Abstract
In our paper we analyse the distribution and promotion of Italian films in English-speaking countries, using as privileged point of observation that of the *Istituti italiani di cultura all'estero* (Italian Cultural Institutes). We interviewed a number of them and other agencies or individuals that regularly screen and organize screenings of Italian films. We conclude that chance, special occasions, and random choices seem to drive much of this kind of distribution of Italian films in the Anglophone countries, a conclusion that is not a value judgement but rather an observation. We also note how a certain realist tendency of Italian cinema seems to be still accepted and promoted, as are social and political themes, in part thanks to many documentaries that do not always get distributed in Italy but that are often screened abroad. Finally, we hope this preliminary research will soon be complemented by other research of this kind, possibly in collaboration with scholars from other disciplines ranging from cultural economics to the sociology of organizations.

Keywords
*Istituti italiani di cultura all'estero* (Italian Cultural Institutes); film promotion and distribution; sociology of culture; Italian cinema abroad.

1. ITALIAN CINEMA GOES ABROAD

Like artists, films have regularly performed the role of “unofficial cultural ambassador[s]”. Chosen by specific institutions, they circulate and they are promoted because they represent a given culture, whether this is a real or alleged function. There is growing literature on this subject, in particular on the Cold War, which remains the most productive field of analysis for this kind of question. In the Italian context, an important contribution is that of Karl Schoonover who discussed the role Neorealism played in...
post-war relationship between Italy and the USA. We would like to address the issue from a different point of view: that of taste cultures, focusing in particular on the function that the agents involved in the diffusion of Italian films abroad have in the legitimation of Italian cinema in the context in which they operate.

Extant scholarship has analysed themes such as the changing role of the Italian film industry, from a focus on its art house cinema to its role as a major producer of genre films in the post-war period, the role of film diplomacy in initiating and maintaining international relationships, while a promising field of research on the reception of Italian cinema in diasporic communities has recently developed. However, it is still lacking a mapping of the agencies that are currently engaged in the diffusion of Italian cinema abroad. An analysis of these kinds of institutions, we believe, will allow us to understand who and what they are, how they operate, what mutual relations they have established, and which communities they address. The goal of this article is contribute to the knowledge of these processes, combining a historical approach in a broad sense (that is, paying attention to the identification of the phases, trends, and genres of Italian cinema that proved to be more suitable for an international circulation) with notions developed in areas such as cultural economics and the sociology of culture. The latter takes into account the role of these institutions in the mediation of national cinema, as well as the function of these films in moulding the taste of their audiences. In particular, we want to answer three questions:

a) Who or what is responsible for the international promotion of Italian cinema?

b) According to what mandate do they operate and what is their mission and intended goals?

c) How, if, and when do they work together? Does their work overlap or even conflict?

Rather than discussing the impact generated by the people or institutions that we believe are more interesting for our topic, we want to discuss first whether, rather than to what extent, certain cultural policies prove to be effective in terms of cultural value and thus to limit the scope of our research to surveying, rather than to measuring this field.

We focused primarily on the activities of the Istituti italiani di cultura all’estero (Italian Cultural Institutes, henceforth IIC), but we also take into account other organizations, which may or may not cooperate with the IIC or with other governmental institutions.

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Our main tools of inquiry are a series of questionnaires that we sent to the IICs and other stakeholders\textsuperscript{11}, but we occasionally also did interviews in person and elaborated data from websites and other official documents. We followed specific temporal and geographical restrictions: we took into account only the IICs operating in English-speaking countries (United Kingdom, Ireland, United States of America, Australia, Canada, Republic of South Africa), asking their representatives to answer a list of questions concerning their activities in recent years. We are aware of the fact that in such way we exclude other historical periods and countries of enormous interest, but we decided to follow such limitations due to the following interrelated factors. Working on contemporary initiatives allowed us to have easier access to data, but more importantly we thought that it was particularly stimulating to try to understand how the promotion of Italian cinema abroad has been undertaken in a period during which the strategies of the Italian national institutions seemed to have changed, shifting from direct financial intervention in favour of a restructuring of the indirect support measures, specifically in the form of tax credit, logistical and organisational support etcetera. In the words of Nicola Borrelli, General Director for Cinema at the Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo (Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism, henceforth MiBACT), there has been a shift from “state aid to efficient support” (“dall’assistenza al sostegno efficiente”)\textsuperscript{12}. Our choice to focus on Anglophone countries was motivated by three further reasons: the presence of Italian communities of recent or less recent formation, which are an elective audience for national cinema; the existence, in addition to IICs, of other groups related to the diaspora that often collaborate with the Institutes themselves; and the importance of these countries from an economic point of view. If the UK and Ireland are part of the same economic area of Italy, a fact that makes them interesting cases of study, the US market has historically been a major target for Italian cinema\textsuperscript{13}. As Diane Crane argued, in fact, although being difficult to access, the US market is a relevant source of revenues for European cinema – especially for a “major producer”, as Crane defines Italian industry\textsuperscript{14} – and in any case an easier market to penetrate than other large ones such as India, Japan, and China. To these mere economic reasons, we can add the prestige that the US market has always had for cinemas from other countries.

### 2. IIC AND THE PROMOTION OF ITALIAN CINEMA: A PRELIMINARY DESCRIPTION

According to the information provided by the Ministero degli Affari Esteri (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, henceforth MAE) there are currently 83 IICs operating in the principal

\textsuperscript{11} The questionnaires for IIC were fixed and standardized. Those for other stakeholders were adapted.


world capitals and in key cities at a regional level. The Law 401/1990 regulates the way they operate, and different projects to reform them were attempted in the early 2000s during the second Berlusconi cabinet, but they never came to fruition. According to this law, among the IICs’ tasks are:

a) to establish contacts with institutions, agencies and operators based in the host countries in order to promote proposals aimed at the dissemination of Italian culture;

b) to inform local communities about Italian cultural life;

c) to organise cultural manifestations and exhibitions;

d) to support the cultural development of Italian communities abroad, so as to facilitate their integration in the host country as well and maintain a vital relationship with the native country;

e) to help Italian scholars and students in foreign countries;

f) to promote Italian language abroad, by means of collaboration with lecturers of the hosting country’s universities, as well as of Italian universities.

IICs depend on MAE, a fact that leads us to point out a first important aspect: the promotion of national cinema abroad is delegated by the State to entities that follow different mandates. Acting under the auspices of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the IICs are diplomatic tools in all respects. This is not the case for other agencies which also work for the promotion of Italian cinema abroad, most importantly Filmitalia, the main institution of this kind, which falls within the orbit of the Istituto Luce – Cinecittà, formally a private company but whose sole shareholder is the Ministero dell’Economia e delle Finanze (Ministry of Economy and Finance), and “whose rights […] are exercised by the MiBACT”. In addition to this, the Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico (Ministry of Economic Development) supports the distribution of Italian cinema through ICE-Agenzia per la promozione all’estero e l’internazionalizzazione delle imprese italiane (an agency that supports the business of Italian companies abroad), which in turn cooperates for this purpose with ANICA, the association of Italian film producers and distributors. Besides these public and state-funded institutions, a variety of other entities contribute in different ways to bring Italian films to non-Italian audiences: film festivals, institutions, cinemas, which, often in collaboration and economic cooperation with Filmitalia or IICs, decided to screen these films. Such a fragmented practice of intervention (that, as Zan et al. argue, affects more generally the public support for performing arts and not just cinema), may of course be interpreted as a symptom of a poorly coordinated system and the General Director for Cinema at the MiBACT has clearly expressed his concerns about the risk of “overlapping initiatives and dispersing

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15 “Istituti Italiani di Cultura”, accessed September 17, 2016. http://www.esteri.it/mae/it/politica_estera/cultura/retieic.html. As of 2007 there is also an IIC on Second Life, which we did not consider for our research.


17 This definition is taken from the Filmitalia website, accessed September 20, 2016, www.filmitalia.org. Filmitalia also organizes yearly showcases of Italian films for foreign distributors, see catalogue of the Italian Screenings, Film&Docs, Bari, July 2nd-5th, 2015.


financial resources. However, at the same time the existence of different agencies involved in the international diffusion of the same cultural goods can also be seen as the inevitable sign of a “mature” phase of the organization of the culture; one in which for several historical reasons cultural policies are implemented by a variety of public and private subjects, whose activity often finds its reasons at a local – rather than at a central – level. These historical reasons, according to Paul DiMaggio, may include the increasing demand for cultural goods that turns into an “inflationary spiral”, and the decisive intervention of the State in the financial support of arts. A closer look at the programmes offered by the IICs and the criteria for their selection of films will help better explain what we have just outlined.

3. Questionnaires

In order to try to map out the presence of Italian cinema in English-speaking countries we decided to submit a number of questions first and foremost to the IICs. We reached out to thirteen of them, all the institutes active in English-speaking countries. Seven of them replied to our questions. Furthermore, we questioned a few different institutions, directors of festivals, programmers in important film venues in the countries we considered. These were Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò at New York University, probably together with the local IIC the most important centre for the promotion of Italian culture in New York City; Dennis Lim, Director of Programming of the Film Society at Lincoln Center, one of the key film venues for international, independent, and art house cinema again in New York City; Michelle Carey, the Artistic Director of the Melbourne International Film Festival, the most important film festival of the region; and CinemaitaliaUK, a private organization which regularly organizes screenings of Italian films in London. Finally, we interviewed Carla Cattani, the Chief Operating Officer at Filmitalia, on their role and how they cooperate with other institutions.

Before highlighting, in the next section, some of the trends and recurrent films, events, typologies of films screened in the IICs or in other venues but with the cooperation of the IICs, we would like to point out two issues. First, all the IICs we interviewed responded positively to our first question, that is if in recent times the institute screened any film or organized events film-related. This is a sign that cinema still has a role in the promotion of Italian culture abroad: while this may seem elementary, it also speaks

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20 Borrelli, “Le politiche pubbliche per il settore cinematografico”, 215. All translations are the authors’.
23 This is the list of questions (in Italian): “Avete organizzato iniziative di cinema negli ultimi tempi?; Se sì, potrebbe brevemente descrivere che cosa?; Con quale frequenza?; Con la collaborazione di quali entità, istituti, organizzazioni?; Se fosse possibile, avete una lista di film che avete proiettato?; Avete collaborato con presentazioni di film in occasione del lancio nelle sale?; Attori, registi, critici, o altre personalità del cinema o legate al cinema hanno partecipato ai vostri eventi?; Se no, per quale motivo non vengono organizzate iniziative relative al cinema?; Mancanza di fondi? Poco interesse? Altri motivi?”. All the interviews with the IICs were conducted in Italian.
24 See appendix.
25 On the importance of this institution in the cultural life of New York, see an interview with the director Stefano Albertini and the late Baroness Mariuccia Zerilli-Marimò for the twentieth anniversary of its foundation. S. Vaccara, “Casa Italiana della NYU. Una grande potenza italiana in America". America Oggi, October 11, 2010.
to the permanence of an art form which has been much discarded in the new media landscape, one where its role is possibly still re-configuring. Second, the IICs propose a mix of regular and occasional events, both organized alone and with the collaboration of a variety of different institutions: film festivals and retrospectives occupy a relevant place in this cultural geography.

4. Film Events and Collaborations

As it is the case with other kind of events, the IICs both run film events on their own or in collaboration with events organized by others. Four Italian films, for example, were screened at the Dublin International Film Festival 2016 with the cooperation of the local IIC: three films (C’era una volta il West, Sandra, and Ultima Fermata) were part of an homage to Claudia Cardinale, who also attended the festival, and the recent Vergine Giurata was also screened. The IIC of Edinburgh (which covers Scotland and Northern Ireland) is partner of an Italian Film Festival that takes place in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, and Inverness. Directors Pierfrancesco Diliberto and Matteo Oleotto attended the 2016 edition. In the region, Italian films are also regularly screened in festivals like the Glasgow Film Festival or the International Film Festival in Edinburgh. Because of its location, in one of the world’s highest concentrations of film culture, the IIC in Los Angeles collaborates with an incredible number of film festivals: Palm Springs International Film Festival, New Mexico Italian Film & Culture Festival, Los Angeles, Italia Film Fashion and Art Fest, Newport Beach Film Festival, Panorama Italia@World Fest Houston (Texas), EU Film festival (festival del Cinema Europeo organizzato da Consoli ati e Istituti di Cultura europei a Los Angeles), Cinema Italian Style, Cinema Little Italy (San Diego), San Diego Italian Film Fest, Milan International Film Fest (MIFF), and Social World Film Fest, and, starting 2017, San Pedro International Film Festival and Santa Barbara International Film Festival. Furthermore, 2016 marked the first edition of the Taormina Film Festival in Los Angeles. The list is long, but it gives a sense of the interactions and collaborations that the IICs undertake. The IICs frequently collaborate with a number of other institutions or organizations regarding film events. For example, the IIC in Montreal has recently collaborated with a remarkable array of festivals, museums, and film theatres: “Festival International du Film sur l’art, Annecy Cinema Italian, Cinémathèque Québécoise, Museo McCord Casa d’Italia, Société de développement commercial Petite-Italie marché Jean-Talon, Cinéma Beaubien, Italian Contemporary Film Festival (Toronto), Festival des Film du Monde, Università Concordia, Università di Montreal, Università Laval Société Dante Alighieri di Quebec, Cinéma Ex-centris, Cinema Guzzo, Centro Leonardo da Vinci.”

All of the IICs we contacted listed for us a number of different institutions they collaborated with, which demonstrates how no IIC operates “in isolation” from the cultural life of the city and regions where they are located.

In some cases, films become a cultural item within a larger constellation of cultural icons that are promoted and sponsored. An interesting synergy between cinema and

26 This is one of the main themes in contemporary Cinema and Media Studies. See, among many contributions, F. Casetti, The Lumière Galaxy. Seven Key Words for the Cinema to Come, New York: Columbia University Press, 2015, and S. Arcagni, Visioni Digitali. Video, web e nuove tecnologie, Turin: Einaudi, 2016.

27 See brochure of the “Audi Dublin International Film Festival, Italian strand”, printed by the IIC Dublin.


29 Interview with Laura Molé, Segreteria di Direzione; IIC Montreal, February 15, 2016.
another art is the one proposed in Dublin, called “Thursdays at the Opera”: between 29th October 2015 and 25th February 2015 the IIC sponsored biweekly screenings of operas, introduced by Deirdre O’Grady, Emeritus Professor of Italian and Comparative Studies at the University College Dublin. Opera is still one of the main assets of Italian culture abroad, and this specific set of screenings was organized in collaboration with Unitel Classica, “one of the world’s leading producers and distributors of classical music for audiovisual media (TV, DVD, cinema, new media)”.30

5. CITIES: LONDON, NEW YORK, AND MELBOURNE

We collected a significant amount of material on three cities, which can serve both as specific case studies and to highlight how certain dynamics may function in different locations as well. New York City is one of the cinéphile capitals of the world, one of the cities in general that offers more opportunities to filmgoers. Italian films play a decisive part in this, and there is even a website which promotes the screenings of all the Italian films in the city.31 For MoMA’s (Museum of Modern Art) cinema alone, we counted as many as 27 film retrospectives or events solely dedicated to Italian cinema between 2003 and 2015.32 This means that every year the most important museum of contemporary art in the city runs an average of two/three events on Italian cinema, with films by a variety of directors and different topics from premieres of restored films to “Filmmaker in Focus” series dedicated to single Italian filmmakers. Most of these events are organized in collaboration with the local IIC. To this, we need to add all the single Italian films that are screened in other yearly retrospectives, such as “To Save and Project” (an annual series dedicated to restored films), or “An Auteurist History of Film”. At the Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò screenings are regularly held, and, as they told us, “Often our film events are so popular that many people cannot find seats and we open another small room for 40 people”.33 The main auditorium itself has 88 seats. Furthermore, two festivals completely dedicated to contemporary Italian cinema take place every year in New York City: “Open Roads: New Italian Cinema”, which takes place in June at the Film Society Lincoln Center, co-organized with Istituto Luce - Cinemà in collaboration with the local IIC, and NICE USA (November), organized by the IIC with NICE (New Italian Cinema Events), which also organizes similar events in Russia. Italian films in New York are also distributed theatrically, and the IIC is involved in this too: “In the occasion of theatrical releases this IIC is active in the promotion and advertising of events, in collaboration with film distributors; occasionally we also organize meetings with authors (the most recent case is that of Matteo Garrone)”34. This is the case in Los Angeles as well, where there is a collaboration with Landmark Theatres, both for new films (Le meraviglie by Alice Rohrwacher, La mafia uccide solo d’estate by Pierfrancesco Diliberto, Anime nere by Francesco Munzi) or re-releases, for example of the restored version of Roma città aperta by Roberto Rossellini.

32 We extrapolated the data from the MoMA website, accessed September 17, 2016 http://www.moma.org.
33 Interview with Julian Sachs, Program Media Coordinator, and Stefano Albertini, Director, of Casa italiana Zerilli-Marimò at New York University, March 22, 2016.
34 Interview with Fabio Troisi, Attaché for Cultural Affairs at IIC New York, February 4, 2016.
In Melbourne something similar happens. The local IIC in fact organizes films previews in collaboration with the Palace Cinemas (LIFF - Lavazza Italian Film Festival), retrospectives of Italian directors organized with the Melbourne Cinematheque, ACMI. The Melbourne International Film Festival also regularly features Italian films, and in some cases also retrospectives dedicated to Italian cinema, such as, in 2014, one dedicated to Commedia all’Italia. The artistic director, Michelle Carey, told us how they operate: “We tend to get everything ourselves direct from the filmmakers or sales agents and market directly to the audience but we have had some promotional partnerships with the IIC here in Melbourne. We did a screening of La dolce vita with Gucci in 2011, which sold out very quickly.” This is important because it highlights how occasionally private companies particularly interested in film promotions, such as the Italian fashion firm Gucci, participate in these kinds of events. Like New York City and London, Melbourne is also a city with a large community of Italians or people of Italian lineage. Carey signals how “we also work closely with Il Globo Italian newspaper, and Italian Radio (SBS) to promote Italian films and guests to the (very large) expat community (we have over 70,000 Italian-born people and nearly 280,000 of Italian ancestry living in Melbourne)”. We see then how in Melbourne a number of different agencies, possibly with different goals, make possible screenings of Italian films: besides the IIC, we have a film festival, private companies, local not-governmental Italian institutions, local media in Italian or for the Italian-Australian community. This may be a specific case, as Carey affirms, “Melbourne has a close love affair with all things Italian”, but these kind of dynamics can be found in similar forms in other cities as well. What may be peculiar to this city is how an interest for Italian cinema becomes also interest for an Italian film produced in the city: in fact, a local film called Lygon St: Si parla italiano about the Italian community in the 1960s and 1970s was presented at the MIFF in 2013, in the section Australian Showcase, and, according to Carey, “It was a huge hit selling out many sessions and it went on to have a cinema release in the Nova Cinema (in Lygon St)”.

London is a peculiar case for different reasons. It is one of the cities in the world with the largest presence of Italian expats, both short term and long term emigrants: Clara Caléo Green, who has founded and runs CinemaItaliaUK, estimated that they are around 500,000. The local IIC organizes screenings once a month for the series “Salon Italia (Film Classici)”, with introductions and post-screening discussions, together with more occasional events. Different from other cities, London also has a regular event

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36 Interview with Michelle Carey, Artistic Director of the Melbourne International Film Festival, March 24, 2016.
showing Italian films, organized by CinemaItaliaUK. To describe their work, its director talks about “a permanent film theatre where it is possible to watch films which could not get to England otherwise”. It is interesting to note how besides introductions and discussions with the director or actors/actresses, CinemaItaliaUK also proposes “food tasting of Italian products which are offered by Italian films based in London”. The screenings take place in two historical film theatres in the city: Genesis Cinema (East London) and Regent Street Cinema (Central London). This experience is interesting for at least three reasons: first, by proposing events on a regular basis it facilitates the creation of a habitual audience, changing drastically the way Italian cinema is experienced in the city; second, like the case of Opera in Dublin, the presence of food products (another great Italian cultural asset) shows how cinema can be promoted and distributed together with the other jewels in the crown of Italian culture, understood in the broadest sense; finally, these films are showed in two of the most important and oldest film theatres of London, central both geographically and iconically, showing again how Italian cinema can still occupy a predominant place within the cultural landscape of a city, and incidentally also how films are indeed still screened in film theatres as well.

6. TRENDS AND TOPICS

Which kind of Italian cinema is proposed in these Anglophone countries? Which trends emerge? What is neglected and what is shown? We could say, perhaps unsurprisingly, that two trends emerge: the constant presence of classics of Italian cinema, in particular evergreens such as Neorealism and the authors of the beginning of the 1960s, and the attention to new films. Some examples will suffice. On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of his death, a series of films by Pier Paolo Pasolini was screened at the IIC of Edinburgh. In Sydney, recently the IIC screened some of the most renowned films of the quintessential Neorealist director Roberto Rossellini: Paisà, Stromboli (Terra di Dio), Viaggio in Italia, Germania anno zero, Roma città aperta. As we have seen, the promotion of contemporary films is the main focus of many initiatives organized by the IICs, and many have specific series dedicated to the new Italian cinema, for example in Dublin contemporary films are screened every other Thursday.

40 This, for example, is the list of films showed by CinemaItaliaUK in 2015 and 2016 (until May): Spaghetti Story by Ciro de Caro, Smetto quando voglio by Sydney Sibilia, Song e Napule by Manetti Bros, Viva la Libertà by Roberto Andò, L’arte della felicità by Alessandro Rak, La seduta della felicità by Carlo Mazzacurati, The Great European Disaster Movie by Annalisa Piras, L’uomo che verrà by Giorgio Diritti, La Trattativa by Sabina Guzzanti, Scusate se esisto by Riccardo Milani, Le cose belle by Agostino Ferrente, Se chiudo gli occhi non sono più qui by Vittorio Moroni, Fear & Desire by Ludovica Fales, Il nome del figlio by Francesca Archibugi, N-CAPACE by Eleonora Danco, Via Castellana Bandiera by Emma Dante, Se Dio vuole by Edoardo Falcone, Sara un Paese Nicola Campiotti, Senza Lucio by Mario Sesti, Fantozzi by Luciano Salce, Ricomincio da tre by Massimo Troisi, NapolIslam by Ernesto Pagano, Io e lei by Maria Sole Tognazzi, Noi e la Giulia by Gennaro Nunziante, If Only I Were That Warrior by Valerio Ciriaci, Negotiating Amnesia by Paolo Pintacuda, Banane by Andrea Jublin, Le cose belle by Agostino Ferrente, Se chiudo gli occhi non sono più qui by Vittorio Moroni, Fear & Desire by Ludovica Fales, Pane e tulipani by Silvio Soldini, Agata e la tempesta by Silvio Soldini, Dopo mezzanotte by Davide Ferrario, The Protagonists by Luca Guadagnino, Ridendo e scherzando. Ritratto di un regista all’italiana by Paolo and Silvia Scola, Gli ultimi saranno ultimi by Massimiliano Bruno, La felicità è un sistema complesso by Gianni Zanasi, Io che amo solo te by Marco Ponti, Quo Vado? by Gennaro Nunziante, If Only I Were That Warrior by Valerio Ciriaci, Negotiating Amnesia by Alessandra Ferrini, Belluscione. Una storia siciliana by Franco Maresco, Influx by Luca Vullo.

41 Interview with Carlotta Tilli, Communication Department at CinemaItaliaUK, May 19, 2016.

42 “Una degustazione gratuita di prodotti made in Italy offerti da aziende italiane di stanza a Londra”.

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Besides these two main trends, there are events organized for specific occasions, for example for the Holocaust International Memorial Day (the film *Binario 21* was screened in Dublin), the Milan EXPO in 2015 (series “Slow Food on Film” in Los Angeles), or other interests that the IIC may have, for example in Los Angeles the institute dedicates “special focus to young emerging directors and to social themes, especially those that can help to know the Italian *impegno* in the world”\(^{43}\). While often the logic that guides these choices seems random, this is not always the case. Valeria Rumori of the IIC Los Angeles notes how “Also following the directives of the MAE, our institute organizes specific initiatives like the week of Italian language in the world, or specific anniversaries during which we screen themes related to the occasion”\(^{44}\). This denotes how some central, governmental coordination is in place. Other reasons, however, lie behind the decision to show certain films. At Casa Zerilli-Marimò, for example, they combine their “event planning with the calendar of festivals, theatrical releases and re-issue of classics, paying particular attention to important directors and actors/actresses who visit New York”\(^{45}\).

The rationale behind the distribution and promotion of Italian cinema is naturally very different for the two film critics and programmers that we interviewed: their choices are not at all based on the promotion of Italian cinema and culture in general. Carey highlights how the reason for choosing an Italian film is similar to the decision to choose one of another nationality: “With all films, we select on the strength of the film primarily – is it a unique piece of cinema? Will it find an audience? Is this a special filmmaker that we want to support?”\(^{46}\). However, Carey also notes how “it’s also about having a variety of types and genres of films represented. We have a section for school children called Next Gen and one of the major languages taught is Italian so we always have Italian films – and they are very popular with children. I also like to have some ‘broader’ films included, such as the genre film *Suburra* from this year; or Paolo Virzi’s *Human Capital*, which was very very popular, we had to put on repeat screenings”. That is, what is at stake are artistic reasons (“strength of a film”, and she also states: “I am always looking for newer experimental talent as well – we love Pietro Marcello, for instance”), pedagogical ones (the possibility of using films as a language tool), and the desire to choose films of a variety of types and genres. Dennis Lim of the Film Society at Lincoln Center also points to artistic reasons: “In most cases, it’s simply a matter of seeking out the most interesting new Italian films – whether I see them at screenings in Rome or on the festival circuit – so as to bring them to New York audiences”, but at the same time he is also well aware of the necessity to bring a variety of films in a city with a big and variegated audience like New York City: “Our annual festival of contemporary Italian cinema, *Open Roads: New Italian Cinema*, is a wide-ranging showcase that encompasses commercial and independent work. We also include Italian films in the New York Film Festival (which generally favors what you might call auteur cinema), NYFF Projections (the festival’s experimental sidebar), New Directors/New Films (for emerging filmmakers), and Art of the Real (for nonfiction and hybrid work)”\(^{47}\). This is a wide range of a number of different typologies of Italian cinema\(^{48}\), to which we can also

\(^{43}\) Interview with Valeria Rumori, Director at IIC Los Angeles, February 5, 2016.

\(^{44}\) Interview with Valeria Rumori.

\(^{45}\) Interview with Julian Sachs and Stefano Albertini.

\(^{46}\) Interview with Michelle Carey.

\(^{47}\) Interview with Dennis Lim, Director of Programming of the Film Society at Lincoln Center New York, March 30, 2016.

\(^{48}\) This is the list of films showed recently at the Film Society at Lincoln Center, followed by the festival
add retrospectives which take place in other venues, among others the Anthology Film Archives where a massive two-part retrospective on the *Giallo* took place.\(^{49}\)

7. CONCLUSIONS

Diane Crane observed that film policies prove to be more effective in the domestic context than at an international level, insofar as they “contribute to the viability of some national film industries […] but, for the most part, they do little to enhance the capacity of other countries to compete with the American film industry”\(^{50}\). Our final remarks confirm this vision and are necessary provisional: they indicate some trends and common features among the different experiences that we researched. Our overarching conclusion is that chance, special occasions, and random choices seem to drive much of the distribution of Italian films, in the Anglophone countries, at least as far as the IICs and most of the partners they work with are concerned. Films – especially contemporary ones – are often chosen for contingent reasons, which privilege the suitability of certain titles at a local level, the presence of directors or actors/actresses in town, or fit into pre-existing schedules of special occasions such as anniversaries and memorial days.

This is certainly due to a lack or scarcity of coordination at a central level: it is important to highlight, for example, how none of the interviewees include the *interesse culturale* label in their selection criteria. The MiBACT accords the *interesse culturale* qualification to a number of films whose production process and artistic value are deemed to respond to certain requisites; such a label may entail financial support and/or facilitations for the distribution of such films. However, the agencies which have the mandate to promote Italian culture abroad (the IICs) do not seem to consider this qualification in any particular way. It is not our intention to express a negative judgement on this lack of coordination, but to signal that it exists. This may be due to at least two factors. On the one hand the fact that the IICs depend on the MAE and not MiBACT implies different priorities relating to the selection and promotion of cultural material. On the other hand there is the fact that *haphazardness*, according to a former director of one of these institutes, Ugo Perone is one of the key characteristics of how these institutes work.\(^{51}\) The reasons for this may include the constant uncertainty regarding the


financial resources available for these agencies and the lack of a standardized, average level of efficiency. What our research confirms is that the way the IICs work seems to be due mostly to local contingencies and it is impossible to highlight common strategies between them and other institutions, but also between IICs operating in similar contexts. This happens despite some general indications (as we have seen in the case of the IIC Los Angeles) seem to exist. The geopolitical role of the IICs in connection to cinema is a theme which deserves further research, studies which could be focused not just on recent years (such as ours) but also on the past. It would be interesting, for example, to understand whether or not randomness has been the key criteria in the past too, or if strong, central, and governmental indications guided the work of these institutions. This could be linked to the activities of other non-governmental institutions, such as the Società Dante Alighieri and other agencies that promoted Italian culture abroad.

However, this necessity to answer to contingent exigencies brings positive and unexpected results. The IICs, for example, regularly screen Italian films which even in Italy often do not benefit from theatrical distributions, or that are poorly distributed: this is the case of a huge number of documentaries which are screened abroad, and that over the last few years turned to be a sort of example of Italian cinema for diplomatic functions, if not an exportation product – and this trend seems to be growing, with the success in worldwide festivals and events of the films by Michelangelo Frammartino, Gianfranco Rosi, and Roberto Minervini.

The importance of this recent New Wave of Italian documentary filmmakers also points to something else: the permanence of an idea of the realist vocation of Italian cinema, which manifests itself as well in the on-going popularity of Neorealist films in Anglophone countries. Neorealism is in fact still the focus of retrospectives and homages. It is not just Neorealism as the historical phenomenon that occurred in the late 1940s, but the broader understanding of Neorealism, similar to what Alberto Farassino defined as “the Italian film, the national language that possibly we are not able to speak anymore [...] but the only one we can study at school, the only one that allows us to make a good impression in society and gives us an identity abroad”53. In other words, the Italian cinema that seems to be most often screened is that which talks about ‘real’ problems, the present, and social and political issues. Even when it comes to recent films, the films most often screened related to organized crime (La mafia uccide solo d’estate, Song e Napule, Anime nere), the Holocaust and World War II (L’uomo che verrà), or contemporary issues, such as precarity and unemployment, whether in the form of dramas (Tutta la vita davanti) or comedies (Smetto quando voglio).

It also needs to be noted how sometimes films are presented not as autonomous objects, but as items belonging to a series of consumer goods. Films are in fact associated with other products typical of Italian heritage and lifestyle: specifically and most importantly, opera, fashion, and food. A certain kind of cinema and these other products become then part of a mix of Italian goods that are proposed as legitimate ones. The promotion of these products, and in particular of cinema, probably reflects a pre-existing idea of the target audience of these events, and is rooted in the tastes of the interviewed.

cultural intermediaries (critics, curators, diplomatic attachés) whose structure and composition needs to be further examined, perhaps starting from the words and concepts they use to motivate their choices. Moreover, the promotion of cinema in combination with other goods speaks to a certain ambiguity on the part of the IICs: that is, as Perone again notes, what it is meant by the word culture, which is understood as both a fully fledged marketable product that is ‘made in Italy’, and as an artistic expression of the country as a multi-layered reality. According to Perone, when the former vision prevails IICs tend to work as sales agencies, in the second case they are to be considered as institutions, and the IICs we interviewed seem to be doing, at least potentially, both things. This oscillation between a “commercial” and a “cultural” mission, can be interpreted – again – as a sign of uncertainty and lack of coordination, more than a compromise between conflicting attitudes. Nevertheless one may think that IICs, when they promote Italian cinema, work along the lines of the cultural institutions that, according to a trend described by Paul DiMaggio (whose research is dedicated to the American context of the 1960s and 1970s), benefit from public patronage and government aid. State intervention and funding, according to DiMaggio “paradoxically push the nonprofit arts toward dependence on the marketplace” as far as the recipients of such aid are requested to adopt the parallel logics of access (increase the size of the public they serve), accountability (report about financial data and administrative practices), and constituency formation. “Many local agencies – DiMaggio concludes – define themselves as ‘chambers of commerce for the arts’, further legitimating the notion of culture as a public service linked to economic growth.” This emphasis on the local dimension, which applies to most of our examples, leads us to conclude that IICs do not legitimate or consecrate the films they screen, in the way that other institutions involved in these processes do. From a different perspective, they do not transform those films from cultural resources into cultural capital, that is do not turn them from objects employed by geographically defined communities as well as taste communities, into items whose value is defined at a central level, then widely recognized and circulated. The IICs screen or help screen both films that we can consider consecrated (classics, Neorealist films, films belonging to genres now accepted by cinéphiles, like the Giallo) and films that are more generally legitimate (documentaries, recent films d’impegno, and the like). In the former case the IICs function as translators of objects that have been consecrated by other institutions or “reputational entrepreneurs”: mostly universities, and festivals and film critics/curators as well, all subjects that the IICs often collaborate with. In the latter the process seems to be more nuanced, and the choice to screen lesser-known products with poor theatrical distribution suggests that the IICs may have a role in the legitimation of these films. However in both cases the “cultural schemas” at stake seem to be the same: the realist vocation of Italian cinema, its capacity to speak in the present tense and to provide points of view and artistic elaboration of important social and historical processes (Mafia, the Holo-

54 A quantitative analysis of the data retrieved in our survey is beyond our competence and beyond the scope of this article, but we cannot exclude that, when applied to the same sample of interviews, other tools (such as cluster analysis, or lexical correspondence analysis) might reveal significant patterns that our descriptive approach was not able to single out.
57 M.P. Allen, A.E. Lincoln, “Critical Discourse and the Cultural Consecration of American Films”, Social Forces, 82, 3 (2004): 871-893, for the distinction between cultural consecration and valorization, as well as for the definition of the notions of “cultural schemas” and “reputational entrepreneurs”.
caust etc.). Because of their contingent and often random programmes, IICs nevertheless reach the goal of inserting contemporary and classic Italian cinema into ordinary, daily consumption practices, by means of juxtaposing these films with other cultural goods significantly branded as Italian (food, fashion, opera). This, we repeat once more, is not a value judgement, but a merely descriptive approach; one that we hope could start the dialogue with scholars of other disciplines, from cultural economics to the sociology of organizations, who could help us more to understand these phenomena and interrogate critically the policies and organizational routines which we have begun to sketch out.

APPENDIX

Interviews

Email interviews with Italian Cultural Institutes:
• Dublin (Ireland), Linda Riolo59, February, 16, 2016.
• Edinburgh (Scotland), Segreteria, February 10, 2016.
• London (England), May 26, 2016.
• Melbourne (Australia), Carmela (Lina) Panetta, Director, February 2, 2016.
• Sydney (Australia), Segreteria, February 8, 2016.
• Los Angeles (USA), Valeria Rumori, Director, February 5, 2016.
• New York (USA), Fabio Troisi, Attaché for Cultural Affairs, February 4, 2016.
• Montreal (Canada), Laura Molé, Segreteria di Direzione, February 15, 2016.
• Toronto (Canada), Tiziana Miano, Executive Assistant, February 15, 2016.

Email interviews with other institutions and organizations:
• Casa italiana Zerilli-Marimò at New York University, Julian Sachs, Program and Media Coordinator and Stefano Albertini, Director, March 22, 2016.
• CinemaItaliaUK, Carlotta Tilli, Communication Department, May 19, 2016.

Interviews with individuals:
• Dennis Lim, Director of Programming of the Film Society at Lincoln Center, March 30, 2016 (email);
• Michelle Carey, Artistic Director of the Melbourne International Film Festival, March 24, 2016 (email);
• Carla Cattani April 22, 2016 (in person, office of Cinecittà - Istituto Luce, Rome).

59 When it is possible, we indicate the person or people we exchanged emails with, together with their role (in Italian or English) within the organization.