Building a timeline for LGBTQ+ Global Cinemas (1895-2019): Movie Production Trends from a Collaborative Internet Cinema Database

Abstract:

This paper examines the role of cinema as a reflection of reality and social change. IMDb (Internet Movie Database) was employed as the main data source in order to examine the representation of LGBTQ+ in global cinema in parallel with the analysis of key milestones in recognizing sexual diversity rights. The movies selected for the analysis were coded by country, language, historical periods, genre, and age rating. The results show, among other findings, greater cinema production in those national markets with legislation favorable to the LGBTQ+ community, such as same-sex marriage laws. Findings reveal also a greater volume of production in the decades with a significant development of civil rights; a predominance of the 'gay' descriptor to the detriment of other terms associated to the LGBTQ+ community, and a higher incidence of genres such as drama and the drama/comedy combination in contrast to other traditions such as action/adventure and animation.

The LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer and other sexual identities and orientations) community has struggled to achieve social acceptance, political representation, and recognition of their civil rights. Their demands respond to the exclusion and oppression suffered historically. Even today, this struggle continues in different countries in areas such as marriage and equal adoption —rights which have not yet been recognized in all societies to the extent that in some countries, sexual diversity is even punishable by death. Audiovisual media, particularly cinema, has the ability to not only function as a device for the production and creation of reality, but also to act as a reflection of reality and social changes (Gross; Williams), such as when recognizing sexual diversity. Media has a key role as a socializer, comparable to that held by institutions such as school or family (Rosengren 6).

Cinema, as the most influential medium of the 20th century, has reflected the struggles of the LGBTQ+ community, mirroring a significant period in the history of humanity regarding the advancement of civil and political rights. This has taken place in different channels. The first one, through the form of commercial and mainstream movies typically coming out of Hollywood and the USA. As one of the main cinema 'super producers' Hollywood industry has shaped the market, ruling over the box office and influencing the content of movies however, in the last few decades, contents are also reflecting a *transnationalization* as a way of appealing to different cultural markets and reflecting the diversity of global audiences (Crane 378). A second venue for these changes would be the independent cinema circuits while they are aimed, traditionally, at a rather minority audience. While both of these production models — the so-called 'mainstream' and 'indie' films— participate in the representation of characters and themes of the LGBTQ+ community, these have been decoded in different and often opposite ways. Independent cinema, including documentary and avant-garde cinema, has been conceptualized in part as a response to this 'dominant mode of American (heterosexist) filmmaking' and, therefore, associated to the 'queer' (Benshoff and Griffin *Queer Images: A*

2

History of Gay and Lesbian Film in America 11). On the other hand, for other authors, the parameters defining queer cinema are diverse and fluid, beyond binary classifications. Queerness is here understood as a component that can be presented through different types of cinemas, manifesting different forms of queer representation and participation/identification among filmmakers (Schoonover and Galt 15).

Until now, studies on the representation of the LGBTQ+ community in the media have focused on particular case studies instead of adopting a holistic approach; for instance, the film outputs in specific decades, such as the media ecosystem of the 1990s (Becker). There have also been studies about specific national markets, but often the focus is on USA productions (Benshoff and Griffin *Queer Images: A History of Gay and Lesbian Film in America*). Although LGBTQ+ and queer cinemas have been researched from a global perspective, the research has been carried out as different forms of qualitative textual analysis (Davies; Russo; Tyler), with a focus on a cultural interpretation of the qualities of filmic texts. Some exceptions in the form of research with a global and quantitative focus have been successful but, to our knowledge, only in other audiovisual markets such as digital games (Shaw and Friesem). Therefore, a quantitative analysis of global cinema seems to be needed to establish an updated comparative criterion on a global scale and to verify the real state of affairs. Hitherto, databases constructed through users' collaboration and big data analysis have been usually contrasted with users' attitudes to social behavior including gender or violence (Gosselt et al.) or the success of a particular product, measured through users' movie rating and recommendation systems (Canet Centellas et al.). The approach adopted in this paper is also innovative as it employs a collaborative-constructed database with the aim of studying synchronic and diachronic trends within global LGBTQ+ cinemas.

We propose a historical review and the global mapping of two phenomena: film production and the development of social rights. With this objective, a methodology based on

content analysis is proposed, using information collected from the IMDb (Internet Movie Database) digital repository. Our aim is, on one hand, to trace the evolution of cinema and the presence of LGBTQ+ characters and/or plots. On the other, to ascertain the current situation of these representations among national productions in quantitative terms.

LGBTQ+ Cinema: Turning points of the LGBTQ+ community.

Attempting to define LGBTQ+ cinema is somewhat controversial. Despite other traditions such as 'queer' and 'gay cinema' having been a common subject of study in abundant academic research (Benshoff and Griffin *Queer Cinema: The Film Reader;* Benshoff and Griffin *Queer Images: A History of Gay and Lesbian Film in America;* Russo; Vaughn), in this article we prefer to use the more specific term of 'LGBTQ+' cinema. By using a more inclusive term, we intend to reflect the diversity within this community and their multiple identities.

LGBTQ+ cinema could be understood as a cultural object that is determined by the participation of audiences and therefore, it is not a textual property, as even texts that are originally 'heterosexual' can be transformed into queer texts by participative audiences (Schoonover and Galt 11). While cinema is a representational form of social reality, it is often conveyed through fiction and stereotypes. Authorship has been a common way of defining queer cinema (Benshoff and Griffin *Queer Images: A History of Gay and Lesbian Film in America* 10). However, some voices, including that of filmmaker Rodolfo Graziano, prefer to restrict queer cinema to documentaries about the community (Peña Zerpa 42), discarding purely fictional texts. Other historians point out that due to the social and institutional censorship cinema has been subjected to in its history, many of the characters and/or plots that can be classified within what has been considered as LGBTQ+ cinema often must be identified through subtexts (Benshoff and Griffin *Queer Images: A History of Gay and Lesbian Film in America;* Mira 51).

Cinema has the capacity to mirror values and social constructs of a given space-time period, but it also has the potential to change them. The presence of positive LGBTQ+ portraits in feature films can also promote the elimination of prejudice about the community and greater social acceptance by audiences (Madžarević and Soto-Sanfiel 18), which, in turn, could have a favorable impact on the recognition of their claims. Furthermore, the idea that there have been significant changes in the profile of audiences in many societies should also be considered. Over time, a transnational LGBTQ+ cinema market may have been created in response to the commercial interest of audiences in a more diverse and inclusive cinema.

The history of LGBTQ+ civil rights features advances and setbacks, and its starting points can be traced back to the first civilizations around the world. When creating an LGBTQ+ timeline, this research focuses only on XX and XXI centuries social milestones on the global scene, which have been parallel to the development of cinema industry and cinema language. Furthermore, although this timeline aims to be universal in nature, we acknowledge that each country has a different history as well as particular social, political, and economic features. Therefore, our analysis attempts to strike a compromise between global development and local and/or national features.

Because of the above, we propose the following timeline, which includes a number of key globally recognized milestones in relation to the LGBTQ+ community and its effect on film, as it is the object of study in this research. This timeline is based on the literature review carried out (Black; Mira; Russo) and is intended to offer an overview of the main social milestones, that may have affected global cinema production, without being an exhaustive account of LGBTQ+ civil rights and social progression.

Early cinema (1910-1934)

There is copious literature on the representation of the LGBTQ+ community in early cinema. The film *Algie the Miner* (Alice Guy, Harry Schenck and Edward Warren, 1912) has been commonly regarded as the first cinematic production featuring a queer character. Although Algie has a girlfriend in the story, his character's queerness 'shows through in everything he says, does and is' (Barrios 18). A scene on the movie, for example, presents Algie with painted lips, featuring hand movements associated with femininity and erotically caressing the barrel of a gun, an object that could be interpreted as a phallic symbol.

Silent movies and the beginnings of sound age featured many queer characters. This period also contributed to the social imagery by creating both positive and negative stereotypes of the LGBTQ+ community (Brown 7). In contrast to these subtle hostile narratives, *Different from the Others* (*Anders als die Andern,* Richard Oswald, 1919) is largely acknowledged to be the first feature film being openly tolerant towards LGBTQ+ identities (Summers 125). Funded by the Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin, the film was created in protest at German laws, which criminalized homosexuality. Sometimes, we can talk more about different degrees of moral judgement as well. While in *Algie the Miner* being queer was represented as an element to be corrected, and therefore, central to the plot, in other movies such as *The Soilers* (Ralph Cedar, 1923), the homosexual character was rather a comic relief. In this case, his condition isn't and not even taken seriously. Although identification was not always explicit, some conventions helped audiences to identify LGBTQ+ characters, such as stories in which cross-dressing is practiced or the use of code-words to designate other characters (Barrios 19; Benshoff and Griffin *Queer Images: A History of Gay and Lesbian Film in America* 65).

Regulatory codes (1934 - 1967)

In 1934, agreements between the Catholic Church in the USA and Hollywood, the main center of transnational film production, managed to implement the production code of the

Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MMPDA). The so-called Hays Code, informally named after Will Hays, the head of the MPPDA, led to the creation of the Production Code Administration (PCA) seal of approval and an interpretative committee monitored by representatives of the Catholic Church. From this point forward, the PCA would decide which films could be distributed, proactively and retroactively, and had the power to fine distributors who violated it (Black 167). For the PCA, homosexuality was considered a 'sexual perversion' and was a common cause for editing movie contents (Russo 73) when, either as a script or once filmed, they were subject to review. This is the case of the feature film *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941). One of the characters, Joel Cairo, was openly homosexual regarding the novel on which the film is based. The committee, however, suggested to eliminate any mention to his homosexuality while, at the same, time made the filmmakers to present the character as a villain.

Movie censorship has existed in Europe almost since the inception of cinema (Robertson). Different European governments since the 1920s established content control mechanisms with a particular interest in movie productions including the Filmprüfstelle (Film Review Office) in the German Republic of Weimar (1920-1934) and the diplomatic censorship exerted by the Primo de Rivera regime in Spain (1923-1930). Prior to the creation of these censoring bodies, content control existed although it was unevenly exercised among local authorities. Vaughn (40) points to different examples of pre-code censorship in the USA due to moral or political reasons, which hint at the social anxieties caused by the negative influence of the cinema medium on society. This was the case of *The Easiest Way* (1917), about a woman who attempts suicide, or *Birth Control* (1917), written and directed by Margaret Sanger life, an activist in favor of sexual education and family planning.

The Hays Code was decisive in the history of film content because of the weight of American production on the international market on the subsequent years. Characters and plots

reflecting homosexual attitudes or behaviors were censored out and LGBTQ+ characters would not reappear until the final years under regulatory codes. Two types of characters predominate: the evil antagonist, whose final punishment has a moral reading, and the comical sidekick, a typically ridiculous portrait of the 'sissy' and effeminate archetype. The latter is a type of representation with a long history dating back to the beginnings of cinema (Barrios 67; Brown; Mira).

The Hays code disappeared in 1967 having conditioned the American cinema production for more than three decades, influencing several internal markets. Eventually, production codes and censorship boards were replaced with other regulatory bodies, institutionalized as rating systems. Even today, these entities still have a relevant influence on audiences, particularly parents and exhibitors. British Board of Film Classification (BBFC), created in 1912 for example, may have not a direct effect on content, however, their most restrictive labels can have serious effects on the financial success of a film.

BBFC case studies collect examples in which a film obtained different ratings depending on the cut, obtaining different classifications regarding the markets (domestic video, streaming, cinema release..). Contents depicting sexual violence (ie, rape), explicit reference to pornography and explicit sex rather than consensual intercourse depictions justifies the more restrictive 15 over 12A/12 classifications. Strong language and sex may have affected negative to films such as *Happy Together* (Wong Kar-Wai, 1997) while it is the combination of sex and violence which makes more restrictive the distribution of *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, 2005). The category ('Suitable only for adults') is observed for apology of violence and sexual violence while R18 is short for 'To be shown only in specially licensed cinemas, or supplied only in licensed sex shops, and to adults only'.

It is important also to understand that is the overall combination of contents what is assessed. Movies such as *Pride* (Matthew Barchus, 2014) is classified as '15' due to the sex

references and strong language which originated some controversy due to the social relevance of its plot and its relationship to the History of Gay Civil Rights in the UK. Attending to the UK legislation and the international laws, the BBFC Guidelines must apply the same standards to homosexual as to heterosexual activity (British Board of Film Classification BBFC).

After Stonewall (1969)

The 1970s saw new significant milestones in the acquisition of LGBTQ+ rights. The most crucial event originated with the riots which took place at Stonewall Inn, in Greenwich Village in New York City in June 1969. Commemorating the first anniversary of the events, the first march for recognition took place in New York City in 1970, marking a new era of visibility for LGBTQ+ groups. Stonewall is also the origin of the Gay Liberation Front that would fight throughout the following years for LGBTQ+ rights in the USA and inspire the creation of other fronts in different countries. These movements led not only to greater visibility of the community but to an institutionalization of their demands, including the annual celebration popularly known as LGBTQ+ 'Pride'. The increased visibility during the decades after Stonewall did not always have positive consequences for the community, as they were faced with an increasing homophobic reaction by society (Barrios 11). With regards to the representation of the community in film, although it was quantitatively greater, it was not necessarily of greater quality. Feature films continued to present homosexuality as a marginal condition that tormented characters, leading them to madness, criminal acts or even suicide (Davies 67). Homosexuality is a conflictive topic at this age and happens, mostly as subtext. In *Midnight Express* (Alan Parker, 1978), Oliver Stone won an academy award for adapting the biographical novel written by Billy Hayes, by performing significant changes in the script regarding homosexuality. While, regarding the book, consensual sex among men was a common practice in the prison, the film script shows Billy's kind rejections to his friend's

sexual approaches. By contrast, Stone pivoted last scene through a fictional climax in which the sadistic chief guard of this Turkish prison is attempting to rape the main character. The film success and its social relevance is of great importance on the history of cinema but even more, perhaps, for what it could have been, and it wasn't. As summarized by Douglas Messerli:

> 'Eight years after Stonewall and in a decade that had seen major works of LGBTQ cinema by the likes of Fassbinder, Luchino Visconti, Rosa von Praunheim, Sidney Lumet, Lino Brocka, Lasse Nielsen, Derek Jarman, Ron Peck, Wolfgang Petersen, and others, to say nothing of Andy Warhol of a decade earlier there was no longer any excuse to refuse to express homosexual relationships on film, especially in prison. Midnight Express appeared, it is important to remember, a full 8 years after Stonewall. Americans should no longer have had to been told only half-truths of such important stories'.

The AIDS crisis (1980s)

By the end of the 1970s, cinema and TV had turned their attention to the dangers behind risky sexual practices and drugs abuse. Feature films linked to LGBTQ+ representation captured these concerns, as illustrated by the controversial *Cruising* (William Friedkin, 1980) in which the investigation on a series of murders brings the main character to undercover in the New York gay subculture to chase a homosexual serial killer. Rather than a sexual identity, homosexualism is depicted in combination to other practices such as S/M and 'cruising'. In short, homosexuality in these films is treated just as another element of moral decline affecting society at the time (Davies 93). The AIDS crisis, which started in 1981, affected the LGBTQ+ community severely in its early days. The disease was unequivocally linked to homosexuality through derogatory names employed by media such as 'gay cancer', 'gay plague' and 'gay-related immune deficiency syndrome', which were used profusely in the years prior to the

discovery of HIV (Fee and Parry 55). Jerry Falwell Sr, founder of the American political organization Moral Majority, referred to AIDS as 'the wrath of God' in a significant debate around this disease in July 1983. The links within the association and other conservative sectors in the US such as the Republican Party, and the Christian right contributed to the stigmatization of the gay collective and divided American society (King). Not only press, politicians and religious leaders emphasized this association between the new illness and the gay community. As a consequence, LGBTQ+ population was stigmatized along with other groups that the research at that time had linked to AIDS. By 1984, the expression '4H Club' become popular, referring to those collectives that were found in greater risk of acquiring the virus regarding the evidence at that time: Heroin addicts, Hemophiliacs, Haitians and Homosexuals (Jean-Charles 64).

Advances in legislative and social recognition of the LGBTQ+ community

In the 1990s, progress was made in recognizing the LGBTQ+ collective rights, and legislation to reduce discrimination was introduced. A relevant example is the removal of homosexuality in 1992 from the World Health Organization International Classification of Diseases or ICD. While the 9th version of the handbook published in 1977 remained ambiguous and suggested coding 'code homosexuality here whether or not it is considered as a mental disorder' to classify some ego-dystonic disorders, the 10th version decided to delete that reference, unlinking for good homosexuality and mental illness (van Drimmelen-Krabbe et al.). In 1994, as a consequence of the trial Toonen vs. Australia, United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) denounced that criminalizing consensual same-sex relations between adults would be in the future a violation of international human rights law (Human Rights Committee).

Around this time, Hollywood began to introduce LGBTQ+ characters and themes into commercial films with higher budgets. Tom Hanks won the Academy Award for his performance in *Philadelphia* (1993). The commercial success of this drama on AIDS and gay rights contributed to a greater recognition of the LGBTQ+ collective by audiences and cultural critics. In this decade other symbolic advances began to take place that favored the integration of the group; for example, American comedian and television host Ellen DeGeneres coming out as lesbian in a *Time* magazine interview and, shortly after, through her own sitcom *Ellen* (1994-98), had a great social significance and increased the community's visibility on the media

The 2000s were a period of great progress in civil rights, and many of these achievements extended to the LGBTQ+ community. In 2001, same-sex marriage was legalized for the first time in the Netherlands, which encouraged the adoption of similar laws in the rest of the world. Henceforth, same-sex marriage would be, together with same-sex adoption, the legislative rights most sought after by the LGBTQ+ collective (Rydström *Odd Couples: A History of Gay Marriage in Scandinavia* 112; Rydström "Same-Sex Marriage" 112). Countries such as the United Kingdom and Germany approved, for the first time, legal measures that penalized discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation. In the 2010s, the number of countries that introduced laws favorable to the LGBTQ+ community increased, which meant an advancement on the protection against discrimination. Same-sex marriage was extended to the entire USA in 2015, although it was still banned in a majority of countries in the world. In 2018, transsexuality was no longer considered a mental disorder by the WHO. It is only natural that all these advances were reflected in a cultural medium as relevant as cinema. Since 1985, GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) has been publishing a series of reports on the representation of the LGBTQ+ community throughout media, with special focus on American TV and Hollywood cinema, in order to monitor the inclusive and

positive representation of the community. While their latest report confirmed an increase in the number of LGBTQ+ characters, it also pointed out the need to increase their presence and criticized cinema studios' tendency to stereotype these characters. Specifically, GLAAD (10) observed the still scarce number of 'trans' characters on media. They also criticized the lack of intersectionality within LGBTQ+ and other communities (ethnic groups, individual disabilities...).

Methodology

Internet Movie Data Base (IMDb) is the largest free access online database for films and is constantly updated by millions of daily users. As a collaborative database also referred as 'crowdsourcing content' (Gosselt et al.), a significant part of the information collected in IMDb corresponds to classifications or taxonomies that are created and maintained by users. These so-called 'folksonomies' are idiosyncratic of digital social environments such as the Web 2.0 and its associated 'tagging' behaviors. In contrast to professionally-curated databases, folksonomies are unsystematic but they have the advantage of being closer to natural language, and there is some controversy around its use against ontologies (Veres 59).

The sample includes all types of sexual diversity represented through film plots and keywords in IMDB. This collection of terms refers exclusively to feature films that include LGBTQ+ characters, even those that are not relevant in the movie plots. As one of the limitations of this study, it is important to note that the research will not reflect the degree of representation of these identities, the role of the characters, nor their time on screen. Our working hypothesis, based on the theoretical framework above, is that we expect there to be a quantitative increase in the production of LGBTQ+ film outputs that, in part, may be linked to the development of the social rights of these groups. Furthermore, other aspects were analyzed,

including the national productions of LGBTQ+ cinema and the prevalence of descriptive terms of the LGBTQ+ community.

IMDb was the only source from which data was extracted. The sample was constructed using the tool search engines, filtering 'feature films' (over 45 min of length), excluding 'adult titles' and excluding 'released'. In order to obtain a comprehensive time period, all productions from 1895 to December 2019 were included and the search was conducted in March 2020. This sample avoid the large disruption occasioned by COVID-19 pandemic on International Film Distribution on cinemas. To collect only those films about which there could be detailed information, the number of items was limited to those with over 50 user ratings (N = 119809) as a way of controlling the popularity of the published work.

The presence of descriptors in the field 'plot' was coded, designating different terms related to the LGBTQ+ community (N = 1768). Some of the terms and their variants with similar etymology were homosexual (homo/homosexuality), gay, lesbian, trans (transsexual, transgender) and queer. After adding those productions that had a descriptor term from this list in the keywords field, the total of the items corresponding to these categories was 9409 films, which were analyzed in relation to the entire sample. This decision responds to the need to reflect in the sample films in which the subject of study is represented, but it is not necessarily part of the plot or is revealed as such through the course of it. It is also supported by the documentary tradition, according to which keywords tend to overlap with the plot or summary (La Barre and de Novais Cordeiro 241).

The following information was extracted from each item (i.e. movie):

- Production by country and production by language in each year. In co-productions, only the first producing country was considered, and the other countries discarded.

- Identity of the group (gay, lesbian, trans, etc.) as per the plot keywords. Several identities and expressions such as transsexuality and transgender have been included under the label 'trans' as it was impossible to recognize the correct expression from the labels provided by IMDb.

- Cinema genres. Using the first two descriptors, a list of genre pairs was created, which were later grouped into 13 generic categories, as per the formal qualities of the theme: Drama (any combinations of the drama category that were not included in other categories), Comedy (combinations including comedy that were not considered in other categories), Action/Adventure, Combinations of Drama and Comedy), Horror, Crime (including thrillers), Fantasy (including Science Fiction), Biography (in both fictional and documentary forms), Documentary (excluding biographies and fake documentaries but including news), Romantic Comedy (Romance + Comedy), Animation (excluding documentary formats) and Music/Musical feature films.

- Age ratings. Parental Advisory guidelines have changed significantly over the decades, from the first classifications in the United Kingdom, Germany, and the USA to today. In order to establish a suitable comparison, the descriptor provided by IMDb, which is usually established by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), was used. When this was omitted, the descriptor used was determined as per the recommended age: Universal, Parental Guidance (PG), 12-13, 14-16, 17-18, as well as X and banned, according to the historical equivalence as provided by IMDb.

Data was pooled to consider evolution by historical periods and trends in a single group or correlational ex post facto design. Subsequently, the data was analyzed with the statistical package SPSS v.26. To visualize the main trends from the data, Tableau 2020 software was used.

Results

<u>Film Production by Country</u>

The Pearson test reveals a very high correlation between production and representation of group identities for periods (r = 0.991; p = 0.000) and years (r = 0.932; p = 0.000), so it is expected that national production goes in parallel with LGBTQ+ film production. In this sense, the results show an overwhelming USA hegemony with respect to LGBTQ+ representation, as 44.98% of all films feature descriptors of the group. This supports the consideration of the United States as the largest producer of LGBTQ+ content (Crane, 2014) and the fact that the vast majority of feature films released in theatres worldwide are American. The USA is proportionally followed by other Western countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Canada, Germany, and Spain.

The differences between US production and other countries, such as the European group, may be due to differences in the volume of production. The data related to the global production level, and the relationship between these levels and LGBTQ+ cinema, as well as the percentage of LGBTQ+ films in relation to national production was all collected in order to establish a comparison criterion (Table 1).

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The average of the national representation in relation to national production, considering the 98 countries common to both samples, is 8.27% (SD = 11.34). The rate is especially low in historically large national producers such as Russia (2.03%), India (1.83%), and China (1.57%). These results are low even compared to Turkey (1.49%) and Iran (0.61%), where there is little interest in the production of LGBTQ+ themes.

The countries above can be compared to other types of rankings in which attitudes to the LGBTQ+ collective are analyzed case by case, such as the Gay Travel Index, an annual report that globally collects the safest destinations for the LGBTQ+ community (GayGuide UG). Here, however, there are significant differences. The USA is, for example, an area considered safe for the LGBTQ+ community, but it is in one of the lowest positions due to the great differences between states regarding sexual freedom, as reflected in legislation and social norms.

The results show that the prevalent languages are those of the producing countries. Thus, 61.81% of feature films are produced in English, followed by French with 7.99% of the total. The most significant difference with respect to the global data is the comparative greater relevance of Spanish (4.92%) and German (3.41%). Other cases of relevant languages in this LGBTQ+ subsample are Portuguese (1.67%) and Czech (0.72%).

Production regarding group identities

Based on the use of keywords, the most frequently used identity among the feature films deemed LGBTQ+ as per the plot keywords is 'gay' (58.15%) followed by 'lesbian' (39.15%), 'homosexual' (31.11%), 'bisexual' (9.33%), 'trans' (5.09%), 'LGBT' (4%), and 'queer' (3.33%).

These terms are not exclusive and may be associated. To test these associations, the Pearson correlation test was used. In this sense, there are many co-occurrences, usually with the gay term that positively correlates with LGBTQ+ ($r = .047$; $p = .000$), queer ($r = .108$; $p = .000$) and homosexual ($r = 0.153$; $p = .000$). Furthermore, the term homosexual, due to its inclusivity, correlates positively with queer ($r = 0.098$; $p = .000$) and bisexual ($r = .060$; $p = .000$).

The most exclusive terms are gay-lesbian (r = -.571; p = .000), gay-trans (r = -.039, p = .0000), lesbian-homosexual (r = -.295; p = .000) and homosexual-trans (r = -.021; p = 0.000). There are also marginally significant correlations such as gay-bisexual (r = -.022; p = .033).

Evolution by decades

Graphically, the results shown indicate the analysis of global LGBTQ+ production by time periods (Figure 1). The terms that have been most sensitive to the historical fluctuation are 'gay', 'bisexual', and 'lesbian,' although in the last two decades the term LGBTQ+ seems to be more closely linked to global production.

The years preceding the regulatory codes (1910-1934) witnessed a very low production of LGBTQ+ films. This may be due to the selection criteria, since IMDb categorizes 'feature films' as those lasting over 45 minutes, which would exclude much of the cinema catalog in these decades, especially in the early years (around 1910). Regarding the treatment of LGBTQ+ issues, differences have been pointed out in the treatment of homosexuality in the first decades of European cinema (pre-code era) when homosexuality was seen as 'often just another aspect of the panorama of human relationships' and American cinema, which seemed more concerned with reinforcing heterosexist male roles (Russo 18). This idea, however, is not reflected in the quantitative data related to production. Despite a reasonable number of films in the 1910s (n = 261) and 1920s (n = 818), the percentages would point to an obvious difference only in the 1910s, and not so much in the 1920s, between the USA (1.67% and 3.69%) and Germany (6.66% and 3.06%), the only movie-producing countries with LGBTQ+ content.

During the period of the regulatory codes (1934-1960), we observed a higher production than in previous decades albeit still very scarce. A significant increase occurred in the 1960s and 1970s in most countries, with the 1970s boasting the most significant increase in countries

such as Italy (+24.63%), France (+10.49%), Spain (+10.65), and the UK (+4.56%). However, the 1980s showed a decrease of outputs, particularly in countries such as Italy (- 48.3%) and France (-25%), which could well be a direct consequence of the AIDS crisis in this period.

Comparing different national producers, especially when considering its historical production, can be specially revealing. For example, if we compare the national production of LGBTQ+ movies in the same period, West Germany (10.08%) would be equivalent to other large producing countries, such as the USA (10.12%). Another example: the considerable volume of cinema production in the Soviet Union (1922-1991) is a fairly well-known and documented fact (Liehm and Liehm), but this does not seem to be related to the related subsample of movies, since only 0.54% (of a sample N = 1,300) of the films dating from that period have LGBTQ+ descriptors, which is low even compared to modern Russia (2.03%).

The countries that traditionally have offered a less favorable environment for the development of LGBTQ+ social rights show less interest in the subject, exemplified by a null or minimal production of cinema with LGBTQ+ content. The most relevant and new increase in production occurred between the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century, mainly in countries such as the Philippines (+ 37.93%), Germany (+ 23.55%), Brazil (+21.64%), Canada (+17.86%), France (+13.57%), Spain (+12.55%), Argentina (+11.70%), and the UK (+ 7.73%). There was also an increase in the case of Italy (+3.76%), although not as pronounced as the increase in the transition from the 1960s to the 1970s. On the other hand, some countries experienced a first significant increase in this period, such as Japan (+7.41%), India (+21.29%), and Turkey (+21.21%). The 2000s and 2010s showed continuing increases in countries such as France (+52.8% and +9.9%), the UK (+33.4% and +18.9%), and Germany (+60.2% and +6.9%).

Genres and regulations in the distribution of LGBTQ+ cinema

A contingency table reveals significant relationships measured with a chi-square test (F = 1081,960; p = 0.000) between the genre and LGBTQ+/ non-LGBTQ+ variables. Examining the percentages (Table 2), a greater ratio in terms of the global feature film sample can be seen in the LGBTQ+ sample for drama and drama & comedy combinations, whereas in the action, animation, and documentary genres, the low percentage is revealing.

<INSERT TABLE 2 NEAR HERE>

A contingency table between the age classifications variable and the presence of LGBTQ+ plot keywords also revealed a positive chi-square test F = 1081,960; p = .000. It should be noted, however, that the number of unclassified films is high, since only the USA' system is included in this analysis (N = 26331). The clearest differences between the LGBTQ+ sample and the global cinema sample can be found in the 12A-13A, PG classifications, and particularly in U-ALL and 17A-18A. The LGBTQ+ sample has a greater proportional number of adult classifications (X and over 17). The X rating applies to those titles that need to be distributed on specific circuits –although this is not necessarily because of its pornographic content. 'Adult' titles were discarded in the creation of the sample.

Discussion

Progress on civil rights and the social, political, and legal recognition of the various groups making up the LGBTQ+ community are among the challenges to be overcome by all societies if we aim to achieve real equality and social justice. Cinema, as a mirror as well as a creator of reality, has served as a faithful diary of the advances, stagnation, and setbacks of the rights of the LGBTQ+ community. In order to gain an understanding of this evolution, our research included a literature review of the most important historical LGBTQ+ milestones. At

the same time, data on cinema outputs around the world at different periods on this subject has been collected using the world's largest cinema collaborative database, IMDb, with the aim of exploring both the historical evolution and the current situation of LGBTQ+ representation in the movies.

Global production of content categorized as LGBTQ+ has gradually increased in all decades, although the most significant increases occurred in the transition from the 1960s to the 1970s, and from the 1990s to the 2000s. Conversely, there has been a rather low increase over the last two decades. Fluctuation between periods is quite high, when measured in terms of decades or five-year periods. From the data available it can be inferred that the decades where social milestones occurred had a direct impact on film production, confirming the proposed hypothesis.

Thus, the results show that social and political changes left a mark on LGBTQ+ film production. Therefore, attention should be paid to a current historical moment in which there is an increased film production but in which social advances can be quickly lost. In contrast to other countries in the European Union, Hungary, for example, has experienced a social change towards intolerance to the LGBTQ+ communities, leading by the government. Prime minister and leader of the Fidesz party, Viktor Orbán, approved in June 2021 a Child Sex Abuse law that has been extensively criticized by other European countries (Novak). The bill has a focus on restricting adoption by homosexual couples but also seeks to moderate the contents on gay and transgender related topics in media and social discourses, which has clear implications on filmmaking and its social narratives.

The results also infer that the USA is the world's largest producer of LGBTQ+ cinema, which mirrors its paramount role as the world's largest audiovisual cultural host and producer. In addition, most of the main producing countries (Canada, Spain, United Kingdom, Germany, etc.) have favorable legislative measures towards the LGBTQ+ community. Film production

with LGBTQ+ content varies significantly between countries. For instance, historically large national producers such as India, Nigeria or Japan have a relatively low ratio of LGBTQ+ production. The study does not focus on relevant historical cases that can nevertheless lead to interesting enquiries, such as why is LGBTQ+ representation absent in Soviet cinema (1917-1991) and, contrarily, notably present in West German cinema (1949-1991). These historical cases, as well as the increase in the last decades of production in countries that, traditionally, have not presented a favorable environment for the LGBTQ+ community (i.e. India, Turkey) are possible case studies for future research. Other research could include the dialogue around the transnational visions of the LGBTQ+ community that may emerge from relevant linguistic communities, as inferred from the production in majority languages such as Spanish, Portuguese, French, and German.

From this study, a prevalence of gay male characters followed by lesbian characters is shown, with an underrepresentation on film of other identities such as 'trans' and 'bisexual' characters, confirming the results found in other sources. Bisexualism and lesbianism in databases should not be confused with 'girl-on-girl' scenes where two women are having sex. These narratives, despite reflecting sexual behaviors and perhaps identities, may respond to the desire of male heterosexual audiences (Benshoff and Griffin *Queer Images: A History of Gay and Lesbian Film in America* 133). In this sense, although the overlap exists it is still quite low in relation to the films that also used the descriptor lesbian (N = 3684; 0.69%) or bisexual (N = 878; 3.07%).

Film genres portraying LGBTQ+ themes follow a similar distribution to that of global cinema, with the exception of genres such as action/adventure and animation, with little or no LGBTQ+ presence. Animation is a genre traditionally linked to children and general audiences, so the absence of LGBTQ+ characters and plots may not be casual. Large companies dedicated to global animation have institutionalized heterosexuality, establishing as a norm an imagery

that mirrors a model social order presenting a hierarchy of sexualities (Cokely 169). With regard to film genres, the literature also suggests that comedies, including romantic comedies, could have a role in representing LGBTQ+ people since the use of gay characters based on comedic stereotypes is common in the history of cinema throughout the different periods (Mira). However, the data regarding the prevalence of this film genre is not very different from the global sample.

It is also worth pointing out that most of the LGBTQ+ feature films are only suitable for people over 17-18 years of age. Conversely, action/adventure is a predominant genre that is linked not only to adult (>17) but also to general (U, PG) and moderate (12-13) certifications. A study between age classifications by audience and genre in a more homogeneous sample could clarify possible interactions between LGBTQ+ content and these variables.

Conclusions and suggestion for further studies

The collaborative nature of IMDb, as with all folksonomies, or classifications based on the collaboration of different non-expert users, is one of the main limitations of this study. However, it also brings to the academic discussion the relevance of these databases in reflecting popular debates and taxonomies. Firstly, it must be assumed that there could be an unequal representation of production by decades or of certain national movie industries and historical periods in IMDb. One of the conditions of this study was to set a minimum popularity of films, to filter out unknown or limited distribution productions. Although a total of 50 votes is not a very high threshold, this may have especially affected early cinema, reducing the number of items for the sample. On the other hand, this piece of research is mainly analyzed from a quantitative content perspective. Therefore, it does not address quality issues related to the representation of the group in the sample studied. In this regard, there has been no distinction between the representation of certain groups as positive, neutral, or negative, or the impact of

23

stereotypes in the construction of fictional characters or the plots represented. This could explain the high proportion of feature films in countries such as Italy where, despite not having equal laws in place such as same-sex marriage, has had a considerable LGBTQ+ movie production in some periods.

The addition of tags by users allows us to identify terms that can be semantically related to a topic or any other textual property, contents related to the presence of LGBTQ+ in our case. In this regard, the use of LGBTQ + categories must be understood through the context of large folksonomies and contemporary readings on queerness. IMBD only started in 2004 and their categorization only include information introduced since then. While texts from the decades of the 1930s or 1940s can be categorized through different LGBTQ+ categories, those are categorizations made by modern audiences which combine different information and levels of analysis (scholarly, aficionado or even casual spectator). This does not imply that the audience from those decades will employ those descriptors which, in many cases have undergone transformations by the linguistic communities over time. For example, the term 'gay' employed in movies from the 1910s and 1920s is mostly corresponding to its original meaning, as an adjective evoking temperament or temper ('carefree', 'cheerful or 'bright') rather than a set of sexual identities. When this arose, we did not categorize the term with the latter meaning. Similarly, some films, such as the seminal *Anders als die Andern* (1919), were produced at a time when many leading experts espoused the notion of a third sex. We may read these characters queerly, but it can be also argued that this is a misinterpretation, based largely on gender performance defined by contemporary standards. In this sense, the operative definition of LGBTQ+ cinema proposed in this research is not really intended to engage with theoretical articulations of queerness and the 'queer', as employed in Film Studies, where the term can designate a wide spectrum of ideological positions and it differs from its literal meaning associated to erotic behavior and sexual identity (Doty 6).

The interpretations behind the data about LGBTQ+ presence on descriptors within folksonomies can also be wide open. For example, representation on film is not always a consequence of greater social progression. Following the model proposed by Mattelart (Mattelart and Reader) in the case of female representation, for example, if a movement challenging the social order acquires power, the system, through elements such as mass media, introduces characters from this group to defend the social and established order. In this vein, cinema would introduce LGBTQ+ characters and/or plots only with the purpose of appeasing the struggles and demands of rights for the LGBTQ+ community by providing 'natural' explanations of their submission (*ibid*. 140).

Future approaches could delve, in a more qualitative way, into the use of descriptors and plot keywords to shed information on how variables, such as representation and identity, are represented by means of cinema. For example, the association in the storylines between the use of drugs and risky sexual practices, or the analysis of the age rating including the reasons behind restrictive ratings (for 17-year-olds or older). This could also help consolidate the findings of qualitative studies; for example, those related to the consolidation of stereotypes in the queer cinema imagery (Barrios; Mira), by identifying themes and associations of terms in plot-keyword collections.

In this paper, a mapping has been proposed of the historical and current world panorama, which allows us to propose a methodological support for future research. Our research also hopes to encourage the analysis of specific national cases, with the unique features of their historical, cultural, and social context, and taking into account the methodology and the categories of analysis proposed here. If movies allow socialization and identification with other ways of life, promoting social acceptance and the elimination of social prejudices, it follows that a quantitative increase in feature films can have a positive impact on the acceptance of other groups and their social struggles. In this sense, it is to be expected that,

despite the fact that the LGBTQ+ films output has stabilized in the last two decades, future studies may present a more positive scenario in which representation is greater than the percentages recorded here. However, a simple assessment increase in quantitative terms is not enough, since this must be supported, on one hand, by a naturalization of the characters and storylines and, on the other, by the elimination of the traditional biased, distorted, and stereotyped views on social minorities, in this case, of the LGBTQ+ community.

This study demonstrates how the use of folksonomies and, particularly, internet collective databases can help to identify large bodies of text featuring different levels of representation of LGBTQ+ identities through large periods of time and assessing differences among national producers. Future research should address the qualitative differences among these representations to different levels including LGBTQ+ identities, narrative tropes and roles, intersectionality with other communities and social groups, etc.

With our research, we are intended to support the claims of the LGBTQ+ community, analyzing the global cinema production contents and how these contents have been evolving reflecting civil rights developments. In this way, we must also pay attention to setbacks and stagnation of LGBTQ+ civil rights in different countries. We hope to have contributed with this paper to promote critical visions on the global history of cinema and its intersection with civil rights. This work has emphasized the need for increase the quality and quantity of the LGBTQ+ community representations on the audiovisual and the social environments, as a step in that direction. However, more work must be done by all society levels (political, economic, social...) to achieve real equality.

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COUNTRY	GLOBAL	%Global	GBTQ+	LGBTQ+	Ratio	% LGBTQ+
USA	41795	35.21	4232	44.99	1.28	10.13
India	8474	7.14	155	1.65	0.23	1.83
UK	7862	6.62	724	7.70	1.16	9.21
France	6790	5.72	715	7.60	1.33	10.53
Italy	5054	4.26	479	5.09	1.20	9.48
Japan	4341	3.66	216	2.30	0.63	4.98
Canada	3599	3.03	420	4.46	1.47	11.67
Germany	2993	2.52	276	2.93	1.16	9.22
Spain	2613	2.20	263	2.80	1.27	10.07
Turkey	2211	1.86	33	0.35	0.19	1.49
Hong Kong	2169	1.83	88	0.94	0.51	4.06
South Korea	1485	1.25	54	0.57	0.46	3.64
Australia	1384	1.17	135	1.44	1.23	9.75
Brazil	1343	1.13	134	1.42	1.26	9.98
Soviet Union	1300	1.10	7	0.07	0.07	0.54
Mexico	1297	1.09	88	0.94	0.86	6.78
Sweden	1271	1.07	78	0.83	0.77	6.14
Russia	1233	1.04	25	0.27	0.26	2.03
China	1143	0.96	18	0.19	0.20	1.57
Denmark	1074	0.90	52	0.55	0.61	4.84
Netherlands	997	0.84	62	0.66	0.78	6.22
Poland	987	0.83	37	0.39	0.47	3.75
Iran	983	0.83	6	0.06	0.08	0.61
Argentina	966	0.81	94	1.00	1.23	9.73
West Germany	962	0.81	97	1.03	1.27	10.08
Greece	954	0.80	78	0.83	1.03	8.18
Finland	891	0.75	55	0.58	0.78	6.17
Egypt	784	0.66	14	0.15	0.23	1.79
Hungary	662	0.56	18	0.19	0.34	2.72
Norway	637	0.54	32	0.34	0.63	5.02
Belgium	609	0.51	45	0.48	0.93	7.39
Philippines	592	0.50	87	0.92	1.85	14.70
Romania	509	0.43	8	0.09	0.20	1.57
Taiwan	504	0.42	32	0.34	0.80	6.35
Austria	488	0.41	24	0.26	0.62	4.92

Table 1. Participation of each national producer on the global sample

	Global	Global%	LGBTQ+	LGBTQ+%
DRAMA	37692	31.46	3476	36.94
COMEDY	16943	14.14	1265	13.24
ACTION__ADVENTURE	15886	13.26	1246	7.13
DRAMA & COMEDY	9906	8.27	671	13.44
DOCUMENTARY	9171	7.65	614	4.55
HORROR	8081	6.74	470	6.53
CRIME	7240	6.04	428	5
FANTASY__SF	4442	3.71	421	3.76

BIOGRAPHY	3980	3.32	374	4.47
ROMANTIC__COMEDY	3308	2.76	354	3.97
ANIMATION	1904	1.59	47	0.43
MUSICAL	1057	0.88	40	0.50
NONE	199	0.17	3	0.03
Total	**119809**		**9409**	

Table 2. Genre representation on the global sample