:

1) They are groups of people who self-organise to produce their own cinematic works.
2) The groups include people who are not professionally involved in film or
audiovisual production, who co-produce alongside industry professionals.

3) They consist of people who are living their day-to-day lives in a specific context, which will give rise to the content and formal elements of the films that are produced.

4) Social and creative relationships in these types of groups are horizontal and inclusive, and the decisions on the production and management of the films are communally owned, discussed, and decided on among all participants.

5) Cinema collectivities can potentially exist anywhere, because every human situation has sufficient elements and values to be turned into film.

6) The cinematic potential of these groups stems from their social and cultural links, the proximity of their lives, from living in the same neighbourhood or working together, or from any other more or less enduring connection that will be strengthened when they specifically self-organise around the production of a film.

7) The subjectivity that is produced by these types of films does not arise from the institution of cinema. Instead, it arises from society working hand in hand with film professionals who choose to venture into this model of production.

8) The subjectivity of a creative group is not the same as individual subjectivity. It operates under different mechanisms; it is not the sum of the individuals involved. A creative group operates under a different type of sensibility, a different way of perceiving, different kinds of operations. Therefore, it will produce different types of works.

9) A creative social collective is not just a sum of professionals. It is a group made up of all kinds of people, and professionals are just one type of contributor among many.

10) Any money that is managed as part of a production is seen as a necessary part of the project, but it is not the main driving force behind the activity. The primary benefits to be generated through a Politics of Collectivity are social, expressive, communicational, affective, cultural, and political returns. Any financial profits that may be generated are an issue that may come up later in the process. They will not determine the forms and content that are generated, and they will always be managed collectively.

11) The more collectives organise themselves to make their films, the more they will represent the community of the society that they belong to.

The set-world

The environment in which we live, our everyday surroundings, the streets, private homes, institutions, parks, situations... the people, our people, the places that make up our lives: these are the new film sets of the 21st century. Any chemist's, bar or school; any social situation or setting in which we gather, work together, or take action, contains the raw material of cinema: different types of people, feelings, situations, histories, stories, atmospheres, conversations, decors... It is life, as it happens.
Ordinary household wardrobes will replace the dressing rooms that will be left to gather dust in the old enclaves of film production.
Normal people, with their joys, struggles, worries, stories, anxieties, laughter and interpretations will take over the old theatrical role of actors and actresses.
Anybody with a device for recording sounds and images is a 21st century camera operator and sound technician.
Recognising the place we live in as the new “set-world” will inevitably lead us to re-signify, reflect, and achieve a new critical awareness of our surroundings. Cinema must enable people’s due appropriation of their filmic representations, if we really want to put film practices at the service of the common good and move away from the exclusive territory of its private minorities.

The social status of production

The social status of film production is the social production relationship that exists between the grassroots population and the teams and enclaves that are involved in professional film and audiovisual production.
Under the old model, spectators as social groups had a relationship of zero participation in the production operations led by the investors and professionals. “Cinema” was the
term used to describe all the audiovisual representations of the world created by these “producing minorities” which owned and still own the know-how, production techniques and business practices of cinema.

These minorities kept the spectator-masses locked in the hypnotic stage. By consuming the works that issued forth from their big film factories and their medium and small production teams, spectators did nothing but attend their exhibitions, and pay for the cinema experience.

There have been very few cases in which ordinary people were able to participate in the creation and production processes.

But this spectator-mass gradually awakened as the 20th century wound down, and by the dawn of the 21st century they were no longer spectators but active users of image and sound recording devices, interfaces and display screens. An increasing number of people are taking an active part in the production of audiovisual representations. But it is only the beginning.

It would be possible to significantly change the social status of production - if only the apprehensive mentality of the minority-owners and the majority-spectators changes, and they accept the potential of the current new technical-social status as a possible path towards a definitive democratisation of film and audiovisual production.

But for the moment, the spectator-population does not contemplate participating in the production of films; it is prevented from doing so by the capitalist perpetuation of the cinematic imaginary and its models.

The battle for a genuine democratisation of cinema must be fought in the realm of practice. It must offer a different - social - model of production and practice, and it must also reformulate the theories and critical sphere of film, re-signifying and reconceptualising everything that has been said and written about cinema so far.

We claim that any place could be Hollywood, because any place can develop and manage the production of its own films based on its own reality, locations and people. It just requires a social consciousness that is in keeping with this aim, and the availability of the means and the participation of technical-professional personnel who are willing to turn their backs on elitism and offer up their know-how as a social service.

In order to break away from the existing model, we need investors and professionals
with a new focus on social commitment, who are willing to abandon even the old activist filmmaker framework, which sought to challenge hegemonic cinema by making different kinds of films based on alternative narratives and content. There is still an urgent need for audiovisual activism in the sphere of information and dissemination. Cinema has always entailed a more in-depth reflection on all the operations that play a part in the production of images and sounds. The radicalisation of political activism in the field of cinema means choosing and committing to the total democratisation of all the processes involved: the production, management, distribution and exploitation of films. The very same operations that have just been blown wide open by new technologies. The new activism also requires us to develop a professional attitude that voluntarily draws on a collective, concrete, situated social imaginary that will become a constant source of inspiration and renewal, and that leaves behind the solitary, faded imaginary of the professional-technical ghetto, its producers and investors.

**Inclusive reterritorialisation.**

The films of the elite have been a major obstacle to the development of societies, an obstruction in the flow of unfolding events. Just as a scene in a film leaves out anything that falls outside of the frame, in what is concealment (or a representational lie), the works produced by the film factories (and all their imitations) were private interruptions of our imaginative practice by the world’s elite minorities, creating representations that suited their own tastes and interests, and that were often alien to our understanding of the world, and to the stories that society as a whole would have been able to create.

The big backdrops and sets where many of the films we watch were and are filmed are an example. They are life-sized simulations for the materialisation of the fictions that a few film professionals think up. These sets are a parallel world.

The same thing can be seen when existing spaces are used: in this case, physical barriers are put up to keep ordinary people out of the shoot. Walls of the imaginary, imposed by its owners, directors, investors, professionals. The director’s imaginary reterritorialises a public location and claims it as its own. For the duration of the shoot, only those who
The concept and the practice of Authorless Cinema are essentially a re-codification of our understanding of the physical and imaginative territory of cinema. Nowadays, any space can lend itself to filmmaking, and all kinds of places are often recorded by today’s image and sound recording devices. A mobile phone or camera can turn any place into a potential set, as long as there is an attempt to consciously reorganise the space and the action beyond simply recording things directly as they are. Any place that we choose as a possible film location will be populated by people who can organise themselves and express opinions, construct, create, take the initiative, act, debate, suggest dialogues, and direct scenes in order to direct their own representation.

Cinema must adapt to the social dynamics of an audiovisual world without restrictions, not the other way around. Cinema must rethink its production methods so that a society that increasingly engages in collaborative, open working dynamics can use film to attend to people’s needs.

All human beings have the right to materialise their imaginaries, feelings and stories in the form of moving images and sounds. This is not a private realm, we do not have to meekly accept it as an area of fenced-off exclusivity. We know that all the films that have come before us, and all the films that we are capable of dreaming up, are part of us. We know that if we dare to dream with others, our individual, private dream will grow into a different, greater, collective dream. “We are made of dreams and dreams are made of us”, said Jean Luc Godard through Pierrot le fou. Our own experiences with cinema, and those of many other people, demonstrate beyond all doubt the still unexplored potential of films produced collectively by non-specialists. Any place can be Hollywood, with the potential to make its dreams.
7. The Future Industrial Status.

Preamble

“In order to improve efficiency, I took the studio out of the brick building and set it up in the wagons of a passenger train. In other words, we had to equip and set up basic studios in those wagons so that we could develop and edit the films as well as shoot them, and then transport them and project them to the people.
We used documentary form, chronicles, not as a form of passive information but as an active, critical intervention to explain the causes of the shoddy work, the breakdowns, delays, errors... Our cameramen would go through the factories, the mines, or wherever, and find that the plan was being forty percent fulfilled, that the workers were leaving, that the boss was useless and often drunk, that the equipment was broken, and similar things.

... This led us to devise a new structure for the function of cinema. The films were projected without music, at general assemblies. We brought together the workers of a mine, a factory, a kolkhoz, a metallurgic workshop or a new construction. The lights were turned off. I introduced myself and explained that our film had no music. The following words were always displayed on the screen: What are you doing, comrades?...

... All of this made a deep impression on them, because there is nothing quite like seeing yourself or people you know in a film, on the screen... because seeing oneself or acquaintances in the cinema, on the screen, is a unique sensation... they saw themselves as absentees or as worker heroes who achieve great things. That was a great help to us...

Once a blacksmith came up to us and said: “The equipment they send us is so bad that we have to start cutting off the extra bits. Film it.” So we did, which meant that they became our scriptwriters. Then we went to the factory where they made the equipment in question, and persuaded them to stop producing the faulty equipment.

We made seventy-two films in one year. They were short, eight or ten minutes, and different genres. We made satirical shorts and even comedies... Each film was like a bomb: they were always challenging, full of examples taken from real life, and they addressed the workers and bosses in such a way that there was no alternative but to take immediate measures.”

Aleksandr Ivanovitch Medvedkin, Later writings on his film-train, 1932

I) We believe that the cinema’s capacity for getting around, for observing and selecting from life itself, can be exploited in a new and vital art form. The studio films largely ignore this possibility of opening up the screen on the real world. They photograph acted stories against artificial backgrounds. Documentary would photograph the living scene and the living story.

II) We believe that the original (or native) actor, and the original (or native) scene, are better guides to a screen interpretation of the modern world. They give cinema a greater fund of material. They give it power over a million and one images. They give the power of interpretation over more complex and astonishing happenings in the real world than the studio mind can conjure up or the studio mechanician recreate.

III) We believe that the materials and the stories thus taken from the raw can be finer (more real in the philosophical sense) than the acted article. Spontaneous gesture has a special value on the screen. Cinema has a sensational capacity for enhancing the movement which tradition has formed, or time worn smooth.

John Grierson First Principles of Documentary
The 20th Century. Fordist factories in a closed, elitist studio system.

Film industries are industries that have turned cinema into their aesthetic-spectacle-business, they are a professional investment ghetto. The spectacle-business developed as an emporium of activities that revolved around filmmaking. The big studios are the industrial paradigm par excellence. Under an umbrella structure, they brought together all kinds of activities, functions and businesses by centralising their decision-making in senior executives and producers according to a Fordist model. As a result, it became a highly elitist activity.

An industrial operation consists of physical premises in which a series of activities and processes transform raw materials into specific products. The 20th century film industry in the Western world fit this description. It consisted of a series of procedures that allowed a large group of executives and professionals to transform ideas, money, equipment, people, places, etc into the material from which their films would be made. These films were the means by which the raw material - money - would turn a profit, and there were very few cases in which the forms and narratives of early cinema were not determined by money.

Although it is certainly true that the emotional, expressive and ideological power of the strongest personalities in the film world also shaped the foundations of cinema and renewed its forms, the fact that the industry was linked to the photographic medium automatically conditioned its potential to exist, simply on the grounds of cost. In this early history, it was not possible for just anybody to take a recording device and record the sounds and images around them. Cinema has always depended on a significant monetary investment that was beyond the reach of ordinary household economies.

In general, the most widely practiced and furthest reaching models of
production have reproduced these forms of organisation. Infrastructure, equipment, sets, costumes, actors and actresses under contract, marketing agents, executives, designers, scriptwriters.... they were all part of a production and marketing chain that made up the productive imaginary of the politics of the 20th century.

The most widespread filmmaking model is an assembly line that originated in these hegemonic practices. Although all films involve a series of processes to some extent, the number of different operations that had been implemented in the history of cinema was so enormous that standardising them became a necessity arising from - demanded by - the quest for commercial efficiency that was a legacy of the Fordist model.

The gesture of cinema linked to photography has remained unchanged since its origins: to capture reality by recording its sounds and images, process (develop) it, and screen it for other people to see.

We know that this key hegemonic operation will continue to exist as a seemingly unstoppable production model, given the enormous flows of capital that still fuel it and the profits that it still secures for its investors. But we also know that its non-profitability is the key element that can lead to its disappearance.

The fact that the studio system became the dominant paradigm for the production and exploitation of films, as it sought to conquer the world’s social imaginary, does not mean that it is the only way to make films. In reality, it prevailed because it was the most profitable method. Dissidents occasionally rose up against it, and other systems of production developed around its margins.

When we learn that Hollywood was born because a series of producers fled to southern USA to escape Edison’s mafia-like iron grip on early film production, we can’t help but wonder at the fact that these same independent producers then reproduced and intensified the obsessive control they were running away from by moving to Los Angeles. The most entrenched elements in the teaching and transmission of film know-how are repetitions of these hegemonic production operations.

Today it seems deluded to allow a handful of minorities to create the film versions of our
own visions, inventions, utopias and dreams.
Other countries’ attempts to create their own industries (or simply their aspiration to have one) always entail a profound contradiction, given that they usually seek to reproduce the North American model that was created by the Hollywood entrepreneurs, and as such they imprison the social and political dynamic of cinema in an endless loop.
The existence of this type of business - which has a clearly imperialist drive for commercial expansion and conquest - sets up a dynamic of competition, in which the other industrial enclaves that follow in its footsteps can only exist as competitors in a battle in which the strongest will prevail, and the others must either disappear or just barely survive. It is wrong to think of a national film industry built under an imperial model that was designed to exist on its own and commercially at war with other production models. Those who think in these terms are forced to compete in the massive commercial warfare, and to use the same formal elements, stories and aesthetics in order to produce competitive products. The history of the twentieth century should have already taught us that audiovisual capitalism has been designed for the benefit of those oligopolies. It is impossible to compete. How can a prospective national industry compete on equal terms with an industry that is a hundred years old, that has honed its operations, and defined the laws of the international market for its own financial benefit, offering the best figures and famous factories that have proven extremely effective in generating profits for its investors? This whole social-political-cinematic situation obviously goes far beyond cinema. It simply reflects a social and political ordering of our societies.
This war has sucked cinema dry since the beginning.
When they follow this path, the - national? - industries become bad caricatures of the original. Bets are laid on whether big or medium productions are good enough emulations to compete on the major circuit with the capitalist film markets. The professionalism of the sector is lauded with red carpet extravaganzas and triumphant entrances that have nothing to do with the social customs of the majority of the population. In Spain, a Walk of Fame was launched in 2011, copying the one that has existed in the USA since 1959. A sixty-year time lag to copy a small detail of the big industry?
It’s hard to believe that a few locals rubbing shoulders with the international pinnacle of power promises any kind of revitalisation for the future of film that would take it
beyond what we are already familiar with. At least socially speaking.
Everybody has the right to live and do as they like, but this supposedly “national” attitude that simply aspires to create a capitalist simulacrum of the experiences of other places with other histories, would, whether we like it or not, doom film to a monoform future.

The 21st Century. Towards a democratic order of social film production.
Authorless Cinema factories and open studios.

Emergent cinematographies and official cinematographies

The future of cinema in relation to society will inevitably be influenced by powerful processes in which the people appropriate the means and know-how of audiovisual production and reproduction. Ordinary people will make and manage films on a mass scale, and most of society’s audiovisual material will be produced beyond the control of the official production sector.
If the elites of the film world want to survive and avoid being trapped in their limbos, they must find away to connect to this phenomenon, in historical, aesthetic, theoretical and production terms. In their national minorities that reproduce the old types of politics, these elites must embrace the new filmographies and systems of film production and management that have started to take off and shake things up in various parts of the world, particularly over the last two decades, and especially in Africa and Latin America.
Many of these new/emergent productions have arisen from the grassroots in different ways, often produced by people without formal audiovisual or film training, and often distributed and sold through the informal economy and piracy networks. This kind of cinema is direct, produced locally, exhibited in a variety of ways, distributed informally, consumed at a very low cost. It is an emergent film world that poses huge challenges, not just to the traditional industry but also to the incipient cinema that is struggling to take hold.
Given that critics, journalists, historians, and film theoreticians largely ignore these grassroots social phenomena, it may be a while before we start to see the desirable contact between the two worlds. The harder cinema’s elites cling to their own history, canons and profits, the more they endanger this type of grassroots filmmaking. Cinema’s elites have been transmitting and refining a type of aesthetic, style and narrative construction that is in keeping with their own form of professional and business organisation. But in grassroots social sectors, the cinematic imaginary is generated from the spectators’ experience and the films they have watched - sometimes not even this, as in certain cases of Latin American indigenous cinema. When they turn their hands to production, they come up with hybrids put together without knowledge of the official film world and its canons, using precarious means of production, embracing overlaps between life and cinema, all within a powerful gesture of appropriation and reinvention of the official imaginary.

Perhaps, we may start to see new areas of contact between the two, based on at least three dynamics that will shape the future of cinema:

a) emergent cinema should work on areas of activity that lie outside of the elitist system: as such, its various elements will be structured differently.
b) the should be feedback between the existing and the new types of cinema, so that they move jointly towards a renewal of cinema as a whole. This would be the ideal but quite unlikely path given the voracious predatory drive of audiovisual capitalism.
c) official cinema needs to discover the enormous potential of emergent cinemas, repeat their historical addictions and absorb them, normalising them to the point that they dissolve into its own structure and functioning.
There will probably be a range of hybrid experiences, according to the contexts in which they take place.

The traditional cinema industry will only be able to meet the challenge of accepting the new types of cinema as its own by voluntarily deciding, as a hegemonic sector, to break down its own categories, dismantle its canons, overhaul its business model, open up and update its theories to include new forms and aesthetics, and reformulate its critical apparatus so that it broadens its focus beyond the European North American tradition.
If it continues to cling to its arrogance and imperialist, colonising nostalgia, and continues to try to impose its own models onto the new, hegemonic cinema runs the risk of becoming a minority cinema itself: a minor form rooted in the splendour and popularity of its past, imprisoned in its memory, like an old academic aestheticism nostalgic for its industrial and authorial past and the glory of its history, discoveries, charm and wars. Cinema would then become a nostalgic collector of itself and those who learn and reproduce its formulas would be acolytes of its past.

The game or battle between innovative or revolutionary movements or figures in some aspects of filmmaking on one hand, and the old traditional cinema structures on the other, has played out many times in its history. And these clashes have always led to significant cases of hybridisation, shock, renewal and experimentation. The results are not always easy to evaluate, but if we measure them by their social benefits in bringing about democratisation, social participation and inclusion in the production process, their effect has been quite negligible. The gradual democratisation of film production has happened in spurts, but never in a far-reaching way.

What’s at stake is the future social status of film production. There can be no single formula that can be applied in all cases, given that each has its own different, specific complexity. The battle for the production of the social imaginary will be everywhere, and it will have to be fought in each location.

Recognising these deep currents and tensions at the heart of cinema puts us in a state of alert and opens up a vista of hope. Each society will have to embark on resolving the specificities of its own social conflicts, which are local but affect cinema as a whole.

Gradually, everybody in all societies should form part of this new social status of film production and management.

Even so, this emergent cinema can lose the power of its novelty and value unless it is based on a politics that protects it. We’re not talking about a politics of control, but about a politics that protects and safeguards new cinema from the all too familiar ways in which audiovisual capitalism has swallowed up anything new over the first hundred years of its history, and will continue to do so.

**Authorless Cinema factories**
As we know, different kinds of production sectors have their own factories, which can be of all shapes and sizes and can sometimes start out as small business ventures created by a few people or even just one. In the type of cinema we are imagining, all it takes is a cameraman or camerawoman who has a camera, a computer and a projector - professional or not - and is willing to make films under the Politics of Collectivity - opening up production and management operations to the participation of the people who live there -, to potentially start a Authorless Cinema Factory.

A Authorless Cinema Factory is essentially a series of operations for the social production of film under the dynamic of a Politics of Collectivity. Instead of continuing to be governed by private, hidden, elitist processes, these operations will become public, participatory, inclusive and shared, based on communal, non-hierarchical interaction. And management of the production and returns will be a shared responsibility. The criteria that determines the emergence and development of a Factory is the implementation of the non-authorial operations that we will explain below.

The criteria that indicate that a particular collective is on the path to setting up a social film Factory is based on the way it develops the human and production order that springs up around it.

Human, because as a group based on social, local, work, family or associative links, for example, there must be a gradual deepening of knowledge and mutual respect, an acceptance of differences and a strengthening of bonds, and a development of individual skills for communal, horizontal and inclusive work around cinema. Production, because this consolidation of the human aspect of the group must lead to better film production, to learning filmmaking by doing it, by engaging in critical and creative debate, creating common narratives, actively participating in the shoots, set-ups, editing, management and social representativity of films, and so on. Social film production must ultimately boost the human capacity to see and hear others, to respond to their surroundings, problems, dreams and ideas by means of filmmaking.

The raw material for these factories will not be money seeking to reproduce itself. Unlike the private, professional investing subjectivity that shaped the first stage of cinema, its raw material is now people, organised productively around filmmaking in order to materialise their vision and fiction of the world.
All the work involved in filmmaking could be carried out by the people from each particular place, with the support of film professionals who are there to help them. These Factories would be part of a system of Open Studios, which would coordinate the production and management processes, and they would be open to the active participation of anybody from the local area through specific procedures.

Any place where there is a person with the tools for audiovisual production and exhibition - if it is conceived as a space for communal production and open to the participation of the community in general - is an Open Studio.

We must push our imaginations and become capable of coming up with a social production scenario that is nothing like the one designed by the two types of politics of production that gave rise to hegemonic cinema. If the old production model was based on closed, private, elitist, hermetic, restricted systems considered to be the property of the producers and investors, we must now imagine a new production industry based on systems of Open Studies that are public, shared, inclusive, and provide collective social benefits.

In order to allow societies to advance towards a new production status under this new type of politics, we urgently need to set up spaces, operations and budgets that can provide minimum infrastructures where ordinary people can come into contact with film production and management, and with film professionals of a new kind, who are at their service. Open Studios are simply places that are made available and fitted out to allow the people who self-organise around them to come up with social narratives, prepare shoots, edit, and post-produce films, and carry out activities to manage, distribute and market them.

Factories without owners in a networked society.
This large-scale restructuring of the existing audiovisual system demands great operational and infrastructural changes in order to bring about alternative types of production models.

The new Factories will constantly emit film material that will lay the groundwork for a citizen film industry, without private monopolies, fuelled by the autonomous production of the many local production enclaves. These new industries will emerge from the set-worlds, and they will not bow down to the aesthetics and formal elements dictated by investments and professionalism; they will not be totally conditioned by the market; they will be free of the enslaving standardisation of the cinema elite. The Factories will be crossed through by the stuff of everyday life, feeding into the stuff of cinema. Our own everyday surroundings will become cinematic landscapes, and the people who live in them will become “film people”.

The Politics of Collectivity does not seek to transform the entire population into audiovisual professionals one by one, and in any case this would clearly be unfeasible. But the creation of all types of audiovisual and filmic documents that supposedly reflect a society are an issue of shared responsibility.

A new industrial status cannot be built on the foundations of old activist altruisms, heroic callings or emotional concerns that last only as long as the leisure time of those involved or their limited capacity for commitment. There is an urgent need for long-term plans leading to a profound restructuring of current systems of film production.

Image professionals should be able to work in their field, and be paid just as teachers and doctors are. But the contributions of ordinary people should also be considered to be work and appraised fairly according to the extent of their participation. Everybody has the right to access the basic conditions that make it possible to freely materialise their cinematic world in collaboration with other people, and with the support of a group of professionals to assist
them.

If we decide to build a house, we turn to an architect and we assume that he or she will not eventually own the house we build. When we have a health problem, we turn to medical personnel who do not become the owners of our bodies. In an even slightly healthy democracy, public institutions provide teachers, social workers and psychologists to meet certain needs, but nobody talks about the health of our audiovisual imagination even though the cultural workings of the world we are immersed in have an extremely high audiovisual component. To create one’s own image of the world, this is also a right.

Filmmaking is a crucial, wonderful practice for training the imagination and encouraging critical reflection, because it involves the body, performance, audiovisual documentation of the surroundings, learning to see and to listen; it involves an exercise in the lucidity of our perception of sound and images, processes of narrativity based on our own lives, exercises with the imagination that can generate social fictions; it involves materialising the ways of life that we imagine and putting them on the screen, like a powerful rehearsal that anticipates our living of them.

From the film market to exchange-based audiovisual socialism.

A host of possibilities open up when we consider working towards a system of audiovisual socialism that will give rise to grassroots cinema. The 21st century cinema that we are starting to envisage will gradually democratise film production and management, to the point where it will become a mass social phenomenon. Use value will replace business value, and the social, political and aesthetic values of the people will become the heart and the driving force of its activities.

Cinema must open itself up to the endless, fascinating exchange of audiovisual materials that is already going on, without the tyranny of the distribution and exhibition monopoly. It will thus become a social market where we can share our own films and personally appreciate the voices and images of different groups of people engaged in the collective construction of their imaginary. Through the films they make, we will discover
their interests, dreams, fantasies, landscapes, aspirations and conflicts. The 21st century cinema that is emerging among the people will provide a therapeutic social opportunity to reappropriate images and work with them, to experience everyday surroundings more intensely as a film set, and to have new types of experiences among people in a community, as the protagonists of our own films.

21st century cinema will be a laboratory of lives, rehearsed, and re-lived. It will transform the social experience of memory through the re-enactment of past events, and it will unearth social narratives around the local, cultural and political identity of the people involved, against the backdrop of their own lives.

All of these benefits, which are already elements of film, will be democratised. One hundred years on, it seems absurd for film to remain riveted to the films of a small minority who transmit their experiences to us as though they were rare delicacies, when we now know that we have the conditions that make it possible for the entire population to sit down at the table with those old diners and enjoy the same pleasures.

“ I’ve discovered that it is impossible to work for cinema or talk about it in a meaningful way without taking into account the system in which films are produced. It follows that it would be equally impossible to fail to take into account the foundations of this system, the way it has grown, the motives which sustain it and the interests that it serves, the type of cinema that this system produces and the type of cinema that makes it possible...”

... “It is no longer about the right or the left, it is a clique devoid of inclinations, a world of empty, smug words, relegated to a political limbo (inevitably, from the moment when the same people started writing indiscriminately for all newspapers)...

Every now and then, a slight gesture or an allusion seems to address issues from the outside world, but they are really nothing but references to works by other colleagues, to alcohol or to the small obsessions of the author. Ideas have already become profoundly removed from the life of the community and the only audience considered worthy of attention consists of a handful of educated liberals who, far from despairing of this, are even flattered by the idea of belonging to a minority...”

Lindsay Anderson, Manifesto of The Angry Young Men (or Free Cinema Manifesto)

There seems to be a sort of Heisenbergian uncertainty principle at work between the film-maker and what he films. He cannot aim his camera at anything without modifying it, for what he films, life itself, is irretrievably foreign to the artifices of his instruments.

Noel Burch, Theory of Film Practice.
We're not discovering anything new. People keep asking us the same question over and over: Where does this new scenario leave filmmakers and film professionals? Where does it leave authors?

Film professionals are people who have invested time in studying the history of film, its operations, its hits and misses, its perversities and its glories, and who have learnt the practical aspects of filmmaking, particular skills that they can contribute to the process.

As with any other trade, becoming a filmmaker or participating in the creation of films gives film professionals a fund of knowledge and technical know-how. But having acquired this knowledge and skills, at whose service are they to place them? At the service of capitalist enclaves and industry framed within business plans based on last century's models of production? Solely at the service of their own personal expression? Or could they also be put at the service of ordinary people, society in general, which has traditionally remained outside of the frame of film production?

Up until now, the need to make a living has naturally led film professionals to find employment in film or television platforms or any of the usual production enclaves. At best, they aspire to making their own projects, waiting for any crumbs left over from the management of public and private funds - to describe the situation in Spain as we write.

This means that new generations of filmmakers are being trained to perpetuate traditional models of production with their labour, remaining dependent on investors and on the imaginaries of existing professionals and producers, and often encouraged to dream of attaining those same obsolete forms of social status, which are the legacy of these systems. There are some enclaves that are more independent, but these are relatively rare.

As the product of a particular system, most people who go study film end up building their professional identity with these enclaves in mind. Nobody works in film or in television. People work on particular projects owned by specific executives and their cronies who have their own ideology and interests, their financial commitments and political positions, their own
particular, personal ideas about culture, aesthetics, society and the economy. It would be reasonable for newly trained professionals who choose not to work under this system (and it’s extremely difficult to get a job under it as it is) to have the option of working under different models of production: other types of Factories such as the ones we are describing here. If these were to exist - if we are capable of creating them - these professionals would and should be paid an average wage just like any other professional, for placing their knowledge at the service of society. This would undoubtedly open up a new horizon for cinema and for film professionals.

Authorial work is not at odds with the political purpose and ethics of cinema produced by and through the community. As they carried out their remunerated work providing social film services, these film professionals could also continue to produce their own personal works. We cannot sustainably continue to be imprisoned in a monoform way of living and making cinema, obstructing and even smothering any other ways of doing it.

The new type of professional required by a Politics of Collectivity will come about by abandoning elitist, individualist practices, rejecting mere narcissistic expression, in order to produce films by means of collective mechanisms, within an idea of cinema as a social environment for collective creation. Film professionals who are prepared to commit “authorial suicide”, to kill the idea of the author that they acquired through education in order to open up their practice to the community.

“Without Authors” does not mean without authorship. It means without the Author of the past, in whose name we have deposited all of the private, minority, elitist property of cinema.

**Without-authorship and authorial suicide. From the Author of the past to shared authorship.**

We say it is “authorial suicide” when filmmakers or film or audiovisual
professionals voluntarily give up the proprietary power that comes with their status as professionals, executives or investors. This “suicide” does not repress their personal expression, it erases it while they are engaged in collective work, subjugates it so that their knowledge and skills can be offered to the group.

Authorial suicide means giving up the privilege and exclusivity of sole authorship and ownership of decisions relating to the production and management of the films. Authorship is given up so that it can be placed in the hands of the group, to create a social arena that allows the shared aspirations, needs and imaginary to emerge in all their fullness. “Without-authorship” is a direct attack on the ownership of intellectual property that technical and business elites wield over the film capital that cinema is made from, and over their production and exploitation. An cultural kamikaze action.

By ‘film capital’ we mean all the elements that come into play to produce films: money, technology, people, places, time, ideas, feelings, interests, know-how, objects.

Authorial suicide is a purely political decision. It seeks to overthrow the old authorship methods and to provoke - from within the profession - the democratisation of cinematic processes.

By the “authorial” we mean the aspects relating to power and ownership that distort or obstruct social authorship as a communal power.

By “author” we mean the human (individual or group) device that activates film processes and exclusively decides over all aspects of the creation and management of the works.

The people that make up this device can be said to operate as Author if they have:

a) power and ownership over whether or not a film is made.
b) power and ownership over most of the decisions that are made in the course of producing a film.
c) power and ownership over the management and exploitation of the film.
d) power and ownership over the public defense of the end product, as if it were their own.
It is hardly surprising that the authorial model has found its way into some specific functions that cinema has developed over time. In general, power has been wielded by investors, producers and directors, and, to a lesser or different extent by the actors and actresses around whom the framework of production and exploitation revolved. This is the model of power and ownership that all young filmmakers automatically take on when they decide to become filmmakers or film professionals, be it by training, on-the-job learning or simply by following in the footsteps of others. It is a model of power and ownership that we accept as a natural part of cinema. And that’s how society in general sees it too.

This model brought about the social divide between the producer-class (with power and ownership over creation, use and exploitation), and the spectator-class (with the ability to contemplate and consume their works).

All the other jobs involved in filmmaking, from electrician to assistant director, catering manager and director of photography, have always revolved around the ownership and power roles at the peak of the film production and management pyramids. There can be no change unless we can imagine a new way of organising the work of film production. It is necessary to reform private professional and industrial practices and replace them with local production platforms that are open to free participation, so that people can self-organise, with or without film professionals, and direct and manage their own representations. These new platforms would welcome different groups of people of all ages and descriptions and allow them to become familiar with film production and management, until this fascinating activity ends up being as natural to them as any other activity of social interest.

In a without-author practice, framed within a Politics of Collectivity, film professionals can develop new functions:
a) promote the type of social organisation that makes it possible to create films in particular places and among specific groups of people.
b) transmit the knowledge and know-how required to make films, through shared actions in the local context.
c) promote non-elitist social relations: their knowledge stems from everything that has come before in cinema, but also from the people that they share with; their role is to provide a service and to resolve any technical, narrative or aesthetic problems that arise in the development of films.
d) introduce social practices that deepen skills and knowledge: listening to sound material, viewing a broader range of visual material, developing collective decision-making processes about what, how, where, who, and why to film.
e) provide opportunities to discuss the social and individual memories of people and places, and to explore the possibilities of using film to return to these experiences.
f) contribute to shared fictional narratives that expand the imagination so that it includes new ways of living and seeing the world.
g) present their own personal creations as a way of giving back to local life, to the people who live in the communities, as a pool of “aesthetic material for common use”.
h) help to develop latent collective storytelling skills.
i) promote debates and the unearthing of personal stories and narratives that will be transmitted among different groups and generations.
j) help to set up local documentary archives to ensure that future generations can learn about their past and be able to see the protagonists and the places, hear the voices, their concerns, their forms of imagination.

Filmmakers who operate under the Politics of Collectivity are simply professionals who coordinate the complexity of cinema, the way it flows among people, emerges from them, and perhaps helps them to live better.
The old author in the politics of collectivity.

Our position can be summarised as follows:

a) We have nothing against authors as human beings. We believe in the right to individual expression, as well as the right to collective expression through film. But the mechanism by which the imaginary is produced is different in each of these two cases. We defend people’s right and responsibility to self-organise in order to create their own cinematic and audiovisual representations.

b) As such, we call for authorial works to be recategorised as mere personal expressions that cannot claim to represent society unless a specific collectivity crosses through them. In order for a group to be able to claim it as its own, the operations that allow people to modify it and appropriate it must be stated clearly.

c) The work of a specific author is aesthetic material that stems from an individual subjectivity. Today, culture functions under a politics of social division. Individual subjectivity is respected because of the surplus value that it generates, and this has to do with elements such as notoriety, the glorification of the personality, the myth of enlightened, prophetic solitude, the hidden aspects of its production, and how easily it can turn a profit in a society that revolves around spectacular events and the exhibition of works.

d) Being an Author is just one minor job out of the many that are possible in society.

We have nothing against people, our targets are the politics of cultural production and cinema.

We ourselves are film lovers, and we identify with and are influenced by many
films produced under the two old types of politics. But we believe that in today’s context they are inadequate and unable to provide experiences that free us from our capitalist ways of being in society.

Now, all the know-how that we have built up in the first hundred years of cinema can be placed at the service of the collective imagination.

9. The Films

As filmmaking evolved over time, so did the prototypes for production systems. And if we were to examine the ways in which each director worked, we would also find a very wide range of different approaches. Some of the points that Vicent J. Benet makes in *La Cultura del Cine* - one of many possible reference books - can help us to understand how the hegemonic paradigm took shape.
According to Benet, the “camera operator system”, in which the cameraman was the absolute head of the production was predominant in 1906 and 1907. Then, in 1907-1909, as films became longer and more complex, the role of the director, similar to that of a theatre director, was created, and the cameraman was left to focus on more technical matters related to the camera. This was the “director production system”.

From 1909 up until the post-war boom, the demand for films grew stronger and companies promoted autonomous production to meet this demand. Directors were able to explore and experiment with a certain degree of independence. Universal, Warner, Fox, Metro and Paramount were set up, and the prevailing system was that of “the director and his team”.

From the 1920s onwards, Hollywood became the nerve centre for the production and the imaginary of cinema. Its links to the big banks and the New York share market grew stronger, and so did its control of the international market and its parallel business activities (promotion, the star system, publicity, fan magazines, etc.) The great industry were stretched to the limit, and the “central production system” appeared.

The enormous complexity of the business eventually forced it to undergo a process of “Taylorisation” like other big industries: diversification, specialisation and planning efficiency. The role of the “executive” appeared, to ensure that the objectives of the different sections of the company were met. Executives had the final say on production matters, and their priorities were biased towards the market. Both distribution and exhibition were absorbed into the structure of the big studios.

By 1931, the splendour of the big studios, with their five big production figureheads (RKO, Metro-Goldwyn Meyer, Twentieth Century Fox, Warner Bros and Paramount), included their own distribution channels and movie theatres to screen their films in major capital cities. It was the “production team system”. Responsibility was delegated to associate producers who controlled several projects in a particular genre at the same time, with their teams, stars, etc.

From 1947-1957, Benet continues, came the end of the monopolistic
structure and the infrastructure of the big studios became untenable. Rather than companies owning all the necessary elements (equipment, infrastructure, actors on the payroll) everything began to be specifically hired on a short-term basis for each film. Thus began the “combined team system”.

This very brief overview is simply intended to show how the model of film production gradually adapted to particular industry interests over time. The diversification and outsourcing of the industrial system continued to change and adapt to the conditions of the world of work in the second half of the century. The important thing is to note that an overview of production systems in the history of the film industry allows us to see a wide range of filmmaking methods.

In the author-based system, each director seems to have developed his or her own work in a very personal way, without necessarily following standard patterns.

When we watch a film we don’t just consume audiovisual material, but also something more subtle: we absorb all the underlying financial operations and business logic through our eyes and ears. What we see on the screen would not exist without all these hidden procedures.

Production handbooks continue to train people in these systems, because the industry essentially seeks cheap labour that can gradually renew the staff working in its production enclaves. The break away from the industrial monopoly in the sixties led some filmmakers back to the early history of cinema, to the emergence of independent production that rebelled against the tyranny of the big studios and recognised that a single operator (the first system of cinema), or two people (the second system), or a small team of people, were perfectly capable of making films.

In the madness of tackling enormous business challenges, what is lost is the artisan relationship that was always at the heart of the way film resolved its projects. Business interests seem to be hell bent on securing the means and the human production line that they claim is required to make films, while ignoring a fundamental principle of production: how can we film what we want with the
means that are available to us? The two systems have always coexisted, and the important thing has always been to develop a direct connection between the available means and the desired projects. At this point we could bring up an endless number of examples of problems that filmmakers in both the industrial and the authorial systems have had to face in order to make their ideas work. But the ideas for films are often contaminated right from the start by that production line mentality that is absorbed through formal education and professional experience, because these ideas come from cinema, not from reality. If we are bombarded by constructs from the central production system as soon as we start to think about our own film, then it’s only natural for us to believe that in order to create our own scenes we will need the same means that they had.

The changing nature of working methods in film past and present, which would deserve a study of its own, suggests that we now have the need and the obligation to reformulate current working methods under a new politics of collectivity that is not subject to hegemonic processes. This critical reflection leads us to set down a series of concepts that will allow us to freely rethink film production processes with a view to their democratisation.

Because... What is a Film?

In a 1967 publication, Glauber Rocha recounts an anecdote about Jean Luc Godard’s Wind from the East (Vent d’Est, 1969). The production company Cineriz had asked the French filmmaker to make a Western and had invested over 100,000 dollars in it. Rocha went to the preview of the film, and described the experience as follows:

“I saw the film in a first, secret session, with the producer and a lawyer... After half an hour the lights were switched on and the lawyer, his face
pale, said:
- I agree with Godard’s words, but this is not a film! Cineriz will sue!

And I answered:
- Look doctor, the technical definition of a film is a certain amount of printed negative, with sound. Scientifically, the film exists.

The lawyer said:
- I’m a practical man. The judge will examine this case and conclude that this is not a film!

And then I said:
- Doctor, there is no legislation that sets out the definition of a film in aesthetic terms. If a judge says that this is not a film, you lodge an appeal!

In the middle of this conversation the lights went out, and an image appeared in which Godard enters the frame and, with his protestant preacher’s voice, asks: “What is a film?” The lawyer roared with laughter and Godard continued talking over an image of Gian Maria Volenté riding a horse and dragging an Indian through the countryside… We were watching the classic Hollywood western scene: an American cavalry officer torturing and Indian…”

**Pre-production:** Film as a social encounter. The new cinematic contract.

In conventional film production, everything starts when somebody proposes a particular film, and a producer weighs up the financial and commercial viability, and the intellectual, narrative, aesthetic and social interest of the idea, synopsis or script.

Under a Politics of Collectivity, a film idea is not just a film idea, it is an idea for a social encounter, in which a group of people self-organise in order to make a film. It is a social encounter that brings together the production team and a particular community of people, who decide to embark on a film adventure using whatever means are available to them. This encounter may be sparked by any of the parties involved, not necessarily the production team.
The pre-production social encounter is recorded, and the footage that is generated during this first stage can be included as raw material in the film. The process generates a field of social film production, based on the desire to communally make and manage one or more self-produced films. Aside from the final film that the collective efforts are aimed towards, the social process is a cinematic event in itself.

A film consists of all the elements that play a part in its creation, as well as all the representations that it produces, and everything that is generated as a result of its public exhibition. Cinema is not just finished films: all the experiences associated with production and management are just as important.

The final cut of a film is simply an arbitrary, subjective choice made by the group, which decides to deem it finished at some point.

In the production systems of the past, a film was the result of the culling of camera footage according to the decisions of the professional filmmakers and/or investors. A selection that reflects an individual, personal subjectivity.

The social encounter of pre-production is full of people with their own stories, views of life, experiences, memory, imagination, feelings, ideas, places, situations, and so on, who are filmed from the moment they embark on the film project. The material that is recorded during pre-production may even end up being more interesting than the final fiction that was planned. The choices will depend on the community and its decisions.

During pre-production, ordinary people choose to turn into “film people”.

THE SCRIPT. The disappearance of monetary control over the social imaginary.

Filmic documents, audiovisual scripts, filmographies.
Very early cinema did not use the kind of scripts that we are familiar with today, even though any sequence of moving images has a duration and, as such, a narrative element.

Today's tyrannical and supposedly indispensable scripts gradually took hold and became more detailed. This was an almost natural result of the need for budgetary control of films, the need to plan ahead, to know how many scenes would be involved, what the dialogue would be, how many actors and actresses would take part. Scripts were largely a means to anticipate the budgets that would be required, the duration of shoots, the treatment of the subject matter, and so on. Later, scriptwriting also developed as a necessary role, the need to organise the ideas of the person who wants to make a film and has to share it with others in order to study its feasibility.

Under a Politics of Collectivity, there is no need to control what will happen in advance. In fact, this would only hinder the process at the start. Scripts emerge from a collective debate about the subject matter, the lives or issues of the group, or anything they venture to imagine.

Digital recording devices make it possible to film the script construction stage, as potential raw material for the film and as audiovisual documentation in progress. This type of documentation is also material that the participants can watch in order to start to discover the potential of their image and voice, of the images and sounds that they imagine. It is a kind of initial film therapy: portrayals of the way the collective works together, the kind of relationships that are formed, an audiovisual record of the narrative ideas that come up in discussions.

The need for a conventional script may or may not arise, depending on the group and the project. If a group has time constraints, for example, and has already defined the film they imagine, going through the process of generating a technical or narrative script before the shoot will only get in the way of the production. In other cases, groups end up using certain scriptwriting tools because they help them to organise their ideas.

Experience shows that learning a script is a skill that forms part of an actor's trade, and that ordinary people find it very difficult to interpret scripts
unless they have an innate talent for it.
The most common way of working is by setting up situations that have been carefully agreed upon in advance, and improvising dialogue under certain basic pillars that everybody has agreed on.

**NON-Directing - The directing vacuum as a driving force for collective filmmaking.**

In the Politics of Collectivity there is no single director who makes all the decisions. Instead, there is a person or several people who guide the development of the social phenomenon that cinema has become. These coordinators do not make decisions on their own; they help to moderate the script meetings, to stage situations, to manage scripts, and so on. The coordinator or coordinating team often edit material and rough cuts as intermediary stages that can generate further narratives. These people who take on the role of “NON-directors” also carry out the tasks that nobody in the group is interested in doing.
The purpose of NON-directing is to bring about the critical flow and transmission of film know-how from professionals to non-professionals. NON-directors must ensure that people rotate freely through different roles as they start to show an interest in the various aspects of filmmaking.
The role of NON-directors is to be cinematic witnesses par excellence. As film professionals who are familiar with film history and the tricks of the trade, they play a pivotal role. They are responsible for ensuring the smooth feedback between the memory of film and its social reinvention, which takes place every time a film is made. Every collective film experience updates cinema history and can potentially reinvent it as a whole.
NON-directors will suggest technical and aesthetic solutions, showing past examples in which similar issues were resolved in different ways, and encouraging people to think deeply about new ways of seeing and new solutions.
The effective transmission of knowledge depends on liberating the social imagination and its technical, aesthetic and narrative suggestions, not stifling them.
The shoot as situation and the creative social crisis.

A shoot is the means by which filmmakers materialise certain ideas that they play out within the camera’s field of view. Traditional shoots are usually hierarchical, with a director making all the decisions in conjunction with his or her team. Under a Politics of Collectivity, shoots are planned collectively. If one of the people in a group has managed to imagine a particular scene in great detail, he or she is the best person to organise the shooting of it. If a group of people are going to re-enact a scene in their own kitchen, they will be best at deciding how it should play out, possible gestures, dialogues and camera positions. If the scene is fictional, the people who have imagined it will certainly be able to express and direct it better than anybody else. Amateurs usually slip into these roles very easily if they are given the freedom to do so.

The shoots are themselves filmed, and the resulting footage is given the same importance as the scenes that are played out for the camera. The fictional scenes are just one many elements of a shoot. Every film made under a Politics of Collectivity requires a minimum of two cameras, so that at least one of them can record the overall production process.

People, performers, protagonists.

In the Politics of Collectivity, the camera turns its lens on the inexhaustible unfolding of the social phenomenon, turning away from the confined spaces of the imaginary of the film industry, its hermetic places controlled by money and professionalism. Ordinary people’s lives and the events that take place in them take centre stage on the exploded cinema screen.
There are three categories of “film experiences” or filmable performances:

**Re-living life**

Past experiences can be relived, re-enacted in detail for the camera, planned as a way of allowing the protagonists to audiovisually explore the particular episodes from their lives that they have chosen to return to. This can be a highly therapeutic opportunity to reconstruct memories through the feelings, audiovisual materials, and sounds that they remember. It is a way of using film operations to regain awareness of one’s own past.

**Documenting the present**

Observational cinema and documentary forms allow us to spontaneously record life. Filming the present makes is possible to analyse the events later. We can return to the images and see, choose, discard, and then go back and improve our approach. We can appropriate the system of gestures, the ways in which we interact and communicate. Viewing footage recorded using direct filming techniques often allows people to progress from simple observation to naturalised fiction. When people see themselves on the screen, they usually want to make changes, improve scenes, steer them in a different direction. It is an opportunity to choose, and to heighten the effectiveness of the interacting bodies, the experience itself.

**Testing the future**

Cinema has always been a temporary social context that offers its actors and actresses the opportunity to test other lives, other forms of behaviour, other identities, other reactions, other storylines. This has been a privilege set aside for a small group of professionals. The history of cinema is essentially the history of this privilege.

Under a Politics of Collectivity, everybody has the right to have these types of imagined experiences through film, to discover inner resources that allow them to
face and resolve situations that they have not lived through, to try out identities and lifestyles that are totally unlike their own, to create fictions that are unrelated to their everyday lives.

It is a new kind of cinema in which the people generate the action. A testing ground in which to explore ways in which life could be other than it is.

The camera

At the heart of any film operation, there has always been a camera (and its owners). The origins and development of cinema are so closely bound up with photography that it would never have come into existence without cameras, even though computer-generated images are now producing a different kind of filmic image that does not require cameras.

If we think about our reading of the dynamics that have governed the concentration and deconcentration of the ownership of production media, we find that they revolved around the camera. In the very early days, if you had a camera you could make films. If you did not, you had to find a way of acquiring or making one, and the costs involved were beyond the reach of ordinary people.

This initial scenario in which camera ownership was essential limited production to a small group of inventors, and determined the initial Social Status of Production that shaped 20th century relations of production.

Nowadays, there is an enormous array of audiovisual recording devices in the hands of an increasingly large part of the population.

Although technology has never stopped moving forward, the current technological and social situation is leading us for the first time in the short history of cinema into an unprecedented democratisation of the ownership of cameras, with the enormous creative potential that this entails.

We are at a complex turning point in history, and we cannot yet clearly see or grasp were the awareness and potential of their use will lead. Even if we pool all of our imaginative power, we would still be unable to predict the
future of cinema. But we know that this future will be shaped by what we, as a society, are able to achieve and put into practice.

If we accept that dichotomies are only useful if they help us to think, there would seem to be two directions that can give us a general idea of what is in store for us.

One. Film could continue more or less as it is, if the democratisation of camera ownership remains attached to twentieth century social structures, based on producing-minorities and spectator-masses. If the ownership of cameras on a mass scale is simply taken as an amusing footnote, film world minorities will continue to take advantage of the new technologies to refine their creations, improve business and strengthen the professional sector, while the spectator-masses will keep watching their films as a poor simulation of the ones that they themselves will never make.

Two. The mass ownership of cameras and devices can lead to a new kind of social relation that also democratises the knowledge that has come down to us through film history, and that accepts all types of camera usage as forms cinematic expression. This is the reality that is already with us, the ability to audiovisually produce and recreate the world we live in and the worlds that we are capable of imaging, and to do so on a mass scale.

The battle of cinema has always been about conquering the social imaginary. In this sense we aren’t adding anything new. We are part of this same battle. On one side, there are forces that offer us audiovisual worlds created by particular, minority sectors of society. And on the other, there are the imaginative powers of ordinary people who make up societies, and who were born into the structure of cinema as unempowered producers.

The reason behind this spectator paralysis has been the large amounts of money invested in cinema, which hindered the opportunity for widespread experimentation in film production.

There are two serious weaknesses in the way film is taught (in the sharing of know-how and practices): firstly, the educational system does not include practical exercises that allow students to make films in a natural, accessible, familiar way, even though the current technology makes this possible. Secondly, when we teach
film, we usually direct the learning process towards the individual. We transmit the idea that students should see themselves as future directors or film professionals, in an individual sense: we tell them how to prepare a script, how to edit, how to direct, and so on. What the students are taught is the production chain for a certain, limited type of cinema.

The democratisation of ownership of the means of production - particularly cameras - has not gone hand in hand with a similar democratisation of filmmaking knowledge, which continues to support a production model in crisis. Manufacturers see us as consumers, and target their campaigns to sell us their devices at prices that we can afford. But once the sale has been accomplished, we are own our own: nobody explains the social, aesthetic or narrative power of the technology that we have just purchased. The capitalist system values the acquisition of objects, but takes no interest in their social usefulness. We went from consuming films to consuming devices that allow us to make them, but ordinary people are still not producing films, just an enormous amount of anecdotal home audiovisual material that is never developed further.

**The social value of cameras. Formal freedom and reality as criteria.**

All recorded material is potentially valid under a Politics of Collectivity. This does not mean that there are no formal criteria, it is simply an affirmation of extreme realism: camera footage is valid as a unique record of a unique moment, regardless of the type and quality of the source. The raw footage can later be put together according to the needs of the group.

This aesthetic rupture has nothing to do with auteur sophistication, it simply seeks to open up film narrative to all types of recordings and content, filmed by anybody. This will generate different perceptual sensibilities. Professionals and amateurs in any group can be camera operators if they record some part of the filmmaking process, regardless of the device that they use. Any recorded material can be shared at working sessions, where the group will discuss whether to edit into different versions of the film in progress.

In groups consisting of specialists and non-specialists, there will be material based on
two types of sensibilities:

- Professionals will film images that are closer to the ones we are familiar with from films and TV, because they have been trained to achieve a certain type of aesthetic, formal and narrative efficacy within this type of production.
- Non-professionals will (not necessarily always) produce images that are closer to what we consider “amateur” sensibility and composition, without professional sophistication.

Under a Politics of Collectivity, the material is treated without any elitism whatsoever. The social divide between those who have knowledge of cinema and those who don’t is erased, and no one type of knowledge prevails over any other. The idea is to bring down all the barriers between ordinary and professional use of raw footage.

Reality is the main criteria applied to the material. Any material recorded in the course of the filmmaking process, regardless of who films it, can potentially be included in the film for its reality-value as a record of a particular moment, a point of view, a unique moment.

This is not about a preference for impure aesthetics, it is about the inclusion of all types of material filmed by any operator, without aesthetic elitism.

The use of at least two cameras, as we suggest, will inevitably reflect:

a) Processes of reality, filmed using direct cinema techniques. Material relating to people’s experiences with the project and the social interaction of the group during the working sessions, shoots, editing, etc.

b) Processes of collectively fictionalised reality. Material relating to the content that has been imagined and planned by the group, to do with the creation of shots, situations and scenes.

They are all processes of reality.

Editing and budgets for new narrative forms.
**Mediated editing**

Mediated editing is carried out by professionals and then submitted to the group. Although the process is authorial in a sense, it is intended to provide rough cuts from which the group can construct and discuss their project. The authorial edited cut becomes “aesthetic material for provisional social use”, undergoing a collective decision-making process that will lead to a new work. The edited material will be the basis for another edited version, which will include the changes that were agreed on by the group. Individual subjectivity is re-created by group subjectivity.

**Open editing.**

Open editing is when professional editors edit a film in public, projecting the process onto a screen, and opening up their work to the opinions and comments of the group during the actual process of cinematic writing, explaining the reasons for what they do and allowing direct participation.

Open editing expands the exhibition stage of the filmmaking process to include the creation of the narrative. Anybody can watch the film being edited; everybody has the right to know how the images are manipulated, regardless of whether or not they have participated in the shoot.

**Liberated editing and continuity.**

Editing consists of ordering as series of recorded images and sounds, which are placed along a timeline. Editors work with units or capsules of footage filmed from life, although it is becoming increasingly common to combine this with computer-generated material.

Since the original gesture of film, which had much in common with still photography (capturing what occurs before the camera), film narratives have gradually become more complex.

“A film”, Noel Burch said in the 70s, “is simply a series of fragments of time and
Placing these fragments side by side is what is known as montage. In extremely simple terms, we could say that filmmaking is the act, the game or the art of joining together a series of fragments of footage. This operation gives rise to editing and the resulting narrative, by which we mean the discursive intention that is given to a series of discrete image and sound signifiers when somebody joins them together.

Returning to Burch’s analysis, we could say that this discursive intention moves between two poles:
1) continuous narrative, in which the aim of editing is to ensure that the viewer does not lose the thread of the space or time of the film.
2) aggressive narrative, in which the continuity is disrupted and the viewer has to deal with ruptures in the space and time of the film.

These two basic intentions drive the narrative edifice.

As the Kuleshov effect tells us, if two unrelated images are placed one after the other, they will trigger a third image in the viewer’s mind, based on the relationship between them.

We could say that editing a film means setting out to engineer meanings using “fragments of space and time” and working with at least three basic functions of continuity:

a) a syntactic function that is strictly narrative (the story; what is told, what is being said through the sequence of fragments).
b) an aesthetic function: the visual sense of the images, the consistency of space and other qualities of the image from one shot to the next (light, texture, colour, etc)
c) a temporal function that has to do with narrative time - chronological time, but also the time between shots, the sense that time has moved on between two shots, etc.

Editors work with these operations and functions, using montage techniques to join the fragments of space-time and organise the camera footage. The questions and ideas that come up in an editor’s minds during this process are the ones that should be openly discussed in public editing sessions.

In continuity editing, all the decisions are geared towards ensuring that viewers can enter the film smoothly, without losing the sense of the story.
Viewers are not disconcerted, they can follow the space-time notions of the narrative, and the message is rational and easily understood.

In Burch’s analysis, aggressive editing consists of the disruptive elements that generate what he calls “structures of aggression”, which are based on a type of montage that disturbs viewers. The cuts trigger confusion and disorientation, making viewers question what has happened and why there are inconsistencies or dysfunctions in the time, space, aesthetics or sound of the film.

This disruption generates different types of narratives that are more similar to the art and essay films that use conventions based on these types of ruptures. *Auteur* films arise from a personal subjectivity and are not forced to persuade viewers on a mass scale. This has allowed them to explore these type of aggressive editing structures, which require viewers to make an effort to understand the reasons behind the disruptions, discontinuities, leaps or ruptures that interrupt the expected narrative thread.

If we extend the idea of montage to other types of edits or connections - montage between shots, between scenes and between sequences, for example - we can imagine the assemblage of a larger structure such as a film. If we extend it even further, we can think in terms of the montage of filmographies, to refer to the body of work of a particular filmmaker or production company, and the way in which one film follows another, like enormous “fragments of space and time” of many hours duration.

The filmographic history of a director or a production house can also be based on continuity or on disruption. This extremely broad range of editing possibilities offers an enormous opportunity for creativity through the construction of a diversity of narrative forms.

But in spite of this infinite array of editing possibilities, we are not imaginatively free. As the film business grew, commercial storylines opted for continuity structures, and financial concerns helped to shape the so-called “popular” film plots that drew large audiences and brought big profits to investors. Stories told with continuity editing prevailed over those that used aggressive structures,
because they were easier to understand and made more money.
These tendencies eventually strengthened a particular way of presenting (producers) and seeing (spectators) reality through film, to the point that it has now become hegemonic.

But when spectators become the subject matter of films and an active part of the production process, all types of editing become easily understandable. The “first spectator” rarely objects to the type of editing used in a film.
In collective film projects, when a group argues and shares associations as part of a discussion about the material they are working with, the group itself often ends up suggesting disruptions and narrative jumps with the freedom that comes from not being aware of standard ways of narrating (not of seeing).
This is crucial when it comes to freeing up editing, and to destroying the myth that audiences are ill at ease with broken, fragmented narratives.
As for “remote spectators” who have not participated in the production process, it is understandable that they would feel perturbed by discontinuity. Nothing connects them a priori to the material and they have to try to understand the particular subjectivity of a creator who is a stranger to them, and who presents a work without any points of reference and with no prior elements of belonging or identification.
Films will always need a campaign (small or large) to inform and stimulate the interest of remote spectators.

Under a Politics of Collectivity, “first spectators” shape the narrative through debates and ideas, and they do not need narrative persuasion strategies or aesthetic trickery in the edited versions that they can see in progress. Editing thus becomes a powerful creative conversation, a collective working session.

A group of film professionals will often have different points of view, tastes and preferences when it comes to editing. Options are usually discussed among colleagues, and then a decision is made, usually by the person with greatest power and highest rank in the hierarchies that govern the old model of cinema.
In a Politics of Collectivity, both professional and amateur arguments are taken into account and given equal value. The tastes, aesthetic and narrative preferences, and formal interests of the film professionals will not be given more weight just because they are professionals. The Politics of Collectivity breaks the hierarchical covenant of cinema. Every participant can defend their own preferences, and the know-how and arguments of professionals will vie with the tastes and arguments of amateurs, on equal terms, in group discussions.

General materials.

All of the images and sounds linked to the memories, experiences and imaginations of the people in a group, all the material hidden away in family chests and personal archives, can potentially be included in Authorless Cinema films.

Throughout our lives, we accumulate an enormous amount of personal, visual and audio material - the physical traces of our memories, of our lives.

A Politics of Collectivity brings to light the meaningful things that participants have kept as part of their personal, family and social history, as well as other things that they have always imagined.

Authorless Cinema films are a chance to collectivise our lives through audiovisual materials, to become part of the space-time dynamic of a communal film that will then be part of our collective film history.

Durations of cinema. From the shot as a political matter to filmographies as the time of the imaginary.

Duration 1: The reality shot.

A shot refers to any audiovisual recording that has an element of duration. Shots are political in nature. An operator who is contemplating a reality that she is part of decides to capture a particular moment, a situation, a series of events or a place. To record it audiovisually, she chooses to start and end at specific
The operator must decide: why? for how long? how will it be used in future? what moment or situation do I want to record? what other material can I connect it to? how? And so on. The aesthetic result may be different depending on whether it is filmed by a professional or an amateur, but the shot will always be political in nature.

The way in which the footage is subsequently ordered, its relationship to other material, is a matter for the editing stage. It will be different on every occasion, in every situation, and for every project. Under a Politics of Collectivity, material is considered to be a “reality shot” if there is a shared awareness of what the shot means, how it was filmed, its relevance and its possible value within the film.

A reality shot must also be obtained with the consent of the person or people filmed, and the filming must be a shared experience involving the operator and the subject, in which power roles can be swapped and decisions are shared. The person being filmed must be able to take the camera and film, guided by the operator, or to direct the actions of the operator. A reality shot is the fruit of an equal social relationship.

Duration 2: Filmic documents.

A filmic document refers to a sequence of reality shots, edited together. Filmic documents are prepared and submitted to groups who are working on films in order to further develop their collective audiovisual consciousness, to encourage debate and participation, to allow the people involved to appropriate decisions over the material, and to identify narrative threads and lines of reflection in the overall film, so that the work can move forward.

Duration 3: Audiovisual scripts (film outlines or drafts)

An audiovisual script refers to a compilation of filmic documents and reality
shots that trigger story ideas when a possible film narrative starts to take shape in a group. An audiovisual script may end up becoming the film itself, if it has been created through a rigorous, ongoing process and the group is unable to shoot the entire film under properly organised conditions.

Duration 4: Films
A film refers to edited material of a certain duration that brings together reality shots, filmic documents and audiovisual scripts (partial or whole) in a final cut that, in the eyes of the group, has achieved a level of narrativity that works in the sense of films as we know them.

Duration 5: Filmographies
A filmography refers to a group of films created through the shared processes described above. All the “durations” retain the status of documents that can be re-used as raw material. Everything from reality shots to films can be seen as units of film time, and can be reworked by the group in order to change the meanings of the discourse.

10. Liberated Aesthetics in the Politics of Collectivity

A 21st century film can be made using any existing audiovisual recording device. It can draw on the many styles and aesthetics that are made possible by today’s technologies. The narrative thread that connects the different materials will come from the people who assemble to make their films.

This is not about making low-budget films and automatically accepting that the only people who should continue to have a right to medium and high budgets are the “people from the film industry” who have always had this privilege.

In aesthetic terms, it is important to accept images filmed by ordinary recording devices such as mobile phones, but it is equally important to have access to professional means of production and to ensure that particular scenes can be filmed with high quality equipment and a team of qualified professionals, if that is what the people in the producing collective decide.

Home footage placed side by side with a scene planned in advance and filmed under good lighting and sound conditions; a shot framed by a professional side by side with a flow of amateur viewpoints; high quality sound recordings side by side with non-professional audio; high definition footage side by side with unfocused images: we have to embrace all of this potential hybridisation of audiovisual flows as the natural aesthetic of 21st century films. We need to be open enough to accept any of the formats, durations, techniques, narrative profiles and sound and visual aesthetics that film has explored.

In this way, cinema can emerge from the audiovisual materials that are par of the fabric of society, and allow them to mingle with professionally produced images.

We draw attention to one key aspect of cinema: it has managed to reflect on our contemporary audiovisual context sooner and more seriously than any other creative industry, and to express it through films.

With their knowledge and experience, filmmakers must help to deactivate the colonisation of the social imaginary by the limited aesthetic, narrative and hegemonic forms of the industry. To free the collective imagination from the stylistic and aesthetic servitude we have acquired as spectators.

Professional know-how should contribute to breaking the bondage of production, and freeing it from old canons. All filmmakers know that film history has given us so many different forms, textures and narratives that it is difficult to imagine a particular
composition that hasn't already been tried out by some filmmaker at some point in history. Under a Politics of Collectivity, the people-as-producers will free the aesthetics of cinema.

**Fiction, set free.**

Fiction - the act and the result of pretending, inventing or expressing imagined things - is the engine that drives all cinematic endeavours. All cinema is fiction in the sense that it pretends, representing a reality that is external to it in the form of sounds and images. All cinema is documentary in that it documents reality, photographically captures whatever is within the range of its lens, whether it is a natural or a staged situation.

In the pre-digital age, very small groups worked in the professional film industries of different countries. Here in Spain, for example, film was estimated to employ some thirty thousand people.

In Los Angeles until the 1990s, around 300,000 people were in some way linked to the huge Hollywood machine. Out of the few thousand people who work in the film industries of different countries, only a handful - usually scriptwriters and directors - actually materialise their fictions in the films that are made. This means that we have only been exposed the audiovisual imaginary of an extremely tiny minority worldwide.

With few exceptions, cinema has always been the result of an organisation of people getting together to make, distribute, market and screen their films, and these organisations consisted of investors and teams of professionals.

Nowadays, if we want to discover the interests of ordinary people who acquire a camera, we just have to look at the audiovisual material available on the Internet: a vast kaleidoscope of recordings, videos and edits that reveal the spontaneous interests of the ordinary operators of the 21st century. Today's technology is allowing us to pull the plug on the old tyrannical model of production, and to make way for a huge audiovisual kaleidoscope of material created by
different social groups organised around a variety of formats. Film images immersed in and emerging from the people.
Cinema is facing a unique opportunity to renew itself, to expand its content, diversify its forms, and exponentially enhance its system of representation. It will be able to do so if it embraces a new politics, one that accepts the audiovisual reality of the 21st century in its theoretical signification, its production and management processes, its cannon and its historiography.
If those who held authority and ownership of cinema can now open up to this new production status, the new “set-world” will nourish and revitalise world cinema.


How can we tell whether a Authorless Cinema film is good?

The notion of a Politics of Collectivity emerged as an alternative way out of the current crisis affecting systems of social and cultural production, particularly in the film and audiovisual sphere. It also stems from the increasingly widespread practices linked to a particular way of producing culture on the net. A Politics of Collectivity entails a break with the critical tradition of film that was exclusively based on the canons of industrial or auteur films.
It is a concept that is dense with cinematic operational potential, and invites action. It is activated anew each time, in each experience that seeks to interact with and modify reality through and within cinema.
A politics of cinema should look at the conditions of production and management in a broad sense, and not limit itself to the aesthetic, formal and narrative aspects of films. It should transcend the historiographic and journalistic anecdotes of its directors and stars.
All creative works emerge from the specific set of economic, social, political, cultural,
ideological, technological and emotional circumstances and conditions that make them possible. This has always been the case, even though creative and critical indoctrination has taught us to restrict our interest to the final cut of a film, drawing a veil over its highly complex production.

Under a Politics of Collectivity, making films - anywhere and with any means of production - means having recourse to a new system that cannot be judged according to pre-existing critical criteria. The criteria of the past was based on the old types of politics, and they are only effective and useful for the films that they gave rise to.

The main determining factor in the early history of cinema, before the expansion of today’s digital technologies, was the economic profits that could be made by investors and producers in the film business. In a new type of politics, based on current and future social and technological resources, money can cease to be the trigger and the goal of filmmaking activity. This does not mean making films without money, and it does not mean making precarious, badly funded films. It simply means that financial profitability is no longer the key engine that drives cinema.

Cinema will be driven by the desire to generate filmographies from the everyday lives of people who self-organise to make films. Under a Politics of Collectivity, filmmaking is driven by the capacity to construct social fiction, discourse and narratives through social organisation. It allows people to create audiovisual reality through their own means, without intermediaries, using the tools at their disposal.

Cinema’s new momentum stems from ordinary people appropriating the means of production (cameras, computers and projectors), thus repeating the initial elitist gesture of the Lumière Brothers, this time on a mass scale.

The list below sets out what we consider to be the basic criteria for judging the quality of a film under a Politics of Collectivity. We know and hope that this is just an initial node, and that each social collective will be willing and able to develop it further through its own practices and analysis.

An audiovisual work, document or film fulfils the criteria of the Politics of Collectivity if:

1) it is generated by a group or collective of people who self-organise to produce films,
as long as the group actively includes people who do not have professional film or audiovisual training or experience.

2) the relations of production among this group of people-producers are horizontal, collaborative, participatory and inclusive during all stages of the production, circulation, management and use of the films, and equal value is given to specialist and amateur know-how.

3) the film shoot takes place in the environment in which the members of the group live or go about their business (the “set-world”) or, alternatively, the group itself has chosen a different location and backdrop to shoot the scenes according to the imaginary that they are creating.

4) the content of the film is generated by means of discussing and debating common interests, whatever these may be.

5) the non-professionals in the group have ceased to think of themselves as spectators of the creative process, and accept responsibilities in the production and management of their films.

6) the professionals who participate in the process place their knowledge at the service of the group, based on an attitude and operational approach of non-authorship.

7) all stages of production and management are open to participation, not just a few of them.

8) the films are open to formal and aesthetic hybridisation, without prejudice and without being forced into pre-existing canons.

9) the production process is open to the inclusion of all types of visual and sound material, regardless of the quality, filmed by any type of camera, without formal, aesthetic or narrative elitism.

And the two key principles that prevail over all the rest are that there must be no private or individual ownership of decisions, and that everything must be submitted for collective decision-making, and discussed by the group at some point in the process. Under a Politics of Collectivity there are no set roles, and anybody can carry out any task that they deem necessary to keep the work moving forward. The process must not block individual initiative, but all those who advance individually must submit their work to the group for discussion at some point.
Under a Politics of Collectivity, these basic criteria of authenticity must be met during the filmmaking process, and only then can the criteria of the old, historical politics of cinema be applied in order to analyse and consider the authenticity of the finished films. We are not proposing inward-looking criteria because they are limited in scope. It is extremely enriching to enter into formal and aesthetic dialogue with film history and we recognise that its traces, lessons, moments and spirit are inevitably present in all audiovisual creations. But this dialogue must be based on respect, not on imposition. And the established film world was always used imposition as a weapon against innovations that bring uncertainty. The official production sector usually addresses non-specialists with imposition and arrogance.

We want to guard against naivety. This is another reason why we have gone to the trouble to revise film history and will continue to do so: in order to detect the arrogance of its politics in terms of aesthetics, production and management, and to weaken it with our own arguments.

Even the most cursory overview of film history reveals a constant stream of blunders, misunderstandings, tests, resounding failures, collapses, commercial wars, mafias, manoeuvres, illicit fortunes, persecution and deaths that appear alongside its triumphs. The cinema of the elites was able to develop among dazzling lights and perverse shadows. We now demand the right for society to carve out its own cinema, just as full of revelations and blunders, failures and amazement at what we are capable of. The dialogue between the emerging social cinematographies and film history can only be based on mutual respect and an interest driven by a deep love and fascination for cinema. In other words, by a profound respect for the well-being of our social imaginary.

Towards a new organisational status of the audiovisual sphere in 21st century societies

This manifesto lays the conceptual groundwork for a restructuring of the social system of cinema, and as such, it must question the social functioning of cinema today. Some of the key points of the paradigm change we are defending here can be
1) radically change our understanding of the three fundamental aspects of filmmaking: production, management (distribution and circulation) and exhibition, and to counter the old models of production with new Authorless Cinema Factories.

2) change the way we view the Studio System and its closed, hermetic, privatised, elitist operations that benefit minorities (professionally or financially), and counter it with the Open Studio System based on participatory, inclusive, self-managed, communal, non-hierarchical operations.

3) overturn the idea that only minority groups in the film world have the right to make films, and extend this right to grassroots social collectives.

4) critically review the studio and authorship politics that shaped past production models, including an in-depth analysis of their limitations and conditioning factors in terms of interacting with a Politics of Collectivity.

5) critically review the legislation that regulates filmmaking in each location, and propose a new legal framework to safeguard and promote the social organisation of people around a politics of collectivity.

12. Questions for the Cinema Sector:

regarding the “history of the future”

How can we prepare for the history that lies ahead? Will we manage to create a film history from the point of view of social production? Or will historians have to
continue to recount the history of today's cinema under the old 20th century
criteria of industrial companies, big production companies, famous directors, stars
and films?
If we, as society, occupy film, shouldn’t we also occupy the way in which our social
history of cinema is recounted, so that we don’t end up with historians telling us
incorrect versions of ourselves?

regarding Film Theory

Will the film sector continue to impose its tyranny without changing the discourse
it has developed since its early history?
Whenever ordinary people make a film under a Politics of Collectivity, will the
ruthless aesthetic cannon turn up to tell us whether it is good or bad? Will the film
sector continue to ignore the dawning of a second history of cinema? Will it realise
that the crisis of its old paradigms is actually a reinvention? Will film professionals
realise that a technological, aesthetic and social revolution in the field of cultural
production has destroyed old filmmaking parameters, and that this opens up a clear
opportunity to democratise film?
If society occupies cinema, collective operations will also have to occupy its cannons of
production.

regarding film journalism

Will film reviewers and theorists continue to amplify the activities of a minority
sector? Will journalists reflect the new reality of audiovisual production? Or will
they continue to play up to the production and exhibition elites and promote them?
If society occupies cinema, will journalists be honest enough to break their
dependence on editorial media and to talk openly about the new kind of
production? Or will they continue to cling to their former practices?
What we have seen so far is the beginning.
The idea of setting out this series of concepts that have emerged from our experiences over the last few years, is simply a way of formulating a conceptual tool that can improve people’s interaction with reality with and through cinema.
The work begins just where this short text ends.
Social production is in the midst of a paradigm change, and the time has come to deeply rethink the foundations on which the edifice of the first hundred years of cinema was built. A bipolar future seems to be looming, in which capitalist business operations are fiercer and more dehumanising then ever, while grassroots society increasingly takes audiovisual production into its own hands. In which the basic direction and intention of the cinema of the past is to continue to exercise control over the social imaginary, while ordinary people everywhere are producing film anonymously.

Meanwhile, we are witnessing and immersed in the emergence of a local-global consciousness, of increasingly collaborative relationships and practices, of shared social responsibility for culture and for institutions, the economy and politics.
We call for the implementation of a Politics of Collectivity for cultural production that can smooth the way, and allow cinema to organise itself differently. But every individual and social group must find its own forms of social transformation that can clear a path towards a life that is not bound to capitalism as the only system of life and production.
Those who love this profession will have already realised that people deserve a society that is structured around solidarity, participation, encounters with others, and peaceful, critical, creative coexistence. We need a proper Politics for the democratisation of cinema, a Politics that benefits the community and allows its own films to emerge.

What we have done in this text is set down our ideas. It has been a way of sharing the concepts that are allowing us to slowly negotiate difficulties and advance towards the profound democratisation of this fascinating profession. We now put this text aside in order to continue our work of consolidating, developing and practicing a different model of cinema.
This has simply been an attempt to clarify our ideas, and by sharing them, we hope to help other people and groups to begin to at least consider a possible horizon for a different type of cinema.

Our main work is essentially among the people who share this journey with us. The texts are just a guide that allow us to approach our work with greater precision. We will have nothing but admiration for anybody who manages to find more effective ways to democratise cinema than the ones we have set out here.

In 1961 Jean Rouch ended La pyramide humaine, an improvised film with a cast of young African and French people, with a voiceover saying:

“What does it matter if a story is plausible or copied! What do the camera or the mic matter! What does the director matter! What does it matter if a film has been created over these last few weeks, or if this film doesn’t exist! The things that took place around the camera are more important. Something has happened among those cardboard classes... those poetic, childish loves, those simulated catastrophes. They have learnt to love each other, to get angry, to make up, to know themselves. Something that was not accomplished in many years of going to school together...has been accomplished by a simple film and its familiar improvisation. The film ends here, but the story isn’t over...”

We know that life goes beyond its stories, so it is reasonable to think that if cinema chooses to emerge in the midst of life, of ordinary lives, it will have the power and the potential to go beyond the brief stories that it has always tried to tell.

We believe that cinema has the potential to open up its production processes to the participation of people on a large scale, to allow itself to be inhabited by life and lives, so that its films can make us - the people of this century - at least a little more caring, more supportive of those around us, more involved in the history we are part of, more humane... more free.

OCCUPY 21ST CENTURY CINEMA!
this english translation is pending for revision