Donatella Maraschin and Paola Nasini‘*Filmmaker* and the Milanese independent cinema of the 1980s and 1990s’

Introduction

The Milanese cinema represents one of the many traditions of Italy’s independent cinematic cultures, which developed in various parts of the country, often in antithesis and in a subaltern position to the national film industry based in Rome—where it had been merged since Mussolini’s policies of the 1930s and where it has been further centralized after WWII when the American funds of the Marshall Plan flooded into the country (Brunetta, 1982, 44).

Traditionally, the Milanese cinematic culture is defined by a number of important traits: its aspiration to counter both the often commercial nature of films produced in Rome and their mode of production; its strong association with the local industries and the industrial culture of the region; its tendency to produce films which are intrinsically embedded in the Milanese urban fabric as well as in the Lombardia’s regional landscape; its fruitful collaborations and interdisciplinary links with intellectuals, professionals and artists from very different fields (including literature, theatre, publishing, architecture, performing and traditional arts, advertising, etc.); and finally, its idea of cinema able to tackle meaningful social issues in which the younger generation of viewers in particular can identify. These themes emerge as early as the themes surrounding the theoretical debates on cinema, which appeared in film and cultural journals printed in Milan during the 1930s (Anderi, 1996, 191-201) and thereafter continued to define the Milanese independent cinema movement for many decades.

In this chapter we discuss how the ‘politics of locations’ (Braidotti, 1994) affected the development of some specific traits of the Milanese independent cinema. We are decontextualizing here a well-known concept coined within the context of feminist theory to stress the importance of the influence of the specificity of a place on the subject against gender generalisation. Our analysis addresses the extent to which, with the absence of state infrastructures to regulate the development of a film industry locally, the socio-cultural-political milieu of Milan during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s shaped the specificity of both the cinematic culture and production modes of the film scene of the city.

One line of investigation examines the political *impegno* [commitment] that infiltrated the Milanese society during the 1970s and its influence on both social interactions and on the output of cultural products. We address the long-standing impact of such political *impegno* on the cinema produced in the city during the decades that followed. To do so, we focus in particular on *Filmmaker*, an independent ‘Festival ofFilm and Video’ founded in 1980 by Salvatore Cavatorta and Gianfilippo Pedote, that also acted as an enterprise via the production company Studio Equatore and the distribution company Indigena, and operated as a lab for the development of young talents.

The chapter is based on both research that we conducted in the *Filmmaker’*s archive and on interviews with key players of the Milanese independent film scene of the 1980s and 1990s. *Filmmaker*’s contribution during these decades in promoting both an alternative cinematic culture and a positive image of Italian cinema abroad, to date has not been sufficiently studied and it has attracted mainly research limited to Milan’s micro-histories published solely in Italian. The purpose of this chapter is to shed some light on this submerged cinema.

Some historical considerations

The Milanese independent cinema sits at the cusp between commercial cinema, documentary, industrial cinema, video art, and art cinema. Over time, the Milanese cinema has uniquely been able to provide an alternative pole of production, although for brief periods, to the Roman national hegemonic film industry by producing films that gained national and international recognition.

ICET (Industrie Cinematiche e Teatrali) and its progressive evolution into ‘Cinelandia Milanese’ in 1960 (see De Berti, 1996, 262-4) reflects the aspiration and determination of Milanese film circles to break away from their subordinate position to Rome. The absence of film equipment rental infrastructures and specialized technicians were some of its major pitfalls. With the development, in the suburban area of Cologno Monzese, of studios capable to offer all services needed by the film industry the city was finally able to make films entirely produced in Milan. Amongst them were works such as *La notte* (M. Antonioni, 1960), *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (L. Visconti, 1960), *La vita agra* (C. Lizzani, 1964) and *Banditi a Milan* (C. Lizzani, 1968).

Nonetheless, the history of the Cinelandia studios is emblematic of the challenges that the Milanese cinema faces to date. This history is powered by the problematic relationship between two realities which are intertwined and antagonistic at once: the advertising industry, television and commercial cinema on one hand and on the other the underling inclination towards a cinematic culture driven by non-commercial works, socially committed films related to the art cinema and documentary. As such, whilst Cinelandia was created to support and develop Milan’s film industry, the studios in the 1960s were mainly used to produce industrial films, television programs and television advertising. No less than 80% of the RAI national *Carosello* was produced here, with one studio exclusively and permanently rented by General Film, the biggest advertising Italian production company at that time. These commercial and non-cinematic productions transformed the Cinelandia studios into a viable business model, turning away the attention and investments from those high-quality films engaged with social critique which defined ICET productions of the 1940s and 1950s, including *Gente del Po* (1943-47) and *Nettezza Urbana* (1948) both by Michelangelo Antonioni, as well as films produced in the Milanese studios with investments from Rome, such as *Miracolo a Milan* (V. De Sica, 1950), *Lo svitato* (C. Lizzani, 1955), *Gli sbandati* (F. Maselli, 1955) and *I prigioneri della montagna* (L. Trenker, 1955). As a result, when the *Carosello* was suspended in 1977, television programs progressively took over the advertising productions in the studios. In 1983 Berlusconi’s Finivest bought ICET’s Cinelandia studios and transformed them into ‘Tivulandia’ (De Berti, 1996, 264), which comprised almost exclusively television studios while it retained small studios for the production of television advertising and small budget movies.

During the 1980s Berlusconi’s Reteitalia—the company of the Gruppo Finivest devoted to the production of feature films (in the 1990s known as Silvio Berlusconi Communication, and later on as Mediaset and Medusa)—produced in its Milanese studios mainly low-quality films, with few exceptions. These include Carlo Vanzina’s and Neri Parenti’s films, who during the 1980s and 1990s directed 1 or 2 films per year, feeding into the long-lasting phenomenon of the ‘cinepanettone’.[[1]](#endnote-1)

Outside of these circuits—although in same cases, with funding raised with the aid of Berlusconi’s film production enterprises—the Milanese independent film industry was nonetheless able to produce quality films, some of which gained international recognition. With limited access to ‘institutional’ production facilities, the Milanese directors and producers had to invent productive channels, often led by informal networks emerging from the city’s cultural, militant and art circles. It is this state of confinement, together with other factors dealt with in the ensuing discussion—including the osmotic mechanism the cinema circles of Milan continued to establish over the years with both the film industry in Rome and the local advertising industry—that defines the independent cinematic culture of Milan as representing a sort of ‘force of resistance’. Amongst the independent filmmakers active in Milan during 1980s and 1990s were: Davide Ferrario, Gianluca Fumagalli, Adriana Monti, Gianni Martuzzi and Massimo Mazzucco, Enzo Monteleone, Michele Soavi, Michele Sordillo, Maurizio Zaccaro, and Marco Tullio Giordana—for more see De Berti, 1996 publication, pages 269-73.[[2]](#endnote-2)

Another relevant but failed attempt by the Milanese cinematic circles to counter the Roman monopoly over the production of feature films is Ermanno Olmi’s and Bruno Janni’s production company ‘22 Dicembre’ (22 Decembre). Founded in 1961 with 51% of investment from the firm Edison Group, it aimed at developing alternative and innovative modes of production, oriented towards documentary, industrial films, content for television and low budget films.[[3]](#endnote-3) The history of 22 Dicembre highlights a key feature of the Milanese cultural fabric of the 1950s and 1960s, often driven by a cultured and enlightened elite of industrial dynasties interested in supporting and sponsoring cultural projects of high social impact. During these optimistic years of economic growth the industry saw cinema not only as a form of investment, in terms of promotion, business communication and public relations (especially in the case of industrial cinema), but also as a form of social enterprise, by endorsing cultural events for the firm’s community and the wider society.

The aim of the 22 Dicembre initiative was to develop low budget films of young up-and-coming film directors and to act as a school lab, intended as a hub for nurturing innovative approaches to cinema. Olmi and Janni’s idea of cinema was: “*not* a *commercial* cinema, as it is usually understood, but rather a kind of cinema that somehow was close, without commercial preconditions, to the problems of our time” (Olmi in De Berti, 1996, 265 – Emphasis by the author).[[4]](#endnote-4) Soon 22 Dicembre became “the destination of Milanese intellectuals interested in cinema” (Janni, cited in De Berti, 1996, 266)[[5]](#endnote-5) and produced films such as *I basilischi* (L. Wertmuller, 1963), *I ragazzi che si amano* (A. Caldana, 1963), *La rimpatriata* (D. Damiani, 1963), *Il terrorista* (G. De Bosio, 1963), *I fidanzati* (E. Olmi, 1963), as well as the serial TV documentary by Roberto Rossellini, *L’età del ferro* (1963).

However, problems of distribution, limited returns due to the production of non-commercial cinema, and clashes between Olmi and Janni brought the activities of 22 Dicembre to an end. Nonetheless, in many ways the cinema project of 22 Dicembre, despite its short-lived activity, continued to remain at the heart of the cinematic culture of Milan for decades to follow. As it will be seen, the culture of nurturing up-and-coming film directors, producing low budget non-commercial films, and the didactic approach of the lab, continued to define the mandate of *Filmmaker*, which voiced and embodied this philosophy in the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, the links between the industry and the Milanese cinematic culture are long-lasting and will remain central to the city’s independent film productions in the decades that follow.

Formal experimentalism

Two specific features of the independent Milanese cinema—its links with the industry and the industrial film, and the synergies it established with video and various forms of art—are traditionally rooted in, as we have mentioned, the fabric and history of the city. These fields make some important achievements during the 1980s and 1990s thanks to the workings of the production company Metamorphosi and the art collective Studio Azzurro. Although these two entities produced some fiction films, the bulk of their activities resides outside the mainstream fiction-film category. In different ways, they contributed considerably to the formal experimentalism and expressive concerns of the independent Milanese cinema and of *Filmmaker*.

Metamorphosi more than any other production enterprise in Milan, inherited and reinvented the tradition of industrial film,[[6]](#endnote-6) which runs through the history of the Milanese cinema due to the city’s links with many sectors of the industry. Founded by Marco e Andrea Poma during the surge of production companies that in the 1980s gravitated around *Filmmaker*, Metamorphosi produced video content commissioned by the local industries, the local businesses (music companies, architecture studios, etc.), and local institutions (Provincia of Milan, Triennale Museum, Swiss Radio Television, etc.).

Susanna Schoenberg (2016), who collaborated with Metamorphosi since 1989, explains how these commercial commissions amounted to the chief source of revenue, which was converted into investments for the production of fiction projects. In working on these commissions, Metamorphosi and its collaborators defined new formal frontiers and reinvented the industrial cinema of the earlier decades. One example of this is the competence that Metamorphosi developed in producing films based on talking-heads and testimonials, anticipating formal strategies now well established in documentary. Soon Metamorphosi became the platform for the production of public relation content for the prolific architecture and music industry of the city.

While initially Metamorphosi worked mainly in film, as Schoenberg (2016) recalls, by seeking left over film stock from the local production companies working in the advertising industry, with the advent of video the production company created post-production studios which could be used free of charges or rented by others. During the 1980s and 1990s the production company nurtured a new generation of filmmakers by commissioning to them the production of commercial videos for their clients, and thus progressively developed their skills. Contemporaneously, Metamorphosi allowed the filmmakers the use of the production and post-production facilities to produce their independent projects. Conversely, by working with Metamorphosi on both their own and commissioned projects, these filmmakers brought more business to the production company by renting Metamorphosis’ facilities on behalf of external clients.

Schoenberg (2016), now an acclaimed video artist based in Cologne, in Germany, recognizes the impact Metamorphosi had in building her professionalism. In this environment filmmakers learned to develop different abilities, including writing, filming, editing, cinematography, etc. In many ways, experimentalism became an effect of the access to technologies, nonetheless, the culture of Metamorphosi and its collaborators was driven by artistic aspirations and expressionism. According to Schoenberg (2016) Metamorphosi’s drive to develop technical skills in the new generation of filmmakers was not dictated purely by financial needs − so to have a pool of people with which to produce commercial content and generate income − but was also shaped by the idea that hardware needs experimentalism to continue to evolve. The strategy of free access to the technology for up-and-coming filmmakers was part of an overarching plan, to invest in quality work and nurture an experimental cinematic culture in the long run.

The work of Studio Azzurro, especially in the field of the art installation, is world-renowned. [[7]](#endnote-7) The collective of artists (formed in different fields of the arts) includes, amongst others, Paolo Rosa, Fabio Cirifino, Leonardo Sangiorgi, and the duo Armando Bertacchi and Gianni Rocco who collaborated together since 1969. The collective produced their first fiction film in 1979, with *Facce di Festa*. The artistic and political background of the city is crucial in defining the works of Studio Azzurro. Their works interpolate video with other media, including photography, theatre, and architecture. Cirifino (2016) explains how the collective saw video as “a spongy element, that sucks everything and what comes out is no longer what it has absorbed. Cinema absorbed by video returned something other than the original medium, in a metamorphic movement”.[[8]](#endnote-8) In this sense, Studio Azzurro’s approach to video and cinema reproduces the Milanese cultural scene, defined by its interdisciplinary exchanges between different fields of arts.

The fluidity of the mélange of and relations between media is the trademark of the collective’s prolific activity over time, which includes films, videos, installations, ‘sensitive environments’, ‘theme museums’, etc., and it is so fertile and diverse that it exceeds the remit of this investigation. It is worth noting, however, that amongst this wide range of fields of arts, the collective widely contributed to the Milanese independent cinema scene. As it will be see, some of Studio Azzurro’s films are intrinsically connected to the genesis and history of *Filmmaker*. Within this context, Studio Azzurro played a central role in bending and expanding the use of technologies, especially in relation to video.

Political *impegno* (commitment)

Another important feature of the Milanese independent cinema is its long-standing interest in tackling social issues. This is also reflected in the genesis of *Filmmaker* and in the cinema project that it represents. To understand the *impegno politico* (political commitment) that dominated the Milanese independent cinematic culture of the 1980s and 1990s, we need to look back at the 1970s and at the generational aspirations of the young directors and producers who grew up during that decade.

The idea of political commitment has led to many theoretical debates, and it has been defined by its historical context. In the 1970s the idea of engagement was underpinned by the belief in a single conceptual framework. As Alfonso Berardinelli explains:

“The logic of *engagement* […] starts from knowing with certainty that one’s own political-literary conscience of the present is the principle from which to deduct *one only* historical correct way to solve one’s own relationship held between social reality, political imperative, literary forms.” (Berardinelli, 2007, 66 - emphasis by the author).[[9]](#endnote-9)

Jennifer Burns (2001, 1) points out how the monolithic idea of commitment linked to a Marxist ideology started to reveal its limitation in the 1950s. This progressively brought the notion of commitment to one single social agenda into a fragmentation and diversification of attention into a number of specific issues.

However, we agree with Pier Paolo Antonello and Florian Mussgnug’s notion that the rejection of universalism and metanarratives doesn’t necessary mean “the end of *impegno*, or indeed of modern emancipatory politics” (Antonello and Mussgnung, 2009, 3). In many ways, as it will be seen, the genesis and development of *Filmmaker* encapsulates the (difficult) journey of a group of filmmakers, producers, and intellectuals into new forms of *impegno*.

When Pedote and Cavatorta founded *Filmmaker*, they were 27 and 32 years of age respectively. As baby-boomers (as a result of Italy’s ‘economic boom’ of the 1960s) they grew up in a highly charged political culture, dominated by ideological polarizations not only between catholic, conservative, and liberal cultures but also between political ideas rooted in the history of post-war Europe. The dichotomy between the extreme Right and extreme Left that distinguishes the 1970s found a fertile terrain in Milan, and was particularly felt by the generation of the baby boomers, who as young adults experienced the political tensions and clashes which were splitting the public opinion of the country during the *anni di piombo* (the years of the bullet). This decade also witnessed traumatic terrorist acts which scarred the cultural memory of the country, of the city, and of this generation in particular. It included the bomb planted at the National Agrarian Bank in Piazza Fontana on the 12 December 1969, which killed 17 people and wounded 88; the detainment and fall from the window of the Questura of Milan of Giuseppe Pinelli in 1969; the kidnapping and killing of the President of the Christian Democratic Party Aldo Moro in 1978; and the killing, also in 1978, of Fausto Tinelli and Lorenzo Iannucci (known as Fausto e Iaio) meters away from the Centro Sociale Autogestito Leoncavallo (Squat of Leoncavallo).

Growing up in Milan during those years meant that young people had to choose a political alignment. Friends often shared similar political ideas, and it was a common practice to act upon such ideas together by taking part in political activities, including *collettivi* (political collectives), *occupazioni* (squattings), sit-ins, assemblies, demonstrations, etc. Universities took an active role in leading political activism, in particular the Università Statale and the Accademia of Brera, and also *licei* (Lyceums or high schools) made their political alliance, which often led to violent clashes between teenagers attending neighboring schools. A common motto of those years: *Chi non occupa preoccupa* (The one not squatting is a concern) shows the extent of peer pressure and the currency attached to political activism at that time.[[10]](#endnote-10)

Many artistic and cultural initiatives that took place in Milan in the 1970s were led by leftist groups (with the exception of some led by catholic circles), who saw culture and the arts as a tool to counter the dominant catholic-liberalist culture of the political and media establishment. With growing social tensions generated by the labour and the student movements, during the 1970s many groups concerned with political debate and activism formed spontaneously outside the fabric of the mainstream economic structures. Political and cultural activities were conceived as double sides of the same coin. For example, the Centro Sociale Leoncavallo (Squat of Leoncavallo) was a popular point of reference not only for organizing political demonstrations, squattings, and political rallies, but also for music and theatre events.

Within these circles, led by ideas derived from the extra-parlimentary left, cinema was seen as a tool for propaganda and civic dissent. Milan saw formed the Collettivo di Cinema Militante (Militant Cinema Collective), which was mainly led by students. The Collective became the hub for the production of 8mm low cost propaganda films, mainly documentaries, which were distributed in schools, factories, cultural centers etc. Amongst these were films such as *Totem*; *Le lotte di via Tibaldi*, *Lotte a Milan*, *La città del capitale*, *Feda Fargos*, *No alla tregua*, *Pagherete caro, pagherete tutto* and *Il capitale.* As De Berti (1996, 267) has pointed out, the Collective also run cultural debates mainly focused on the critique of traditional cinema production and distribution modes, as well as on the role of cinema in trigger agency and elicit an active intervention in the social sphere. Another idea promoted by the Collective was that the emerging video analogue technologies, by shifting traditional mode of productions and distributions, represented an opportunity for the democratization of cinema. In many ways, as it will be seen, the concerns raised by the Collective align with the work continued by *Filmmaker* in the decades that followed.

Other symbolic *loci* of the 1970s which contributed to forge the Milanese independent cinematic landscape of the following decade, were: a) the ‘Cineclubs’ and ‘Cineforums’ (clubs with a limited number of members, and which offered retrospectives of, and debates around, American and art cinema)—these included the Cineclub Brera, the Obraz Cinestudio, and the Centro Studi Cinematografici that comprised around 30 clubs, amongst which the group of catholic inspiration, Centro S. Fedele; b) and the *Cinema d’essai* (Art house cinemas)—amongst which the Arti cinema, the FAC (Film, Art and Culture) and the cinema Argentina. These initiatives were specifically designed to promote a cinematic culture that runs outside mainstream circuits as well as a critical understanding of film.

Amongst these alternative cinemas, the Cinema Anteo has continued to represent a hub and a leading force for the discovery and dissemination in the city of quality films peripheral to commercial cinema over several decades. The Cinema Anteo was already active in the 1940s, when it hosted the activities of the Circolo del Cinema ‘Mario Ferrari’ (Cine Club ‘Mario Ferrari’). Thereafter, under the direction of the ‘MusiCineTeatro’ in 1979—a collective of young cinema lovers lead by Lionello Cerri and Maurizio Ballabio—the cinema became “an alternative pole in the way cinema was presented” (Pavesi, 1996, 345).[[11]](#endnote-11) The ‘MusiCineTeatro’ offered retrospectives of past films not yet screened to the public, of new European art cinema and American independent films able to generate commercial interest, and an open lab delivering popular classes and courses with leading film scholars, including Francesco Casetti.[[12]](#endnote-12)

Another crucial factor that shaped the independent Milanese cinema scene of the 1980s and 1990s is the popular local left-wing radio station Radio Popolare (Popular Radio). *Filmmaker*’s founders Pedote and Cavatorta worked at the radio in the late 1970s. Pedote (2016) describes the radio station as a *catalizzatore di energie* (catalyst for energies) and explains how it became a resonance chamber for the cultural and cinematic initiatives and events of the city:

“The end of the 70s was a time of particular curiosity and proactivity in the small world of cinema of Milan. What emerged was a great desire to work in a new and freer way, and open to confront oneself with other experiences [...]. This effervescence finds its voice in Popular Radio, which collected and disseminated the best ideas that were circulating in town. […] *Filmmaker* was born in connection to the radio […] and was the point of confluence of all those ‘cinematographic’ energies”.[[13]](#endnote-13) (Pedote, 1998)

At the radio Pedote and Cavatorta, together with Daniele Maggioni and Gianluca Fumagalli, curated film reviews and debate programs, which focused on experimental, low-budget cinema engaged in social critique. Pedote (1998) recalls the popularity at the radio of buzz words such as *cinema indipendente* (independent cinema) and *documentario sociale* (social documentary). The film team also launched radio campaigns in support of new independent films and they collaborated with art house cinemas Anteo and Cristallo in promoting as well as in managing their film screening programs. It is within this setting that Pedote and Cavatorta organized the first edition of *Filmmaker* in 1980.

*Milan da bere?* (Milan to drink?)

While the political engagement of 1970s forged the cultural frames and political ideas of Pedote, Cavatorta, and many of the intellectuals, artists, producers, and filmmakers who were engaged in the cinematic culture of Milan at that time, during the 1980s the political climate of the city changed drastically and the socio-political tensions of the previous decade eased, freeing those creative and experimental tensions that had being constrained by the orthodox ideology and cinematic practices of the 1970s. The economic and financial crisis of the 1970s saw many factors that contributed to this shift. They include: a process of partial de-industrialization with the closure of many local factories; the growth of the tertiary sector (especially banks and finance), of the luxury brand industry and of the television and advertising industry; and the emergence of the signs of a postindustrial society.

The shifting cultural frameworks of the city are reflected in the public relation campaign driven by the Socialist Party and its Milan Mayor Ugo Tognoli (1976-86) to promote a positive image of the city. During the 1980s and the *Craxismo*—Italian Socialist Party leader Bettino Craxi’s liberal-socialist ideas—Milan was chosen as the epicenter on the new political power and became associated with an image of prosperity, yuppies, and beautiful fashion models. The idea of promoting Milan as a *città vetrina* (shop-window city) projecting a cosmopolitan, trendy, upbeat and glamorous image is mirrored in the famous claim made in the slogan of the advertising campaign for the drink Amaro Ramazzotti, *Milano da bere* (Milan to drink).

The conjunction of these factors brought radical changes to the social interactions and cultural models of the city, which affected also the production and consumption of cinema. As explained by Pavesi (1996, 334): “This complex social, cultural, and economic landscape of transition triggers the ‘open’ crisis of cinema and the data […] also confirm a crisis in the cinema exhibitors within the city”.[[14]](#endnote-14) One indicator of such crisis is the number of filmgoers in Milan. The number went from 20,998 millions in 1976 to 11,311 millions in 1980 (Pavesi, 1996, 334).

To counter the diminished interest of the public in watching films, and in line with the ongoing campaign aimed at promoting a confident image of the city, the local authorities (both the City of Milan and the Provincia Lombardia) offered a prolific string of cinematic and cultural initiatives at low cost. These led to what Pavesi (1996, 348) describes as a *surplus culturale* (cultural surplus) with an excess and repetition of offers. Amongst these initiatives we remember the following: *Le vie del cinema* (created in 1980, with a different title, as a window for 10 films presented at ‘Mostra del Cinema di Venezia’—it quickly became a very popular event just after the first week, and brought to the city almost a hundred films); retrospectives of films in original language; increased number of cinemas offering ‘quality’ films (including the cinemas De Amicis, Arcobaleno, Centrale, Angelicum, Paris, Dal Verme); and special summer programs such as *Arianateo* organized by the Cinema Anteo.

It must be noted, however, that even if the departure from the previous decade’s idea of Milan as a sort of ‘moral capital’ has had success in setting new forms of social interactions and setting new aspirations amongst some in the city, it did not eradicate the strong sense of social commitment of many Milanese intellectuals and filmmakers. We argue that to some extent the many tensions amid different cultural and political realities of the city—the new Left of the Socialist Party, the rise of the new Right which brought together the party ‘La Lega’ (The North League) and Silvio Berlusconi, the advertising industry, the television industry, etc.—helped intellectuals, artists, filmmakers and producers who felt that did not fit in the emerging social categories and relative ideology to gather together and to create an alternative common platform, such as *Filmmaker*.

*Filmmaker*, Festival of Film and Video

It is in the complex and contradictory Milanese landscape across the 1970s and 1980s that *Filmmaker* began its journey. Founded by Silvano Cavatorta and Gianfilippo Pedote to “support research, experimentation, innovation in Italian audiovisual production”[[15]](#endnote-15) (Pedote, 1998)*,* during the 1980s and 1990s *Filmmaker* led the Milanese independent cinema scene by bringing together the city’s filmmakers and producers who were operating outside the more commercial circles.It certainly was not an easy task. Armed with an ideology of social commitment and with political ideas that were increasingly seen as uncomfortable and outdated by a society in rapid transformation, the filmmakers, producers, and scholars who associated with *Filmmaker* tried to promote a cinematic culture that in terms of themes and production modes did not fit in with the mainstream industry and culture.

In a recent interview with us Gianfilippo Pedote has emphasized the political dimension of the city in the 1970s, and has recognized in the *impronta generazionale* (generational footprint) of 1970s young adults, like himself, the matrix of *Filmmaker’*s identity and mission: “*Filmmaker* reflects the political commitment of the 1970s, as there was a desire not only for political reflection but also to intervene and drive social changes” (Pedote 2016).[[16]](#endnote-16)

The history of *Filmmaker* gives a sense of its rapid success and growth.[[17]](#endnote-17) As mentioned, in 1980 at the Cinema Cristallo Pedote and Cavatorta organised the first edition of *Filmmaker* ‘Festival of Film and Video’, with a small fund from the Provincia of Milan and naming the festival after Jonas Mekas’ New American cinema and filmmakers’ cooperative. Mekas is considered by many the godfather of American avant-garde cinema.

The first edition of the film festival *Filmmaker* didn’t have a Director; it was *autogestita* (self-managed) and it was modeled on the idea of the collectives of the 1970s. It was the brainchild of a network of people who gravitated around Radio Popolare and who were passionate about innovative ways to conceive cinema. This first event was the product of the strong personal and generational bond amongst the coordinators and the filmmakers represented and Pedote (2016) recalls that the program was organzied “on trust, without having previewed the films”.[[18]](#endnote-18) It showcased a very small number of films, by artists such as Bruno Bigoni, Mario Canali, Giancarlo Soldi and the collective Studio Azzurro represented by Paolo Rosa, and it was a success. Many films in the program engaged with the end of an era (the 1970s) and the conflicts and struggles of a generation in crisis, and they were experimental in their use of the cinematic apparatus and language. As Pedote (2016) highlights, the first edition of the festival was organized more with the intent to promote a new idea of cinema than to showcase films. As a result, in the interim between the first and second edition of *Filmmaker* Pedote and Cavatorta created Studio Equatore, a production company intended to create a platform for the production of films. From this moment onwards Pedote took up the role of Executive Producer of Studio Equatore, while Cavatorta focused on the curation of the festival. Pedote (2016) explains that Cavatorta for over thirty years has relentlessly continued to act as the spiritual guide of *Filmmaker* until 2011, when he passed away.

The second edition, in 1982, was organized by Studio Equatore, and Pedote and Cavatorta became officially the Artistic Directors of the Festival, thus changing the collaborative paradigm of the previous event. This edition showcased a very high volume of heterogeneous audio-video material from Italy and from abroad, including commercial films, videos, non-professional and professional independent films, documentaries, etc.

It is with the third edition in 1984 that *Filmmaker* introduced a prize system. Through Studio Equatore and with investments received from Provincia of Milan, AGIS of RAI, and the Swiss Radio Television Company, the move resulted in the production of 10 films. They include the work of Silvio Soldini, Studio Azzurro, Bruno Bigoni, Tonino Curagi, and Kiko Stella. The Centre Pompidou in Paris validated the success of this event by showcasing the films produced by *Filmmaker*. With this edition *Filmmaker* not only took on its characteristic role of producing films—rather than solely showcasing them—but also introduced another feature that will define its mandate: educating a new generation of filmmakers through the added means of workshops and debates led by key players of the independent American cinema and European art film scene. Some examples of low-budgets 16mm productions include: *Giulia in ottobre* (S. Soldini, 1984−19 milion Lire/8 thousand Euros); *Rosso di sera* (K. Stella, 1984 - 25 million Lire/17.5 thousand Euros); *Osservatorio nucleare del Signor Nanof* (P. Rosa, 1985 - 50 million Lire/25 thousand Euros). With the fourth edition, in 1988, the investment for the production prize grows to 50 million Lire (which in post-Lira times is equivalent to roughly 25 thousand Euros), for films developed from original scripts by contemporary writers.

When the fifth edition is held in 1991, the production efforts are extended to 19 projects. Between the years of 1994 and 1997, however, *Filmmaker* will not produce any film; this is mainly due to Pedote’s departure in 1993, the driving force of the production enterprise linked to the festival, and who left to join the creative hub Fabrica of Benetton, with film director Goffrey Reggio. With the departure of Pedote, *Filmmaker* will no longer be managed by Studio Equatore, and will become an independent cultural association, directed by Cavatorta alone.

The edition in 1995 includes a full retrospective on the essay-film, which will mark the festival’s increasing interest for the documentary genre, resulting in workshops and master classes with leading world documentarists. The festival will continue its efforts to promote Milanese and Italian cinema abroad, amongst such initiative we note a collaboration with the Locarno Film Festival in 1995 on a retrospective of Italian short films. When in 1997 *Filmmaker* fully resumed its production activities, some of the productions became iconic films and gained national and international acclaim. Such works include: *Fame chimica 1* (the short film, by Paolo Vari e Antonio Bocola, produced in collaboration with Centro Sociale Giambellino, 1997) e *Dolce stil novo* (G. Maderna, 1998).

It is important to note that the initial success of *Filmmaker* was partly due to the fact that within the social fabric of the city also resided the type of audience which the films produces by *Filmmaker* attracted. Such audience was formed especially by the numerous creative minds and by the *intelligentsia* of Milan, and in turn it shared culture, age, and background, with the young film directors that *Filmmaker* showcased. Pedote (1998) recalls:

“With the massive participation in what actually might have seemed just a small festival for short films, this public, so curious and involved, seemed to declare its desire to be able to recognize and mirror themselves in the films—something that was not easy to do at the time with Italian cinema, which was culturally backward by one generation compared to them. [...] It was an audience made up of people who were experiencing some of the profound social and cultural transformations of the city.”[[19]](#endnote-19)

As a result of the buzz and confidence created by *Filmmaker* that there was a market, although limited, for independent films, since the 1980s a number of production companies were created in Milano. These include: Bilico (thereafter Monogatari), by Silvio Soldini, Daniele Maggioni and Luca Bigazzi; Electric Film, by Kiko Stella e Bruno Bigoni; Metamorphosi, by Marco e Andrea Poma; Bambú Cinematografica, by Maurizio Nichetti e Ernesto di Sarro. This positive climate also led to the creation of the distribution company Indigena, directed by Minnie Ferrara e Bruno Bigoni, to guarantee the promotion and distribution of the films outside the festival. Many of these companies, often founded by film directors to aid the production of their own work, covered a range of productions, including art video, industrial film, documentaries, film, installations, and low-budget feature films. Video art and art installations became a trademark of the Milanese creativity in 1980s and 1990s. In many ways, Studio Azzurro led the way and played a prominent role in influencing the cinematic language of the independent films produced in those years through *Filmmakers.*

As it has been seen, over time *Filmmaker* established itself as a multidimensional enterprise, which challenged the mainstream Italian film industry on many levels. Firstly, the festival promoted cinematic experimentalism by showcasing an eclectic array of formats and genres, including the feature film (mainly in 16 mm but also in video), the short film (including fiction, video art installations, animation films, industrial films, computer graphic and theatre installations, etc.) and, since 1995, documentary. Secondly, as a production enterprise, it provided a consistent, although limited, pool of funding creatively generated through the support of various sources. These include: the local authorities (such as Comune and Provincia of Milan and Regione Lombardia), the local industry (including advertising and in the new millennium the local bank Cariplo) [[20]](#endnote-20) and partly the support of the Roman film industry. It also stimulated in the city a surge of production companies and via Studio Equatore it produced low-budget films of international appeal (including work by Studio Azzurro, Silvio Soldini, Alina Marazzi, Michelangelo Frammartino, Marco Bechis, etc.). Thirdly, as a hub *Filmmaker* aimed at educating a new generation of filmmakers, via the delivering of cutting-edge professional training by world-renown independent American and European as well as documentary filmmakers (amongst which Giuseppe Bertolucci, Jon Alpert, Wim Wenders, Vittorio De Seta, Erol Morris, etc.). And fourthly, it established a promotion and distribution system which validated *Filmmake*r’s success at both a local and international level—locally via the promotion of Radio Popolare and the distribution in the Cinema Anteo as well as in other Milanese art cinemas, and internationally via linking with cultural institutions such as the Centre Pompidou and the Cinémathèque in Paris, the Locarno Film Festival (with a retrospective on Italian shorts) and the Berlin Film Festival.

For a short period of time *Filmmaker* created an autonomous industry, which in many ways reproduces—in a different technological context—ICET’s efforts in the 1950s and 1960s to create an alternative pole to the Roman monopoly for the production, distribution and showcasing of films. As such *Filmmaker* embodies the city’s cinematic and cultural *humus* developed over decades: its ‘in-betweeness’ amid the national film industry based in Rome and the television and advertising cultures of Milan—something which already emerged in the 1950s and 1960s with the growth and epilogues of ICET and ‘22 Dicembre’; the intent to develop low-budget films for young up-and-coming film directors as well as the didactic goal of nurturing innovative approaches to cinema—which years earlier drove the short-lived adventure of Olmi’s ‘22 Dicembre’; the passionate interest in new technologies, especially with the advent of video—which stems from the experimental projects of the Militant Cinema Collective; and the fruitful osmotic exchanges with sectors of the theatre and the advertising industry, allowing the expertise of skilled operators from other creative fields to enrich film productions with their competencies and professionalism—which recall the rather eclectic mix of artists, industry people and intellectuals that since the 1930s have gravitated around the cinema Milanese circles. As De Berti suggests:

“The cultural environment and the city’s art life are the fertile soil in which the different expressive needs mature. In the absence of ‘institutional’ production centres in which the stages that lead to the completion of the film are already set and somehow encoded, the Milanese directors must, from time to time, invent productive paths, learning the-art-of-getting-by; but since the making of a film is part of a team work, as there were no official pre-formations to draw from, the aggregation is informal, even unpredictable, and it inevitably creates a closer relationship with the city, within the cultural circle, within the critical and militant experience, within the theatre and television activity: the city is a breeding ground for incentives, initiatives, fruitful exchanges. It is here, it seems, that the film directors are rooted in the fabric of the Milanese city.”[[21]](#endnote-21) (De Berti, 1996, 260-1)

However, by the end of the 1990s the Milanese administration started losing interest in the project cinema and overall public investments by local authorities in the arts began to decrease. Pedote (1998) recalls as one the main reasons for the weakening of *Filmmaker* in the 1990s the fact that “everyone was forced to fence for themselves and strive for survival”.[[22]](#endnote-22) Notably, as we have mentioned, between 1994 and 1997 *Filmmaker* did not produce any films. As a consequence, the network of production companies that emerged and collaborated together during the 1980s, failed to act as a united front in the following decade, and soon a competitive environment emerged. While the success of *Filmmaker* resided in the ability of a group of people from different fields and with different skills to collaborate together and create an environment in which innovative production modes and cinematic language emerged, the limited collaborative efforts of the 1990s redirected *Filmmaker* towards new frontiers.

Moreover, with the emergence of the new generation of filmmakers (amonst which Paolo Vari and Antonio Bocola, Alina Marazzi, Michelangelo Frammartino, Anna Negri, etc.), *Filmmaker*’s collective framework built on the osmosis between organizers, producers and filmmakers with similar experiences, expectations and aspirations, started to shrink. Pedote (2016) evokes *Filmmaker*’s strong sense of identity and of belonging of the 1980s almost with some nostalgia. The generational gap introduced new dynamics, with the younger filmmakers relating to *Filmmaker* as a platform for support rather than a symbolic place to relate with, thus creating interpersonal relations driven by pedagogical aims. Furthermore, in conjunction with this generation of filmmakers new themes were introduced and the formal strategies became more conventional. At the same time, the new generation of filmmakers established at international level the festival’s interest in areas such as, for example, art installations (see Michelangelo Frammartino’s installation at the cinema Manzoni in 2013, produced by Luca Mosso, *Filmmaker*’s current director), and marked an increased passion for the documentary genre (see retrospectives and workshops on/by Albert Wiseman in 2000 and Errol Morris in 2001). The generational gap grew even further in the new Millennium. This is exemplified by the introduction of a new funding system, with selected projects undergoing a mentoring system delivered by an older generation of experts leading to the selection of a few project developed into films, and a prize for best film. This practice, incidentally, well-established in many international film festivals, marks a philosophical shift from the collaborative paradigm of the first editions Filmmaker to a hierarchical model which relates masters to pupils.

Other factors also contributed to drive substantial changes between the first editions of *Filmmaker* in the 1980s and those of the following decades. Firstly, we mention the new digital technologies, which partly changed the production modes. Although *Filmmaker* was involved with video technologies since its first edition, the advent of high definition video and the digital format provided a different technological landscape. Secondly, many seminal Cineclubs which forged the cinematic culture of Milan in the 1970s and 1980s closed down due to the advent of VHS home videos; this included the influential Obraz Cinestudio. In response to this, the new generation of Milanese film lovers founded the Associazione Pandora in 1995 and the short-lived (1989-91) Circolo Creativo ISU (Creative Circle ISU) in Porta Romana, which also offered workshops by film critic Morando Morandini. Many of the remaining Cineclubs turned into Film Festival, as the local authorities only injected funding into Festivals, and this trend still features in today’s Milanese cinema landscape. Moreover, during the 1990s some of the historical Milanese schools which educated many film directors associated with *Filmmakers* started to lose their kudos. These included the Scuola Civica of Milan and I.T.S.O.S. – Istituto Tecnico Statale a Ordinamento Speciale (State Technical Institute with Special Orientation) of via Pace. The latter was particularly affected by the departure in 1997 of one of the school’s founders, Nuccio Ambrosino, and by its relocation from the city centre to the suburb. However, Academia di Brera retained its leading role in the field.

Closing comments

The analyses suggest that *Filmmaker* has nurtured a cinematic culture that on many levels aligns it with that of the global art cinema and the transnational New Waves.[[23]](#endnote-23) As Pedote (1998 and 2016) has pointed out, art and experimental films from around the globe—including American director Cassavetes, the New American cinema, the *Nouvelle Vague*, the German cinema, which emerged from the Oberhausen manifesto—were a great sources of inspiration for the *Filmmaker*’s circle. For instance, *Filmmaker*’s cinematic *modus operandi*, which contrasts drastically with the high level of work division and specialization of the mainstream national cinema industry, echoes the production modes of art cinema. The development of low-budget films by young up-and-coming film directors, the nurturing of innovative modes of production, the passionate interest in new technologies, and the promotion of the idea of the ‘filmmaker’ in control of all stages of the production process are also considered as defining traits of this form of cinema.

Moreover, some of the themes that recur in films produced by *Filmmaker* echo core concerns which film historians have identified in the transnational New Waves of the past half century (see Tweedie 2013). These includes: the investigation of societies at the cusp of fast economic, cultural and technological changes; the attention to youth adaptation to these changes; the focus on the youth and young adults as agent of social and cultural transformation; and the use of urban landscape as prototype for the reconception of society. Naturally, alongside thematic patterns, *Filmmaker*’s investment in aesthetic dynamism and technological experimentation as well as the international circulation of the films produced via the festival in art house cinemas and at international film festivals, also connect *Filmmaker*’s cinematic framework to that of the New Waves.

However, compared to the established New Waves that flourished globally in the past half century, *Filmmaker* did not develop a strong identity as a movement and failed to establish a long-lasting presence in the industry as a commercial venture. Reflecting *a-posteriori* on *Filmmaker*, Pedote (1998) has openly expressed his frustrations for its partial failures:

“We should ask ourselves why the relationship between Milan and the cinema cannot evolve beyond a string of fragmented experiences, sometimes very interesting, at others rather innovative and big, but nonetheless incapable of settling and of forming a base on which continuity can ensue, constructively. Surely not as an industry (given that since the time it centralized itself in Rome, it sufficed) and yet, neither as a tool through which it could ‘reveal’ itself, and its way of life in our times.” [[24]](#endnote-24)

*Filmmaker*’s inability to develop into a self-sufficient industry, can be explained by the historical fragmentary nature of the Milanese independent cinema, which, as we have mentioned, manifested well before the adventure of *Filmmaker*. The city has traditionally played an important role in launching the career of several film directors who began making films in Milan, and subsequently continued directing and producing films in Rome, or even abroad. They include directors such as Antonioni, Lattuada, Olmi, Comencini, Risi, Salvatores and Soldini.

The Milanese independent cinema and *Filmmaker* testify to how the crisis of cinema can sit paradoxically ‘out’ of cinema (Pavesi, 1996, 332). The city’s internal political and cultural polarizations, the prominent presence of an eclectic creative industry, the absence of institutional production facilities, and the reliance on a fluctuating level of local funding (including the local authorities, the local industry and local bank), are concomitant factors that contributed to both the success and failures of the Milanese independent cinema.

Nonetheless an important achievement of Pedote and Cavatorta and of the group of filmmakers and producers that contributed to *Filmmaker* is their ability to have repurposed and reinvented over the years—although perhaps without a conscious insight of this—the concept of political *impegno* (commitment) from which *Filmmaker* originated. As it has been mentioned, this *impegno* initially informed *Filmmaker* via: the idea of the collective and of the collaborative (rather than hierarchical) framework; the social critique embedded in the film produced; and the democratic forms of production modes. Nonetheless, during the 1990s the *impegno* of the past morphed into new frameworks and meanings, less directly derived from a Marxist ideology (that was by then rather obsolete and un-trendy), and able to take on forms which were meaningful to the emerging generations. Pedote (2016) admits how with Cavatorta they struggled at that time to understand the socio-cultural-political shifts that were taking place. However, the fact that *Filmmaker* has continued to sustain itself over the years as a viable cultural reference and pole that attracted filmmakers, and aspirations at the margin of Italian cinema’s institutional pathways, testifies to *Filmmaker*’s ability to reconfigure new forms of commitment through time, without losing its grip on experimentalism and social critique. The essence of this metamorphic commitment resides, according to Pedote (2016), in Cavatorta’s leadership and in an internal “tension oriented towards that which is new, towards research, and towards that which could undo conventional and also an interest and a rare ability to identify and develop the talent of young people.”[[25]](#endnote-25) The significant success the festival had with the public over the years constitutes one proof of this.

The peripheral place traditionally occupied by Milanese cinema (both in terms of volume of production as well as in the geographical sense) has nevertheless been anything but negligible within the landscape of Italian cinema. If, as Pedote points out (2016), *Filmmaker* has failed in its intent to change and reinvent the national film industry, the quality of films that it produced has succeeded in renewing the interest in Italian cinema both at national level but also internationally. Within Italy *Filmmaker* challenged mainstream Italian cinema and some of its formulaic cliché by providing a alternative model in addressing different audiences with different stories and different aesthetics, and at the international level it renewed the interest in Italian cinema worldwide with successful filmmakers such as Salvatores, Soldini, Frammartino, among several others.

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Filmography - Films produced by *Filmmaker*

1984

*Ave… Maria* (B. Conti Rossini, 16 mm, col., 5’)

*Foglie Morte* (F. Del Bosco, Video, col., 29’)

*I Volti dell’Altro Luogo* (E. Inetti, Video, col., 30’)

*Accendi la Tele (Videogag)* (M. Lombezzi e Filarmonia Clown, Video, col., 10’)

*Kamera* (M. Pratesi, Video, col., 18’)

*Polsi Sottili* (16mm, col., 50’, Giancarlo Soldi)

*Rosso di Sera* (K. Stella, 16mm, col., 20’)

*L’Osservatorio Nucelare del Sig. Nanof* (P. Rosa, 16mm, col. 60’)

1985

*Le Mille Cose Infinite* (T. Curagi e F. Ilacqua, 16mm, b/n, 65’)

*Rifiuti* (S. Francalanci, Video, col. 30’)

*Giulia in Ottobre* (S. Soldini, 16mm, col. 60’)

1988

*La Metamorfosi* (L. Mugnai, 16mm, col., 29’)

*My Sweet Camera* (R. Sodi, 16mm, col., 30’)

*La Variabile Felsen* (P. Rosa, 16mm, col., 30’)

*Viva gli Sposi* (G. Del Re, Super 16mm, b/n)

1991

*L’America me la immaginavo* (A. Marazzi, 16 mm, col., 22’)

*La Confessione di un Maniaco* (G. Fumagalli)

*Nothing Compares to You* (G. P. Rizzo, Video, col., 17’)

*Il Congedo del Viaggiatore Cerimonioso* (G. Bertolucci, Video, col., 35’)

1994

*Siamo Tutti Innamorati* (M. Spada)

1997

*La Casa delle Belle Addormentate* (M. Frammartino, Installazione Video, col.)

*Girotondo* (M. Pellegrini, 16 mm, col., 14’)

*Fame Chimica 1* (P. Vari e A. Bocola, Video, col., 60’)

1998

*Il Dolce Stil Novo* (G. Maderna)

1999

*Pompeo* (P. Vari e A. Bocola, Video, col., 31’)

*Vietato Scappare* (G. Carella, Video, col., 45’)

*Garage Olimpo* (M. Bechis, 16mm)

2000

*Isban* (G. Carella, Video, col., 47’)

*Orario d’Apertura* (C. Tassin, Video, col., 30’)

Notes

1. On ‘cinepanettone’, see O’Leary, Alan. 2013. *Fenomenologia del cinepanettone*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino. Films produced by Reteitalia/ Silvio Berlusconi Communication/ Mediaset/ Medusa during the 1980s and 1990s include: *Signori e signore* (T. Pulci, 1984), *Via Montenapoleone* (C. Vanzina, 1986), *Il camorrista* (G. Tornatore, 1986), *Rimini Rimini* (S. Corbucci, 1987), *Soldati - 365 all'alba* (M. Risi, 1987), *Caramelle da uno sconosciuto* (F. Ferrini, 1987), *I miei primi quarant’anni* (C. Vanzina, 1987), *Angel Hill – L’ultima missione* (I. Dolce, 1988), *La cintura* (G. Gamba, 1989), *La maschera del demonio* (L. Bava, 1989), *Il sole buio* (D. Damiani, 1990), *Le comiche* (N. Parenti, 1990), *Stanno tutti bene* (G. Tornatore, 1990), *Johnny stecchino* (R. Beningni, 1991), *Mediterraneo* (G. Salvatores, 1991), *Volere volare* (M. Nichetti, 1991), *Caldo soffocante* (G. Gagliardo, 1991), *Cin Cin* (G. Saks, 1991), *Hornsby e Rodriguez – Sfida Criminale* (U. Lenzi, 1992), *Infelici e contenti* (N. Parenti, 1992), *Dellamorte dellamore* (M. Soavi, 1993), *Il silenzio dei prosciutti* (E. Greggio, 1994), *Facciamo paradiso* (M. Monicelli, 1995). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Films produced in Milan during the 1980s and 1990s include: Maurizio Nichetti’s *Ratataplan* (1979), *Ho fatto splash* (1980), *Domani si balla!* (1982), *Ladri di saponette* (1989), *Volere volare* (1990) and *Stefano quantestorie* (1993), all of which gained national acclaim. Gabriele Salvatores, co-founder of the Teatro dell’Elfo, directed *Sogno di una note d’estate* (1983) and later on with Colorado Film *Kamikaze, ultima notte a Milan* (1988), *Marrakesh Express* (1989), *Mediterraneo* (1991)—for which at the Academy Awards he earned an Oscar for Best Foreign Film—*Puerto Escondido* (1992), and *Sud* (1993). Amongst Silvio Soldini’s films, we remember *Giulia in Ottobre* (1985), *L’aria serena dell’Ovest* (1990), *Un’anima divisa in due* (1993), and the episode *D’estate* for the multi-direct film *Miracoli. Storie per corti* (1994). Paolo Rosa with Studio Azzurro directed *Facce di Festa* (1980), *Osservatorio nucleare del Signor Nanof* (1985), *La variabile Felsen* (1988), *Dov’è Yankel* for *Miracoli. Storie per corti* (1994), and *Il menmonista* (2000). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Olmi’s relationship with the industry dates back to the early 1950s and his work with the industrial film at the ‘Sezione Cinema Edisonvolta’ [Cinema Section Edisonvolta] till the end of the 1950s. See Boledi and Mosconi, 1996 publication, pages 299-301. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Quote translated by the authors. Original quote: “*non* il cinema *commerciale*, come normalmente inteso, bensì del cinema che in qualche modo si accostasse, senza pregiudiziali commerciali, alle problematiche del nostro tempo.” [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Quote translated by the authors. Original quote: “la meta di tutti gli intellettuali milanesi interessati al cinema”. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. On the Milanese industrial film see Boledi and Mosconi, 1996 publication, pages 295-311. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. The literature on Studio Azzurro is copious and is published in many languages. For a brief overview of their work, see the bilingual volume Di Marino, Bruno. 2010, ed. *Tracce, Sguardi e Altri Pensieri/ Clues, Views and Other Thoughts.* Milan: Feltrinelli. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Quote translated by the authors. Original quote: “il video sia un elemento spugnoso, che risucchia tutto e ciò che esce non sia più ciò che ha assorbito. Il cinema assorbito dal video restituiva qualcosa di diverso dal medium iniziale, in un movimento metamorfico”. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Quote translated by the authors. Original quote: “La logica dell’*engagement* […] parte dalla certezza che la propria coscienza politico-letteraria del presente è il principio da cui dedurre *un solo modo* storicamente corretto di risolvere il proprio rapporto fra realtà sociale, imperativi politici, forme letterarie” [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Young activism continued to develop during the 1980s. On this see De Sario, Beppe. 2012. “Cambiamento sociale e attivismo giovanile nell’italia degli anni Ottanta: il caso dei centri sociali occupati e autogestiti”. *Cahiers d’études italiennes* 14: 117-38. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Quote translated by the authors. Original quote: “un polo alternativo nel modo di presentare il cinema” [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. On cinema Anteo, see AA. VV. 2004. *Anteo 1979-2004: Venticinque anni di cinema a Milan*. Milan: Feltrinelli. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Quote translated by the authors. Original quote: “La fine degli anni ’70 fu un momento di particolare curiosità e propositività per il piccolo mondo del cinema a Milan che si traduceva in un grande desiderio di lavorare in modo nuovo, più libero, aperto al confronto con altre esperienze […]. Questa effervescenza trova la sua voce in Radio Popolare, che riusciva a raccogliere e diffondere le idee migliori che circolavano in città. […] *Filmmaker* nacque intorno alla radio […] e fu il punto di confluenza di tutte quelle energie ‘cinematografiche’ ” [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Quote translated by the authors. Original quote: “Questo complesso panorama sociale, culturale, ed economico di transizione innesca quindi la crisi ‘manifesta’ del cinema e i dati […] trovano conferma anche nella crisi cinematografica dell’esercizio cittadino”. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Quote translated by the authors. Original quote: “sostenere la ricerca, la sperimentazione, l’innovazione nella produzione audiovisva italiana”. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Quote translated by the authors. Original quote: “*Filmmaker* rifletta l’impegno politico degli anni Settanta, poiché c’era un desiderio non solo di riflessione politica ma anche d’intervento sul sociale” [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. On *Filmmaker* and the Milanese independent film see also Pasciulli, Ettore. 1998. *Milan cinema prodigio. Anticiapzioni e primate in un secolo di avventure*. Venezia: Canal & I Nodi; Bertozzi, Marco. 2003. *L’idea documentaria*. Torino: Lindau; Bertozzi, Marco. 2008. *Storia del documentario italiano*. Venezia: Marsilio; Palazzini, Marco, and Mauro Raimondi. 2009. *Milan films 1896/2009*. Genova: Fratelli Frilli Editore. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Quote translated by the authors. Original quote: “sulla fiducia, senza aver neanche visto i film”. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Quote translated by the authors. Original quote: “Con la partecipazione massiccia a quello che in realtà poteva apparire solo un piccolo festival per piccoli film, questo pubblico così curioso e coinvolto sembrava voler dichiarare il suo desiderio di potersi riconoscere e rispecchiare nel cinema, cosa che allora non era facile col cinema italiano, culturalmente indietro di una generazione rispetto a loro. […] Era un pubblico fatto di persone che stavano vivendo alcune profonde trasformazioni sociali e culturali della città”. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Since 2012 Cariplo has continued to sponsor *Filmmaker* and since 2013 the Milan Film Network, an association of seven Milanese film festivals. However, amongst these the only local festival that has consistently invested in a production unit is *Filmmaker*, whilst the Milan Film Festival has only sporadically funded its own productions. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Quote translated by the authors. Original quote: “In questo senso l’ambiente culturale, la vita artistica cittadina costituiscono il terreno fertile in cui giungono a maturare le diverse esigenze espressive. In mancanza di strutture produttive ‘istituzionali’ nelle quali le tappe che portano alla realizzazione del film sono già scandite e in qualche modo codificate, per i registi milanesi occorre di volta in volta inventare dei percorsi produttivi, imparando l’arte di arrangiarsi; ma poichè l’opera filmica è anche un lavoro di squadra, laddove non esistono formazioni ufficiali alle quali attingere, l’aggregazione è informale, anche imprevedibile, e si crea inevitabilmente in un rapporto più stretto con la città, nel circolo culturale, nell’esperienza critica e militante, nell’attività teatrale e televisiva: la città è un vivaio di fermenti, di iniziative, di scambi proficui. È qui che si insinua, ci sembra, il radicamento dei registi nel tessuto Milanese.” [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Quote translated by the authors. Original quote: “ognuno era costretto a pensare a sé e alla proria sopravvivenza”. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Some global New Waves which emerged during the 1980s and 1990s include: New German Cinema—Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Werner Herzog, Wim Wenders, Margarethe Von Trotta; New Taiwanese Cinema— Edward Yang, Te-Chen Tao, I-Chen Ko, Yi Chang, Hou Hsiao-hsien; Hong Kong New Wave— John Woo, Wong Kar-wai, Ann Hui, Mabel Cheung, Alex Law; La Movida Madrileña (The Madrilenian Scene)—Pedro Almodóvar, Juan Antonio Bardem, Carlos Saura, Julio Médem; Taiwanese second wave—Ang Lee, Tasi Ming-liang, Stan Lai, Wei Te-sheng; Nuevo Cine Mexicano (New Mexican Cinema)—Alfonso Cuaron, Alejandro G. Iñárritu’; Korean New Wave—Park Kwang-su, Jang Sun-woo, Chung Ji-young, Lee Myung-se; Danish ‘Dogme95’—Lars Von Trier and Thomas Vintemberg. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Quote translated by the authors. Original quote: “C’è da chiedersi perché tra Milan ed il cinema le cose non riescano ad andare al di là di un susseguirsi frammentato di esperienze, a volte molto interessanti, a volte addirittura innovative e grandi, eppure incapaci di sedimentarsi e di formare una base su cui costruire con continuità. Milan sembra non aver mai veramente creduto nel cinema. Certamente non come industria (da quando si è concentrata lì, Roma bastava) ma neanche come strumento attarverso il quale ‘rivelare’ se stessa e i suoi modi di vivere il nostro tempo”. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Quote translated by the authors. Original quote: “una incredibile vivacità intellettuale, una tensione per il nuovo, per la ricerca, per quello che poteva rompere gli schemi convenzionali, e poi un’attenzione e una capacità rara di individuare e valorizzare il talento dei giovani”. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)