



Language and Cultural Nearness: Film Programming Strategies and Audience Preferences in Big Cities and Small Towns in the Netherlands 1934–1936

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INTRODUCTION

The following comparative analysis of the film programming strategies of cinemas in 22 towns in the Netherlands between 1934 and 1936 is a further elaboration of a paper I wrote with Jaap Boter (2009) on film distribution and exhibition in the Netherlands in 1934–1936. In that article, a short case study was presented on the programming strategies of cinemas in Amsterdam and how these strategies could be explained by the geographical position of the cinemas. We found that cinemas in the centre of the city tended to choose a particular level of specialisation in the programming: either older American films and European films, recent American films, or recent European films (especially German and Dutch films). The so-called neighbourhood cinemas were characterised by mixed

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programming. Given the lack of other theatres in the vicinity, the latter could be explained by the need to cater to the wide-ranging tastes of audiences living in neighbourhoods. From the evidence of Amsterdam, one could hypothesise that cinemas in smaller towns with little or no competition would be likely to screen mixed programmes in order to attract as wide an audience as possible and that the size of the potential audience was probably too small to support specialised programming.

Research by Kathryn Fuller-Seeley (2008) into film exhibition in small towns in the US points in the same direction. Fuller-Seeley analysed the reports of exhibitors presented in the section ‘What the Picture Did For Me’ in the *Motion Picture Herald* and shows that small town exhibitors wished to programme films that pleased a heterogeneous audience as they could not afford to only attract a segment of the local audience. But not only did the small town exhibitors distinguish themselves from more specialised cinema owners in the cities by the variety of their programmes, they also had at the same time to cater for particular preferences for, say, action, comedy, fast-paced plot, scenic locations, and American settings. These audiences liked real characters and were not interested in exotic places or high-class characters (Fuller-Seeley 2008: 191). So, Fuller-Seeley’s work suggests a similar difference in film tastes between cinemagoers in the cities and in the small towns of the US in the 1920s to that conjectured above.

After a discussion of the data and methods used in this study, this chapter begins with an analysis of differences in the programming strategies of cinemas across the Netherlands between 1934 and 1936. This broadly supports the idea of highly specialised cinemas being comparatively rare and, with a number of exceptions, located in the cities. However, we discover that by relaxing the criteria by which ‘specialised cinema’ is understood, it becomes apparent that in most small towns cinema owners practised either a pro-Dutch or pro-German film oriented programming strategy. The second part of the chapter focuses on film preferences in the small towns. Here, evidence is presented to suggest that while there was a general preference for Dutch films in small towns, this was not the case in the mining towns of Geleen and Heerlen, close to the German border, where a large German-speaking population watched films that suggested both the physical and cultural proximity of Germany. The importance of the relation between aspects of cultural representation in the form and content of a film and film preferences from different audiences has been pointed out by several authors. For example, Joseph Garncarz in his work on film preferences of European audiences argues that cultural nearness is

an important factor in understanding film preferences. Films can evoke feelings of cultural nearness not only because of their narratives and locations but also by the language in which film action is conducted (Garncarz 2015: 142–46). This is also noticed in research by Barrera and Bielby (2001) on immigrant audiences and the reasons why they watch programmes produced in their home countries. The presence of cultural aspects like religion, the settings, and language reinforced their cultural identity and were therefore important reasons to watch those shows. Cultural nearness even seems to play a role in the appreciation of Hollywood films by international audiences. In explaining the popularity of Hollywood films in foreign markets, Peter Miskell (2016) found that Hollywood films with a less obvious American appearance and manifestation reaped a higher percentage of their earnings on foreign markets than on the domestic market. In other words, international audiences seemed to have favoured Hollywood films with international settings and characters, made with international talents (director, scriptwriter, leading actors). Thus in explaining differences in film preferences, we should also pay attention to the way audiences might have felt culturally related to the films they favoured.

DATA SET AND METHOD

The data set used for this paper consists of the film programme data of 144 cinemas located in 22 cities and towns in the Netherlands. Included are the three big cities of Amsterdam (780,582 inhabitants), Rotterdam (592,767), and The Hague (476,346); the provincial cities of Utrecht, Haarlem, Groningen, and Eindhoven with more than 100,000 inhabitants; the smaller (provincial) cities of Apeldoorn, Dordrecht, Leiden, Maastricht, Nijmegen, Schiedam, and Tilburg with populations of between 50,000 and 100,000; the towns of Alkmaar, Heerlen, 's-Hertogenbosch and Zeist with populations between 10,000 and 50,000; and finally the small towns of Geleen, Tiel, Culemborg, and Zierikzee with less than 20,000 inhabitants.¹ (For an overview of the places see Table 16.2.) The cinemas in these towns represent about 40 per cent (359) of all cinemas in the Netherlands during that period (Sedgwick et al. 2012). The data set includes 26,059 film programmes on which were presented a total of 2411 individual film titles.

To analyse the distribution of the films over the cinemas a Latent Class Analysis (cluster analysis) is conducted.² Also known as the mixture model, a Latent Class Analysis is a statistical method that sorts large quantities of

data into clusters and is commonly used when the data do not suggest obvious patterns.³ It simultaneously clusters both cases (films) and variables (cinemas). As it addresses uncertainty in the output and assigns films to a certain cluster with a particular degree of certainty, a film may have a likelihood of 85 per cent of belonging to a cluster and a likelihood of 15% of belonging to cluster 3. The cluster analysis was performed on all feature length fiction films shown in 122 of the sample set of cinemas over the two-year period (January 1934 to December 1936)—those cinemas with incomplete programming information (less than 50 film titles) were left out. The cluster analysis offered insight into how cinemas differentiated themselves.

A further aspect to the analysis is that of the popularity of films being screened. However, box office data are only available for Geleen. Accordingly the popularity index, called the POPSTAT method developed by John Sedgwick is used (Sedgwick 2000: 70–73).⁴ This method is based on the idea that films screened for longer in bigger theatres will draw larger audiences than films playing for a shorter time in smaller cinemas. Sedgwick's method factors ticket prices into his estimation of POPSTAT. Unfortunately, this information is not available in the Netherlands for the period in question and hence cannot be included in the estimation of film popularity. A further difference is that the number of screenings that a film received is counted, rather than periods of time (weeks and half-weeks), making the estimate sensitive to cinemas which only opened their doors for a couple of days a week but which offered extra screenings whenever demand exceeded the usual scheduled number of screenings. Thus, here for each film, POPSTAT is estimated from the total number of screenings a film received; the seating capacity of the cinema(s) where the film was shown; and the billing status of the film—in the case of a double bill, the number of screenings received by each film is multiplied by 0.5 in order to spread the earnings over two films. So that results are comparable, estimates are made only for those films that could be followed 12 months from their premiere.

FILM PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES: THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE CLUSTERS OVER THE CINEMAS

Cluster analysis delivers eight clusters. Table 16.1 presents a summary of the characteristics of these. Cluster 1 is the biggest: almost half of the titles found in the data set (48 per cent) end up here. It is also the most heterogeneous, both in terms of the origin of the films and their vintage, with a large number of old films clustered here. Four of the clusters are strongly

Table 16.1 Programming clusters in Dutch cinemas, 1934–1936

	<i>Cluster 1</i> <i>(very) old</i> <i>films before</i> <i>1931</i>	<i>Cluster 2</i> <i>recent films</i> <i>1931–1936</i> <i>US</i>	<i>Cluster 3</i> <i>recent films</i> <i>1931–1936</i> <i>US &</i> <i>Europe</i>	<i>Cluster 4</i> <i>première films</i> <i>1934–1936</i> <i>Europe (NL)</i>	<i>Cluster 5</i> <i>première films</i> <i>1934–1936</i> <i>Duitsland</i> <i>(UFA)</i>	<i>Cluster 6</i> <i>première films</i> <i>1934–1936</i> <i>Europe</i>	<i>Cluster 7</i> <i>première films</i> <i>1934–1936</i> <i>US (Warn.</i> <i>Bros., First</i> <i>Nat. Pict.)</i>	<i>Cluster 8</i> <i>première</i> <i>films</i> <i>1934–1936</i> <i>US (MGM)</i>
Films before 1927	142	3	1	0	0	0	0	1
Films 1927–1930	244	5	4	0	0	0	0	1
Films 1931–1933	458	228	142	47	28	35	28	28
Films 1934–1936	249	115	194	99	94	71	69	50
Prod. year not known	69	2	1	1	1	0	0	0
DE	331	34	69	39	111	62	3	0
FR	91	7	46	11	3	6	2	1
GB	43	14	28	6	2	7	6	0
NL	10	0	1	15	2	2	1	1
US	551	289	172	61	0	20	84	78
Other countries	71	7	26	15	5	9	1	0
Prod. country not known	65	2	0	0	0	0	0	0

distinctive: While Cluster 5 is dominated by German films, Clusters 2, 7, and 8 each contain a substantial number of Hollywood productions. In contrast, Cluster 6 is less distinctive, but has a clear European character. Clusters 3 and 4 look very similar and only differ from one another marginally. Cluster 3 contains films that are slightly older and has more films from the US. Cluster 4 is slightly more oriented towards recent European films and contains the highest number of Dutch films (Table 16.1).

To what extent did particular cinemas screen films belonging to one cluster or another? If, for example, cluster 5 were to dominate, then that cinema is identifiable as a place where audiences watch German films. However, when characterising the programming of a cinema, it is necessary to look beyond the degree to which a cluster can be observed. For instance, if there is only one cinema in a town that programmes German films, this cinema will be understood by the local population as the place where German films are screened, even if these make up a small percentage of the total programming of that cinema.

The distribution of clusters across the sample of 122 cinemas shows that relatively few of them offered a sharply defined programming profile. Only 12 per cent (15 cinemas) had a programme that consisted of more than 50 per cent of films from one cluster. Table 16.2 shows that specialisation only really happened once there were five or more cinemas in a location, although three exceptions to this rule are of interest:

- There were only four cinemas in Nijmegen and yet one of these offered a distinctive selection of films.
- Although there were five cinemas in Tilburg, specialisation did not take place.
- Tiel only had two cinemas, yet one of them offered a clearly profiled selection of films.

The explanations for these exceptions vary. In fact, five cinemas in Nijmegen were operational, but one was excluded from the analysis because of a shortage of programme information. In Tilburg the *Cinema Royal* was excluded for the same reason. However, here it is interesting to note that by relaxing the 50 per cent rule a different perspective emerges. For example, the latest films from the US (Cluster 8) were only screened in the *Harmonie*. Thus, even though Cluster 8 films comprised 32 per cent of all films screened, it is very likely that local audiences perceived the *Harmonie* as a specialist cinema. In the same fashion, the *City Theatre* was the place

Table 16.2 Number of cinemas per place with dominant clusters

<i>City/Town</i>	<i>Inhabitants (average 1934 to 1936)</i>	<i>Numbers of cinemas screening more than 50 films</i>	<i>Number of cinemas with a dominant cluster of more than 50% of films</i>
Amsterdam	780,582	27	3
The Hague	476,346	19	1
Rotterdam	592,767	18	6
Utrecht	160,599	7	1
Alkmaar	30,087	6	1
Haarlem	129,041	5	1
Tilburg	87,051	5	0
Groningen	113,121	4	0
Leiden	72,934	4	0
Nijmegen	89,360	4	1
Eindhoven	100,118	3	0
Maastricht	65,436	3	0
's-Hertogenbosch	45,416	3	0
Apeldoorn	66,950	2	0
Heerlen	49,963	2	0
Schiedam	60,710	2	0
Tiel	12,658	2	1
Zeist	28,512	2	0
Culemborg	9452	1	0
Dordrecht	59,654	1	0
Geleen	14,277	1	0
Zierikzee	6922	1	0
Total		122	15

to go for slightly older US (Cluster 2) films, constituting 37 per cent of the films screened. Accordingly, although the 50 per cent threshold was not surpassed in Tilburg, a marked degree of specialisation is evident.

In Tiel, although there were just two cinemas, both specialised. The explanation for this is that had a single owner (J. M. Lureman), who, as a monopoly supplier, was able to programme each to meet the particular interests of what was a culturally divided community. Hence, over 50 per cent of the films programmed at the *Spaarbankgebouw* (650 seats) were Cluster 5 films, mostly German premieres. Of the rest, 17 per cent were old films originally released before 1931 (Cluster 1), and 13 per cent were other European premiere films (Cluster 4). In contrast, 37 per cent of films programmed at *The Luxor* (488 seats) were drawn from Cluster 4, complemented by 17 per cent of European and American released from

Table 16.3 Film cluster density amongst Dutch cinemas

<i>Cluster</i>	<i>Number of cinemas screening more than 50 per cent</i>	<i>Number of cinemas screening between 40–50 per cent</i>	<i>Number of cinemas screening between 30–40 per cent</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Cluster 1	0	1	1	2	2%
Cluster 2	5	4	10	19	16%
Cluster 3	2	4	8	14	11%
Cluster 4	1	14	13	28	23%
Cluster 5	5	0	3	8	7%
Cluster 6	2	0	0	2	2%
Cluster 7	0	0	2	2	2%
Cluster 8	0	1	3	4	3%
Total	15	24	40	79	65%

1931 onwards (Cluster 3) and 13 per cent were US premieres (Cluster 8). Lureman chose *The Luxor* to showcase Dutch films. Of the 17 Dutch titles he screened, 14 were premiered at the Luxor, and only 3 at the *Spaarbankgebouw*. Thus, in this small community, Dutch films largely premiered at *The Luxor*, while all German premieres took place at the *Spaarbankgebouw*.

These exceptions suggest that setting the specialist threshold at 50 per cent might be too restrictive. Accordingly, by relaxing the threshold from 50 to 40 per cent and then lower to 30 per cent, many more cinemas can be included in the analysis, throwing a much clearer light on how cinema programmes differed and responded to peculiar local circumstances. The results of this exercise can be found in Table 16.3.

It can be concluded from Table 16.3 that for the most part although exhibitors chose not to specialise exclusively in one type of film, they nevertheless made choices about what kind of films they programmed, with 65 per cent of the 122 cinemas that programmed more than 50 films between 1934 and 1936 offering distinctive programmes, where 30 per cent or more of film programmes can be categorised as belonging to a particular cluster. Table 16.3 also shows that the most common means for cinema owners to differentiate their cinemas was to select programmes featuring films classified under Cluster 4.

To find out whether there was a difference in film programming between urban and provincial locations, the total number of cinemas with a share of 30 per cent or more in any one cluster was compared across different-sized urban localities. Four categories are created: the big cities

with more than 100,000 inhabitants; bigger provincial cities with inhabitants between 50,000 and 100,000; smaller provincial cities with inhabitants ranging from 20,000 to 50,000; and finally, small towns with less than 20,000 inhabitants. High scores indicate those clusters that were most represented. A surprising outcome emerges from the results of this exercise. These are depicted in Graph 1, which shows Cluster 4 films (European premiere films—including **all** Dutch films—and US premiere films) dominated in two of the four categories, and Cluster 2 films (recent 1931–1936, US films) in the middle two (Fig. 16.1).

The big cities obviously had more possibilities for specialisation. As argued earlier, the tendency for cinemas to specialise increased when there were five or more cinemas located in the same area. In the big cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, each cluster generates the highest number of cinemas. In the smaller localities (fewer than 20,000 inhabitants) this number is reduced to two clusters. Cinema owners in these towns choose to profile their cinemas with Cluster 4 or Cluster 5 films, both oriented to European films, in particular Dutch and German films. It would seem apparent that exhibitors operating in the small towns believed these films to be more attractive to local audiences.

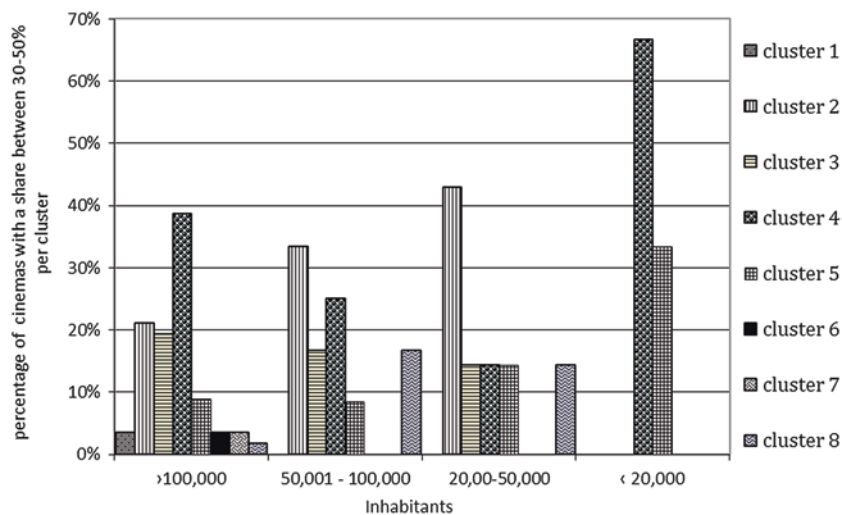


Fig. 16.1 Clusters with the highest share (percentage) per cinema divided in the number of inhabitants

LOCAL DIFFERENCES IN FILM TASTE: A COMPARISON OF THE LOCAL FILM TOP TEN

To investigate whether differences in programming strategies is a consequence of local differences in film taste, the total POPSTAT score for all films premiered in the Netherlands during the period is calculated. Table 16.4 shows that the top ten films comprise six Dutch films, and two apiece from the US and Germany. The presence of six Dutch films in the top ten is extraordinary as only 2 per cent of all films premiered in the Netherlands were Dutch in origin. The popularity of this set of films is confirmed by their collective presence on 11 per cent of all cinema programmes (Pafort-Overduin 2011: 125–39; 2013: 331–49). In other words, Dutch films were very popular with Dutch audiences (Table 16.4).

Contrasting the performance of these national top ten ranking films with their popularity in the 22 localities that feature in this study is the subject of Table 16.5, in which local rankings are obtained through their respective POPSTAT scores. The top film in Table 16.4 *De Jantjes* is never ranked below fifth position in any of the towns. In contrast, the films two films of Shirley Temple were not screened in certain localities during the two-year time frame: *Little Colonel* was not shown in Culemborg, Geleen,

Table 16.4 The top ten most popular films premiered in the Netherlands, 1934–1936

Rank	Title	Director	Country ^a	POPSTAT
1	<i>De Jantjes</i> (1934)	Jaap Speyer	NL	2402
2	<i>Bright Eyes</i> (1934)	David Butler	US	1731
3	<i>Blecke Bet</i> (1934)	Alex Benno & Richard Oswald	NL	1435
4	<i>Het meisje met den blauwen hoed</i> (1934)	Rudolf Meinert	NL	1395
5	<i>The Little Colonel</i> (1935)	David Butler	US	1182
6	<i>Mazurka</i> (1935)	Willy Forst	DE	1182
7	<i>Op hoop van zegen</i> (1934)	Alex Benno	NL	1173
8	<i>Malle gevallen</i> (1934)	Jaap Speyer	NL	1170
9	<i>De kribbebijter</i> (1935)	Henry Koster & Ernst Winar	NL	1150
10	<i>Wenn du jung bist, gehört dir die Welt</i> (1934)	Richard Oswald	DE	1127

^aThe International Standardization Organization (ISO) code is used for the abbreviations of the countries

Table 16.5 Local ranking of national top ten films

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Number of films not shown
<i>National ranking</i> →		De Janjies (NL, 1934)	Bright Eyes (US, 1934)	Blecke Bet (NL, 1934)	Meisje met den blauwen hoed (NL, 1934)	Little Colonel (US, 1935)	Mazurka (DE, 1935)	Op hoop van zegen (NL, 1934)	Malle gevallen (NL, 1934)	Kribbelbijter (NL, 1935)	Wenn du jung bist, gehört dir die Welt (DE, 1934)
Alkmaar	1	5	8	2	15	10	30	16	16	34	0
Amsterdam	2	3	5	9	4	13	15	12	14	1	0
Apeldoorn	1	4	6	3	10	11	6	10	9	20	0
Culemborg	2	0	2	3	0	7	3	2	5	0 ^a	3
Den Haag	1	2	9	5	24	4	16	8	3	69	0
Dordrecht	1	5	4	4	21	20	8	21	20	2	0
Eindhoven	4	6	2	14	8	1	5	19	15	55	0
Geleen	1	0 ^a	2	0	0	14	10	0	0	0	6
Groningen	1	4	9	8	7	15	3	2	20	51	0
Haarlem	1	2	7	14	8	9	3	6	13	27	0
Heerlen	5	1	0	17	0	16	0	0	20	16	4
Leiden	2	14	1	5	15	41	11	3	10	13	0
Maastricht	1	41	4	3	16	9	2	19	21	15	0
Nijmegen	1	26	12	9	43	10	12	6	16	54	0
Rotterdam	2	1	4	3	6	9	5	12	8	13	0
's-Hertogenbosch	3	3	25	24	1	7	19	0	14	21	1
Schiedam	1	19	2	5	17	17	6	3	18	10	0

(continued)

Table 16.5 (continued)

	De Jantjes (NL, 1934)	Bright Eyes (US, 1934)	Bleek Bet (NL, 1934)	Meisje met den blauwen hoed (NL, 1934)	Little Colonel (US, 1935)	Mazurka (DE, 1935)	Op hoop van zeggen (NL, 1934)	Malle gevalen (NL, 1934)	Kribbebijter (NL, 1935)	Wenn du jung bist, gehört dir die Welt (DE, 1934)	Number of films not shown
National ranking→	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Tiel	3	19	2	1	12	3	8	9	7	19	0
Tilburg	3	10	5	2	20	7	6	4	8	178	0
Utrecht	1	11	9	8	22	2	9	6	15	52	0
Zeist	1	8	16	24	18	18	0	16	2	16	1
Zierikzee	1	0 ^a	2	2	0 ^a	0	2	2	0	0 ^a	5
Total of 'not shown'	0	3	1	1	4	2	2	3	2	3	

^aThe film was screened but after the period set for the comparison of popularity (More than one year after its premiere on the Dutch film market)

Table 16.6 Week of arrival after the film's premiere in the Netherlands

<i>Film</i>	<i>Zierikzee</i>	<i>Culemborg</i>	<i>Geleen</i>
<i>Bright Eyes</i>	Week 61		Week 70
<i>Little Colonel</i>	Week 54		
<i>Wenn du jung bist (...)</i>	Week 83 & 84	Week 85	

Heerlen, and Zierikzee, and *Bright Eyes* was not shown in Culemborg, Geleen, and Zierikzee. However, closer inspection of these results shows that they are affected by the methodological decision to limit the circulation of new films to 12 months from their Dutch premiere. However, it turns out that *Bright Eyes* did reach Geleen and that both Shirley Temple films did reach Zierikzee, but more than a year after their first release. The same applies to the German film *Wenn du jung bist, gehört dir die Welt* positioned number ten on the national popularity list, taking more than 12 months to reach Zierikzee and Culemborg (see Table 16.6).

Thus, by the time audiences in Zierikzee and Culemborg got to see *Bright Eyes*, *Little Colonel*, and *Wenn du jung bist*, the films were at the very end of their respective runs, coinciding with a return to the large cities where they were now being screened in smaller cinemas. Zierikzee and Culemborg were both small communities with 9452 and 6902 inhabitants, respectively. The available screen time was limited to one cinema that operated only three days a week. The programming of these cinemas changed weekly, and when a film turned out to be popular, it simply got more than the usual screenings, for example, five instead of three screenings on Sunday. Films were seldom booked for a second week.

This points to a negative relationship between the available screening time in a certain locality and the number of weeks it took a popular film to get to the screen in that place after its premiere. In other words, audiences in places with limited screening time had to wait longer for popular films than audiences in places with an abundance of screening time. The conclusion from this is that the fact that few top ten films that did not reach Culemborg and Zierikzee was caused not by differences in local preferences but rather by economic factors.

However, the 'no-show' of films in Geleen and Heerlen requires a different explanation. Both settlements were more highly populated: Geleen had a population of 14,162 and Heerlen of 50,017. Geleen had one cinema, operating six days a week. Heerlen had three cinemas; two offered daily film shows, while one operated three days a week. Heerlen and

Geleen are distinct from the other towns in the data set, being located in the Limburg coalfield in the south of the Netherlands. The mining industry here had long been attracting foreign (especially German) workers (Langeweg 2011: 125–27).⁵ To better understand the under-representation of the national top ten films in Geleen and Heerlen requires that we investigate the demographic composition and migratory flows in these mining towns.

Between 1919 and 1930, almost 60 per cent of new miners employed in the Dutch mines were immigrants and by the end of 1930, 32 per cent of all miners were of foreign origin (Langeweg 2011: 139). During the second half of the 1920s in particular, the demand for miners was such that special recruitment teams were established to search for skilled miners abroad (Langeweg 2011: 145). These favoured German-speaking workers as German had become *lingua franca* in the Limburg mines. German miners were regarded as highly qualified and had trained Dutch miners who had worked as migrant miners in Germany before the First World War (Langeweg 2011: 80, 145). In the 1920s, when again foreign forces were needed in the mines, Dutch mining companies wanting to avoid communication problems recruited skilled miners in German-speaking countries like Germany and Austria or in German-speaking parts of countries like Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. Indeed, in 1930, 63 per cent of the foreign mining population in Limburg originated from Germany. After the economic crisis in the 1930s, these numbers diminished as Limburgers became interested in working in the mines, reversing the employment trend of the previous decade (Langeweg 2011: 149). Thus, by the mid-1930s the number of German workers in the coalfield was decreasing, but they still made up the largest group of migrants; almost 60 per cent in 1934, 56 per cent in 1935, and 53 per cent in 1936 (Langeweg 2011: 154).

This was especially true in Heerlen, where 13 per cent (6253) of the population was German (Dieteren 1959: 33). Heerlen was located in the so-called east mining area. Between 1909 and 1930, its population had tripled, largely explained by immigration (Langeweg 2011: 53–54). While, at the end of 1930, almost a quarter of the male labour force in Limburg coalfield was employed in the mining industry, in Heerlen this proportion was over half (Langeweg 2011: 62–63). The relatively high presence of German miners, the acquaintance with the German language, and possibly the nearness to the German border seems to be reflected in a high number of German films amongst the most popular films in Heerlen.

Because of the small number of cinemas in Heerlen, POPSTAT results are much more closely bunched than would be the case in larger settlements, with 19 films occupying the first five ranks. There is a clear number one and two, but the third place is shared with three films, the fourth with eight films and the fifth with six films, but there is a very clear tendency towards a preference for German films. Of these 19 films, 9 were German speaking, 4 were American productions, 3 were Dutch, and 3 were French. What is notable about these German language films is that six of them did not appear in the top ten listings in the 21 remaining cities and towns in the data set. Moreover, as shown in Table 16.7, with the exception of *Gold* and *Viktor und Viktoria*, these films generated low to very low POPSTAT scores in the national rankings. In other words, the popularity of part of the German films seems to have been particular to Heerlen.

The themes of a number of those films hint at the presence of German workers. *Flüchtlinge* ranked 82 in the national top ten and was a controversial film in the Netherlands. Produced by UFA, and the first film awarded by the Goebbels Reichspropaganda minister with the new status award: 'Künstlerisch besonders wertvoll' (high artistic merits), *Flüchtlinge* drew the protests of Dutch socialists, contending that it was an anti-communist film and a product of the Hitler regime (Kreimeier 1992: 245; 255–57). The film tells the story of a group of Volga Germans (ethnic Germans migrants in Russia) who were trapped in Manchuria (China) when war

Table 16.7 National POPSTAT ranking of the most popular German films screened in Heerlen, 1934–1936

<i>Title</i>	<i>Director</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Ranking in Dutch market</i>
<i>Gold</i>	Karl Hartl	1934	DE	15
<i>Viktor und Viktoria</i>	Reinhold Schünzel	1933	DE	26
<i>Flüchtlinge</i>	Gustav Ucicky	1933	DE	82
<i>Jungfrau gegen Mönch^a</i>	E.W. Emo	1934	DE	225
<i>Fürst Woronzeff^a</i>	Arthur Robison	1934	DE	248
<i>Eines Prinzen junge Liebe</i>	Arthur Robison	1933	DE	284
<i>Schön ist es verliebt zu sein^a</i>	Walter Janssen	1934	DE	312
<i>Frühlingsstimmen^a</i>	Pál Fejös	1933	AT	502
<i>Tanzmusik^a</i>	J.A. Hübler-Kahla	1935	DE	620

^aFilms that featured only in Heerlen's Top 10

broke out in 1928. Although the impressive direction of the film might have been an attraction—perhaps explaining its top 100 ranking, the evidence from Heerlen is that the film likely appealed more to German migrants than it did to Dutch citizens (Table 16.7).

Fürst Woronzeff was perceived in the Limburg press as a film based on an ‘emigrant-roman’.⁶ It tells the story of a king in exile who tries to prevent his greedy family from taking away the heritage of his daughter. Two other films were both framed as films that did not fit into Dutch preferences and were more popular with ‘our neighbours’ (meaning the Germans, CPO). In the *Limburger Koerier* of 28 December 1935 *TANZMUSIK* was presented as ‘an anti-jazz film of which a certain neighbour state has more on its program, but against which we as good Catholics have to take stand because of its conjugal ethics’. About *Eines Prinzen junge Liebe*, a reviewer in the *Limburger Koerier* of 24 March 1934 stated: ‘Militarism. War. Beautiful girls from lovely villages waving to marching soldiers. And the trouble with this film is that it is tarred too much with this brush that perhaps causes the Germans to tremble with emotion, but is a little ridiculous for us sensible Dutch’. These are all little cues that point to the presence of German cinemagoers and the distinctively different make up of Heerlen’s top ten.

In Geleen the presence of German miners was less felt. Geleen was located in the so-called new mining area where the portion of foreign miners was almost 11 per cent and thus much lower than the 26 per cent in the old mining area where Heerlen was located. In 1926, the state-owned coal mine Maurits was opened and a high influx of labourers almost tripled Geleen’s population from 5141 in 1924 to 14,162 in 1934 (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 1925, 1935). About 10 per cent of the new influx consisted of foreign immigrants (Dieteren 1959: 34). Rising numbers meant that the town could sustain a commercial cinema, resulting in the opening in 1929 of the 750-seater Royal. This was followed in 1932 when the same owners opened the Roxy with 900 seats, replacing the Royal.

The local top ten ranks in Geleen is presented in Table 16.8, comprising seven films screened on a single bill, and six films on three double-bill programmes—identifiable because each film on the billing generates the same POPSTAT score. The three double-bill programmes combine a German with an American film. It is interesting to note that the American film always scored much higher in the national ranking than the German film. From the advertisements, however, we can tell that the German films

Table 16.8 Top 13 films in Geleen, 1934–1936

<i>Title</i>	<i>Local ranking</i>	<i>National ranking</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>POPSTAT</i>
<i>Jantjes, De</i>	1	1	1934	NL	2891
<i>Bleeke Bet</i>	2	3	1934	NL	2510
<i>Misérables, Les</i>	3	67	1934	FR	1435
<i>Count of Monte Cristo, The</i>	4	65	1934	US	1109
<i>Gold</i>	5	15	1934	GER	1061
<i>Pappi</i>	6	241	1934	GER	1057
<i>Sons of the desert</i>	6	24	1933	US	1057
<i>Tugboat Annie</i>	7	143	1933	US	907
<i>Mein Herz ruft nach dir</i>	7	14	1934	GER	907
<i>Liebe, Tod und Teufel</i>	8	256	1934	GER	901
<i>Big van het regiment, De</i>	9	11	1935	NL	894
<i>Du bist entzückend,</i>	10	245	1934	GER	880
<i>Ros'marie</i>					
<i>Tarzan and his mate</i>	10	44	1934	US	880

were supposedly meant to draw in the crowds in Geleen as the double-bill programmes presented the American films as ‘extras’. Of the three Hollywood films combined in double-bill sets, only *Sons of the Desert* (a Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy film) was advertised as the main attraction. The ranking clearly shows that fewer Dutch films were represented at the top and that other European films, mainly German, replaced them. Nine films in Table 16.8 were European and four American. Because there was only one cinema in Geleen, it is impossible to draw any hard and fast conclusions from these results, but they do seem to reflect the presence of foreign residents, and this explains a local audience that is not as oriented to Dutch films as elsewhere in the country.

CONCLUSION

Using cluster analysis it has been possible to identify patterns in film programming and to use these to compare local differences in programming strategies. A clear finding is that exhibitors in smaller towns with few cinemas run programmes based upon cluster 4 films (European films including Dutch films) and cluster 5 films (dominated by German films). This outcome reflects the national popularity of Dutch films and shows the penetration of Dutch popular films to even the smallest towns. The POPSTAT methodology made it possible to discern local differences, and although

these findings are specific and very local, it is important that we pay attention to them. The most notable finding is the diminished interest in Dutch films in the mining towns Heerlen and Geleen and the apparent preference of Heerlen's audiences for German films that were not very popular elsewhere in the Netherlands. The relatively high presence of German miners seemed to have had an impact on the films that were popular. The results show clearly that in a choice between films spoken in different languages, audiences tended to choose mother tongue films. Watching films from their homeland, spoken in their mother tongue was as important to Dutch audiences as it was for German audiences. And not only that, audiences also exercised preferences for certain films. In the case of German miners, these were films that were not much liked by Dutch audiences elsewhere. Likely, the nearness of the German border and the association of Heerlen's inhabitants with Germany is part of the explanation. This means that filmgoing cannot simply be reduced to a habitual social practice. Although the social aspect of filmgoing is very important, it is important to recognise that particular *films* are what people choose to watch in a particular context (Sedgwick and Pafort-Overduin 2012: 96–110). As pointed out earlier, Garnarcz (2015) presents convincing evidence that cultural nearness is an important factor in understanding film preferences. We should be careful not to generalise the findings of Heerlen too easily, and more research needs to be done regarding cultural and language aspects of filmgoing and film preferences. A comparison between film programming and cinemagoing in border and non-border towns is a good starting point for this.

NOTES

1. www.cinemacontext.nl. The Cinema Context Collection database contains information about films, film programmes, cinemas and their owners, distributors, and the rulings of the Centrale Film Keuringscommissie (Film Censorship Committee) The programme information from 14 of 22 cities was collected from local newspapers in which the cinemas advertised. (Alkmaar, Apeldoorn, Culemborg, Dordrecht, Eindhoven, Haarlem, 's-Hertogenbosch, Leiden, Nijmegen, Schiedam, Tiel, Tilburg and Zeist) For the remaining eight cities, the Cinema Context website offered the information for the weekly showings. (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Haag, Groningen, Maastricht, Heerlen, Geleen and Zierikzee.) We would also like to thank Karel Dibbets, the project leader of Cinema Context. The Cinema Context data were supplemented with the number of times a film was shown per week, as was done for the other cities. The information about the pro-

- gramming is found in newspapers in which the cinema operators advertised.
2. I'm very grateful to Jaap Boter who performed the analysis.
 3. See, for a detailed explanation of the applicability of Latent Class Analysis, Vermunt (2004). A Latent Class Analysis leaves room for uncertainty and calculates the chance that something belongs to a certain class (cluster). There are statistical measures to determine the optimal number of segments and the quality of the solution. See also Wedel et al. (2000).
 4. Different from Sedgwick's method, ticket prices were not included in the calculation as they were unknown. Also different is the calculation of number of screenings; instead of a week or half a week, the actual number of screenings per week was put into the data set. This made it possible to differentiate in the degree of popularity of films shown in small places where cinemas only opened their doors for a couple of days a week.
 5. The number of foreign workers increased from 17 per cent in 1905 to 32 per cent in 1930. There are no numbers available from before 1905.
 6. The movie *Fiirst Woronzeff* was based on the novel with the same title by Margot von Simpson published in 1929.

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