



**Panel's title** : Neoliberalism, Globalization and Transformations in Indian Cinemas

**Coordinator (Affiliation, University...)** : Dr. Sarunas Paunksnis (Kaunas University of Technology, Kaunas, Lithuania)

**Language** : English

**Topics** : (Arts, Politics)

**Panel presentation** :

Post-liberalization, or neoliberal India witnessed significant social, cultural and economic changes since the early 1990s. The transformations took time to become visible and to hybridize the local cultural forms. While it is possible to talk of the transformations in the cultural field interrogating varied manifestations of 'global', 'local', but more precisely 'hybrid', or 'vernacular' culture, cinematic transformations (and shifts in creative industries more generally) offer interesting insights into the unconscious of rapidly changing India's imaginary. The panel focuses on the impact of neoliberalism, its reason, ethics and aesthetics on many aspects of Indian cinemas. Rather than focusing on the dominant Hindi, or Bollywood cinema, positioning itself as pan-Indian and becoming a globalized commodity itself, the panel addresses under-researched regional, or 'minor' film industries and imaginaries.

**Key words** : Indian cinema; Globalization; Neoliberalism

**Participants** :

- 1) **Name(s) (Affiliation, University...)** : Sarunas Paunksnis (Kaunas University of Technology)

**Communication's title** : Cinema and Sexual Anxieties in Neoliberal India: Anurag Kashyap's Masculine Urbanism

**Language** : English :

**Presentation** :

In the early 2000s a complex film form began to emerge involving violent and uncanny urban imaginary. It can be seen as a blend of neo-noir and dirty realism, with Anurag Kashyap as the most visible representative working in Hindi film industry. The paper investigates the subject-formation of an urban male by looking at three Kashyap's films: *Dev D* (2009), *Ugly* (2013), and *Raman Raghav 2.0* (2016). His imagination is ideologically very conservative evoking unspoken anxiety regarding the sociocultural shifts in neoliberal India, especially with regards to the position of a man. Hindi neo-noir as a form infused with sexual anxiety acts as a symptom of neoliberal restructuring, involving, among other things, cultural hybridization as the outcome of globalization and introduction of new cultural codes into Indian local contexts; growth of the new Indian middle class in urban areas; transforming sexual relationship challenging the male dominance. The paper argues that the aesthetic transformations in early 21<sup>st</sup> century's Hindi cinema in the form of neo-noir and dirty realism try to focus on the other side of neoliberalism, or, on the dark side of the new regime.

**Key words** : India ; Cinema ; Urbanism ; Masculinity



2) Name(s) (Affiliation, University...) : Asma Sayed (MacEwan University)

**Communication's title** : Indian Regional Cinema as Minor Cinema

**Language** : English :

**Presentation** :

India's regional cinema has a history parallel to the popular Hindi or Bollywood cinema; films in Gujarati, Tamil, Bengali, Kannada, Telugu and other languages have been made since the advent of cinema in India. Satyajit Ray's Apu Trilogy (1955-59) in Bengali has been somewhat instrumental in putting Indian regional art cinema on the world stage. In 1956, Ray's *Pather Panchali* (1955), which was the first film of the trilogy, was featured at Cannes. Other notable regional films include *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (Bengali; 1960), *Bhavni Bhavai* (Gujarati; 1980), *Maya Miriga* (Oriya; 1984), *Mukhamukham* (Malayalam; 1984), *Nayakan* (Tamil; 1987) - which was also included in *Time* magazine's top 100 films of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and *Swayamwaram* (Malayalam; 1972). Regional cinema is usually deeply embedded in regional folklore, literature, and mythology, rendering it inaccessible for global audiences, as global culture is disconnected, deterritorialized, and disembedded (Mike Featherstone). Taking development of Gujarati cinema as a case study, this paper will consider the concept of 'minor cinema' in the context of India's regional cinema, and will seek to answer the question: In spite of a rich history (paralleling Hindi language cinema) and a multicultural society, why do majority of regional films remain at the margins, both in India and globally?

**Key words** : India; regional cinema; Gujarati cinema; deterritorialization

3) Name(s) (Affiliation) : Runa Chakraborty (Ambedkar University Delhi)

**Communication's title** : Asserting Her 'Self': Bengali Women and their Bhadrakok Families in Neoliberal India

**Language** : English :

**Presentation** :

This paper critically examines how India's policy of economic liberalization became instrumental in bringing phenomenal changes within the patriarchal structure of Bengali middle-class, bhadrakok families located especially in and around Kolkata. Using primarily the contexts of two major post-1990 Bengali films *Dahan* (Rituporno Ghosh, 1998) and *Paromitar Ekdin* (Aparna Sen, 2000), this paper underscores the disjuncture created by the 'dissenting' voices of new Bengali middle-class women who not only question the 'moral' values hitherto upheld as the bulwark of a Bengali bhadrakok family but also concomitantly assert their identity as independent individual subjects. The paper contextualizes this rhetoric of self-assertion within the larger discourse of neoliberalism and appraises its ability in 'unsettling' a traditional system of patriarchal values prevalent in Bengali middle class bhadrakok families. Does this endeavour of Bengali middle class women to claim their agency become a success? Or, does it yield to the ploy of a 'new' patriarchy that has re-oriented itself with the onset of an open- market economy and a culture of globalization?

**Key words** : Neoliberalism, Globalization, Bengali Films, Bhadrokok, Bengali Women, Agency



4) Name(s) (Affiliation) : Nemesis Srour (EHESS)

**Communication's title** : Indian Bodies On Arab Screens: Shifting Reception Of Transformed Hindi Cinema

**Language** : English :

**Presentation** :

Hindi cinema appeared on the screens of the Arab world in two successive waves. Firstly, during the 1960s, with the films of Mehboob Khan and Raj Kapoor; then in the 1980s, centering around the star actor Amitabh Bachchan, and constituting the real Golden Age of Hindi cinema in the Middle East. While Indian companies were adopting a global strategy at the end of the 1990s to promote their films internationally, it was hard to get the Arab audience back, whose enthusiasm for Bollywood seemed to have disappeared. Besides the structural reasons that partly explain the rupture in Hindi films, how can we explain the current lack of interest of the Arab audiences for Hindi films? The paper argues that the enthusiasm and its weakening are both articulated around the body as identity base – cabaret song sequences echo Egyptian cinema representations of the dancer, while Amitabh Bachchan's angry young man embodies a common imaginary across Indian and Egyptian workers audiences. Around the years 2000, Bollywood shifted towards the Gulf market: the distance became blatant. While Bollywood was reinventing *desi* modernity, Dubai needed to cover up the Indian actors' bodies in marketing campaigns, thus disclosing a "moral" rupture in the representations of the body.

*Key words* : Bollywood, Middle East, cinema, body.

5) Name(s) (Affiliation) : Sonia Ghalian (Manipal University)

**Communication's title** : The Neoliberal Narrative of Self and Desire in *Kaaka Muttai*

**Language** : English :

**Presentation** :

By analyzing a Tamil film *Kaaka Muttai* (Manikandan, 2015), this paper explores the consequences of one's situated place in a neoliberal world that constantly constructs desires and establishes identities, and defines the limits of autonomy with regards to constructing selfhood, rationality and a sense of ethics. Set in Chennai, the film is a story of two slum children who over the course of the film develop a desire for something they never had: a pizza. It is a film about aspiration, a food chain and a kind of hunger that is unique to the process of globalization. The question that I explore in this paper is the one about the possibility of making an alternate choice to the one the children make in the film. It explores the neoliberal self, created by the forces of globalization, where the object of desire represents the model of aspiring to overcome one's identity by achieving and acquiring materialistic goods, only to face the inevitable "neurotic" existence.

*Key words* : Indian cinema, Identity, Commodity culture, Neoliberalism, Desire.

6) Name(s) (Affiliation) : Veena Hariharan (Jawaharlal Nehru University)

**Communication's title** : The Global Precariat And The Malayalam Film Industry



**Language** : English :

**Presentation** :

What unites screen media workers in Europe, Hollywood, Bombay, Chennai or Kerala is their “precariousness” (*Precarious Creativity*, ed. Michael Curtin and Kevin Sanson) – a new world order of neoliberal globalization that enables transnational flows of labor and capital, simultaneously creating the conditions for agency and exploitation. In this paper, I attempt to map contemporary labor practices in the film industry of Kerala through an ethnography of its important collective organizations: unions, associations, and societies that control, facilitate and ameliorate the work and working conditions of the precarious labor of cine and TV artistes, technicians and actors as well as producers, exhibitors and distributors. Some of these include the Kerala Film Chamber of Commerce, KFPA (Kerala Film Producers Association), FEFSI (Film Employees’ Federation of South India), FEFKA (Film Employees Federation of Kerala), MACTA (Malayalam Cine Technicians Association) and AMMA (Association of Malayalam Movie Artistes). Until as recently as the nineties, the film industry in Kerala operated out of neighboring Chennai, depending on the thriving Tamil film industry’s labor, unions, and infrastructure, while looking across the Indian Ocean to the Gulf for capital. I track the trans-regional as well as transnational movements of labor and capital to delineate the local specificities of cine labor collectives in Kerala as it networks with a national as well as global precariat.

**Key words** : Neoliberal, Labor, Capital, Collectives