

Using a computational ontology and mixed-methods in conceptualising film audiences

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Audiences: rethinking audience research



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Outline: Audiences and Diverse Film Cultures

- How film audiences engage and form in English regions?
- Research questions and themes.
- Managing and analysing mixed methods data.
- Working with data using a computational ontology.
- Interpretative resources.
- Film watching, access, and audiences.
- A relational understanding of film culture and place.
- Film audiences as reflexive, interactive and relational.

Beyond the Multiplex: Audiences for Specialised Film in English Regions

Central Question:

- How do audiences engage with and form in different ways around specialised films in English regions?

Research context:

- Changing film audience experience and film consumption patterns (inc. online streaming, boutique cinema, community cinema, multiplex).
- Unequal access to diverse film culture and the wider context of cultural inequality across England.

Conceptualising film audiences

- Livingstone (2013) - audiences as relational and interactive.
- Chaney (1983, 1990) - film as a cultural form, relations of production, narrative, participation and interaction.

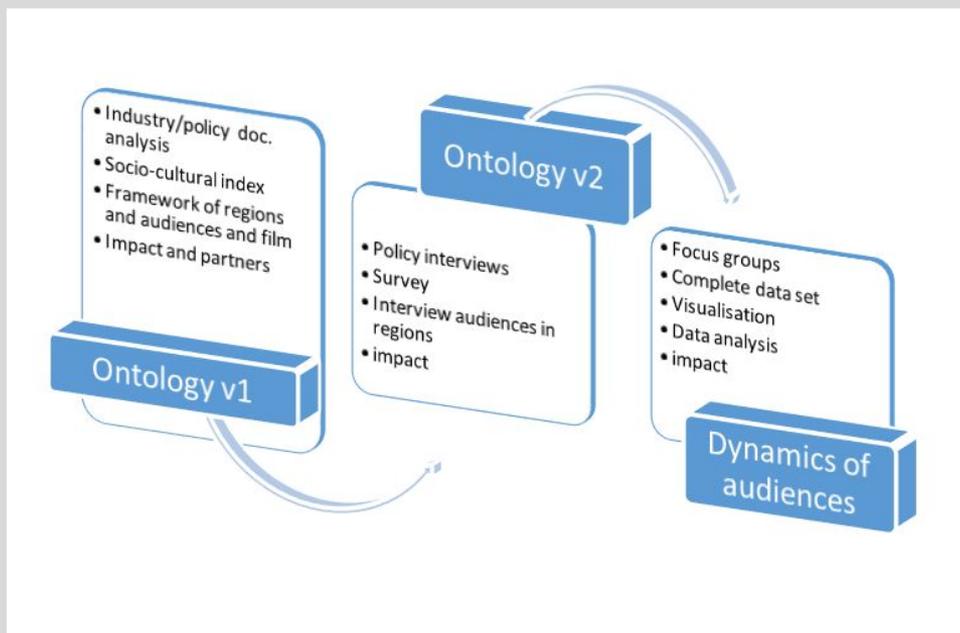
> Chaney (1983) 'The Department Store as a Cultural Form', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 1(3), pp.22-31

> Chaney (1990) 'Subtopia in Gateshead: The MetroCentre as a Cultural Form', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 7, pp.49-68.

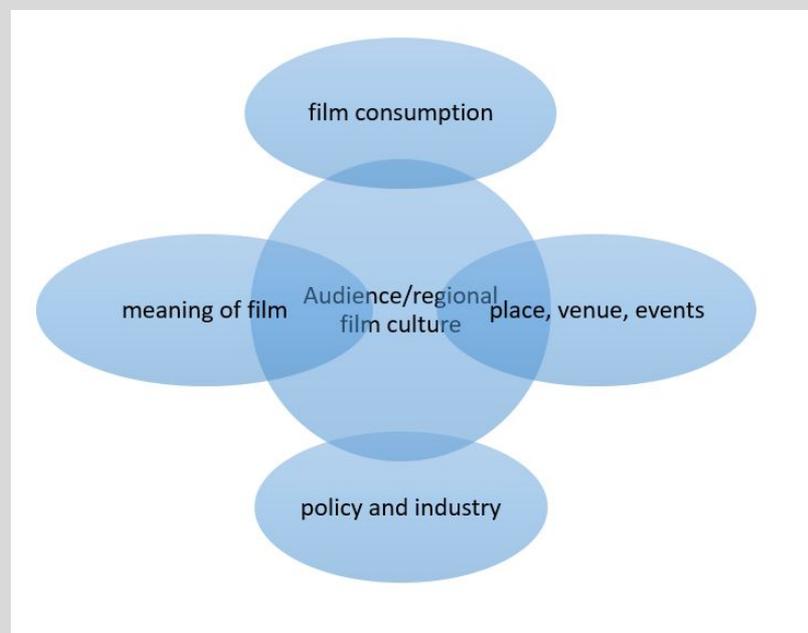
> Livingstone, S. (2013). 'The Participation Paradigm in Audience Research', *Communications Review*, 16(1-2), pp. 21-30.

Research themes and relations

Exploring audience formation as engagement with film that generates experiences

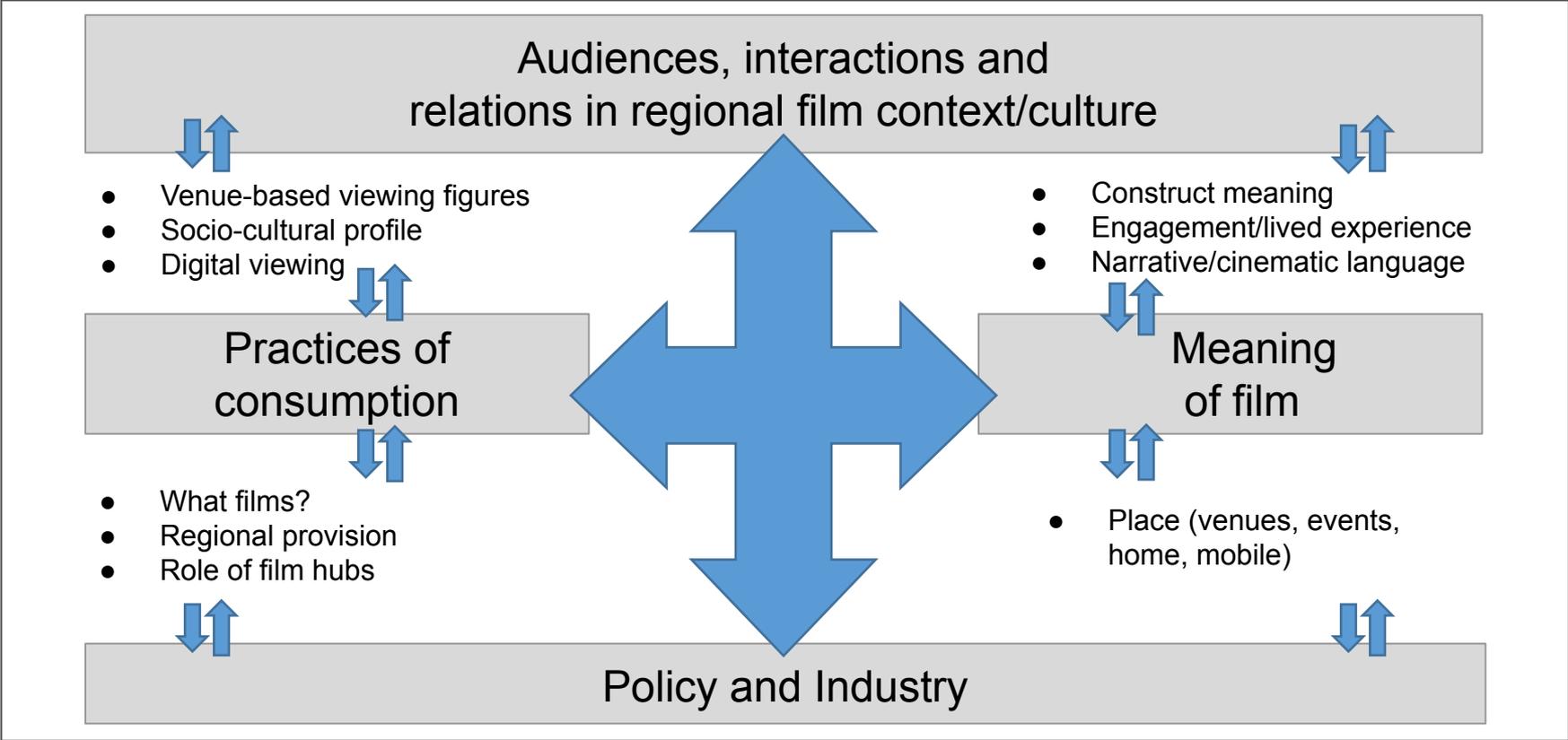


Overview of process



Research Themes

Dimensions of audience formation



Research design, methods and data

- Policy and industry document analysis.
(covers the policy environment and industry budgets surrounding audience development and regional access from 1997 to present).
- Secondary data analysis of BFI and DCMS data.
(measures for national demographics and cultural consumption).
- 200 Qualitative interviews (50 per region).
(qualitative coding scheme on audience members practices and experiences).
- Three-wave survey: N=5,094; n=547; n=317 - June 2018 to January 2019.
(variables on film consumption patterns through time).
- 16 Film-elicitation groups - four per region.
(qualitative coding scheme on the meaning of specialised film for audiences).
- 27 Elite Interviews.
(qualitative coding scheme on policy context from industry and policy experts).

Data

1. Summary of data collected and analysis

- 150 qualitatively coded industry and policy documents.
- Secondary analyses of BFI and DCMS data.
(hierarchical cluster and latent class analysis of measures: 5 demographic; 22 on cultural activities, 17 film genres).
- Three-wave survey.
(multilevel and longitudinal analysis of patterns in film preferences, viewing, sharing, and audience formations).
- 3 x qualitative coding schemes (interviews, elite interviews, film-elicitation groups).
(Combined: + 4000 nodes / + 800 Relationships).
- Total 243 thematically coded transcripts (interviews, elite interviews, film-elicitation groups).

2. Development of data analysis tools

- Graph database.
- Data model.
(relations between datasets).
- Computational ontology.

Analysing mixed-methods data

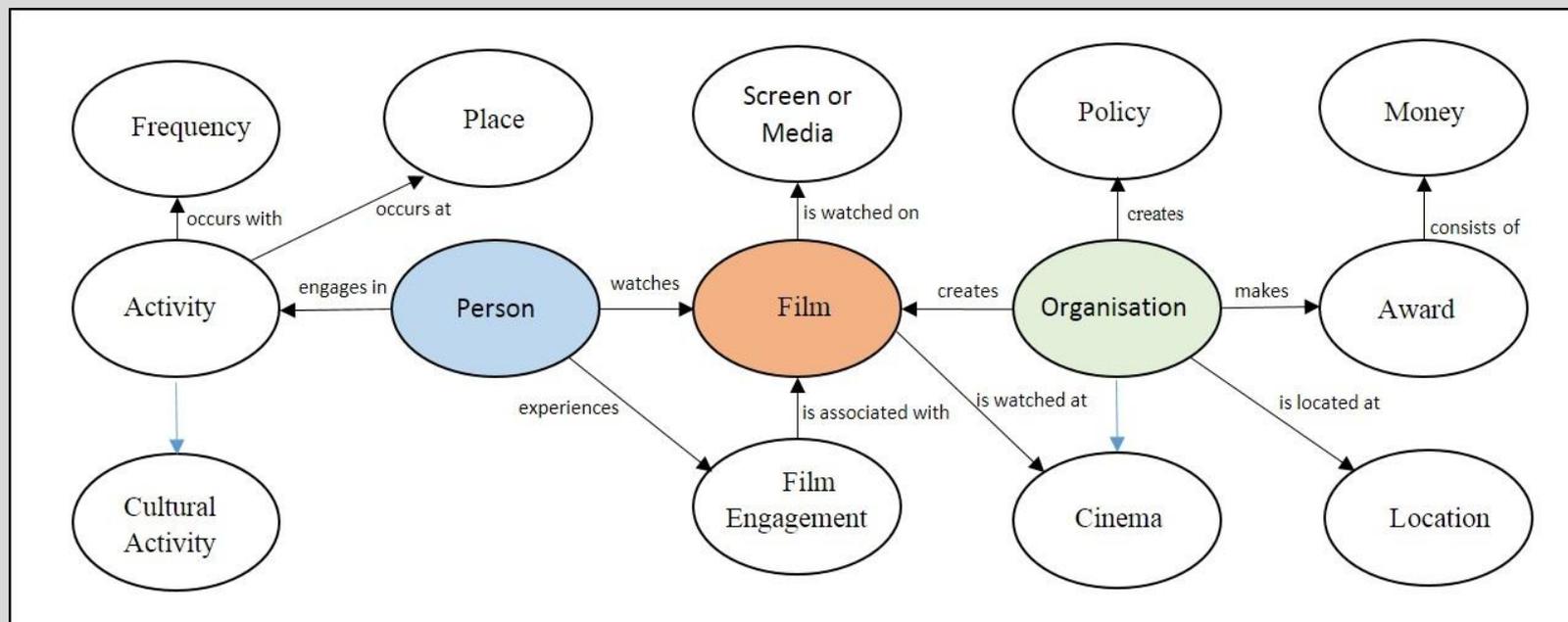
- Sensitivity and attention to the practical and epistemic ways that each dataset frames the overall analysis.
- Multi-dimensional approach: how data relates and interacts in addressing research questions.
- Iteratively developing computational ontology for audiences/film as cultural form:
 - Explore relations and interactions between datasets.
 - Inductively generate new insights on the relations between datasets.
 - Develop tools to search and query, and to aid in data visualisation.

> Cresswell, J. (2009) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*, Los Angeles. Sage

> Crossley, N. and Edwards, G. (2016) 'Cases, Mechanisms and the Real: The Theory and Methodology of Mixed-Method Social Network Analysis', *Sociological Research Online*, 21(2). pp.1–15.

> Mason, J. (2011) 'Facet Methodology: The Case for an Inventive Research Orientation', *Methodological Innovations Online*, 6(3), pp. 75-92

Our computational ontology:



Using a computational ontology

- Enables us to coherently integrate different datasets.
- It has a tri-part structure composed of: **entities**, **characteristics**, and **relationships**.

> Example:

One interview participant explained that her engagement with film changed with becoming a parent:

'...since we had the children, we don't tend to watch really hard-hitting stuff...I find it quite hard to watch things that are overly graphically violent, and particularly things that involve young children...' (Sarah)

Working with a computational ontology

The tri-part structure in action : Sarah is a person (an **entity**, with characteristics, e.g. age, gender, age, area of residence) who is a (**relationship**) parent (a PersonCategory **entity**). Sarah experiences (**relationship**) film engagement (**entity**, described as '*challenging to watch*') with violent films (a FilmCategory **entity**). Through this process we can draw on all our data to:

- Explore all '*challenging to watch*' film engagements and the characteristics related to it.
- Examine who experiences each type of film engagement to identify lifestage patterns.
- Ask questions about parenthood and film engagement.

Realism, authenticity, location, experience as an interpretative resource... *I, Daniel Blake* (2016)

Film-elicitation groups: **Jennifer, Yorkshire and Humber:**

“... I found it extremely authentic, from personal experience...because I’ve known that system and known people through that system...If anything it was toned down, for me. I was in a situation where I couldn’t speak because I’d had major surgery and the guy threatened not to process my claim because he couldn’t hear me... It’s very moving...it was one [film] I knew I’d have to watch at home because I would get very upset about it... I found it extremely realistic and I feel it reflects everything about the way the world seems to be going at the moment.”





Film watching: diversity, empathy, learning, emotion

Nicole, North East, on film watching:

“It’s pleasurable, it’s something that I enjoy doing, but it opens you up to different cultures, different people, different ways of living, different ideas about the world, I think it’s really important to watch things that you might not necessarily choose to watch actually because they might surprise you...”



Film access: inequality, venues, place and online

Michael, North West, on film access:

“We don’t have as much as other cities or towns. We got a cinema but we don’t have an independent cinema, the mainstream shows Hollywood stuff... but independent British films, em, I have to say, access to, like the rest of the world is with Netflix and stuff.”

Towards a relational understanding of film culture and place

Five levels of diverse film exhibition in English regions

- Places with a broad and diverse film culture (e.g. Manchester, Bristol and Sheffield).
- Places with narrow diversity relative to size (e.g. Sunderland, Liverpool and Hull).
- Place with diverse, independent but temporally limited local film cultures (eg. Berwick and Keswick).
- Places with a commercially dominant local film culture (e.g. Wakefield and Warrington).
- Places with limited or no opportunity to experience film theatrically.



Film audience formations

- Individualised audiences (audience of one).
- Smaller 'micro-audiences', e.g. couples/family unit.
- Venue-specific audiences.
- National audiences.
- Global audiences.
- Digital audience.



> Audiences are configured around geographies of local provision and practices of exclusion/inclusion.

> Feeling part of an audience depends on the film watched, whom it is watched with, and where.

Film audiences as interactive and relational

- The details of the interactive and relational aspects of audiences:
 - Sets of relations configuration differently but include films, venues, place and people.
 - Interactive social engagement through film with friends, family or community.
 - Interactive film participation changes over the life course.
 - Interactive interpretation through film stories.
- Conceptualisation and theory:
 - Reflexivity through the relational and interactive aspects of audiencehood.
 - Different modes of participation, film meaning, provision.
 - Audience formation embedded within film as cultural form - relations of production, distribution, narrative, participation and interaction.

Thank you

Beyond the Multiplex: Audiences for Specialised Film in English Regions

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