How Audiences Form.

Exploring Film Provision and Participation in the North of England.
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How Audiences Form:
Executive Summary

Background: Aims and objectives of the project

This project provides landscape research of regional film provision to assist Film Hub North’s mission to increase and widen participation in independent and specialised cinema. It examines three case study regions: County Durham/Wearside, Humberside and South Yorkshire. The initial findings will provide groundwork for future collaborative research to examine the wider region and make suggestions for policy development.

The project aims to understand existing audience engagement with independent and specialised films, to identify emergent trends in film and cinema engagement, and to explore possible initiatives aimed at improving audience engagement. To achieve this, the research has identified current specialised and independent cinema provision in terms of venues, film programming, community events and online presence, and explored current audience participation in terms of attending venues and events, viewing films (through conventional and online channels), and engaging in social media. This executive summary sets out the methods used, key findings and recommendations from the main report.

Methods

This research used nine semi-structured interviews with BFI policy makers (x2), cinema professionals in a senior position (x3, one for each case study region), community organisers involved with film (x3, one for each case study region) and a cinema-goer. Three focus groups took place with cinema-goers (one focus group for each case study). A survey about preferences and barriers to engagement was distributed in each case study region and online. 287 responses were received, of which 278 were from the appropriate case study regions and used for the analysis. Thematic analysis of the interview and focus group transcripts, survey data analysis and reference to existing film policy was used to write the report.

Key findings

- The hub model has potential to support local level engagement with different film programmes.

The regional hubs have the potential for BFI policies to be enacted within cities and rural areas, by using the intermediary hubs to support specific local contexts for film
provision, such as relatively different levels of social, cultural and economic development.

- **Provision in the case study regions is uneven, with some areas well served and others significantly underserved.**

Wearside and County Durham have very little independent and specialised film provision, with most of this coming from small film clubs. Humberside has a groundswell of film clubs and film nights with engaged audiences, though the area lacks a ‘bricks and mortar’ venue, while South Yorkshire is better served, at least in Sheffield, given the presence of Showroom Cinema. However, more flexible opportunities to screen films in all regions would increase engagement.

- **Film providers need to manage and balance cultural values with economic imperatives for adequate film provision.**

Space needs to be given for the cultural value of independent film provision, as this is strongly desired by the research participants. Such an approach is not zero-sum and must balance the continuum between a strongly ‘art’ film offer and a strongly ‘commercial’ film offer. This of course, must be economically sustainable.

- **Independent and specialised film audiences are diverse and have diverse interests.**

The cultural value of independent and specialised film for cinema-goers includes the both the types and genres of films. The research shows that different audiences value film choices that are considered thought-provoking, challenging, even cathartic and offer new understandings of human life.

- **Diversity of types of film provision can also enable a variety of forms of engagement with independent and specialised film culture.**

More opportunities to engage with these types of film experience are desired by research participants, notably in Wearside and Humberside. This can be through multiplex cinemas, independent cinemas, film clubs/societies/nights, and community-based pop-up screenings, along with home viewing via DVD/Bly-ray and Internet streaming. These are complementary and distinct film experiences, and film-viewers have strong preferences for specific venues that provide a good atmosphere, that reflect a love of film and offer relaxing and sociable spaces to interact.

- **Opportunities to make use of technological changes in distribution methods may help to maintain existing audiences and develop new ones.**
New technological developments may enhance the prospects for economically sustainable provision of independent film, given the cheaper cost of digital film distribution, especially through online streaming. Support from Film Hub North could help local community groups and organisations to develop and curate their own film programmes.

- *Social media has an important role in facilitating debate about independent and specialised film and to develop lasting relationships between film providers and audiences.*

Many research participants described social media as an invaluable tool for finding out information about new films, building anticipation for new releases, engaging with venues and discussing independent and specialised film with like-minds. This is especially pertinent for those in under-served areas for whom finding out about independent film culture is difficult. Cinemas and film providers can also use social media to build loyal relationships with cinema-goers.

**Recommendations**

- *Support diverse types of film provision for diverse audience choices.*

The research suggests that cinema-goers will engage with a range of different types of film experience. Film providers should not view other formats as a challenge to their audiences. Moves towards engaging with new distribution methods, such as BFI Player can be used to complement, support and encourage the formation of new audiences and to maintain existing ones at venues and in film clubs.

- *Promote the cultural value of the independent cinema experience.*

The cultural value of films for the research participants in this paper suggests that attending an independent cinema is a qualitatively different experience to other formats and is treasured by cinema-goers. Focus should be on diverse types of venues for film screenings, the use of social spaces and the opportunity to eat and drink, which are valued by cinema-goers. Careful promotion of the independent cinema experience as distinct to the multiplex offer and home viewing can help to encourage this.

- *Support independent cinemas, film clubs and community groups to curate independent and specialised film screenings*

New methods of distribution, such as online streaming, could support film clubs and societies to encourage wider and more diverse engagement with independent and
specialised film. The research has shown that setting up film screenings is costly for small organisations and using digital technology could reduce the cost barrier to this. This could increase broader engagement with independent film, including attendances at independent cinemas.

- **Consider local and regional social, cultural and economic contexts in tailoring support to different areas.**

The three case studies have shown that different levels of film culture engagement can be discerned. South Yorkshire or at least, Sheffield in particular, has a particularly strong level of engagement. Humberside has keen audiences and film clubs but insufficient fixed-venue provision, while Wearside has very little provision. The extent of audience desire for more independent and specialised film provision in both Wearside and County Durham could benefit from further research, but the film club in Sunderland and presence of film clubs in County Durham suggest that there may well be an untapped demand for a different film experience to the multiplex offer. Film Hub North’s work should recognise the different levels of cultural development that the different regions are starting from. Therefore, smaller scale provision could help to build audiences in Wearside, while bigger events may be desired in Humberside and South Yorkshire.

- **Use social media to understand diverse audience preferences and build online communities for film engagement and discussion.**

Part of the cinematic experience for many of the focus group participants was the use of Twitter and Facebook to find out about films and discuss them with others. Independent cinemas can build stronger relationships with audiences through social media as evidenced in the reactive example of the Showroom adjusting sound volumes during the film in response to complaints. Likewise, social media can be promoted as an invaluable and cost-effective tool for the promotion of the activities of film clubs and societies.

- **Further research into wider barriers to engagement and audience preferences**

The survey provides some indicative data of the extent of film engagement, barriers and preferences, however this is limited by the short time scale for this work (as a consequence, the methods of distribution were not able to capture a generalisable sample). Therefore, further investigation of barriers, especially in rural areas could build on the indications in this paper. For example, the desire for more localised screening of films that have a connection to Mexborough might be replicated elsewhere across rural areas in the north.
How Audiences Form

Introduction

This report provides an account of a small landscape research project to assess existing film provision and desired film provision in three regions within the remit of Film Hub North; County Durham/Wearside, Humberside, and South Yorkshire. Film Hub North is part of a national Film Audience Network set up by the BFI (2012) to address regional provision of British independent and specialised film. The aim of the film hub is that, through a coalition of local partners... to actively encourage innovative and fresh thinking around partners who could come together to form a hub. For example, partners might include independent and/or multiplex cinemas, broadcasters, film archives, arts centres, film festivals, rural providers and others. Regional audience hubs will be able to create their own programmes which respond to and grow audiences at a local and regional level, as well as taking advantage of their role in the Network, which will collaboratively devise UK-wide programmes – ensuring that audiences have a richer choice of films to see. Working collectively, the UK Audience Network will also identify around 1,000 community venues across the UK wanting to present a greater choice of film to local audiences. These venues will enable greater reach of independent and specialised film to audiences (BFI, 2012, pp.13-14).

The remit of Film Hub North covers Cumbria, the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber. The case study regions for this research were selected on the basis that a major independent cinema and the Hub’s lead organisation, Showroom Cinema, is based in South Yorkshire, where there are also several film festivals. In contrast, Humberside, Wearside and County Durham have no major independent cinema and therefore relatively less film provision. Given that all the case study regions have experienced post-industrial decline and different levels of regeneration, there is scope to highlight differences within and across the regions.

The aims of the project are threefold:

- To understand existing modes of audience engagement with independent and specialised film provision in Northern England
- To identify emergent trends in film and cinema engagement

1 County Durham and Wearside have been treated as a single case that approximates a broadly similar geographical size to South Yorkshire and Humberside, although it was immediately apparent that there are significant differences between the two regions and relatively less film provision than in South Yorkshire and Humberside. Therefore, while together County Durham and Wearside consist of a single case, the data has been separated to enable comparison between these regions.
• To determine the region’s readiness for initiatives aimed at improving audience engagement

This report addresses existing engagement, emergent trends and disparities in film provision, along with opportunities for developing existing audiences, forming new ones and increasing engagement with film in different ways. The report addresses this through the lens of cinema as a cultural form (Chaney, 1983, 1990). First, the focus is on the relations of film production and culture in which the structure of UK film provision, existing strategies to target audiences, the cultural and economic imperatives of film provision, and technological changes are explored. Second, cinema and audience engagement is explored by discussing typologies of film audience and film experience, the importance of venues and the local context, the cultural value of film for cinema-goers and the social and individual aspects of being part of a film audience. While the first section addresses structural issues the second looks more at audience experiences. This is brought together in the third section, which looks at the forms of participative relationships that these suggest, and which could be built on in moving towards a regional plan for Film Hub North. The third section looks at opportunities to build audiences, barriers to engagement, and the role of social media in this.

Methods

This report draws on mixed methods, including nine in-depth semi-structured interviews, three focus groups, a survey, and document analysis of film policy in the UK. The interviews were conducted with BFI policy makers (x2), cinema professionals in a senior position (x3, one for each case study region), community organisers involved with film clubs/societies and film engagement in local areas (x3, one for each case study region). A further interview was also conducted with a cinema-goer, alongside three focus groups with five participants in each group who are cinema-goers (one focus group for each case study region).

A paper survey that addresses preferences for the cinema experience and barriers and issues of access to cinemas was distributed in each case study region (see Appendix 1 and 2). Given the short timescale of this project the survey drew on informal methods of distribution (community centres, libraries, etc.) in order to capture the views of cinema attendees and non-attendees more broadly. The survey was also distributed online via social media and Showroom Cinema’s email newsletter. To ensure that the responses were from the case study areas, the respondent’s post code was required and any responses from outside the chosen case study regions were deleted. 287 responses were received, of which 278 were used for analysis. Thematic analysis of the interview and focus group transcripts, survey data analysis and reference to existing film policy and other academic research has enabled the following report to be written.
Framework – Cinema as Cultural Form

The framework for this research is Chaney’s (1983, 1990) notion of ‘cultural forms’. Chaney (1990) elaborates on the concept of a cultural form, which can be viewed as three interrelated levels. The first refers to ‘relations of production’ which includes the social relationships involved in producing and distributing culture, including the technologies and structures in which culture is produced. The second level is the ‘narrative of the form’, which refers to people’s experiences and the themes and stories that they interpret from these experiences. The third level is the ‘participative interaction’ of culture between producers, providers and audiences. This third level refers to the kind of social bonds involved in cultural engagement.

In this research the three levels of analysis are adapted to the study of different types of film provision and engagement as cultural forms. This involves the broader structural and policy direction of independent and specialised film in the UK (relations of production) and the specific audience and cinema experiences of film-watchers in both cinemas and film clubs/nights/societies (narrative of the form). The third level of the cultural form – participative practices – refers here to existing barriers to engagement, opportunities to develop audiences and the role of social media in facilitating engagement with film. Chaney (1990) adds two features to the study of cultural forms that are important for this research. First, that ‘medium does not equal form’, the qualitative differences between types of films (foreign-language, Hollywood, documentaries, etc.) and genres of films (science fiction, comedy, etc.) are important in understanding people’s film experiences, along with the variety of venues and modes of engagement with film (Chaney, 1990, p.51). Second, cultural forms are not simply representations of ‘conventionally understood... aesthetic forms’, but are open to a multitude of symbolisations and interpretations (Chaney, 1990, p.51). Therefore, the following research findings are led by the perspectives of the research participants, including different interpretations of the cultural forms of film and cinema.

Findings

In line with the theoretical approach to this research, the findings are presented in three sections. Firstly, pertaining to relations of production, the structure of film provision in the UK, and especially with regards to the film hubs, is discussed. Secondly, to explore the narrative of cinema as a cultural form, the types of audiences and their experiences of film in the three case study regions, including the social aspects and cultural values of film engagement, are described and compared. Thirdly, to explore participative practices between film producers, providers and
audiences, the desired forms of film provision appropriate to different and localised regions are highlighted.

Relations of film production and culture

This section addresses relations of film production and culture as the ‘social organisation of producing and distributing’, including ‘technologies of expression’ and ‘cultural phenomena’ (Chaney, 1990, p.51). Recent changes to the structure of UK film provision are discussed first, highlighting the current geographical imbalance, expressed through relatively less screenings outside of London. This section highlights the development of the regional film hubs within the Film Audience Network, and how the BFI endeavours that these will build audiences. Second, existing methods of targeting audiences, used by cinemas and other film providers within the Film Hub North region are examined. Third, the tension between the concern with British independent and specialised film as arts cultural engagement and the commercial aspects of the UK film industry is explored. Finally, recent technological changes and their impact on film provision and cinema production are discussed.

Structure of film provision: BFI and the film hubs

The structure of film provision in the UK has undergone changes in recent years. While the screen agencies previously had a remit to address regional and local provision, broader structural changes in UK film provision and policy, including the closure of the UK Film Council and subsuming of its activities under the remit of the BFI, have meant that: ‘we lost our grasp of what [was happening at a local level]... something else had to be put in place to deliver the regional policy... so that’s where the whole Hub model came from’ (BFI policy-maker). A cinema manager from Newcastle-upon-Tyne considers, as a response to a currently static cinema market, ‘the only expansion point... is to take the cinema experience back to communities that don’t have it and... aren’t able or willing to make the journey to [existing cinemas], but would if it was within their community’.

This new emphasis on nine regional film hubs across the UK then is pertinent in the context where the ‘increasing complexity of the digital world’ threatens access to, and economic success of, independent and specialised films, which are shown on just 7% of screens outside of central London (BFI, 2012, p.13). Reflecting this concern, responses provided by members of the public to a consultation on the BFI’s film education strategy include a negative view of the London-centric focus of the organisation’s activities (BFI, c2013).

This challenge is considered by a BFI policy-maker:
how do you replicate what the Screen Agencies did, when you haven’t got a regional structure? So it’s very much about trying to create structures that mean that money can flow out of London and the South East... a huge majority of admissions are within the M25... that’s where the films make or break... if we can offer the renters really good audiences out of London, they’ll give us the films. But it’s a case of chicken and egg, and if we can’t get the films, we can’t get the audiences, and if you can’t get the audience, you can’t get the film!

This suggests that the regional film hubs could help to develop audiences for British, independent and specialised film across the UK, in especially under-served areas. In conjunction with a Programming Development Fund, Festivals Fund and Distribution Fund from the BFI, the Film Audience Network, which includes Film Hub North, aims to ‘encourage release plans that give audiences greater access to a wide range of independent British and specialised film and support new and innovative ideas that embrace ambitious digital opportunities’ (BFI, 2012, p.39). Within the Cumbria, Yorkshire and North East areas of England covered by Film Hub North, the challenge is clear to one BFI policy maker; in Sheffield and Newcastle ‘we’ve got the Showroom, the Tyneside’s really strong... [but] when you get into the rural areas, [provision in] Cumbria is much patchier, there’s parts of the North East outside of Newcastle which are very under-served’.

The purpose of the hubs is to link venues within the regions, which broadly include major cinemas, independent cinemas, community film societies, clubs and nights, and pop-up screenings, and to draw on different ranges of expertise. According to a BFI policy-maker, this will necessitate a change in perspective for many, as the venues and exhibitors ‘have spent the last decades of their existence focusing on themselves and how they get people over their doorsteps and how they’re working, so there’s a huge shift in culture to encourage a venue to think about itself in the context of a region [and also] in the context of the UK’.

The benefits of this form of networking is apparent in Humberside where three promoters of their own film nights, clubs and societies have collaborated on an umbrella organisation called Hull Independent Cinema Project (HICP) to cross-market their individual activities, put on screenings under the HICP brand, and campaign for a ‘bricks and mortar’ independent venue in Hull. This includes a film night organiser who is building links with the film and media studies department at Hull University; ‘when we do Polyester [a ‘scratch-and-sniff’ film screening], I know they do trash cinema as part of their core units [at the University], and they do Pink Flamingos, so I was hoping that maybe we could get one of [the academics] to come and do a talk’.
HICP’s aim to develop a co-ordinated, but autonomous, approach to film screening suggests a possible direction for the Film Audience Network. A film society organiser who is involved in HICP states a desire to establish HICP as “the brand” for independent cinema in the city. So that then, whenever anyone else says, “oh, I’d like to do this [film] night, I’ll go and talk to HICP about it”... we want them to do it themselves, but we want them to do it under our umbrella, because if we’ve got a single umbrella for all of this sort of activity in the city, between those of us involved now and anyone that might be involved in the future, we’ve got a much greater chance of making it a success, if it’s a sort of co-ordinated approach... of course you want people to be out there doing their own things in all forms of culture; that’s how a scene develops. You don’t get a vibrant cultural or arts scene through central planning. It simply can’t work. But what you do need is some sort of central place that collects information about what’s going on’.

The Film Audience Network could adopt this approach nationally, using the umbrella regional organisations to co-ordinate and support projects proposed by cinemas, societies and individuals. However, an additional role for the film hubs could be to develop and encourage these kinds of projects. Indications from this research on how this might take place in practice, the mechanisms that could foster more engagement with film and the specifics of local contexts that necessitate a flexible approach to supporting exhibitors and building audiences are discussed below. The perspective of a BFI policy-maker is that establishing the role and reach of Film Hub North is an ongoing process of development that requires them to gain more knowledge of the regions involved:

a lot of us, myself included, look on the Hub as a means of developing a regional infrastructure. You build stuff, you link stuff, and you make it relevant to the place that it’s in... the idea that you can just raise everything up and we get this sort of higher impact across the whole of the UK... in that perception, details about venues or places get lost. I think that’s the national approach. I’m then not quite sure if we’ve yet articulated how we relate that national desire to increase audiences and sales and tickets with that local [level].

To begin to address this, the strategic direction of BFI policy suggests the macro level of the London-based BFI, from which policy and funding decisions emanate, while the regional film hubs, within the Film Audience Network (along with other organisations, such as the British Federation of Film Societies [BFFS]), act at the meso-level to link cinemas and venues, and to distribute support to develop venues and audiences for the micro-level of community-based film societies and individual film-viewers. This will also include proposals for shared marketing of specific films across different exhibitors in order to pool the costs of advertisement and developing programming knowledge so that individuals within film exhibiting organisations can champion and
promote British independent and specialised films within their local area. The justification for this structure is described by a BFI policy-maker:

if you are a voluntary organisation, you don’t necessarily want to engage with the BFI. It’s too big an organisation, it’s too institutional, but actually the Hub and the BFFS are good halfway houses that they can sort of introduce them to the idea of a broader range of stuff... if you’re a small exhibitor a long way from London, you just can’t engage with them. You need people like the ICO [Independent Cinema Office] and the BFFS and the Hub to be your stepping stone.

The BFI policy-maker indicates that between the meso- and micro-levels communication will flow both ways, with small organisations contacting the hubs for support and the hubs offering advice and promoting the cultural remit of British independent and specialised films to these organisations and individuals. Indeed, engaging with this type of film culture is a prerequisite for support from the film hubs. This is not just about distributing funding: ‘we need to present them with a toolbox... one thing we’re not going to do is core fund them. So a lot of this will be project work... we can provide content... if they are interested in broadening the range of what they do, the Hub is a great place to go, because they’ve got all kinds of contacts, they actually generate their own programmes, they can get into archives – so the range of what’s on offer can be enhanced... [it will be] their own initiative being empowered by the Hub’ (BFI policy-maker).

The success of this approach to building audiences will be measured by basic audience figures, numbers of screenings and locations, along with profitability, number of titles across the Film Audience Network, though establishing a baseline of existing provision is necessary in order to measure this (BFI policy-maker).

Targeting audiences

In order to build audiences as part of the BFI and Film Audience Network strategies, it is instructive to examine examples of existing problems within the case study regions with targeting audiences, and the need for a diversity of strategies. A cinema manager in a small town in Humberside describes their approach as ‘pretty market-led’ as there is not a great scope for challenging their audiences with less well-known films: ‘[b]ecause we need to keep them coming back, rather than shedding them’. Attempts to target specific national and ethnic groups have had mixed-levels of success: ‘we have screened Polish language films – some of which have done fine, others of which have done not very well at all... just because it’s a Polish language film, doesn’t mean the Polish community here wants to see it’.
Moreover, top-down decisions about what to screen have previously failed to achieve an audience, where local councillors in Humberside had expressed a desire that we should be screening old films for the older audience. In fact, [older audiences] don’t want to see them. So we put on Breakfast at Tiffany’s when it was re-released a couple of years ago to a tiny audience. Actually older people want to see the films that are coming out now... those matinée screenings are now generally working much better, because we’re not trying to second guess what older people want to see.

This approach to targeting audiences is instructive for the co-ordinated but autonomous approach proposed for the BFI-hub-exhibitor nexus described above. This suggests careful consideration for the way any central co-ordination supports regional and local autonomy. In view of this, targeting audiences necessitates a different approach when considering film societies, nights and clubs. A film night organiser who screens cult films looked at other venues that screen cult films in order to understand how to attract audiences to see cult classic films:

I looked at venues like the Prince Charles Cinema in London... they repeatedly show the same films every year, over and over again, and they are very successful. Quote-along, sing-along, things like that, fancy dress events.

The sense of an event and celebration of a cult classic film is part of the appeal and success of this type of film night. The distinctions between types of film exhibition explored in this research are discussed further in the next section on cinemas and audience engagement, which also draws attention to cultural values within different regions and audiences. A further concern in Humberside for targeting audiences was raised by the absence of a defined independent and specialised film venue in the region, in contrast to West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, or Tyneside for example. A film night organiser describes this concern:

There isn’t a Hyde Park Picture House, there isn’t a Prince Charles Theatre, or an equivalent in Hull. And, if that was there and people knew about it, and it had a history, and it had a longevity... I think people would start going to it more... if we had a two-to-three screen art house cinema, there’s no reason why one of those screens couldn’t be programming something that’s slightly more commercial... to get bums on seats, and then to introduce them as well to other types of films.

This section has suggested that, along with the requirement for dedicated venues, a negotiation between audiences and providers – to some extent market-led in terms of film distributors, but also subject to audience demands and some top-down direction to challenge the audience with film offers that they might not ordinarily
The cultural and economic imperatives of film provision

The interviews suggest a tension between the need to make profit and the cultural and film education remit of the BFI and arts council-linked organisations, and the passion for different types of films evidenced by the film society exhibitors. The preferences for independent and specialised film culture, along with, but perhaps superordinate to, mainstream commercial films, necessitates attention to film provision that might challenge or be unfamiliar fare to audiences. Programming in the example of a small-town independent cinema in Humberside necessitates a balanced negotiation between the market provision of mainstream films, demands of audiences and cultural and educational remit of the venue to promote art films: ‘[film education is] part of our ethos... as a live venue and as one which is an Arts Council NPO [non-profit organisation], we’re very much of the mind-set that it’s not about putting on strippers and clairvoyants, it’s about putting on good quality art... with the absolute knowledge that it needs to make money’. Nonetheless, he acknowledges that older films don’t attract an audience, older kids’ films don’t attract an audience, so we do go pretty much by what’s available at the time and screen films that are fairly recently released. We don’t have a six-month or year-long strategy that “we’ll start showing this at the beginning of a period and, by the end of a period, we’ll have moved our audiences onto something much more difficult”, because we need to keep them coming back.

This tension is explored in claim of an uncertain ‘cultural ranking’ of cinema in late-modernity:

the distinctions between ‘low’ and ‘high’ culture, as well as the certainties concerning cultural value, that were once a feature of the cultural field have been seen to weaken... If cinema was initially validated along the same lines as the traditional arts (in terms of authorship and freedom from economic constraints), this has become much less common than before given the more general critique to which the category of ‘art’ has been subject (Hill, 2004, p.32).

Indeed, in the UK, film does not automatically fall ‘within the domain of “arts policy”’, and usually is seen as ‘an industrial policy concerned with the preservation and support of commercial film making’, reflecting a broader influence of neo-liberal managerialism, free market economics and instrumental rationality in government (including the change from ‘cultural industries’ to the notion of ‘creative industries’).
This relates to the sense that arts provision and public engagement with cinema as an art form is becoming increasingly determined by economic imperatives, which is starkly evidenced by the gaps in independent and specialised film provision in Wearside, Humberside and, to an extent, Durham, and the relatively much stronger provision in South Yorkshire (primarily due to the long-term presence of the Showroom Cinema). This is despite the North East having the highest admissions per screen for any region in the UK (and the third lowest number of screens) (BFI, 2013).

Recent research on cinema audiences supports this assertion. Evans (2011, pp.330-331) points out that a sense of community evoked by an independent or art cinema helps to establish its identity, despite the increasing programming of mainstream films within such venues to address issues of engagement and income. This separation between arts culture and commercial culture may also be tied up with notions of cultural capital regarding whether people disadvantaged in a number of ways feel ‘comfortable in places [such as ‘art house’ cinemas] and their “right” to inhabit them’ (Hollinshead, 2011, p.402), which is explored further below.

However, the commercial and art cultural imperatives of film provision are not a zero-sum relationship, but rather, different cinemas exist on a continuum between strongly commercial film offers and strongly ‘art house’ film offers. Therefore, the distinction between economic and cultural imperatives might not be as clear cut, necessitating a balanced approach. A cinema manager in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where three large independent cinemas currently operate, states that

you have to accept that audiences are diverse and want a diverse choice of film, and so the policy decision that we took when we opened this building to move to an 80/20 split between specialised and mainstream film, along with... marketing efforts and a lot of shrewdness around how we work has... been the fundamental shift in us growing audiences for film here generally, and specifically for specialist film. So we’ve bucked a national trend... we’ve expanded the audience for specialist film in the past few years so... that mix – that creation of destination for many people and the diversity of programme has been the key to doing that.

This suggests a space for independent and specialised film provision with cultural and educational remits alongside the commercialised multiplex-style film offer. In Hull, where several film societies run alongside multiplexes, there is a strong desire by a group of independent and specialised film advocates (Hull Independent Cinema Project and Friends of Hull Screen) to shift the balance from a strongly commercial film culture in the city to a more diverse mix between commercial and art house offers. This film culture may contribute to the relatively higher percentage of film
club participation in Humberside, based on the survey data (see Appendix 1a). While discussing the plans for HICP, one film society organiser states that:

we’re not going to start by putting on Bela Tarr’s *Turin Horse*, which is three hours of black and white and not very much happens. We’re going to put on foreign language stuff, but we’re not going to really push people... [but] there’s no reason to expect that a Hull audience can’t respond to these sorts of films. There’s nothing strange or unusual about Hull, which would explain why these sorts of films don’t get an audience [here] when places like Leeds, York, Sheffield can [get an audience].

This view is also reflected in Sunderland, where there is no independent and specialised cinema provision, save for a small film club that runs monthly in a coffee shop. On setting up the film club, the organisers ‘really thought that people would only want to see blockbusters or something that they’ve seen that’s really familiar to them, but some of the suggestions are “out there!”’ This suggests, with attention to the very different local contexts in terms of population, social and economic circumstances, and preferences, a negotiation between the audience as both consumers and active participants in film watching and the film providers as providing a space for exploration and enjoyment of diverse films while responding to national- and international-level market-forces in the promotion and consumption of films. The theme of a need for cultural values and preferences to have space alongside economic imperatives is explored further by examining the diversity of audience experiences and engagements in the cinema and audience engagement section.

**Technological change**

The final topic to be discussed in relation to the relations of film production and cultural provision is the social relations produced, but not determined, by technological changes in the consumption of film culture. This section includes evidence of how cinemas and film societies in the case study regions are, or could, engage and influence these changes in the UK’s film environment. The BFI’s recent film strategy states that opportunities for new models of film distribution and marketing are to be sought ‘including innovative release models that harness emerging digital platforms; and the creative and audience-building opportunities offered by cross-media activity’ (BFI, 2012, p.14). This innovation and change includes the equipment for exhibiting films, the format in which they can be presented, increasingly networked release schedules and responses to other technologies such as Internet streaming services (Lovefilm, Netflix, etc.) for independent and specialised films.
The BFI has been running a series of trials in recent years of innovative methods for distributing films, some of which point towards more localised and tailored film provision, which may be useful for understanding regional differences and community-based provision. For example, in 2012 a small independent film, *Tortoise in Love*, was premiered in rural communities across the UK in cinemas (Vue, Apollo and Showcase) along with village halls, to reflect the village-based crowd-funding and support for the project (Aquarone & Behan, 2012). The film was particularly relevant to rural film societies and clubs that are often run by volunteers, as the film’s ‘rural distribution strategy meant that audiences who rely on community cinemas and film clubs could experience a film that was at the height of its release and whose provenance they could relate to strongly’ (Aquarone & Behan, 2012, p.18). The report authors argue that the development of independent film networks for distribution and production of films may enhance film clubs and societies as they ‘offer much more around the experience of film watching than mainstream cinema venues. Rural and community film societies provide social inclusion for often neglected groups, help build communities, and cost very little to support’ (Aquarone & Behan, 2012, p.19).

Satellite screenings of film premieres and the instant communication of social media can potentially have a huge impact on the cinema experience. A documentary about the indie rock band Pulp was screened as part of Sheffield’s annual Docfest in 2014, with a Q&A with the band. The event was held in City Hall in Sheffield, rather than a traditional cinema venue and was screened via satellite across the UK. A female focus group participant attended the screening and live Q&A at City Hall, and describes how she shared this experience in real time with her daughter in Glasgow and her friend at another venue in Sheffield:

one of my daughters is a big Pulp fan, she’s up in Glasgow working, and she saw it at the same time that we saw it and. I’ve got another friend that couldn’t get in [to City Hall], and so she was contacting me via the power of Facebook... I think she was at the Centertainment watching it, and she was really jealous that we actually could see Jarvis and Candida and all the others. It was very good. Everybody clapped and cheered and stood up and it wasn’t like being in the cinema and I really, really enjoyed it. I’d recommend it, and I love the idea of it going national.

A cinema manager argues that ‘as digital equipment becomes second-hand, cheaper [and] more ubiquitous... the barrier to entry around cost to operate cinemas is shifting back’, which could increase the viability of more market town and single screen cinemas, including the use of multi-platform release schedules where films are released digitally for streaming, broadcast on TV and exhibited in cinemas around the same time. For example, *A Field in England* was released on 5th July 2013 in cinemas, on DVD, via Internet streaming and broadcast on Film4. The choice of how
to watch such a film would then be the personal preference of the film-viewer. Indeed, while the initial access to new films via the cinema prior to other formats may be a key distinction that draws cinema-goers, the discussion below suggests that the social aspects of cinema-going are also part of the appeal. In addition, the survey data shows that home viewing of films and cinema account for 95% and 88% of respondents’ viewing habits, respectively. This suggests that these two ways of watching films should not be seen as in competition, but rather as qualitatively different film experiences (see Appendix 1a).

This may point to an alternative model for film provision which responds to competition from other media, such as Internet streaming, and offers a diversity of choice for film-watchers in terms of venues and formats, while maintaining and strongly promoting the cultural value of the cinematic experience to audiences. This reflects a theme that a film programmer from Showroom Cinema, South Yorkshire is concerned with:

How do we make sure that we are moving with the times while still maintaining this deep love of dark rooms with screens and everybody watching together in a communal experience... [with technological changes] do we [just] curate screens, or do we curate a wider kind of film programme? Do we suddenly work with the [video on demand] channels and try and do “Showroom Online”?

The recognition of the role of cinema alongside other formats of film release has helped HICP to generate buzz around their new project to screen independent films at different venues across Hull. For their first event they have been able to screen *Locke* to a sell-out audience ahead of its home-release on DVD/Blu-ray or Internet streaming. The benefits of this to cost-conscious Hull audiences is described by one organiser, who asks

...do they want to spend £16 to £18 for [the film] on Blu-ray, or they can come down to Kardomah and watch it for £4, because arguably, a lot of those kinds of films, they buy it because they really want to see it, because it wasn’t on in Hull... I can imagine people all chipping in to buy it and then [saying] “all come around and watch it at my house to try and keep the costs down”, because I used to do that.

Lastly, the response by the BFI to changes in the film environment and increased competition with alternative film providers and formats for audiences has influenced the BFI’s online role. The development of the BFI Player, as an alternative to streaming websites such as Netflix and BBC iPlayer, is part of a strategy to deepen knowledge and improve access to independent and specialised films, and involves ‘extending the material from the archive, which ordinarily wouldn’t be screened at a cinema... the
BFI Player is about getting more product out there... and also linking product as well... so if you're interested in [a particular film] then, it gives you a view of other films that you may be interested in as well. So it's about just extending the access opportunities for people, wherever they are, to view a different type of material' (BFI policy-maker). Indeed, the survey suggests that around 39% of respondents use Internet streaming to watch films, which suggests a significant population that may respond to easier access to British independent and specialised films (see Appendix 1a). The role of new technological developments, including the BFI Player in facilitating more film engagement and provision is discussed in the final section of this report.

_Cinema and audience engagement_

The previous section considered the policy direction and relations of production involved in supporting British independent and specialised film exhibition. This discussion has already begun to consider the audience experience because this is central to producing film policy and film provision. This section builds on this by exploring Chaney’s (1990) concept of the narrative of the form, which involves the modes of narration, themes and styles of audience participation in film. First, six distinct types of film-watching experience highlighted in the interviews and focus groups are described (there may in practice be more than these six however). Second, the importance of venue and local structures of feeling (Taylor et al., 1996) are explored which adds credence to the notion of diverse local strategies for Film Hub North in particular. Third, the cultural value of film for cinema-goers is explored, which deepens the assertion that there needs to be a space for cultural engagement alongside purely economic imperatives. Fourth, the social aspect of cinema-going is explored, which includes both individualised and community-identification strands, and is an integral aspect of establishing the importance of cinema, alongside other media and formats for film engagement and consumption.

**Types of film provision and audience**

The interviews and focus groups have identified different ways in which audiences engage with films, all of which appeal to interviewees/focus group participants to a different extent. These include, but are not limited to, the multiplex offer, the independent/art house offer, film clubs to celebrate classic films, film clubs to discover old/new films, community-based film screenings and film festivals. The first refer to the main two forms of cinema, while the others involve a diversity of venues and screening methods. This section explores the interview participants’ views of these different types of film provision, and different audiences that they imply.
The focus groups explored film-goers experiences and passion for cinema in general, as well as specific types of film screening. A female participant from the Wearside focus group describes the immersion of a good cinematic experience, compared with other ways of watching films:

when you’re in the cinema it’s really easy to look at your watch and then two hours have gone, and you’ve just been fully immersed in this film for the last two hours, whereas, if you’re watching something on TV or if you’re watching something in Film Club as well, your surroundings are very obvious.

For many focus group participants this is due both to the film and the setting of the cinema itself, although there are differences between cinemas in this regard. A further aspect of the cinematic experience that a male focus group participant from South Yorkshire highlighted is the sense of experiencing a shared cultural event:

I’m quite a sucker for hype as well. If there’s a film that’s been talked about a lot, or if I read a review of it and it gets five stars, I just have to go and see it immediately. Even if it’s not really my type of film, I’m just drawn to it because everybody’s saying it’s so good and I want to make up my own mind about it.

Finally, there is simply the visual aspect of the cinema-screen experience, which applies to both mainstream blockbusters and visually strong art house films. For example, a female focus group participant from Humberside highlights *The Tree of Life* as an art house film that has to be seen on a big screen.

• The mainstream multiplex offer

Although some focus group participants were critical of multiplexes, some describe the role of the multiplex in their viewing experience as for watching a big event movie. This includes for some, 3D screenings, loud sound and blockbuster special FX. A male focus group participant from Wearside describes this:

what I really love about [the multiplex] is the immersive sort of sensory thing of it. I sit there thinking, “turn it up more!” [laughs] I love the big sound. I love a big screen. My ideal film would be a big cinema with nobody else in it but me, and everything full on – turned up, and a good film.

A female participant viewed the multiplex as somewhere to take the family to enjoy the big event movie experience, whereas an independent cinema screening is somewhere that she goes to view a more thought-provoking film. Others state that they enjoy the multiplex, but like the participant above, they prefer to attend less-full screenings. This relates both to the atmosphere of the multiplex and the other cinema-goers, who are often viewed as noisy and disruptive during the film. This view
is strong in the South Yorkshire focus group, where the Showroom Cinema features heavily in the participants' viewing habits, one male participant states that 'maybe it's just the type of people that come to the Showroom as opposed to the mainstream cinemas, and there's something about the atmosphere', while another argues that 'you’re sharing your cinema experience with people who you wouldn’t invite to dinner, would you? And I think that’s an issue for me, personally'.

This perspective could be interpreted as a clichéd and judgemental distinction between vulgar popular culture and tasteful high culture. However, this research suggests that the imbalance between cultural imperatives and economic imperatives in the multiplex film offer may be a structural aspect that increases the dissatisfaction of multiplex attendees. This point can be explored further by highlighting aspects of the independent cinema offer and additional contrasts between the two.

- The independent/art house offer

For some focus group participants the appeal of the independent or art house cinema experience involves a more "old school" cinema than the typical multiplex venue, with aspects such as an old fashioned ticket booth, taking coffee and/or alcoholic drinks in a glass into the auditorium, more comfy seats, and a more focused and relaxing environment. A female focus group participant from South Yorkshire states that 'I always want a film that's really going to make me think... and question things a bit'. These cinemas are seen as a place to lose oneself in a film, often alone or with friends. In contrast the multiplex is seen as a place for families and groups of friends. In addition, the different film offer is an important distinction as many multiplexes do not show documentaries or many foreign-language films. These factors are a part of the enjoyment of independent cinemas highlighted by focus group participants.

A male focus group participant is effusive about his experience of The Film House in Edinburgh, citing the atmosphere and the ‘beautiful old building’ as part of the attraction, whereas multiplexes are ‘replicated in every other place. There’s really something quite unique about certain cinemas, and the atmosphere that they’re able to create’. The sense that visiting an independent cinema is special, in this case Tyneside Cinema, Newcastle, is described by a female focus group participant from Wearside; ‘I like going to see films there because the experience of buying the ticket from the kiosk... the actual screening venue is lovely, the seats are always really comfortable and you know that you’re unlikely to get people talking over the film... the building’s really historical and you feel like you’re part of a history, by going there, you don't feel like you’re just going to see whichever blockbuster's on, on a “Cheap Tuesday”, because you want to go to the pictures’. This quotation highlights the
perception of a qualitative difference in the cinema experience in terms of both the
venue and the audience at independent cinemas.

The thought-provoking aspects of independent cinemas, even when screening films
that also appear at multiplexes is described by a female focus group participant from
South Yorkshire:

*Prisoners*... upset my son so much that he went to see it three times! [laughs]... he
was really in the moment, and he just was so upset by the whole film, it was a
moment – he was just eighteen and it was one of those times when he
became a little bit older when he came out... he’s seen blockbusters [such as]*
Transformers*, where hundreds of people are blown up every five minutes and
that doesn’t affect him. But that film really affected him... and it’s [also]
something to do with the Showroom experience. It’s that originality, that
freshness, it’s the lovely floorboards, it’s the... art deco, it’s a sweet little
building.

Again, the atmosphere and set up of the independent cinema is cited as conducive to
a challenging cultural experience, which is markedly different to the multiplex
experience described above. Another female focus group participant from South
Yorkshire states that the local independent is the only place that she
developed an interest in this type of film from studying
languages at university, and moreover, she chooses this venue because 'I tend to like
quite weird, quirky films that leave you very confused at the end!' A male participant
from South Yorkshire states that his interest in music documentaries can only be
satisfied at an independent cinema.

A further aspect is the provision of social spaces and cafés, where ‘if you and your
mates have just seen a film and it was amazing and you have to hang around and chat
about it, then you’ve got the option... you’d go in a café in a multiplex and end up with,
the world’s biggest drink, just to sit there for twenty minutes!' (female focus group
participant, Wearside). A focus group participant from Humberside adds: ‘the art
venues seem to get it right. They seem to have better food and drink and I’m
somebody who likes her food and drink, and I don’t want neon nachos near me! They
stink! It’s really off-putting!'

The sense that independent cinemas offer a qualitatively different and more
enjoyable cultural experience for those that visit them is reflected in other research
into cinema audiences as ‘indirect communities’. For example, in exploring the sense
of community implied in cinema audiences, Evans (2011, p.329) states that
‘independent art cinema audiences’ can be seen ‘as an example of an “indirect
community”, that shares space and a binding communal identity based on taste,
ideology and etiquette despite lacking direct, consistent interaction’. Indirect
communities, broadly speaking exhibit ‘an active desire to seek out spaces and groups with similar cultural tastes and characteristics’ (Evans, 2011, p.332). This is reflected in the focus group participants’ preference for the atmosphere and audience and cinematic experience of independent cinemas, and suggests an identification as an independent cinema-goer.

While the views above indicate a dislike of how some people act in multiplexes, for example, disruptive behaviour, Evans’ (2011, pp.336-337) research argues that this can have class based perceptions of audiences at multiplexes:

knobs, yobs, townies and chavs... [other audiences are seen as] uneducated and lower class. These participants clearly feel a sense of social and cultural superiority to multiplex audiences, even if they may occasionally be part of that audience.

A cinema manager argues that there is a cultural cliché and stereotypical perception amongst some that independent and specialised films are ‘high culture’ or ‘art’ for the ‘carrot cake and cappuccino audience’ and not for them. Indeed, a film programmer from South Yorkshire expresses frustration with this perception in general:

[a] problem we have is in terms of a slightly stereotyping image of what the Showroom is, without ever having actually been here... all kind of cultural organisations have it: [the] “oh, it’s not for me” attitude... art house cinema’s [seen as] a bit artsy-fartsy and it’s a bit serious... I don’t know how you kind of fight those assumptions that people... you’re trying to break down these decades-old assumptions about arts and culture.

Focus group participants in Humberside cited their class backgrounds and the working class history of Hull as potential barriers to the cultural development of independent and specialised film provision. This may be an aspect of individual perceptions in an age where class identities are fragmenting. This could especially link cultural participation and changes in social class in relation to the development of post-industrial culture.

The focus group participants expressed their sense of ‘indirect community’ as a desire to be amongst people that have a genuine love for film. This is despite the fact that many of them also enjoy mainstream films to different degrees, ‘they continue to see themselves as distinct from a more commercialised cinema culture, perpetuating distinctions between “art cinema” and commercial venues’ (Evans, 2011, p.344, emphasis in original). However, the focus group participants in this research emphasised more their passion for film and the sense of independent cinemas as a more desirable venue to explore that passion than class-based moral judgements of
the qualities of other cinema-goers, suggesting that there is more to the appeal of the ‘indirect community’ of independent cinemas than these types of distinctions. This includes the diversity of both the audiences and the range of films desired by audiences, along with the diversity of types of engagement with film, including film clubs, festivals and community screenings, as explored below.

• Film clubs

Away from the traditional two forms of cinema venues, two broad categories of film club can be highlighted from this research: film clubs that celebrate classic films and film clubs for discovering new or old films. There may well be other variants of film club, particularly rural film clubs which may have different characteristics. Film clubs that celebrate classic films are based on a shared reminiscence of a well-seen film often from the audience’s youth or university experience. However, this form of film club also attracts younger (student) audiences to view cult classics that they may have not have seen before. An interviewee from Humberside who runs a cult classic film night confirmed that achieving the former was easier than the latter. His film night has devised a range of associated social aspects to the screenings, including raffles, limited edition print sales, film quizzes, film-specific food, etc. which are part of the appeal of seeing a well-watched cult classic.

The cult film night promoter describes how he developed an audience by enhancing the social and celebratory aspects of this type of film event. He states that the first film screened was *The Big Lebowski*, which was not just a film screening, it’s a celebration, a social thing as well, about that movie, that genre, the movement, the fans, the fandom, the quotes, the shout-outs. Can we make it a bit more of a fun type of thing? Because we’re showing films that people have at home on DVD, or can stream on Netflix, have seen a hundred times. But, those films that you have seen a hundred times, I want you to come out and enjoy it in a big social space - but a quirky place, because it’s like a big warehouse, so it’s quite different. We had Kahlua White Russian cocktails at the bar... Got a local café that are based on Humber Street to come in, and they cook up themed food. So when we showed *Pulp Fiction* we had Big Kahuna burgers, five dollar milkshakes at the bar, things like that... I run a quiz for the night as well... so there’s extra content to warrant you coming out to see a film that’s 15, 20 years old.

The second type is a film club for discovering new and old films. Themes highlighted for this type of film club include the social aspect of viewing films in a small venue with people, openness to new film experiences and discussing films with others. A film club in Sunderland – the only opportunity in the city for an independent film experience other than the local multiplexes – provides the source for much of this
discussion. It takes place in a coffee shop once a month and has an attendance of around 15 – 30 people. The opportunity to meet new people and watch films together is part of the appeal. A female focus group participant states that ‘there’s this social element to it, and there’s something about exploring a film with other people who care [in the film club]’. Moreover, the film club ‘brings people together who would never have met each other in a normal day, or [are] from different walks of life, or are quite different, but it’s exciting to meet those people as well’.

This necessity for an open mind to experiencing different films is a condition for attending the film club (films are either selected by those that run the club or from suggestions by attendees). A male participant states that: one of the things I like about [Film Club is that] there’s a danger about just going to the pictures that you just become self-selecting and you go and see things you think you’ll like, so you never open yourself up as much’. In addition to this, the opportunity to stay after the film and discuss it with a drink is an important aspect of the film club:

> everyone’s there to watch but also, you get the feeling that everyone’s there with an open mind... I’ve been really interested to hear some things that people have to say, which made me look at things in a different light... that social aspect – even in a smaller group, is really positive (male focus group participant).

A further male focus group participant states that

> there’s some discussion about [the themes of the film] after which, for me, enhances the whole thing. I find it interesting when I don’t know a whole lot about a film and I’m learning something from it. I also enjoy it because deciding to go means that I’ve committed myself to seeing films that I wouldn’t necessarily choose to see myself... that’s good, because it broadens things out.

The focus group participants expressed an enjoyment of both the local multiplex offer for blockbuster films and the local film club for a more sociable and reflective experience. The film club also has a different composition of attendees each month. For example, when the original *Godzilla* (1954) was screened to tie in with the recent reboot, it happened to be during half-term and many children came with their parents, which led to a very different type of discussion after the film. In this case, the film club was set up by disaffected cinema-goers in their 20s who lamented the lack of an independent offer in their city. Different motivations and different experiences may be had in rural film clubs.

- Festivals
Festivals provide a different type of special event film screening, both in traditional cinemas and in alternative venues. Focus group participants in South Yorkshire enjoyed the days devoted to film watching and intense immersion and celebration of film culture offered by the bigger festivals, such as Docfest in Sheffield. One male focus group participant states that:

This year I bought a wristband for DocFest and I went every day and I saw a couple of films every day, and I thought that was just marvellous, as well... the fact that sometimes you’re seeing the premiere, you’re seeing the director there, you’re mingling with like-minded people, I’m still buzzing off that. I just thought it was fantastic.

A female focus group participant also highlights the special feeling of taking part in a festival, especially given the relatively different opportunities for cultural engagement in London and elsewhere: ‘It’s a bit like London comes up to Sheffield, isn’t it?... It means you’re just surrounded by people and it’s really buzzing’.

- Community-based film screenings

The final type highlighted by interviewees, but less explored due to the absence of a current empirical referent in the regions, are screenings within local community buildings that have resonance with local culture and history. For example, a community worker in Mexborough, South Yorkshire is aiming to set up community-based screenings that reflect the local working class and mining history of the area. In gleaning local appetite for film screenings, the community worker highlights how

I’ve been surprised [when we asked] “what films should we show?” I was expecting to get “oh mainstream big blockbusters,” and there’s been very little of that, actually... the selection of what [people] would like to see were things either that had a connection to this place, so Brian Blessed was born in Mexborough... wouldn’t it be great to somehow put on Flash Gordon and create a bit of a stir and a bit of fun, and do it as an event beyond just showing the film... [as we’re on] Barnsley’s doorstep: Kes... there was a big interest [in that film]... The actor that played the young boy in that lives not far away... we’re looking at trying to get him in to come and do a Q&A as part of it. Again, to make the experience more than just the film... Another one that people have expressed a real interest in trying to show is... an early bit of work by Ken Loach, which is The Price of Coal, Part 1 and 2.

The community worker envisages that this type of flexible film screening in different venues might take off in the area, given local desire for films in a town which historically has had a number of cinemas, and now only has multiplex provision in neighbouring towns and cities. This links to the theme of curation of a diversity of
films for diverse audience choices, in this case, with a local focus. Another example cited was showing Kung-Fu films in a warehouse where a local Taekwondo club is run.

Pop-up screenings are another aspect of community cinema. A female focus group participant from South Yorkshire describes her enjoyment of these unique types of film events:

*Cycle to the Cinema* [is interesting]... the last one I went to was in Eccleshall Woods, in the little visitor centre there. Usually they’re out somewhere in the Peak District, but I really like the idea that everybody cycles out together and you get tea and cake and, and sometimes the film’s cycling-based but often it’s just adventure-based.... it’s a lot more social, you feel as though you can chat to people more openly in a sense because there’s only twenty or thirty of you there, and you’ve all come with that same interest.

The importance of different venues for film screenings is explored in more detail in the next section.

*Venues and local structures of feeling*

Taylor et al (1996) draw on the work of Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall to explore the importance of ‘local structures of feeling’ for Northern cities in England that have experienced dramatic transformation from industrialism to post-industrial decline and to different extents, regeneration. Structure of feeling includes ‘the definitive cultural character of any one social formation’ which necessitates ‘the examination of the routine and taken-for-granted “social practices” that [characterise] that social formation’ (Taylor et al., 1996, p.5). In this research local structures of feeling for cities and areas in County Durham, Humberside, South Yorkshire and Wearside that have changed rapidly since the 1980s are reflected in the relationship that cinema-goers have with different local venues. The differences in perceived atmosphere, culture and forms of engagement between ‘globalised’ multiplexes that reflect a global consumer capitalism of ‘one size fits all’ film provision, with the ‘local’ individual and unique independent cinema venues has been discussed above. This section explores the perception of local venues in more detail.

The importance of venue is reflected in the different levels of provision in the case study regions. Sheffield has had for nearly twenty years a large independent venue whereas Hull has had some form of independent film provision in a library in the past, Sunderland and Durham, on the other hand, have very little in the way of independent film provision and no fixed venues for this. The value of a fixed venue is elaborated by a film programmer from the Showroom; ‘we’re in the centre of the city and if we want to have a cohesive city with a broad cultural audience, then actually it needs to be venue-based. People need to be engaging with the venues in the city’. 
In South Yorkshire, a male focus group participant gives an example of how screenings at the Showroom allowed him to learn more about the local area when he initially moved to Sheffield:

I watched a documentary about working men’s clubs. The reason I came was, moving to Sheffield I didn’t know the area, so it was about local competency. I’m assessing older people [for my job] who are talking about factories and areas and I thought, “well, I don’t know anything about that”. So when I saw that, I thought I’d come along, find out a bit about the social and economic history. There was a Q&A, but it was just really interesting to listen to people, because they were talking about their experiences of some of the places that had been in the film.

Similar forms of educative and cultural engagement appear to be desired by focus group participants in Sunderland, who are keen for the film club to be part of broader cultural development in the area:

one of the things that’s really important to me is not just about the fact that it’s... in Sunderland, which is a city which isn’t blessed with loads of cultural activity... [Film Club is] one aspect of something that’s starting to develop in the city.

The coffee shop setting is also seen as conducive to relaxed conversation, whereas previous attempts at similar social experiences in a university lecture theatre were less successful due to the venue.

However, provision in Wearside and County Durham is significantly lower than that available to those able to visit Sheffield to see films and engage with film culture at the Showroom. In Humberside, the situation regarding the absence of a fixed ‘bricks and mortar’ venue is reflected in great frustration amongst focus group participants, who describe how people will travel to York, Leeds, Sheffield, Newcastle or Manchester in order to have an art house experience. A male focus group participant states that

compared to Hull, unfortunately, York’s got a bit more of prestige about it, hasn’t it?... Hull just isn’t thought of in the same way. I think because it’s always been a working class city with roots in the docks and everything, and we’ve yet to really break free of that mould.

Experiences elsewhere in Yorkshire are drawn upon to highlight the dearth of provision in Hull. A female focus group member from Humberside states that a converted train station venue in North Yorkshire ‘was a really nice use of space. It was an art gallery, cinema on the side, little artisan shops as well. So you felt like you
were in the right kind of space anyway, so you were in the right frame of mind to really enjoy whatever you watched, and having previously lived in a much smaller place, I know how much I appreciated having a cinema’. Even in South Yorkshire, there is a desire for old closed down cinemas to be renovated for the independent film experience in local communities: ‘lots of people are “Friends of Abbeystead Picture Palace” but it would be so lovely if that could be opened up again. I like the idea of cinemas out in the sticks again, like they used to be, so you don’t have to come into the city centre all the time’ (Male focus group participant, South Yorkshire).

This reflects the sense of a lost history of small independent cinema venues which is no longer catered for with the advent of big, out of town multiplexes. As the above typologies of film audiences and cinemas above shows, these are alternative types of film experience, and many participants in the focus groups said that they enjoy both for different reasons. Given the relative post-industrial decline and less cultural provision in the case study regions in comparison to other cities, such as London, the cultural value of film is an important aspect of the cinema experience and is part of the process of deepening the local structure of feeling for arts and film culture.

**The cultural value of film for cinema-goers**

This section considers the cultural value of films and cinema-going for the focus group participants. The themes addressed here are: first experiences of independent cinema, learning about film, further cultural engagement inspired by films, and increases in a sense of belonging through engagement with film culture and new understandings.

Focus group participants described how they first got interested in independent and specialised films. For many, this was through late-night TV discoveries in their youth. For one female participant, in Humberside, this was an issue connected to working class culture and the perception that art cinema was something for other people:

> while I was a teenager, I remember watching a sequence of Luis Buñuel films on BBC2... I come from a very working class family, there’s no way that I would have been exposed to that any other way. When I was a teenager I started going to Hull Screen with my then boyfriend and saw more Luis Buñuel there and then they did a double bill of Delicatessen and Diva... I wouldn’t have been exposed to that... through my family, so I educated myself, and you have to find people who are of like mind, essentially, to be able to do that with.

Others cite using film compendiums and the Internet Movie Database to find out about old and new films, but learning about films is often a process of discovery:
I watched the first episode [of Mark Cousins’ *Story of Film*] and realised, “right, this is something different” and then, every episode I watched afterwards, I sat with a notebook, and I noted down all the films that I wanted to see that he talked about... it went on from there, especially with documentaries, it was seeing Herzog for the first time, and that opened up a whole new [area of interest] (Female participant, Humberside).

This is a form of film education that takes place as people experience different types of films. A male participant from Wearside describes his recent discovery of foreign-language films:

> When I went to see [*The Skin I Live In*] I had a blinkered view of world cinema, and I think I’d probably got a closed mind to it... when I saw it, I was absolutely blown away... because it was on a big screen as well. Seeing it on a screen like that legitimised it at the time... It almost sanitised the fact that it was world cinema... I loved the visual impact of the film.

Others describe ‘transformative’ experiences with more mainstream films that took place at cinemas and spurred them on to develop a passion for film. A Humberside participant described *The Lord of The Rings* trilogy as having this effect, likewise, an interviewee from Humberside stated that he’d grown up watching the *Harry Potter* films and ‘it was two years ago [that] the last one came out, so I was about sixteen... So it was kind of “that’s the end of my childhood, just there!”’

A further aspect of the cultural value of independent and specialised films is to challenge the viewer to consider subjects that they might not ordinarily consider. A male participant from Humberside stated that it took him four attempts to watch *Hunger*, a film about the IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands, and described a satisfaction of watching a film about a challenging subject. A community worker in South Yorkshire supports this perspective, as cinema can

> challenge our inspirations, challenge us politically, challenge us in the sense of who and what we are... that’s always been a mechanism of film for me... cinema needs to keep having that role actually, and not just be so sanitised, so disconnected, so big-budget and special effects laden that it forgets a narrative and a role.

Another aspect, described by another Humberside focus group participant is the sense of catharsis or ‘film therapy’ from engaging with difficult emotional experiences in films:

> to just have an emotional catharsis [is good] sometimes... it makes you think differently... I went to see *The Fault in our Stars* recently... it was a cathartic experience for me. It touched me on a very deep level... because my mother
passed away from cancer when I was fairly young and because the story’s about two people who have terminal cancer, right towards the end of it... I just lost it. I couldn’t hold it together anymore because it hit a nerve... People were just in tears over it, and I think that could work well in terms of “therapy film”, [for] people who have dealt with cancer in their life.

The potential for this form of film engagement to help people to reflect on, and possibly face challenges in their personal lives highlights an important cultural value of the medium of film. These types of film can also encourage viewers into further cultural engagement and education, broadly conceived, while others stated that a good film based on a novel would encourage them to read the book. A male participant described being spurred on to investigate more about the context to the films of Godard by a screening of Breathless, and who will also engage with the themes of films more critically:

if I’ve seen a film, I often like to go and read other people’s reviews of it... I think it brings out things that I’ve missed... and then I see the film with a slightly new light. I’ll watch it again, slightly differently, because I’ve got a different perspective on it. Sometimes I get a bit narked, because I think they’ve missed something that I feel quite strongly about... and sometimes it actually weakens the experience, because if I read a really critical review and I actually think, “oh yes, got a good point”, it makes me see things I hadn’t actually, consciously thought about but then I start to think, “oh, I didn’t enjoy that as much, after all”.

In addition to further cultural engagement, a benefit of watching independent and specialised films is the increased sense of cultural belonging and understanding. One male participant in South Yorkshire describes an increased sense of ‘cultural inclusion’ through having watched a film that is generating a buzz, and another viewed the general debate through magazines, books, music and TV shows about topics in a film as being part of the experience of cultural engagement. Although one participant describes how blockbuster films can sometimes address important issues ‘it depends on what you bring to it... some people will be going for the wham-bam stuff and other people will get something, if there’s a more serious thread running through it’. Others describe the sense of deeper understanding that a really engaging film can encourage. A female participant from Humberside describes how within them all there is some form of positive experience but for film to be what it is, it has to be a reflection on human life... that’s why we watch them, because we want to see it come back at us. I think it’s the only art form that can do it to that extent.

This section can be related to the cultural and economic imperatives of independent cinemas. As a film programmer from Showroom points out:
we have to tread this very fine line between what is a huge, multimillion dollar industry and the “high arts”. So it’s hard to get people to understand that we’re exactly like all cinemas, we’ve got films that are all part of this same industry, but also, we’re here for cultural reasons and we’re a registered charity.

This research highlights that a space for the diverse cultural imperatives of film provision, in terms of both audiences and the curation of films, should be encouraged to enhance the cinematic experience and fulfil the cultural values and demands of audiences.

The social/individual aspects of film watching in an audience

This section addresses the social experiences of watching films. It highlights the social relationships involved which, along with the venue and cultural values of cinema-goers, make the cinematic experience an alternative to other formats such as DVD, downloading or Internet streaming. This section involves the sense of community invoked by being part of a cinema audience, the sense of sharing a cultural event with others, and the contrasting collective and individualistic aspects of the cinema experience.

For a male participant in Humberside the appeal of cinemas can be found in the responses that audiences collectively have to films: “there’s nothing like it. When everyone’s laughing at the same gags... [you feel] like part of a larger thing, so that’s why cinema’s such a special thing”. Similarly, when watching a particularly well-received film, in this case the recent silent film *The Artist*, a female participant from Humberside describes how “at the end of [the film] there was a huge round of applause, and that was such a bizarre experience, but I actually went to [clap] myself... because it was silent, I think there’s a higher level of attention as well”. This also points to the immersive aspects of focusing on a film in a darkened auditorium, away from the distractions of smartphones and social media.

This sense of community and immersion in film has important implications for social relationships between members of a cinema audience. An interviewee from Humberside recants how

you get that kind of community spirit, don’t you?... It’s basically a room full of people, all sat enjoying the same thing, laughing along together and stuff like that, and it’s not something that tends to happen as often nowadays... this is going to sound really odd coming from a teenage perspective, but... society tries to shape you and people that stand out from the crowd are “odd,” but you can put anybody from any background into a room together to watch
something that they all enjoy, and everybody’s suddenly back down to an equal level.

In addition to being part of a collective experience, the sense of sharing a cultural event is important to participants in this research. From the perspective of a film provider that runs a cult film night, there is a satisfaction in introducing people to new film experiences: ‘I like the fact that it’s like “well, I’ve introduced you to this film. Thank you for coming and hopefully you’ll trust [my taste]”. I mean Spirited Away is getting a lot of buzz’. Relatedly, a female focus group participant from Humberside also describes the pleasure of sharing a physical copy of a highly regarded film on DVD with friends and the ‘great joy’ of their positive response. Film enjoyment, while an individual sensory experience, is clearly also about the social relationships and shared cultural engagement that it invokes.

This is further evidenced by the perspective of an interviewee that runs a film club in Sunderland:

[it’s] a social thing to do… there’s something just nice about sitting around, drinking a cup of tea, chatting about what you’ve just done, and there aren’t very many opportunities to do that in Sunderland really... If something happens in Sunderland... it’s a big event... it’s anonymous and you leave. But I think it’s something about those shared interests... that means that people want to sit around and chat about it, and make it less of an anonymous experience.

In addition, a male participant from Wearside highlights how book clubs serve a purpose for people to not only discover and read new books, but to discuss them, and he expresses surprise that these sorts of face to face discussions aren’t more prominent in film engagement.

Lastly, the film experiences described above in cinemas and other film-watching events invoke a social practice that is both individualised and collectivised. On the one hand ‘there is that social aspect, but because you’re sat in a dark room, so concentrated on this huge screen [with others]’, but on the other hand ‘it’s almost more of an individual experience, because there is the darkness and you’re not communicating during the film and things like that. So it’s for you to take in and digest how you see it yourself’ (female focus group participant, Humberside). This view is shared by others: ‘one of my children... He says, “I just want to go on my own. I just want to soak it in, and then I’ll go with somebody else another day to see the same film”’ (female focus group participant, South Yorkshire).

Towards a Film Hub North Regional Plan
This final section on the findings of the empirical work emphasises the participative practices that could contribute to the development of a regional plan for supporting film provision. With acknowledgement of the structural and policy context highlighted in the first section, and the individual and collective experiences and cultural values of cinema explored in the second section, this discussion provides an account of barriers to engagement and the recognition of diverse local contexts, opportunities to develop audiences, and the role of social media in cinema and other film-viewing audiences.

**Local contexts and barriers to engagement**

In Humberside, there is a sense of frustration at the absence of a credible independent and specialised film offer. Some independent films are screened at a multiplex cinema but amongst focus group participants there was dissatisfaction with the quality of the screenings, frequency and information given out by the chain. Even less provision is evidenced in Sunderland, as a male focus group participant from Wearside states:

there’s nothing [like the independent cinema offer] in Sunderland that’s easily accessible so, if we go to the cinema, we spend half an hour deciding the best of a bad bunch of what we’re actually going to go and see, and then still leave dissatisfied.

The lack of desirable film choice is evident for the independent film fans that took part in the focus groups, but this dissatisfaction is also evidenced in the survey findings from the more general population (although there are methodological issues with the survey data, see Appendix 1). Around 80% of respondents reported that they see a lack of film choice as affecting their decision to go to the cinema to “some extent” or “to a great extent” (see Appendix 1b).

Cost is also cited as a barrier to more cinema attendance, notably in Humberside, where a number of focus group participants cite cinema ticket prices as determining their choice of venue and time of attendance, with some only able to afford the ‘Cheap Tuesday’ screenings. This issue is also noted by a film night promoter:

Hull audiences are very price driven... My art projects [at the film screenings] were doing 50 limited edition prints for six quid each, which is ridiculously cheap, but people would probably spend three quid on a can of Red Stripe, or three-fifty on a burger, than they would supporting some local talent.

Again, the survey data indicates that the availability of discounted tickets is a very strong influence on cinema attendance, as around 78% of respondents cite this “to
some extent” and “to a great extent” (see Appendix 1b). This is notably the case in Wearside.

Related to the lack of choice and costs as barriers to film attendance, in Wearside interviewees highlighted a relatively lower level of cultural development in the area which limits opportunities to engage with independent and specialised film. Without a dedicated venue a film club organiser in Sunderland argues that

HMV is the only place where you would buy a film [in Sunderland] and the World Cinema section is tiny... when we were thinking about the film club and why it was needed and why we should do it, it's more than just film, it was about cultural provision in the city in general. It was about an economically-deprived area and quite a culturally-deprived area and people not being able to access stuff... it's just not really feasible for people to go, “oh, yes, great, I'll jump on the Metro and go to Newcastle”... there's not really much else here, which feels quite tragic to say, but it is true.

In addition a cinema manager from neighbouring Newcastle-upon-Tyne views a tension between Tyneside and Wearside and the perception in Sunderland that Newcastle has recently had much more investment and attention for social, economic and cultural development. In Sunderland there are barriers around access to the few places that might provide a more independent alternative film offer to the main multiplexes. For example, the university runs a film club, but there is a perception amongst focus group participants that the venue is only for students rather than for everyone. Indeed, a cinema manager points out that some venues themselves can be barriers to participation in independent cinema:

the offer [would struggle to] work at Sunderland University because the barriers to attendance are too high... the barriers within the university to make it a public offer are too high also... they've got an interesting space, but it's locked anyway inside a university building that's hard to access. It hasn't got a box office, it hasn't got a bar, it hasn't got all these things that actually if we think about a contemporary cultural experience for film now are expected.

The view that there needs to be more local provision in Sunderland was one of the key drivers behind setting up the film club: ‘me and some friends were talking about what goes on in Sunderland, and [how] it wasn’t really catering for what we wanted... we were thinking “we live here, we've always lived here, we love it – if no-one else is going to do it, then we're going to have to do it ourselves”’. However, additional barriers in terms of the cost of setting up and running a film club and issues over licensing and advertisement of film screenings have limited the group’s ability to run as many screenings as they would like:
the way that we’re licenced, we can’t charge for entry or anything like that. It proves a little bit of a financial burden on us. I bought the print projector out of my own money and it was just a labour of love really. We wanted to do it, so we put money into it ourselves. We were just chatting the other day about how we’re going to make it a bit more financially sustainable because, some of the films we want to show, we’re like, “yes, let’s show this!” and then we’re like, “oh, it’s 20 quid. right well, who’s going to pay for it this month?”... We licence the venue to show a film, which means [that] we can’t advertise what film we’re showing, and that means that we can’t charge for people to come in.

More flexible and affordable arrangements for running film clubs, under the umbrella of Film Hub North may enhance the opportunities for more participation in this form of cinema experience. This could involve, as discussed below, using new methods of digital distribution of films and film culture.

Opportunities to develop audiences

This section considers some practical ways to build audiences, as highlighted by interviewees and focus group participants, and reflection by the researcher on the issues of access and barriers to film engagement. The policy position is that there is a significant ‘gap is that specialised film tends to be viewed in London [predominantly], and also within the major conurbations where there is a regional film theatre... [we are aiming at] extending that provision, but also extending the diversity of audiences who view that type of product, with an underlying feel of wherever the citizens are’.

This local focus and regional diversity reflects the preferences of the research participants explored above, however, clear paths towards a greater impact for the BFI and film hubs needs to be articulated. This research aims to provide initial steps towards this.

Film clubs screen films that appear in the BFI Player library, such as Blancanieves, Stranger by the Lake and Blue is the Warmest Colour. A possible way to engage with new methods of film distribution and reduce the financial barriers to setting up a film club could be to investigate the potential for a BFI Player group membership for screening films in film societies/clubs. This requires also that people can access good enough broadband speeds, which may be less possible in rural areas. This will improve access to films and provide a more diverse choice. Many of the films on the BFI player currently have been screened in independent cinemas and film societies in the region. This suggests a key audience for the BFI player already exists within these societies.

A central regional database with film screening information that is up to date is desired by Humberside focus group participants in particular, as ‘people just don’t know where to look’ (film society organiser, Humberside). This could be a role for
the regional film hubs, whereby in this case, Film Hub North could collate information about different film clubs, societies and independent cinemas and provides listings of upcoming film screenings in the regions, online, via email newsletters or on flyers.

In addition, interview participants highlight the central co-ordination but with local autonomy approach described above in the discussion on policy directions and the potential within the current structure of UK film provision. A community worker in South Yorkshire states that

sometimes the only way you [encourage more engagement with film culture] is by dictating a challenge... there is this very tension within the project... you’re going “yes, I want you to have ownership and you to decide it. Equally, I have to challenge you with something you wouldn’t [necessarily] pick”.

Similarly, when discussing the possibility of Hull Independent Cinema Project providing outreach screenings in communities where there is an absence of an independent film offer, an interviewee highlights that

if we can actually empower people to do it themselves, then that’s great... they can use our brand, our resources... One of the big barriers to community screening is licensing, obviously. It’s not just paying for the license for the film, which is a minimum of 100 quid from Film Bank, but, to get a Film Bank account, you’ve got to put up a £150 deposit, which you don’t get back until you close your Film Bank account. So, essentially, if a community venue just wants to put on one film, they’ve got to come up with 250 quid minimum, plus the venue hire and all the associated costs – that’s well beyond the means of most small community groups.

Another member of HICP argues that ‘what would be even better is having our brand out there but... being taken out there by a network of champions who are organising their own nights’.

A related movement to develop more interest and access to independent films is the current project run by Showroom in Sheffield to develop film clubs to engage the teenage demographic with their film offer. This too would encourage the teenagers to learn how to curate their own programme of film screenings but with some central coordination from the Showroom. The project is about ‘starting that relationship out there and then, hopefully, they will become a mature, brave audience member in the future’ (film programmer, South Yorkshire). The key for these projects is ensuring autonomy, inspiring enthusiasm and commitment from the audiences.

The role of social media in film cultural engagement in the regions
Social media, especially Twitter and Facebook, are providing new ways for film providers and audiences to engage with film culture. This final section discusses the uses of social media by independent cinemas and film clubs. For independent cinemas, using social media can make them more reactive to audiences. For example, a film programmer from the Showroom explains that

it’s a very valuable tool for feedback. A lot of the time, I’ll be at home and I’ll check on Twitter and it’ll be somebody going, “huh, the sound isn’t very good in this cinema”, so I’ll [say to the technicians] “can you put the sound up, please?” So it’s quite good for instant feedback. People can ask questions and hear right back so it’s really good for that audience engagement.

This is important for new organisations aiming to develop lasting relationships with audiences for film screenings however, this also requires the personalisation of social media communication. For example, the community worker in South Yorkshire describes the project to develop film screenings in the town as requiring individual Facebook profiles so that local people are engaging with the person who is running the project to encourage the role of the community worker ‘as a trusted friend within the community’. For reasons of cost – ‘it’s free!’, the film club in Sunderland uses social media exclusively for building up interest for their film screenings along with word of mouth in the coffee shop where films are shown, although for licensing reasons they cannot advertise.

At a slightly larger level of film provision, Hull Independent Cinema Project makes extensive use of social media, citing the free access and relatively widespread use of the technological medium amongst their key audiences. For the Cult Cinema Sunday film night, social media is an invaluable tool:

it’s the key way that I reach my audience... I use it as a blog. So, film news that day... a new film poster’s been released; I’ll post it up [or if] a new trailer’s been released, or there’s a news story that’s worthy and I’ll put that up and – so it’s not just a stream of what’s going on at my night... It’s a stream of what’s going on in the world of cult and genre film (film night promoter, Humberside).

The experience of the BFI in using social media to connect with rural communities has been less successful however, due to poor broadband coverage or lack of take up amongst rural communities.

For the cinema-goers in the focus groups, social media has a generally big role in their engagement with film culture. In the Wearside focus group participants describe using Facebook to see what films their friends have liked – ‘on Facebook, people had seen [Maleficent] and I was getting good vibes from it, I thought I would
go’, or by searching for information and reviews of films (for example from Little White Lies) they are interested in using Twitter hashtags. Social media is also used to initiate conversations about recent film experiences, to follow the production and build up to the release of an anticipated film and for some it has become part of their cinema experience and an outlet for engaging with others interested in similar films. A female focus group participant from South Yorkshire states that normally, when I come to see a film at the Showroom, I Tweet... because I quite like sharing the experience... and [I] say “oh, maybe check out this one”, and I think part of it is the fact that a lot of my friends don’t tend to like the films that I see, so it’s [about] wanting to talk about film and not really knowing where to go... if there were more groups where, just informally, if someone said, “oh, do you want to go for a drink after the film and just chat about it?” that I would like that kind of thing, and I feel that Twitter’s kind of the closest I can get to that! [laughs].

Around 55% of respondents to the survey saw social media discussion as influential on their decision to go to see a film, which suggests that this can be an invaluable tool to complement and initiate film engagement.

Conclusions

To return to the three project aims mentioned in the introduction to the report, this paper has explored existing modes of audience engagement with independent and specialised film. This is especially pertinent to the typologies of different film provision discussed in the second section. Here it was highlighted that these are qualitatively different experiences and therefore should be supported and developed by Film Hub North’s activities. It is also noted that very different levels of provision exist across the case study regions, including a strong level of provision in Sheffield but less so elsewhere in South Yorkshire, and a relatively lower level of provision in Humberside, Wearside and County Durham, with Sunderland and surrounding area probably the most underserved.

The distinction between multiplex audiences and independent cinema audiences was discussed in the second section, which considered Evans’ (2011) concept of the cinema audience as an ‘indirect community’. While this is borne out in the individual and collective aspects of cinema-going, cinema attendees are indirectly forming a community while immersing themselves individually within a cinema experience, the class-based distinctions are less prominent in the views of the research participants here. There is a legacy that independent cinemas are ‘arty’ and sit between the distinction between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture. This legacy is found in some perceptions of independent cinema by both providers and audiences, as discussed in this report.
However, the report also identifies diversity in both curation of cinema programmes and other film events and the tastes, preferences and practices of the audiences. While the focus group participants all identified as people who enjoy independent and specialised films in independent or community-based venues, many of them also engage with mainstream multiplex film culture. The key points emerging from the research participants’ views are that more diversity of film choice, and access to more venues and different types of film provision may enhance their film and cinema experience. Attention also needs to be paid to widening participation whilst sustaining these existing audiences.

In addition, the research has asserted that independent cinema and other film engagement, including multiplexes and home viewing via DVD/Blu-ray, downloads or Internet streaming are aspects of film culture that simply offer more diverse forms of engagement. All focus group participants were effusive about the independent cinema experience and expressed desires for old cinemas to be reopened, new ways to engage with a more diverse film offer, and for the atmosphere of unique independent venues to be maintained. Emphasising the role of independent cinema amongst other forms of film engagement ought to be part of a strategy to maintain existing audiences and form new ones.

The second project aim is to identify emergent trends in film and cinema engagement that may be used to this end. Here the role of social media is especially important in connecting with audiences, linking organisations and facilitating debate and cultural engagement around independent films and the themes and subjects that they address. In addition, a more localised and autonomous approach to film provision (more towards the independent cinema and film club offer than the multiplex offer) appears to be more desirable to the research participants.

The third project aim is to determine the region’s readiness for initiatives aimed at improving audience engagement. While wider audience engagement is not easy to discern from this project, the three case study regions suggest that South Yorkshire is best prepared for increased audience engagement due to the strong legacy of independent film provision in Sheffield. Hull has a history of independent cinema engagement, but is currently lacking in sufficient venues for this. The build up to City of Culture status in 2017 could offer a timely opportunity to facilitate more film engagement, which Hull Independent Cinema Project is already working towards. County Durham and Wearside appear the least well served in terms of independent film, partly because they are in the shadow of Newcastle. However, increased support for film clubs and pop-up screenings may tap into the creative culture of Sunderland and Durham as both are university cities with student populations. In particular, Sunderland University has a specialty for arts, design and media studies.
Moreover, this report has explored the experiences of cinema audiences in the region that engage with independent and specialised film. Despite the limited opportunities to engage in some regions, the research participants described the rich, educative and meaningful cultural experiences that they get from independent cinema and film. This is especially pertinent in the second section of this report which highlights the thought-provoking, debate stimulating and even cathartic experiences of engaging with these kinds of films in a range of different venues. This suggests that access to different kinds of films are a strong part of the cultural values of these cinema audiences.

However, with the prevalence of the multiplex big blockbuster model and heavily marketed Hollywood films, these cultural experiences exist in a challenging and changing market place. Independent and specialised film providers need to engage with the balance between cultural values and economic imperatives. This also requires them to engage with audiences, promoting local autonomy, flexibility and diversity in film engagement to generate cultural value in existing and new audiences. The role of film curation is a further consideration that could engage with diverse forms of film provision, with opportunities for film clubs and pop-up screenings to enable more film engagement from diverse audiences. Part of the consideration of film curation will be shaped through assessments of cultural value along with business models of sharing and opening up film provision in an economically sustainable way across the regions covered by Film Hub North.

**Recommendations**

- **Support diverse types of film provision for diverse audience choices.**

The research suggests that cinema-goers will engage with a range of different types of film experience. Film providers should not view other formats as a challenge to their audiences. Moves towards engaging with new distribution methods, such as BFI Player can be used to complement, support and encourage the formation of new audiences and to maintain existing ones at venues and in film clubs.

- **Promote the cultural value of the independent cinema experience.**

The cultural value of films for the research participants in this paper suggests that attending an independent cinema is a qualitatively different experience to other formats and is treasured by cinema-goers. Focus should be on diverse types of venues for film screenings, the use of social spaces and the opportunity to eat and drink, which are valued by cinema-goers. Careful promotion of the independent cinema experience as distinct to the multiplex offer and home viewing can help to encourage this.
• **Support independent cinemas, film clubs and community groups to curate independent and specialised film screenings**

New methods of distribution, such as online streaming, could support film clubs and societies to encourage wider and more diverse engagement with independent and specialised film. The research has shown that setting up film screenings is costly for small organisations and using digital technology could reduce the cost barrier to this. This could increase broader engagement with independent film, including attendances at independent cinemas.

• **Consider local and regional social, cultural and economic contexts in tailoring support to different areas.**

The three case studies have shown that different levels of film culture engagement can be discerned. South Yorkshire, or at least, Sheffield in particular, has a particularly strong level of engagement. Humberside has keen audiences and film clubs but insufficient fixed-venue provision, while Wearside has very little provision. The extent of audience desire for more independent and specialised film provision in both Wearside and County Durham could benefit from further research, but the film club in Sunderland and presence of film clubs in County Durham suggest that there may well be an untapped demand for a different film experience to the multiplex offer. Film Hub North’s work should recognise the different levels of cultural development that the different regions are starting from. Therefore, smaller scale provision could help to build audiences in Wearside, while bigger events may be desired in Humberside and South Yorkshire.

• **Use social media to understand diverse audience preferences and build online communities for film engagement and discussion**

Part of the cinematic experience for many of the focus group participants was the use of Twitter and Facebook to find out about films and discuss them with others. Independent cinemas can build stronger relationships with audiences through social media as evidenced in the reactive example of the Showroom adjusting sound volumes during the film in response to complaints. Likewise, social media can be promoted as an invaluable and cost-effective tool for the promotion of the activities of film clubs and societies.

• **Further research into wider barriers to engagement and audience preferences**

The survey provides some indicative data of the extent of film engagement, barriers and preferences, however this is limited by the short time scale for this work (as a
consequence, the methods of distribution were not able to capture a generalizable sample). Therefore, further investigation of barriers, especially in rural areas could build on the indications in this paper. For example, the desire for more localised screening of films that have a connection to Mexborough might be replicated elsewhere across rural areas in the north.

Questions for Further Research

The following questions have been generated by the above report. Some of the topics that these questions cover have been indicated above but would benefit from further investigation in larger research projects.

• What is the role of a cinema provider in shaping audience expectations?

• How important is are levels of education for people’s interest in different types of film provision?

• Is there a relationship between cinema provision and regional social and economic performance?

• What structures might Film Hub North create to foster more even and diverse engagement across the regions? (This includes the type of model and resources required to facilitate greater provision and engagement).

• How can cinema experiences be shared within or amongst communities? Who acts as opinion formers and trend setters within local communities?

• What are the roles and what is the relationship between informal community groups and formal institutions (schools, libraries, youth clubs, etc.) in fostering cultural engagement (including film)?

• What is the role of local authority provision to support cinema engagement, including transport, costs, education and local community engagement (e.g. older people’s clubs, dementia friendly cities initiatives, children and young people, unemployed, ethnic minority groups, parents of young children)?

• Is it possible to identify and measure levels of untapped demand for British independent and specialised film (e.g. Hull Independent Cinema Project, Lamplight Film Club [Sunderland])? What structures can be put in place to support and grow these forms of social mobilisation around film provision?
References


Appendix 1: Survey Data Analysis

The survey component of this research explores existing engagement with cinemas, barriers to engagement and desired film provision. Given that this research is a small-scale pilot project, the data generated from the survey can only give an indication of some relevant trends and possible issues to develop further in future research on audience engagement and formation. The survey was administered online through social media networks and a newsletter, and by distributing paper copies to libraries, churches, community centres and other public service providers in the case study regions. The trends in the data described below can only be considered indicative due to the sample size and distribution of responses across the regions.

Table 1: Regional distribution of responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Responses (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County Durham</td>
<td>30 (10.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humberside</td>
<td>49 (17.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Yorkshire</td>
<td>171 (61.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wearside</td>
<td>28 (10.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>278</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that there are 278 responses in total, of which 171 were returned by people in the South Yorkshire region, 30 were from County Durham, 28 were from Wearside, and 49 were from Humberside. The responses were skewed towards South Yorkshire possibly because of the help with promotion of the survey by Showroom Cinema, which was likely to capture respondents who attend this particular venue. However, taken as a whole the survey data can suggest some trends and issues in cinema attendance within the remit of Film Hub North, but the attention to differences within and between the regions, suggested above in this report, are of central importance for the recommendations for Film Hub North’s activities.

(1a) How people engage with films: cinema, home and on the move

This section examines where people watch films, in which formats and how often they tend to visit the cinema for the total survey respondents and also, within each of the case study regions.

Figure 1: Where do you watch films?
Figure 1 above shows that 95% of respondents watch films at home, while 88% attend the cinema to watch films, which suggests that home viewing does not pose a significant threat to cinema-going, but provides a qualitatively different form of film experience. Indeed, five people added comments that they would watch films at a friend’s house, which reflects the importance of the social aspect of film-viewing and the different typologies of film audiences and experiences that people may participate in. 17% of respondents said that they attend film festivals and 8% of the sample attends film clubs.

Table 1: Film festival and film club/society attendees by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Film Festivals</th>
<th>Film clubs</th>
<th>Total respondents by region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Durham</td>
<td>2 (6.67% of total respondents from this region)</td>
<td>1 (3.34%)</td>
<td><strong>30 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humberside</td>
<td>7 (14.29%)</td>
<td>8 (16.33%)</td>
<td><strong>49 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Yorkshire</td>
<td>36 (21.05%)</td>
<td>13 (7.6%)</td>
<td><strong>171 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wearside</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (3.57%)</td>
<td><strong>28 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On stratifying the figures by region in table 1, it is clear that the two areas in which large film festivals have taken place, South Yorkshire (Docfest, Celluloid Screams, Showcomotion, amongst others) and Humberside (Glimmer Short Film Festival),
make up the vast majority of the total responses. However, table 1 also indicates that more respondents within the Humberside region attend film clubs/societies (16.33%) compared with other regions, and South Yorkshire has a much higher percentage of respondents from that region that attend film festivals (21.05%) compared with the others. The figures from County Durham and Wearside are too low to make any indicative statements other than that they are relatively much lower than Humberside and South Yorkshire. Further, the extent of participation in film clubs/societies and festivals described above must be taken with caution, as the method of administering the survey was likely to capture a significant proportion of independent cinema viewers that are likely to attend these forms of provision rather than as a statistical approximation of the total regional population.

Table 2: Ways that people watch films at home/on the move

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of viewing</th>
<th>Respondents (% of total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DVD/Blu-ray</td>
<td>233 (85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>239 (87%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet streaming</td>
<td>108 (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablet device</td>
<td>41 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile phone</td>
<td>11 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>274</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 indicates that DVD/Blu-ray and TV are clearly the most popular methods of watching films outside of the cinema, however at 39% Internet streaming suggests a significant proportion are making use of new technological developments. This supports the research findings that the BFI Player could be used more proactively to capture audiences with an interest in British, independent and specialised films. The relatively low take-up on watching films on the move or on other devices suggests that watching films at home on TV, DVD or Blu-ray remain the more preferred methods.

Figure 2: Frequency of cinema visits
Figure 2 suggests that from this sample, cinema attendance of those that attend is most likely to be every couple of months (31%), followed by those that attend every couple of weeks (20%) and those who go once a month (15%). 12% attend once a year, 6% attend every couple of years, 13% say that they go every week, while 3% say that they never go to the cinema. Should this data be reflected in a further and more sustained data collection then an area to explore could be how to encourage those that attend every couple of months or once a month to go to the cinema more often. Given that the sample is skewed towards those that are very or extremely interested in films (due to using an email newsletter to collect a significant proportion of the responses) then there is likely to be much scope for increasing the frequency of attendances. The discussion of some of the barriers to cinema engagement below highlights possible aspects of this.

(1b) Attending the cinema

This section highlights issues that cinema-goers and non-cinema-goers have with attending film screenings. Factors that are discussed here include film choices, timing of screenings, travel and cost.

Table 3: To what extent do the following affect your decision to go to the cinema?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To a great extent</th>
<th>To some extent</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Total responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of film choice</td>
<td>94 (36.72%)</td>
<td>111 (43.36%)</td>
<td>38 (14.84%)</td>
<td>12 (4.69%)</td>
<td>1 (0.39%)</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 shows that an absence of adequate choices of films to watch prohibit people’s attendance at the cinema. Around 80% of respondents report that this is an issue (36.72% say ‘to a great extent’, and 43.36% said to some extent), against around 15% for whom the range of films shown at the cinema is not seen as an issue. This suggests further investigation into the film preferences of different audiences, especially in terms of the changing forms of engagement with film that is also facilitated by technological and consumption changes.

The timing of film screenings is less clear but still shows that a clear majority of respondents (73.31%) view the timing of screenings to be an issue that affects their choice to go to the cinema (18.73% say this is an issue ‘to a great extent’ and 54.58% ‘to some extent), against 24.30% for whom this is not an issue. Comments that respondents have left on the survey appear to support this trend. One respondent states that; ‘I have to take into consideration whether I can get a train home after the film finishes’. This affects respondents who use public transport both in terms of early evening screenings – ‘film screenings don’t tie in with public transport timings. Often times too early to make after work’, ‘a bit inconvenient for me to attend after work… 5pm is a bit early and 8.45pm is a bit late’, and late at night – ‘start times beyond the final transport times in the area’.

Travel issues, including where film screenings do not align with public transport provision, or where the journey using public transport is too expensive or too much effort, or where driving would be too long a journey accounts for 36 comments made by respondents about ‘difficulties’ or ‘problems’ with attending screenings.

Cost appears also to be a concern for many cinema-goers in the case study regions. 21 comments by respondents refer to the high cost of going to the cinema, especially when factoring travel and food into the equation. Moreover, discounted tickets appear to be a factor in influencing many respondents’ decisions to attend the cinema. Out of a total of 259 respondents, 112 (43.24%) state that this influences their decision ‘to some extent’ and 90 (34.75%) ‘to a great extent’, while 40 (15.44%) state that discounted tickets does not factor at all in their decision to attend the cinema.

However, when stratifying the data by case study regions, it is apparent that cost factors much more into decisions to attend the cinema in Wearside than elsewhere. Table 4 shows the percentages within each region of respondents replying ‘to a great extent’ to whether the cost of refreshments affects their decision to attend the
cinema, and those that view discounted tickets as an influence ‘to a great extent’ on their choice to go to see a film.

Table 4: Cost of refreshments and discounted tickets per region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Cost of refreshments affects decision to attend ‘to a great extent’</th>
<th>Discounted tickets influence decision to attend ‘to a great extent’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County Durham</td>
<td>7 (26.92% of respondents in this region)</td>
<td>6 (23.08%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humberside</td>
<td>9 (20.93%)</td>
<td>15 (33.33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Yorkshire</td>
<td>16 (10%)</td>
<td>54 (33.33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wearside</td>
<td>14 (51.85%)</td>
<td>15 (57.69%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, the data presented here needs further investigation to confirm the indications here due to the overall sample size and distribution of responses across the regions. The findings indicate that for Wearside, an area that has experienced more relative deprivation than the other regions as a result of post-industrial decline, the cost of attending a cinema factors more strongly into the decision to attend. The data shows that cost of refreshments and discounted tickets factor ‘to a great extent’ in over 50% of responses compared with relatively lower responses for the other regions.

(1c) The cinema experience

This section addresses the experiences of respondents and their preferences for types of cinema experience.

Table 5: To what extent do the following influence your decision to go to see a film at the cinema?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To a great extent</th>
<th>To some extent</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Total respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social media discussion</td>
<td>29 (11.74%)</td>
<td>107 (43.32%)</td>
<td>100 (40.49%)</td>
<td>2 (0.81%)</td>
<td>9 (3.64%)</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website/blog reviews</td>
<td>35 (14.06%)</td>
<td>116 (46.59%)</td>
<td>88 (35.34%)</td>
<td>1 (0.4%)</td>
<td>9 (3.61%)</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazine/newspaper review</td>
<td>70 (27.78%)</td>
<td>118 (46.83%)</td>
<td>56 (22.22%)</td>
<td>2 (0.79%)</td>
<td>6 (2.38%)</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend's recommendation</td>
<td>74 (29.02%)</td>
<td>142 (55.69%)</td>
<td>33 (12.94%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>6 (2.35%)</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 highlights that of different social and cultural influences on the decision go the cinema, a friend’s recommendation would have the most significant influence on this sample. 84.71% say that a friend’s recommendation would influence their decision (29.02% ‘to a great extent’ and 55.69% ‘to some extent’), compared with 12.94% for whom this is not important. Magazine, newspaper, website and blog reviews are also likely to influence but to a lesser degree. 74.61% say that a magazine or newspaper review would influence them (27.78% say ‘to a great extent’ and 46.83% ‘to some extent’). 60.89% view website and/or blog reviews as influential on their choices (14.06% ‘to a great extent’ and 46.59% ‘to some extent’). While for social media discussion, the picture is more mixed with 55.06% saying that it is influential (11.74% ‘to a great extent’ and 43.32% ‘to some extent’), while 44.13% view it as not influential at all (40.49% state ‘not at all’ and 3.64% responded ‘not applicable’). This suggests that word of mouth and traditional news media are most likely to influence this sample to attend a screening.

Figure 3: How often do you watch the following types of films at the cinema?

Figure 3 shows that the survey respondents are more likely to attend screenings of Hollywood, British and Independent film screenings, and less-so documentaries. Short films, as is perhaps to be expected, are the least often viewed, and foreign-language films. Around 35% of respondents do ‘not at all’ attend foreign-language films, compared with around 36% that attend Hollywood films ‘often’, 40% that see British films ‘often’, and around 28% that watch independent films ‘often’. This perhaps reflects existing research into foreign-language films in which issues with subtitling and dubbing can to different extents reduce enthusiasm for these types of films for some audiences (UK Film Council, 2010).
In contrast to different types of films, different forms of screenings are explored in figure 4. This data shows that the majority of respondents report that they ‘never’ attend early morning screenings, late night screenings, special events and discussion events. The lack of attendance amongst the respondents for early morning and late night screenings may correlate with the issues raised above regarding public transport and screening times. Respondents are more likely, but still ‘rarely’ or ‘sometimes’ likely, to attend 3D screenings. This suggests a relative lack of opportunities for different forms of film screening. Based on the qualitative component of this research, it must be acknowledged that for a minority of extremely engaged film-viewers, special events and discussion events may well be appealing, and targeting of these audiences is necessary to make these events viable.

When breaking down the types of films by region, the data suggests that South Yorkshire audiences are more likely to watch foreign-language films than other areas. 28% of South Yorkshire respondents are likely to go to see these type of films ‘often’ (44 respondents), and around 27% ‘sometimes’ (43 respondents), compared to 20% (31 respondents) who say ‘not at all’. In contrast, in County Durham around 63% (17 respondents) replied ‘not at all’ to the question. For Humberside the ‘not at all’ response was around 49% (22 respondents), and for Wearside 65% (17 respondents). Clearly, the much higher provision of foreign-language films in South Yorkshire, due to the presence of Showroom Cinema, has an effect on the distribution of responses. However, the issue of whether there is latent demand for more opportunities to see this type of films requires further research. Initial evidence in support of this is
discussed in the main sections of this report, and includes the role of Hull Independent Cinema Project (HICP) in joining together three film societies/clubs and the film choices of Clayport Film Club in Durham (see online map).

Regarding types of screenings, there are also differences between regions. The results for all regions were skewed towards ‘sometimes’, ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ attending 3D, early morning, late night screenings or special events. However, Table 6 shows that this was the case in particular for respondents from County Durham. The survey did not include a question on whether respondents would like to attend these types of screening, given the relative lack of provision. This is an important issue for future research.

**Table 6: Respondents that ‘never’ attend screenings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>3D Screenings</th>
<th>Early morning screenings</th>
<th>Late night screenings</th>
<th>Special events</th>
<th>Discussion events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County Durham</td>
<td>12 (40% of total respondents from this region)</td>
<td>18 (62.07%)</td>
<td>21 (72.41%)</td>
<td>23 (79.31%)</td>
<td>24 (82.76%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humberside</td>
<td>8 (17.39%)</td>
<td>17 (37.78%)</td>
<td>18 (40%)</td>
<td>21 (46.67%)</td>
<td>23 (51.11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Yorkshire</td>
<td>39 (24.22%)</td>
<td>73 (45.34%)</td>
<td>77 (48.13%)</td>
<td>61 (38.31%)</td>
<td>66 (41.51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wearside</td>
<td>6 (22.22%)</td>
<td>7 (25.93%)</td>
<td>9 (33.33%)</td>
<td>14 (51.85%)</td>
<td>20 (74.07%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5: How important are the following amenities to your cinema experience?**

Figure 5 addresses amenities at the cinema. The bar chart indicates that arcades, social media and apps are mostly seen as ‘not at all important’ to the cinema.
experience. However, the provision of food, drink and social spaces reveals a more mixed picture, with social spaces being relatively more important compared with other amenities. This perhaps reflects the view in this report of the cinema as a social experience and again, highlights how cinema audiences may be captured by promoting this aspect of cinema-going more.

(1d) Respondent demographics

Table 6 shows the distribution of the age categories of respondents. When viewed by region the most common age group of respondents is 45-59 years old, while South Yorkshire has a much more even split with a higher 25-34 year old category. This probably reflects the survey collection methods and the higher number of respondents from South Yorkshire, including from a Showroom Cinema email newsletter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Respondents (%) All regions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>31 (11.52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>60 (22.30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>59 (21.93%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-59</td>
<td>81 (30.11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>38 (14.13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>269 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The gender of the respondents was 165 female (60.89%) and 106 male (39.11%) of the respondents that filled out this information. The sample did not capture all ethnic groups in a way that could be generalised to the wider population, as 97% of respondents that answered the question were white (259 people), 2.25% or 6 respondents are mixed race, and 2 respondents are Asian. However, the 97% figure does approximate the white population in Humberside and County Durham, but more work to capture other ethnic groups would be needed in Humberside and Country Durham, but especially South Yorkshire and Wearside, to provide an accurate picture of these populations.

Figure 6: Highest level of qualification
Figure 6 shows the highest qualification of respondents for all regions. The data is skewed towards university educated. Caution must be exercised when generalising regarding the role of education in cinema attendance as this distribution does not map onto regional statistics for educations, which in all case study regions have a higher percentage of those with fewer or no qualifications. For example 21.8% of people in South Yorkshire have a university education in comparison to 29.53% who have no qualifications.

*Figure 7: Employment categories*
Figure 7 shows the breakdown of occupations of the respondents for all regions. It is important to point out that here also the data does not provide an accurate approximation of the case study regions. For example, the level of unemployed respondents is lower than Hull (13.5% unemployment), South Yorkshire (10.5%), and Sunderland (11.3%), while County Durham’s 2.7% unemployment rate does broadly fit with the overall picture. The data collected has also drawn more extensively on those who categorise themselves as working in professional occupations, whereas the wider picture is more likely to include a higher percentage of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers. Given the methods of data collection it is worth baring this in mind in future research in order to generate a more generalizable sample.
Appendix 2: Survey

### Your Film and Cinema Experience

#### About the survey

This survey is about your experiences of film and going to the cinema. It is for a research project that is assessing the quality of cinema provision in the North of England and ways in which it can be improved. The research will enable Film Hub North to develop a strategy for film provision in the region, as part of the BFI’s Film Audience Network. See http://www.showsroomworkstation.org.uk/infofilmhunorth for more details.

All data collected from this survey will be completely anonymous and it will not be possible to identify people from the research. This project is being carried out by researchers from Sheffield University and has been approved by Sheffield University’s Research Ethics Committee. If you have any questions please contact Steve Corbett at s.corbett@sheffield.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.

#### Your interest in films and cinema

1. **How interested are you in films?**
   - [ ] Extremely interested
   - [ ] Very interested
   - [ ] Somewhat interested
   - [x] Slightly interested
   - [ ] Not at all interested
   - [ ] Don’t know

2. **Where do you watch films? (Please tick all that apply)**
   - [ ] At the cinema
   - [ ] At a film club/film society
   - [ ] At home
   - [ ] At film festivals
   - [ ] Other (please specify)

3. **In which of the following ways do you watch films?**
   - [ ] On DVD/Blu-ray
   - [ ] On TV
   - [ ] Via internet streaming
   - [ ] On a tablet device
   - [ ] On a mobile phone
   - [ ] Other (please specify)

#### Accessing the cinema

4. **How do you get to the cinema? (Please tick all that apply)**
   - [ ] Walk
   - [ ] Cycle
   - [ ] Car
   - [ ] Bus
   - [ ] Train
   - [ ] Taxi
   - [ ] Other (please specify)
Your Film and Cinema Experience

5. How easy is it to get to your cinema?
   - Very difficult
   - Difficult
   - Neutral
   - Easy
   - Very easy

6. If you find it difficult to get to your cinema, please explain why here

7. Please answer this question ONLY if you have a disability.

   How accessible is your cinema?
   - Very accessible
   - Quite accessible
   - Not very accessible
   - Inaccessible
   - Not applicable

8. If you have any comments about problems with access to the cinema, please write them here

Going to the cinema

9. How often do you visit the cinema?
   - Every week
   - Every couple of weeks
   - Once a month
   - Every couple of months
   - Once a year
   - Every couple of years
   - Never
Your Film and Cinema Experience

10. If you go to the cinema, which of the following venues do you go to? (please tick all that apply)

- Showroom Sheffield
- Odeon Sheffield
- Cineworld Sheffield
- Vue Meadowhall
- Film Unit Sheffield University
- Vue Doncaster
- Parkway Barnsley
- Real Hull
- Odeon Hull
- Cineworld Hull
- Vue Hull
- Vue Scunthorpe
- UCI Scunthorpe
- Parkway Cleethorpes
- Junction Goals
- Reparq Hall Barton
- The Forum Birstlington
- Empire Sunderland
- Cinedub Sunderland University
- Cineworld Boulton Colliery
- Gala Durham

Any other venues not listed (please specify)

11. Who do you go with to the cinema? (please tick all that apply)

- Alone
- With partner
- With friends
- With children
- With parents

Other (please specify)

12. To what extent do any of the following affect your decision to go to the cinema?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To a great extent</th>
<th>To some extent</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of film choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timings of film screenings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of refreshments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of refreshments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one to go with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. If you have any further comments or details about problems with attending film screenings please write them here

Your cinema-going experience
### Your Film and Cinema Experience

14. To what extent do the following influence your decision to go to see a film at the cinema?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
<th>To a great extent</th>
<th>To some extent</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discounted tickets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child-friendly facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screenings for older audiences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A friend's recommendation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The film's cast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The film's poster</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The film's trailer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazine/newspaper review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website/blog review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media discussion (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social occasions (e.g. birthdays)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. If there are any other influences on your choice to go to the cinema please write them here.

16. How often do you watch the following types of films at the cinema?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Film</th>
<th>Very often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hollywood films</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>British films</td>
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<td>Independent films</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign language films</td>
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<td>Documentary films</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short films</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Your Film and Cinema Experience

17. How often do you go to see the following types of film screenings at the cinema?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Screenings</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3D screenings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early morning screenings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late night screenings (e.g. midnight premiers)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special events (e.g. filmmaker Q&amp;As)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion events (e.g. film experts)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. How important are the following amenities to your cinema experience?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amenities</th>
<th>Not at all important</th>
<th>Not very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweats, drinks, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coffee shop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social spaces</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arcade games</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social media interaction before/during film screenings (e.g. Twitter)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobile phone apps (e.g. cinema)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Information about you

To help us understand how people might want to engage more with film, and how film provision can be improved, can you please provide some information about yourself. This will be completely anonymous and it will not be possible to identify you from your responses to these questions.

19. Please indicate your age group

- 15-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- 45-59 years old
- 60 years and older

20. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

21. Which of the following best describes your ethnic background?

- White
- Asian
- Mixed
- Black
- Chinese

Any other ethnic background (please describe)
Your Film and Cinema Experience

22. Please indicate your level of education
- University educated
- A Level, DTEC or equivalent
- GCSEs or equivalent
- Other qualifications
- No qualifications

23. Which occupation category describes your employment status best?
- Higher managerial
- Professional
- Skilled worker
- Student
- Middle managerial
- Skilled worker
- Semi-skilled worker
- Retired
- Supervisory
- Semi-skilled worker
- Unemployed
- Senior Professional
- Unskilled worker
- Other (please specify)

24. Please write the first part of your post code:
(this will indicate your approximate area but we will not be able to identify your address)