Selling Culture in a Socialist State: Film Screening, Ideology, and the Plan in the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic (1956 – 1972)

Agnė Rimkutė

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Supervisor: Marsha Siefert

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I hereby declare that this dissertation contains no materials accepted for any other degrees in any other institutions and no materials previously written and/or published by another person unless otherwise noted.

Abstract

Cinematic life in the Soviet Union has long been established as a domain of state propaganda, within which cinema was defined by the authorities as an ideological weapon designed to mould socialist consciousness and foster the loyalty to the socialist project. Among the consequences of the ambition was the conflictual relationship between film creators and the authorities, but Soviet utilization of cinema as an ideological tool was enacted in another area of cinematic life – the decades-long project of cinefication, conceived as an attempt to develop a network of cinemas across the USSR. Within the framework of Soviet cultural programme, the ascribed value of film screening was akin to that of the film itself: it lied within cinema's potential for aesthetic and political betterment of a person and a collective. As such, film screening seemed to be estranged from the material concerns or the pursuit of profit. Yet, during the 1960s Soviet film screening network was fraught with worry about the "cash register film" – a category defined by its vast capacity to attract audiences to cinema and generate cash income. Not only was the cash register film one of the culprits behind the growing presence of Indian or Western films on Soviet screens – it also introduced a persistent presence of economic valuation of an ideological weapon, highlighted the contradictions of the Soviet cultural enlightenment project, and was a symptom of the presence of strategies rooted in the pursuit of economic gain on the ideological front of film screening and outreach to Soviet people.

The dissertation seeks to elucidate this conundrum by trying to understand what were the conditions that allowed the pursuit of economic interest emerge in Soviet cinema network? What kind of historical, institutional and economic circumstances encouraged cinema network employees' pursuit of financial objectives while laboring at the "ideological front"? How could a response to audiences' preferences emerge in an economic structure broadly perceived as defined by seller's dominance over the consumer? Finally, how was the resulting tension

between ideological mission and income experienced, interpreted, and justified by the actors working to deliver the films to the masses?

Conceived as a study of a microcosm of a cinemagoing in one of the Soviet Union's republics (the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic), the dissertation explores the phenomenon of the manifestations of material interest in the cinema network. Focusing on the multifaceted, yet interrelated, areas of film screening – administrative and economic coordination of cinema network, screening of films, provision of cinema services, advertisement practices, and work - the dissertation explores the life of film and cinemagoing as objects of economic exchange. The inquiry suggests that the multilayered factors of the presence of limited cinema enterprise autonomy, the intricacies of institutional and financial planning structure, financial discipline measures, pressure towards cost efficiency and the expansion of the socialist consumer cultures characteristic to socialist 1960s created an array of incentives for socialist cinema enterprise to both pursue income and pay attention to the audiences' preferences, even if often at the expense of cinema's ideological promise.

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Introduction

"We consider the plan to be the law, this is what the Party teaches us. But the Party also teaches us to work with the people, and to perform this work innovatively. And Lenin has taught us that cinema is an irreplaceable weapon of communist education. But sometimes […] plans put us in a position of cutting down the branch on which we're sitting."[1] The author of the reflection on the contradictory bearings of the state socialist film screening sector was Sigizmundas Juozas Šimkus, the Deputy Head of the Propaganda and Agitation Branch of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party, and a vocal participant of one of the most productive and candid discussion on the problems of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic's (LSSR) cinema network held at the LSSR State Cinematography Committee (SCC) in February 1967. The "we" Šimkus was referring to was not a confined group of high-ranking state officials, but a rather diverse group of the LSSR film screening administrators and employees, some of whom were present in the room – including a representative of an advertisement agency from Moscow, members of the SCC and, importantly, numerous managers and technicians from local cinema directories of the LSSR.

As a career Party politician, having spent decades navigating across educational and cultural institutions of the LSSR, Šimkus may have been exceptionally discerning in his analyses of the problems pertaining to film screening. By the 1960s, however, his insights into the fraught relationship between the plan and communist education were far from unusual: high-ranking Party members and rural cinema managers alike were facing an apparently irresolvable tension between constant emphasis on cinema's role in moulding socialist consciousness, and the pressures of the financial plan targets set for cinema network. More specifically, on the one side of the ongoing debates was the objective of drawing on cinema as an arena of communist

[1] LLMA, 1967 February 23, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 105, 203.

education, the key purpose of which was to mobilize, educate, and shape the tastes and political loyalties of the Soviet citizens. On the other side stood another, an equally crucial, tenet of the state socialist order – the imperative to meet planning targets, an objective that was measured in numerical cinema attendance rates and generated income. The significance and repercussions of the tension between these two objectives of film screening went far beyond that of a mere intellectual or political debate performed behind the closed-door meetings of intellectuals and Party bureaucrats: the conflict between ideology and the plan was ingrained in cinema network's institutional designs, bore a profound impact on the strategies of cinema management, and shaped cinema going experience of the LSSR cinemagoers. One of the key reflections of the conflict, in the eyes of contemporary state and Party officials, as well as numerous concerned commentators in the cultural press, was the growing prevalence of "commercialist" tendencies in the LSSR film screening network. Within a state socialist moral order, such tendencies were questionable on their own right. However, as Šimkus tried to explain, they also contested the ideological mission of film screening under socialism: as this dissertation endeavours to demonstrate, pressure to meet planning targets provided an incentive to screen the entertaining films preferred by the audiences.

The "commercialist" tendencies observed by the contemporaries were not exclusive to the LSSR, nor to the reform socialism of the 1960s. Historians have observed similar processes in the early years of the Soviet Union, as well as during the dogmatic and restrictive Stalinist era. As Kristin Thompson shows, the 1919 nationalization of film industry did not mean that the Soviet state committed to a full subsidization of film production or film screening: her research reveals that an imposition of a top-down administrative control over the economy and the expectation of financial sustainability from film screening sector were not mutually exclusive. Those engaged with film screening were therefore subjected to a persistent pressure to engage in practices encompassed by commercial motives, less than egalitarian cinema ticket price

setting policy, and fostering of an unequal development of regional and urban cinema networks.[2] Jamie Miller observes similar processes during the 1930s, both in the context of economic reforms of NEP and the restrictive years of Stalinism: he notes not only the chaotic organization of film screening network, but also a presence of the "profit-making" motive among cinema management of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR).[3] Financial considerations of this kind continued to play an important role in repertoire planning and film screening during the 1940s as well. This tendency was probably most prominently expressed in the case of trophy films.[4] Appreciation of the economic potential and profitability of film screening persisted regardless of the progression towards increasingly centralized, top-down structure of Soviet economy and film administration.

Recognition of the profitability of film screening persisted after Stalin's death and throughout the years of the Thaw. While causing the many contradictions in Soviet film screening, the pursuit of income and even a profit motive continued to play an important role.[5] This tendency persisted well into the late socialist years,[6] contributing to the heightened prevalence of Western cinematic production on Soviet cinema screens, and, in some readings, providing one of the bases for the future dissolution of the Soviet Union.

At the same time, appreciation of the financial returns generated in cinemas was never self-evident or unproblematic, at least not to the historical actors involved in the management of film screening network. While, given an extensive presence of market economic mechanisms,

[2] Kristin Thompson, 'Government Policies and Practical Necessities in the Soviet Cinema of the 1920s', in *The Red Screen: Politics, Society, Art in Soviet Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1992), 19–41.
[3] Jamie Miller, *Soviet Cinema: Politics and Persuasion under Stalin*, KINO, the Russian Cinema Series (London ; New York : New York: I.B. Tauris ; Distributed in the USA by Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 28.
[4] Kristin Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire That Lost the Cultural Cold War* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2014), 39–43; Lina Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė, 'Moving Pictures for Peasants: The Kinofikatsia of Rural Lithuania in the Stalinist Era (1944–1953)', *Jahrbuch Für Geschichte Des Ländlichen Raumes* 15 (2018): 49–63.
[5] Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time*, 39–48.
[6] Sergei Zhuk, 'Hollywood's insidious charms: the impact of American cinema and television on the Soviet Union during the Cold War', *Cold War History* 14, no. 4 (2014): 593–617.

promotion of "an unhealthy sensationalism"[7] was sometimes criticized as a way too common practice in interwar Lithuania, cinema in the Soviet Union was framed as a part of a larger Soviet cultural project, permeated with a belief in the capacity of education and culture to enable social progress.[8] Cultural production, and the institutional arrangements through which artistic creations were distributed to the masses, were charged with a mission aptly summarized by Kristin Roth-Ey: that of "educating, training, motivating and mobilizing Soviet citizens".[9] Conceptions of the Soviet culture in general, and cinema in particular, as a crucial tool in furthering appropriate understanding of the Revolution, reached back to the 1920s.[10] In the eyes of Soviet authorities, cinema had an important role to play in the development of the moral virtues of the Socialist Man. By the 1960s, militant vision of Soviet culture persisted: cinema network employees were publicly encouraged to keep in mind that they were workers of the "ideological front,"[11] and the cinema the were presenting to the audiences was a "sharp ideological weapon."[12]

An unresolved conflict between economic and ideological commitments in an area of the dissemination of cultural goods, film being one of them, poses as complex a conundrum to a historian as it did to comrade Šimkus and his colleagues dispersed across administrative offices, the LSSR film studio, Party quarters, local cinema directories, and the editorial offices of cultural and cinema magazines. This tension was not, I contend, a matter solely of an ideological divergence and disagreement, or a symptom of a struggle between different

[7] Dr. J. Purickis, 'Kinematografas Ir Visuomenės Auklėjimas [Cinematograph and Education of the Public]', *Lietuvos Aidas*, 29 September 1932.
[8] On the connections between modernity, Enlightenment and state's propensity to mobilize and shape its citizens, see: David Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).
[9] Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time*, 11.
[10] Miller, *Soviet Cinema*, 13.
[11] 'Ukmergiškiai Dirba Brigadiniu Metodu [Ukmerge Projectionistts Adopt Brigade Method]', *Ekrano Naujienos [Screen News]*, no. 19 (18 May 1964): 5.
[12] 'LTSR Kino Tinklo Darbuotojų Ir Respublikos Aktyvo Kreipimasis [A Call from the LSSR Cinema Network Employees and Republic's Activists]', *Ekrano Naujienos*, 14 December 1964.

political groups competing within Soviet government apparatus, or even just a mere discursive battle: the causes of the contradiction were rooted in the institutional basis and economic order that structured many of the processes of Soviet film screening. Therefore, my inquiry is an attempt to unravel this conundrum by prying into the institutional and economic settings facilitating film screening in a state-socialist, centrally planned cinema network. The dissertation will be guided by the following questions: what were the institutional and economic frameworks that created the conditions for the emergence of the accusations of commercialism in Soviet film exhibition network in the first place? How did variously (horizontally and vertically) positioned institutions seek to shape film consumption?[13] What encouraged cinema network employees' pursuit of financial gain while laboring at the "ideological front"? How could cinemas screen films that were on high demand among the audiences in a centrally planned economic structure of cinema network, which, as many analyses of the economic history of the Soviet Union would suggest, had established a setting in which all was planned at the top, where there was no competition apart from that for the allocation of the state resources, where enterprises and their managers did not know the threat of bankruptcy, where the economy of shortage prevailed leaving suppliers with no economic incentive whatsoever to respond to the preferences of a (cultural) consumer? And, given the persistent presence of the quandary between the ideology and the plan or, in other words, the public service and state budget[14] – how was the tension experienced, interpreted, and justified by the actors involved in delivering the films to the masses?

The dissertation offers one of the first in-depth studies of film screening and the conditions of cinemagoing under state socialism. The pursuit of the understanding of the dilemma between the varying teachings of the Party and the plan, guided by the questions outlined above,

[13] Judith Thissen, 'Cinema History as Social History : Retrospect and Prospect', in *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 123–33.
[14] Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time*, 27.

compels an inquiry into the ways in which cinema was delivered to the audiences, with special focus, in the words of social historian of cinema Judith Tissen, on the material conditions under which movies were distributed and presented to the LSSR viewers.[15] In addition, the dissertation is also conceived as an attempt to recover the voices of local cinema management, employees, and audiences, in an effort to define the role they might have played in the historical processes shaping socialist cinemagoing of the 1960s, as well as in the Soviet economic system. However, a pursuit of the still novel approach to cinema and film screening as a social and economic phenomenon requires us to first explore the venues for challenging and moving beyond the media specificity that has for a long time haunted the study of cinema.[16]

The many lives of film

In Soviet Union's cinema network, film was a cultural object for sale, and in the case of cinematic production defined as artistically and ideologically valuable – it was an ideological weapon for sale. By the 1960s, collection of money for screening films, and screening films that could be predicted to collect greater amounts of money, already had a decades long history. At that point, however, the process of assigning monetary value to and exchanging the product traditionally resistant to commensuration and commodification[17] was conducted in the context of rapidly evolving political, cultural and economic reforms of de-Stalinization, economic and institutional decentralization, and experimentation with introducing limited market

[15] Thissen, 'Cinema History as Social History'.

[16] For a discussion of the limitations of this approach, see: Daniël Biltereyst, Richard Maltby, and Philippe Meers, eds., *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2019).

[17] For complexities related to commodification and commensuration in market settings, see: Alain Supiot, *Homo Juridicus: On the Anthropological Function of the Law* (London ; New York: Verso, 2007), 97–98.; Wendy Nelson Espeland and Mitchell L. Stevens, 'Commensuration as a Social Process', *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (August 1998): 313–44. For a theoretical analysis of an affinity between market and Soviet planning in reliance on calculation as a way of ensuring social order, see: Alain Supiot, 'The Law Geared to Numbers: From the Gosplan to the Total Market', in *Governance by Numbers: The Making of a Legal Model of Allegiance*, trans. Saskia Brown (Oxford; Portland, Oregon: Hart Publishing, 2017), 104–21.

mechanisms to planned economy. Across the Eastern Bloc, the reforms, while most frequently analyzed in the context of industrial enterprises, did extend to the sphere of culture as well, prompting discussions over the most suitable valuation of artistic activity and art.

Discussions on the relationship between aesthetic and economic in a socialist society reached the LSSR as well. In 1966, shortly before the Prague Spring and amid Kosygin economic reforms disrupted the established enterprise management mechanisms and strategies, the LSSR cultural magazine *Kultūros barai* published an overview of a discussion conducted between Czechoslovak sociologists, economists, and artists.[18] The starting point of the article was the experimentation with economic mechanisms directed at, much like in the case of Kosygin reforms, the pursuit of cost-efficiency in artistic production and distribution. Experimentation with the new reform measures in Czechoslovakia had promptly raised questions about the value of art, the material basis of artists' livelihood, and appropriate basis for estimating their remuneration, as well as the relationship between aesthetic and commercial value of artistic creations. One of the speakers, named Shada, contended that "artistic function of art, realized in the moment of aesthetic experience, had nothing to do with its' economic value." The problem was posed by the fact that artworks did, without a doubt, have an economic value (not the least because artist required work tools and sustenance to produce them), and were economically useful. Among the contributors to the discussion were a group of artists, who felt compelled to speak against this position, deeming it to be "a prevailing view that artwork or an artistic institution must deliver a strictly defined profit (*pelnas*). Relationship between capital and art cannot be beneficial to the latter. The principle of commercialism (considered by Lenin the opposite to the development of socialist art) should not become the policy of the state, the

[18] Antanas Masionis, 'Apie Estetinę Ir Ekonominę Meno Vertę [Regarding the Aesthetic and Economic Value of Art]', *Kultūros barai*, 6 September 1966.

claimed. After all, culture is *rentabili*[19] in other, non-monetary, sense," they were reported to argue.

The contested issue of aesthetics, ideology and economic returns persisted throughout the 1960s. Yet, while discussions over the material basis of artistic activity, the relationship between art and money, and an occasional worry from film screening network administrators about whether they should be expected to profit from ideology in the first place, and whether it was not the case that "ideology profited from ideology [itself]"[20] continued, films continued to be purchased, leased, and tickets to the screenings continued to be sold. As was the case in alternative modes of economic coordination, artwork had a monetary value in the Soviet Union.[21] Films were bought and sold in the centralized and planned film economy, starting with the foreign purchases made by Soveksport film in Moscow, to the ticket sales in a remote village in a Lithuanian socialist republic. Monetization of the relationship to cinema was present even in such heavily-state coordinated programs as that of dissemination on films on agriculture. Agricultural modernization, one of the highlights of numerous Khrushchev's initiatives,[22] relied on film extensively because of its attributed capacity to educate (in this case, in a narrow sense of the word) and mobilize the people. For the employees of the LSSR cinema network, working with agricultural films meant a new line of activity: convincing the management of collective farms to screen agricultural films. Yet, these screenings, for all their importance to the development of the economy of the Soviet Union, still had to be paid for from the collective farm budget. Whereas in many other fields of cultural production the

[19] Lithuanian *rentabilumas*, Russian *rentabel'nost'*: indicator of economic efficiency, referring to cost-efficiency, a balance between spending and income. The term is frequently translated as "profitable". In Lithuanian, however, profitability can be referred to by a much more accurate term *pelningas*. Thus, the use of *rentabilu* is more careful and ambiguous.
[20] LLMA, 1967 February 23, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 109.
[21] Vera L. Zolberg, *Constructing a Sociology of the Arts*, Contemporary Sociology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 9.
[22] Philip Hanson, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Economy: An Economic History of the USSR from 1945*, The Postwar World (London: Longman, 2003), 48.

dilemma between economic and non-economic values of film might have been less tense intensive due to an assumption of an extensive subsidization from the state coffers,[23] cinema and cinemagoing were consistently defined as a source of income, thus magnifying the conflict between economic and non-economic values of cinema as a cultural phenomenon.

"In social life, different forms of value are present simultaneously, such as moral value, aesthetic value, and economic value. (…) Being judged as a commodity is only one sort of "life" that a thing can have,"[24] proposed economic sociologists Jens Beckert and Patrik Aspers in their edited volume on social complexity of assigning economic value to such goods as art, wine, or fashion. Conversely, being judged as a tool for achieving the common good inherent in the ideals of the socialist project was also just one of the lives that Soviet film could have – and the one that we are, thus far, immeasurably better informed about. Cinema's role as an ideological and educational tool, a form of art subjected to a heavily politicized and intense interference of Soviet authorities, and the crucial role that moving picture was ascribed in the Soviet government's efforts to mold their citizens' socialist consciousness, has encompassed many historical research projects. This research has furthered our understanding of an incredibly important part of Soviet cultural and cinematic life: as mentioned, as a cultural phenomenon cinema was assigned immense significance and transformative power in the Soviet Union. Prevailing focus on the ideological constraints imposed on cinema often directs researchers' attention to the analysis of the work of the individual artists, their relationships with state institutions and censors, as well as the Soviet ideological project overall.[25] However, these crucial insights into the political and ideological existence of cinema under socialism

[23] Paul Betts, 'The Politics of Plenty: Consumerism in Communist Societies', in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism* (Oxford ; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 425–37.
[24] Patrik Aspers and Jens Beckert, eds., *The Worth of Goods: Valuation and Pricing in the Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5–6.
[25] See, for instance: Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Miller, *Soviet Cinema*; Richard Taylor, *The Politics of the Soviet Cinema, 1917-1929*, International Studies (Cambridge University Press) (Cambridge [Eng.]: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

tends to leave the problems related to the economic value of film making and screening aside, and therefore offers only partial support for the study intending to explore in greater depth the tension between the ideology and the plan under state socialism.[26] Much like in the case of the discussants in Czechoslovakia in 1966, the persistent division between the artistic and the economic remains a puzzle.

Seeking to establish a methodological background for a closer exploration of cinema's economic life in the Soviet Union, the dissertation draws on thought experiments developed in the field of the sociology of art, as well as some of the by now classic sociological approaches to artistic creations as objects moving through different contexts, in the process of which they end up in the hands of professional groups each of which hold their own aesthetic, financial and career interests.[27] Approaching cinematic life in the LSSR with these frameworks in mind, we can lay the basis from which to unravel the historical circumstances of the Soviet conflict between ideology and the plan, and between cinema's incommensurable political mission and the numerical frameworks established as part of the planning and accounting processes. It also enables us to consider the implications that the persistent tension between ideology and commerce might have for our understanding of the historical developments of late Soviet cinema cultures, as well as for our understanding of Soviet economic planning processes. In the course of this exploration, I will inquire into two of the less studied lives of cinema in the Soviet Union. Firstly, I'll shed some light on cinema's existence as a subject of economic exchange in a field of procedures and judgements that rendered cinema and cinemagoing determinable by commensurability, monetary value, and calculation. In other words, I will pay close attention to the ways in which this life of film was lived out as a category of the historical

[26] For a nuanced inquiry into the institutional dynamic of film making under Stalin, see: Maria Belodubrovskaya, *Not According to Plan: Filmmaking under Stalin* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017).
[27] Howard Saul Becker, 'Howard S. Becker. Art as Collective Action', in *Sociology of Art: A Reader* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 88. The socio-material turn in sociology of art has similar insights, see: Strandvad S.M, 'Attached by the Product: A Socio-Material Direction in the Sociology of Art', *Cultural Sociology* 6, no. 2 (2012): 163–76.

state and spontaneously emerging categorization schemes, as a statistical unit in economic accounting sheets, estimates of economic efficiency, as a resource in the quarters of institutions the primary concern of which was not to secure the fulfilment of cinema's ideological mission, but rather to manage Soviet economy. Secondly, I will follow this life of film in the context of film screening – a setting in which films of the Soviet Union, both domestically produced and imported from abroad, finally met their audiences.

The strange bedfellows: cinema, economy, and the state

In 1967 Vilnius' cinema employees were invited to collect the award for an outstanding work and performance of their cinema directory. Appropriately for an official occasion of this kind, the awardees expressed their gratitude for the acknowledgment of their input. They also proclaimed their firm conviction to keep up the good work, in a rather curious wording: "Grateful for the care of the Party and the state, we solemnly swear to provide the state with […] 35 000 roubles of above-the-plan income."[28] In these officially recorded commitments, the Soviet state appears as everything it had promised to be: a strong entity offering benevolent oversight of everything and everyone, with the Party working tirelessly for the wellbeing and the future of the Soviet citizens. This was the image relentlessly promoted in the speeches of Soviet political elites, introductory paragraphs of the countless bureaucratic decrees and reviews, and in the headlines of *Tiesa*.[29] This was also an image familiar to the students of Soviet society and history, even as the totalitarian approaches were forced to enter debate with alternative readings of Soviet history: the image of the homogenous and primarily patronizing state set out to control every aspect of its citizens lives, be it leisure, consumption or work.

[28] LCVA, 1967, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 7061, p. 72.
[29] Lithuanian version of *Pravda*.

The limitations of an uncritical acceptance of such a view of the Soviet state surface once we consider that in their commitments Vilnius cinema directory employees expressed their gratitude and obligation to the Party and the state in purely monetary terms. This inadvertent monetization of their gratitude and contribution in return for the benevolent supervision of the state and the Party was not an anomaly in the LSSR cinema network. The constantly emphasized obligation for cinema enterprises to deliver income to the state budged, the tropes of "producing losses for the state budget" and especially the "owing money to the state" in the cases of failure to meet planning targets were all an integral part of cinema network administrations' records. Yet, the approaches capitalizing on the extent of political intervention performed by a homogenous Soviet state suggest that the economic was neatly absorbed by the administrative and political powers of the Soviet state and communist ideology, thus precluding the attempts to account for, or to conceptualize, the role that economic processes might have played in the Soviet Union.

A relevant critique of a common assumption that economic life in the Soviet Union was comprehensively politicized has relatively recently been voiced by Andrew Sloin and Oscar Sanchez-Sibony in their attempt to recover to role of the economic processes in state-socialist economic systems. They argue that:

> "The second paradox was that economics specialists — whether officials on both sides of the Iron Curtain or Western scholars — ended up according most weight to politics. Economic historians — particularly those critical of the Soviet system — embraced as axiomatic the view that the Soviet party-state had rendered the economy subservient to the demands of politics, ideology, the party, and, ultimately, Stalin himself. In emphasizing the primacy of the political

> over the economic, they effectively extended the logic of a broadly construed Soviet "totalitarianism"— the sine qua non of all Sovietology — into all branches of economic life."[30]

Arguably, the notion of the Soviet state as a unitary entity, and a concomitant focus on state power and intervention as subjects of research, has underpinned even the studies more cognizant of a broader array of agencies and power relations in the Soviet Union. However, perception of the Soviet state as an agent that politicized economic management "at every level" to such an extent that decisions "were based on national priorities rather than profit and loss"[31] does little to further the explanation of either the monetization of the relationship between cinema network employees and "the state", or to help understand Šimkus' conundrum of the contradiction between the political and social importance of the education of the masses, and the financial planning targets.

Economic processes are not the only area hidden by the imagery of the Soviet state as a homogenous, neatly defined and delineated entity, exercising one-sided coercive or persuasive power over its citizens. Soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, anthropologist Chris Hann expressed his doubts about the usefulness of the binary state-society opposition (which, he argued, is rooted in Western political and social theory) for our understanding of how actual socialist political systems have operated.[32] Research in political science and anthropology has also raised questions regarding the difficulty of drawing a meaningful conceptual boundary between the categories of "the state" and "society" in the context of liberal market societies, while scholars of the Soviet Union addressed similar problems in the field of Soviet studies.[33]

[30] Andrew Sloin and Oscar Sanchez-Sibony, 'Economy and Power in the Soviet Union, 1917-39', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 15, no. 1 (2014): 11.
[31] Mark Harrison, 'Communism and Economic Modernization', in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism*, 1st ed. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[32] Chris Hann, ed., *Socialism: Ideals, Ideologies, and Local Practice*, vol. 31, A.S.A. Monographs (London: Routledge, 1993), 17.
[33] Mark Edele, 'Soviet Society, Social Structure, and Everyday Life: Major Frameworks Reconsidered', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 8, no. 2 (2007): 349–73. For an inquiry informed by anthropology and political science, see:Timothy Mitchell, 'The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics', *American Political Science Review* 85, no. 1 (March 1991): 77–96.

Jurgen Kocka, a contributor to the volume advancing the conceptual framework of "modern dictatorship" as a lens for the study of social life in GDR, nevertheless admits the limitations of this approach: the risk of keeping out of view the many aspects of daily experience and socialization in state-socialist contexts.[34] State-centered approaches run a risk of overlooking the numerous forms of social life and the areas where various forms of social and individual agency took root: once the analytical framework is constructed around the notion of the extensive prescriptive powers of a unitary state, the understanding of the actions of its citizens is stranded in the binary of acquiescence to or rebellion against that state.[35] The expressions of agency and autonomy, then, are bound to fall somewhere outside of state frameworks or, in reference to Dorothee Wierling's metaphor, "beneath" the political apparatus.[36]

Image of the homogenous state poses yet another limitation pertinent to the study of cinema network and cinemagoing practices in the Soviet Union: disregard for the multiplicity of institutions comprising the administrative apparatus, and their importance in defining the objectives and implementation of a variety of state programs. Recognition of institutional multiplicity is particularly important in the case of cinema.[37] Rather than a mere subject of the "propaganda state", due to the complexity and cost of production process, cinema was managed, even if to differing extents, by an array of institutions. The importance of accounting for the institutional multiplicity grows in the case of film screening. In case of the LSSR, for instance, there was one film studio but, by the end of the 1960s, around 1500 film screening units.

[34] Jürgen Kocka, 'The GDR: A Special Kind of Modern Dictatorship', in *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 17–26.
[35] Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, 'Finding One's Way in Social Space: A Study Based on Games', *Social Science Information* 22, no. 4–5 (1983): 631–80.
[36] Dorothee Wierling, 'Work, Workers, and Politics in the German Democratic Republic', *International Labor and Working-Class History.* 50 (1996): 43–63.
[37] For a brief overview of works focusing on the "official measures taken to bring cinema under ideological control", see: Vance Kepley Jr, 'The Origins of Soviet Cinema: A Study in Industry Development', *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 10, no. 1 (1 January 1985): 22, https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208509361238.

Yet, as Alice Lovejoy points out in her study of army film in Czechoslovakia, the wealth of inquiries on state-socialist cinema also tend to envision the state in unitary terms rather than an institutional actor consisting of multiple dimensions.[38] The importance of acknowledging the influence of the diversity of institutional settings is emphasized in some of the studies focusing on the maneuvering and divergence of interests within the state socialist political apparatus and governing institutions.[39] However, consideration of a possibility of multiple institutional tensions applies not only in the case of central governance apparatuses or the analysis of the horizontally located central institutions, but also is also crucial for a deeper understanding of vertical institutional relationships. Finally, the multiplicity of institutions and positions was also recognized by and consequential for ordinary socialist citizens, who could form a divergent array of attitudes towards variously positioned institutional bodies. As Zsuzsa Gille's example drawn from her family history suggests, people could find the causes for specific processes – such as shortage of goods – in different places, be it the Party, or the local management.[40]

The answer to an ambitious question who or what the state was, along with an attempt to conceptualize the limits of the state and society, falls beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, the multiple concerns raised by the critics of the imagery of a Soviet state as a homogenous, ubiquitous, and clearly delineated entity are a source of many of the questions guiding this work.[41] What the dissertation will attempt to achieve instead will be to take a close look at how some of the historical schemes and programs initiated at the top level of a self-

[38] Alice Lovejoy, *Army Film and the Avant Garde: Cinema and Experiment in the Czechoslovak Military* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 11.
[39] See, for instance, the work on consumer lobby in the GDR: Mark Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand: The Politics of Consumerism in East Germany*, Harvard Historical Studies 147 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).
[40] Zsuzsa Gille, Cristofer Scarboro, and Diana Mincytė, 'The Pleasures of Backwardness', in *The Socialist Good Life: Desire, Development, and Standards of Living in Eastern Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020), 16.
[41] Sudha Rajagopalan, *Indian Films in Soviet Cinemas: The Culture of Movie-Going after Stalin* (Bloomington [etc.: Indiana U.P, 2009), 69.

proclaimed socialist government – such as planning, ideological education through cinema, socialist citizens' right to leisure, experimentation with economic efficiency techniques in the 1960s, socialist citizens' right to material and cultural consumption – were implemented and interpreted "on the ground". The dissertation is conceived as a study "concerned not so much with socialism or communism as abstract ideas, but with their concrete realization in 'actually existing' societies,"[42] tracing how some of the core ideas and institutions of the project of state socialism evolved in local – national and institutional – settings. The direction taken here builds on an apparent contradiction between the two of Stephen Kotkin's ideas: rather than seeking to deepen readers' understanding of the "grand strategies of the state",[43] I will rather delve into the "… panoply of ideas and practices, customs and institutions, technologies and micro-procedures, often arising independently, [that] can be brought together by political pressures and the humble instrumentalities of everyday existence to form contestational arenas from the ground up, in which not just lives, but socioeconomic regimes, even states, are invented and reinvented".[44] I hope in this way to be able to assess the manner in which the dynamic inter-institutional tensions have shaped film screening and cinemagoing worlds during Soviet 1960s, and to engage more seriously with local involvement in the developments of the socialist 1960s.

Dissertations' focus on a local setting – in this case, on one of the republics of the Soviet Union and, in terms of institutional and economic organization, maintaining the position and preoccupations of a film screening unit in sight – offers an opportunity to seriously consider that which is emplaced and the internal social dynamics of the socialist cinema network.[45] The benefits of such an approach is one of the reasons why, within an emerging field of studies of

[42] Hann, *Socialism*, 31:2.
[43] Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
[44] Stephen Kotkin, 'Introduction: A Future for Labor under Communism?', *International Labor and Working-Class History* 50 (1996): 1–8.
[45] John-Paul A Ghobrial, 'Introduction: Seeing the World like a Microhistorian*', *Past & Present* 242, no. Supplement_14 (1 November 2019): 7.

film screening and cinemagoing, localized focus – be it a country, a city, or even a microcosm of a neighborhood – is considered to be an attractive and fruitful research strategy.[46] The premise of such a localized analysis in the context of the Soviet Union is that state planning (or the official dreams, as a labor historian Adalberto Paz put it)[47] was bound to be frustrated by local circumstances, while local realities – and, therefore, a way in which the LSSR citizens experienced cinemagoing – was created not only by a top-down control, but also by inter-institutional tensions, decisions made by local management, and the audiences.

These frustrations and contributions are frequently overlooked, since Soviet cinematic life, as well as Soviet economic life, are often studied at an all-Union level, with general conclusions drawn from the analysis of the policies and dynamics in Moscow.[48] Some of the limitations of this approach have been emphasized by Vance Kepley in his work on early Soviet cinema.[49] Kepley's objective was to bring to light the opportunities opened by deeper consideration of the multifaceted nature of the Soviet film production, and the presence of a federal Soviet film market. While Kepley focused on the production of film and a concept of national cinema, his findings extend to film screening network was well. In order to probe into the dynamics of local film screening, administration and management, the dissertation will for a the time-being leave Union-level administration in Moscow in the background of archival reading, and will bring to the first plane a republic-level cinema network administrators, film critics, intellectuals were actively interested in film screening affairs, managers of dispersed local cinema directories, skilled cinema workers (especially projectionists), who labored within the local

[46] See, for instance: Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst, and Philippe Meers, *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); Judith Thissen, *Cinema Beyond the City. Small-Town & Rural Film Culture in Europe* (London: British Film Institute, 2016).
[47] Adalberto Paz, 'Free and Unfree Labor in the Nineteenth-Century Brazilian Amazon', *International Review of Social History* 62, no. S25 (December 2017): 23–24.
[48] Sloin and Sanchez-Sibony, 'Economy and Power in the Soviet Union, 1917-39'; Vance Kepley, 'Federal Cinema: The Soviet Film Industry 1924-32', *Film History* 8, no. 3 (1996): 344–56.
[49] Kepley, 'Federal Cinema'.

directories, and viewers, who played a role in shaping cinema work amidst far reaching historical changes taking place in the 1960s LSSR.

The long-1960s: a note on periodization

The socialist 1960s were comprised of multilayered historical processes, several of which were particularly important in the development of the LSSR cinema network: Soviet governments' growing emphasis on the commitment to raising the standard of living, the subsequent growth of socialist consumption standards and norms, the increased material prosperity in the Socialist Bloc, new economic reform projects, cultural liberalization brought about by the Thaw, and the concomitant openness to cultural imports. Some of these processes can be traced back to the post-war years, while others have made their first appearances already during the early years of the Soviet Union.[50]

This was the case with one of the most important themes of the 1960s – the development and expansion of socialist consumption. While such notions as "cultured trade" have appeared already before the WWII, Julie Hessler places the stabilization and expansion of non-economic goals in the sphere of consumption at 1948 – 1950.[51] This was the threshold at which many of the forms recognizable in the developing trade (and consumption) culture of the 1960s were taking shape, including the notions of "culturedness" as a prerequisite of modernizing Soviet trade, improved customer service, provision of better training for trade employees, as well as the delivery of a greater variety and higher quality goods.[52] Late 1940s, Hessler argues, was also the time when supervision of trade was delegated to lower administrative levels and the

[50] Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane Koenker, *The Socialist Sixties: Crossing Borders in the Second World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 3–5.
[51] Julie Hessler, *A Social History of Soviet Trade: Trade Policy, Retail Practices, and Consumption, 1917-1953* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2004), 310–17.
[52] Hessler, 310.

"apolitical authorities" embodied by local trade administrations. In addition to the formulation of new norms of socialist trade, the sector faced similar pressures to those noticed in the GDR[53] or, as we will see, the LSSR film screening network. Among them were the incentives to meet the sales projections, which motivated stimulation of sales among trade enterprises and workers. Already in those early post-War years, the educational component of "educating the consumer," prominent in the 1930s Russia, was giving way to consumer-oriented attitudes among trade employees. These included paying attention to consumers' demands and tastes, dedication to the improvement of customer service, and advertising – all of which are labelled by Hessler as "profit oriented innovations".[54] By the 1960s, introduction of these innovations had gained pace: development of socialist consumption standards had not only become an area of a softer form of Cold War rivalry,[55] but the very desire for consumer goods was used by central state administration as an incentive to invest in state bonds.[56] During the 1960s socialist consumption in the Soviet Union and other countries of Eastern Bloc could no longer be fully explained, as is often suggested in the general studies of Soviet economy, solely in terms of scarcity and shortage economy,[57] nor by defining it as an exclusively "sellers' market."[58] The development of new forms of trade work and attitudes has not only accelerated during the 1960s but, as we will see in Chapter 3, entered the world of cinema services.

[53] Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand*.
[54] Hessler, *A Social History of Soviet Trade*, 322.
[55] See, for instance: Susan E. Reid, 'Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and the De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev', *Slavic Review* 61, no. 2 (ed 2002): 211–52.
[56] Kristy Ironside, 'Khrushchev's Cash-and-Goods Lotteries and the Turn Toward Positive Incentives', *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 41, no. 3 (2014): 296–323.
[57] For an overview of the limitations of approaching socialist economies and consumption practices solely through the lens of economy of shortage and dictatorship of needs, see: Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger, eds., *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[58] As Susan Reid notes, already early in the decade some elements of buyers' market were noticeable: Reid, Chapter This is tomorrow! Becoming a consumer in the Soviet Sixties (2013), p. 45. On the seller's priority over consumers in the 1920s NEP retailing context, see: Marjorie L. Hilton, 'Retailing the Revolution: The State Department Store (GUM) and Soviet Society in the 1920s', *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 4 (2004): 939–64.

Forms of trade work in the late 1940s and mid-1960s might have been similar in some ways, except for one aspect: the cycle of "crisis socialism," and the times of coupons and overnight queues were over, as were the years of poverty and minimal household discretionary income.[59] The period between 1953 and 1964 witnessed an overall increase in prosperity, attested by per capita consumption growth of 44.6%, accompanied by a fall in inequality when compared to late Stalinist period.[60] Growth in prosperity and wages led to the emergence of new economic problems that were of importance for the organization of consumption: money incomes were growing faster than the supply of consumer goods and services, increasing purchasing power, and thus contributing not only to shortages, but also to the problem of unintended savings. This process of general economic growth does not comply within the periodization based on the tenures of the First Secretaries of the CPSU. Relative economic prosperity, growth in incomes and various forms of investment in consumer goods did not end with Khrushchev's rule: during the first nine years of Brezhnev's governance, economy continued to grow at a reasonable pace, only starting to show visible signs of slowdown by 1973.[61]

Another historical process distinguishing the socialist 1960s across Eastern Europe were a broad scope of attempts to reform socialist economies. Khrushchev's commitment to raising the standard of living for Soviet citizens brought along a reorganization of investment, including a limited redirection of funds from the military. While Khrushchev did not initiate substantial attempts to reform the structure and mechanisms of Soviet economy, his *sovnarkhoz* reform and efforts to reduce bureaucratic apparatus did nevertheless spark a discussion on the possible benefits that decentralization might have for the efficiency of Soviet economy. Khrushchev's governance brought about yet another important change: a relative openness of the discussion on economic matters. In 1956, the economic indicators that were until then kept

[59] Hessler, *A Social History of Soviet Trade*, 10; Hessler, 296.
[60] Hanson, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Economy*, 48–65.
[61] Hanson, 98.

secret, were shared with the public for the first time. While the framing and structure of these indicators were still often adjusted for propaganda purposes, especially for the projection of and image of continued and rapid growth of Soviet economy, the indicators collected in statistical yearbooks were not entirely unreliable. This initiative was but one of the steps for the relaxation of the limits of deliberation over the economic coordination measures in a state-socialist economy,[62] opening the ground for the emergence of reform ideas.

Economic reshuffling of the centralized command structures began almost immediately after Khrushchev's ousting. Contrary to the label of stagnation commonly ascribed to the entirety of Brezhnev's rule he, under the guidance of the Premier of the Soviet Union Alexei Kosygin,[63] initiated one of the most daring economic reform processes in the history of the Soviet Union. The so-called Kosygin (or Liberman) reforms embarked on a path of developing and introducing economic mechanisms that would increase economic efficiency of a Soviet enterprise. Within reform framework, "administrative methods" were to be partially replaced by the "economic levers" common to market economy settings – prices, profits, capital charges, and incentive funds.[64] Controls imposed by planning were also eased leaving more space for decision making on an enterprise level: planning indicators were reduced from 40 to 9 in some sectors.[65] Importantly, the economic reforms of the 1965 also included a reformulation of management and employee incentivization. Returning to Lenin's ideas on the importance of responding to the "material interests" as a way of motivating economic agents, reform measures emphasized the profit as a source of employees' bonuses.[66] This stood in contrast to the forms of recognition more directly sanctioned by the state authorities, awards among them.

[62] Hanson, 51–67.
[63] Serving in this position from 1964 to 1980.
[64] Gertrude E. Schroeder, 'Soviet Economic Reform at an Impasse', *Problems of Communism* 20, no. 4 (1971): 36.
[65] Schroeder, 38.
[66] Jan Adam, 'The Incentive System in the USSR: The Abortive Reform of 1965', *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 27, no. 1 (1973): 84–92.

There is a consensus that the reforms of the 1960s failed to correct the numerous contradictions of Soviet economic apparatus. The first signs of halting the reform processes appeared in the early 1970s. After a period of initial curiosity and excitement about the possibilities of the 1965 economic reform, contemporary Western researchers assessed them as unsuccessful, prompting conclusions about the overall impossibility of reforming established state-socialist economic systems. Yet, regardless of the discussions sparked by these questions, reform processes and discourses were an important part of public discussion for a period of time, during which Soviet enterprise managers and employees were being persuaded by the press and state authorities that financial accountability, cost efficiency and material rewards (usually conceived as wage bonuses) were not only an acceptable incentive, but also a key to an efficient functioning of an enterprise.

Thus, the historical processes of improvement of standard of living, expanding discursive strategies of rational socialist consumption, growing availability of consumer goods, reconsiderations regarding the appropriate size and function of administrative apparatus, the role of decentralization, economic reform attempts and their concomitant reformulations of what constituted a quality enterprise work, cannot be neatly assigned exclusively to Khrushchev's or Brezhnev's governance. The question of periodization turns even more complex once we call into question an assumption that developments occurring at Moscow (or even the RSFSR) straightforwardly dictated and reflected the developments across the different republics of the Soviet Union. While the reach of the imperial governance should not be overstated, historical development in different socialist republics was varied. Historians of the Baltic regions' socialist period Rein Taagepera and Romuald J. Misiunas, for instance, have suggested that in the case of Soviet Lithuania it does not make much sense to follow a schematic division into Stalinist, Khrushchev's and Brezhnev's periods. They also questioned the relative importance of the changes of Party secretaries in the LSSR. In the opinion of

Taagepera and Misiunas, removal of Khrushchev in 1964 was the beginning rather than the end of the Thaw and cultural liberalization of the Lithuanian SSR, while the Thaw withered away in the aftermath of Prague Spring. The policies of Russification in the LSSR, in the meantime, did not directly follow Brezhnev's coming to power, but rather the death of the First Secretary of the Communist Party, Antanas Sniečkus, in 1974.[67]

Suggesting a belated beginning of Thaw in the LSSR likely is based on the evidence of expanding permissiveness in cultural life, including such events as publications of, for instance, the works of Albert Camus or James Joyce, which sometimes occurred ahead of their publication in the Russian part of the Soviet Union.[68] It would be difficult, though, to underestimate the importance of the Thaw for the LSSR political, social and cultural climate, including the partial rehabilitation of the deportees and political prisoners of the early 1940s.[69] However, the LSSR cinema network was, indeed, not subjected to the more stringent controls after Brezhnev's coming to power, not until the 1968 events in Czechoslovakia. It was after the Prague Spring that attempts were made to both tighten administrative and political control over cinema network, and to intensify the promotion of Soviet cinematic production.

This dissertation follows roughly the period between 1956 and 1972, contextualizing the LSSR cinema network within these multiple historical processes, all of which influenced Soviet Lithuanian cinematic life extensively. Cultural policies of the Thaw, the relative relaxation of cultural life, growing openness to Western influences, both in the areas of dissemination of culture and in international trade, encouraged the presence of foreign cinematic production on

[67] Eglė Rindzevičiūtė, 'Constructing Soviet Cultural Policy: Cybernetics and Governance in Lithuania after World War II' (Linköping, Department for Studies of Social Change and Culture, Linköping University, 2008), 45.
[68] Vardys Stanley, 'The Role of the Baltic Republics in Soviet Society', in *The Influence of East Europe and the Soviet West on the USSR* (New York: Praeger, 1975), 163.
[69] Deportations, even if on a smaller scale, kept reoccurring up to Stalin's death. In 1956, 17 000 former deportees had returned to Lithuania. By 1970 this number had reached 80 000: Tomas Balkelis and Violeta Davoliūtė, *Maps of Memory: Trauma, Identity and Exile in Deportation Memoires from the Baltic States* (Vilnius: Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, 2013), 125.

cinema screens. Cinema as a provider of access to a cultural service, in the meantime, was included among the indicators based on which the rising standard of living of the socialist citizens was measured. Finally, the LSSR film screening network was among the first in which the experimentation with economic control mechanisms was tested and implemented. Some of the developments that began with the Thaw were there to stay: the Soviet Union never returned to the harshest Stalinist methods of rule, and socialist consumption, even if severed by general economic slowdown of the 1970s, was not drawn back to the austerity regime of the Stalinist years. Other processes – such as relaxation of the enforcement of the ideological program or Kosygin reforms – were withdrawn or reversed to varying degrees by the early 1970s. I include in the dissertation the early 1970s, the years of withdrawal of the reform and intensification of the promotion of ideologically valuable content on the LSSR screens out of conviction that the way in which the reform was withdrawn can deepen our understanding about its development and the contradictions it might have created.

Note on the archives and sources

The bulk of the material on which this dissertation is based was gleaned at the LSSR institutional archives. The LSSR Ministry of Culture and the LSSR State Cinematography Committee (SCC) were the core administrative organs managing the affairs of the republic's cinema network. Research of those materials was supplemented by additional inquiries into the documentation preserved at other institutions involved in cinema network affairs: the LSSR Council of Ministers, the Planning Commission, the LSSR trade union and other archives. Most of the archives are relatively well preserved, collected in a neat chronological order by the institutions themselves, revealing the administrative norms and expectations these administrative bodies had from the film screening network. They also provide information on

the complex institutional linkages between central management, formal procedures, and irregular interactions, that shaped cinema life in the USSR.

However, local cinema management was not without a voice in this rigid hierarchical setting: their opinions and judgements are consistently present in the archives, especially in the SCC archival holdings, in a form of complaints, local inspections, inquiries, but most prominently – in carefully recorded cinema network employee meeting minutes, involving not only representatives of the various branches of the SCC or relevant Party bodies, but also local cinema managers and technicians. The function of the minutes itself is quite interesting: they were used not only as a way to keep records, but could also turn into an attachment to an executive decree, as an aid and an illustration of what exactly was said and by whom. Some of the minutes, especially of the internal meetings of the administrative bodies are concise, leaving us only a record of the decisions that were made during the gathering. Others, however, are remarkable verbatim records of the meeting full of colloquial language, repetitions, and muddled sentence structures. While presence of self-censorship, awareness of the political limits, and observation of the boundaries must be assumed, these minutes nevertheless reveal a degree of openness of discussion, where local management, cultural elites, and cinema network administration questioned the existing structure and processes evolving in film screening network, criticized higher tier institutions for, for instance, failing to deliver the supplies necessary to reach the required quality of work. In addition, my inquiries into the perspectives of local cinema management led me to the regional archive of Kaunas' Cinefication Branch. One of the troublesome gaps of archival material is the absence of a consistent institutional archive of the Film Rentals Agency (kinoprokat). However, its close connection to the work done by the SCC and cinema directories helped to fill in many blanks.

While not a subject of the inquiries of this dissertation, the linguistic aspect is nevertheless interesting, and hints at a possible degree of autonomy exercised by the LSSR administrative

bodies and local cinema management in the implementation of their tasks. The decrees of the LSSR Council of Ministers were, in the 1960s, issued in two copies: Russian and Lithuanian. Where the workings of the lower tier institutions are concerned – such as the SCC, the Planning Commission, or Kaunas' Cinefication Branch – prevalence of Russian depends on the type of documentation, but generally, most of the records, including, for instance, the SCC decrees, were produced in Lithuanian language.

The archives from which materials for this dissertation is drawn appear to be surprisingly focused on the implementation and discussion of the specific tasks at hand. Following parts of the official discourse, institutions such as the LSSR SCC were administering one of the most important mass cultural industries of the time, yet much of their tasks and language is technical and practical in nature, evolving around the attempts to ensure appropriate working of cinema enterprises, financial discipline, to correct underperforming cinema directories and their managers, distribute the vehicles to regional cinema directories, etc. That is not to say that the elevated language of glorifying the decisions of the latest Plenum or of striving for the bright future of communism had evaporated from the documentation: it was still an integral part of most decrees and speeches. Yet, much of the daily administration of and discussions on film screening focused mostly on the mundane tasks of management. The overall tone of the documentation resembled that of a pragmatic Khrushchev's attitude reportedly exhibited in 1963 June Plenum on ideology when, after reading an extensive passage on ideological matters, the First Secretary released a heavy sigh and said: "now let's talk about real business."[70]

In addition to the institutional archives, in order to grasp the parameters of the discussions and understandings evolving around various historical processes impacting cinematic life, I have also consulted several contemporary publications. For readers' convenience a short note on

[70] Alexander Titov, 'The Central Committee Apparatus under Khrushchev', in *Khrushchev in the Kremlin* (London: Routledge, 2011), 55.

those that were most widely consulted might be useful. Generally, all of the magazines consulted here were in one way or another a product of the post-Stalinist developments: the Thaw, cultural liberalization and decentralization, growing openness and publicity of economic affairs, and expansion of the services delivered by the LSSR cinema network.

One of the magazines that provided a wealth of information on contemporary interpretations and discussion of such topics as socialist leisure, problems of balance between popular and high art, cultural outreach to the masses, including several particularly illuminating discussions on the affairs of film screening, was *Kultūros barai* [*Domains of Culture*]. The establishment of *Domains of Culture* was a local, Soviet Lithuanian, initiative. It was made possible by a decree that granted republics' Central Committees a right to found public press publications, leading some historians to interpret its printing as a symptom of an ongoing liberalization of cultural life in the LSSR. Publication of the magazine started in 1965 and goes on to this day. Importantly, *Domains of Culture* was published by the LSSR Ministry of Culture, while the magazine was oriented to and broadly read by cultural intelligentsia.[71]

Another rewarding source was a weekly magazine *Ekrano naujienos* [*Screen News*], published by the LSSR Film Rentals Agency from 1959 to 1972.[72] *Screen News* was published in two languages (separate issues in Russian and Lithuanian. The magazine was preceded by the FRA's *Kinas* = *Кино* (1955 – 1959), a single bi-lingual publication dedicated to providing information on the films about to reach republics' screens. *Screen News*, labelled as an "informational-advertisement publication," followed a similar mission – to provide weekly overviews of the films that will soon be available to the LSSR audiences. At the same time, however, as we will see in Chapter 4, it was considered to be the only publication in Lithuania

[71] Rindzevičiūtė, 'Constructing Soviet Cultural Policy', 40.
[72] *Screen News* was discontinued, but not eliminated at that point: it was, rather, split in two different publications, one dedicated to informing about repertoire, other – for more in-depth discussions of cinema art.

dedicated to cinematic matters,[73] and throughout 13 years of its existence carried a double task of advertising the films to the audiences, and of engaging with film overviews and "education" of viewers' tastes and visual literacy.

Liaudies ūkis [*Peoples' Economy*], an invaluable source on contemporary economic affairs and debates, was also likely an outcome of the Khrushchev's general initiative to open up the public discussion on economic affairs. The magazine was a joint monthly publication of the LSSR State Planning Committee, Peoples' Economy Council (from 1966 replaced by the Ministry of Finance as a publisher), and the Economy Institute at the Science Academy. The monthly was not exactly a page turner, but it was intended to be accessible to enterprise managers and people in economic or accounting professions. The magazine was committed to a "broad practical analysis of the questions of industry, agriculture, construction, transport, finance, credit, trade, cooperative," other branches of economic activity, and problems pertaining to the economy of the enterprise. The broad theoretical issues of economic development and chronicle of the domestic and international economic life was also to be included in the pages of the magazine.[74]

Besides *Peoples' Economy*, the dissertation draws some of the data pertaining to the development of cinema network from the LSSR statistical yearbooks. The intended purpose of their publication was dual. Firstly, quite unsurprisingly, they were conceived as a way of demonstrating the numerous achievements of the Soviet economic order. Second intended objective had to do with the official notions of enabling Soviet citizens' informed participation in economic affairs, as illustrated by a quote from Lenin in one of the issues of the magazine:

> "In a capitalist society, statistics were the jurisdiction of exclusively "government people" or narrow group of experts, - we have to bring it to the masses, popularize it so that working people

[73] Regardless of the fact that publications such as *Iskusstvo Kino* were, of course, available to readers in Lithuania.
[74] '[Front Matter]', *Liaudies Ūkis*, November 1958.

would gradually learn themselves to understand and see how and how much is it possible to work, how and how much is it possible to rest…"[75]

Due to the limitations posed by the politicized and propagandistic aspects of statistical data collection and presentation,[76] in this dissertation, the information gathered from statistical yearbooks was cross-checked for at least approximate consistency with internal institutional documentation wherever possible.

Chapter overview

The body of this dissertation is divided to 5 chapters. In Chapter 1, I outline the general historical context and the basic institutional and economic frameworks structuring the development of film screening network during the 1960s. By tracing frequent reform initiatives in the administrative coordination of cinema network I delineate the complex relationship between centralized coordination of film screening network and the necessary cooperation of local film screening enterprises for the achievement of these objectives. I single out several areas of agency and autonomy attributed to a film screening unit, including such important decisions as assembling the short-term repertoire plans. I then situate film screening within the general economic planning structure, both highlighting the status of cinema as the basic unit of economic accounting, and the pivotal repercussions that the character of cinemas' planning targets – screenings, attendance rates, and income – had for the economic workings of cinema enterprise. Finally, I point out several ways in which financial discipline was fostered on an enterprise and industry level. I argue that the relative decentralization inherent in the structure film screening network, the presence of limited enterprise autonomy, financial discipline

[75] *Tarybų Lietuvai 25 Metai. Statistikos Duomenų Rinkinys [25 Years of Soviet Lithuania. Collection of Statistical Data]* (Vilnius: Centrinė statistikos valdyba prie Lietuvos TSR Ministrų tarybos, 'Statistika', 1965), 3.
[76] For a discussion on the bias and reliability of Soviet statistical yearbooks, see: Hanson, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Economy*, 67.

measures, and pressure towards cost efficiency created an incentive for socialist cinema enterprise to attract as many viewers as possible, thus providing the backdrop against which the conflict between ideological and economic objectives in the LSSR film screening network evolved.

In Chapter 2 I delve into the numerous tensions evolving around one of the most contested notions in the 1960s LSSR cinema network: "cash register film". Labelled as slang of cinefication network employees by contemporaries, the category of cash register film revealed paradoxes and contradictions inherent in the presumably ubiquitous state control over the economic life of film screening. In the chapter, I unravel the contemporary tension between cash register and ideologically valuable cinema. I argue that the emergence of "cash register film" was an outcome, among other factors, of the economic coordination structure encouraging an active pursuit of financial gain in one of the most important Soviet cultural and ideological industries of the decade. I show that this pursuit, while not publicly promoted as desirable by the authorities or cinema critics, was nevertheless tolerated and justified among the administrators, managers and workers of film screening network. I conclude that "cash register film" was an outcome of determining film's value solely by its capacity to generate income, reflecting a prevalent valuation of a cinematic product guided by economic rather than ideological terms. During the 1960s, this assessment coexisted with a more familiar outlook of cinema in the Soviet Union as a tool for ideological education and elevation of tastes of the socialist citizens of the LSSR.

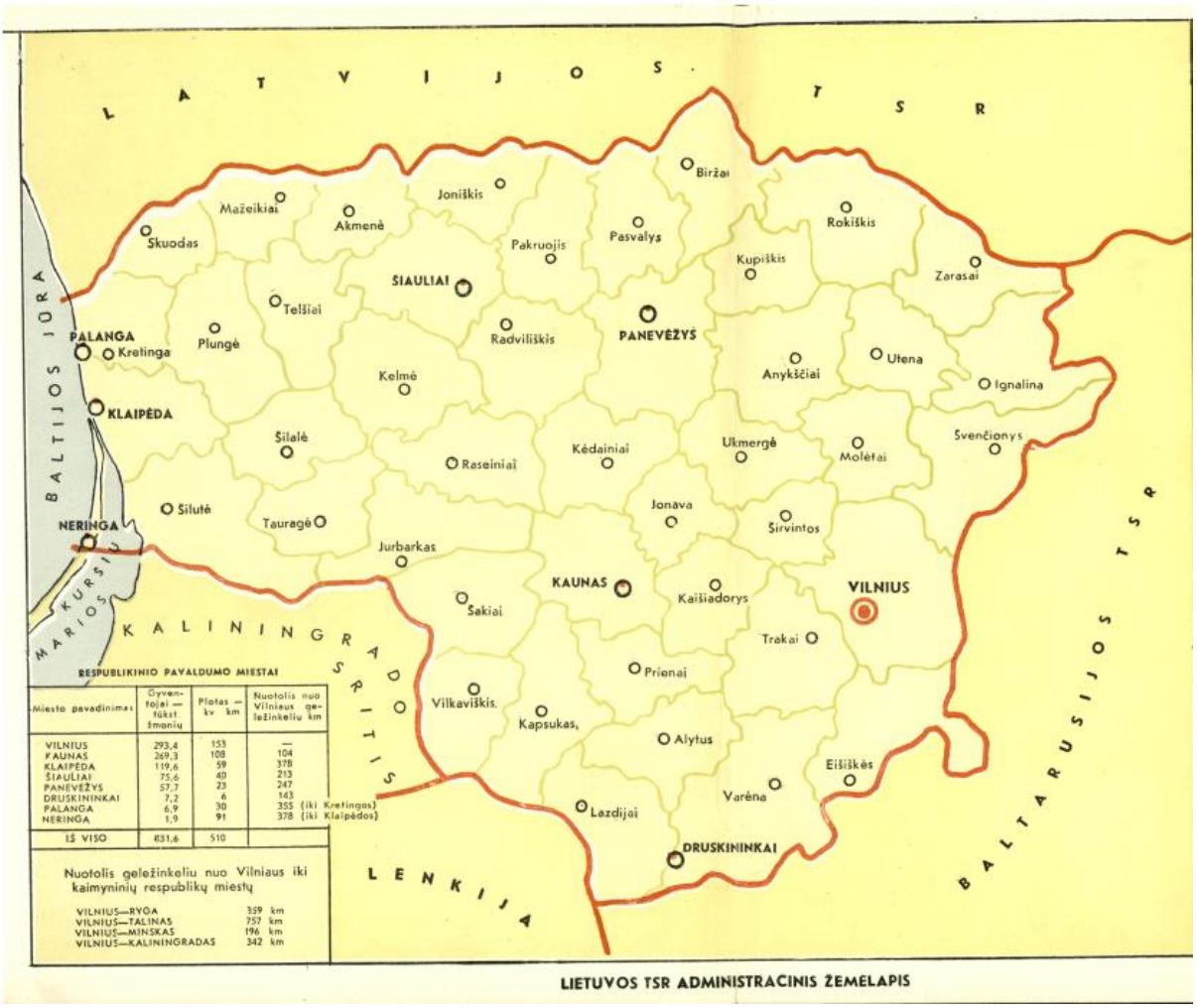
In Chapter 3 I shift the focus from differing valuations of cinema to the context within which cinema was experienced by the LSSR audiences: film screening network and cinemas. In other words, I delve into a variety of services that cinemas were expected to provide to the viewers in the 1960s: flawless screening quality, pleasant environment, and polite and swift service. By analyzing administrative cinema classification schemes, as well as public representations of

quality cinema work, I demonstrate that viewer-oriented values of comfort, pleasure, tastefully arranged environment, and polite staff were central to contemporary definitions of desirable cinema work. I further outline the ways in which consumer-oriented standards of quality cinema work were complemented by the effects of such contemporary developments as the development of alternative types of media and leisure, as well as, in some areas, growth of cinema network itself. I argue that at the juncture of developing socialist consumption cultures, the position of cinema within economic planning structure, and the development of new types of media, cinema network was exhibiting some features of buyers' market, whereas cinema managers were incentivized to meet the requirements of their audiences.

In Chapter 4 I explore the development of cinema advertisement, another rapidly changing area of cinema work during the 1960s. Seeking to grasp the function of advertisement in a state socialist economic setting, as well as the ways in which it was included among the activities of the ideological front, I follow contemporary discussions on the distinction between cinema advertisement and propaganda. I further close in on the ways in which distinction between the two forms of communicating about film to the audiences were reflected in the shifting institutional designs. I argue that, while the notions of education and promotion were intertwined in the notion of cinema advertisement, it was singled out for its assumed capacity to attract audiences to cinema halls. I trace the ways in which advertisement, conceived in this way, was engaged as a tool in the economic management strategies of cinema enterprise. I argue that contemporary understandings and uses of cinema advertisement complemented the usual educational ethos of Soviet cinema going, while advertisement techniques were partially integrated into cinemas' toolkit of attracting audiences and meeting its planning targets.

In Chapter 5, I explore the work worlds of people whose efforts delivered cinematic experience to the LSSR audiences. Cinema work was a labor-intensive endeavor, while the cinema workers were widely dispersed across the republic, thus posing challenges to authorities efforts

of centralized coordination of cinema work. In order to shed light on the measures employed in labor coordination and provision of incentives to work, I briefly outline an often-troubled landscape of cinema work in the LSSR, with a special focus on the most numerous profession in LSSR film screening network: projectionists. I then close in on the distinction between the moral and material incentives, and highlight the importance of the monetary wage as a widely accepted motivational measure. This type of remuneration was especially important within framework of the 1967 premiums system reform. Short lived, but significant, I argue, it emphasized material incentives over the honors and awards issued by the state. The reform established a close link between workers' earnings and economic performance of cinema enterprise, while the latter was defined by the capacity of cinema collective to attract audiences to their cinema.



RESPUBLIKINIO PAVALDUMO MIESTAI

Miesto pavadinimas	Gyventojai — tūkst. žmonių	Plotas — kv. km	Nuotolis nuo Vilniaus geležinkeliu km
VILNIUS	293,4	153	—
KAUNAS	269,3	108	104
KLAIPĖDA	119,6	59	378
ŠIAULIAI	75,6	40	213
PANEVĖŽYS	57,7	23	247
DRUSKININKAI	7,2	6	143
PALANGA	6,9	30	355 (iki Kretingos)
NERINGA	1,9	91	378 (iki Klaipėdos)
IŠ VISO	831,6	510	

Nuotolis geležinkeliu nuo Vilniaus iki kaimyninių respublikų miestų

VILNIUS—RYGA	359 km
VILNIUS—TALINAS	757 km
VILNIUS—MINSKAS	196 km
VILNIUS—KALININGRADAS	342 km

LIETUVOS TSR ADMINISTRACINIS ŽEMĖLAPIS

1. An administrative map of the LSSR, 1965. Tarybų Lietuvai 25 Metai. Statistikos Duomenų Rinkinys [25 Years of Soviet Lithuania. Collection of Statistical Data]. Vilnius: Centrinė statistikos valdyba prie Lietuvos TSR Ministrų tarybos, ‘Statistika’, 1965.

Chapter 1. Between central control and local initiative: coordination of the LSSR film screening network

The LSSR as the "Soviet abroad"

"This is not Arkhangelsk, but a republic with its own history, traditions and peculiarities, and we locals know better what to do and how to do it, without your preaching and sermons." An impatient explanation was issued to Leonid Kondratyev, an instructor from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in the mid-1960s,[77] by the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Lithuania Antanas Sniečkus.[78] The LSSR, a Soviet republic of 2 950 000 inhabitants at the time, was peculiar in several ways. Some of them had to do with the historical relationship with the USSR: Lithuania, along with Moldova, were the last republics to "join" the USSR in 1940. By that time, Lithuania had a 20-year history of independent statehood, fully fledged market economy, a short-lived experimentation with democratic political order, a coup d'état in 1926, and a subsequent introduction of a nationalist autocratic government of Antanas Smetona, lasting until the country was annexed by the Soviet Union. After Soviet occupation, one of the outcomes of this history was a prolonged anti-Soviet partisan resistance, lasting from 1944 to 1953. Even after the resistance struggles waned, Lithuanian émigré diasporas in the West continued their efforts to foster the memory of independent Lithuanian statehood, as well as hopes of its restoration.

Lithuanian SSR was also different from its neighboring Baltic Soviet republics: the LSSR stood out because of the low rate of Russian immigration. In 1959, Russian citizens made up 8.5% of LSSR population, whereas in Estonia the number rose to 20.1%, and Latvia - 26.6%. This

[77] Quoted in: Saulius Grybkauskas, 'Imperializing the Soviet Federation?: The Institution of the Second Secretary in the Soviet Republics*', *Ab Imperio* 2014, no. 3 (2014): 267.
[78] He held this position from 15 August 1940 until his death in 22 January 1974.

disparity continued into the 1960s.[79] In addition, during the years of Soviet rule, Lithuania was marked by persistent linguistic differences, and Lithuanian language continued to play an important, if not dominant, role within state administration apparatus and public sphere. The open possibility, prior to 1939, of according to Lithuania a status similar to that of a satellite socialist republic of Poland suggested by Elena Zubkova, may not have come to fruition, but the situation of the LSSR continued to add a layer of complexity for centralized Soviet administration.[80]

Existing research on governance structures and strategies of the LSSR's political elites suggests that the specificities of the position of the LSSR were among the factors keeping local politicians engaged in a tricky balancing act, beginning with the onset of the Thaw and lasting until the very last years of the Soviet Union. A consensus exists among researchers of the histories of local nomenklatura that, while interpreting local policies as dissent against the Union center would be too far-fetched, navigation between local interests and those of the central government was an integral part of political life in the LSSR, enabling in this way a formation of distinct peripheral elites engaged in representation of localized interests.[81] After the occupation, Lithuanian political elites managed to strengthen their position. This was especially true during the Khrushchev's *sovnarkhoz* reform.[82] Reversal of the *sovnarkhoz* project in 1959 seemed to both reverse the decentralization and threaten the limited autonomy that was established during the reshuffling, but it did not put an end to the strategies of local

[79] V. Stanley Vardys, 'How the Baltic Republics Fare in the Soviet Union', *Foreignaffairs Foreign Affairs* 44, no. 3 (1966): 512–17; *Tarybų Lietuvos Dvidešimtmetis: Statistinių Duomenų Rinkinys [The 20th Anniversary of Soviet Lithuania: Collection of Statistical Data]* (Vilnius: Centrinė statistikos valdyba prie Lietuvos TSR Ministrų tarybos, Valstybinė statistikos leidykla, 1960). According to 1989 census, Russian population in the LSSR had reached 9.4%: Barbara A. Anderson and Brian D. Silver, 'Demographic Sources of the Changing Ethnic Composition of the Soviet Union', *Population and Development Review* 15, no. 4 (1989): 628.
[80] Grybkauskas, 'Imperializing the Soviet Federation?', 283.
[81] Marius Ėmužis, 'Apie beklasės visuomenės klasę [About a class in a classless society]', *Knygų aidai*, no. 1 (2012): 11–15; Vilius Ivanauskas, *Lietuviškoji nomenklatūra biurokratinėje sistemoje: tarp stagnacijos ir dinamikos (1970-1988 m.)* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2011).
[82] Saulius Grybkauskas, 'Lietuviškosios Sovietinės Nomenklatūros Požiūris į Ūkio Valdymo Permainas Sovietų Sąjungoje 7-ojo Dešimtmečio Viduryje [Soviet Lithuanian Nomenclature's Views on the Economic Governance Changes of the 1960s]', *Lietuvos Istorijos Metraštis*, 2002, 187–206.

political maneuvering. One of the areas where this type of navigations had substantial effects was the LSSR economic policy. Here, historian Saulius Grybkauskas observed the development of what he termed "economic nationalism": local authorities' pragmatic balancing act between the demands of the central government in Moscow, concerns of the local workers and public, and politicians' own strife for local power and legitimacy. All of these criteria played a considerable role in the historical development of the LSSR's economic policy.

One of telling illustrations of local economic advocacy was the case of the Soviet Union's General Plan, developed in 1963. In this instance, local officials singled out some types of industrial production as being more appropriate to the specificities of the LSSR level of development, as well as its regional position. Among others, these specificities included prioritization of the development of labor force, provision of cultural and domestic (*buitinis*) services, and transport. In this context, improvement of the industrial level was defined not so much as investment in the extraction industries, but rather as development of the industrial branches such as radio electronics, precision engineering, and production of appliances.[83] There were several justifications for prioritizing these areas of the LSSR economic development, including a general problem plaguing Soviet economy in the 1960s: salaries were growing, but access to quality goods on which wages could be spent remained limited. This situation resulted in salary money being held up within households in a form of savings, rather than being released back into economy. Improved production and distribution of goods was presented by the LSSR representatives as the only solution to this problem and a way of drawing money back to the economy from where it could be used for further state investment.[84]

[83] Based on local initiative, such associations as "Sigma" and "Elfa" were established. The former produced calculation devices, the latter – engines for domestic appliances, as well as sound recording and reproduction devices.

[84] Grybkauskas, 'Lietuviškosios Sovietinės Nomenklatūros Požiūris į Ūkio Valdymo Permainas Sovietų Sąjungoje 7-Ojo Dešimtmečio Viduryje [Soviet Lithuanian Nomenclature's Views on the Economic

Available data suggests that at least to some extent these official arguments had palpable effects. The Baltic region was gaining the reputation of the "Soviet abroad" (or "our abroad," *nasha zagranitsa*) among the citizens from other Soviet republics, including Russia itself.[85] While there is a shortage of an in-depth inquiries on both the economic profile of the LSSR and its position in relation to the Soviet Union economy overall, existing research suggests that development of light industries, and the concomitant growth of living and consumption level was above the Soviet Union average in both Soviet Lithuania and its Baltic neighbors. The LSSR specifically (especially its factory "Elfa") was a producer of engines for 80% of Soviet-made refrigerators and 50% of washing machines.[86] By 1974, when the volume of Soviet light industry represented only 4.4% of the total industrial output, in Estonia it accounted for 8.8%, in Latvia - 7.5%, and in Lithuania - 8.3%.[87] Correspondingly, incomes and growth of per capita income[88] in the Baltic region are also reported as positioned among the highest in the Soviet Union, thus alluding to an overall higher standard of living.[89] This was especially the case during the period of general Soviet economic growth during the 1960s and early 1970s.[90]

The distinction between the Baltic Soviet republics and the rest of the Union appears to have been so pronounced as to determine the decisions to migrate to the region from other parts of the USSR,[91] encourage consumer tourism, and prompt many memories of the Baltic Soviet

Governance Changes of the 1960s]', 192. Another important note here is that the republic got to keep the over-the-plan production.

[85] Anne E. Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin*, Oxford Studies in Modern European History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[86] Vardys, The role of the baltic republics in the Soviet society, 1975, p. 147 - 179

[87] Galina Yuzefovich, '"Stydlivyj Konsjumerizm": Potrebitel′skij Nevroz v "Potrebitel′skom Raju" Sovetskoj Pribaltiki ["Shameful Consumerism": The Consumerist Neurosis in the "Consumer Heaven" of the Soviet Baltic States]', *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie (New Literary Observer*, no. 143 (2017): 178–90.

[88] Romuald J. Misiunas and Rein Taagepera, *The Baltic States: Years of Dependence, 1940-1990* (London: C. Hurst, 1993), 185.

[89] Stanley, 'The Role of the Baltic Republics in Soviet Society', 157.

[90] Anatol Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution: Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and the Path to Independence*, 2nd ed (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 98.

[91] Misiunas and Taagepera, *The Baltic States*, 194.

republics as a consumer paradise, providing both higher quality consumer goods and services.[92] Regardless of being perceived as a marginal economic activity, film screening was also affected by this general economic context: generally higher incomes meant that people had more money to spend on cinema services.[93] This might be one of the reasons why, at least periodically, cinema attendance in the Baltics was also relatively high. At least in 1965, it was estimated to have been higher than Union average, while in 1967 the LSSR cinema network administration proudly boasted having taken the second place in the Soviet Union.[94]

Inquiry into the extent to which "economic nationalism" encouraged the comparatively better production and retail of consumption goods in the LSSR might require a more extensive comparative study of the production profiles of different Soviet republics. The same applies to the study of cinemagoing in the USSR and its constituent republics. However, new industries were being developed at the time, as were the innovations in economic thinking, and while basic principles of centralized planning applied to all Soviet republics and industries, conditions could differ dramatically not only between constituent members of the USSR or production branches, but even between different factories within the same republic. A relatively higher standard of living in Soviet Baltics is an example of such a difference, with Estonia being often selected by central Soviet authorities as a testing ground for new projects of rendering socialist production more efficient. One of the most outstanding examples of such experiments was development of such mathematical and technological innovations as cybernetics.[95]

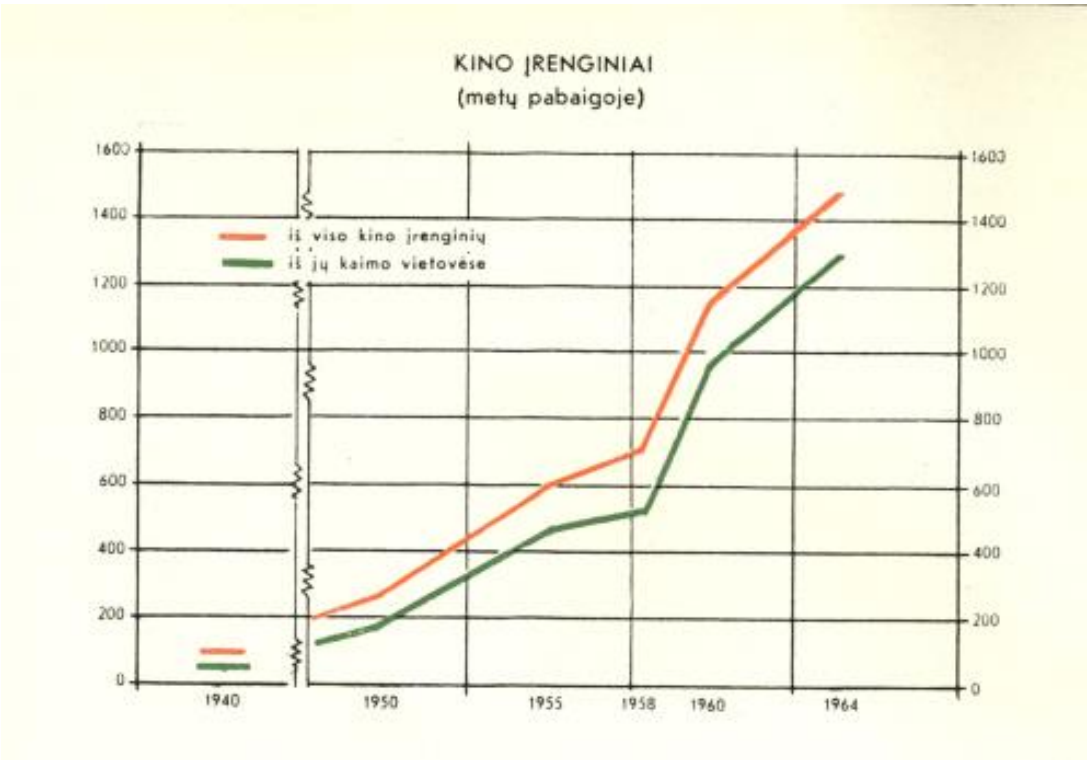
[92] Yuzefovich, '"Stydlivyj Konsjumerizm": Potrebitel′skij Nevroz v "Potrebitel′skom Raju" Sovetskoj Pribaltiki ["Shameful Consumerism": The Consumerist Neurosis in the "Consumer Heaven" of the Soviet Baltic States]'.
[93] LLMA, 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 100.
[94] LLMA, 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 97, p. 5; LLMA, 1965, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 28, p. 88. However, data on attendance or plan implementation success, compared to the all-Union average tends to differ over the years.
[95] Rindzevičiūtė, 'Constructing Soviet Cultural Policy', 145.

Inter-Union differences aside, even within an individual republic different productive associations could follow different management schemes. Therefore, potential search for the answers to questions relating to the center-local relationship between Moscow and Vilnius (or any other Soviet state) would benefit from an inquiry into the specific conditions of the state or its production profile. Where film production, distribution and consumption of cinema services are concerned, the endeavor should begin with tracing the administrative structures designed to facilitate the role of cinema in state socialist LSSR, along with the specific institutional settings through which the standards of quality film screening and cinemagoing were implemented. In the following subchapter I will outline the institutional framework within which cinema affairs in the LSSR were managed, keeping an eye on such factors as the position of cinema in the LSSR economic structure, the inter-institutional relationships between different levels of management, and the extent and limits of institutional autonomy as they were reflected in the intentional designs of the apparatus of the Soviet state.

The LSSR cinema network under reform: balancing between central and local

The citizens of the LSSR experienced cinema through what was universally referred in the administrative offices, as well as public representations of film screening, as a "cinema network": hundreds of film screening units dispersed across the Soviet republic, linked through administrative structures and economic accounting mechanisms. During the 1960s, as a part of the drive to improve the socialist standard of living by means of expanded provision of consumer goods, as well as social and cultural services, cinema network underwent a phase of rapid development. One of the most widely used indicators of cinema network's growth and its capacity to meet the seemingly perpetually growing needs of socialist citizens was the number of screening units. In this sense, the period of the most rapid development took place between the mid-1950s and the early 1960s: according to the collections of statistical data, in

1955, 590 cinemas were reportedly active in the republic, while by 1965 the figure had reached 1490.[96] After that, the growth of cinema network proceeded at a slower pace, with the reported 1538 film screening units in 1970.[97]



2. The growth of the number of film screening units in the LSSR between 1940 and 1964. Red line indicating screening units in the LSSR, green – screening units in the rural areas of the LSSR. Tarybų Lietuvai 25 Metai. Statistikos Duomenų Rinkinys [25 Years of Soviet Lithuania. Collection of Statistical Data] (Vilnius: Centrinė statistikos valdyba prie Lietuvos TSR Ministrų tarybos, 'Statistika', 1965), 12.

"Film screening units" was a general term used for many types of film screening arrangements and covered a diverse set of film viewing conditions in the LSSR. Much of the cinema network consisted not of the fully equipped buildings dedicated solely to the purpose of screening films, but rather of the screening arrangements in local houses of culture, clubs, factories, long-

[96] *Lietuvos TSR Liaudies Ūkis 1961 Metais: Statistinių Duomenų Rinkinys [LSSR People's Economy in 1961: Collection of Statistical Data]* (Vilnius: Centrinė statistikos valdyba prie Lietuvos TSR Ministrų tarybos, Valstybinė statistikos leidykla, 1963), 215.
[97] *Lietuvos TSR Ekonomika Ir Kultūra 1970 Metais: Statistikos Metraštis [LSSR's Economy and Culture in 1970. Statistical Chronicle]* (Vilnius: Centrinė statistikos valdyba prie Lietuvos TSR Ministrų tarybos, 'Statistika', 1971), 350.

distance fishing vessels, mobile cinemas,[98] or, as in the case of port town Klaipėda, establishing film screening equipment in the already existing concert hall.[99] These different arrangements of film screening delivered to the Lithuanian public around 250 new films a year.[100]

3. Lithuania's fishermen in Northern Atlantic. At the projectionist's booth of a floating base "Sovetskaja Litva" cinema hall. Author: Bernardas Aleknavičius (1966)

Expansion of cinema network in the 1960s LSSR was an echo of an early cinefication efforts launched in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. After Lithuania was annexed to the Soviet Union, the same effort was implemented in a new Soviet republic. Lina Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė's inquiry into cinefication processes in the Stalinist years demonstrates the extent of the effort, its limitations, as well as the authorities' view of cinema as an integral part of the Soviet

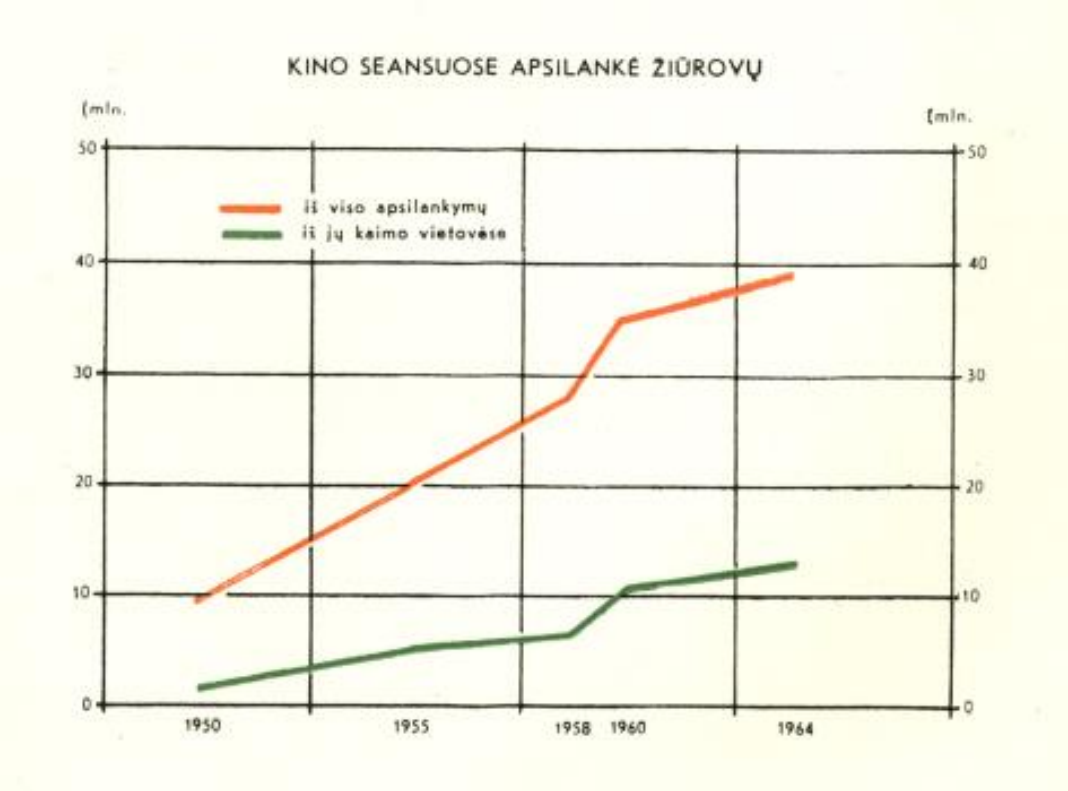
[98] The use of mobile cinemas peaked in 1959, when 567 of such cinema units operated in the LSSR. By 1970, there were 366 of mobile cinemas left. *Lietuvos TSR Liaudies Ūkis 1965 Metais: Statistinių Duomenų Rinkinys [LSSR People's Economy in 1965: A Collection of Statistical Data]* (Vilnius: Centrinė statistikos valdyba prie Lietuvos TSR Ministrų tarybos, 'Statistika', 1966), 247; *Lietuvos TSR Ekonomika Ir Kultūra 1970 Metais*, 350.
[99] LCVA, 1963, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 6139, p. 205.
[100] I.e., LLMA, 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 321.

modernization process. Access to cinema was defined as an indicator of the progress in the development of a modern industrial society, as well as a tool in educating citizens of the LSSR in a spirit of communism.[101] By 1960s, this commitment was complemented by Khrushchev's effort to raise the standard of living, of which provision of cultural services was an integral part.

One of the most important distinctions within the general growth of film screening network, both administratively and in terms of the character of actual screening services provision, was that between urban and rural cinema networks. Numerically, the latter comprised the bulk of film screening network. In 1959, 711 film screening units were located in rural areas, and only 177 – in towns. By 1970, the extensive investment in film screening in rural areas was showing palpable results: out of 1538 film screening units, 1333 were situated in rural areas, with remaining 205 located in towns.[102] There were other important differences besides the size. For one, cinemas located in urban areas consistently showed higher attendance rates. For instance, in 1962, the reported number of cinema visits in towns was 22.2, rural cinema network – 7.5;[103] in 1969, it was 21.1 and 9.2 respectively.[104] The disparity could at least in part be explained by lower density of the population in rural regions, which was not helped by the ongoing urbanization: if in 1959 towns and villages had 38.6% and 61.4% population share respectively, in 1970 the balance had evened out to 50.2% in towns, and 49.8% in villages.[105] Later in the decade, additional problems in terms of provision of cinema services were posed by the development of television: since new films tended to reach rural cinemas with delay, people would choose to watch newer films on television.[106]

[101] Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė, 'Moving Pictures for Peasants: The Kinofikatsia of Rural Lithuania in the Stalinist Era (1944–1953)', 50.
[102] *Lietuvos TSR Ekonomika Ir Kultūra 1970 Metais*, 350.
[103] LCVA, 1962, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 5880, p. 22.
[104] LCVA, 1969, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 7582, p. 2.
[105] Surasymas, p. 21
[106] Romualdas Ozolas, 'Žmogus, Kultūra, Poreikiai [A Person, Culture, Needs]', *Kultūros barai*, 11 July 1967.

While the stark differences between urban and rural cinema going conditions of the 1930s USSR might have been somewhat abated in the context of the 1960s LSSR,[107] the divergence in attendance rates was nevertheless seen as a result, at least in part, of the generally much poorer conditions of screening in the rural cinema network. The contrast was even sharper the context of the rapidly growing expectations and increasingly more demanding definitions of a quality cinema service.



4. Growth of cinema visits in the LSSR between 1940 and 1964. Red line indicating cinema visits in the LSSR, green – cinema visits in the rural areas of the LSSR.[108]

By the mid-1960s the situation in rural cinema network prompted Novickas, the Deputy Head of the SCC at the time, to alert the Council of Ministers about the unsatisfactory state of many

[107] Miller, *Soviet Cinema*, 42.
[108] *Tarybų Lietuvai 25 Metai*, 12.

rural cinemas. While by that time many urban cinemas were already able to provide "cultured" service to their visitors, rural cinema network was still generally "unpleasant, cold, lacking equipment". In his report, Novickas proceeded with an illustrative list of specific problems of rural film screening conditions: several screening sites lacked heating equipment, in others windows had no glass, dozens needed repairs, and dozens were unprepared to work in harsh winter conditions. Heads of collective farms, he pointed out, would sometimes close film screening halls and rather use them for storing grain or other purposes of the collective farm. It was true, Novickas noted, that hundreds of new film screening units were introduced. However, since collective farm managers local councils neglected to take care of screening spaces locally, attendance rates did not increase in these areas. The presented reason was simple: "halls are not meeting the minimal requirements of culturedness."[109]

Generally poor condition of rural film screening network affected financial expectations: towns were bearing the bulk of planning targets, as well as collecting most income from ticket sales. Planning targets reflected on cinema's development as part of a modern, urbanized, socialist culture. In 1967, for instance, one of state officials reported that 83% of the LSSR's plan for income from cinema visits fell on towns, while the capital Vilnius and second largest town Kaunas played a major role in the implementation of this portion of republic's plan of cinema attendance and income.[110]

The dispersed and unequal film screening network was subjected to the basic principles of the state-socialist institutional and economic system. All major decisions were made at the central government bodies, to whom local cinema network directories were accountable to. Yet, centralized supervision and coordination of 1500 relatively small film screening units dispersed across the republic posed many challenges for this type of institutional model, since one central

[109] LLMA, 1965, f. 473., ap. 1, b. 28, p. 131 – 132.
[110] LLMA, 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 204.

authority was supposed to coordinate a complex maze of responsibilities involved in processes of ensuring technical functioning, provision of transport, economic accounting, education and training of employees, and the quality of the cultural services provided by cinemas. In the context of the rapid growth of cinema network in the 1960s, the already complex process of overseeing, controlling and supervising film screening was subjected to a series of reforms designed to define and implement the functions of cinema in a socialist society. A substantial part of the reform was focused on the restructuring of the institutional relationship between central administration in Vilnius, numerous film screening units, and thousands of their employees.

While introduction of new administrative models was a regular occurrence in film screening network during the 1960s, all minor and major restructurings were building on the initial arrangement of the administrative structure of cinema and cinefication management introduced soon after the annexation if Lithuania in 1940. Already before the end of the WWII in 1944, the Board of Cinefication at the Council of People's Commissars (hereafter, CPC) of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic, and the Chief Film Distribution Agency (Glavkinoprokat) were established and tasked with the management of distribution and exhibition of films in the LSSR. Two years later, the Board of Cinefication was disassembled and replaced by the Ministry of Cinematography of the LSSR.[111] This institutional arrangement lasted until 1953, when administration of cinema affairs was transferred to the Ministry of Culture, marking the beginning of nearly a decade of film production and exhibition management by a republic-level ministry rather than an institutional body directly accountable to the Council of People's Commissars (after 1946 named the Council of Ministers).[112]

[111] Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė, 'Moving Pictures for Peasants: The Kinofikatsia of Rural Lithuania in the Stalinist Era (1944–1953)', 52.
[112] The reform involved joining 7 cultural agencies under one ministry: Art Affairs, Cinefication, Culture-Enlightenment Enterprises, Publishing Houses and the Printing Industry, Professional Education, Radio Information, and the Book Trade, and Supply and Realisation. See: Rindzevičiūtė, 'Constructing Soviet Cultural Policy', 70.

Eventually, in 1963 – 1964, administration of cinematic life was withdrawn from the Ministry of Culture and handed to the newly assembled State Cinematography Committee at the LSSR Council of Ministers (hereafter, the SCC).

When the general control over the cinefication processes was transferred to the Cinematography Committee's Board of Cinefication at the Ministry of Culture of the LSSR (hereafter, the Board of Cinefication, or BC),[113] its statute outlined the responsibilities as well as areas the newly assembled institution had decision making powers over. Directly accountable to the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Culture, yet defined as a "self-contained" (*savarankiška*), organization, the Board was taxed with ensuring good screening quality and service across the republic's cinefication network, ensuring technical maintenance, preparation of the repertoire plans in coordination with Film Rentals Agency, and even supervision of the preparation of cadres for republic's cinema network.[114] In addition to this comprehensive list, the BC was granted the permission to initiate construction of new cinemas.[115] In the meantime, the Head of the BC was tasked with management of the basic organizational principles and duties of the institutions under its jurisdiction,[116] including their financial and procedural accounting processes, preparation of the plans for the approval of the responsible authorities, distribution of the funds among cinemas, hiring and firing of employees, signing contracts and establishing new organizations where this was considered to have a beneficial effect on the further development of Soviet republic's cinema network.

By 1961, this institutional arrangement was found to be insufficient: in January that year, the LSSR Ministry of Culture issued a decree in pursuit of an administrative realignment designed

[113] LCVA, 1953 July 13, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 5295, p. 102 – 107. Duplicate reproduced in the summer of 1960.
[114] More precisely, to "manage" the state cinema network, and "control" trade union and organisational (*žinybinis*) cinemas.
[115] It should be kept in mind that this right to initiative was limited: any construction meant receiving approvals from planning and financial institutions, dependency on state loans, etc.
[116] Including the LSSR Film Repair Workshop and the LSSR Projectionists' School.

to encourage more efficient functioning of the cinema network.[117] In the context of a suggested institutional restructuring, the definition of "efficiency" focused on aspects more pragmatic than implementation of cinema's cultural and political tasks in the Soviet Union: the lack of efficiency was measured through the assessment of cinema attendance rates, and the income that attendance was generating. The decree acknowledged that, in comparison to 1959, cinema network showed a 7.1% increase in cinema attendance, and 5.4% increase in income delivered. However, these achievements notwithstanding, the majority of towns and rural areas were still failing to meet their planning targets for attendance and income. From the point of view of the LSSR Ministry of Culture, this was to be blamed on two central issues. Firstly, the Ministry itself was extending insufficient support to and control of local cinema management.

The second key problem was placed in the institutional and economic organization of film screening network. Presentation of the problem was in tune with the emerging discussions on the financially efficient running of a state-socialist enterprise, and invoked some of the key terms of the decade – including that of *ūkiskaita*, a set of economic management principles believed to ensure financial accountability and efficiency on an enterprise level. In the decree at hand, cinema network's system of compensating losses and financing the needed repairs was assessed as exaggeratedly centralized and therefore unfavorable for the development of *ūkiskaita*.[118] In this case, the problems posed by exaggerated centralization lied not only in the spending and income sections of enterprises' books – it was also judged as negatively affecting the people in charge of cinema management. Specifically, the existing system was assessed as thwarting local executives' responsibility for the performance of cinemas assigned to their jurisdiction.

[117] LLMA, 1961 January 17, f. 342, ap. 1, b. 944, p. 40 – 45.
[118] A Lithuanian term of *khozraschyot*, the economic accounting principle based on which an economic unit was expected to cover the operational expenses from its income. The notion is often translated as "profitability".

With centralization seen as an obstacle to the greater economic efficiency, the solutions were found in assigning greater economic accountability to local administrative bodies. With this objective in mind, Kaunas', Panevėžys and Šiauliai regions' cinemas were placed under the jurisdiction of their local Executive Committees of a Council of People's Deputies (hereafter, ECCPD). While the Ministry of Culture did retain the final word regarding planning targets, the planned losses of cinema operation were to be covered from local municipal budgets, and any saving from above-the-plan income could be used for renovation of local cinemas. With additional responsibilities came additional rights and a somewhat greater degree of autonomy: ECCPDs now had a right to fire and hire cinema directors. In the restructuring, several cinemas were singled out and remained under direct jurisdiction of the Cinefication Board. This was, also, done in accordance with the focus on financial sustainability: these cinemas were expected to cover the costs of operation of these administrative bodies.

As a consequence of this rearrangement, no less than 70 cinema directories were instituted in the LSSR. This might have been one of the causes behind yet another administrative restructuring, introduced just 2 years later. This time, a new body – Cinema directories at the Culture Committees at the local ECCPDs – was established, allowing reduction of regional cinema administration units to 41.[119] The temporary guidelines of the new cinema directories listed the usual array of tasks of a film screening organization: screening feature, popular science, newsreel and educational films; provision of a high-quality service to local populations; organization of ticket sales; provision of support to local party organizations in their efforts to "educate people in the spirit of communism"; implementation of operational plans[120] and ensuring cost-efficient operation of their economic unit. As far as the principles of economic organization of regional cinema directories were concerned, indicated income base

[119] LLMA, 1963 March 26, f. 342, ap. 1, b. 1159, p. 223 – 231.
[120] A plan of the projected number of screenings.

of a cinema directory were the allocation of funds from "higher" institutions, income from ticket sales, income from screening agricultural films, and other. After 1963, cinema directories continued to be expected to work along the lines of the economic accountability principles entailed by the concept of *ūkiskaita*, while the tasks of the managers of cinema directories included ensuring the "unconditional implementation of planning targets," and managing cinema's economic activity in a way that would secure economic efficiency.

The 1963 reorganization of the LSSR cinema directories was not the final one in what was gradually turning into a series of reforms aimed at rendering management of film screening network more efficient. In May 1963, the LSSR Ministry of Culture received a communication from the USSR Ministry of Culture, at the time led by Yekaterina Furtseva. The letter requested a twofold reorganization of cinema network in the LSSR.[121] First of the suggested reforms was designed to alter the administrative structure of the regional[122] cinema network by once again restructuring local cinema directories. One of the major changes requested in the letter was already in the making in the LSSR: to move the governance of cinematography and cinefication from the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture to a newly established body – the State Committee for Cinematography at the Council of Ministers. Historian Marina Kosinova has suggested that the 1964 reform of the USSR cinema administrative composition might have already been a few years in the making, the first ideas about it reaching back as far as 1958.[123] Among the considerations of the purposes of the reform was the exploration of the possibilities of creating a more efficient feedback system between film studios and film distribution sector,[124] as a way of improving response to audience demand and increasing the sense of

[121] LLMA, 1964, f. 342, ap. 1, b. 1259, p. 245 – 248.
[122] Referring to cinemas and film screening points outside of the bigger towns.
[123] *Posle Ottepeli: Kinematograf 1970-h*-M.:NIIK, 2009, referred to in: Anna Mikonis-Railienė and Lina Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė, *Kinas sovietų Lietuvoje: Sistema, filmai, režisieriai [Cinema in the Soviet Lithuania: System, films, directors]* (Vilnius: Vilniaus dailės akademijos leidykla, 2015), 130.
[124] A path was pursued later with the creation of an Experimental Film Studio in Moscow, see: Irina Tcherneva, 'Imiter Le Marché, Une Recette Pour Le Cinéma Soviétique? L'histoire Du Studio Artistique Expérimental (1965-1976)', *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 54, no. 3/4 (2013): 589–621.. Lithuanian cinema circles were aware of

responsibility among technical personnel. In Kosinova's assessment, the complex reform ideas were close to transferring cinema from planned to market based economic model. However, the actual mid-1960s reform did not go that far.

In early June 1963, the LSSR Council of Ministers was contacted by a newly established USSR Cinematography Committee. The communication outlined the parameters of cinema directory reorganization and requested the LSSR officials for feedback and proposals for the best course of the reform.[125] The LSSR Ministry of Culture supported the proposed changes, on the grounds that new arrangement showed potential for the simplification of accounting processes, and therefore for making the assessment of cinemas' economic performance and efficacy easier.[126]

Not everyone among the LSSR authorities was supportive of the proposed changes. The Ministry of Finance (hereafter, MF), habitually focused on maintaining the balance between income and expenses, took a different stance.[127] The central problem, MF found, was that the reorganization required to open the positions for additional cadres at local cinema management. This meant additional spending on salaries. The Ministry reasoned by appealing to the hard logic of economic efficiency: regional cinema network was generating loses as it was (around half a million roubles in the years 1962 and 1963), and introduction of additional salaried cadres could only increase these losses. They demanded to scrap the entire reorganization project and to rather focus on the reduction of existing deficit.[128] However, the Ministry of Finance soon

these experiments. A report in *Ekrano naujienos* explains the purpose of the studio as a way of linking the at that time detached film production and exhibition sectors. The Experimental Film Studio was described as relying on help from the experts in cybernetics, while definitions of its economic success relied heavily on the audience choice. 'Eksperimento Ateitis [The Future of the Experiment]', *Ekrano Naujienos,* 23 June 1965.

[125] LCVA, 1963, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 6139, p. 149 – 150.

[126] LCVA, 1963, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 6139, p. 157 – 159.

[127] This was the Ministry of Finance policy throughout the decade: Ministry of Culture would mediate requesting construction of new cinemas, or Film Rentals Agency would ask for a cash injection, and Ministry of Finance explaining that none of these can be provided because cinemas and organizations in question are already underperforming economically, producing losses, and failing to use the existing resources efficiently.

[128] LCVA, 1963, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 6139, p. 157 – 159, p. 161.

withdrew their objections, accepted the necessity of additional cadres,[129] removing in this way one of the potential obstacles on the way towards reorganization of cinema network management.

But before cinema directories could be reorganized and additional cadres could be appointed, the second aspect of the Furtseva's letter had to be addressed: the establishment of the State Committee of Cinematography at the Council of Ministers of the LSSR (SCC). Given the scope of the reform, organizational processes took a while. One of the problems was finding a director for the SCC. This position was, even if reluctantly in the beginning, filled by Vytautas Baniulis, an officer at the LSSR Communist Party's Central Committee Culture, Science and Schooling section.[130] The second problem of a more pragmatic nature was posed by the search for the acceptable quarters for the newly established Committee. Administrative functions of cinematography and cinema network leaving the institutional structure of the Ministry of Culture also meant physical departure from its buildings. The result for a short while was the dispersal of various departments (planning, accounting, etc.) of the SCC around Vilnius. Baniulis soon found a space in what now appears as yet another gaffe of Soviet planning system: the actually present 4th floor on the building that was supposed to only have 3 floors.[131] Eventually, establishment of the LSSR Cinematography Committee was announced in October 1963,[132] and a newly founded central administrative unit started issuing its first decrees by January 1964.

Once established, the LSSR SCC took over the supervision of the entire cinematic life in the LSSR: it was directing and overseeing the production of films at the Lithuanian Film Studio

[129] LCVA, 1963, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 6139, p. 157 – 159, p. 163.
[130] He continued to serve as the Head of the LSSR State Cinematography Committee until 1974. For his recollections on the establishment of the CC, see: Rasa Paukštytė, 'Kai Niekas Nenorėjo Pirštų Kišti Prie Kino. Pokalbis Su Vytautu Baniuliu [When No One Wanted to Touch the Cinema. Conversation with Vytautas Baniulis]', *Kinas*, 15 July 2019, https://www.zurnalaskinas.lt/interviu/2019-08-01/Kai-niekas-nenorejo-pirstu-kisti-prie-kino.
[131] Paukštytė.
[132] LLMA, 1963, f. 342, ap. 7, b. 393, p. 1 – 4.

(LFS), the work of Film Rentals Agency (FRA), and the management of film screening network. The reach of the SCC tasks was broad: their officials were endowed with the authority to define and implement repertoire policy for LSSR cinemas, establish, reorganize and dismantle film screening units, institutions and organizations under its jurisdiction.[133]

By May 1964, the LSSR Cinematography Committee was finally in a position to devise the regulations outlining the work of local cinema directories it was supposed to coordinate, defining their obligations and responsibilities, as well as reshaping the involvement of ECCPDs in cinema network management. The guidelines of the work of local cinema directories showed a partial transfer of management and financial accounting responsibilities to the hands of local officials. Under the new management of the SCC, local cinema directories and urban cinefication branches were supposed to prepare operational plans for the approval at the SCC. They also were obliged to exercise financial control in cinema units falling under the purview of their directory, and to take care that the qualification of the cadres and both sufficient and constantly improving. Importantly, in cooperation with the local branches of the FRA, cinema directories now had the right to prepare their repertoire plans for their directory, and to implement the necessary measures related to the delivery of films to cinemas and other film screening units. Manager of a cinema directory retained the right to hire and fire employees of the enterprises under his purview.[134] Overall, cinema directories and their managers retained many of the areas of decision making envisioned during the 1961 and 1963 reforms.[135]

Some of the more substantial changes were introduced by reshaping the involvement of local ECCPDs in the management of local cinema directories, defining the establishment of the SCC as a reform directed towards greater centralization and more efficient streamlining of

[133] LLMA, 1964, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 4, p. 65 – 73.
[134] LLMA, 1964, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 3, p. 102 – 105.
[135] Extensive involvement of local ECCPD's in management of cinefication affairs was sustained in the early 1970s, when cinefication branches were transferred under direct ECCPD jurisdiction. See: LCVA, October 1972, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 8413, p. 11 – 28.

management processes, yet not eliminating the involvement of the local municipal administration. According to the new regulations, cinemas retained their dual accountability to both the local ECCPD's and to the SCC. Differently from the previous arrangement, managers from then on were fired and hired by the SCC rather than local municipal government, even though the latter were still expected to provide their recommendation. The right to hire and fire the senior accountant was also transferred from the jurisdiction of ECCPD to the SCC, under advisement from the former. However, regardless of the reshuffling of these responsibilities, local cinemas retained substantial links to the local municipal budgets, thus establishing stakes of the local government in the performance of cinema network. This context prompted the ECCPD of Kaunas' to request Kaunas' cinefication and film lease branches to acquire and screen the films that were demanded by the viewers.[136]

Local decision making in the LSSR film screening network

The ongoing reform processes and their concomitant, often baroque, administrative regulations, highlight the major questions of the central management of the LSSR cinema network in the rapidly shifting social and economic context of the 1960s. One of the central questions was the tricky balancing act between sustaining central control over the cinema network, the necessity of engaging the initiative of local governance and management, and the best ways of soliciting that initiative from local governance and cinema management. Centralized administrative control and economic management of cinema network was retained: obviously, neither cinema directories nor local municipalities could make independent decisions on ticket prices or imports of foreign cinematic production. Any major adjustments in cinema network, be it administrative reforms or construction of new cinemas, were either

[136] KRVA, 1965, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 3, p. 13.

initiated from the top, or required an approval from the relevant higher-tier institutions in Vilnius. At the same time, however, cinema directories were bound to the local ECCPD's, with the latter being actively engaged in cinema management and having economic interest in the efficient functioning of cinemas in their jurisdiction. Finally, reform guidelines demonstrate that cinema directories themselves were assigned considerable responsibilities such as devising short term repertoire plans, supervising the employees, maintaining cinema's environment and appearance, and fostering close and productive connections with local organizations.

Part of the Soviet authorities' attempts to strike a balance between central and local management was likely unavoidable because of the very structure of cinema network: unlike large productive factories, the 1500 cinemas were small economic units[137] dispersed widely across the country. They were not easy manageable by central decree alone, a problem attested by the accumulated piles of the SCC regional inspection reports and (usually negative) assessments of local cinema performance. Regardless, there was little reluctance in encouraging local cinema managers' input in decision-making processes and quality cinema performance. In part, tolerance towards and even enthusiasm about localized decision-making was rooted in broader political changes of the 1960s. As part of his initiatives of reforming the socialist polity, Khrushchev encouraged "unlocking of local potential"[138] at a regional level. The highlight of his initiative, the *sovnarkhozy* reform, might have been recalled in 1959, but focus on fostering of local engagement and responsibility was not put to rest.[139] In the LSSR cinema network, active involvement of cinema managers, employees, and even audiences was endorsed by the authorities, as well as in the press.

[137] Larger urban cinemas could employ around 30 people, while the work of, for instance, mobile film screening units mobile film screening stations often relied on a single person – a projectionist, who was, besides their technical and educational duties, supposed to manage advertisement, ticketing, and basic financial accounting tasks such as ticket sales and delivery of the collected money to the bank.
[138] Titov, 'The Central Committee Apparatus under Khrushchev'.
[139] Among the most interesting experiments in this direction were the occurrences of cinemas testing the work without ticket controllers, as was the case in Vilnius' "Neris" cinema in 1960: LLMA, 1960, f. 342, ap. 7, b. 296, p. 104 – 105.

In the context of the proliferation of discourses emphasizing the importance of local initiative in film screening network, in 1965 *Ekrano naujienos* reiterated the "4 pillars of good cinema work" several times throughout the year. An illustrative example of the contemporary emphasis on the decisive importance of local contribution in ensuring good performance in any sector, articles on the "4 pillars" were construed as a managerial guide for cinema directors, basing the quality of cinema work on such areas of their work as good cadre selection, systematic and thorough performance analysis, flexible and prompt reaction to organizational questions and a close connection to local community and organization leaders.[140] The latter was important for the task of delivering the films to broader audiences. The "4 pillars" of quality cinematic work put managers and their employees at the forefront of successful cinema performance, and when things did not go according to the predictions and wishes of the higher authorities, managers were often the ones to suffer the scolding at the SCC headquarters, not excluding an occasional threat of being dismissed from their positions altogether. One of the major issues was that in order to successfully fill cinema halls and collect the planned income local managers' in-depth knowledge of a local context and audiences was necessary. This much was admitted even in the meetings of a SCC Party organization: "It is necessary to give more initiative to [local FRA branches] which possess an in-depth knowledge of the regions they are working in."[141]

Deep familiarity with local circumstances and cinemagoing publics, the organizational map and leaders of local organizations was only one aspect expanding the significance of local practices in cinema network. Acknowledgment of the importance of local initiative was not confined to the LSSR, as illustrated by a resonating and critical analysis published in *Izvestia*. The economic organization of Soviet film industry suffered from the same ills across the Union,

[140] 'Iš Kino Tinklo Darbo: Įgyvendinant Svarbius Uždavinius [From Cinema Network: Implementation of Important Tasks]', *Ekrano Naujienos*, 28 September 1964; 'Kinas - Svarbi Ideloginio Darbo Grandis [Cinema - an Important Part in Ideological Work]', *Ekrano Naujienos*, 14 December 1964.
[141] LYA, 1964, f. 17315, ap. 1, b. 2, p. 37.

and solutions for some of these problems were placed with local management. The author of the article pondered that "to fulfil the plan, you need a dank summer, cloudy skies, incessant rains…" However, since that year the weather was good throughout the summer, the audiences had "disappeared outside the city - hiking, fishing, berries, mushrooms", without a shadow of concern about "burning down" July's film lease plans.[142] In other words, in order meet the targets, besides the knowledge of the local context, planning process had to take into account seasonality, history of weather changes, and the impact that such occasions as Christmas tended to bear on local attendance rates.[143] Some of these changes, such as attendance shifts caused by seasons, could be reliably predicted – others required a quick and flexible response which was only possible with assigning greater responsibilities to local level management. There were other local circumstances that were difficult to take into consideration at a planning office in Moscow: ensuring optimal performance of cinema network in a region two thirds of which were covered by forest, and in Vilnius' old town, were fundamentally different tasks.[144]

The necessity of acknowledging the importance of and encouraging local agency in order to be able to take local nuances into account was reflected in local planning processes as well. While annual planning targets of cinema visits and income were assigned from above in a centralized fashion, it was left to the accountants of cinema directories to distribute those cumulative targets both across the quarters, and among different cinemas under their jurisdiction. In addition, operational plans (indicating the number of screenings to be organized) were put together by local cinema directions, while information about quarterly plans would be sent to the SCC, but only as a material required for economic analysis.[145] Cinema's chief accountant – in consultation with employees[146] - was expected to be able in this way to take into

[142] Inna Levshina, 'Naivnyi Merkantilist Krutit Fil″my', *Izvestiia*, Nr. 32 1965.
[143] KRVA, 1964, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 20, p. 27.
[144] The case of Varena region: LLMA, 1966, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 58, p. 75.
[145] LLMA, 1965, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 21, p. 72.
[146] KRVA, 1966, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 44, p. 2.

consideration the cinematic geography of a town or city in which cinemas were located, the physical condition of those enterprises and the quality of service that they could be expected to provide, the quality of and expected demand for the available films, the local demographic situation, public transport connectivity, and even local audiences' preferences for a particular kind of cinematic production. Assigning a limited power over plan distribution enabled and empowered local management to consider such factors as traditionally lower attendance rates during the summer, respond to weather changes, closures caused by planned or emergency repairs, and to take into consideration the ways in which evolving situation of an individual cinema affected attendance rates in the district or town.

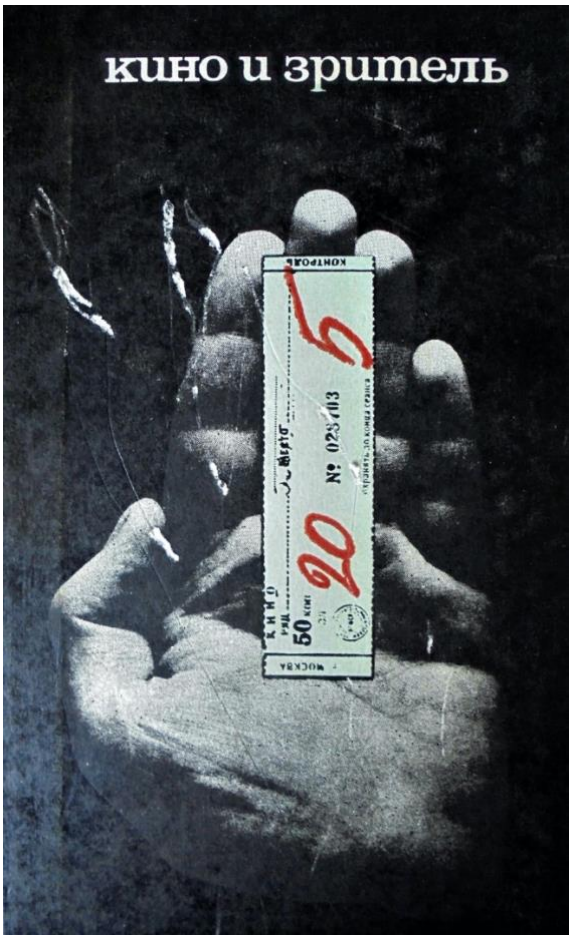
Pursuit of financial discipline

In spring 1964, the Economic Commission of the recently established Kaunas' Cinefication Branch (KCB) gathered for an investigative exercise: their task was to figure out how and, importantly, because of whose fault, several viewers without cinema tickets were recently allowed into one of the screenings.[147] A somewhat tense discussion ensued as cinema employees provided explanations of their role in the incident: one of them left the cinema because their work hours were over. He did leave another person to overlook the cinema, but the latter explained having had to leave to collect medication for their wife, leaving cinema building unsupervised for a while. In the meantime, the inspectors who caught the ticketless viewers appeared to have made a mistake of their own by disregarding the fact that some of the viewers in the audience were in fact cinema employees, entitled to attend film screenings for free. Because of the flaws in inspection conclusion was reached that none of the employees

[147] KRVA, 1964, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 6, p. 1-2.

were to be held accountable. Cinema workers questioned in this investigation were quite lucky: their colleagues a few years earlier were dismissed from their jobs for a similar mishap.[148]

Importance of accurate ticketing in state-socialist cinema network's economic accounting system could not be overestimated. A paper ticket, marked by a unique serial number, provided the material basis for monitoring and accounting for the act of provision of the otherwise immaterial service provided by cinemas, and served as a tool enabling the exchange of services for money between an individual and a state enterprise, providing the basis for smooth financial accounting. Because of this, proper cinema ticket accounting was also a key to enforcing financial discipline and accountability on an enterprise level.



5. Cover of Kogan, Lev Naumovich. Kino i Zritel'. Opyt Sociologicheskogo Issledovanija [The Cinema and the Audience. Results of a Sociological Investigation]. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1968.

[148] LLMA, 1958, f. 342, ap. 7, b. 229, p. 5 – 7.

The meeting in Kaunas was called by local officials, but the concern with proper ticketing procedure and financial accounting was paramount for central authorities in Vilnius, as attested by numerous archives of regional cinema inspection documents, meticulously documenting financial discipline violations, and recording issued fines and reprimands. In the relative absence of material goods to steal, manipulation of tickets was cinema networks' version of "stealing from the state", included among the most widely denounced crimes in the 1960s.[149] Allowing ticketless viewers to cinemas could bear harsh penalties. One of the most common reprimands was ingrained in the notions of financial accountability: the culprit had to compensate the losses from their own income. In this way the money would return to the state budget, while at the same time fostering employees' sense of material responsibility.

The micro-procedures of ticketing presented one of the areas where a rather unforgiving financial discipline was exercised in a state-socialist economic order. The LSSR SCC exerted immense efforts to ensure financial accountability in the cinema network, but ticket prices fell under the purview of the Ministry of Finance. Setting cinema ticket prices was not the only area where the Ministry of Finance would get involved in cinema affairs: they determined the salaries,[150] pursued setting of higher planning targets,[151] had a voice in regulating the number of cadres in cinema network,[152] contributed to the drafting of cinema attendance rulebook.[153] One of the areas where the Ministry of Finance bore the most influence was the expansion of film screening network in the LSSR, especially so where the construction of new cinemas was concerned.

[149] Large scale embezzlement could result in a death penalty: James Heinzen, 'Soviet Entrepreneurs in the Late Socialist Shadow Economy: The Case of the Kyrgyz Affair', *Slavic Review* 79, no. 3 (ed 2020): 544–65.
[150] LLMA, 1965, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 29, p. 55.
[151] LCVA, 1967, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 7061, p. 26; LYA, f. 17315, ap. 1, b. 3, p. 20.
[152] LLMA, 1969, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 182, p. 160.
[153] LLMA, 1971, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 275, p. 70.

In the late 1950s – 1960s one of the most common ways to acquire funds for a construction of a new cinema was acquisition of a loan from the USSR Gosbank. A 1963 report of the LSSR Ministry of Finance indicated that between 1956 and 1963, 20 cinemas were constructed, 3 spaces were adapted for the purposes of film screening, and 8 cinemas were under construction from the Gosbank loan.[154] The loan application procedure could be initiated by a local cinema directory or ECCDP, with the support from the Ministry of Culture (before 1964) and the Cinematography Committee (after 1964). However, the success of the application depended on the LSSR Ministry of Finance providing a guarantee to the bank.[155] Among the issues related to the loan was a relatively short repayment period: only 3 years from the beginning of cinema construction.[156] Another problem, emphasized by the Ministry of Finance, was that if cinema failed to generate enough income to repay the loan on time, the missing amount had to be returned to Gosbank from the state budget – an outcome that the Ministry of Finance appeared to be determined to avoid at all costs. These circumstances would often translate the cinefication effort and the promise of providing cinema services to socialist citizens into a language of bare numerical values of expenditure and income.

Several such conflicts were presented in front of the LSSR Council of Ministers in the early 1960s: construction of cinemas in less populated locations of Trakai, Biržai, Akmenė and Pasvalys was advocated by the Ministry of Culture and contested by the Ministry of Finance. The latter argued that Trakai cinema should be constructed from state capital funds rather than the Gosbank loan because, based on the contemporary estimates, Trakai could not have been expected to return the loan on time:

[154] LCVA, 1963, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 6139, p. 43. Construction of cinemas reportedly slowed down in the early 1970s: LCVA, 1972, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 8412, p. 37.
[155] LLMA, 1965, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 28, p. 27.
[156] LCVA, 1963, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 6139, p. 25 – 28.

> "The currently active cinema has 192 seats, and brutto income for the year 1961 was 18700 roubles, for the first 9 months of this year – 13600 roubles. After the introduction of a new 300 sear cinema, in order to repay the loan, annual income of that cinema should be not less than 63000 roubles, or 3.5 times more than the income of the current Trakai cinema."[157]

In their response the Ministry of Culture did not fall back on the arguments rooted in the ideological, social and political value of facilitating Soviet citizens' access to cinema: rather, their argument was construed within the same economic logic, providing estimates showing that it was, in fact, entirely possible to collect the income necessary to repay the loan within the provided period of time:

> "We should keep in mind that if the viewer is not going to a [current] slum labelled as a cinema (…) it does not mean that he will not come to a new, wide-screen cinema. (…) To repay the loan, it is necessary that every screening at a new (300 seats) cinema would be visited by 195 viewers. This is completely realistic. Speaking of annual indicators, each inhabitant of the town will have to visit cinema 36 times, or 3 times a month. The average indicator in republic's towns is 23 times, but it is much higher in some towns. For instance, only during the 11 months of 1962, each inhabitant of Druskininkai has visited cinema 40.7 times, Pagėgiai – 30.2 times (…) etc."[158]

It was also important to note, the argument went, that the Ministry of Finance had miscalculated the number of potential visitors. The historical town of Trakai[159] was attracting around 11500 visitors per month. In addition to them, the new cinema could also expect viewrs from a nearby smaller town Lentvaris. All these potential audiences could enable increasing the number of viewers 2 to 3 times.

[157] LCVA, 1962 December 20, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 5880, p. 84.
[158] LCVA, 1962 December 25, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 5880, p. 89 - 90.
[159] Trakai had briefly served as a capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in 14th century.

Similar discussions continued into the next year: the Ministry of Finance estimated that cinemas in other 3 small LSSR towns would not yield the income required to repay the loan on time, as in these cases the number of visitors would have to grow 3.3 to 6.3 times, while the already existing cinema halls were only exploited at 60% capacity on average.[160] Generally, the Ministry of Finance was concerned with what its officials perceived as broader tendencies: the estimates provided by the Ministry of Culture when applying for new cinema construction loans were often unrealistic, cinemas in smaller towns were often not able to repay the loans from their own income on time, cinemas constructed in small regional centers often generated substantial losses, and in 1963 regional cinema network generally was unprofitable.[161]

In all 4 loan application cases, the final decision of the LSSR Council of Minsters was to compel the Ministry of Finance to provide the guarantee. However, similar scenarios kept being recorded: Kėdainiai was refused the chance to apply for the loan due to its low number of inhabitants,[162] while holiday resort Birštonas was denied a loan, but offered an alternative source of the LSSR Trade Union Holiday Resort Council funds.[163] However, receiving a loan did not mean the end of the financial pressures exerted over a cinema. The necessity to repay the loan could affect the repertoire choices of cinema managers. Such was the case of Vilnius' cinema "Kronika" in 1960. Cinema finally repaying the loan was taken by Trifonovas, the head of the Cinefication and Film Lease Branch, as "a favourable circumstance to begin screening the older Soviet feature films after the documentaries": since financial obligations were fulfilled, more ideologically valuable films could make their way back into the repertoire.[164] The head of the SCC Vytautas Baniulis recalled a similar tendency: "Cinemas were constructed

[160] LCVA, December 1962 – January 1963, f, R754, ap. 4, b. 6139, p. 36 – 38.
[161] Lithuanian: *nuostolingas*, literally – "producing losses".
[162] LLMA, 1965, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 28, p. 133.
[163] LLMA, 1963, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 63, p. 116.
[164] LLMA, 1960 October 25, f. 342, ap. 7, b. 296, p. 94 – 95. "Kronika" [Chronicle] cinema was dedicated to sreening documentary films. The cinema opened its doors in December 1958: Sonata Žalneravičiūtė, *Vilniaus Iliuzionai: Miesto Kino Teatrų Istorijos [Vilnius' Houses of Illusions: Stories of Town's Cinemas]* (Vilnius: Vaga, 2015), 280.

from loans. No one was [just] giving the money away. You take a loan from the state bank, construct a cinema, after that you screen the films, you have income, spend some 5 years repaying the loan. But it was easy to repay [the loan]. Cinemas were asking for the so-called better films. Indian."[165]

Cinema enterprise and *ūkiskaita*

Central deliberations over the expansion of cinema network, the presence of the economic logic, expense and income balance were an important influence in the work of cinema network way before experimentation with economic reforms finally took place in the mid-1960s. These reforms did, however, introduce new ideas and procedures designed to encourage economic accountability on an enterprise level. One of the key principles behind new economic debates and practices was the principle of *ūkiskaita* (in Lithuanian; *khozraschyot* in Russian). *Khozraschyot* encompassed an array of economic management principles, all oriented towards encouraging economic and commercial accountability, as well as pressuring state-socialist firms to keep their costs down and generate profits. *Khozraschyot* was first introduced in the context of the mixed economy of NEP in the 1920s.[166] The notion was revived in the 1960s as part of de-Stalinization as well as the attempts to improve the efficiency of Soviet economic system, especially when the Kosygin reforms began were being introduced starting with 1965.

The reform, along with the notion of *khozraschyot*, was eagerly embraced and actively promoted in the LSSR press. In 1965, Antanas Sniečkus (the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Lithuania) expressed his unambiguous endorsement of the economic reform and the principle of *khozraschyot* in the pages of *Liaudies ūkis* [*People's economy*]. The importance of *ūkiskaita* could not be overestimated: Sniečkus described it as nothing less than "the key tool

[165] Paukštytė, 'When No One Wanted to Touch the Cinema'.
[166] Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR, 1917-1991* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 215.

for improving Soviet economy."[167] The economic reform was far reaching: Taagepera and Misiunas claim that by 1969, 90% of the LSSR enterprises had been transferred to a reformed model of economic management, following all the key tenets of *ūkiskaita*: enterprises being granted a greater degree of administrative autonomy, financial self-dependence, and therefore growing interest in enterprise-level profitability. In addition, these changes were closely tied to workers' incomes.[168]

The general objective behind the idea of *khozraschyot* was a partial replacement of administrative controls with the financial accountability of an enterprise,[169] focused on balancing the income and spending, and on over-the-plan target fulfilment. Where culture was concerned, cinema again stood out from other types of cultural production. As a historian Eglė Rindzevičiūtė points out in her study on economic management of culture in the LSSR, cultural organizations, as a rule, were organized along the lines of a *biudzhetnye* institution. Such organizations "were directly subsidized by the state, and were not expected to either generate profits or balance their expenditure and income."[170] Thus, if a theatre produced losses – these losses would be readily covered from the state budget.[171] On the other hand, the economic management conducted along the principles of *khozraschyot* assigned to cinemas, "implied that organization possessed some autonomy, but it also had to fulfil centrally laid out plan, and it was economically accountable to respective agencies."[172]

[167] Antanas Sniečkus, 'Sprendžiant Naujus Uždavinius [Meeting New Challenges]', *Liaudies Ūkis [Peoples' Economy]*, no. 5 (1965): 131–33.
[168] Misiunas and Taagepera, *The Baltic States*, 229.
[169] B. Sukharevsky, 'Ekonominis Skatinimas Ir Ūkiskaita [Economic Incentives and Accountability]', *Liaudies Ūkis [Peoples' Economy]*, no. 11 (1965): 322–24.
[170] Rindzevičiūtė, 'Constructing Soviet Cultural Policy', 92.
[171] However, a closer look should be taken at separate cultural and media industries regarding the application of principles of *khozraschyot* in the context of Kosygin reforms. For instance, *khozraschyot* was encouraged in the case of the USSR press, see: Simon Huxtable, 'In Search of the Soviet Reader. The Kosygin Reforms, Sociology, and Changing Concepts of Soviet Society, 1964-1970', *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 54, no. 54/3-4 (1 July 2013): 624. Ann White in her study of culture houses observes a similar tendency in the 1970s: plan was interfering with propaganda purposes as culture houses resorted to movies and dances out of "economic compulsion", see: Anne White, *De-Stalinization and the House of Culture: Declining State Control over Leisure in the USSR, Poland, and Hungary, 1953-89* (London: Routledge, 1990), 78.
[172] Rindzevičiūtė, 'Constructing Soviet Cultural Policy', 92.

The introduction of new ideas and organizational principles to the management of state-socialist economy did not mean that film screening was not subsidized from the state budget, or that the "soft budget constraint"[173] was eliminated. In the context of the perception of cinema as part of the project of increasing socialist citizens' standard of living, and a concomitant investment in the growth of cinema network, cinemas did not go bankrupt in the LSSR. Occasionally, they could be closed by central decree, usually due to an unsatisfactory or unsafe condition of the building where cinema was located. Other failing cinematic organizations could still expect that their appeals for a cash injection from the state budget in cases of economic crisis would be satisfied.[174] As the decree of the 1961 cinema network reform suggested, *khozraschyot* as a tool for correcting the limitations of centralization and stimulation of economic responsibility among local managers and government bodies was a goal, a set of economic management techniques that were still under development.

However, the emphasis on *khozraschyot* did institute a set of objectives for cinemas and their managers: to seek economic efficiency on an enterprise level, to meet and exceed their planning targets, to gear their cinemas towards financial sustainability, to strike a balance between expenditure and income. The expectations implied in *khozraschyot* both outlined the objectives for cinema management and the supervision criteria for central cinema administration authorities: economic calculation, credible assessment of costs and income, pursuit of economic efficiency were to play an integral part in cinema work. Yet, the impact of the reinforced interest in *khozraschyot* did not stop at outlining the expectations of economic efficiency from cinema management: it also held implications for cinema directories' position in Soviet economic structure.

[173] János Kornai, 'The soft budget constraint', *Kyklos* 39, no. 1 (1986): 3–30.
[174] As illustrated by the LSSR Council of Minsters approving financial compensation for financially failing cinema network: LCVA, 1956, f. R755, ap. 2, b. 3562, p. 142; or the case of Film Rentals Agency appealing for additional funds due to financially dire situation: LCVA, 1963, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 6139, p. 56.

Mark Pittaway's analysis of the productive sector under Stalinist economic model reveals an array of relationships between the plan, shopfloor, and wage laborer. In this case, the laborer was the subject of economic planning, while the factory they were working at was positioned as little else than a mere layer in a hierarchical administrative planning chain.[175] The work of cinemas and cinema directories in the 1960s LSSR reveals an alternative variation of a position of a firm in a state-socialist economic structure. A cinema under state socialism was not an enterprising firm as it would be defined in a market environment: arguably, cinema enterprise navigated the constraints defined by centrally set objectives rather than constraints posed by the market. Economic objectives set out for cinema were defined by central plan, and there were clearly defined limits when it came to making such decisions as repertoire planning and major renovations (depending on the LSSR agencies such as SCC, the Ministry of Finance, or the Planning Commission). However, within the basic economic premises of Soviet planning system and accounting, cinemas did have a distinct economic identity: it was a cinema (and cinema directory) that served as the basic unit of economic accounting. Planning targets were assigned to cinemas, economic success was measured for a cinema as a unit, and it was managers[176] of individual cinemas who were held responsible for the successes and failures of their enterprise and their employees.

The basic economic identity of a cinema enterprise was arguably furthered in the context of the Thaw, the emphasis on the tentative merits of decentralization, and the 1960s developments in economic thinking on the efficiency of a socialist enterprise. Among the overarching objectives of the economic discussions of the 1960s was finding ways to further the position of an enterprise as the central unit in economic planning and analysis. As the records of the contemporary administrative and institutional reforms of the cinema network show, cinema

[175] Mark Pittaway, 'The Social Limits of State Control: Time, the Industrial Wage Relation, and Social Identity in Stalinist Hungary, 1948-1953', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 12, no. 3 (1999): 271–301.
[176] Who could be fired for a particularly poor performance: LCVA, 1963, f. R754, ap. 4, p. 6139, p. 73.

directories were assigned local decision-making powers over such questions as repertoire planning or implementation of the measures necessary for provision of the quality cinema services. The quest for a more efficient economic management involved both the recognition of the importance of the involvement of local governmental bodies and management, and implementation of the economic measures – often encompassed by *khozraschyot* – to strengthen economic accountability on a local level, and within a cinema enterprise.

Measuring economic performance

One of the common ways of referring to cinema employees and cinema network was the metaphor of the "ideological front".[177] The metaphor referred to many things, including the proximity of cinemas to the Soviet audiences. Cinema was, in fact, among the fields of cultural activity with the broadest outreach. For instance, as early as 1959, LSSR statistics account for 2651 public libraries (including those working at the local houses of culture), 2154 houses of culture, and 888 cinemas, followed by only 36 museums and a comparatively low number of 10 theatres.[178] However, whilst sometimes labelled an ideological front, film screening was also an economic activity, economic management of which was strongly impacted by its direct contact with the consumers. One of such economic coordination techniques had to do with measuring cinema's economic success.

Depending on a context, managers and administrators could draw on several ways of estimating economic efficiency of their cinema directory. Some of them relied on expenditure and cost accounting. For instance, in 1968, Palčiauskas, the head of the Planning and Finance Section

[177] 'Iš Kino Tinklo Darbo: Sektinas Pavyzdys [From the Work of Cinema Network: An Example to Follow]', *Ekrano Naujienos [Screen News]*, no. 14 (13 April 1964): 11; 'Ukmergiškiai Dirba Brigadiniu Metodu [Ukmerge Projectionistts Adopt Brigade Method]'. LCVA, 1965, f. R981, ap. 2, b. 49, p. 59; KRVA, 1966, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 44, p. 6.
[178] *Tarybų Lietuvos Dvidešimtmetis: Statistinių Duomenų Rinkinys [The 20th Anniversary of Soviet Lithuania: Collection of Statistical Data]*, 50.

of the SCC, raised the problem of the losses generated in the LSSR cinefication network. To illustrate the point, he estimated the income vs. expenses ratio. In the case of Pakruojis region, it was 1 rouble to 78 kopeks. In Palčiauskas' analysis, this was a rare example of profitable work in cinema network.[179] An earlier report on financial performance of Širvintos region used income collected from one inhabitant as an indicator of economic efficiency.[180] The most prominent and consistent measure of cinema's economic performance, however, was their capacity to meet planning targets.

In case of cinema, planning targets were closely linked to cinema's capacity to engage audiences. There were three central categories of planning targets in cinema network: operational plans, indicating the screening schedule, seating capacity, etc.; "viewer plans," indicating the required attendance and tickets sold; and income plans, indicating the income delivered by ticket sales. Both cinema's positioning as a service provider working in a direct contact with the audiences and the economic framework of planning targets used to assess its success had far reaching implications for economic process in cinema network, as well as decision making both among higher authorities and local cinema management.

Cinema's proximity to the audiences and the nature of assigned planning indicators placed cinema in an ambiguous position, leaving it outside of some of the explanatory frameworks applied in cases of industrial productive industries in state-socialist contexts. One of the differences was posed by the fact that due to having their success measured by attendance rates and income from sales, cinemas were attuned to demand. Generally, Soviet film industry, similarly to other industrial branches, suffered because of the institutional and economic separation between production and trade. This problem was broadly acknowledged by Soviet authorities and was one of the issues that the designs of economic reform of the second half of

[179] LLMA, 1968, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 138, p. 42.
[180] LLMA, August 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 216 – 220.

the 1960s sought to address. In case of film industry, one of the clearest examples was the Experimental Film Studio in Moscow, the establishment of which sought to test the ways of linking the notions of success in film production to their popularity among audiences, all under a guise of socialist economy.

However, while attempts to bridge the gap between production and consumption continued to be partial and incomplete, film screening firm had to pay attention to the preferences of its audience. For a cinema, the information about and importance of demand was not only obvious, but also impossible to ignore: their income and capacity of meeting planning targets depended directly on the consumers of cinema. Awkwardly positioned cinema management still had to observe what Katherine Verdery has termed an "allocative power" in state-socialist systems, especially when it came to the acquisition of materials for substantial renovations of cinemas, privileges that only Soviet central administration could issue; the same was true when it came to career prospects.[181] However, managers of cinema enterprises did not have the luxury of straightforwardly following the mentality of "production will determine consumption":[182] in their case, the measure of their productive capacity was consumption, and this dictated close awareness of the demand.

Furthermore, within the economic structure of film screening network, one of the key expressions of that demand was the income generated by cinemas to local and state budgets. Whereas in some cases the employees and management of productive industrial factories were focused first and foremost on achieving the norms rather than concerning themselves with the money value of the goods they were producing,[183] cinema network had the target of monetary

[181] Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceauşescu's Romania*, Societies and Culture in East-Central Europe 7 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 74–83.
[182] Misiunas and Taagepera, *The Baltic States*, 229.
[183] Antti Sarasmo, 'The Kirov Fishing Kolkhoz: A Socialist Success Story', in *Competition in Socialist Society*, Routledge Studies in the History of Russia and Eastern Europe 19 (New York: Routledge, 2014), 54.

income inscribed directly among its most important economic success indicators. Finally, cinemas had no other choice but to deal with a problem often overlooked in research approaching Soviet economy as an "economy of shortage": the presence of, even if limited, audience sovereignty. Cinema managers knew all too well that, in the words of KP CK Ideological branch head Misutis, one could not "take a viewer to a cinema with an aid of a whip".[184]

Such position of cinema in the economic system of Soviet film industry was in many ways akin to that of the trade sector. Therefore, the area of film screening was subjected of many similar processes and managerial strategies. Whereas cinema network was referred to as an "ideological front", it is not by accident that Mark Landsman in his study referred to GDR's domestic trade as a front line of contact with consumers.[185] For one, similarly to other areas of cultural production and service,[186] cinema-going was an integral part of the late-socialist governments' efforts to improve the general standard of living of Soviet citizens. Growth of the number of film screening units in the republic was routinely presented as a proof of the growing wellbeing of socialist citizens, whereas cinemas were constantly assessed for their capacity to meet the new, growing, and contemporaneous needs of their audiences. Association of cinemas with the 1960s consumption policies (discussed in more depth in Chapter 3) went hand in hand with the similarities in the economic management techniques employed in film screening and in trade. Because of the way in which their planning targets were determined, much like the functionaries of the trade sector in the GDR, cinema network employees in the

[184] LLMA, 1964, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 1, p. 41.
[185] Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand*, 93.
[186] T. Iván Berend, *Central and Eastern Europe, 1944-1993: Detour from the Periphery to the Periphery*, Cambridge Studies in Modern Economic History 1 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 220; Betts, 'The Politics of Plenty: Consumerism in Communist Societies'.

LSSR were motivated by the need to meet their sales plans and supply the films and services preferred by the audiences.[187]

In terms of their position in an overall Soviet economic system, cinemas and retail enterprises also served a similar function within Soviet economic structure. Economic experts contributing to the LSSR's *Liaudies ūkis* included film screening (categorized as "viewers' establishments") among contributors to the growing socialist standard of living, alongside such areas as trade, transport, and services. Cinemas, along with these areas of economic activity, were assessed as serving an important purpose in Soviet economy: that of ensuring "healthy and normal" circulation of money.[188] Economists contributing to *Liaudies ūkis'* in the 1960s were painfully aware of the problem described by Sergei Oushakine: "hoarding of money".[189] Natalia Chernyshova suggests that the issue of retaining the earnings in a form of savings, rather than releasing them back into economy for further investment through consumption, persisted well into the Brezhnev's era. Incomes continued to grow, but they were not spent.[190]

The general problem of the Soviet economy appears to have persisted in the Baltic socialist republics as well, signaled by the growing savings accounts in the 1970s.[191] In the eyes of economic analysts, without the wage money returning to the central bank it was neither possible to ensure investment, nor to support the strength of the rouble.[192] Oushakine points out one of the causes of the money hoarding, very much familiar to the employees of the cinema network: Soviet consumers' refusing to purchase, even under conditions of shortage, the goods that they did not like. It was clear to economic experts and functionaries that delivery of products to the stores (or cinema screens) did not mean that they will be purchased, and that was one of the

[187] Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand*, 10.
[188] J. Skardžius and J. Zinkevičius, 'Pašalinti prekybos darbo trūkumus [To eliminate the shortcomings in trade work]', *Liaudies ūkis [Peoples' economy]*, May 1960.
[189] Serguei Alex Oushakine, '"Against the Cult of Things": On Soviet Productivism, Storage Economy, and Commodities with No Destination', *The Russian Review* 73, no. 2 (2014): 209.
[190] Natalya Chernyshova, *Soviet Consumer Culture in the Brezhnev Era* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 30.
[191] Misiunas and Taagepera, *The Baltic States*, 220.
[192] Skardžius and Zinkevičius, 'To eliminate the shortcomings in trade work'.

reasons why understanding demand and ensuring production quality was frequently highlighted in the pages of Liaudies ūkis throughout the 1960s.

Concluding note

The continuous reform process of the 1960s outlines the parameters of the central coordination of the LSSR film screening network. Such economic decisions as setting of attendance and income plan targets and cinema ticket prices continued to be defined at the top, while central institutions in Vilnius, the Ministry of Culture and, from 1964, the SCC, retained the right of central supervision and command, while sustaining their authority with the right of issuing reprimands where they found necessary. However, the basic structure of film screening network provided an unfavourable setting for a meticulous centralized administration: management of hundreds of film screening units and dozens of cinema directories was prone to complexities. In addition, due to growing investment in provision of cultural well-being of Soviet citizens, of which cinemas were defined as an integral part, cinema network kept growing during the decade.

In this context, authorities acknowledged the necessity to allow some leeway in local decision making. To provide optimal conditions for smooth functioning of cinema network, and to achieve the best results, cinema directory managers had to be granted some decision-making power. This was, again, at least in part because of the dispersion of cinemas, but also because one of the central objectives the planning system set for cinema network in general, and each cinema enterprise in particular, was to attract as many viewers as possible. Achievement of this objective depended on a close knowledge of local idiosyncrasies, such as the condition of local film screening units, the layout of local organisations where cinema, cinema art, and film screenings could be promoted or the habits, tastes, and preferences of local audiences. In addition, the 1960s LSSR film screening network appears to be an illustration of the departure

of the ambition of meticulously centralized management of repertoire policy, the consequence of which was managers of Moscow cinemas complaining about not receiving timely information about films, their duration or, alternatively, not receiving the films scheduled (and advertised) for screening.[193] This might be the reason why by the 1960s, while the decisions over what films will be available in what number of copies were made in Moscow, local management was allowed flexibility in making decisions over setting up short-term repertoire plans. Importantly, besides the horizontal links to the SCC, cinema directories also had to mind the horizontal, local links to their ECCPD, for whom good performance of cinema network meant additional income to their budgets.

Similarly, where coordination of economic processes of film screening network was concerned, the structure was an example of a centralized, top-down management. However, the dispersion of cinema units demanded a specific type of economic accountability, which constituted cinema directories and cinemas as the basic accounting units. This meant that management and employees of these cinema enterprises were assigned planning targets of their own, while the success or failure was assessed on the basis of an enterprise, with cinema directory manager bearing the most responsibility in front of the authorities. Rather than living in a lax atmosphere of soft budget constraint, cinema managers and employees were constantly assessed for their compliance with financial discipline. For cinema employees this meant regular monitoring for compliance with ticketing regulations. For cinema enterprise, this meant a continuous pressure to meet planning targets. Development of cinema network as a whole was also affected by the logic of cost and expense balance, especially where construction of new cinemas was concerned. The state program of providing loans for the construction of new cinemas, the main channel of expansion for cinema network, appeared to effectively encourage cinema expansion in the areas where they would yield the most economic returns: cities. The financial monitoring

[193] Miller, *Soviet Cinema*, 42.

was furthered with the revival of the NEP reform idea of fostering financial discipline through the mechanisms of ūkiskaita, or khozraschyot. While the principles of ūkiskaita did not mean the ultimate financial discipline of bankruptcy, they did nevertheless structured cinemas' economic activities along the lines of expectation of financial accountability.

Finally, the very definition of planning targets themselves bore a profound influence on the organisation of film screening network and the strategies employed by cinema managers. Similarly to trade enterprises, and in distinction from a traditional Soviet productive factory, the basic "norms" of cinema enterprise were defined as a number of screenings (which cinema managers and employees had some control over) and attendance rates and income (which were much more difficult to control). Such measurement of economic success kept cinema management fixated on the demand, rather than being confined solely on the central institutions for the allocation of resources. In order to meet their planning targets cinemas had to attract the viewers.

This constellation of factors – the decentralized structure of film screening network, necessity and acknowledgement of local engagement, definition of cinema as the basic unit of economic accounting, a close link between their indicators of economic success and demand, the presence of an economic logic of enterprise income and expense accounting – provided the backdrop for the development of the LSSR cinema going culture in the 1960s. In the context of a generally growing standard of living, a tendency which was particularly sharp in the LSSR, this backdrop created the conditions prompting cinema administration and management to respond to audiences' preferences.

Chapter 2. Cash register film

Cinema, entertainment, and money

In 1968, an overview of one of Vilnius' cinemas "Vingis" appeared in Ekrano naujienos:

> "The entire collective of the cinema (27 people), besides their direct duties, perform public[194] tasks. Public? But cinema's duty is to promote good films. Yet, for some a good film is "Anna Karenina", "Roko and his brothers", for others – the "Phantom"… Both for the first and for the latter the money is paid. Both the first and the latter help to implement financial plans. But cinema is not only entertainment and leisure – films shape public taste and opinion".[195]

By the late 1960s, several roles were assigned to cinema in the LSSR. The educational mission of cinema in a socialist society retained its importance. Yet, it was clear to many engaged in cinematic life in various capacities that for many viewers cinema was also a site of relaxation and a careless pastime. This was the way cinemagoing was seen by a student when she was filling in a questionnaire distributed at a cinema, where she approached cinema as a site of relaxation, and by an economist, who wanted to see more musicals "so that a person could rest after an intensive day, so that cinema would become a real place for relaxation."[196] This view of cinemagoing was acknowledged by renowned cinema directors as well, as in the case of Raimondas Vabalas' publicized explanation that "viewers still expected entertainment from cinemas".[197] A small survey conducted by *Kultūros barai* revealed that, at least in Alytus region, cinema was among the most popular leisure activities of choice.[198]

Audiences' inclination towards entertaining content on cinema screens was not an uncontested area. As an overview pubilshed in *Ekrano naujienos* pointed out,

[194] Lithuanian "visuomenines" – as in social, public.
[195] D. Šakėnienė, 'Žmonės Už "Vingio" Ekrano [People behind the Screen of "Vingis"]', *Ekrano Naujienos*, 6 May 1968.
[196] KRVA, 1964, f. 1220, ap. 1, b. 24, p. 36, 87.
[197] E. Aukštikalnis et al., 'Kinas Ir Kultūra: Pokalbis Prie Apskrito Stalo [Cinema and Culture: Roundtable Discussion]', *Kultūros barai*, December 1968.
[198] Romualdas Ozolas, 'Žmogus, Kultūra, Poreikiai [A Person, Culture, Needs]', *Kultūros barai*, 11 July 1967.

> "Depending on the circumstances we, [film] critics, write about the viewer in one of the two ways: we either appease him or demean him. Sometimes we say our viewer is "the most aware", "the most sensitive", "the most demanding and clever". At other times, it appears that our viewer "needs aesthetic education."[199]

The paternalistic approaches to audiences continued to appear in the press and in the meetings of cinema administration. Audience was not always right[200] and, as in the article written by the LFS film editor Irena Seleznovaitė, the viewers sometimes needed encouragement to see the things in a correct light. She was concerned with the intense fascination young people had shown towards a Soviet hit "Amphibian man," and she urged young film enthusiasts to reflect – why did they like the "Amphibian man"? Was it because of the fascinations of the underwater world, or was it because the film exposed the vicissitudes of science when combined with capitalist greed?[201]

However, commitment to the educational potential of cinema had to share space with other approaches. As the reportage on the new methods of work in "Vingis" cinema illustrates, by the mid-1960s both cinema's role as a provider of entertainment, and audiences' proclivity for relying on cinema to be entertained, were a subject of open debate, in which the right to entertainment was often acknowledged. Film repertoire, as film director Arūnas Žebriūnas told in a projectionists' seminar, obviously had "to be varied and satisfy viewers with different inclinations."[202] Adventure and detective stories were also needed in a socialist context, yet

[199] Michailas Bleimanas, 'Gyventi Žiūrovo Interesais [To Live by the Interests of the Viewer]', *Ekrano Naujienos,* 10 July 1967.
[200] M. Malcienė, 'Ekranas Tarptautiniame Forume [The Screen in an International Forum]', *Kultūros barai,* October 1965.
[201] Irena Seleznovaitė, 'Atsakome Skaitytojams: Kodėl Patiko "Žmogus Amfibija"? [We Respond to the Readers: Why Was "Amphibian Man" Liked?]', *Ekrano Naujienos,* 20 August 1962.
[202] 'Respublikos Kino Tinkle: Keilame Kvalifikaciją [In Republic's Cinema Network: Raising Qualification]', *Ekrano Naujienos,* 3 January 1966.

without philosophical movies the repertoire would be poorer, suggested Žebriūnas to his audience.

However, the ongoing discussions regarding leisure, public mission, and a right to relaxation and entertainment on cinema's grounds were not confined to public deliberations, and were not solely a competition between differing arrays of ideas regarding Soviet audiences' competences, rights, and cinema's role in Soviet society. The picture was further complicated by the underlying institutional and economic arrangements around which cinema work evolved. The approach to cinema as entertainment, along with proclamations of viewers' right to comfortably relax after a long day's work, was linked to the money. As Vabalas pointed out, "relationship of the viewer to cinema is very clearly reflected in the income of cinemas",[203] and this was so because income of cinemas reflected the demand, and the demand, in the words of one of the *Ekrano naujienos* contributors, was inextricably connected to the entertainment value of films: "viewers like entertaining films, and the employees of each cinema directory make accurate judgements about "cash register" capacity based on the films' entertaining elements".[204]

The category of "cash register film"

In 1968, a young film critic Roma Pauraitė published an article, reflecting on the major issues and questions affecting the rapidly transforming LSSR cinema network, ongoing shifts in the strategies of work in film screening, and the multiple notions regarding the role of the audiences. Given her subject, it was unavoidable that she touched upon the most acute

[203] Aukštikalnis et al., 'Kinas Ir Kultūra: Pokalbis Prie Apskrito Stalo [Cinema and Culture: Roundtable Discussion]'.
[204] El. Blauman, 'Pramoginis Filmas [Entertainment Film]', *Ekrano Naujienos*, 3 April 1967.

problems of the LSSR cinema network – the role of cinemagoing as entertainment, and the notion of "cash register film":

> […] we live in an epoch of great mental strain," she explained, "which is why sometimes art must become entertainment: to help people shed their worries, even if only temporarily. Let's remember such ideologically and aesthetically mature films as The Cranes are Flying, Ballad of a Soldier, Nobody Wanted to Die, The Nuremberg Trials, Chained by One Chain, among others. These have also become, in the slang of cinefication employees, "cash register films"; they were screened in full cinema halls. [Italics A. R.][205]

Pauraitė hinted at one of the essential aspects of the "cash register film" phenomenon plaguing the late socialist LSSR[206] film screening network: it was a slang of the cinefication employees. The category of a "cash register film," for all its pervasiveness and importance, was not a direct product of Soviet bureaucratic governance, and not a part of any planning target indicators sheet or any other classification scheme produced at the higher (or lower) Party echelons, the chambers of the USSR or LSSR Council of Ministers, or the State Committee of Cinematography. "Cash register film", as a concept and a subject of series of cinefication employees' worries, choices and strategies, was a product of both the administratively regulated economic processes of film screening, and the ensuing contradictions within the organizational structure of cinema network. "Cash register film" was coined and widely used by cinema network employees themselves, regardless of their position in administrative hierarchies, to refer to the type of film and a process that was never openly promoted as desirable in the press or official state discourses, yet was justified in the SCC meetings, and was the outcome of the decisions that were made centrally, and institutional frameworks that brought it into existence.

[205] Roma Pauraitė, 'Dešimt Tūkstančių Ar Dešimt [Ten Thousand or Ten]', *Kultūros barai*, December 1968. Italics - A.R.

[206] Similar tendencies can be observed in other parts of the Soviet Union. See: Zhuk, 'Hollywood's insidious charms'; Rajagopalan, *Indian Films in Soviet Cinemas*; Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time*.

Discussions about cash register film highlighted several rifts in the landscapes of meaning of Soviet cinemagoing, and cinema culture in general. In terms of genre and content, cash register film was usually of the so-called light and entertaining content. In her essay, Pauraitė refers to cash register films as mostly detective stories and "cheap" comedies. Another associative distinction drawn to the spotlight by the presence of cash register film phenomenon was that between domestic Soviet production and the foreign (which could refer to films from other European socialist states, Western films, or films from the Global South). In the LSSR, one of the types of films defined by their origin and carrying a considerable cash register potential were films produced in India.[207] Country of origin could be politically problematic within Soviet cultural project, as the LSSR audiences tended to favour foreign, as opposed to domestic, Soviet production. While the exact scope of the phenomenon in the LSSR are difficult to draw due to the lack of sources, in 1964 the rough assessment by one of the LSSR cinema network employees was that "every Soviet film is seen by 20 - 30 thousand people, each foreign - by 40 - 50 thousand".[208] Finally, the presence of cash register film was the cause for the complaints of commercialism and expansion of the negative sides of mass culture, the phenomenon attributed to cultural production and consumption in the capitalist West, and posing a challenge to the cherished Soviet values of high art. However, while "shallow" entertaining content, foreign cinematic production, and ideological impotency were broadly associated with the cash register film, none of them were definitive. As one of the SCC officials was quick to point out, Soviet films could, in principle, also become cash register films.[209] While he might have been motivated to defend the inherent qualities of Soviet cinematic production, he was not completely wrong. *The Cranes are Flying* and the LSSR's home production *Nobody Wanted to Die* did attract substantial audiences' attention. Soviet

[207] For instance, LYA, 1972, f. 1771, ap. 247, b. 262, p. 33; LLMA, 1969, f. 473, ap. 1. b. 182, p. 157.
[208] KRVA, 1964, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 20, p. 31.
[209] Romualdas Simonaitis, 'Kinas, Kinofikacija, Žiūrovas [Cinema, Cinefication, Viewers]', *Kultūros barai*, December 1968.

production and hit in the LSSR *Amphibian Man* and the foreign *Phantom* were both box office successes.[210]

Numerous dichotomies (between high art, sophisticated cinema and mass culture, between Soviet and foreign, between socialist and capitalist cinematic production) were encompassed by a concern about the situation of films labelled as "aesthetically-ideologically valuable".[211] These films, perceived as meeting the standards of sophistication in aesthetics, storytelling, and film art, and/or adhering to the socialist values, were usually seen in opposition to cash register film, and the values the latter seemed to promote. Intense deliberations about the conflict between the two continued unresolved until 1970. Choices made by audiences were an important part of the conflict between aesthetically-ideologically valuable and cash register films: the fact that, ultimately, it was the viewers who were choosing which films to attend, positioned the two categories of film in competition.[212]

In the 1960s LSSR, both categories, with their implicit and conflicting visions of the tasks of socialist cinema and, by extension, cinematic culture of Soviet citizens, continued to coexist, while the consequences of this conflictual relationship continued to bear enormous influences over the everyday life of the LSSR film exhibition network. Towards the end of the decade, the conundrum of the ideological front and pressing financial obligations of the state budget was still unanswered. No clear approach or strategy had appeared by that time as to how to assess the value of one or the other mode of operation for the general welfare of the Soviet state and society. In the official meetings of the SCC, involving both the central administration in Vilnius, the heads of regional cinema directories, representatives of the Party and delegates from Moscow, the assessment of the situation and the following recommendations often

[210] Most likely the "Phantom of the Opera", 1962, directed by Alfred Cox.
[211] *Ideological*, however, is an inaccurate translation, used throughout the dissertation for the lack of an accurate expression in English. The word used in Lithuanian is *idėjinis*, related more closely to the meaning of *idea*.
[212] On competition between Soviet and foreign films, see: Eleonory Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die: The Soviet Lives of Western Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018).

appeared as a matter of emphasis and preference of the speaker, thus reflecting the ambiguous assessment of cinema's role. It was a completely common situation for an official in cinefication affairs to give a speech at the SCC stating that the implementation of financial tasks is a "primary, mandatory, indisputable law of a cinema employee", while situating ideological and economic commitments in opposition:

> The SCC […] will show special gratitude and attention to those comrades who, through the means of cinefication, will express support for Party and community organizations, for educational events organized by cultural-educational institutions. Active participation at these events is a necessity and our sacred duty. However, we must remind the comrades who might think that by hiding behind these events they may somewhat forget the financial relationship between cinefication and the state: employing state films in the implementation of the policy that undermines state's economic program is equally impermissible.[213]

Similarly common was a situation such as when an official of an FRA, and a Party member Drugas, was being scolded for "undermining" Soviet films in the repertoire of Vilnius cinemas. Reproaches against him were voiced exactly for his efforts to comply with the mandatory and indisputable law of financial plan by "dividing films into those that will sell and won't (einančius – neinančius)" mentioned in the meeting just a few months earlier, and for arranging repertoires in accordance with these evaluations. The "offender" was further accused of employing another common policy of the time, a band-aid that was seen by some as a reconciliation of the conflicting purposes of aesthetic-ideological education and the box office: screening Soviet and foreign films side by side.[214]

This ongoing competition between the two ways of valuing film in Soviet cinemas (defining the role and value of cinema and culture in the Soviet society) – as an educational tool distanced

[213] LLMA, 1968 March 26, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 138, p. 58.
[214] LLMA, 1968 March 26, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 138, p. 58.

from commercial consideration, and a source of income – was also a competition between the two ways of valuing culture in a socialist society. On the one hand, regardless of the increasing influx of Western culture and tendencies towards commercialism in film exhibition, the Thaw did not eliminate Soviet confidence in the political and social values of culture.[215] Administration and development of socialist cultural life, film industry included, continued to hold onto policies and discourses based on a belief that culture had the power to educate socialist citizens, to shape socialist consciousness, foster political loyalty to the socialist project as represented by the Party and the state, and thus to contribute to the construction of the communist future praised in the pages of *Tiesa* (*Pravda*). But the presence of cash register film in the 1960s language of cinema administration shows that being judged on a scale of its educational and political value was by then only one of the lives a movie in the Soviet film exhibition network could have.[216] In a maze of cultural, social, economic and political changes of the 1960s, another way of valuing a film, a cultural object, was becoming important enough to impact policy and decision making on a variety of hierarchical levels: films' value as a source of income. This value was primarily constituted in the economic management of film exhibition network.

Firmly rooted in box office, "cash register film" highlighted and caused many of the fissures evolving in the LSSR film screening network during the decade defined by cultural relaxation and growing openness to the West, authorities' vocal commitment to raising socialist citizens' standard of living, and ongoing experimentations in economic thought and techniques. Within the field of cinema and cinemagoing as a part of the 1960s cultural life, cash register film emphasized and exacerbated the many contradictions widely discussed both within and outside the administration of the LSSR cinema network. Pauraitė's essay was a case in point: it was

[215] Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*.
[216] Aspers and Beckert, *The Worth of Goods*, 6.

published in 1968 special issue of *Kultūros barai*, the theme of which was dedicated to the role of entertainment in cinemagoing, the problems of how to interpret and approach Soviet audiences' tastes for "light" cinematic production, the ongoing tricky balancing act between artistic value and monetary income, and an increasingly difficult task of furthering the educational and ideological work within film exhibition network. Among the pieces addressing these questions, the special issue included a roundtable of a colorful and elite group of a film critic, film designer, director of the Lithuanian Film Studio, editor in chief of a television association, chief engineer of the LSSR State Cinematography Committee, and the head of the LSSR Cinematographers Union.[217]

Significant part of the discussion was dedicated to the contemporary problems in the economic organization of cinemagoing, including the many questions raised by the cash register film. Romualdas Simonaitis, the chief engineer of the SCC, positioned the problem of cash register film on a systemic level: aesthetic education of the audiences was hindered by the existing system of financial planning. Financial plans were subject to annual redefinition, he elaborated, and cinefication workers were trying to meet the assigned planning targets at any cost. This meant that films generating more income were often given priority, while screenings and propaganda of such films as newsreels, children's films, popular science, and "difficult" cinematic content – in other words, films that as a rule attracted smaller audiences and generated less income – were often thwarted as a consequence. His opinion was seconded by Julijus Lozoraitis, the head of the LFS. In his take on the issue, the flaws of the contemporary economic model of film screening were creating "a conflict between art and commerce". The existing planning system established the "average mass" (as in – the average audience) as the

[217] Aukštikalnis et al., 'Kinas Ir Kultūra: Pokalbis Prie Apskrito Stalo [Cinema and Culture: Roundtable Discussion]'.

most important criteria in the work and decisions of majority of cinema network employees, since this mass guaranteed the planned monetary income.

The roundtable conversation published in *Kultūros barai* echoed the ongoing, often much more intense, discussions evolving at the SCC meetings in Vilnius, on the grounds of local cinema directories, and press (both central and regional) alike. During those conversations, the context and nature of the cash register film phenomenon were brought to light. The common tendencies and linkages between cash register film and such criteria as genre, country (or economic and political system) of origin, or the anticipated effect the cinematic creation would bear on the minds of Soviet citizens continued to play a crucial role in the development of cash register film phenomenon. However, on the very basic level, cash register film was defined by its capacity to generate income to cinema's, municipal, and state budgets. Its presence was prompted, in view of contemporary cinema network administrators in a variety of local and central positions, by the financial planning system applied to cinema network. Cash register film framed Soviet cinema and cinemagoing in economic terms, establishing the practices of assessing the financial (over ideological or aesthetic) value of film. Crucially, this value was closely linked to the demand for entertainment – the films that audiences preferred to see and pay their money for.

Planning and measuring economic performance

In 1968 *Komjaunimo tiesa* [*Komsomol Pravda*] published a piece on the work of Vilnius' cinema "Pionierius" ["Pioneer"]. Appropriately to its title, cinema was part of the ongoing effort of youth education, and was dedicated for screening films exclusively for children and youth. However, as a critical analysis of Komjaunimo tiesa illustrates, even cinema dedicated to the crucial Soviet mission of youth socialization and upbringing was far from exempt from financial concerns:

> "People [employees] change, but the work is standing still (…) An employee hasn't even gotten his feet wet, and he's gone before you know it. Then – once again – an older cinema director is left by himself. He gathers all his strength and fights the nine-headed Hydra of the plan (…) How will you develop and cultivate those kids, and whether you will develop and cultivate at all if the plan is implemented – no one is going to ask. They'll even praise you. [Children] are visiting [the cinema], they're bringing 10 kopeks each – that means everything is fine. (…) In the centre of the town, further away from busy streets and busy traffic, there is "Pergalė" ["Victory"] cinema. They have a great concert hall, plenty of room. It would be spacious and comfortable for children. But "Pergalė" is successfully implementing quite substantial financial plan. To give it to children would mean to refuse half of the income generated by this cinema. But can we always measure everything by income?"[218]

The nine headed Hydra of the plan, the quintessential measure of the hierarchical, top-down, centralized planning appeared to be undermining the education of youth.[219] For the director of "Pergalė" cinema, the Hydra was presented as a sheet of numerical planning indicators. One example of such bureaucratic forms of accounting was compiled in autumn 1956. It was an outcome of the common efforts of the Cinefication and Film Lease Board and Planning-Financial section at the LSSR Ministry of Culture, at the time in charge of all affairs cinematic. The report on the financial plan implementation in the LSSR for November at that time was an 8-page document including 5 graphs: a list of cinema screening points in the republic (including cinemas, mobile cinemas and houses of culture), the position they occupied within their category of urban and regional cinemas in terms of performance, and the indicators by which

[218] A. Matekūnaitės, „Skirtas vaikams ir jaunimui", Komjaunimo tiesa, 1968 06 13, excerpts quoted in: Žalneravičiūtė, *Vilniaus Iliuzionai*, 141.

[219] Similar concerns were voiced elsewhere. In a speech at the Party congress in Moscow, the head of the Soviet Union SCC Kulidzanov worried: "Should we harm our children? [Should we] say, that screening children's films is not profitable (nerentabilu)?": 'Didžiulės Perspektyvos [Great Perspectives]', *Ekrano Naujienos*, 9 May 1966. Worries about financial pressures of the plan were not confined to cinema. For instance, a critical commentary on the state of cultural activities at factory promises wondered why the youth café had disappeared from one of the factories: "I guess, it appeared unprofitable … Factory managers don't have time for this. The most important thing is the plan": V. Girdzijauskas, 'Darbininkas Ir Jo Kultūriniai Poreikiai [Worker and His Cultural Needs]', *Kultūros barai*, 11 March 1967.

this performance was measured. Of the latter there were only three, yet they were the focal point for everyone from cinema directors to the head of the SCC: "Income", "Viewers"[220], and "Screenings".[221]

This picture was subject to change over time. Thirteen years later, the Head of Planning-Finance division at the SCC placed a stamp on another report on film exhibition network's financial performance in October 1972. While the division between urban and rural cinema networks was still drawn, there were some differences. The report sheet did not focus on individual cinemas anymore (most likely due to the growth of cinema network in the 1960s) and rather took town and regional performance as units of analysis. It had added values of the number of cinema visits per person in each of these administrative units, and the number of agricultural films screened.[222] The "Screenings" graph was lost from this sheet. However, importantly for local cinema management, the sections on "Income" and "Viewers" have retained their firm position as the main indicator of the planning implementation and, by extension, the financial performance of cinema enterprise.[223] These indicators were central in the assessment of the economic performance of individual cinemas and cinema network as a whole.

Financial planning of film screening in the LSSR was a part of a centralized, top-down, administratively managed system. General planning targets for the republic were estimated at the center in Moscow, while the LSSR on a republic level had the responsibility of distributing planning targets among the local administrative units,[224] and, as we have seen in the review of the 1964 regulations of cinema network reform, local cinema directories had a right and an obligation to further redistribute planning targets among the cinemas under their jurisdiction.

[220] "Viewers" referred to the number of cinema visits rather than persons.
[221] LLMA, November 1956, f. 342, ap. 7, b. 2, p. 23 – 30.
[222] A consequence of close involvement of cinema in the agricultural modernisation program.
[223] LLMA, October 1972, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 356, p. 9 – 10.
[224] LLMA, 1963, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 63, p. 5.

All of the steps of the planning process – assignment of planning targets from Moscow to the LSSR, or from the Ministry of Culture or Cinematography Committee to the cinema directories, were subject to some degree of negotiation, involving also financial institutions. The following years' financial planning targets and the possible problems in meeting them were subject of the meetings between central and local administrators.[225] Far from being ironclad, planning targets were regularly changed for local cinemas when their neighbours were, for instance, closed temporarily due to unsatisfactory state of the building, renovation purposes and other unforeseen events. Negotiations over planning targets most often took form of a reasoned plea for planning target reduction, both for the republic and its regions. This process, depending on individual circumstances, involved a variety of institutions – the LSSR Ministry of Culture as an author of the request or as a mediator, the Ministry of Finance as a (usually uncooperative) addressee of the request,[226] the Party as a mediator between the Ministry of Culture and the Council of Ministers,[227] or the Planning Commission.[228]

Appeals to reduce financial planning targets required responsible authorities to consider a variety of local circumstances which had in each instance evaded the scope of bare numerical indicators. Definition of the planning targets relied first and foremost on a previous years' performance,[229] while taking into account of such factors as the number of cinemas and seating capacity in the location.[230] Generally, the most common complaint in the genre of planning target negotiation was that they were "unrealistic".[231] Requests to reduce planning targets often

[225] Record of one of such meetings in 1957, still under management of the Ministry of Culture, shows a republic-wide gathering of local management and executive committees to discuss any problems with the Planning Commission: LCVA, 1957, f. R755, ap. 2, b. 3582, p. 955.
[226] LCVA, 1960, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 5295, p. 4; p. 19.
[227] LYA, 1960, f. 1771, ap. 213, b. 11, p.13.
[228] LLMA, 1965, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 28, p. 88.
[229] LLMA, 1965, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 28, p. 88.
[230] KRVA, 1965, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 38, p. 2. Seating capacity estimate also established a measure of the extent to which cinema hall had to be filled for each screening, below which plans would not be fulfilled. In 1965, meeting planning targets meant 80% of cinema's capacity had to be filled for each screening, or else planning targets would not be met: Inna Levshina, 'Naivnyi Merkantilist Krutit Fil″my', *Izvestiia*, Nr. 32 1965.
[231] I.e., LLMA, 1964, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 1, p. 8.

concerned locally occurring contingencies which centralized planning could not foresee, such as regional demographic situation,[232] or the impact that developing new ways of spending hours free of work, such as television, had on the expected cinema attendance rates.[233] By 1967, the impact of the latter was so extensive as to prompt the LSSR Council of Ministers to address the USSR Council of Ministers: the following years' proposed planning targets for republics' cinema network were too high, stated the letter. In terms of provision of service, LSSR's cinema network had no resources to increase the number of available seats in cinemas any further. In terms of the audiences, the problem was that around 80% of republics' inhabitants had access to television.[234]

Critiques of the planners' decisions and planning system in general were not a prerogative of a few privileged elites: they prevailed in various settings, from local cinema employees' meetings to the LSSR and USSR press. The "arbitrary" nature of central planning seemed to be evident to everyone, including contributors to the USSR's *Izvestiia*. In one of the resonating analyses, the core of the problem was that the plan was raised by 8 percent on top of the previous years' factual implementation. "Why 8% and not 6% or 16% - nobody knows," wondered the author. Similar questions pestered local cinema management. In one of the most important meetings dedicated to the discussion of the relationship between Soviet cinema and the plan, comrade Šimkus raised the question along the same lines:

> "I was explained that the plan for the republic was raised by 4% (…) why not 10%, or 1%, or 2%? A question comes to mind how much was it raised, if at all, to those [republics] that did not achieve their planning targets. We don't know that, we're not informed about that. I

[232] Such as in a rural Vabalninkas region: LCVA, 1960, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 5295, p. 4; 19; LLMA, 1969, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 182, p. 2.
[233] LYA, 1965, f. 17315, ap. 1, b. 3, p. 20.
[234] LCVA, 1967, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 7061, p. 35. This percentage does not indicate ownership so much as access. In 1967, another problem with excessive planning targets was that they limited the possibility for cinema network employees to receive premiums and thus take advantage from the material incentives scheme. On the premiums reform, see Chapter 5.

> remember an article published in *Izvestiia* last year, very interesting article about financial planning (…) It suggested that planning should have a scientific basis, such as taking into consideration the state of equipment or the local traditions of watching one or another kind of films."[235]

The planning process concentrated on the numerical expressions of income and seating capacity could not take into consideration the multifaceted realities of local conditions, especially when it came to such crucial intricacies as awareness of viewers' tastes. Another problem was that plans did not consider the cash register value of film. So, for instance, in 1967 performance of the LSSR cinema network was good, but the next years' plans should not be based on that: in the first 10 months of the year the republic had received and had a chance to screen plenty of cash register films, which improved financial performance.[236] However, presence of cash register films was not something the LSSR could count on for the next year. The inaccuracies and pressures of the centralized planning system were particularly pressing for the management of local cinema directories. The discontent was often exacerbated since cinema managers were aware that definitions of the planning targets, or assessment of their performance, did not always make sense. For instance, the neighboring location, where new cinema had just opened its doors and increased the overall seating capacity of the location, did not have their planning targets proportionally increased.[237] In another instance, a town with smaller population was assigned a higher target than their more densely populated neighbor.[238]

The LSSR SCC representative had fluently summed up the situation in their communication with the LSSR Council of Ministers and the Communist Party's Propaganda and Agitation Branch. On that occasion, the SCC asked for support in convincing the Ministry of Finance to withdraw their intention to further increase planning targets: "It is widely known that all-Union

[235] LLMA, 1967 February 23, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 103.
[236] LLMA, 1967 February 23, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 204.
[237] KRVA, 1965, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 42, p. 4.
[238] LLMA, 1969, f. 473, Ap. 1, b. 182, p. 2.

planning institutions, when defining the planning targets, increase them additionally on the account of "improvement of work", with no consideration for the existing regime of cinema network, work conditions, material basis, quality of the movies and, most importantly, the ideological tasks of cinema."[239] Excessive planning targets defined in the way that was often judged as arbitrary by the republic and regional authorities was the central reason why cinema management and employees were routinely choosing to screen cash register films before other considerations. In the dilemma between screening children's films or documentaries, and "delivering money to the state budget", the latter would be given priority.[240]

Purchasing cash register films

In February 1967, Iurii Nikolaevich Aleksandrov, an official of the Advertisement Bureau of the USSR Cinematography Committee arrived at the meeting at the LSSR SCC in Vilnius.[241] The meeting was among the larger ones, involving not only the SCC officials or an occasional manager called on a carpet, but a general one, dedicated to the overview and assessment of the performance of the LSSR cinema network, distribution of the awards for outstanding achievements, etc. 8 town cinema directory managers, 13 regional cinema directory managers, and their technical employees were present. After giving a speech to this audience and facing open disappointment from one of the managers of the LSSR regional cinema district ("we have expected more from our representative from Moscow"),[242] Aleksandrov retreated to his seat, waiting for the notes with questions from other participants.[243] Towards the end of the gathering

[239] LCVA, 1967, f. R754, ap, 4, b. 7061, p. 26.
[240] LLMA, 1967 February 23, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 103.
[241] LLMA, 1967 February 23, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 30.
[242] LLMA, 1967 February 23, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 41.
[243] Might have been an organizational matter. More likely, however, this strategy was chosen because not all participants could have been expected to speak Russian with required fluency. From those speaking in the meeting, 2 delivered their entire contributions in Russian, remaining 10 spoke Lithuanian, with a couple including a few sentences in Russian when addressing Aleksandrov specifically. Generally, in the LSSR in 1970 35.9 of the inhabitants claimed Russian as their second language: Anderson and Silver, 'Demographic Sources of the Changing Ethnic Composition of the Soviet Union', 617.

questions had finally arrived. One of the notes read: "Why there aren't any Indian films in the 1967 repertoire?"[244] He responded that there were, in fact, films from India purchased that year. He further explained having decided not to mention them in his speech because of their "evidently" lower aesthetic value. The question was likely posed by one of the cinema directories managers, as an expression of a frank concern with the chances and conditions of meeting the next years' planning targets. Aleksandrov, in the meantime, found himself in a more vexing position, created by the conflicting assessments of the value of Indian cinema in the Soviet society: the purchase and presence of Indian films was torn by the conflict between the assessments of the "dogmatic criteria" and "decisions based on profitability".[245]

Decisions regarding the purchase of Indian films, one of the staples of Soviet cinematic entertainment and the box office of cinema directories, were made at the Union centre. One of the primary stages in the process of delivering foreign films to the Soviet publics were the purchases managed by the Sovexportfilm in Moscow, to be distributed to the Soviet republics from there. Centrally managed purchase of foreign films was not the only way in which top – down repertoire planning was engineered: Moscow was also the place where amount of the copies to be distributed in the republics was defined.[246] However, Eleonory Gilburd shows that even at this level, the process of purchasing foreign films was neither unambiguous, nor devoid of the commercial interests and marketplace logic.[247] Rather than representing a grand strategy of the state, the process of acquisition of foreign films involved multiple organizations, often carrying differing institutional cultures, types of expertise, and agendas.[248] Much like in the LSSR, where questions related to cinema network were often negotiated between the Ministry of Culture, the SCC, the Ministry of Finance and Planning Commission, and where the Central

[244] LLMA, 1967 February 23, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 111.
[245] Rajagopalan, *Indian Films in Soviet Cinemas*, 83–84.
[246] Rajagopalan, 73. Also, LLMA, 1968, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 138, p. 104.
[247] Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die: The Soviet Lives of Western Culture*, 159.
[248] Mark Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand: The Politics of Consumerism in East Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

Committee and the Council of Ministers were also often involved in the developments of film screening network, buying films from abroad was a process of interaction between the primarily political motivations of the USSR SCC, prioritization of profits by the Ministry of Foreign Trade, and Sovexportfilm's "commercial organization".

Problems of planning and film screening were touched upon at the 23rd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as well. A month after the congress was concluded, the editorial team of the LSSR's *Ekrano naujienos* found it important to publish an excerpt from the speech made by Lev Kulidzhanov. A recently appointed head of the USSR Union of Cinematographers at the time, Kulidzhanov dwelled on the ongoing experimentation with models of organisation in film industry, designed to strengthen the ideological and aesthetic values of Soviet film through the establishment of direct links between production of film and distribution.[249] He then addressed some of the general problems existing in film distribution and planning within cinema network. Kulidzhanov pointed out that "a more serious engagement of the Cinematography Committee and planning organs with [film] distribution is long overdue. We need, in my opinion, to overcome the overly commercial character of [film] distribution (prokat)."[250] He further proceeded to point out that the existing system of financial planning, focused on previous years' performance and seating capacity prevented the possibility of developing a repertoire policy.[251] In his view, the indicators on which planning targets were devised discouraged the development of more favourable conditions and incentives to screen aesthetically and ideologically valuable cinema.

The outcomes of the tension between multiple institutions involved in film distribution, their varying agendas, between cinema as an element in a patronizing state strategy aimed at

[249] He was most likely referring to the attempts of enhancing economic efficiency through the introduction of market mechanisms tested in the Experimental Creative Studio. For more on the ECS and its links to Kosygin reforms, see: Tcherneva, 'Imiter Le Marché, Une Recette Pour Le Cinéma Soviétique?'
[250] 'Didžiulės Perspektyvos [Great Perspectives]'.
[251] 'Didžiulės Perspektyvos [Great Perspectives]'.

fostering social and political engagement among Soviet audiences,[252] and film as a source of income, might have been obscured to the rank-and-file cinema network employees at the LSSR.[253] This circumstance did not prevent local cinema management from engaging in open and quite accurate speculations about the reasons behind film purchase decisions made at the top. The interest in income at Sovexportfilm was transparent to both the LSSR elites, and local cinema directories. When faced with a critique of their local repertoire policy, a manager of Kaunas' cinema did not share the shyness demonstrated by the guest from Moscow a couple years prior:

> "I don't think that the uncles from Sovexportfilm are that dumb and don't understand what it is that they are purchasing. I am convinced that they are buying the mildest foreign ideological diversion, and at the same time want to deliver as much income to the state budget as possible."[254]

His voice was not alone in the republic to both reach such a conclusion about profit seeking motives of cinema officials in Moscow. A renowned Lithuanian film director Vytautas Žalakevičius,[255] also pointed to the contradictory and increasingly pragmatic objectives behind film purchases in Moscow: "Phantom" was purchased for the sole reason of delivering profit".[256] By the end of the 1960s, as far as the LSSR cinema network was concerned, the equation was quite simple: reduction of cash register film purchases from abroad would definitely have a negative effect on income.[257]

Cash register film, with its accompanying practices of screening films with the financial returns in mind and the assessment of value of cinema in term of money value, was not actively promoted or even advocated by the USSR or the LSSR officials: the ambiguous silence or open

[252] Rajagopalan, *Indian Films in Soviet Cinemas*.
[253] As of 2009, distribution records were still classified. See: Rajagopalan, 72.
[254] KRVA, August 1966, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 44, p. 6.
[255] Who had received the USSR State Prize in 1967 for his work *Nobody Wanted to Die* (1965).
[256] LLMA, 1968, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 38, p. 106.
[257] LLMA, 1969, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 182, p. 68.

criticism of the economic system that allowed cash register film to appear were the rule. After all, recognition of the financial potential of entertaining, even if ideologically flawed, films had a history reaching back to the Stalinist time and the screening of trophy films.[258] Yet, while the discussions over problematic nature of screening films with a purpose of collecting more generous income were becoming more heated in the second half of the 1960s, the strategies of purchasing films presumed to attract copious audiences, and the demanding planning targets, were staying in place for local cinema management to cope with. While there was awareness of the motivations behind the centrally coordinated purchases of entertaining foreign cinema in the LSSR, the attention of the critics of cash register films and its accompanying distraction of audiences' attention from the much more valuable Soviet cinematic production was often directed at the repertoire planning decisions made by local cinema directory management.

Local management of film screening

In 1962 Juozas Banaitis, the LSSR Minister of Culture recently put in charge of cinematographic affairs,[259] issued a decree in hope of alleviating the many ills found to be pestering the work of cinema network. The list of problems was extensive: promotion of cinematic art was found to be insufficient, cinema directories did not dedicate enough attention to maintaining connections to other local organizations, advertisement policy and quality was deemed inadequate. Of special importance was the problem that local cinema directories were not implementing measures for improving audiences' access to the most ideologically-aesthetically valuable films. The minister also had a take on the central underlying cause leading to this unacceptable outcome: "Among our cinema network employees still lingers a

[258] Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė, 'Moving Pictures for Peasants: The Kinofikatsia of Rural Lithuania in the Stalinist Era (1944–1953)', 60.
[259] Mikonis-Railienė and Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė, *Kinas sovietų Lietuvoje: Sistema, filmai, režisieriai [Cinema in the Soviet Lithuania: System, films, directors]*, 129.

view that film is not an artistic creation but rather a tool to meet financial planning targets with. Because of such a "commercial" approach to the propaganda of cinematic art, the best Soviet and foreign films often do not reach broader audiences, and do not accomplish the great task of ideological-aesthetic education of the society".[260] A thorough list of the necessary changes to be made followed. However, regardless of the authority of the Minister of Culture, decrees such as this one did not always have a desired effect. Regardless of all the scolding and accusations of commercial motivations, by the end of the decade situation appeared to remain unchanged when in the routine meeting at the SCC one of the state officials complained harshly about the situation with one of the most important educational areas – cultivation of the young: he found it "difficult to understand some of the cineficators. If they cannot take [from the viewer] 20 kopeks instead of 10[261] today – they do not care about this viewer".[262]

The efforts to engage local cinema management in active participation in social and political tasks assigned to socialist cinemagoing provided a source of continued frustration for the critics concerned with the implementation of the ideological mission of Soviet cinemagoing. One of the reasons was a certain amount of disobedience on a local level. The latter was by no means the common to the 1960s alone.[263] Already in 1957 some of the LSSR culture houses were accused of dismissing official orders and screening feature movies instead of documentaries.[264] During the decade, high-ranking officials' complaints and dissatisfaction with conduct of local cinema management proliferated: news reels and popular science films were not made available to the audiences in the holiday resort Neringa.[265] In some regions, documentaries and

[260] LLMA, 1961, f. 342, ap. 7, b. 332, p. 102.
[261] The price of children's cinema ticket at the time.
[262] LLMA, 1968, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 138, p. 60.
[263] Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė, 'Moving Pictures for Peasants: The Kinofikatsia of Rural Lithuania in the Stalinist Era (1944–1953)'.
[264] LLMA, June 1957, f. 342, ap. 1, b. 446, p. 105. One the emergence of the leisurely tendencies in socialist houses of culture, see: Anne White, *De-Stalinization and the House of Culture: Declining State Control over Leisure in the USSR, Poland, and Hungary, 1953-89* (London: Routledge, 1990).
[265] LLMA, July 1968, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 140, p. 79 – 81.

popular science films were found not to be screened at all.[266] Similar accusations against local cinema employees forgetting the ideological purposes of cinema and trying instead to meet planning targets by screening "low value capitalist films" were not confined to the administrative headquarters, but also voiced publicly in the press.[267] Trakai cinefication employees, for example, were scolded in the pages of Ekrano naujienos for having neglected the provision of access to the "the best socialist films," leading to nearly ridiculous examples: one of such films was planned to be screened 54 times, but appeared in front of the viewers eyes on only 22 occasions. Another film, focused on Friedrich Engels, was seen by only 4 people. As far as an unnamed author of the critical writing was concerned, such situation was the fault solely of cinema employees.[268]

Such reproaches could be voiced because of the institutional arrangement within which cinema directories functioned. "Repertoire depends on planning, and planning is in the hands of cinefication directors. It is true that they are still tempted by the financial aspect", stated comrade Trifonovas during a meeting of a local Party branch in 1964, hinting at many institutional and local realities faced by cinema directory managers, employees and, in rural areas, projectionists.[269] The structure of economic planning and the priorities it outlined for cinema network created favorable conditions for cinema directors to approach films as a source of income. Oftentimes, this arrangement was furthered by focus from the top to follow financial discipline and ensure savings. The pressure to meet and even exceed planning targets was intense. Yet, another feature of the institutional structure of cinema network administration

[266] LLMA, August 1964, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 101, p. 30 – 32.
[267] 'Įgyvendinant Svarbius Uždavinius [While Implementing Important Tasks]', *Ekrano Naujienos*, 28 September 1964. Generally, in the press the tone regarding "commercial" tendencies in film screening, and accusations of cinema employees' forgetting that they are the workers of the ideological front, was less forgiving. In the SCC and other cinema network employee meetings, where local cinema managers were present, screening of cash register film was received with more acceptance, even if not seen as unproblematic.
[268] 'Respublikos 25-Metį Pasitinkant [On the Occasion of the Republic's 25th Anniversary]', *Ekrano Naujienos*, 15 May 1965.
[269] LYA, 1964, f. 17315, ap. 1, b. 2, p. 27.

prompting Trifonov's assessment of the causes of financial motivations in cinema network was the leeway cinema directories had in devising repertoire planning.

Repertoire policy was one of the spheres in which some leeway for local decision making emerged. Arguably, local management had only a limited power over repertoire policy. Local cinema directories in the LSSR could hardly imagine influencing the decisions over what kind of films would be purchased by Sovexportfilm in Moscow. However, they could choose from the hundreds of titles available to them.[270] The exact film repertoire policy was assembled for a week or two in advance, and this was done in cooperation between the Film Rentals Agency, its local branches and cinema directories.[271] This opened the possibilities for two strategies employed by cinema managers. On the one hand, even before Stalin's death, local cinema managers in the LSSR were not particularly diligent in following general state policy to the letter.[272] Baniulis' decree further illustrates the same problem: the presence of a decree did not mean it will be implemented on the level of cinema directory. The Ministry of Culture and, later, the SCC monitored cinema network closely, and within the hierarchical institutional structure, they had the decision power over the most important questions. However, ensuring that dozens of daily operations at hundreds of cinema enterprises were performed to the letter often fell beyond their reach, which is attested by the hundreds of pages of regional inspection documents accumulated over the decade, each of them finding irregularities. This issue persisted in local repertoire planning as well.[273] Local cinema management would not only continue making a debated decisions by prioritizing entertaining and other films they could assume would sell well, but would also employ more intricate strategies for making, financially, most of the best-selling films. One of such reported strategies was to send

[270] 230 – 250 new titles each year: LLMA, 1967 February 23, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 321.
[271] LLMA, 1972, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 319, p. 103.
[272] Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė, 'Moving Pictures for Peasants: The Kinofikatsia of Rural Lithuania in the Stalinist Era (1944–1953)'.
[273] LLMA, 1960, f. 342, ap. 7, b. 296, p. 14.

"heavier", "non-cash register" films to the cinemas that were less satisfactorily equipped ("second- and third-rate cinemas"), while leaving the best cinema halls for the screening of light and popular films.[274]

Yet, active involvement of local kinoprokat and cinema management was not merely an outcome of disobedience: as we have seen earlier, for instance, the official view voiced at the Party organization meeting was that local FRA branches should be allowed even more initiative because of the close knowledge they had about local audiences. Local powers over the repertoire policy and decisions, which films to order for the next week, were not simply a result of managers' wanton decisions and lack of regard to hierarchical order. In the context of the 1960s political reforms, delegating decisions to locally situated organizations and enterprises was encouraged by the Party and senior state officials. Assigning more initiative to local film lease branches was seen as potentially beneficial since they were the ones possessing a close knowledge of the regions they were working in.[275] During the 1960s, it was becoming increasingly clear that as far as attendance rates were concerned, both reaping profit from cinemagoing and the dissemination of the ideological message depended on responding to local conditions, demographics and local cinemagoers' preferences. Senior officials of the LSSR SCC also believed that planning should take into consideration wishes and preferences of cinema directories, local organizations and viewers,[276] even if this meant having to discipline local managers for problematic planning decisions, releasing films to screens without making the necessary estimates, and to encourage them invest more attention to making decisions locally, based on research of the local setting rather than some prearranged schedule.[277]

[274] Pauraitė, 'Dešimt Tūkstančių Ar Dešimt [Ten Thousand or Ten]'.
[275] LYA, 1964, f. 17315, ap. 1, b. 2, p. 37.
[276] LLMA, 1966, f. 473 ap. 1, b. 60, p. 68.
[277] 'Films are released to screens without making any calculations, without making decisions on a local scale'. LLMA, 1965, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 23, p. 2. Another instance on reproaching cinema managers for not making an effort to work with regard to specific local conditions was voiced in case of Kaunas: LLMA, 1966, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 58, p. 111.

Local justifications of cash register film

In September 1966, the manager of Panevėžys cinema directory Smailienė and her colleague director of the FRA Panevėžys branch Marčiulionis were summoned to the SCC in Vilnius. They were called on the carpet due to the many shortcomings of the results of their work: overall low attendance rates, poor condition of advertisement, and insufficient screening for pupils were mentioned. Smailienė admitted the presence of some mistakes, tried to justify the others, and eventually called the elephant in the room: "The instruction we receive from the [Cinematography] Committee and kinoprokat aren't always consistent. One is demanding that Panevėžys cinemas screen all films, other – that only the ideologically and artistically most valuable [films] are selected."[278] A few months later, another manager, having just received an award for the outstanding performance of his regional cinema directory, also did not hesitate to bring forward his bewilderment about the ambiguous requirements regarding the kind of films that he should be delivering to the audiences: "Comrades! Some questions I was not intending to address, just some of the others. There is one thing that I do not understand, I'd like to ask to explain it to me, how should we understand the ideological and operational capacity of a film – I do not understand that. The way I see it, "Lenin in Poland" and "Some Like it Hot" are both ideological [idėjiniai], or [for instance] "Girl Rosemary" and "Mother's Heart"? How do you see it?"[279]

Local cinema management was often navigating an ambiguous space, torn between the ideological objectives and public mission of cinema art in socialist LSSR society, and the financial pressures posed by the plan. While the discussions evolved in the SCC, Party

[278] LLMA, September 1966, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 58, p. 98.
[279] LLMA, 1967 February 23, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 58. The films he is mentioning most likely are: Sergei Yutkevich, *Lenin v Polshe [Lenin in Poland]* (Mosfilm, Polski State Film, 1966); Billy Wilder, *Some Like It Hot* (The Mirisch Company, 1959); Rolf Thiele, *Rosemary* (Roxy Film, 1958); Mark Donskoy, *Serdtse Materi [A Mother's Heart]* (Gorky Film Studio, 1965). It is difficult to identify films with absolute certainty due to the lack of records, and title translations to Lithuanian nearly always going unaccompanied by the translations in Russian or any other language.

meetings and the press regarding Soviet audiences' right to the pleasures of a light-hearted leisure, ideological and aesthetic values of cinema, and the flaws of the official planning system, they had to be making practical decisions in order to screen the films. The official policy regarding planning, repertoire planning, or even what exactly constituted an ideologically valuable film was contradictory and even baffling at times; the pressure to attract as many viewers as possible and meet financial planning targets was rarely ambiguous. The result was that lofty considerations of the communist political project, socialist ideals and political mission was often sent to the second plane.

Local cinema management, however, was often reluctant to blindly accept the blame for many of the issues related to the cash register film, including the accusations of "commercialism" or of being "tempted by the financial aspect". This was the case in the republic-wide meetings at the SCC whenever these questions were raised in the presence of local cinema management. The presence of justifications regarding repertoire choices was even stronger at local cinema direction branch meetings. An especially telling instance of such a gathering took evolved in late summer of 1966 in Kaunas, one of the most important cinema centres of the LSSR at the time. The meeting brought together cinema directors, administrators, designers, technicians and projectionists working at the auspices of Kaunas' Cinefication Branch. There was a single item on the agenda: a discussion about "Until the Film Reaches the Viewer", a recently published critical article authored by a recognized film critic Saulius Macaitis. In the reading of those present at the meeting, Macaitis was disconcerted with what he perceived as an overflow of low-quality films in the LSSR cinemas. In line with complaints of higher-tier cinema administrators vocally critical of the perceived neglect of the ideological mission of socialist cinemagoing, he placed the blame for this problem with those working at the lowest levels of cinefication network: cinema directory managers and employees.

The meeting in Kaunas gave some of these employees an opportunity to negotiate their role in and to make sense of one of the deepest fissures in the Soviet film distribution industry, thus providing us with a glance into what they perceived to be the reasons of a troublesome relationship between ideological and financial commitments of film exhibition network. During the discussion, cinema managers, all of whom were members of the Communist Party, did not hesitate to take the floor. They did not attempt to deny that they were routinely choosing to screen films of contested ideological and aesthetic value. Managers also acknowledged that advertisement could probably be organized better. What they refused to accept, however, was that they were the sole agents behind the so-called commercialist tendencies in the LSSR film screening network, or behind the undermining of ideologically and aesthetically valuable films. They denied that their questionable screening choices were deliberate or happened because they had lost the ability to distinguish good films from bad due to having "fallen in love with Egyptian melodramas and American films".[280]

Managers' response to the accusations of commercialism echoed those mentioned by their direct manager Micevičius, the director of Kaunas Cinefication Branch. His note emphasized that he was not happy to screen cash register films. Neither was he happy that his subordinates were "forced to act like salesmen because of high financial plan targets".[281] Similarly, cinema managers in the meeting pointed to the systemic issues in film exhibition organization, and to the fact that resulting financial pressures played an important part in their choices. One cinema director pointed out that conversations about screening ideological films were going on all the time, but all of them were forgotten by the end of the quarter. The end of the accounting period was the moment when everyone suddenly became concerned with the fulfilment of plan first and foremost, with no regard to what kind of films led to the achievement of the desired

[280] KRVA, 1966, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 44, p. 6.
[281] KRVA, 1965, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 38, p. 5.

financial results. Echoing the comparison with the nine headed Hydra at the introduction of this chapter, during the meeting the plan was labelled as "almighty" and as the "magic word". In other managers' words, they were prioritizing financial indicators because of the importance that showing financial results had to the enterprise itself: without implementation of the plan "there are no salaries, no funds to perform repairs from, one has to listen to the unpleasant speeches at the Cinematography Committee, the Executive Committee and so on".[282] Another manager emphasized what he saw as an irreconcilable chasm between money, ideology, and culture: "for as long as cinemas will be assigned financial tasks, as long as cinema will be a source of income – no articles, no orators will be able to provide the support to the ideological front".[283]

Locally voiced readings of the situation were shared by some in the leading positions in the LSSR. In the same 1967 general SCC meeting where comrade Aleksandrov was taking the inconvenient questions and remarks, spoke Šimkus of the Party's Propaganda and Agitation Branch.[284] He approached the question of screening documentaries:

> "… but the plan for towns is such that we need to, so to say, start another screening before the previous one had finished. In reality, we only get a chance [to screen documentaries] at midnight screening, to show documentary as the last screening [of the day], this is not normal. Yet, regretfully, this is the way it is. Maybe we could have, the Central Committee could have informed the SCC Bureau and sought that Bureau decides for each screening to accompany.[285] Maybe we could have steered things in this direction. But [in this case] a representative of the USSR Cinematography Committee would have scolded us from the tribune today for failing to meet the plan by some 5 or 7 percent. We have made a compromise, so to say, in towns we

[282] KRVA, 1966, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 44, p. 6. References most likely to the SCC and to Kaunas' ECCPD.
[283] KRVA, 1966, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 44, p. 6.
[284] Holding the position from 1961 to 1969.
[285] Most likely: for the documentary film to accompany a feature film in the same screening.

> hardly screened cinema, but we gave a lot of money to the state budget, much more than we would have given if we had screened documentaries."[286]

For local cinema management, screening cash register films that would draw the audiences was in big part an outcome of the economic structure of the film screening network. They were, in their view, acting in accordance with what was required of them. And, in the end, there was something good to come out of it: money to the state budget.

Control films

Cash register film and its impact on screening aesthetically and ideologically valuable cinematic production (as it was understood within the frameworks of a formative power of culture) maintained its position among the most contested issues in the LSSR cinema network during the 1960s. Its implications were constantly condemned and discussed on various levels, but no actionable solutions were put in place. Arguably, the design of 1965 economic reform (see Chapter 1 and 5) could only encourage pursuit of financial income. The situation was to change in the early 1970s, however. Then, possibly as one of the ripples of the Prague Spring reaching the LSSR, many administrative regulations were being reintroduced in the LSSR, including an intensified control over cultural life.[287] The economic administration framework that created the basis for cash register film was not changed, nor were the audiences and their preference for entertaining cinema genres. However, the chosen policy was to devise stronger strategies of persuasion, limiting the accessibility to cash register films, films of foreign or capitalist origin, and creating incentives for screening, and more favorable conditions for watching, ideologically and aesthetically valuable Soviet cinematic production. By the end of the 1960s strategies of persuasion through administrative techniques, designed to protect Soviet

[286] LLMA, 1967 February 23, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 103 – 104.
[287] Rindzevičiūtė, 'Constructing Soviet Cultural Policy', 45.

cinematic production from the competitive force of cash register films, were being introduced at an intensified rate. One of such attempts was an LSSR SCC decree from 1969 requiring to decrease the number of "commercial" films delivered to urban areas, and to rather screen the fewer of those that were in the end delivered for longer periods of time.[288] Additional measures were implemented to intensify the promotion of films produced in the LSSR itself. According to the decree, local cinematic production should only be released to the best (1st category) cinemas, it should be scheduled for the maximum possible number of screenings, and should not be screened side by side with the "foreign commercial films".[289] By 1970 these measures had consolidated into a comprehensive policy of the so-called "control films". Within the framework of this policy, the best Soviet movies were to receive special promotion strategies through such measures as prescription of the minimum number of days they had to spend on cinema screens[290] and an introduction of a clearly defined target number of viewers.[291]

During the initial years, introduction and implementation of these measures was hindered by many of the same problems that caused the need to introduce them in the first place. One of them was the crucial role of viewers' agency and capacity to choose which films they wanted to see. Work with the so-called control films in the early days of the policy was on more than one occasion reported as "difficult because not many viewers would show up at the screenings".[292] The accusations towards local management also persisted: in some regions, local cinema branch directors were noticed to neglect even assigning control film targets to their projectionists.[293] In other places, managers continued overlook distribution of the supplementary propaganda and advertisement of the best Soviet films. In these cases, the policy regarding control films differed only in that that the FRA was sent information about

[288] LLMA, 1969, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 182, p. 163.
[289] KRVA, 1970, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 41, p. 11.
[290] LLMA, 1970, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 274, p. 76.
[291] LLMA, 1970, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 274, p. 106.
[292] LCVA, 1972, f. R542, ap. 3, b. 628, p. 2.
[293] LLMA, 1972, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 324, p. 38.

attendance rates and screening quality.[294] Early in the reform, a SCC inquiry into the situation of the control film program found that "due to bad planning, control films are still placed in competition with foreign commercial films".[295] In Šiauliai in 1972, for instance, projectionists were accused by the SCC for electing to screen "low quality commercial films", which was then reformulated in a customary accusation that "cinema directory still does not understand the role that cinema plays in the ideological education of workers".[296]

As Kaunas' cinefication branch employees knew all too well, failure to grasp the parameters of the ideological tasks of cinema was only part of a problem at best. The notion of cash register film emerged among cinefication employees as a result of the contradictory institutional and discursive designs guiding cinema network, creating an impetus to respond to audience demand for entertaining films, as opposed to the cinematic production considered more complex, or sounder ideologically. Local cinema management, decisions of which played an important part in cash register film phenomenon, was aware of what was considered desirable for the cinemagoing in the LSSR. Yet, in their view, they were making their decisions in accordance with the economic pressure exerted over them, in a form of planning targets. The plan, even as a subject of negotiations, was devised at the center, and was subject to continued growth. In the case of film screening, this centralized economic management tool became a justification within the state frameworks, for the repeated choices to respond to demand, even if at the detriment of ideologically correct cinematic production.

[294] LCVA, 1972, f. R542, ap. 3, b. 628, p. 2.
[295] LLMA, 1970, 473 - 1 – 274, p. 76.
[296] LLMA, 1972, 473 – 1 – 324, p. 32.

Chapter 3: "The viewer is always right": cinema services between state pedagogy and audience sovereignty

"We will work according to the principle "the viewer is always right!" declared the employees of Kaunas' cinema directory "Santaka"[297] in the list of their socialist commitments for 1965.[298] A mere bullet point in a pile of local administrative documentation, the sentence is a ripple of the broader concerns evolving within the changing 1960s state-socialist film screening network. Firstly, annual socialist commitments were a list of concrete tasks and objectives to be accomplished as a part of the larger effort of the Soviet socialist project. Putting these tasks together was one of the examples of the techniques designed to motivate the ordinary workers (or, in this case, local cinema personnel), to mold them into diligent and exemplary employees laboring for the higher purpose of the communist future, and to integrate them into the larger political project of the Soviet state. Secondly, these commitments were voiced at the premises of a cinema – a cultural activity customarily approached by historians as a quintessential sphere where the power of Soviet ideology would evolve, the "socialist man" was being shaped, where the objectives defined by the Party were mediated to individual Soviet citizens by means of cultural education. In this picture, cinematic endeavors are often approached as an ideal field for study of Soviet state's methods of acting upon its citizens, be it in their lives as workers or as consumers of culture. Yet – and here comes the third part of the puzzle – socialist commitments of a local group of employees included nothing less than a paraphrase of "the customer is always right." This expression of an uncompromising commitment to cinemagoers was not an aberration calling for a prompt administrative punishment, but rather only a particularly dense variation of the pervasive 1960s theme of cinemas striving to provide a good

[297] A local administrative-economic unit usually occurring within urban cinema administrative bodies: several cinemas grouped together under supervision of Kaunas' Cinefication Branch (KCB).
[298] KRVA, 1965, f. R1220 ap. 2, b. 4, p. 8.

service to socialist citizens. It is also an especially telling one, not only because "Santaka" cinema directory employees equated the notion of a "customer" to that of an "audience", but also because they seamlessly borrowed a phrase signifying consumer sovereignty of the 20th century free market economies, suggesting the approach to cinema viewer not as towards someone to be acted upon, but rather as someone whose preferences and agency had to be taken into serious consideration on cinema grounds. The following chapter is designed to unravel this conundrum by contextualizing cinema services of the 1960s LSSR in their broader institutional, social, and historical context.

"Film needs a background": the other services of cinema

"There are other important problems in our work," explained an unnamed official in the LSSR SCC meeting. "Production of the film is not all. Unscreened film, like an unread book, is worthless."[299] The statement might have been straightforward, but it delivered both the sense of urgency assigned to the affairs of film screening and hinted at the growing sophistication of the task of screening films to Soviet citizens. The causes of the sense of urgency and importance were, at least in part, related to the relentless economic pressure on cinema network. Yet, it also had to do with the growing Union-wide acknowledgment of the importance of reception for the achievement of social purposes assigned to culture and art in the Soviet state. One of the most telling examples of the increased efforts to better understand the processes of perception of art – and cinema – undoubtedly was the slowly developing field of the sociology of audiences.[300] In the words of one of the leading contemporary Soviet analysts of theory of

[299] LLMA, 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 101, p. 58.

[300] For a contemporary example of a sociological inquiry into cinema audiences, see: Lev Naumovich Kogan, *Kino i Zritel'. Opyt Sociologicheskogo Issledovanija [The Cinema and the Audience. Results of a Sociological Investigation]* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1968). For an account of the emergence of sociological approach to Soviet audiences, see: Joshua First, 'From Spectator to "Differentiated" Consumer: Film Audience Research in the Era of Developed Socialism (1965-80)', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 9, no. 2 (2008): 317–44.

culture and aesthetics Moisei Solomonovich Kagan, "a work of art is meant for reception, precisely and only for reception, and in this it differs from the other objects mankind creates … and art is capable of realizing its social functions only to the extent that it becomes an object of reception."[301] Where films were concerned, cinemas were the site where the perception of cinematic art would take place.

Cinemas played a role of a mediator between creators of film and the audiences. However, the task of "screening" the film was not a simple process. An important part of cinema's work was linked to the films themselves, such as development of repertoire policy, selection of films to be screened, management of equipment. However, throughout the 1960s cinema work and cinemagoing culture were shaped by an array of additional tasks, importance of which could not be underestimated. In 1968 a renowned Lithuanian designer Feliksas Daukantas took up the task of outlining both the seriousness of cinemas' undertakings, and the different lines of cinema work:

> "… film is a product of a creative effort of great many people. Part of the audience will see it in a comfortable [cinema] hall, to which they were invited by tasteful, dainty announcements and billboards [which were] designed as an entry to the film itself. Evidently, in this case the effect the cinematic creation will have over the viewer will be much stronger than when the film was seen in a tiny club or other poorly equipped, messy, shabby space. The impression will be weaker if the visual and sound precision is distorted, if the film strip is constantly obstructed. The viewer will be irritated and leave dissatisfied. To put it shortly, all the auxiliary conditions supporting or preventing full perception of the cinematic creation, do present the content based on which a film can be assessed. But they do show the efforts to help the

[301] *Lektsii po marksistsko-leninskoi estetike*, 1963-66, quoted in: Evgeny Dobrenko and Jesse M. Savage, *The Making of the State Reader: Social and Aesthetic Contexts of the Reception of Soviet Literature* (Stanford Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), 17.

consumer to develop a direct connection to the work of art, as well as reflect our general level of respect towards an artistic treasure" (italics A.R.).[302]

Recalling the reportedly Stanislavski's words that "the theatre begins with a cloakroom", Daukantas then proceeded to list the "auxiliary conditions", the basic elements comprising cinemas' service that reached beyond the technical task of screening the film, including: maintenance of cinema space, quality of advertisement, efficiency of ticket sales organization, service provided for the viewers (referring to polite communication of cinema employees), quality of sound and projection equipment, and such factors as managers' awareness of the demographic composition and density of cultural establishments in the area.[303]

Daukantas' was an inventory of the daily cinema work all too familiar to any cinema manager navigating the demands of the late-socialist LSSR cinema network. When they were putting together quarterly work plans of their cinemas and cinefication branches it was clear, that the "auxiliary" duties comprised, in fact, the bulk of cinema's work. More than just detached technicalities, these tasks were closely embedded in the contemporary institutional structures and were subject of regular judgements by the authorities (and, as we will see, cinema audiences) regarding the quality of the service that cinemas were expected to provide to the citizens and guests of the LSSR. The content of cinemas' services was the very substance of the cultural function of the cinema network, and its "social function," referred to by Kagan. In the following I will explore the relationship between educational disposition of cinema work and the consumer-centred approach underlying Daukantas' vision of the ideal conditions of film viewing.

[302] Feliksas Daukantas, 'Filmui Reikia Fono [Movie Needs a Background]', *Kultūros barai*, 1972, 38–41.
[303] Daukantas, 'Filmui Reikia Fono [Movie Needs a Background]'.

Paying for quality cinema service

Judgements regarding what constituted quality in cinemagoing and the value of cinema service in Soviet society were ingrained in the very architecture of the administrative management of economic processes structuring cinema network. This was the case with one of the key economic tools: cinema ticket price.[304] Following the general rules of the centrally planned economy, cinema ticket prices used in the LSSR were defined by an administrative decision in Moscow,[305] thus being void of any information related to the supply-demand balance. However, they still contained information, putting forward some standards of cinema work while leaving aside the others.

Before taking a closer look at the structure and process of price setting in cinema network, might be worthwhile to consider what ticket prices were not used for. This included the regulation of demand for "controversial" film genres. While, as we have seen in Chapter 2, the voices of the advocates of intensified promotion of Soviet films continued to be heard throughout the 1960s, I have not encountered any proof of an attempt to lure the audiences to the screenings of domestically produced, aesthetically and ideologically valuable cinematic production by means of a lower ticket price – or, conversely, to inhibit audiences' desire for "light" films by making attendance of entertaining cinematic films from capitalist countries more costly. Secondly, ticket pricing was only sparsely used to level the field to income differentiation of potential audiences. One group consistently entitled to lower cinema ticket prices were children. What cinema prices were linked to in the LSSR were the "auxiliary"

[304] In the following exploration of the judgements on cinema service quality expressed in cinema ticket prices in state socialist economy, I draw on the insights of economic sociologists exploring the relationship between economic and cultural values. Of particular importance for my inquiry are Olav Velthuis insights on the process of market price setting in contemporary art galleries highlighting the importance of meaning assigned to a presumably purely economic measure of setting the price; see: Olav Velthuis, *Talking Prices: Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007). I further draw on Beckert and Aspers' suggestion, that relationship between pricing and valuation is not strictly dependent on the presence of market balance between supply and demand, and that the questions of pricing and valuation appear in the context of socialist economies as well; see: Aspers and Beckert, *The Worth of Goods*, 3.

[305] LLMA, 1963, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 63, p. 57.

services of cinema: it was the quality of cinema environment and screening that determined, within the logic of Soviet economic management, what citizens could be expected to pay more for.

The link between screening quality and ticket prices was implemented by integrating cinema ticket price definition into a cinema categorization system. The LSSR cinemas were bracketed into one of the three categories based on the definitions of service quality. Both the definitions, and the significance that being assigned one or another category had for individual cinemas, is best revealed in the process of an individual cinema being transferred from lower to a higher category, since the procedure required the applicants to produce justifications regarding eligibility to such a transfer. One of such procedures, pertaining to Kaunas cinemas, was initiated in late 1967. It began with a request for recategorization from local representatives, which was then brought forward during a late December meeting at the LSSR SCC by a committee member L. Palčiauskas.[306] Hardly a month passed until local Kaunas' ECCPD[307] announced the approval for the category upgrade for five of Kaunas cinemas.[308] Explanations as to why the cinemas in question should receive a higher category sounded alike both in the SCC meeting and in a ECCPD decree. The five cinemas were deemed to have earned the 1st category because by then they met the broadly accepted contemporary criteria of what constituted the highest quality cinema service: they had introduced the innovative wide-screen technology, generally improving the quality of screenings.[309] In addition to technological advancement, cinemas had modernized their interior design, acquired the cutting edge screening equipment, improved ventilation systems, and all of them had established cafés at

[306] LLMA, 1967 December 29, f. 473, a. 1, b. 96, p. 326. L. Palčiauskas was serving as the Head of the LSSR SCC Planning Section as of 1968: LLMA, 1968 March 26, f. 473, a. 1, b. 138, p. 42.
[307] In accordance with relevant decrees from the USSR and the LSSR Cinematography Committees.
[308] KRVA, 1968 January 24, f. R1220, a. 1, b. 3, p. 34 – 35.
[309] LLMA, 1967 December 29, f. 473, a. 1, b. 96, p. 326.

their premises.[310] All these innovations were considered to provide the basic premises for providing a "more satisfying experience for the viewers."[311]

Meeting the criteria for higher screening quality and a more satisfying experience were something the audiences could be expected to pay extra for: transfer to a higher category meant ticket price increase for the cinemas. Generally, the increase was about 5 kopeks. For instance, in 1968, ticket prices for a 2nd category cinema ranged from 20 to 45 kopeks (depending on the row in the cinema hall), in the 1st category the same seats would cost 30 to 50 kopeks per ticket.[312] Generally, the transfer to a higher category meant price increase of 5 kopeks. However, capacity to charge more for a visit was not the only economic perk the 1st category cinemas would receive. Contemporaries' memories suggest that the 1st category cinemas had the priority in screening the newest films: colloquially, there were "first screen" and "second screen" cinemas, the latter visited for the films that one had missed before.[313] New releases tended to attract more viewers, thus adding to the financial returns. Linking the quality of cinema service to a monetary expression granted better equipped cinemas a potential income increase.

Planning pressures and the association of higher category to the increase of ticket prices rendered the pursuit of a higher category an important financial decision in the cinema enterprises' and cinefication branches' struggle to meet planning targets. Palčiauskas' advocacy for changes in Kaunas' cinema categorization was particularly clear on this point. His argument included an unambiguous estimate that assigning Kaunas' cinemas a higher

[310] KRVA, 1968 January 24, f. R1220, a. 1, b. 3, p. 34 – 35.
[311] LLMA, 1967 December 29, f. 473, a. 1, b. 96, p. 326.
[312] KRVA, 1968 January 24, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 3, p. 34 – 35.
[313] While I have not found any direct indication of such policy in the state documents, contemporaries recall the categorization of cinemas as "first screen", "second screen", "third screen," and that films would reach second or third screen cinemas only after having been screened in "more prestigious" cinemas. See interviews conducted by Rasa Mikulevičiūtė as part of her MA research: Rasa Mikulevičiūtė, 'Kultūrinių Objektų Istorijos Aktualizavimas. Kino Centro „Skalvija" Atvejo Analizė [Actualizting the History of Cultural Objects: The Case of „Skalvija" Cinema Centre]' (MA Thesis, Vilnius, Vilniaus dailės akademija [Vilnius Art Academy], 2013), 12; 48; 68.

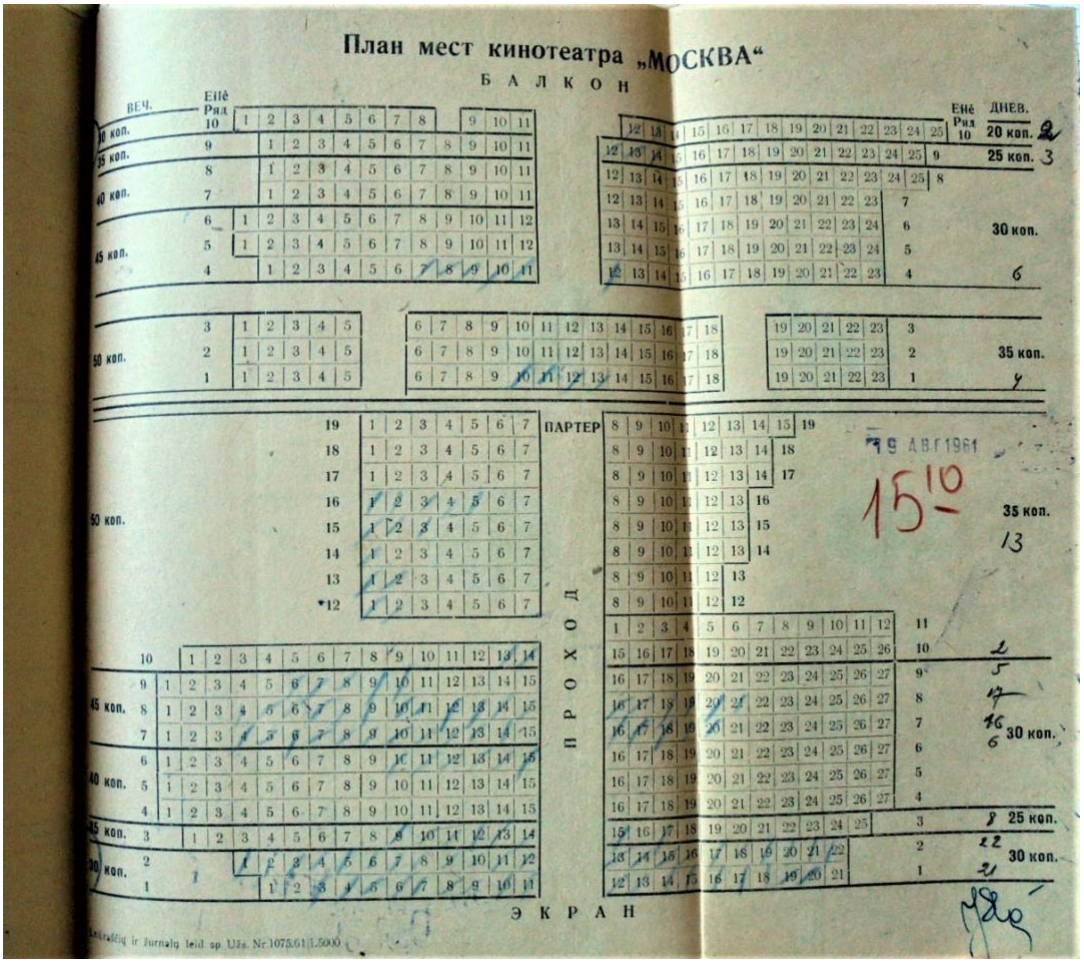
category would create a reserve for meeting their[314] "heightened planning targets".[315] A more detailed estimate of the expected increase of financial returns was included in Kaunas PDCEB's decree approving the higher category for 5 cinemas. After the transfer, the calculations showed, the upgraded film screening enterprises together were expected to bring in 245.10 more roubles per day, 7353 more roubles per month, and overall 88236 more roubles per year.[316] Differential not only established the notions of what constituted a quality cinema service deserving viewers' money: it also provided the basis for cinema administrators in various positions to frame cinema tickets as a tool in generating more income for municipal and state budgets.

Besides assigning a monetary expression to quality cinema work, ticket price differentials performed yet another function in the LSSR film screening network: that of regulating the demand. While prices were not used to encourage the attendance of Soviet film screenings, it was employed in an attempt to adjust viewer flows throughout the day. The rhythm of the work week dictated that audience flows and cinema attendance were low during the day and peaked after the work hours. As the 1961 cinema hall plan of "Moscow", one of Vilnius' cinemas, Image 6. illustrates, ticket prices were relied on to regulate this fluctuation of demand to some extent: watching movies was cheaper during the day, and more expensive during late afternoon and evening.

The strategy of tying higher ticket prices to the peak attendance times remained stable throughout the decade. In 1971, the peak hours and the concomitant higher ticket prices would continue to start at 4 P.M. The same higher tariff applied on Sundays and during state holidays.[317] The policy designed to encourage viewers to come to cinemas during the quiet

[314] "Their possibly referring to the entire republics' planning targets for cinema network.
[315] LLMA, 1967 December 29, f. 473, a. 1, b. 96, p. 326.
[316] KRVA, 1968 January 24, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 3, p. 34 – 35.
[317] LLMA, 1971, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 275, p. 70.

hours preceded that of cinema categorization: tickets to daytime screening before 4 P.M. were supposed to cost the same for all cinemas, regardless of their category.[318]



6. Plan of “Moscow” cinema hall, Vilnius. LLMA, August 1961, f. 342, ap. 7, b. 329, p. 62.

The framework of setting the prices based on the definitions of cinema service quality was set centrally as part of the administrative management of economic life of cinema network. However, locally price differentiation system could be and was manipulated by local cinema managers in such ways as to maximize the income of their cinemas. The strategies they employed relied not only on the awareness of the principles of pricing system, but also on a familiarity with the preferences of their audiences. One of such strategies was highlighted in December 1968 issue of Kultūros barai: cinefication branch managers were gently reproached

[318] KRVA, 1968 January 24, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 3, p. 34 – 35.

for resorting to intentionally sending the "heavy", "non-cashier" films to the second or third grade cinemas, leaving the best cinema halls for the content of more leisurely nature, and therefore with a greater potential for generating generous income.[319] Much like the newest films, newly opened cinemas were widely publicized in the press and attractive to the viewers, thus presenting managers with an opportunity to double down on expected demand in order to maximize the income. Similar complaints were voiced regarding the regulations of introducing higher cinema ticket tariff after 4 P.M.: managers would sometimes resort to introducing Sunday and state holiday ticket price tariff on Saturdays, at other times – cinema employees would launch the peak time tariff earlier than necessary.[320]

Economic organization of cinemagoing in a state-socialist LSSR film screening network assigned an economic value to the cultural goods and services provided by cinemas. The story of the specific measures employed in the organization of economic processes of film screening – cinema categorization and ticket pricing policy – sheds some light on what was construed as quality in the management of economic life of state-socialist cinema. Economic management of cinemas assigned a higher value to provision of quality service, quality defined first and foremost by such factors as state-of-the-art equipment, uninterrupted screenings, modernized interior design, and presence of a café at cinemas' premises, while staying aside from incentivizing ideological work – such as an intensified promotion of Soviet films, organization of viewers conferences providing a space for steering viewers' tastes in a right direction, or setting up events in honor of numerous anniversaries of the Soviet state. This did not mean that such activities had been eradicated from cinema's premises: they continued to form a significant part of quarterly and annual cinema's work plans. However, the depoliticized

[319] Pauraitė, 'Dešimt Tūkstančių Ar Dešimt [Ten Thousand or Ten]'. In the early 1970s, as the promotion of domestic USSR and LSSR cinematic production was increasingly prioritized, this practice was reversed by introducing the rules designed to make use of the quality differentiation between cinemas: Soviet films were to be screened in the best rated cinemas, and not mixed with entertaining foreign production. See: KRVA, 1965, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 41, p. 11.
[320] A complaint from the Ministry of Finance; see: [320] LCVA, 1970, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 7831, p. 35.

approach to the quality of cinema service embedded in one of the main economic management systems governing cinema work opened the space for the managers to approach and manage cinema and cinema services as a source of monetary income. Moreover, it fostered the image of cinema service as that of a provider of a pleasant and comfortable experience to Soviet citizens. Such definitions of quality cinema work and the desired standard of cinemagoing experience were not confined to the economic management mechanisms alone: they branched out to the public representations of cinema work and cinemagoing, shaping cinema's public profile amidst the political and cultural changes of the 1960s.

Cinema's pleasures: cinema as a site of consumption

Socialist turn towards the peoples' needs included the expanded consumption of culture, both in its high and leisurely varieties.[321] As a part of the ongoing efforts to raise the standard of living, the LSSR cinema network has become and arena of a continued struggle to improve the quality of the services it was providing. The ongoing revitalization and scrutiny of every detail of cinema work included both functional and aesthetic improvements, revealing the multiplicity of the social and cultural tasks assigned to the service of cinemas in the Soviet Union. A site for desired promotion of October anniversaries and the objectives outlined in the latest Party Congress, cinema continued to play a role as a mediator of the objectives outlined in the latest Party program, and the minds and convictions of Soviet citizens. At the same time, the parallel cinema's profile was coming into shape, including the norms distanced from direct political engagement, such as providing comfort and coziness, entertainment, and simply a pleasurable experience for the audiences.

[321] Betts, 'The Politics of Plenty: Consumerism in Communist Societies'; Berend, *Central and Eastern Europe, 1944-1993*, 220.

Growing demands to the performance of cinemas were accompanied by an increased investment in cinema network. This was particularly the case where construction of new cinemas was concerned: emergence of new cinema buildings went hand in hand with entire new district being raised in larger Lithuanian cities as part of Khrushchev's construction drive. Finalized construction and openings of new cinemas in larger towns rarely went unnoticed in the pages of *Ekrano naujienos*. On the one hand, the announcements represented the ongoing success of communist construction to LSSR cinemagoing public and, as in the case of the report on particularly outstanding "Lietuva" ["Lithuania"] cinema in Vilnius, "a gift" to the people.[322] On the other hand, these notes served as promotional materials for freshly opened or refurbished cinemas. After all, it was not only films, but cinemas themselves that needed promotion in order to help increase attendance rates.

The descriptive accounts on new cinemas, often involving stories of reporters' visits to newly opened or freshly refurbished cinemas were intended to raise interest in cinemagoing and to attract more viewers, furthering the definition of a modern 1960s Soviet cinema along the way. Pleasant environment and catering to audiences' needs was paramount in an exemplary organization of cinemagoing, as was reflected in an imaginative scenario depicted by one of Ekrano naujienos authors in 1962. The focus of the piece was the recently introduced innovative methods of work in Vilnius' cinema "Neris".[323] The introduction to the article was written from a perspective of a child, a little girl excited about her parents' planned visit to cinema that day. Girl's enthusiasm was not about seeing the movies – as a 4-year-old, she was too young to watch most of them anyway – but about children's playroom opened on cinema's grounds. Among the walls decorated with folk tale motives by cinema's designer, the article

[322] 'Šventinė Dovana Vilniečiams: Dar Vienas Plačiaekranis [A Celebratory Gift to the People of Vilnius: One More Wide Sreen Cinema]', *Ekrano Naujienos*, 5 November 1964.
[323] P. Šapoka, 'Naujovės Vilniaus "Neries" Kino Teatre [Novelty in Vilnius Cinema "Neris"]', *Ekrano Naujienos*, 12 February 1962.

goes, the child "will be able to spend a couple of hours, to play, and aunt Valė will teach her to draw a bus, flowers. Here she will meet her new friends (…)" The subsequent remarks from the parents illustrated the usefulness of such an initiative of "Neris" cinema employees: after moving to the district where the cinema was located, child's parents no longer had to take turns when going to watch films since they knew that their child will be taken care of. Similar benefits were, reportedly, enjoyed by a father who no longer had to stay home when his wife went away on a work trip: now, he could enjoy the films while being assured that his son was under good care in cinema's playroom.

Such tales of exemplary work of a modern cinema of the Thaw years, defined by the provision of a pleasant and inviting cinema environment reached back to the earlier years of the Thaw. A 1957 report on "Laisvė" ["Freedom"] cinema in Kaunas, for instance, outlines some of the main themes of quality cinema work that will continue guiding cinema policy throughout the 1960s. In this case, cinemagoers were provided with a cozy atmosphere, had an opportunity to browse newspapers and magazines while waiting for the screening. Foyer of "Laisvė" was tastefully arranged, Party congress decisions were dutifully displayed, and employees were doing their very best to provide "cultured"[324] service to the viewers.[325] Another Ekrano naujienos report on a freshly opened cinema "Vilnius" (Images 7. and 8.) a few years later asserted the standard of what a desired environment of a modern socialist cinema was supposed to be like: "Everything was pleasing to the eye: modern interior design, beautiful waiting hall, lighting. (…) it was readily felt that here everyone is a respected and awaited guest."[326]

[324] In literature the idea of "culturedness" is discussed broadly as a part of the educational project of the Soviet state, an attempt to civilize the socialist man. Here, it refers more accurately to a narrower task of politeness, of the provision of polite communication at cinema's premises. In this 1957 report, the role of the viewers in judging the quality of cinema service makes an appearance as well: the author mentions audiences' complaints about rude service and alcohol consumption.
[325] LLMA, 1957, f. 342, b. 7, a. 190, p. 53.
[326] 'Iš Kino Tinklo Darbo: Kino Teatras "Vilnius" [From the Work of Cinema Network: Cinema "Vilnius"]', *Ekrano Naujienos*, 27 January 1964.

Efforts to expand and develop the desired cinema's features went beyond the elevated announcements in the press. In the description of "Vilnius" cinema, some of the cinema's inviting atmosphere was assigned to the dedicated work of a local cinema designer – an important figure in the formation of the modern urban cinema environment. Assembling Designers' Councils (DC) at local cinemas was among the first decisions made by the newly established LSSR SCC in 1964, adding an additional push towards making the standard of a tasteful and cozy cinema environment a reality.[327] The primary purpose of the introduction of Designers' Councils was to improve the quality of advertisement, and to ensure a timely production of varied, original and attractive promotional materials on individual cinemas' grounds. In addition to this central task, however, cinema designers were also expected to keep an eye on and maintain the general appearance of cinema environment, including such aspects as the state of interior design, furnishing, lighting, and cinema's façade, all of which had to meet the criteria of contemporaneity and tastefulness.

The invigoration of cinema's function as a site where depoliticized service and comforts were provided side by side with the 50th October anniversary posters was promoted publicly and endorsed institutionally. In addition, the increasingly multi-layered character of cinema's services entered administrative vocabularies and taxonomies. The role of cinema as an educational site in Soviet society was counterbalanced not only by the apolitically formulated notions of coziness and comfort: cinemas were also a site in which the complex relationship between the objectives of propaganda, agitation and entertainment played out.

[327] However, cinema designers' profession existed before that. LLMA, 1964, f. 473, b. 1, a. 3, p. 48.

7. Cinema “Vilnius”, 1964, picture: J. Vaitulevičius, (LCVA, 0-047/120)[328]

8. “Vilnius cinema”, 1964. Mozūriūnas, Vl., I. Fišeris, and L. Ruikys. Vilnius ... Rudenį [Vilnius ... in Autumn]. Vilnius: Mintis, 1964.

[328] Žalneravičiūtė, *Vilniaus Iliuzionai*, 347.

In public discussions, the dilemma continued to be subject of rumination. Throughout the 1960s, cultural publications of the LSSR published careful deliberations over the balance between high culture on the one hand, and socialist citizens' "right to entertainment" on the other. This tension applied to cinema as well as in other arts. Within local administrative apparatuses, however, cinema work and its related economic operations were unambiguously grouped under the category of entertainment. Within local ECCPD's economic accounting nomenclature, film screening organizations were "entertainment organizations," subjected to a an "entertainment tax,"[329] and working towards meeting the "entertainment plan".[330] Where economic management was concerned, cinemas were the providers of leisure.

A more vocal, even if contested, recognition of the function of cinema as a site of entertainment in the LSSR society was just one aspect diluting the status of cinema as, to quote a contemporary headline, "an important link in ideological work".[331] I have already pointed out in Chapter 1 that cinemas and trade organizations shared a structural position in the Soviet economic system: they were both distributing goods and services, interacting directly with the consumers (of culture), and the economic assessment of their work depended directly on the people. During the 1960s, they also shared the tools designed to attract and satisfy the perpetually growing (cultural) needs of socialist citizens. Cinema work of the 1960s appears to have worked along similar lines as the Stalinist department store engaged in the sales of goods of lesser political significance described by Julie Hessler: what she terms as a civilizing interaction between salesperson and customer, physical appearance and organization of the store, the quality of the selection of goods, and the quality of customer service.[332] Some of the more specific techniques of work were borrowed directly from the field of trade. One of such

[329] KRVA, 1965 June 4, f. R-1220, ap. 1, b. 3, p. 8 – 9.
[330] KRVA, 1967 March 27, f. R-1220, ap. 1, b. 58, p. 4.
[331] 'Kinas - Svarbi Ideloginio Darbo Grandis [Cinema - an Important Part in Ideological Work]'.
[332] Julie Hessler, 'Cultured Trade: The Stalinist Turn towards Consumerism', in *Stalinism: New Directions* (London: Routledge, 1999), 182–209.

techniques was the official introduction of suggestion books to cinemas, put on an agenda of a 1969 LSSR SCC meeting. The Chief engineer of the SCC Simonaitis explained the process: "We had to get acquainted [with the suggestion books at] the Ministry of Trade which, as we know, relies on such books already for a long time. After this we decided to introduce them to cinemas. This should improve the structure and, generally, play a positive role."[333]

The SCC was not the only setting within which the similarities between film screening and trade were asserted. A few years before the SCC meeting, the Head of Kaunas' Cinefication branch Micevičius compiled a report about a film network in Kaunas.[334] In the text he lamented the poor material situation of town's cinema network. His primary concerns reached beyond the crude realities of the leaky floors or insufficient heating in some of town's cinemas: he was trying to secure the funds to update their interiors. Curiously, one of the problems Micevičius saw was that most of Kaunas' cinemas were constructed "in the bourgeois years,"[335] when the owners focused on generating the highest possible profit. In Micevičius' view, this explained the large cinema halls and disproportionally small and poorly equipped foyers. Trying to secure the resources needed to alleviate the situation, Micevičius compared the cinemas to their counterparts in trade and service sectors: "From one year to another we see the interiors of shops, public catering institutions, and other buildings changing and becoming more beautiful. In the meantime, interior design of town's cinemas does not meet the contemporary requirements anymore. [Kaunas'] cinemas are visited by 5 million people every year.[336] How can we provide aesthetic education with an outdated interior?"[337]

The economic tools of managing film screening along with the institutional and public discourses shaping cinema's profile contributed to the presence of multiple assessments of

[333] LLMA, 1969 September 3, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 182, p. 81 – 82.
[334] Likely to the head of the LSSR Communist Party Central Committee's ideological branch Šimkus.
[335] Referring to the years of Lithuania's independence in 1918 – 1940.
[336] He is referring to cinema visits rather than people: Kaunas' population was about 200 000.
[337] KRVA, 1965, f. R-1220, ap. 1, b. 38, p. 1 – 2.

cinema's role in the socialist LSSR society. With the promotion of Soviet cinematic production and the posters publicizing such highlights as the decisions of the latest Party Congress, in the public profile of cinema continued to play a role in mediating the ideological and political goals decided by the political elites to the LSSR citizens. However, besides the educational program of cultural enlightenment, the definitions of quality cinema work were embedded in the very structure of economic management of film screening. Standards of quality were defined by economic management techniques, categorization of cinemas, and such crucial frameworks as ticket price setting, and brought forward a more technical and depoliticized definition of what constituted quality cinema service and, therefore, a quality cinemagoing experience. As a provider of film screening service, functions of cinema service were associated with the norms similar to those followed in (and sometimes drawn directly from) the sectors that were not burdened with the task of disseminating communist ideology or the education of a socialist man: services and trade. In this regard, film exhibition entered the accelerating development of socialist consumer cultures of the 1960s,[338] guided by the objectives of flawless film screening process, cozy and tasteful interior design, and provision of polite service – all of which were oriented towards viewers' satisfaction.

Meeting the audience: gathering information about consumers of culture and cinema

Cinema work in the 1960s was marked by interest in audiences' satisfaction and needs on a variety of levels, including the budding sociological profiling of audiences and reframing of the viewers as consumers.[339] However, there were limits to how far growing sociological

[338] Many of the definitions of socialist consumption applied in cinemas reaching back as far as Stalinist years. See: Philippa Hetherington, 'Dressing the Shop Window of Socialism: Gender and Consumption in the Soviet Union in the Era of "Cultured Trade", 1934-53 Gender and Consumption in the Soviet Union in the Era of "Cultured Trade"', *Gender & History Gender & History* 27, no. 2 (2015): 417–45.
[339] First, 'From Spectator to "Differentiated" Consumer'.

interest in consumers, and consumers of culture specifically, reached the LSSR's field of cultural and cinema work, leading an Engineer of Vilnius' Computing Factory urge to conduct "sociological investigations which would deliver scientific understanding of the actual situation [among the working people]"[340] and help in this way to enhance the organization of the delivery of cultural services. While consistent attempts to produce "scientific" knowledge about the consumers of culture were difficult to come by, it was nevertheless widely accepted among cinema network administration and management that such knowledge was desired and instrumental for good quality cultural work. For this reason cultural publications, such as Ekrano naujienos and Kultūros barai, sporadically sought such information themselves by including questionnaires in their pages.[341] Most of such questionnaires focused on gathering information about the preferences of their readership: which of the published articles the reader liked the best, whether the profile and direction of the journal were satisfactory, what were the shortcomings and what could be done to fix them, finally – if the respective reader has any suggestions regarding preferred themes for future issues?... Requested information about the respondent was minimal: just a name, occupation and address. Most of the questionnaires of this type were focused on crafting the journal that responds to the readerships' preferences rather than gaining "sociological" understanding about the readers.

However, in 1967 *Kultūros barai* went a step further in the attempts to compensate the dearth of sociological inquiries, develop an understanding of the social composition and cultural consumption habits in the LSSR: they conducted their own survey in Alytus region,[342]

[340] Girdzijauskas, 'Worker and His Cultural Needs'. Here, his broader argument was pointing to the necessity of educating the worker.
[341] See, for instance: 'Gerb. Drauge, Malonėk Atsakyti! [Dear Comrade, Please Kindly Respond!]', *Ekrano Naujienos*, 6 June 1960; 'Anketa "Kultūros Barų" Skaitytojams [Questionnaire to the Readers of "Kultūros barai"]', *Kultūros barai*, 9 December 1966; 'Anketa "Kultūros Barų" Skaitytojams [Questionnaire to the Readers of "Kultūros barai"]', *Kultūros barai*, 10 December 1968; 'Anketa Skaitytojams [Questionnaire to the Readers]', *Kultūros barai*, January 1970.
[342] 1959 and 1970 censuses approximated 64 000 and 75 500 inhabitants in Alytus' region respectively: *Lietuvos TSR Kaimo Gyvenamosios Vietovės 1959 Ir 1970 Metais [1959 and 1970 Censuses of the LSSR Rural Areas]* (Vilnius: Centrinė statistikos valdyba prie Lietuvos TSR Ministrų tarybos, 1974), 14.

involving 100 local collective farm workers and 100 factory workers as respondents. Findings about their cultural life and habits were summarized and reported by one of its editors Romualdas Ozolas.[343] The introduction stated that:

> "Regretfully, to date we weren't able to enjoy a broad and consistent research of the shifts [of the growing cultural needs of the working people], research that would be conducted with scientific rigour, enabling us to reach concrete and practical conclusions. It is self-understood that the survey organized by Kultūros barai is also just an odd inquiry, in a sense – an amateurish attempt. We nevertheless hope that its results will be interesting not only to those living in Alytus, but also to the general readership".[344]

The editorial team of *Kultūros barai* repeated the effort in 1970, this time with a more clearly expressed intention of using information about their readership for the purposes of the journal itself. Interestingly, the questionnaire was presented as a multiple-choice sheet on readers age, education, occupation, favorite pastimes, subscription status, and enjoyed/did not enjoy option regarding the previous years' material of the journal. Curiously, a multiple-choice format was selected because the questionnaires were to be processed by a computer.[345]

Where cinema itself was concerned, it seems that local (conducted within the LSSR level) inquiries into audiences remained absent during the 1960s. Daukantas in his guidelines for quality cinema service bases his insight on the audience research published in Moscow, considering such factors as the purposes of going to cinema (leisure being the reason for 48% of respondents) or the advertisement strategies that were the most efficient in attracting audiences (for instance, performance by a favorite actor was found to attract 50% of the respondents).[346] Yet, in the absence of consistent, scientifically produced, local information

[343] Ozolas, 'A Person, Culture, Needs'.
[344] Ozolas, 8.
[345] 'Anketa Skaitytojams [Questionnaire to the Readers]', 74.
[346] Daukantas, 'Filmui Reikia Fono [Movie Needs a Background]'; First, 'From Spectator to "Differentiated" Consumer', 333.

about the audiences, the position of cinema in the economic system of Soviet film screening, much like that of trade enterprises, nevertheless dictated a constant and intensive contact with Soviet citizens. Furthermore, the predominant assessment of the quality of cinema's work defined through attendance rates and income facilitated interest in audiences' preferences and needs even further. The scientific tools for in-depth analysis of the audiences might not have been consistently available, but the necessity of knowing the viewer better was unambiguously acknowledged across both in the press and across the institutional hierarchy of film screening administration and management.

This was the case in the public rendering of the exemplary methods of cinema work, as in one of the descriptions of model experiences brought from Moldavia narrated in a form of an interview in *Ekrano naujienos*:

> "'We are trying to understand viewers' tastes. People tell their preferences to projectionists: which movies they'd like to see once again, which documentaries or popular science films are interesting for collective farmers' or for school children. Each week we organize 2 - 3 additional screenings. In projectionists' notebook you can find names of those who are not going to cinema. - And how are you trying to impact those who aren't coming? - Many are not going to cinema because they have not "seen" it. To get them "used" to cinema we have the projectors "Ukraine". We use them for screening films for free in remote villages After organizing such a screening once or twice, next time look – and you'll see new faces in the audience."[347]

Beyond the tales of model performance, "knowing the viewer,"[348] "studying viewers' needs" and "understanding their tastes" were the guiding tropes in the LSSR film screening network. In 1964, the LSSR SCC and the LSSR Cultural employees' Trade Union organized a long-term (July to December) review of the quality of the work of cinemas in larger towns and holiday

[347] 'Iš Kelionių Bloknoto: Pirmaujančiame Rajone [From a Traveler's Notebook: In the Leading Region]', *Ekrano Naujienos*, 12 October 1964.
[348] 'Ukmergiškiai Dirba Brigadiniu Metodu [Ukmerge Projectionistts Adopt Brigade Method]', *Ekrano Naujienos [Screen News]*, no. 19 (18 May 1964): 5.

resorts.[349] The objectives of the review were to assess the quality of cinema work, and to encourage improvements in quality cinema work through inspections and an element of competition, all so as to ensure "a quality service for the working people,"[350] more specifically, "to mobilize […] town cinema employees for exemplary maintenance of cinema and projection booth space, tasteful rendering of façade and advertisement, rise of projectionists' booths' employees qualification and improvement of cultured service for the viewers, and cinema technicians – to improve screening and sound quality."[351] The commission was assembled to coordinate the review and assess the situation in each of the cinemas, yet none of its members acted explicitly as an ideological representative of the Party: it consisted of engineers, a representative from the trade union, cinema managers,[352] and a fire safety official. The criteria of assessment were ideologically neutral, focused on ensuring technical screening quality based on a detailed list of the tasks for projectionists, and on the improvement of service culture.

Importantly, the review turned out to be a manifestation of the growing interest in audiences' opinions and input where cinema services where concerned. Organizers of the review actively sought involvement of the audiences in this assessment of the quality cinema work. Review guidelines prescribed not only to inform the public about the review by publicizing it in the press, but to also actively seek their opinion about the quality of cinema's surroundings, screening and cinema work. In order to include audiences in the assessment of the quality of cinemas work, 6000 questionnaires were to be printed and made accessible at cinemas' cashiers, as were the special boxes to leave the questionnaires. It is difficult to judge the extent to which the LSSR cinemagoers responded to these calls, but 77 of filled-in questionnaires were preserved in Kaunas' Cinefication Branch archives.[353] Questionnaires were two-sided,

[349] KRVA,1964, f. 1220, ap. 1, b. 24, p. 4.
[350] KRVA, 1964, f. 1220, ap. 1, b. 24, p. 1.
[351] KRVA, 1964, f. 1220, ap. 1, b. 24, p. 12.
[352] All of whom, however, were Party members as of 1965. See: KRVA, 1965, f. 1220, ap. 1, b. 38, p. 12.
[353] KRVA, 1964, f. 1220, ap. 1, b. 24, p. 32 – 109.

with one side in Lithuanian, and the other one – in Russian, while only a handful of questionnaires were filled in in Russian language. The questionnaires positioned the experience of cinemagoing withing the consumer framework of service quality with the questions focused on the practical aspects of cinematic experience: they asked about the quality of the display on the screen, sound quality, appearance of the façade and foyer, quality of advertisement, opinion on the music played in the foyer, cashiers' work, service culture, and left a bigger space for any suggestions on how cinema work could be improved.

Within the questionnaires' framework, respondents shared their ideas about how the situation in a particular cinema, and the ways in which the viewing conditions and experience could be improved. Many appreciated quick and polite service of the cashiers, some praised tasteful interior appearance, good advertisement, vivid illumination. Viewers also shared freely their suggestions and wishes, reflecting in this way their own expectations on what constituted a quality cinema service. Some suggested to establish a café at cinema's premises, to provide a possibility to read a newspaper, introduce more tasteful illumination for advertisements in the cinemas where these aspects were wanting, to maybe play some excerpts from a film in the foyer (or, alternatively, jazz or Lithuanian music) so that the waiting time is less boring, and even to place some flowers in the foyer for additional coziness. Without being asked anything about the films themselves, some of the viewers who filled in the questionnaire also expressed the preferences for the kind of films they wanted to see: foreign and other people's democracies' films, films about nature, or films with Charlie Chaplin, or, in case of one respondent, less comedies that appeared to be screened too often for her taste. The initiative of a review of cinemas' work, including the questionnaires listing the same questions, was repeated in 1967, to encourage good performance during the anniversary year. This time it was launched by Kaunas' Cinefication Branch.[354] The tone of viewers suggestions had not changed:

[354] KRVA, 1967, f. 1220, ap. 1, b. 67, p. 1 – 17.

viewers were asking for more screenings of the popular at the time light film "Pharaoh",[355] for light music before the screening, for a shop at cinemas' premises to expand its assortment of sweets and drinks, to establish a café at the premises. An employee in finance went as far as to deem the 50th anniversary of October Revolution posters exhibited at cinemas' façade "unappealing".[356]

As part of the anniversary year review, Designers' Councils at cinemas were called to participate where advertisement and interior design were concerned.[357] As part of their involvement, Kaunas' cinemas "Santaka"[358] and "Taika"[359] devised their own questionnaires for the viewers, in a context of viewers' conference. The introduction of "Santaka" questionnaire framed the questionnaire exclusively in terms of a leisurely, cosy experience:

> "Thank you for appreciating our cinema. "Santaka" administration wishes for you to have an interesting, cosy, and lovely time with us. Let's consider together what's working well in our cinema, and what we could still do in the future. Your suggestions will help us in making the time in your frequented "Santaka" cinema more interesting and more pleasurable."[360]

In a similarly conversational tone, the questionnaire proceeded to inquire about the kind of films that viewer liked, did not like, would like to see, what activities (such as meetings with film directors) the viewer would enjoy, whether the cinema's environment was sufficiently pleasant. Importantly, the authors of the questionnaire positioned the cinema in the context of other cinemas in town, and in competition: "Are you a frequent guest with us? Maybe you prefer some other cinema? Could you let us know why? We will strive not to fall behind them".

[355] Likely Jerzy Kawalerowicz's *Pharaoh* (Polish: *Faraon*), 1966.
[356] KRVA, 1967, f. 1220, ap. 1, b. 67, p. 9.
[357] KRVA, 1967, f. 1220, ap. 1, b. 59, p. 1.
[358] A medium-sized cinema with 313 places, opened in 1965 and to be promoted to the 1st category in 1968.
[359] A medium-sized cinema, 337 places and promoted to the 1st category in 1968.
[360] KRVA, 1967, f. 1220, ap. 1, b. 59, p. 14.

"Taika", after making and acknowledgment of the 50th October anniversary with a question about what films on revolutionary themes the viewer might like to see, proceeded in a very much the same spirit, inquiring which films viewers preferred, how frequent their visits were and whether they liked "Taika" cinema, whether cinemas' appearance and service culture were in a good standing. They did, in addition, try to fill the whole left by lack of information about what determines a choice to see one or another film, with options ranging from friends' suggestion to reviews in the press and favoured directors and actors. They also tried to understand audiences' take on the common practice of screening newsreels and documentaries before feature films: "Would you like for documentary films to be screened for free before the 7 pm and 9 pm screenings?"[361]

In cases of questionnaires announced in cultural press, or distributed within the cinema network, cultural organizations were actively seeking feedback from their respective cultural consumers. While some of the feedback sought was concerned with the social composition of the readership and audiences, most of it f0cused on their opinions and suggestions regarding the quality of the content and service they were provided. The means of gathering information, including the questionnaires studied here, joined the public and institutional discourses shaping cinema's public profile, and integrating cinemagoing and cinema services within the framework of socialist consumer culture. The questionnaires enforced the image of cinema as a site the function and objective of which was to provide a comfortable, cosy, smooth services, while remaining silent on the questions of political and ideological education. A modest sample of filled in questionnaires suggests that at least part of the audiences embraced this standard, growing to accept and expect such characteristics as technically smooth screening, cosy and tasteful environment, café and appealing illumination.

[361] KRVA, 1967, f. 1220, ap. 1, b. 59, p. 15.

Importantly, the questionnaires (or introduction of such measure as suggestion and complaint books) invited audiences to co-create their cinematic experience and the formation of cinema services. The extent to which response to viewers' requests for specific films or conveniences was systematic is difficult to assess due to lack of sources. However, discursively audiences were gradually established as a decisive part of municipal cinematic life: their feedback was an essential part of cinema review designed to assess and improve cinema work. Audiences' input was framed as an integral part in assessment of a quality cinema work. Appreciation of audiences' role and involvement went beyond the questionnaire campaigns.

Counting viewers' complaints

"For the viewer, [technical difficulties] make no difference. He paid the money, he wants the screening to go like it's supposed to (*videt' kak polozheno*), he comes to relax, not to get irritated."[362] This uncompromising vision of the expectations of the money-paying audiences emerged in an LSSR SCC meeting from comrade Ankudinov, the director of Vilnius' Cinefication Branch. Such vision of an unyielding consumer spilled out from the quarters of the SCC to the public discussions of the requirements for cinema work in the pages of Kultūros barai: "The viewer is not in the least interested in the difficulties of the cineficators' work. What he wants is for films to be screened properly, and a cozy environment in cinemas",[363] as well as to the pages of "Tiesa": "The viewer does not care about holder of the keys nor about some kind of coal pieces. He comes to cinema to see the films, to relax. Administration should take care of everything else – this is why it exists."[364]

[362] LLMA, 1967 February 23, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 66.
[363] Simonaitis, 'Kinas, Kinofikacija, Žiūrovas [Cinema, Cinefication, Viewers]'.
[364] P. Jankauskas, "Nepasibaigusi pūga" [Unfinished "Snowstorm"], *Tiesa*, 1965 August 3, quoted in Žalneravičiūtė, *Vilniaus Iliuzionai*, 380..

During the 1960s, audiences' satisfaction with cinema services was deemed of paramount importance across the administrative apparatus of film screening network, and in the press concerned with affairs of cinemagoing. One of the indicators of just how seriously audiences' assessment of cinema services was taken were the ways in which viewers' complaints were appraised, handled, and the extent to which they could – or were considered as capable of – influencing cinema work.

There were several established channels through which audiences could express their dissatisfaction with cinema services. These included complaint and suggestion books, and the questionnaires analyzed in the previous chapter. Besides these venues, viewers could resort to voicing their complaints directly to the cinemas, to a common practice of letter writing to authorities, and to publicizing their complaints to the press.[365] Encouragement for cinemas to pay close attention to and to maintain lines of communication with the audiences by taking complaints seriously[366] went along with the early years of the growing public commitment to improving the standard of living of socialist citizens. Whichever way the complaints were delivered, cinemas were expected to react to the promptly. Ankudinov himself was included in a reprimanding decree a couple of years prior when Lithuania's flagship cinema "Lietuva" ("Lithuania") was opened in 1965. The idea about building a "panoramic" cinema in Vilnius appeared in 1959,[367] and a 1000 place "Lietuva" opened its doors in July 1965, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Soviet rule in Lithuania.[368] Cinema's opening and modern facilities were widely advertised in the press, inviting viewers to come, reporting sold out tickets. At the

[365] Publications would forward the complaints they received to relevant institutions. See, for instance: LLMA, 1956, f. 342, ap. 7, b. 144, p. 11 – 12.
[366] LLMA, 1959, f. 473, a. 1, b. 260, p. 13.
[367] By 1964 the cinema was already under construction, even though the works were not proceeding as smoothly as was expected, resulting in complaints to the LSSR Council of Ministers and the Planning Commission. The alleged culprits of truncated construction were accused of lack of financial responsibility: "They completely avoid consideration of the gigantic losses to the state. 1000 seats cinema is supposed to serve 1 000 000 viewers per year and to deliver 500 000 thousand roubles to the budget." See: LCVA, 1964, f. R755, ap. 2, b. 5059, p. 182.
[368] Sonata Žalneravičiūtė, *Vilniaus Iliuzionai: Miesto Kino Teatrų Istorijos [Vilnius' Houses of Illusions: Stories of Town's Cinemas]* (Vilnius: Vaga, 2015), 372–97.

same time, it seems that many of those who did come to see films in "Lietuva" in the first months after its opening ran into troubles. The situation was discussed at a SCC meeting in December the same year, singling out the numerous technical difficulties occurring during screening.[369] While it was deemed understandable in the first months due to the new equipment, by that time there were no excuses left, and only employees' lack of dedication to their job could be blamed. The decree following this discussion listed the difficulties, pointing to the numerous audience complaints about hiccups in "Lietuva" service: "viewers have informed "Lietuva" management about the problems, but no action was taken."[370] Harsh reprimands, including fines and hints at firing were issues, while Ankudinov was called to pay closer attention to what is going on in one of the most prestigious cinemas in town.

Approaching viewers' complaints as one of the indicators of the state of service in cinemas, and using audiences' dissatisfaction as a leverage when urging improvements was a common practice in the LSSR administrative apparatus of the LSSR film screening network. This was especially the case where technical qualities of screening were concerned, since those could result in terminated screenings. Such was the case with one of the LSSR SCC decrees in 1967. Listing flaws in film screening in several cinemas in Vilnius, V. Baniulis also singled out the presence of "rightful dissatisfaction" among the viewers which was, moreover, time and again publicized in the press.[371] Another instance involved a group complaint letter from a Kėdainiai region: viewers described situations were parts of the film would be missing, but the major source of dissatisfaction in this case was a screening of an American film, which due to projectionists' incompetence ended in half an hour. When the audience approached the projectionists' boot, they found a young person under an influence with little clue as to how

[369] Sonata Žalneravičiūtė, *Vilniaus Iliuzionai: Miesto Kino Teatrų Istorijos [Vilnius' Houses of Illusions: Stories of Town's Cinemas]* (Vilnius: Vaga, 2015), 372–97.
[370] LLMA, 1965, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 25, p. 242.
[371] LLMA, 1967 September 4, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 97a, p. 85 – 86.

the situation could be resolved. After one of the viewers' lost his temper, a ruckus broke out and the police was called.[372] Responding to the complaint, the Deputy Head of the SCC Operational and Technical Office Masaitis urged the director of Kėdainiai Cinefication directory to find the culprits and issue "harsh reprimands".[373] Serious attitude towards audiences' complaints was not confined to the central administration in Vilnius: for local management in Kaunas poor cleanliness of cinemas was important not only because it departed from the standard of cinema work, but also because it caused dissatisfaction among the audiences.[374]

However, viewers complaints were drawn on not only to increase the sense of urgency in the elimination of problems from the work of cinema network: by the mid-1960s absence of audience complaints had turned into an informal indicator of the quality of cinema work. On occasion, such approach to audiences' dissatisfaction would result in counting the complaints as a proof of cinemas' quality of work and service. In the general employee meeting at Kaunas Cinefication Branch, the Head of the Branch read his address, judging performance of cinema not only though the achievement of planning indicators or state of advertisement, but also by the presence or absence of viewers' complaints. Reduction of complaints from the viewers was a sign of general progress in KCB work. Presence of them was an indicator for improvement. Eventually, Micevičius resorted to numbers to illustrate the situation better: "In 1966 alone this ["Neringa"] cinema alone has received 3 complaints from the viewers because of poor screening quality, while keeping in mind that we [all cinemas under KCB] have received only 8 complaints."[375] Cinema employees, in the meantime, had adopted the complaint criterion as well: when putting together their socialist competition commitments employees of Kaunas'

[372] LLMA, 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 143, p. 167.
[373] LLMA, 1967 October 25, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 143, p. 166.
[374] KRVA, 1964, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 19, p. 3.
[375] KRVA, 1967 January 13, f. R1220, ap. 2, b. 9, p. 11 – 12.

cinema directory "Laisvė" promised "to improve their service culture so that they would not receive a single complaint from the viewers".[376]

Competition for viewers' attention

In 1968, during a routine LSSR SCC meeting one of the regional cinema managers Kundrotas took an opportunity to negotiate planning targets:

> "We [in our region] have a house of culture, [which] opens several times a week. There might be a circus [performance], there might be something else, it takes away around 400 viewers. In smaller towns, where viewers don't have such opportunities, they are left with a cinema and a church. Things go more smoothly for them, but in Kėdainiai, for instance, there is football. It might seem funny, but there are matches in summer, they take away viewers, in summer situation is completely bad where the plan is concerned. The region is quite economical.[377] There are many television sets. [People] only go to cinema when there's a better [film], otherwise they watch TV. Such would be our request, a request for the Committee to review [the situation] and reduce the plan at least for the [cinema currently] under renovation."[378]

While comrade Kundrotas' conviction that cinemas located in small settlements and rural areas were in a better position to plan their activities and meet planning targets deserves further scrutiny, he did nevertheless touch upon yet another process bearing influence on cinema enterprises: an implausible presence of competition in a state-socialist film screening economy of the LSSR. Competition with proliferating forms of leisure and cultural activities was not the only competitive process affecting cinemas in the LSSR. As we have seen in Chapter 2, there was competition between different genres of film. In addition, cinemas were strongly encouraged to participate in state-coordinated socialist competition campaigns, as well as

[376] KRVA, 1966, f. R1220, ap. 2, b. 7, p. 5.
[377] "Economical" here used colloquially as "wealthy".
[378] LLMA, 1968 March 26, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 138, p. 42.

facing a thwarted drive towards competition with other cinema enterprises. Kundrotas' statement points to another reality of film screening economy of the 1960s: subject of many of these competitive processes was audiences' attention. Moreover, different types of competition affected the economic life and cinema enterprises' relationship to the audience.

The potential benefits of competitive mechanisms as an incentive were recognized and utilized in the Soviet economic system as early as the 1920s.[379] During the 1960s one of the most widespread forms of this type of competition were the annual socialist competition campaigns, which all cinema enterprises were strongly and incessantly encouraged to attend by the authorities which continued to perceive socialist competition as a way of incentivizing cinema managers and employees to strive for better performance. Socialist competition campaigns, as a measure of providing additional incentives to cinema employees, are discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5. Here, it will suffice to mention that while collective material awards for the winning enterprises were a common occurrence, the main benefits of such competitions were closely integrated within the state system. Receiving state awards, such as a Red Flag, could afford privileges in the future, thus rendering state socialist competition campaigns within the model of competing for the privileges issued by state administrative apparatus – as in the case of such productive enterprises as Kirov fishing kolkhoz in Estonia.[380] It is also worth noting that there were signs of reluctance to enter socialist competition among cinema enterprises.

However, during the 1960s cinema network faced competitive challenges outside of the directly state-administered socialist competition. Some of them were posed by proliferation of alternative forms of leisure, such as the activities of culture houses in Kėdainiai region. However, one of the most worrying processes for cinema managers in the 1960s was the advancement of television, and continuously expanding television set ownership. In 1965, there

[379] Katalin Miklóssy and Melanie Ilič, eds., *Competition in Socialist Society*, Routledge Studies in the History of Russia and Eastern Europe 19 (New York: Routledge, 2014).
[380] Sarasmo, 'The Kirov Fishing Kolkhoz: A Socialist Success Story'.

were an estimated 303 000 television sets in the LSSR;[381] by 1970, this number had reached 1 412 000.[382] In the face of the rapid growth and availability of a new medium, in 1968 an SCC official Bernotėnas urged cinema employees to improve their substandard work: "10 years ago poorly maintained equipment and disrupted film screenings would cause complaints, today – people simply don't go to cinema. This is so because viewers have other opportunities for leisure – clubs, television. You in this way chase away the viewer and ruin the plan."[383] Cinema managers were finding ways to adapt, such as planning the screenings in such a way that they would not overlap with more interesting television broadcasts.[384] If cinemas were to secure a number of visitors sufficient for meeting planning targets they had, in this context, to work to ensure smooth technical work at the cinemas.

Central administration was concerned with meeting general planning targets assigned for the republic's cinema network, which dictated their worry with providing a service of high enough quality to successfully compete with other forms of leisure. At a level of a regional cinema directory or urban cinefication branches, all of which were assigned individual planning targets, managers faced yet another competitor: other cinemas. Growing variety of alternative forms of leisure was not the only growth of assortment that individual cinema enterprises had to cope with. Inclusion of cinemas into the project of raising socialist standard of living lead to an increased pace of construction of new cinemas.

[381] Central Statistics Agency at the LTSR Council of Ministers, *Lietuvos TSR Ekonomika Ir Kultūra 1968 Metais. Statistikos Duomenų Rinkinys [Lithuanian Economy and Culture in 1968. A Collection of Statistical Indicators]* (Vilnius: Statistika, 1969), 54. Similar number is quoted in SCC communication with the USSR cinefication and film distribution organizations: 250 000 owned a TV, while 43 000 more were planned for the next year: LLMA, July 1965, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 28, p. 95.
[382] *Lietuvos TSR Ekonomika Ir Kultūra 1970 Metais: Statistikos Metraštis [LSSR's Economy and Culture in 1970. Statistical Chronicle]* (Vilnius: Centrinė statistikos valdyba prie Lietuvos TSR Ministrų tarybos, 'Statistika', 1971), 71. The LSSR population was around 3 million.
[383] LLMA, 1968 February 13, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 138, p. 21.
[384] LCVA, 1967, f. R542, ap. 3, b. 436, p. 88.

This process was especially intensive in urban areas due to the rapidly evolving urbanization of the LSSR and growing urban populations, the cultural needs of which had to be met.[385] Between 1956 and 1970 around 200 – 300 cinemas annually were constructed across the Soviet Union.[386] In the LSSR, for instance, in 1964 alone, 8 cinemas were being built in 6 different towns, while another 4 were already in the plans. Cinema density was particularly high in bigger towns. For instance, Kaunas, with the rapidly increasing population of 260 000,[387] had 12 cinemas with overall 5200 seating capacity; at least 4 of them were opened between 1961 and 1964.[388] In the meantime, by 1964 Vilnius had 14 state-network cinemas, and 7 film screening points under within the jurisdiction of the trade union network.[389] In addition to growing density of urban cinema network, by 1972 the USSR Ministry of Finance pointed to the problems raised by another tendency: bigger cinemas tended to congregate in the same (usually central) areas of towns.[390] The LSSR capital Vilnius was an example of this process (Image 9.) while second largest town Kaunas was similar in this regard: 7 out of its 12 cinemas were concentrated in the town centre.[391] For urban cinemas, growing density of cinema network bus but one process fuelling competition for audiences' attention: in one estimate from 1967, 83% of the LSSR's plan for income from cinema visits fell on towns, while two largest towns of Vilnius and Kaunas played a major role in the implementation of this portion of republic's plan.[392]

[385] On the expansion of, for instance, Vilnius, see: Violeta Davoliūtė, *The Making and Breaking of Soviet Lithuania: Memory and Modernity in the Wake of War*, BASEES/Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2013).
[386] LCVA, 1972, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 8412, p. 37.
[387] KRVA, 1965, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 28, p. 3.
[388] KRVA, 1964, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 20, p. 30. Regarding opening of new cinemas, see: KRVA, 1965, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 38, p. 31.
[389] 'Ar Žinote, Kad Vilniuje... [Do You Know, That in Vilnius...]', *Ekrano Naujienos*, 20 July 1964.
[390] LCVA, 1972, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 8412, p. 116.
[391] KRVA, 1964, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 20, p. 41.
[392] LLMA, 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 204.

9. Late 1965 – early 1966 map of Vilnius, with marked approximate locations of cinemas. Mikulevičiūtė, Rasa. 'Kultūrinių Objektų Istorijos Aktualizavimas. Kino Centro „Skalvija" Atvejo Analizė [Actualizting the History of Cultural Objects: The Case of „Skalvija" Cinema Centre]'. MA Thesis, Vilniaus dailės akademija [Vilnius Art Academy], 2013.

Pressing financial planning targets and dense urban cinema networks brought to light another reality of the LSSR films screening: cinemas were not created equal. The promoted parameters

of quality cinema service, such as up to date equipment, capacity to screen wide-screen films, and to provide an inviting environment, were unevenly distributed among cinema enterprises. Newly opened, modernized, 1st category cinemas were much more likely to attract more viewers, regularly illustrated by queues or sold-out tickets at "Lietuva". In the meantime, managers of cinemas located in the urban outskirts or industrial areas, with a poor public transportation connection, often struggled to attract audiences and meet their planning targets.[393] Similar problems related to the presence of cinemas located in the vicinity, yet providing service of differentiated quality, continued to be voiced throughout the decade, as managers of smaller cinemas or screening stations felt overshadowed by their often newly opened, bigger, better equipped neighbors. After 1000 seating capacity cinema "Lietuva" was opened in Vilnius, Teachers' House cinema located just a few hundred meters away was not able to meet their plans. The same complaint was voiced by another small club cinema manager: after the opening of the big, renovated cinemas their work efforts of performing the required work analyses, of organizing more screenings still did not help to meet their planning objectives. "Before cinemas "Vingis", "Lietuva", "Aidas", "Tauras" were opened club's cinema would meet and exceed the plan. Now, every viewer goes to better cinemas. [Our] cinema council performs work analyses, increases the number of screenings, but are unable to meet the plan," he complained.[394]

Competitive relationship also surfaced between the LSSR state (administered by the CC) and trade union cinema networks. These cinema networks had separate accounting systems, meaning that income collected in trade union network (after the taxes were paid) stayed in trade union budget. In 1968, trade union cinema network included 25 "commercial" and around 400

[393] LCVA, 1972, f. R542, ap. 3, b. 628, p. 41.
[394] LCVA, 1967 April 24, f. R542, ap. 3, b. 436, p. 61 – 62.

non-commercial cinemas.[395] However, the administrative body entitled to manage the standards of quality and make decisions regarding whether one or another cinema met the requirements for a transfer to higher category remained the LSSR CC. This was the reason behind several conflicts occurring over the years, including trade union representatives complaining to the Party the SCC did not give one of their cinemas the 1st category not because of the quality of service it could provide, but rather because a 1st category trade union cinema would possibly "pose competition" to the cinemas belonging with the state cinema network[396] and, therefore, to their capacity to attract viewers and meet planning targets.

The hints of the presence of competitive tension between different ways of spending one's leisure, and between film screening enterprises themselves, suggest a rather limited competition. In a system of central state planning and resource allocation, enterprises – or the trade union network – often resorted to appealing to higher authorities to adjust the planning targets or provide necessary investment. However, at the same time competition appears to have occasionally pushed enterprises to perform better within the constraints of state-socialist economic structures and institutions. Like in the case of Kaunas' cinema "Santaka" questionnaires, where attempts were made to understand, why one cinema would be preferred to another, cinema managers were placed under another kind of strain: "The cinema will earn a bad reputation among the viewers, and it is going to be difficult to fix that".[397] The competitive sentiment might have been limited, but it did highlight the importance and pressure of audience autonomy to the daily work of cinema enterprise.

[395] LLMA, 1968, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 143, p. 82. Statistical data on the extent of cinema network in the LSSR does not indicate whether trade union cinemas were included among general numbers.
[396] LYA, 1963, f. 1771, ap. 231, b. 20, p. 16.
[397] KRVA, first half of 1965, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 19, p. 5.

Concluding note

Screening films was only of one and the very basic of cinemas' functions: during the 1960s, an array of additional cinema's tasks were being promoted, such as ensuring a pleasant cinema appearance, polite service, or establishing a café with appropriate refreshments at the premises. The economic assessment of the value of cinema's services, as reflected in the mechanism of setting ticket prices, defined quality cinema work as a smooth technical operation and provision of comfortable viewing experience, leaving pursuit of the educational and ideological missions of cinema to the supervision processes of a more administrative character. However, the notions of the comforts that LSSR cinemas were supposed to provide to the viewers were not confined to the frameworks of economic management: they were actively promoted in the press, furthering the image of cinema as a provider of a comfortable viewing experience in parallel to those of ideological front. In the context of expanding provision of services and goods to socialist citizens in the 1960s, in their work cinemas were drawing some of the techniques from trade and other service sectors, blurring the boundaries between ideologically significant cinematic work and more mundane services such as catering and retail. The new standard of "pleasing the customer" and responding to the demand, while flailing in the productive enterprises even during the process of economic experimentation with Kosygin's ideas, was a much more pressing reality in the service sector due to the definition of their planning targets. In the context of consumer-oriented discourse evolving around cinemas, consistent administrative insistence to comply with the promoted standard of quality cinema work, wide publicity and encouragement for the audiences to demand quality service, and the position of cinema enterprise in a centralized Soviet economic structure, many cinemas pursued feedback from their audiences, seeking to understand viewers' preferences and respond to them. These processes were furthered by an expanding array of cultural services, as well as the

expansion of urban cinema network, thus sharpening cinema's need to attract audiences' attention if they were to meet the planning targets assigned to their enterprise.

Chapter 4. Soviet film advertisement and propaganda

"Lately, film advertisement is subjected to both extraordinary attention and enhanced demands", explained the Deputy Head of the LSSR Cinematography Committee Novickas in his plea for the LSSR Party Central Committee to finally take action and alleviate the persistent shortages and the low quality of the paper provided for the production of advertisement in 1965.[398] By that time "advertisement" had indeed become a keyword across the institutions involved in management of distribution and exhibition of films in the LSSR. Advertisement of cinema services had entered the ranks of the pivotal instruments in the toolbox of cinema network administration and management, from the headquarters of the SCC to local cinema directories. The extent and quality of advertisement was monitored during every financial inspection in regional cinema directories, and not a single socialist competition commitments sheet would be signed without including the commitment to ensure extensive, innovative, and appealing advertisement.

The LSSR cinema network was not the only area where importance of advertisement was growing during the 1960s. Ideologically and politically less complex areas of trade and retail were also exploring the possibilities offered by advertisement techniques and such measures of consumer outreach as branding.[399] In his survey of socialist advertisement after Stalin's death, Philip Hanson points to the general (even if limited when compared to capitalist contexts) growth of the extent of advertisement in the 1960s, one symptom of which was a proliferation of specialist literature on advertisement.[400] In state socialist retail industry at large, development of advertisement went hand in hand with the 1960s commitments to improve the standard of living for the citizens of the Soviet Union, to increase the quality and variety of

[398] LLMA, 1965, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 28, p. 18 – 19.
[399] Brigita Tranavičiūtė, 'Dreaming of the West: The Power of the Brand in Soviet Lithuania, 1960s–1980s', *Business History* 62, no. 1 (2 January 2020): 179–95.
[400] Philip Hanson, *Advertising and Socialism: The Nature and Extent of Consumer Advertising in the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1974).

consumer goods, to promote the imagery of a comfortable living under Soviet socialism, and to introduce innovations to trade and retail sectors. While cinema and cinemagoing were markedly different goods from such material items as clothing, modern design furniture and appliances, invigoration of film advertisement took place alongside the developments in the areas of socialist trade and consumption.[401]

Yet, the presence of advertisement in a centralized, command economy of the Soviet Union is puzzling. In an economy coordinated by competitive market mechanisms, advertisement has multiple functions, such as regulating demand and helping enterprises to single out their goods from those of their competitors, none of this seems to have a place in a Soviet economic system, where production of goods is pre-defined by rigid planning targets, state enterprises have no incentive to compete with one another, while constant shortages of goods define a sellers' market where consumer would presumable purchase whatever is available out of necessity. This is the array of questions raised in scant inquiries into advertisement (especially in the organization and economic logic of it) in state-socialist settings, while their frameworks are often influenced by the established understandings of basic principles of the ideal of market and state socialist economic structure.[402] When approached along the lines of a clear-cut division between ideal models of market and state socialist economies, Soviet advertisement appears as a contradiction in terms or an aberration.[403]

Proliferation of reliance on advertisement techniques in such idiosyncratic area of economic activity as a film screening network poses an additional array of questions. Film and, by extension, cinemagoing, were activities of ideological, political, and social importance for the

[401] The notion of film advertisement was not invented in the 1960s – it was among cineficator's tools already during late Stalinism.
[402] Hanson, *Advertising and Socialism*; Natasha Tolstikova, 'Early Soviet Advertising: "We Have to Extract All the Stinking Bourgeois Elements"', *Journalism History*. 33, no. 1 (2007): 42; James W. Markham, 'Is Advertising Important in the Soviet Economy?', *Journal of Marketing* 28, no. 2 (1 April 1964): 31–37.
[403] Hanson, *Advertising and Socialism*. For an argument regarding the necessity of competition for the emergence of advertisement practices, see: For a similar argument in the early Soviet and NEP periods, see: Tolstikova, 'Early Soviet Advertising'.

socialist project of the Soviet Union. Cinema and other fields of cultural production had decades-old mode of communicating information about the cinematic medium to the audiences – propaganda. Enacted in a variety of forms of communication, from a specific visual language of posters and moving image to interactive means of readers' or viewers' conferences,[404] propaganda had for decades developed the ways of attempting to mold the consciousness of socialist citizens, along the lines of officially determined programmatic set of values. From the aesthetics of film posters to the viewers' conferences, propagandistic approach to communicating knowledge about film to the audiences, was an established way of Soviet cinemagoing life.

In this context, why would the techniques and language of advertisement be so eagerly embraced at the "ideological front" of the film screening network? How was advertisement considered different – if at all – from propaganda? How did advertisement take over the film exhibition industry in the context where, just a few decades before, the Communist Party had sternly condemned advertisement as a wasteful economic activity at best? How, and to what consequences, did the importance of advertisement rise in the 1960s? Finally, how did the growing importance of advertisement relate to conceptualizations of film in Soviet society? Seeking to shed light on these questions, the chapter will endeavor to discern the ways in which advertisement of an ideologically significant cultural product was integrated in the economic arrangement of film exhibition sector, and how emerging advertisement processes molded film exhibition in their own right.

[404] Similar to the "readers' circles" described in Stephen Lovell, *The Russian Reading Revolution: Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras* (New York: St. Martin's Press, in association with the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, 2000).

Advertisement = propaganda?

The growing importance of both development of socialist consumption cultures, and advertisement as their adjacent component, as attested by the 1957 Prague conference of advertisement workers. Given the links of the concept of advertisement to the capitalist market economies, participants of the conference sought ways to distinguish socialist advertisement. Much like socialist consumption itself, socialist advertisement was supposed to evolve around the rationale of promoting rational socialist consumption instead of following the path of generating greedy desire for more things, as was the case in a capitalist context.[405] In the wording of the early 1970s educational reel from Lithuanian Film Studio, there were "things that were friends, and there were things – enemies."[406] The purpose of the rational socialist consumption and advertisement was to be guided by the objective of infusing daily existence with beauty. Definitions and explanations of advertisement in film screening network had, however, to work around additional layer of complexity: unlike shoes, curtains or radios, the meaning of the good they were distributing was closely linked to the political and ideological projects of the Soviet Union. Much like books or music records, films were saturated with the educational, political, and social significance. Cultural production such as this already had conventional means of communicating with publics, falling under a broad rubric of "propaganda", and those concerned with cinefication struggled to find a way to draw a line between the two.

The complexity of the task of defining the distinction between and relationship of film advertisement and film propaganda was well illuminated by a 1964 article published in Ekrano naujienos. The piece was conceived as a part of an ongoing effort for Ekrano naujienos to provide "methodical aid" to a variety of advertisers and propagandists across the republic's

[405] Susan E. Reid, 'Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and the De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev', *Slavic Review* 61, no. 2 (ed 2002): 211–52.
[406] H. Baltrukas, et. al., *Daiktai Ir Žmonės [People and Things]* (Lithuanian Film Studio, 1970).

cinema network. However, instead of providing the technical guidelines about the basics of fonts and composition,[407] the author of the article P. Jučys[408] embarked undertook the topic more conceptual in nature: the distinction between propaganda and advertisement.[409] Beginning with the Latin roots of both words, Jučys seemed to suggest that there was indeed a distinction between the two: propaganda's purpose was dissemination and explanation, advertisement, habitually described in opposition to its capitalist counterpart, was designed to provide information to the consumers of cinema. Yet, then he quickly blurred this distinction by stating that in the context of socialism, advertisement was an integral part of propaganda. Advertisement was defined a "helper" of propaganda, even if its objectives were somewhat narrower and slightly different in character. In addition to that, Jučys indirectly called into question the assumption of a purely informational nature of socialist advertisement: presented in an attractive form it was admitted to have the desirable and acceptable capacity to regulate audiences' behavior by sparking viewers' interest and contributing to the objective of showing the film to the largest possible audience. The article explained that good advertisement is supposed to venture outside the conventional visual and media confines, and is integrated in the environment of physical cinema space itself, serving in this way the purpose of providing the viewer of the 1960s with a relaxing and enjoyable rather than dull and irritating experience. Eventually, as far as the distinction between advertisement and propaganda went, the piece seemed to raise more questions than provide answers.

The difficulty of drawing a distinction between advertisement and propaganda was not a new occurrence: regardless of a markedly different ratio of private and state-owned enterprise activities in 1960s, the same question had been raised during the years of NEP economy in the

[407] A common aid to the cinema propagandist in *Ekrano naujienos*.
[408] Likely a visual artist and faculty member at Vilnius' Art Institute Pranas Jučys (1913 – 1985).
[409] P. Jučys, 'Į pagalbą kino meno propaguotojui [Cinema propagandist's aid]', *Ekrano naujienos [Screen News]*, 7 September 1964, Lithuanian National Library.

Soviet Union. In the context of NEP policies of the 1920s, decades before Lithuania's annexation by the Soviet Union, an author at Zhurnalist, the newspaper actively engaged in pursuit of questions related to advertisement, went as far as to put an equality sign between the two.[410] The complexity of the task of distinguishing between advertisement and propaganda was prompted by the strained efforts to define socialist advertisement through what it was not supposed to be as a part of socialist economic and cultural order – a tool designed for the sole purpose to generate financial profit. Officially defined in opposition to capitalist advertisement, socialist advertisement could not be related to commercial or profit-driven incentives, ultimately making distinction between an established idea and a set of practices of propaganda as an educational activity and the burgeoning idea of advertisement difficult.

If there was one undisputed facet of advertisement, it was the same quality for which advertisement was equally valued in market settings: advertisement's capacity to regulate and correct demand. Utilization of this potential of advertisement created and affinity between its usage in retail[411] and film screening. Trust in the magnetic power of innovative, quality advertisement, shared across the institutional layers of film exhibition administration, was broadly relied on as a possible solution for the issue of cash register film: if properly advertised, many hoped, Soviet films could attract audiences to Soviet film screenings. If in trade advertisement could be used to move the unwanted goods, a similar conviction emerged in cinema network as advertisement was believed to help to spark audiences' interest in generally less attractive cinematic creations.

Where promotion of Soviet cinema was concerned, economic justifications or audience preferences played a secondary role in assessing the value of the film. Even in cases where Soviet films lacked aesthetic qualities or were not particularly interesting – they were still

[410] A 1928 article titled *Advertising = Propaganda*, quoted in: Tolstikova, 'Early Soviet Advertising'.
[411] Where advertisement was used to move unwanted goods.

worth seeing because of the humanistic values they represented. Concerns about neglect of the promotion of these films, even when such central institutions as the FRA and their Ekrano naujienos were concerned, were recurring throughout the decade. Often, worries were voiced not just about the promotion of Soviet films as such, but about their promotion in relation to foreign cinematic production. In 1960, as regard for cinema advertising was rising, some of the Party members expressed their apprehension of the content of Ekrano naujienos: they were pursuing a worrisome path of publishing pieces on Western films and Bridgette Bardot.[412] As the anniversary of the October Revolution was passing by, insufficient promotion of Soviet films was found, with near total omission of anniversary materials.[413]

Dispersion and intensity of cinematic activities in the LSSR makes it difficult to provide a decisive assessment of the extent to which concerns about excessive promotion of foreign films and bourgeois actresses were grounded, and to which they were rather rooted in fears stemming from such problems as leadership of Ekrano naujienos being "not in the hands of the Party".[414] However, throughout the decade Ekrano naujienos continued to dedicate at least half of their reviews and promotions to Soviet repertoire. In addition, Soviet films were usually the ones to be endowed with the most visually rich, several-page long, overviews.[415] Generally, in the pages of the journal, promotion of Soviet films was by no means neglected or overshadowed by that of foreign or entertaining productions. The ratio of the advertised films aside, the fear of over-advertising capitalist films was a meeting point between advertisement and the circumstances in the Soviet film industry in general. In particular, it was a consequence of

[412] Juozapas Romualdas Bagušauskas and Arūnas Streikus, *Lietuvos kultūra sovietinės ideologijos nelaisvėje 1940-1990: dokumentų rinkinys [Lithuanian culture in the captivity of Soviet ideology, 1940 - 1990]* (Vilnius: Lietuvos Gyventojų Genocido ir Rezistencijos tyrimo centras, 2005).
[413] LLMA, 1967, F. 473, Ap. 1, b. 97a, p. 19.
[414] LYA, 1964, f. 17315, ap. 1, b. 2, p. 37.
[415] For instance, in 1960, *Ekrano naujienos* presented to Lithuanian audiences 74 Soviet films, 29 from other socialist states and 35 from capitalist states (*Ekrano naujienos*, 1960 12 26). In 1963, the ratio between Soviet and foreign (including both people's democracies' and capitalist countries' productions) was 81 to 77; in 1964 – 71 to 68.

attempting to regulate the demand in the market where viewers could choose between films valued on different scales: Soviet and foreign, ideologically/aesthetically valuable and entertaining.

Attempts to employ advertisement in such a way as to direct viewers' attention along the lines of the political vision of the Soviet authorities peaked in the early 1970s, as the administrative controls were gradually reintroduced in various spheres of the LSSR cinematic life after a decade of ideological and institutional experimentation. In 1970, the "control films" initiative was introduced. As mentioned in Chapter 1, "control films" were the films defined as "the best" by the central authorities. Among the measures of the control film programme, such as setting of individual planning targets and close monitoring of the attendance rates, was an intensive use of advertisement.[416] The efficacy of it, at least in the early years of the initiative, appeared to be flailing: there were reported instances of local management neglecting to dedicate any special effort to the promotion of control films.[417] Successful or not, however, reliance on advertisement in promotion of educationally and aesthetically valuable cinemas presented a variety of "retailing the revolution" of the 1920s: an initiative of relying on a form of marketing for the purpose of achieving political goals.[418]

Advertisement vs. propaganda

While drawing conceptual distinctions between film advertisement and film propaganda may have caused a headache for cultural commentators, definitions and distinctions between the two were also developing institutionally. From the mid-1960s, the functions of advertisement and propaganda of cinema were divided between two very different institutional bodies, each

[416] LLMA, 1970, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 274, p. 76.
[417] LLMA, 1972, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 324, p. 32; 38; LCVA, 1972, f. R542, ap. 3, b. 628, p. 21.
[418] Marjorie L. Hilton, 'Retailing the Revolution: The State Department Store (GUM) and Soviet Society in the 1920s', *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 4 (2004): 939–64.

assigned an array of functions allowing us a glimpse into how the division between, and character and purposes of, the two modes of communicating cinema to the audiences were impressed in actual activities. Part of the advertisement functions in the LSSR film screening network, including the publication of the weekly Screen News, was coordinated the Information-Advertisement Bureau (IAB) under the FRA. In 1966 a separate bureau was established for the handling of the affairs of cinema propaganda. The idea of establishing a separate bureau for the propaganda of cinema was simmering at the Union for a few years, until the final push (and the always welcome additional resources) came from Moscow in 1966.[419] This organization was colloquially referred to as "propaganda bureau," while its official title was Bureau of the Propaganda of Soviet Film Art (БРСК; BPSFA). Unlike the IAB, the propaganda bureau was not managed by any institution involved in cinema distribution and exhibition. Rather, it worked at the auspices of a much more culturally elite agency: The Union of Cinematographers of the LSSR.

The distinction between Information – Advertisement Bureau and the Bureau of the Propaganda of Soviet Film Art was the most palpable in the type of activities they were expected to conduct. At BPSFA, focus lied on such time-tested activities as organization of lectures and meetings with renowned cinema artists, publication of literature on cinema, and engagement with amateur film studios among others.[420] Their work profile was closely resemblant of the organizational forms of the early years of the Soviet Union.[421] At BPSFA – as in other instances of propagandistic activities organized at cinema branches and elsewhere – the main objective was to work on the education and development of the Soviet viewers' aesthetic sensibilities. Importantly, these tasks were not strictly confined to the Soviet cinema alone – aesthetically sophisticated, "high culture" and ideologically correct cinema of other

[419] LLMA, 1966, f. 307, ap. 1, b. 58, p. 13.
[420] LCVA, 1966, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 6843, p. 90.
[421] Lovell, *The Russian Reading Revolution*.

countries was considered to be as important, at least in the early years of propaganda bureau's work.

Established under the auspices of the Union of Cinematographers, the propaganda bureau was only marginally concerned with economic returns on the films they were promoting.[422] Their mission was primarily educational in character. This understanding of what engaging in promotion of film in a propagandistic key spilled over to other settings. As one of the SCC officials Bernotėnas mentioned during a heated discussion, "education of the viewer is completely separate problem that should not be confused with advertisement of films".[423] For him, the distinction between advertisement and propaganda was not difficult to grasp: the role of the first was to spark audiences' interest enough for them to come to cinema, while the latter was responsible for shaping audiences' tastes and political inclinations.

A very similar discussion at the SCC tackled the emerging signs of a troubling incompatibility of advertisement and propaganda reflected in the differences between the tasks of two bureaus. A case in point was a the IAB's Ekrano naujienos, the only regular periodical publication on film repertoire and other cinema affairs in the LSSR.[424] Throughout the 1960s the magazine was published within the framework attempting to put an equality sign between propaganda and advertisement, trying at the same time to provide information on film repertoire, analysis of films, the overviews of the newest cinematic literature and international film festivals, all the while maintaining an attractive and richly illustrated format. Yet, the coexistence of the tasks of educating, informing and – importantly – drawing audiences to cinema[425] was appearing increasingly complicated from the point of view of the administrators of cinema

[422] Although they were far from oblivious to the questions of financial solvency.
[423] LLMA, 1966, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 58, p. 120.
[424] Circulation of *Ekrano naujienos* fluctuated over time: 20 000 in 1964, 13 000 in 1968, 16 300 in 1972. At least some of the dips in circulation might have been because of an irregular and at times poor provision of paper.
[425] "Simply informing is not enough – we are supposed to advertise", LLMA, 1969, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 182, p. 39 – 53.

network. As a consequence of this unease, suggestions to divide the Ekrano naujienos in two distinct parts were reoccurring. In order to address the problem, in 1966 the editor of Ekrano naujienos M. Malciene suggested dividing the magazine in two separate publications – the one dedicated to "publishing," and another– to propaganda. Following up on this suggestion, the director of the Lithuanian Film Studio Lozoraitis proposed to transform Ekrano naujienos into a purely informational publication, and at the same time to start publishing of another magazine dedicated to "the broader questions of cinema". A by that time renowned film director Žalakevičius had a different view, even if framed by the same distinction between advertisement and propaganda purposes. In his opinion, what Ekrano naujienos needed was not a division into two separate publications, but rather to dedicate more space and attention to the questions of aesthetic education of the working people.[426]

Reservations similar to those voiced by Žalakevičius, along with a lack of decisive take on the problem, and probably the lack of resources prevented any real action on the situation of Ekrano naujienos for the few coming years. However, the tension between the two keys of communicating film to Soviet audiences persisted throughout the decade. They reached their conclusion in 1972, in line with the ongoing tightening of cultural life. Ekrano naujienos were eventually reorganized: FRA was ordered to cease the publication of Ekrano naujienos, and the magazine was split in two.

[426] LLMA, 1966, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 58, p. 120 – 126.

10. Ekrano naujienos covers, 1963, June 17th and 1st of May.

Weekly Screen, a 4, A3 sized page publication,[427] dedicated to the purpose of informing viewers about new films, announcing repertoires of the 5 biggest towns in the LSSR, announcing news about the new releases and events taking place in cinemas – all with the prescribed special emphasis on Soviet cinema. Kino, the second publication, was envision as a much thicker monthly magazine tasked with education of the working people in a communist spirit, provision of extensive information about the work at the Lithuanian Film Studio, broad propaganda of the newest Soviet films, provision of information about the best Soviet and world masters of cinema, and provision of the critical analysis of bourgeois tendencies in cinema.[428]

[427] Published in two separate Lithuanian and Russian issues.
[428] LLMA, 1972, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 319, p. 88 – 89.

The continued tension, and the eventual division of the Ekrano naujienos outlined the parameters of the murky division line between film advertisement and film propaganda. The latter, closely tied to the official project of the Soviet state during the 1960s, prioritized education, commitment to high culture and sophisticated cinema art. It was more didactic in its approach to communicating cinema affairs to the audiences. The essential objective of cinema propaganda was to promote desired values and guide the viewers towards the particular kind of values and mould their aesthetic preferences. Advertisement, in the meantime, as a practice and an idea, took a position as a cinema management technique. Within film exhibition and distribution sector advertisement was approached as a tool designed to not only provide timely and accurate information on what was next on the LSSR screens, but also to be a source of promotion attractive enough in form to attract the audiences to cinemas – regardless of what kind of films were being screened. As such, it was more closely attuned to the viewers' preferences, and therefore – to the developing audience (as a consumer of culture) sovereignty.

Central and local cinema advertisement

Much like the administrative structure coordinating the activities of cinema directories, organization of film advertisement navigated between central and local agencies, and depended to a great extent on a capacity to promptly respond to local circumstances. Philip Hanson's study of the economy of advertisement in diverse socialist settings reveals that Soviet advertisement overall was not prone to centralization, and was rather dispersed across a variety of institutions. LSSR film advertisement management appears to have followed the same pattern, both among the handling central institutions and in vertical organization of film exhibition.

In the hierarchical structure of film exhibition administration, two bodies stand out as handling for central management of film advertisement in the republic: the LSSR SCC and the Film

Rentals Agency (FRA, at the auspices of the Cinematography Committee's Operational and Technical Council). As far as advertisement was concerned, the LSSR SCC occupied their regular supervisory position, including assessment of whether regional cinema managers were maintaining the expected standards of advertising, giving away recommendations regarding how affairs could be improved, and deciding over the penalties for failures to ensure quality work. The FRA, in the meantime, was directly involved in acquisition, production and distribution of advertisement materials. FRA was the agency to acquire centrally produced advertisement materials from Moscow,[429] to produce serial leaflets for the purposes localized circulation of information on film repertoire. In addition, FRA was also the central publisher of major LSSR advertisement publications, such as Ekrano naujienos and Our Screen,[430] an irregularly issued magazine dedicated to information and promotion of Lithuanian films, the production and events in the Lithuanian Film Studio, and local festivals.

Growing significance of advertisement in film exhibition during the 1960s reverberated in the series of reforms in the institutional organization of advertisement, reflecting not only the intensification of the advertisement effort, but also the notions of what cinema advertisement should entail. In 1965, Ekrano naujienos was officially defined as a film advertisement publication. With this change, its editorial team was transformed into an organization endowed with a much broader array of tasks than publication of the magazine. Besides the publication of Ekrano naujienos, the editorial team was now expected to organize promotions of newsreels and popular science films with the help of both visual means and radio, to publish a broad variety of advertisement materials, starting with posters and ending with leaflets and invitations to film screenings, and to supervise their distribution in towns and villages alike. In addition, publication of SCC information on the events in cinema network, communication with

[429] Through the communication with Moscow's *Reklamfilm*, *Likely the same Sovkino's advertisement institution from the 1920s, engaged in design and application of film posters*.
[430] *Ekrano naujienos* and *Mūsų ekranas* in Lithuanian.

Moscow's Reklamfilm, providing consultations and guidance to local cinema and FRA branches regarding cinema art and propaganda were also in the new list of responsibilities.[431] In short, the responsibilities of the reorganized advertisement publication team meant acquiring and disseminating advertisement materials and information about film as broadly as possible, and to ensure this dissemination locally.

About a year later another administrative reform, designed to reinforce advertisement efforts, was implemented: the establishment of an aforementioned Information – Advertisement Bureau (IAB). IAB constituted a separate administrative body dedicated to advertisement alone. Unlike the assignment of advertisement functions to Ekrano naujienos, establishment of IAB came with the substantial investments: the Bureau was assigned its own managerial position, a number of positions for the needed additional employees, Bureau's range of activities was broadened, as was its autonomy.[432] From then on, IAB also took over the publication of Ekrano naujienos, and many of the functions that were ascribed to the Ekrano naujienos a year before. In the context of the reforms, the FRA and its respective advertisement bureau were the main agencies making financial investments in production and dissemination of a substantial part of advertisement materials disseminated in the LSSR. The FRA purchased some of the materials from Moscow, or paid for printing others locally. FRA was also bearing the costs of distribution of advertisement across the republic by delivering them to the local film lease branches and cinema directions. Local film exhibition and distribution branches received these centrally procured advertisement materials free of charge. The returns to FRA budget depended on the income from screened films.[433]

Besides leaflets and posters, either accrued by the FRA or produced by local cinema designers, press remained among the most important outlets for information and promotion of film,

[431] LLMA, 1965, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 25, p. 89.
[432] LLMA, 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 97a, p. 42 – 45.
[433] LLMA, 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 126 – 7.

especially when it came to announcing daily cinema repertoires. Unlike in the case of advertisement delivered with the help of the FRA, local cinema directories paid for advertisement in the local press independently, based on their own budget line assigned for this purpose. In this important method of cinema advertisement for films and cinema services, the assumption of the central, state funded press lacking incentives to sell their advertisement space is called into question: at least in some instances publications relied to some extent on advertisement. When managers voiced complaints that advertisement in the press is too costly, they were given a response not much could be done about this and, importantly, while cinema was overall profitable, regional press was producing losses.[434] At the same time, profitable work for a film advertisement publication was to the very least a desirable condition, and a proof of adequate work, as was the case with the Ekrano naujienos editor, pointing out that for all the FRA, the magazine was generating profit.[435]

A hiccup in central price coordination from 1971 sheds some light on the way in which relationship between film advertisers and daily press were construed. The problem occurred in 1971, when the USSR Central Committee of the Communist Party announced a price increase for advertisement in the press. For one reason or another, the price change was not reflected in the bills presented to the buyer of advertisement materials, thus causing local budget disbalance. In the case of daily repertoire announcement in local newspapers, the buyers of advertisements were not the FRA or the SCC, but the local cinefication agency itself. In this case, with the mistaken price calculations, the manager of Vilnius' cinefication branch found himself lacking funds to purchase advertisement space in the press, and had therefore reduced repertoire announcements to 3 – 4 per week.[436] It was not the only instance where, obliged to manage advertisement in the press, local cinema directories encountered difficulties.

[434] LLMA, 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 109.
[435] LLMA, 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 272.
[436] LCVA, 1971, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 8125, p. 11.

Cinefication branches, especially in the regions, had limited allocations for advertisement purposes, which in some cases limited their options in keeping cinemagoing public informed and engaged. In these instances, cinema directories were expected by the authorities to make do with what they had.[437]

Responsibility to manage advertisement in the press being assigned to cinema directories was not the only instance of localized advertisement strategy. Distribution of advertisement, supervision and provision of "methodical support" were among the key functions of the central agencies such as the SCC or FRA, and this was so not by an accident. Extensive part of advertisement efforts was implemented both at the margins of the centralized film advertisement distribution framework, and by the means other than, for instance, posters acquired from Moscow. One of such means appears to have belonged with the potential viewers themselves, especially in the areas where – in the assessment of state agents – institutionally organized advertisement was lacking. This was the gist of the complaint of one of the SCC officials: "In the absence of required advertisement and information, it is common that better films are advertised by the viewers themselves (…) Plenty of films receive more viewers on the second day of screening than on the first. This shows that due to insufficient advertisement viewers don't know anything about the best films and rather trust the opinion of their neighbors and acquaintances who had already seen the film."[438] Needless to say, advertisement by the word of mouth was problematic for the state agencies, not the least because it happened outside the reach of their efforts to guide viewers' preferences.

Recommendation from a neighbor or a friend was not the only form of advertisement evolving in a local setting. In fact, locality was inherent in the notions of quality advertisement as they were conceived by the central administration. Particularly telling was the list of measures for a

[437] 'Dėmesio Centre - Reklama [Advertisement - at the Centre of Attention]'.
[438] LLMA, 1969, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 182, p. 14.

republic-wide advertisement effort prepared at the SCC in 1964. Cinema advertisement, the decree demanded, had to be rendered nothing short of ubiquitous. Posters were to be present at cinemas, on the billboards in cities, in the establishments, schools and organizations, while leaflets for every important film were to be distributed in trolleybuses, buses, and public catering places.[439] In practice, broad outreach of film advertisement could become rather labor intensive on a local level: an advertiser could be servicing as many as 15 to 20 advertisement sites, while producing dozens of leaflets for distribution in the nearby organizations.[440] Deciding over the content of Ekrano naujienos in Vilnius' editorial office was one thing; to manage the distribution of millions of leaflets and posters throughout the LSSR was completely another. Such broad outreach, often entailing advertisement in the remote and rural areas, could not be managed by a single central agency alone: both local obedience and initiative were essential. Similar to the case of the central management of other aspects of local cinema work (discussed in Chapter 3), the SCC played a supervisory role over the advertisement processes evolving across the hundreds of screening stations of the republic. It was at the point of broad outreach that the purported vertical centralization of cinema advertisement faltered: majority of the listed measures on the list depended heavily on the cooperation of locally positioned cinefication and distribution bodies and the people they employed.

Their power of the central agencies over local management should not be underestimated: the tools such as public embarrassment, firing and others remained in the disposition of the SCC officials. However, they had to take into account twofold problems in their justification for the use of this power. One of the problems were the hiccups in the organization of advertisement provision. Delivery of advertisement was a chain with multiple links, including FRA, regional distribution centers, enterprises and village screening sites. Troubles within this chain were

[439] LLMA, 1964, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 3, p. 46 – 49.
[440] 'Dėmesio Centre - Reklama [Advertisement - at the Centre of Attention]', *Ekrano Naujienos*, 21 February 1966.

common: advertisement would not arrive on time (when the film was screened), or would not arrive at all, while the agencies had to deal with persistent problems such as paper shortages and insufficient paper allocation. None of these processes could be considered as a fault of a local manager. Another problem was posed by the fact that development of socialist advertisement was in its early stages. Local expertise in advertisement management and techniques was often lack. This, and the importance of local advertisement effort, was the reason why Film Rentals Agency and SCC worked towards providing guidance and advice to local advertisers, including organization of seminars on advertisement and publication of articles on font techniques in Ekrano Naujienos.[441]

Another major reason for intensive local involvement in advertisement effort, besides geographical dispersion and importance of local knowledge, was a rather flexible repertoire policy[442] and timing. Since managers had some leeway in setting up short term repertoire plans, each cinema could introduce new films as much as 3 to 5 times a week, and in an ideal state of affairs, each of them had to be advertised at cinema premises and elsewhere beforehand.[443] Any hope to ensure that advertisement is able to respond to these rapid changes had to be rooted in local initiative.

Acknowledgment of the importance of the role played by local advertisers in cinema promotion was inscribed in some of the central state regulations: film propaganda and advertisement were included among the essential functions of the newly established territorial cinema directions in 1963, in the midst of the extensive reform of the film exhibition network.[444] In search for the broadest possible outreach, only local film lease and cinema direction administrations could ensure that advertisement materials are distributed in local factories, schools and other

[441] LLMA, 1968, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 143, p. 72.
[442] Described in Chapter 2.
[443] 'Dėmesio Centre - Reklama [Advertisement - at the Centre of Attention]'.
[444] LLMA, 1963, f. 342, ap. 1 – 1, b. 1159, p. 229.

organizations within their territorial administrative units.[445] This rendered local managers responsible for any deficiencies the advertisement might have been facing in their area. In regional and rural cinefication branches, however, local effort was often placed extensively on the shoulders of a single individual: "When it comes to advertisement, we expect the most from cinema directions, and cinema directions, in their own right, expect the most from projectionists."[446] In rural areas, an often underpaid and underqualified projectionist was the one tasked with responsibility of ensuring that advertisement for the films he is about to screen reaches the audiences both in a presentable condition and in a timely manner.

Increased importance of advertisement in film exhibition network and the acknowledgment of the necessity of local film exhibitors' input in the advertisement effort led to establishment of the Designers' Councils at the premises of every cinefication branch in 1964.[447] The councils were established with several aims in mind. Firstly, increasing requirements for the quality and quantity of advertisement required positions dedicated to this specific purpose. Secondly, councils consisting of people trained in visual arts were needed to satisfy the incessant hunger for original, innovative advertisement, capable of decorating the cities and shaping audiences' aesthetic tastes. Finally, they were needed at every cinefication branch because it was the only way advertisement issued at the cinemas could respond to the fluidly changing local repertoires. Designers' Councils labored under a rather broad definition of what constituted advertisement for each individual cinema. It was not confined to simple preparation of visual materials: they were held responsible for maintaining cinema's interior, façade and premises as well. The practice of their work fluctuated between pursuit of educational objectives, such as promoting important ritualistic state celebrations and development of viewers' aesthetic

[445] KRVA, 1964, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 19, p. 3.
[446] LLMA, 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 53.
[447] LLMA, 1964, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 3, p. 48. Cinemas in bigger towns had designer positions as early as 1962: LCVA, 1962, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 5880, p. 27.

sense – and letting their craft be guided by the awareness of viewers' capacity to choose between films, cinemas, and alternative forms of leisure. As a result, much of their work was impacted by the middle-class norms of an appealing, cozy, and pleasant cinemagoing experience.

Advertisement as part of cinema's economic toolkit

While advertisement was engaged in the "retailing of the revolution" by aiding the promotion of Soviet cinematic production, this was not the only role it played in film screening network. Amidst the eager arguments regarding the seemingly perpetually insufficient advertisement of the most ideologically and aesthetically valuable Soviet films, a SCC member put forward a thesis that advertisement should both educate "and support the implementation of state plans".[448] The speaker, unlike local cinema management, appeared to remain oblivious to any contradictions such dual ambition could entail. In part, this disregard of the conflictual developments in the LSSR film exhibition network, at the time torn by the tension between audience preferences for cash register and ideologically valuable cinematic production, was rooted in the perception of the basic function of cinema advertisement: its capacity to draw audiences to cinema halls. This conviction was held across the hierarchical levels of film exhibition administration: good advertisement was considered as one of the most efficient ways to spark viewers' interest,[449] while absence of adequate advertisement was seen as a straightforward path to low cinema attendance.[450] Perceived in this way, the expectation among some of the cinema exhibition officials was that advertisement had the power to attract people

[448] LLMA, 1964, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 3, p. 39.
[449] LLMA, 1968, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 138, p. 84.
[450] Alg. Krygeris, 'Paslaptis - Išradingumas [The Secret Lies in Resourcefulness]', *Ekrano Naujienos*, 26 October 1965.

to cinemas, regardless of the category or the content of the film, or the existing demand for different cinematic genres.

Predictably, as in the fields of retail and trade, in cinema there was "no doubt that purely commercial objectives are foreign to Soviet advertisement": within the officially voiced considerations, Soviet film advertisement was supposed to inform.[451] However, at the same time, advertisement was officially acknowledged as an influential tool in improving cinema attendance rates, which were inextricable from collecting income to cinema budgets. As such, advertisement techniques entered the area of economic assessment of the value of both film and cinemagoing. While continuously approached and managed as a way to encourage the viewers to show up at, and pay for, Soviet film screenings, it was at the same time closely linked to the economic objectives shaping film exhibition network: Soviet films were not the only ones to be advertised. In fact, films in general were not the only thing to be advertised: in the context of rapidly growing array of leisure, culture and entertainment options, cinemas themselves were considered to be in need for promotion.

Soviet film and cinema advertisement developed within an already existing economic processes shaping the film exhibition network, including its partial tendencies towards "commercialism". The priority of the advertisement of the "good", ideologically valuable, or Soviet cinematic production was unambiguous. However, there were more types of film in the LSSR market, including the "bad", capitalist, and frivolous ones. Both ideologically and aesthetically valuable Soviet production and such entertaining features as "Phantom", or even the legendary Soviet "Amphibian Man", were supposed to reach the audiences if they were to yield the economic returns for the investment made in purchasing them and producing copies. The question of what to do with the films that could not be lauded for their aesthetic or ideological worth was at the root of the many conundrums discussed by the editorial team of

[451] 'Dėmesio Centre - Reklama [Advertisement - at the Centre of Attention]'.

Ekrano naujienos and the SCC officials, as they were trying to find an answer to a question in what kind of tone and how exactly different types of cinematic production should be advertised.

In addition, development of advertisement evolved in the context of the continuous and, as we have seen, effective pressure for cinemas to meet their attendance and income planning targets. Unavoidably, advertisement was to enter this problematic field. In 1969, the head of the SCC Baniulis expressed concerns echoing those voiced at the Party meeting regarding the content of Ekrano naujienos almost a decade earlier: "people [cinema employees] are trying to meet planning targets at any cost. In advertisements we see only commercial movies – "The Phantom" and all the Indian ones".[452] Testing the accuracy of his statement remains impossible due to the dispersion of the LSSR cinemas and the ephemeral nature of much of the advertisement produced at their premises. In the meantime, in the case of Ekrano naujienos and their ration of advertisement of films of capitalist and socialist origins suggest that Baniulis' statement about an overwhelming preference for advertisement of the films that tended to sell well might have been somewhat of an exaggeration. However, it does nevertheless point to the presence of framing advertisement as an instrument in the pursuit of economic objectives in film exhibition network.

This was not the only assessment framing advertisement as an integral part of the economic process of film screening under state socialism: by the mid-1960s, advertisement became an integral part in the routine assessment of cinema's economic performance. The link between good advertisement and improving cinema attendance rates was perceived by the SCC supervising officials as a direct one.[453] In the SCC as well as in the local Party organization meetings, poor financial performance was often quoted as a consequence of the poor state of advertisement,[454] among other reasons. In a similar vein, attempts to assess the causes behind

[452] LLMA, 1969, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 182, p. 157.
[453] LLMA, 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 100, p. 25.
[454] LYA, 1972, f. 1771, ap. 247, b. 262, p. 27; 33.

failures to meet planning targets often pointed to the unsatisfactory state of advertisement in a particular location: in the words of one of Kaunas' cinema directors, planning targets were not met because of an array of factors, including a poor state of advertisement.[455] Quality, innovative and attractive advertisement had taken a firm place among the remedies suggested during the routine assessments of failing cinema directories' financial performance. Local cinema directions adopted the same conviction: quality advertisement was seen as one of the preconditions for meeting their financial targets.[456]

There were other ways in which cinema advertisement was integrated as a leverage among the economic strategies of cinema network. Advertisement's significance for the financial performance of the enterprise was recognized in the wave of economic experimentation with enterprise and employee incentive schemes, discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5. What is significant for the question of advertisement and the economy of film screening, is that among the highlights of the premiums reform was the experimental premiums scheme, designed to incentivize employees not only to meet, but also to exceed their planning targets. Within the framework of this scheme, starting with 1966, high quality and extensive advertisement was included among the criteria of the assessment of enterprises' performance and, therefore, distribution of premiums for cinema employees.[457] Importantly, these regulation focused only on the presence of advertisement, and did not include any indications on the category of cinematic production that would have to be promoted to qualify for premiums. Both ideologically valuable and entertaining films, and promotion of the cinema itself, were sufficient.

Finally, film advertisement also entered the field of limited competition that cinema network found themselves in throughout the 1960s, as the availability of cultural services was

[455] Among the instances in Kaunas, see: KRVA, 1964, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 20, p. 1.
[456] KRVA, 1964, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 20, p. 1.
[457] LLMA, 1966, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 58, p. 127.

expanding. Attempts to attract attention of the consumers of culture, and to convince them to choose cinema over other available cultural activities, in the words of one of one of the regional cinema directory managers, meant that advertisement was crucial for meeting the financial planning targets.[458] Such formulation resulted in socialist cinema advertisement being used in ways closely resemblant of those employed in market settings, such as trying to follow and respond to consumer flows, for instance, by intensifying advertisement in the areas most frequented by the tourists.[459]

Concluding note

The importance of advertising was growing in the Soviet Union, as a result of the 1960s policy directed at increasing the standard of living and provision of a greater variety and quality of consumer goods. Importance of advertisement was growing in cinema network as well: the concern with extent and quality of advertisement was pervasive. Several investments were made in the mid-1960s to ensure both the quality and extent of advertisement, including additional investments in the Information-Advertisement Bureau and establishment of Cinema Designers Councils on a local level. One of the concomitant processes of the efforts to expand advertisement in the area of film screening was an assertion of a parallel way of communicating information about film to the potential audiences. The conceptual distinction between propaganda and advertisement was difficult to draw. Nevertheless, the institutional distinctions and discussions between the officials of the LSSR cinema network suggest a recognition of a difference: propaganda measures were supposed to educate and foster audiences' aesthetic and political sensibilities, while advertisement, without losing the function of education through

[458] LLMA, 1968, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 143, p. 34
[459] LLMA, 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 101, p. 33

tasteful designs, was essentially relied on to attract audiences to cinemas. It was, in other words, relied on for the regulation of demand.

Conceived in this way, advertisement served a dual function. On the one hand, it was relied on for promotion of Soviet cinematic art and the aesthetically and ideologically valuable cinema. In the context of the ongoing tension between cash register and aesthetically valuable film, advertisement could be used as a tool for attracting the audiences to the screenings of the films that were problematic for cinema's cultural, political, and social missions in Soviet society. At the same time, film advertisement was evolving in a cinema network that, during the 1960s, was a setting within which "commercialist tendencies", pursuit of economic gain, competition with other forms of media and leisure, and strategies of seeking economic gain were a common occurrence. In this context, besides its educational tasks, film advertisement was closely integrated in several economic management schemes and was approached as one of the tools for ensuring that planning targets are met.

Chapter 5: Laboring at the ideological front

"Financial plan is not everything. It should not be forgotten that we are the workers of the ideological front" urged, in the pages of Ekrano naujienos, a model leader of a projectionist brigade screening films in Ukmergė region.[460] The report on his and his colleagues' success and determination was supposed to motivate a similarly outstanding performance of other cinema network employees, especially projectionists. After all, these were the people whose daily labor and effort delivered the films to the LSSR audiences, reaching remote corners of the republic. "Working ideologically," in this context, meant both promotion of ideologically and aesthetically valuable cinema and active engagement with the audiences in cultivation of their purposes. Yet, as the head of Ukmergė brigade inadvertently suggested, there was also, as in other areas of the organization and work of cinema network, a consideration of the plan and financial tasks of cinema network. Labor relations and processes were an integral part of the decade's dilemma between ideology and the financial imperative.

In the sphere of work relations, the dilemma between the financial and educational objectives of film screening evolved in and exceedingly complex setting. For one, most of cinema work was labor intensive, be it management, creation of artistic advertisement posters, accounting, or provision of a polite service. In addition, many of the tasks followed the profile of cultural worker, whose personal and educational faculties, in an ideal case scenario, had to be engaged in the promotion of cinema art, communication with the people, and education of audiences' tastes. This sophisticated landscape of work evolved in a complex setting of hundreds of dispersed cinemas and film screening units. These work collectives were usually small in size, especially when compared to larger productive factories. By the end of the 1960s, these enterprises were maintained by around 3000 cinema employees, many of whom performed

[460] 'Ukmergiškiai Dirba Brigadiniu Metodu [Ukmerge Projectionistts Adopt Brigade Method]'. Emphasis in the original. A little town of Ukmerge is located some 80 km from the capital Vilnius.

their direct tasks alone.[461] It was in this scattered setting that central administration of cinema network had to manage cinematic labor, and to manage it in such a way as to encourage employees' cooperation in the pursuit of "state tasks". I will in this chapter shed some light on the problems of how did state authorities seek to control and coordinate the work of cinema employees? What was the status accorded to the workers of ideological front? How was the success of their work measured? What kind of motivational mechanisms were devised for cinema employees to pursue what outcomes? And, finally, how could labor management techniques affected the pursuit of ideological and financial aspirations of film screening?

Varieties of cinema work

Cinema network employees may have been occasionally grouped, especially in the press, under the general labels of cultural workers, or workers of the ideological front, but cinema work itself was far from an equal or universal experience. Firstly, cinema employees formed a group incredibly divergent in their skill sets, salaries, and status. Secondly, work worlds and daily work experience were among the areas where disparity between urban and rural film screening was felt the most sharply.

In some ways, regardless of their skillset and profession, cinema employees suffered some of the disadvantages common to service sector – such as irregular work hours. Many of the Khrushchev's initiatives discussed in the republic-wide trade union meeting in 1956, including such improvements as shortening of the work week or shortening of the workday before the holidays,[462] were problematic if not impossible to apply in cinema work. For instance, projectionists were excluded from the introduction of a longer (2 days) weekend legislature.[463]

[461] Out of the overall 4000 employees working in film industry. 'Planas 1968-Iesiems Metams [Plan Indicators for 1968]', 4 November 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 97a, p. 55, LLMA.
[462] LCVA, 1956, f. R542, ap. 3, b. 137, p. 30.
[463] LYA, 1972, f. 1771, ap. 247, b. 262, p. 31.

Similarly, when a 5-day workweek was being introduced in the LSSR in 1967, cinema workers were not in a position to automatically expect that the new legislations will apply to them, too. The peculiar work schedules of servicing Soviet citizens with film screenings dictated that pursuit of a shorter work week would require to hire additional employees. Hiring additional employees, of course, meant incurring additional costs for the operation of the enterprise, which rendered transfer to a 5-day workweek in cinemas unlikely, at least for the time being.[464]

Besides the shared troubles, workers of the ideological front included an array of different professions: managers, accountants, administrators, cashiers, cleaners, manual and technical workers, ticket controllers and even firemen. The case of Kaunas' cinema employees serves as a telling example of the scope of variations between employees of the same cinema as of 1964:

Position	**Monthly wage in roubles**
Manager	90
Senior accountant	70
Administrator	60
Fireman	28
Technical manager	90
Senior projectionist	75
Projectionist, 1st category	70
Projectionists' assistant	50
Projectionist	62.5
Designer	80
Senior cashier	60
Cashier	55
Senior ticket controller	50
Ticket controller	42.5
Cleaner	45

[464] KRVA, 1967, f. R-1220, ap. 1, b. 58, p. 8.

Sound engineer*	50
Stoker	55
Locksmith	65
Janitor	42.5

Table 1. Salary scale of cinema employees in 1964. KRVA, 1964, R-1220 - 1 – 11, p. 64.

During the 1960s, the salaries were growing continuously, however, the divergences in pay ratio of different professionals employed in cinemas persisted. The discrepancy between salaries, the value assigned to different types of work and their associated notions of status, was growing into a cause for dissatisfaction for some of the employees, while managers complained about it posing problems in keeping their employees motivated. For instance, it did not seem fair to some of cinema employees that a cashier, who was responsible for managing significant amounts of money, was earning 50 roubles a month, while a watchman, presumably carrying nearly zero responsibilities, was earning about the same wage.[465] "Cleaning lady gets 60 roubles, projectionist – 65. Cleaning lady is satisfied, projectionist – not," complained one of the regional cinema directory managers during a SCC meeting in 1968.[466] Employees were thinking within the framework of status that should have been afforded by their qualifications and reflected in their remuneration, which is why it was easy to find it unfair that a cleaning lady was receiving about the same pay as a highly qualified projectionist. In the meantime, for management such situation posed problems in incentivizing and, therefore, ensuring good work or simply retaining disgruntled employees.[467]

Besides divergence in remuneration, cinema professions also occupied different positions in the state-devised categorizations of work. While, being employed at a cinema, all of them were

[465] KRVA, 1965, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 38, p. 2 – 4.
[466] LLMA, 1968, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 138, p. 35.
[467] LLMA, 1965, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 29, p. 55.

providing cultural service to socialist citizens, administratively only few of the positions were defined by the category of cultural work. Different categorizations prevailed. For instance, during the 1965 state initiative or raising the earnings "of the lowest-paid workers providing direct service to citizens",[468] in cinema network only cleaners, ticket controllers and cashiers fell into this category.[469] In addition, few of the professions included in cinema work implied the additional load of "material responsibility", involving handling of tickets, money, and accounting. During governmental inspections, these workers were held responsible for any accounting mistakes, missing tickets or cash. They were under greater pressure than their colleagues, since most often any mistakes were to be compensated from their own earnings. Even projectionists, whose work was widely acknowledged to be of importance for the implementation of cultural asks of cinema, were excluded from some of the government schemes designed to support cultural work, one of which was the compensation for utilities. Projectionists were regularly complaining that, besides an inadequate pay, they were not entitled to this benefit.[470]

Chapter 1 has briefly touched upon the issue of the divergence between urban and rural cinema networks, while Chapter 3 has shed some light of the work of urban cinemas. The work world of the projectionist, however, provides probably the best window not only into the differences between the urban and rural cinema networks, the complexity of an institutional and human landscape that authorities sought to manage, but also into the rural cinema going cultures under state socialism. Projectionists' work was, arguably, the most specific to the medium. As one of the employees of the projectionists' training program put it, "without the projectionist the film

[468] LLMA, 1965, f. 473, ap. 1, p.25, p. 2. Since these workers were earning minimum wage, their salaries were increased to 40 roubles at that point.
[469] KRVA, 1965, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 28, p. 20.
[470] LLMA, 1965, F. 473, Ap. 1, b. 29, p. 55. The same issue of projectionists not receiving the subsidies, creating another factor in high worker turnover, is mentioned elsewhere. See: LCVA, 1969, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 7582, p. 4.

does not reach the masses, without him the film does not come alive."[471] No screening, regardless of whether it was motivated ideologically, commercially or in the grey area in between, could happen in the absence of a projectionist, while his or her skills were crucial in ensuring the desired quality of the screening, and therefore of the cinemagoing experience and any kind of effect that cinema could have been expected to exert over the LSSR citizens. In addition to their crucial role, projectionists also formed the most numerous workforce in cinema network since any film screening device, if it was to be operated appropriately, must have been attended to by a qualified projectionist. Therefore, by the mid-1960s, out of the average 3000 cinema network employees, around a half were working as projectionists,[472] and most of them were working in rural cinema network. The work conditions of this group of employees and the measures implemented to coordinate had an important effect to the management of cinema network, and to the implementation of its objectives.

The nature of projectionists' work differed greatly between town and village, revealing the specificities of urban and rural cultural life in the republic. As illustrated by Figure 2., in urban cinemas, the institutions dedicated specifically to the screening of films,[473] projectionists were always a part of a bigger team, the size of which sometimes could reach a few dozen employees. This meant greater division of labor and responsibilities within a cinema: different employees managed the financial operations, ticket control and advertisement

Cinema	Number of employees
"Laisvė"	49.6
"Kanklės"	42.5
"Daina"	39
"Ąžuolynas"	14

[471]LLMA, March 1968, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 138, p. 47.
[472] 1564 people employed in this position as of 1964. See: LLMA, 1964, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 3, p. 94.
[473] Rather than sharing the space with other activities, as was often the case in culture houses and clubs.

"Pionierius"	34
Culture house Nr. 2	2
"Neringa"	25

Table 2. Number of employees in some of Kaunas' cinemas. KRVA, 1964, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 11, p. 26.

Thanks to a bigger and more diverse worker collective, projectionists' work was more technical in nature in urban cinemas, focused on managing the equipment and the technical process of film screening.[474] This was a considerable contrast to the work of projectionists in rural areas, where the demands and expectations from a projectionist were immensely more difficult and multifaceted. In a documentary film "The Province of Lost Film" on the recollections about and the dissipation of cinema network in Ryazan region,[475] a rural cinema projectionist recounts his work day in the 1950s: a projectionist would wake up, go order and get the transport, then go to the location of film screening. There, he would advertise the film ("the earlier you come, the more viewers will come"). He would then set up the screen – sometimes, where the required conditions were absent, this would be an improvisational exercise of hanging the screen on a building, or between two trees – set up the projectors, and screen the films in the dark.[476] Work in the rural cinema network in the LSSR seems to have been similar. Inspirational articles in Ekrano naujienos presented quite an austere view of projectionists' daily work, demanding to deliver the films to remote areas, while often battling harsh weather conditions, snow and rain, efforts to lead the vehicle with screening equipment through the

[474] Simonaitis, 'Kinas, Kinofikacija, Žiūrovas [Cinema, Cinefication, Viewers]'.
[475] Part of the RSFSR.
[476] Thomas Lahusen, Alexander Gershtein, and Tracy McDonald, *The Province of Lost Film* (Chemodan Films, 2006).

unpaved and miry roads, and wind ripping off the advertisements the projectionist had just put up.[477] It was a physically demanding job.

This was, however, only a part of it: rural projectionists were also expected to perform the duties of cultural workers[478] and more. Having his work formulated in this manner, projectionist was positioned at the ideological frontline in a rather literal sense: they were performing multiple functions involving close contact with local populations. Projectionists' work, therefore, was susceptible to being conceptualized as that of a mediator between cinema and film's message, and the viewer. Thus, setting up advertisements was included among the most important tasks of projectionists' list of duties.[479] Since the projectionist was working in the rural area alone, he was also expected by the authorities to be acquainted with the repertoire, possess adequate knowledge about the "value" of those films, and select more artistically and politically valuable cinematic production.[480] Finally, projectionists' work description also involved sustaining close contact with local populations and, in cooperation with the viewers, organize discussions after film screenings.

This was not the only form of communication with the audiences that projectionists were expected to manage. Due to their close proximity to the cinemagoing publics, projectionists were also encouraged to perform some form of audience research in order to be better able to respond best to their audiences' needs – and, in this way, meet the plan targets. "I cannot afford losing a single viewer. When working in a village you need to know your viewer. They like films on different topics," explained a rural projectionist in an interview to *Ekrano naujienos*.[481]

[477] 'Ukmergiškiai Dirba Brigadiniu Metodu [Ukmerge Projectionistts Adopt Brigade Method]', *Ekrano Naujienos*, no. 19 (18 May 1964): 5.
[478] Romualdas Simonaitis, 'Kinas, Kinofikacija, Žiūrovas [Cinema, Cinefication, Viewers]', *Kultūros barai*, December 1968.
[479] LCVA, 1969, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 7582, p. 4.
[480] K. Ambrasas and A. Liukaitis, 'Dirbkime Brigadiniu Metodu [Let's Adopt Brigade Method]', *Ekrano Naujienos*, 4 May 1964.
[481] 'Ukmergiškiai Dirba Brigadiniu Metodu [Ukmerge Projectionistts Adopt Brigade Method]', *Ekrano Naujienos*, no. 19 (18 May 1964): 5.

In his model work practice, he would figure out which members of the audience like films about love, which – about war or adventures. He would then take these wishes into consideration when assembling a monthly repertoire. There were projectionists, he explained, who would just come, screen the film and move on. But his own example showed that "sometimes [it's] you [who] must look for the viewer!" In the encouraging tone, Ekrano naujienos demonstrated that this was a practice that led the model projectionist to being meeting planning targets.

There was another catch to projectionists work: since they were screening the films mostly by themselves, they had to handle the tasks involving "material responsibility," such as selling tickets, accounting for them, and even delivering the collected money to the bank.[482] "Material responsibility" was one of the reasons why projectionists working in rural areas travelled around with a little "projectionists' task book" signed by the manager of their cinema directory at hand.[483] "Projectionist's route book" included the planned number of film screenings and income tasks, while projectionist himself was supposed to include data on the actual implementation: which films were screened and where, how many screenings were organized, how many tickets were sold at what price, how many viewers came and what income was collected. The final pages of the booklet included tables for summaries of the income collected from ticket sales and other screenings, and the expenses – "cinema tax", film rentals and operational costs. A record of the estimates of overall cinema attendance rates, the projectionists' route book was a crucial tool of collecting data necessary for central management. For this reason the head of the LSSR SCC Baniulis was concerned about the quality of the collection of this data, and worried about the possible subsequent distortions of statistics at republic's and federal level.[484] Among the sources of his concern was the

[482] LLMA, 1964, f. 473, Ap. 1, b. 3, p. 31.
[483] LLMA, 1965, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 25, p. 29 – 39.
[484] LLMA, 1966, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 60, p. 92 – 93.

insufficient monitoring of this data on a regional level, where cinema managers and accountants would check projectionists route books only occasionally, thus not only opening the possibility for the distortions of data, but also demonstrating a loose supervision of regional projectionists.

However, projectionists' status as an ideological worker did not go unquestioned. Yet, their position was ambiguous due to the mixed technical and cultural nature of their work. It was reflected in their training, which was focused largely on technical expertise. "It's been constantly hammered into our heads that projectionist is an ideological worker," reflected one of the regional cinema directory managers at SCC meeting. "That is true to a certain extent. But then, why are they trained at a professional school rather than some Party school or pedagogical institute? (…) Why, for instance, we don't consider construction workers, who are prepared by the same professional schools, to be ideological workers?"[485] To him, it seemed unjustified to expect that youngsters, who'd barely finished high school and received 9 months of professional training, will be able to provide their viewers' insight on the intricacies of film directing or acting, all the while establishing the conditions for "correct" interpretations of the films they were to see.

Education, discipline and labor turnover: the problems of cinema network

The ideal and aspirational norms of model projectionists' work regularly promulgated in *Ekrano naujienos* envisioned both the meeting of planning targets and implementation of ideological tasks. Narrating exemplary stories of outstanding projectionists, and inviting others to learn from their experience, cinema magazine promoted the image of an employee delivering the highest quality service, in possession of the required technical expertise, intimately familiar

[485] LLMA, February 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 61.

with his audiences' needs, equipped with the prerequisite knowledge of cinematic art and politics and therefore in a position to shape his audiences' tastes and needs. Of course, all of this was to be done while meeting the attendance rate and financial planning targets. The conditions under which this image of model work was to be implemented, however, were nothing short of chaotic. Where management of labor in cinema network was concerned, especially when it came to hundreds of projectionists, problems abounded in the fields of training, work discipline, and cadre turnover.

Preparation of the qualified cadres was one the major problems during the decade. Every film screening point needed to have a projectionist trained to service it. As mentioned, this required around 1500 actively working projectionists by the mid-1960s. It was local cinema directories that were assigned the tasks of recruitment of the new cadres as well as improvement of qualifications of the already existing ones. Attracting people to learn the trade of a projectionist, however, was easier said than done. Courses themselves were not particularly extensive: they could last up to 9 months. However, it was still difficult to attract enough people to the trainings. In view of some of the managers, the issue was that provision of dormitory accommodation for the period of training was inadequate, while the stipend was a meagre 20 roubles.[486] Regardless of these flaws, preparation of future projectionists was happening quite intensely in the 1960s. For instance, in 1964, 209 projectionists were being prepared at a special program established at a professional training school in Kaunas. 60 of them were pursuing the 1st category of qualification.[487] In 1965, 200 projectionists were prepared.[488] The rate of preparing 200 new cadres annually seems to have been sustained for at least several years.[489] However, the LSSR film screening network was still continuously operating under conditions

[486] LLMA, March 1968, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 138, p. 35.
[487] LLMA, 1964, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 3, p. 94. Formal schooling was not the only way to prepare projectionists – they could also learn the trade as apprentices on the job.
[488] LLMA, 1965, F. 473, ap. 1, b. 23, p. 75.
[489] LLMA, 1970, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 227, p. 86.

of shortage of qualified and honest projectionists.[490] The lack of qualified employees posed many problems, including the immediately graspable economic losses caused by the untimely damaging of the film reels[491] and equipment caused by lack of skill or careful attitude at work. Unqualified cadres were also blamed for technical disruptions during the screenings, which would disrupt the cinematic experience, weaken the impact of film, and cause unsatisfied viewers.

State authorities blamed the continued shortage of qualified cadres for a variety of problems, including that of a poor work discipline among projectionists.[492] Poor work discipline itself resulted in further instability of projectionist cadres since underperforming employees often left cinema directory managers with little choice but to fire them. In 1964, in the region of Eišiškės in a period of four months, 11 projectionists were fired, 12 were hired, and "9 people were reprimanded by the administrative court".[493] Cinema directories of the minor towns of Užventis and Ignalina had hired 43 projectionists and 27 drivers, and fired 39 and 25 respectively, in 10 months of 1962.[494] In these cases projectionists appear to have been prone to some level of lax attitude to work discipline: the report indicates that they themselves would decide when their rest days should be taken, and were screening less films than they were supposed to. However, work discipline problems and what was interpreted by the authorities as a proclivity to cheating were not the preoccupation of projectionists alone. Accountants specifically would also often use their position to manipulate such aspects of their work as employment administration procedure. One of the recurrent problems was creation of employment positions "on paper," among other schemes.[495] Overall, since projectionists were

[490] LCVA, 1969, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 7582, p. 4.
[491] Which rendered them unsuitable for screening, thus retracting any income that could have possible been collected from them.
[492] They were not the only ones to be reproached for this: the assessment of poor work discipline and control was assigned to the work in cinemas broadly.
[493] LLMA, 1964, f. 473. Ap. 1, b. 3, p. 94.
[494] LCVA, 1962, f. R754, ap. 4, f. 5880, p. 22.
[495] LLMA, 1964, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 3, p. 52, 113, 156.

dispersed, often working by themselves, especially in rural areas, direct, constant and effective supervision ensuring that their work meets state standards was more difficult.

Training and work discipline were among the causes of one of the biggest issues of the LSSR film screening during the decade: labor turnover. This problem concerned projectionists first and foremost. Problems started soon after the graduation: many of the fresh and qualified graduates of Kaunas' projectionists' training program would not sign up for the job itself. In some cases, the situation could get particularly acute, such as in Vilkaviškis, where out of 17 graduates sent for training, only 5 returned to work.[496] One of the most prominent causes of people receiving the training but not entering the workforce was related to gender: most of the trainees were young men, and young men were called for a two-year long military service before they could join the ranks at the ideological front. However, the major cause of projectionist turnover was that they did not have too many reasons to hold on to their jobs. The already mentioned difficult work conditions, high expectations, poor housing, irregular workhours were among the factors contributing to the projectionists' not showing up for work or quitting soon after starting their duties. The setting of the LSSR labor market helped the process: very often, projectionists could freely seek employment in more profitable industries. With their skill set, they were gladly accepted to work in other industries, for higher salary and, after remunerations system was reformed, bigger premiums.[497]

In face of these issues, it was the monetary wage that was ubiquitously defined as the cause of high labor turnover. The problem persisted in rural as well as urban screening network.[498] It was also profound and long lasting: by 1968, there were only very few projectionists in cinema network who had work experience of 10 or more years.[499] Low wage was understood both by

[496] LLMA, 1965, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 23, p. 41.
[497] LCVA, 1969, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 7582, p. 4.
[498] LLMA, 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 97a, p. 44.
[499] Romualdas Simonaitis, 'Kinas, Kinofikacija, Žiūrovas [Cinema, Cinefication, Viewers]', *Kultūros barai*, December 1968.

state officials and public commentators as the main reason of the many problems in the situation of projectionists in the republic. Their position as ideological workers might have been repeatedly lauded in the press, but the assumed dignity and honor of ideological work did not translate to higher salaries. Projectionists were not alone: other employees, such as cultural mass workers, or shop consultants found themselves to be similarly underpaid.[500] By 1969, projectionists in the LSSR cinema network were still working for only slightly higher than minimum wage.[501] By 1972, projectionist's salary was still at the same 62 rouble level it lingered at in 1964.[502] Low salary in the LSSR labor market led to several outcomes. One of them was that the low pay posed great difficulties for cinema directory managers to recruit qualified workers. This consequence of low salaries was not confined to projectionists or to the film screening network alone. Low salaries posed a problem whether one was trying to hire a qualified accountant,[503] a mass cultural worker,[504] or an actor for a mass scene during a film shooting.[505] Low salaries created obstacles not only in hiring qualified employees, but could also make a manager to think twice before firing an unqualified one, since they could expect difficulties in finding a replacement.[506] Low pay was also a reason why projectionists' work was often chosen as a second job, rendering these employees unable to work at the cinema during the day.[507]

Notion that low pay encouraged high cadre turnover among the projectionists was an understanding so commonplace that in 1963 the LSSR SCC did not shy away from communicating the suggestion for salary increase to the USSR Party Central Committee

[500] Many of the issues framing work in the service sector applied to cinema workers as well. See: Diane P Koenker, 'The Smile behind the Sales Counter: Soviet Shop Assistants on the Road to Full Communism', *Journal of Social History* 54, no. 3 (1 February 2021): 872–96.
[501] LCVA, 1969, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 7582, p. 4.
[502] LYA, 1972, f. 1771, ap. 247, b. 262, p. 31.
[503] LCVA, 1961, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 5578, p. 3; LLMA, 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 100, p. 64.
[504] "Only unqualfied workers would show up". See: LLMA, 1968 F. 473, Ap. 1, b. 138, p. 102.
[505] "Only alcoholics would show up for 3 roubles". They were relying on army for shooting mass scenes. LLMA, 1969, F. 473, Ap. 1, b. 182, p. 33.
[506] LLMA, 1966, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 58, p. 93.
[507] LYA, 1972, f. 1771, ap. 247, b. 262, p. 27.

Cinema Sector.[508] The issue of low pay of the cultural workers was also not kept under wraps: Kultūros barai roundtable discussion openly stated that cinefication workers' salaries were among the lowest, which "unavoidably" led to a high cadre turnover.[509] The tendency of high labor turnover persisted throughout the decade: in 1972, a reported cadre turnover in film screening network was still the estimated at 30% - 40%.[510]

Bottlenecks in attracting qualified personnel and holding onto qualified workforce may have been among the reasons why in republic-wide meetings held at the SCC, managers were often complaining to their colleagues and to the authorities about the poor living conditions and low wages of their personnel. However, there were more reasons for a rather close-knit, even if tense, relationships within a cinefication enterprise. While capital investments, such as equipment, new buildings and film reels were needed for successful functioning of the cinema, the day to day of cinefication work was largely labor intensive. Quality cinema work, by contemporary definitions and standards, depended on a skill of the projectionist, politeness of the cashier, inventiveness and taste of the cinema designer and managers' social skills in developing the ties with local communities and organizations in the quest of advancing the propaganda of cinema art. Managers, holding direct responsibility for the performance of their enterprise in front of higher authorities, depended on their workers' initiative and cooperation in performing their duties diligently. This was a prerequisite for any enterprise to accomplish their tasks, be their economic, social or educational.

Difficulties in attracting potential employees to training programs, dispersion of the workforce, lack of qualified workers, high turnover and general local disregard for government regulations posed problems in labor management as well as hindered the attempts to ensure worker

[508] LLMA, 1963, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 63, p. 16.
[509] Romualdas Simonaitis, 'Kinas, Kinofikacija, Žiūrovas [Cinema, Cinefication, Viewers]', *Kultūros barai*, December 1968.
[510] LYA, 1972, f. 1771, ap. 247, b. 262, p. 31.

cooperation in accomplishing film exhibition objectives. Many of the considered solutions for the problem had to do with devising appropriate incentives. As Kristy Ironside notes, in the 1960s, with the reign of Stalinist coercion gradually turning into the matter of memories, emphasis fell on devising new ways to incentivize voluntary participation in the Soviet project.[511] During the 1960s, the question was what kind of incentive that would be.

Moral incentives

The authoritative power of planning indicators might have yielded stronger influence over managers of film exhibition enterprises than other workers. From the point of view of higher tier administration, local managers were responsible for performance of their cinemas. Because of that, they were regularly subjected to pressure from their superiors, including an occasional firing or demotion in cases of persistent failure to deliver. Other cinema workers, however, were not subjected to the same type of direct pressures from the top, and with the fixed salary and sporadic premiums schemes existing in the early 1960s, the link between remuneration for their efforts and the overall performance of the enterprise was weak. However, cinema workers were not left to their own devices: they were included in numerous schemes, actions and campaigns designed to encourage their voluntary and heartfelt participation. Efforts to find ways to persuade workers to perform better and more efficiently (in terms of meeting planning targets and delivering projected income) found their expression in both the so-called "moral incentives".

The idea of 'moral incentives' was rooted in the ideal of the future communist society, citizens of which would already possess sufficiently developed socialist consciousness. Based on the expectation that people can be motivated by the mere fact of having fulfilled their social duty,

[511] Ironside, 'Khrushchev's Cash-and-Goods Lotteries and the Turn Toward Positive Incentives'.

this form of incentives relied heavily on the commitment to the pursuit of a social, common interest of the Soviet society, and the state as a representative of that society.[512] However, since in the 1960s the communist society was still presented as an aspiration rather than reality, the ways of providing moral incentives were also profoundly educational in character. They were designed not only to encourage achievement of the present-day objectives, but also as a way of advancing socialist consciousness by producing shifts in the individual attitudes of the incentivized workers.

Ways on motivating the workers in the spirit of communism were numerous. Among them were the already mentioned regular stories about the model projectionists in the pages of Ekrano naujienos. Some of these stories were the transformational narratives about the previously underperforming projectionists that had since changed their ways and improved their performance under a watchful guidance of their comrades. In other cases, these brief essays were designed to inspire simply by presenting examples of the leading cinema workers.[513] Another appeal to moral incentivization was the appeal to the "love of work". Cinema work was often demanding, while in the case of hundreds of rural cinema projectionists the list of duties was vast and conditions were particularly difficult, leading to the view that in this setting it was projectionists' personal qualities that would determine the outcome of his efforts.[514] Under these conditions, the author claims, only the workers who 'love' their job were able to do the work properly.[515]

[512] Carmelo Mesa-Lago, 'Ideological, Political, and Economic Factors in the Cuban Controversy on Material Versus Moral Incentives', *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 14, no. 1 (1972): 49–111.
[513] Especially when it came to popularizing the benefits of a new brigade method of work in the mid-1960s. Forming projectionist brigades was seen as a way of improving the organization and efficiency of their work. However, formation of the brigades, while strongly encouraged by the authorities, remained voluntary, therefore prompting series of articles shedding the light on the benefits of this form of organisation.
[514] E. Aukštikalnis et al., 'Kinas Ir Kultūra: Pokalbis Prie Apskrito Stalo [Cinema and Culture: Roundtable Discussion]', *Kultūros barai*, December 1968.
[515] Simonaitis, 'Kinas, Kinofikacija, Žiūrovas [Cinema, Cinefication, Viewers]'.

In form, moral incentives were rather closely integrated in the process of reproducing what Timothy Mitchell would likely define as "the ghostlike abstraction of the state": such designs of spiritual remuneration were mostly created and orchestrated "from above", and they could earn one additional recognition in front of state authorities.[516] Among the most common forms of this type of incentivizing were awards of the letters of honor or competition for such titles as the Best Projectionist.[517] However, one of the most comprehensive schemes of moral incentivizing in the 1960s were the socialist competition campaigns. Coordinated by the SCC, they were conceived in a spirit of an unselfish endeavor and a friendly rivalry among the enterprises and their work collectives, all laboring together towards fulfilment of their planning targets and, in this way, for the greater cause of future communism.[518]

Importantly, these campaigns did not set any new objectives besides those already defined in state policies for cinefication and planning targets: rather, they were designed as a motivational auxiliary to the already defined planning targets and cinema policy guidelines. This was precisely how they differed from such measures as the planning targets and attendance rates. The latter, as in any other form of assessment of cinema work, occupied the first lines of any list of socialist competition commitments. However, meeting planning targets alone did not grant success in the competition. For this to happen, it was necessary to meet multiple additional criteria: to devote sufficient attention to the screening of particular film genres, to organize broad outreach to the local communities and organizations regarding cinematic matters, and to show some extra investment in the original and enticing advertisement strategies. As could be expected from a moral incentive, awards for winning these competitions

[516] Timothy Mitchell, 'Society, Economy and the State Effect', in *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader* (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), 176.
[517] 'Decree Awarding the Title of Best Projectionist', 22 January 1964, 13, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 3, LLMA. To be eligible to some of these awards, projectionist needed to have 10 years of work experience: LLMA, 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 97, p. 17.
[518] Katalin Miklóssy and Melanie Ilič, eds., *Competition in Socialist Society*, Routledge Studies in the History of Russia and Eastern Europe 19 (New York: Routledge, 2014), 2.

remained mostly symbolic, such as the Red Flag transferred from the previous winner to the new.[519] Even when they did take a form of a material reward, it was usually a piece of work equipment such as radio which could be used in providing musical background in cinemas before the screening. This kind of prizes were given to the participating collective rather than individual participants, thus serving mostly as means for improving work conditions for all rather than means fostering individualistic interest.

What these different schemes of moral incentivizing had in common was their expressed integration in state administrative processes. Letters of honor and nominations, even if occasionally accompanied by monetary rewards, were distributed by the decision of the head of the SCC. These awards remained irregular and sporadic throughout the decade, and were only vaguely tied to workers' or enterprises' initiative. However, having had received letters of honor (as well as not having received official reprimands) was likely to help workers in their future dealings with state institutions – and that was something that monetary wage alone could not grant. Whenever cinema worker needed to issue a complaint, contest a decision of firing from a job, or ask for a transfer to a more suitable accommodation, records of this type of remunerations were treated as a witness to ones' moral character and dedication, and as such, a proof of the legitimacy the request.[520]

Regardless of these perks, level of general involvement in and effects of socialist competition campaigns remains questionable. In the spirit of Khrushchev's policy of employing incentives as means of encouraging voluntary engagement, enterprises' participation in socialist competition campaigns was supposed to be voluntary. Regardless of constant administrative pressure for enterprises to join and compete with one another, this may have been one of the reasons for the apparent reluctance to enter these campaigns. As a speaker in one of the SCC

[519] Even though financial prizes were also quite common.
[520] LLMA, August 1966, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 63, p. 91 – 92.

meetings put it in a course of an extensive speech, "sometimes what happens is this: you start talking about socialist competition and basically you can see how the audience starts snoozing overtaken by boredom so great that it gets embarrassing. Many of them are thinking: we are educated people and we do know how to achieve plan targets without all kinds of competition."[521] Thus, while socialist competition continued to be promoted as one of the key policies in encouraging motivation within film exhibition network, to the constant irritation of the authorities, some enterprises were regularly failing to challenge each other in this way, while others were scolded for their merely "formal" engagement.

Material incentives and the 1967 premiums reform

Beginning with Stalin's denunciation of egalitarianism and the subsequent introduction of wage differentials and bonuses for over-fulfilment of piece rate quotas, material incentives had a long history as an integral part of the Soviet remuneration schemes. In the 1960s LSSR, as we have seen, monetary wage was considered a central factor in fostering employees' motivation. Khrushchev's promise of wage increases – for the low paid workers by as much as 30% - only fostered the sentiment, zooming in on monetary wage as "a powerful leverage" in raising work productivity and improving workers' material well-being.[522] The importance of material incentives in fostering the motivation of cultural and cinema workers was also accepted in the management of cinematic affairs. In 1961, a decree concerning material incentives to cinematography workers was issued at a USSR level,[523] while a manager from Salantai region in the LSSR complained that the financial situation was not allowing him to foster the interest in work among his employees.[524] By 1969, the head of the LSSR SCC

[521] LLMA, 1968, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 138, p. 67.
[522] LCVA, 1956, f. R542, ap. 3, b. 137, p. 54.
[523] LCVA, 1961, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 5578, p. 8.
[524] LCVA, 1959, f. R754, ap. 4, b. 4987, p. 126.

admitted that "people are motivated by the financial side of things."[525] An opinion such as that of the director of Kaunas' projectionists school Turčinavičius, who stated that "a projectionist chasing a good salary will not be a good projectionist" was more of an exception than a rule.[526] More importantly, it bore little resemblance to the remuneration schemes applied in the actual organisation of cinema network. Within the LSSR cinema network, it was widely acknowledged that material remuneration, in a form of salary or a bonus, played a crucial role in motivating the workers, and aided management of such problems as attracting and keeping qualified employees and reducing such undesirable phenomena as high turnover among projectionists.

While not entirely new, in the context of Kosygin reforms of the mid- to late 1960s, the concept of material incentives underwent a revival and was one of the central themes in the discussions about how a more efficient organization of Soviet economy could be achieved. The notion of material remuneration as an incentivizing factor was not entirely new. What was new about Kosygin's incentive schemes was the large-scale and systematic establishment of a link between the individual financial rewards for the workers and enterprises' capacity to generate income.[527] For the enterprise to work efficiently, there had to be a connection between effort and remuneration.[528] The notion of material incentives defined in this way drew on a specific understanding of economic agents by evoking Engels' idea that economic relations in every society will be expressed first and foremost as economic interests.[529] Within an economic structure of a film screening enterprise in a centrally planned economy, direct link between employees effort and income could unleash a variety of strategies and processes designed to

[525] LLMA, 1969, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 182, p. 60.
[526] LLMA, 1968, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 138, p. 47.
[527] There were smaller scale efforts to link the bonuses to above the plan income: LLMA, 1958, f. 342, ap. 7, b. 229, p. 82.
[528] Carmelo Mesa-Lago, 'Ideological, Political, and Economic Factors in the Cuban Controversy on Material Versus Moral Incentives', 53–54.
[529] 'Planas, Pelnas, Premija [Plan, Profit, Premiums]', *Liaudies Ūkis [Peoples' Economy]*, no. 9 (1962): 278–80.

the best possible economic performance through the increased cinema attendance rates and generated income. These strategies would be based on what the workers could (local repertoire policy, quality of service) and could not (planning targets, prices, general repertoire planning) control.

Among the hopes leading to placing material incentives at the center of worker remuneration schemes was its potential to bolster the financial discipline among both the enterprise management and its workers. Fostering employees' individual interest was the key. Unrelenting echoes of NEP in the pages of *Liaudies ūkis* included a reiteration of Lenin's dictum that socialism will be built '… not [by] directly relying on enthusiasm (one of the components of moral incentives, A.R.) but will rather be aided by the enthusiasm engendered by the great revolution, and on the basis of personal interest, personal incentive and business principles.[530] In 1963, two years before Kosygin reforms took off, individual incentives were assessed as neglected and the links between employees input and enterprise performance were weak. In the years between 1959 – 1963 the general rate of profit in the Soviet Union grew by 84%, and 44% for each worker, while wage funds and premiums funds grew only by 10% and 2% respectively. According to Sukharevsky of the USSR State Committee for Labor and Wages, the reshuffling of incentive systems according to the principles of khozraschyot, paying closer attention to individual incentives, and establishment of a tighter link between workers' remuneration and profit would facilitate a partial replacement of excessive administrative coordination with the economic pressures.[531]

Basic design of the experimental premiums scheme was based on the established numerical measurements of enterprise performance – attendance rates and generated income. This was

[530] V. I. Lenin, 'Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution', *Pravda*, 18 October 1921., quoted in V. Astrauskas and A. Šulus, "Vidinė Ūkiskaita Ir Premijavimas [Internal Accountability and Distribution of Premiums]," *Liaudies Ūkis [Peoples' Economy]*, no. 1 (1961): 16.
[531] Sukharevsky, 'Ekonominis Skatinimas Ir Ūkiskaita [Economic Incentives and Accountability]'.

one of the reasons why ideological tasks of cinema network and cinefication enterprise were not – and could not be – included directly in the development of experimental remuneration project. However, film exhibition was among the first branches of economic activity to be chosen as a testing ground for the new premiums system. The LSSR was among the five Soviet regions in which the experiment of premiums system was conducted, with an intention to implement it in the rest of the USSR if approved as successful.[532] Trial regulations dictated that premiums were to be distributed among the workers on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. Monthly premiums were paid directly from the profit and could reach up to 20% of each workers' base salary, while quarterly premiums constituted as much as 3% of the wage for every percent of plan overfulfilment, and could reach as much as 2 monthly salaries, thus establishing a rather broad margin for bonuses.[533] Such premiums arrangement did not simply tie each individual workers' premiums to the fulfilment and overfulfilment of plan targets: it was devised in such a way that the earnings of each worker depended on the extent to which the plan was overfulfilled. By linking workers' bonuses to the performance of the enterprise it also seemed to fulfil another promise of the Kosygin reforms: that of constituting a collective of workers and management laboring hand in hand toward profit.

Experimentation with the reform did not proceed without hiccups. For instance, within the experimental premiums scheme timing was of the essence. Due to inexperience or late bills, accountants chronically failed to include accurate calculations of production costs, thus overestimating the profit, and paying unrealistically high bonuses in some months only to withhold them altogether in others.[534] However, regardless of this and other issues of administration, the reform was evaluated as bearing generally positive economic results.

[532] LLMA, 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 97.
[533] LLMA, September 1966, f. 473. Ap. 1, b. 60, p. 166 – 173.
[534] LLMA, July 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 97a, p. 113 – 114. This occurred quite often, and SCC officials suspected that in some cases it was done on purpose rather than by mistake.

As is often the case in complex economic settings impacted by multiple simultaneous historical processes, acceptance of a direct causal link between premiums reform and improved economic performance of cinema network requires extreme caution. However, premiums reform does appear to have had palpable income on the performance of the cinema network: in 1966, for the first time since 1960, film screening networks' plans were being fulfilled and overfulfilled. On top of that, the LSSR's cinefication network suddenly occupied the second place in the USSR. Considering the timing of these improvements it is not surprising that authorities attributed the positive changes to the ongoing experiments with the remuneration model.[535] At the end of the testing period, the recommendation from the LSSR SCC to the federal authorities was to introduce experimental premiums system as a regular one.

In addition to measurable improvement in general economic performance of film exhibition network, premiums seemed to have had a positive effect on workers' incomes. In contrast to many forms of moral incentives, rather than being distributed on a specific occasion or for a specific achievement by the decision of the SCC, these premiums were paid every month. The share of bonuses in the final wage rose from an estimated 7.9% in the first quarter of 1966 to 16.6% in the same period in 1967. Average salary (with premiums) increased from 71.6 rubles to 78.8. While salaries grew both for the management and other employees, the rise was particularly important for low paid workers, projectionists among them. Already in the early stages of the reform, some of them saw their wage soar to 120 – 130 rubles in some months,[536] compared to a base salary of 62.5 rubles.[537] It also seemed to have finally provided the awaited income increase required to stifle turnover among projectionists, which had dropped by 29%.[538]

[535] LLMA, 1968, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 101, p. 81 – 83.
[536] LLMA, 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 84.
[537] KRVA, 1964, f. R1220, ap. 1, b. 11, p. 64.
[538] LLMA, October 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 100, p. 66 – 69.

The experimental phase of the premiums system was enough to muster both workers' and their managers' expectations and entitlement to new wage standards. Already during the transition to new premiums system as a regular form of remuneration one of the managers complained that they are receiving letters from workers' threatening to quit their jobs if bottlenecks in paying the premiums will not be resolved soon.[539] A year later, negotiations about the proposals for the upcoming five-year plan prompted one of the members of the SCC to issue the warning about the necessity of the premiums: "Let's take projectionists' salaries. Can we take from them their last bit of bread – the premiums? We'll find ourselves with no projectionists at all."[540] Abramavičius, the director of Panevėžys cinefication branch went as far as to advocate for the right to receive premiums even when the main criterion, overfulfilment of plan targets, was not met. "If there were no good movies in January, it is not the fault of the collective. (…) Premiums should be paid regularly,"[541] he argued.

Abramavičius' advocacy might have been rooted in his consideration of his workers' quality of life or his need to contain workers' threats to leave their jobs if they were not adequately paid. Yet it is as likely that he was trying to protect his own income along the way. Very early on it became evident that the structure of premiums reform did little to prevent inequalities among cinema workers. Based on the calculation of the percentage from the salary, it was biased towards the already higher paid management. In addition, its imitation of market mechanisms predictably produced some of the market-like effects and tended to exacerbate the already sharp division between urban and rural cinemas. Cinemas which were better equipped and better located (be it in terms of the local population size, ease of access to new films or the level of local interest in going to the movies) were in a much better position to overfulfil their

[539] 'Respublikinio Kino Tinklo Darbuotojų Pasitarimo Protokolas [Minutes of the Republic Wide Meeting of Cinema Network Employees]', 44.
[540] LLMA, June 1969, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 182, p. 68.
[541] 'Respublikinio Kino Tinklo Darbuotojų Pasitarimo Protokolas [Minutes of the Republic Wide Meeting of Cinema Network Employees]', 50.

planning targets and thus grant the premiums for their workers. '… cinema [like] "Lietuva"[542] will get thousands [of roubles], comrades', explained the manager from Ignalina, a small town in the east of the LSSR. "But for a place like Ignalina this means several roubles, and if we overfulfill the plan by 200 roubles, our workers and projectionists will get some 80 kopeks of bonus".[543] Reformed premiums system provided no alleviating leverage for cinemas in disadvantaged positions since the only criteria of success and income increase was the number of viewers.

Reform reversed

Besides the initial statistics showing improvement in economic performance of film exhibition network there is no reliable data that could help us understand the impact that premiums reform had on choices to screening 'cashier' films rather than those oriented towards long-term social, economic or political results. It is certain, however, that the framework of reformed premiums scheme did little to support the so-called ideological aspects of cinema work. Screening cash register films, which by as a general rule required little preparatory work in order to attract the viewers, remained the most efficient way of ensuring income flow to cinema network. Reformed premiums system ensured that the same was true for workers' wallets: it successfully tied the low-waged workers' income to the financial performance of the enterprise, thus providing every worker with an incentive to follow the deep-rooted tendency of putting cinema's social commitments aside and prioritize, in the ironic utterance of Kaunas' cinema director, "the almighty plan."[544]

[542] One of the biggest cinemas located in Vilnius.
[543] LLMA, February 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 96, p. 72 – 73.
[544] KRVA, August 1966, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 44, p. 6.

Designed in such a way as to increase work efficiency and economic performance premiums reform did just that. Unlike socialist competition or other moral incentives oriented towards more comprehensive lists of achievements, including the ideological ones, premiums reform focused entirely on financial performance of the enterprise. It defined premiums as a bridge between inherent personal economic interest of the workers, and the profit motive as a guiding principle of enterprises' economic workings. Within this framework, only income and profit was measured (determined by cinema's capacity to attract more viewers to cinema), while concerns with ideological tasks or forms of work appropriate to achieving these tasks were left to the more direct measures of administrative control.

This encouragement of market-like response – of measuring economic success of film exhibition enterprise by the number of viewers – contributed to inequalities and, as far as authorities were concerned, exaggerated growth in wages. The problem was partially that of resources: paying premiums for the workers started eating up substantial part of cinemas' budget. This was true even in underperforming areas. One of the regional cinefication branches were last in the republic, yet were still paying 2000 rubles in premiums.[545] Some managers complained that at this rate, soon there won't be money left for such necessities as equipment repairs.[546] While specifics of labor productivity in film exhibition were slightly different from productive enterprises, general evaluation of the reform in the USSR pointed to a similar problem: due to increases in premiums wage growth was now exceeding the growth of labor productivity.[547]

The first amendments of premiums experiment, introduced as early as 1967, were trying to tackle this exact problem. The legislation issued by the USSR's Cinematography Committee

[545] LLMA, 1969, F. 473, Ap. 1, b. 182, p. 3.
[546] LLMA, March 1968, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 138, p. 45.
[547] P. Jakubėnas, 'Ekonominė Reforma: Rezultatai Ir Problemos [Economic Reform: Results and Problems]', *Liaudies Ūkis [Peoples' Economy]*, no. 2 (1971): 45–47.

did not challenge or criticize the profit motive directly. What it endeavored to accomplish, however, was to introduce minor corrections imposing stricter limits on the rapidly swelling premiums. Rapidly increasing labor costs was likely one of the reasons for the amendment. However, it was not officially indicated one. The reason announced in the legislation had to do with a particular concept of work ethics: screening cashier films "did not require any additional effort from cinema employees while still allowing them to collect ample remuneration."[548] "Easy money" was not something appropriate for a socialist ideological worker.

In film industry, by 1971 authorities' investment in the harmonizing powers of khozraschyot and material interests of the workers appeared to be fading across different ministries. If one of the main objectives of the reform was to reduce the number of criteria for measuring enterprises' performance, now they were being re-added again. In film exhibition, this process took a specific form. The second amendment of the premiums system did not withdraw the profit incentive from the picture altogether. What it did do, however, was an attempt to integrate the social mission of cinema and its' economic tasks: the amendment added clauses based on which premiums could be reduced or withdrawn if the additional plans for screening of documentary, children, popular scientific films, and newsreels were not fulfilled, even if financially cinema was profitable.[549]

Concluding note

Throughout the 1960s the expectation for cinema network employees to work ideologically persisted. This formulation could refer to a variety of work forms, including the preferential screening of aesthetically and ideologically valuable films, engagement in an array of educational activities with the audiences (such as viewers' conference, where "correct"

[548] LLMA, March 1967, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 97a, p. 67.
[549] LLMA, February 1971, f. 473, ap. 1, b. 274, p. 6 - 7.

interpretations of films could be suggested), or the communist sensibility as the basis of the work ethic. The pursuit of any objectives or provision of incentives for work, however, was greatly challenged by several factors relating to cinema network's work force, such as cinemas' dispersion across the republic, small size of the enterprises, or an individual work setting. During the 1960s, I contend, the incentives provided for cinema workers can be grouped around to categories: moral and material. While the promotion of moral incentives, based to an extent on the workers' commitment to the socialist project and closely integrated withing the frameworks of the state, was still widespread, and such measures as appeals to the love of work and socialist competition campaigns were regularly relied on, material incentives were widely acknowledged as a crucial measure in fostering workers' motivation. Such approach was reinforced with the introduction of a new premiums scheme as a part of Kosygin reform. Within the new system, the generally low workers' income was systematically tied to the economic performance of the enterprise and its capacity to meet and overfulfill planning targets. Oblivious to the ideological tasks of cinema in the Soviet society, the reform created an additional incentive for attracting more viewers and catering to audiences' preferences. However, along with the growing restrictions caused by the reaction to the Prague Spring, additional controls were soon introduced, including prioritized film categories – such as "the best" Soviet films – among the criteria of qualification for bonuses.

Conclusions

Inquiry into the economic administration and management of cinema network in the 1960s LSSR reveals a lively cinematic life evolving alongside of and in tension with ideological and political frameworks: the framing of a film and cinema service as objects of significant economic value. The latter framing of cinema appears as particularly acute in the context of post-Stalinist softening of administrative controls in the cultural sphere as well as the partial opening to the cultural influences not only from the West, but also from around the globe. Already at the central administrative level, where foreign cinematic production was purchased, considerations other than ideological appropriateness or aesthetic depth came into play, including an assessment of the potential income that the film would be able to deliver to state coffers. On a level of local repertoire planning, managers responded to the financial pressures as well, as they regularly chose to screen the so-called cash register films, which were otherwise still extensively criticized for their lack of aesthetic complexity and political sensibility.

These processes were facilitated by the historically determined institutional parameters, withing which cinemagoing in the LSSR evolved during the late socialist years. In this dissertation I have outlined the complex relationship and influences leading to the growing prevalence of cash register film and financially motivated film screening practices in the Soviet Lithuanian cinemas. Departing from an assumption of a unitary and powerful Soviet state as a starting point for the analysis, I was able to do justice to the institutional multiplicities and their various interests encompassing administration and management of cinemagoing. Some institutions, especially the Party, continued to emphasize the ideological and aesthetic tasks of cinema as a part of the larger Soviet cultural project geared towards education and fashioning of the socialist society according to a patronizing vision of the Party and the Soviet state. However, at the same time, the Party itself continued to demand fulfilment of the planning targets. In addition to the influences of the Party, the LSSR cinema network was equally, even

if less noticeably, involved with such institutions as the Ministry of Finance or the Planning Committee, whose work and demands were formulated explicitly around the economic objectives, savings, and fiscal discipline. The LSSR SCC, as the central administrator of cinema service provision in the LSSR thus functioned at the juncture of these demands, while economic considerations were accorded an important role in the development of the organization of film screening, and experience of cinemagoing.

Taking a closer look at the economic techniques through which cinema network was managed revealed some of the basic premises for the emergence of "cash register film". The top-down pressure for meeting planning targets and other instances of enforcement of fiscal discipline facilitated the importance of economic interest both at the higher administrative layers of the LSSR cinema, and among the managers of local cinema directories. Equally important was the fact that within centrally planned economy cinema's performance, similarly to other enterprises engaged in distribution and trade, was measured by the number of sales – in this case, cinema tickets and collected income. This instrument of measurement of economic success inevitably directed cinema network's focus to their audiences, on whom cinema management and republic's cinema network depended for meeting their planning targets. Within this context, film and the service that cinema was providing were assessed for their economic, rather than ideological, value in state socialist society.

In the assessment of the contemporary observers and participants of cinema network administration and management, the convergence of the economic management techniques inherent in the economic planning system posed a serious challenge to the implementation of the ideological purposes of cinema in a socialist society. A considerable role played by economic interest and inclusion of cinema within the frameworks of the advancing socialist consumption standards appeared to have reformulated the positioning of the aesthetic and ideological value of cinema. The question of the extent to which contemporaries' fears might

have been grounded fall beyond the scope of this dissertation, and might be greatly challenged by the availability of sources. What appears to be beyond doubt, however, is that economic and ideological missions of cinema were coexisting in an uneasy tension during the 1960s, with the economic incentives bearing a considerable impact on the development of the LSSR cinema network.

In the context of 1960s increased commitment towards raising the standard of living of socialist citizens, this economic management structure aided the reformulation of the position of the audiences: cinemagoers and their preferences were to be taken seriously by local cinema management. While continuing its existence as the most important of mass arts, cinema and especially cinema services entered the field of developing socialist consumption standards. A study of the way in which these standards were defined in state classification schemes, as well as the daily forms of work in a local cinema setting, suggest that such standards as cutting-edge screening equipment, comfortable environment and pleasant viewing experience were playing an increasingly important role in the definition of quality cinema work. Within the context of the developing new norms of cinema, and especially cinema service, were constituted as a consumer good, besides its continued role as an educational force in socialist society.

The economic role of cinemas and the ongoing reframing of cinema services as an object of consumption bore multiple consequences for the status of cinema audiences. The assessment of cinema's economic performance established the cinema attendance rates as the central measure of cinema's economic success. In cinema network, and especially for the managers of local cinema enterprises, this posed a complex task of managing the effects of the presence of viewers' agency: cinemagoers could choose which films to see and cinemas to visit. In addition, in the context of multiplying array of cultural activities one could pass their free time on, potential cinemagoers could choose different cultural products altogether. In response, cinema managers found themselves seeking ways to attract viewers to their cinemas. This

process reflected the autonomous presence of the audience, as opposed to audience as an entity acted upon by the Soviet state apparatus. Moreover, the factor of audience agency prompted both the negotiations and policies in cinema administration and influenced decisions of local management alike.

In terms of the norms of consumption of cinema and cinema services, the everyday forms of cinema work began gearing towards acknowledgement of consumer agency as well. While the push towards providing good service in a trade sector reaches back as far as the 1930s, the new norms of socialist consumption emerging in the 1960s did put the viewer-consumer ahead of the cinema worker-service provider. Much of the cinema service was dedicated both to understanding local viewers' preferences in terms of films screened and a pleasant service provided, as witnessed by the format of questionnaires. Cinemas strove to satisfy the new consumer demands at that time promoted across the USSR, leaning towards modes of work designed to attract the audiences rather than to act upon them in the ideological terms.

Overall, the centralized planning structure governing the LSSR cinema network in the 1960s opened the space for the pursuit of income (if not profit) akin to that in the market settings. Not only did managers of cinema network show a lively interest in meeting their planning targets, but the economic arrangement they were working under, the growing urban populations, multiplication of new cinema enterprises, and expansion of the alternative forms of leisure led to the emergence of the rudimentary forms of competition that they sometimes sought to control by appealing to the state agencies. Importantly, processes like the pursuit of income, inclination to respond to demand and rudimentary competition were not emerging at the margins of the state socialist cinema network economy, as was the case with such practices as blat or the second economy under state socialist regimes. These practices were developing within state managed cinema network, thus posing additional questions for further inquiries

into the economic functioning not only of cinema network, but also of state socialist trade and service sectors.

List of abbreviations

BC – Board of Cinefication
BPSFA - Bureau of the Propaganda of Soviet Film Art
CPSU – Communist Party of the Soviet Union
ECCPD - Executive Committee of a Council of People's Deputies
FRA – Film Rentals Agency
IAB – Information and advertisement bureau
LFS – Lithuanian Film Studio
LSSR – The Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic
NEP – New Economic Policy
RSFSR – The Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
SCC – The LSSR State Cinematography Committee

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