Topologies of Regional Cinema: Philippine, Mindanaon, and Southeast Asian Films

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Topologies of Regional Cinema:
Philippine, Mindanaon, and Southeast Asian Films

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ABSTRACT

This PhD by Publication investigates the entanglements of national and regional cinema formations. It explores the potential of peripheral regional cinema imaginaries and proposes a topological approach to film research, interpretation, and curation informed by the geographical concepts of place and scale. The national and regional contexts addressed are Philippine, Mindanao, and Southeast Asian cinemas.

The portfolio comprises (1) my book*, The End of National Cinema: Filipino Film at the Turn of the Century* (2016), which interrogates the significance and limitations of the national cinema paradigm and the ramification of placemaking films in forming imaginaries beneath and beyond the nation-state; (2) three essays—"*Tu Pug Imatuy*: Small Film, Global Connections" (2019), "Allegories of Scale: On Three Films Set in Mindanao" (2021), "Topos, Historia, Islas: Film Islands and Regional Cinemas" (2021)—that conceptualise regional cinema by centring on films made or set in Mindanao; and (3) three film programmes, This Land Is Ours (2019), Cinematic Counter-Cartographies of Southeast Asia (2021), and LUMAD (2021), curated with activist intentions, concretising the micro- and macro-regional contexts of Mindanao films in the Philippines and Southeast Asia.

The submission is methodologically attentive to placemaking, scale mapping, and topological thinking. It demonstrates how they facilitate a process-oriented, open-ended, and comparative understanding of contemporary regional cinema sensitive to the volatile politics of (national) inclusion, marginalisation, and exclusion, the contradictions of one's practice vis-à-vis one's location, and the possibilities of solidarity and collaboration within and across borders.

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When I dream of and work toward a hoped-for future, I think of Clio and Tim, who inspire me to do well and be better every day.

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* * *

Many rights, land, and truth defenders, including Lumad and their allies, and countless victims of state and police aggression in the heinous "war on drugs" have been killed while I was writing this thesis.

I offer this work to their memory and join the call for justice and remembrance.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my work.

Patrick F. Campos
21 May 2023

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Commentary

I am a Filipino film researcher and programmer whose scholarly output in the early part of my career (2005-2015) was occupied with the problematics of "national cinema." While completing my book, *The End of National Cinema: Filipino Film at the Turn of the Century* (2016; hereon, *TEONC*), I expanded my research agenda to include "regional cinemas," referring to filmmaking in Southeast Asia and different parts of the Philippines beyond Manila.[1] I branched out to film programming in the next stretch of my career (2014-present) while writing several essays based on my curatorial work.

This commentary traces the trajectory and itinerary of my thinking from interrogating national cinema to conceptualising topologies of regional cinema. It demonstrates the unity of my shifting but continual process of theorising the national and regional as expressed in research and curatorial work produced between 2016 and 2021. The commentary's structure, mirrored in the section sequences of each chapter, reiterates an arc from complicating the national view to reconfiguring the regional.

In Chapter 1, I engage with currents in Philippine cinema, reworkings of national cinema in the era of globalisation, and various modes of conceptualising regional cinema and introduce key concepts that enable my methodology. Chapter 2 is focused on *TEONC* and revisits its first four chapters, where I establish the significance of nationalist criticism, the priority of (national) subjects in the contest to define national cinema, and the ramification of placemaking films in forming imaginaries beneath and beyond the national. Chapter 3 discusses three essays—"*Tu Pug Imatuy*: Small Film, Global Connections" (2019), "Allegories of Scale: On Three Films Set in Mindanao" (2021), "Topos, Historia, Islas: Film Islands and Regional Cinemas" (2021)—centred on recent films made or set in Mindanao and explores how scales modulate configurations of regional cinema. Finally, in Chapter 4, I reflect on three programmes, This Land Is Ours (2019), Cinematic Counter-Cartographies of Southeast Asia (2021),

1 In this commentary, Manila refers both to the capital city, where Philippine cinema was born, and the megalopolis of Metro Manila, officially designated as the National Capital Region (NCR), where the film industrial centre is located.

and LUMAD (2021), which investigate the entanglements of national and regional cinemas and the potential of place-rooted peripheral cinema imaginaries through a topological approach to film research, interpretation, curation.

The commentary evaluates my research and curatorial methodology and explains how attentiveness to placemaking, scale mapping, and topological thinking can unsettle national cinema. More importantly, it demonstrates how they facilitate process-oriented, open-ended, and comparative analyses of regional cinema sensitive to the volatile politics of (national) inclusion, marginalisation, and exclusion, the contradictions of one's practice vis-à-vis one's location, and the possibilities of solidarity and collaboration within and across borders.

Research Questions

Underlying my research and programming work are the following questions:

1. How can a shift from the national to the regional view revaluate, nuance, and reorient the politics of "national" cinema?
2. How can the geographical concepts of *place*, *scale*, *region*, and *topology* activate the progressive potential and protean imaginary of a "regional" cinema not subordinated to the nation-state?
3. How can developing a method of film curating that is attentive to topological interrelations and the power of place provide alternative ways to conceptualise national and regional cinemas?

CHAPTER 1 DEPARTURES & TRAJECTORIES

This chapter comprises four sections. The first situates the emergence of my critical project at the University of the Philippines (UP) and the nationalist, anticolonial, and antidictatorial critical traditions it nurtured. The second provides an overview of engagements with national cinema in the era of globalisation. The third characterises the conjuncture that gave rise to Southeast Asian cinema studies and reflects on top-down, grounded, and programming-oriented conceptualisations of regional cinema. The last elaborates on the key concepts of place, scale, region, and topology and discusses their ideational power to bring new social spatialities and cinema formations to mind as a prelude to struggling to realise them materially.

Sites of Intellectual Development

My introduction to film studies at the UP came in two registers, formal and informal. The Department of Film and Audiovisual Communication (est. 1984) was shaped by the intellectual tradition surrounding nationalism prevailing at the UP since the postwar period (Ileto 1993). The professors were artists, scholars, and critics involved in the anti-Marcos movement in the 1970s and '80s and advocates of variations of "native" and "anticolonial" scholarship.[2] In the classrooms, I learned about the canon comprising a Golden Age, produced by filmmakers that spoke to the Filipino experience under Marcos's dictatorship.

Most of the readings about Philippine cinema were written or edited by founding, active, or former members of the Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino (lit. Critics of the Filipino Film; hereon, MPP), established in 1976 during Martial Law.[3] The work of two of its founders typifies the project of then-emergent film studies. The late Bienvenido Lumbera sought to bring popular culture into the ambit of academic research and critical reflection. His historiographic sketches and valorisation of the

2 Nativist, Filipinist, and nationalist frameworks and approaches vary; some overlap, while others clash. See Guillermo, 2009.

3 By highlighting the significance of the MPP's historical emergence, I am not suggesting that the group was solely responsible for establishing Filipino film studies, nor that the MPP subscribed to a monolithic theory. I must also disclose that I was a member of the MPP from 2016 to 2018.

"new" cinema spearheaded by Lino Brocka, Ishmael Bernal, Mike De Leon, and cohorts profoundly impacted the way Filipino film is appreciated as a political as much as a cultural form (1983, 1989, 1992). His criticism exhibited the tension of being committed to taking the mass audience of popular movies seriously while also helping canonise social realist and art films that tended to be unpopular.

Meanwhile, Nicanor Tiongson's scholarship situated Filipino film in the broader context of folklore, and his work as editor sought to produce a continuous and glorious Philippine Cinema History. He edits the MPP's *Urian Anthology* series with four volumes to date (1983, 2001, 2010, 2013). Apart from reviews and critical essays, each volume provides a ten-year historical overview and names the decade's best films. Tiongson is also the editor-in-chief of two editions of the massive multivolume *CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art* (1994, 2017). Here, Philippine cinema is an integral part of the national cultural heritage. Thus, the films named in these compendious publications form an influential canon.

The MPP favoured politically liberal or radical films considered representative of Filipino Culture. Their publications emphasised a progressive nationalist framework, which, though prone to essentialism, rendered any consideration of Filipino film inseparable from taking into account the deep-seated political instability, economic inequality, and social crisis in the Philippines, that is, these films' national-historical context.[4] So, my education in Filipino film studies coincided with my conviction that cinema is political and instilled in me a concern for the nation's ideational, material, and affective bearings that, as I discuss in Chapter 2, mattered ultimately to subjects denominated as national.

The other factor in my education was my informal association with cinephiles at the UP Film Center (est. 1976). If at the Film Department students were conscienticised to change the film industry and taught about this industry's distinguished history, it was at the Film Center where I discovered "alternative" cinema. The Film Center promoted non-industrial forms during and beyond the Martial Law period (Deocampo 2022). Its programming has maintained a strong preference for art cinema and the avant-garde and opened its spaces as a home for artists working

4 On Filipino cultural nationalism's tendency toward essentialism, see Guillermo, 2009; and JN Garcia, 2004.

beyond the mainstream. Here, I witnessed the importance of cradling a vibrant community of artists and cineastes that, though niche, could disrupt traditions and conventions in its call to make cinema new.

In their early years, the cinemas that the Film Department and the Film Center promoted differed. One preferred "serious" full-length films that circulated commercially but overcame crass commercialism; the other extolled short films that would never break through commercial cinema.[5] Yet, as I analyse in *TEONC*, despite their differences, both schools were, and are, invested in National Cinema (244-57). Notably, former Film Center programmer Nick Deocampo's historiography sought to establish alternative cinema as the "real" national cinema with its own canon and Golden Age.[6]

However, by the late 1990s, as technologies shifted to digital, the espoused filmmaking practices of the two schools converged. Short filmmakers were turning to full-length and contributing to mainstream cinema (including Deocampo), while some commercial filmmakers began adopting the maverick stance of alternative filmmakers that disrupted popular conventions. By the mid-2000s, the camps constituting the alternative and the mainstream were no longer neatly distinguishable (De la Cruz 2010; Tiongson 2013b; Del Mundo 2016). Furthermore, film communities formed beyond the industrial film centre of Manila. In these places, self-educated filmmakers were unburdened by the National Capital Region's prevailing cultural politics. Many were unexposed to the inaccessible canon and alternative films but were informally schooled in world cinema via digital piracy.

In *City of Screens*, focusing on screening spaces and events in Manila in this crucial period from 2005 onward, Jasmine Nadua Trice reorients the conversation from the institutional strategies of reading and promoting "ideal" films toward the alternative practices of film circulation and reception as "an *aspirational* approach to cinema's place in public culture" (2021: 3). Stressing the contradictory situation of films with radical forms, modes of production, and representations of the marginalised in class-divided societies like the Philippines that attract viewership from the cultural

5 On the notion of "serious" films, see *TEONC*; see 133-4n.10. Ch. 4 maps various conceptions of independent cinema.

6 The introductory chapters of his *Cine*; *Film*; and *Eiga* elaborate on the thesis of National Cinema. *Alternative Cinema* employs the concept of rhizomes to theorise recent filmmaking, though it retains a linear historicisation before the digital era.

elite, she postulates that Filipino films comprised "an aspiring national cinema without a national audience" (ibid.).

Thus, her work demonstrates how theorising cinema's "ideal" publics is compelling.[7] The yet "fantasized, future" publics overcoming the "inherent paradoxes" of culture renders them speculative; they constitute an alternative culture that envisions their arrival and summons them to existence (ibid.: 6, 11, 29). According to Trice, film circulation is "the engine of this trajectory" that calls forth publics of a national cinema advocating social transformation (ibid.: 6). As I discuss in the next section and illustrate in Chapter 4, I share Trice's preoccupation with film circulation, specifically its programming component, and the speculative future-making potential it aspires. However, apart from examining how alternative programming, distribution, and exhibition adumbrate the dream of the national, I propose a spatial and process-oriented method of thinking about Philippine cinema through the prism of the regional, whose ideal publics comprise national and nonnational subjects.

The changes in Philippine film culture were further manifested in 2003 by the merger of the Film Department and the Film Center to form the UP Film Institute (UPFI), where I joined the teaching staff and eventually served as its co-programmer. From this central location, I problematised the nation's contested and contradictory manifestations in the institutional, critical, and political projects of engineering the discourse of National Cinema at different conjunctures. Rather than endorse one school over the other, my inquiry in *TEONC* reassessed their gains and deficiencies in light of contemporary cinema.

Here, too, I negotiated my relationship with emergent cinemas beyond Manila, with a keen interest in developments in Mindanao, as well as with the variegated cinemas of Southeast Asia, through my work as a co-programmer of the Film Center, curator for state-funded initiatives Cinema Rehiyon and Tingin ASEAN Film Festival, and independent programmer. My location at the UP and NCR challenged me to constantly acknowledge the affordances and limitations of my purview, decentre my

7 Notably, Brocka approached the same conundrum in a 1983 essay, though he argues, echoing Lumbera, that artists should learn from the taste of the mass audiences and nurture it patiently, prioritising the Great Filipino Audience rather than the Great Filipino Film. See "Philippine Movies."

subject position to activate the critical potential of regionality, and, most importantly, learn humbly from places I am not.

Transmogrifications of "National Cinema"

When I began researching and writing *TEONC*, "[t]he notion of National Cinema [had] been under fierce attack," with scholars retreating from the concept that, as JungBong Choi argues, had been disparaged as "antiquated," "obsolete," "parochial," and "taboo" (2011: 173-74). Such an attitude contrasted with the bearing I had cultivated at the UP and provided the tension that impelled my interrogation of national cinema.

The tide of interest in or resistance to globalisation stirred the mounting rejection of the once-dominant paradigm (James & Steger). Film scholars analysed how film production, circulation, and reception—the diversification of the sources of capital, labour, stories, and images, channels of distribution, and the cultural location of artists, markets, audiences, critics, and fans—may be understood to have become global and, thus, no longer understandable in terms only of the national (Willemen 1994:216-19; Higson 2000:63-74; Ezra & Rowden 2006). The concepts of "global," "transnational," and a revalued sense of "world" cinema actuate the scholarship along these lines (Ezra & Rowden 2006; Shaw & De La Garza 2010; Higbee & Lim 2010).

Film scholars either welcomed the new turn, remained suspicious, or explored novel ways to engage with the national. An example of the first is captured in Stephanie Dennison and Song-Hwee Lim's (2006) assertion, keyed to the cultural politics of representation, that attention to films beyond the US and Europe in the new century has enabled the reimagination of a world cinema without fixed centres. In contrast to such optimism, Jyotsna Kapur and Keith Wagner, whose critical focus is on the political economy of global cinema, contend that "any and all cinema is the localised expression of a globalised integration" (2011:6). In this view, promoting national distinction could be coopted by or complicit with the processes of globalisation that obscure their repressive operation with the veneer of diversity. The third broad response is located between these opposing views. I summarise three frameworks that have informed my work.

Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover take a position between these two stances in their consideration of "global art cinema," which they assert is a "resolutely international category" but with an "ambivalent relationship to location," in that, a popular film from a national cinema can be considered an international art film elsewhere (2010:7). This ambivalence signals film's deictic, or locationally contextual, relationality vis-à-vis how producers, distributors, and receivers locate it.

Unlike Galt and Schoonover, Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar (2006) accentuate internal cultural boundaries. They propose to abandon the "national cinema" analytic in favour of the "cinema and the national" framework. Critiquing the cinemas of China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Chinese diaspora, they maintain that their refashioned framework uncovers how cinemas manifest contending ideas of the [Chinese] nation from the transnational perspective to viewpoints within or without discrete and overlapping (sub)national borders.

Meanwhile, focusing concurrently on the global and the national, Dina Iordanova, David Martin-Jones, and Belén Vidal, in their edited volume (2010), offer the abstractly spatial and embracive notion of "peripheral" cinemas, or any cinema that subverts centres or centring patterns in film industries, markets, and cultures, for instance, small-national cinemas vis-à-vis filmmaking in the global centres, stateless cinemas vis-à-vis films propped up by ethnonationalist states, and Aboriginal films vis-à-vis settler films. They recuperate the oft-derogated category of the peripheral and illuminate the shifting modes of production and circulation that sustain the representation and reception of oft-suppressed marginal identities and histories. The framework stresses the deictical aspect of centrality and peripherality while limning the interrelatedness of peripheries within, across, and beneath dominant structures.

Common among these responses to globalisation is the assumption that cinema is not insular. Any attempt to conceive national cinema must acknowledge the simultaneity of its particularity and relationality (*TEONC* 17). Also shared by these works is their supposition that various forms of national and global territorialisation are not absolute and breed asymmetries in power relations between minority and majority populations. *TEONC* and my programming work exhibit a similar disposition in assessing national cinema's uses, limits, and persistence. As with their premises, I concede the global processes transforming cinema but am critical of how political and

economic borders are broken down to benefit hegemonic powers at the expense of national subjects. Moreover, I have focused on the role of place in curbing the totalising claims of the national and global. More crucially, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, I use a topological approach to trace interrelated peripheries that network as regional formations.

Such a reorientation made me sensitive to the implications of Philippine cinema's renewed global visibility beginning in the 2000s—a subtext that runs through *TEONC*. At the same time, it made me attentive to the developments in regional cinema—a term I unpack in Chapter 3. Works in various forms and languages representing myriad ethnicities from this peripheral formation, such as those from Mindanao, where films about and by Christian settler, Muslim, and indigenous artists unsettle national cinema, even as some circulate internationally under the undifferentiated signifier of "Filipino" film.

The case of Mindanao films is complicated by their polylinguistic and multiethnic dimension and the heterogeneity of nationness Mindanaons[8] address—the fractured nation with a troubled colonial and Filipino history in Mindanao; the "modern" nation presided over by local "traditional" leaders whose influence pivots between the central government, feuding clans and their private armies, and rebels; the autonomous as well as the separatist Moro nation (Bangsamoro), and the indigenous groups, roughly corresponding to "First Nations,"[9] struggling to keep their cultural dignity and ancestral domains. In my programming of Mindanao cinema, it became vital to evaluate films about the internally displaced minority of Indigenous Peoples (hereon, IPs),[10] some of the most marginalised groups by any sociopolitical

8 Mindanaon, locally Mindanawon, means of or from Mindanao.

9 The term picturing communities long before the formation of colonial states and modern nation-states is used mainly to refer to the Indigenous Peoples of Canada and Australia but is alluded to here for how it expresses a sense of small-scale, sovereign nationhood that has existed for centuries apart from the state apparatus. See Simpson 2016:22.

10 Indigenous Peoples is a problematic term because it groups a host of diverse populations with vastly different histories, cultures, and struggles. Names used by the communities as self-identification are preferred, but the relatively recent "Indigenous Peoples" (with I and P capitalised and pluralised with an s to signify distinctions) have been adopted by many groups to internationalise the political issues of natives in different parts of the world, collectivise their efforts in gaining and safeguarding their rights to self-determination, and strategically activating cross-border networks and alliances. The Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2007 resulted from such an international mobilisation. Official terms such as First Peoples, First Nations, and Aborigines differ worldwide; in the Philippines, Indigenous Peoples, shortened to IPs, is used legally to refer to nearly 200 ethnolinguistic groups throughout the nation-state whose rights

and economic measure in the Philippines, as elsewhere. Thus, scholarship on indigenous media's critique of national and global formations is germane to my work.

In *Our Own Image* (1990), Māori director Barry Barclay reflected on his advocacy of complete indigenous control over their image, image-making, and distribution, the gravity of respecting and primarily addressing one's community and allowing its members to participate in production, his fidelity to the worldview of his culture as translated into practice, and the difference of his resulting work from other cinemas. These principles comprise what he would call Fourth Cinema, in contradistinction to what Argentine filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino defined as First Cinema, typified by Hollywood genre movies, Second Cinema, exemplified by European auteurist works, and militant, revolutionary Third Cinema, which for Barclay are settler or invader cinemas incapable of speaking for the native experience (Barclay 2003; Murray 2008:21-26; Milligan 2015:349).[11]

Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (1994) called for deprovincialised and polycentric media studies in which "Third World" and "Fourth World" productions, roughly corresponding to Third and Fourth Cinemas, each in its way, without reconciling them, occupy a central role in the radical decolonisation of global culture. Amy J. Elias and Christian Moraru (2015) have argued that a planetary turn away from a globalist view, a turn of which Shohat and Stam's work may be considered a forerunner, has occurred in this century and is remaking critical theory. This turn is keyed to "the planet as a living organism, as a shared ecology, and as an incrementally integrated system" and "the risk environment brought about by the ever-escalating crises of world ecologies" (ibid.: xii, xi). Though they only broached the concept in the 1990s, it is noteworthy that Shohat and Stam's critique of globalisation in their generative book links humanity's shared "planetary destiny" with the histories and survival of "indigenous communitas" (1994:32).

Finally, in a series of essays that brought anthropological approaches to bear upon media studies, Faye Ginsburg (1991, 1995, 1997) articulated how indigenous production embodied a rhetoric of self-determination and served as a tool for

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are recognised by the Indigenous People's Rights Act of 1997, although as I discuss in Ch. 4, the term Lumad for the IPs of Mindanao signifies a specific political experience. See LT Smith 2012:6-7; and Rodil 1994.

11 Solanas and Getino's, as well as the other manifestoes of Third Cinema, are in MT Martin 1997.

activism. Like Shohat and Stam, she deictically situates indigenous production as a counterpoint to media globalisation, another form of western imperialism inundating native culture. At the same time, she underscores the contradiction of indigenous production enabled by the same technological processes of globalisation. That natives wield the same media counterdiscursively is characterised by Ginsburg (1991) as a Faustian paradox, complicating Barclay's notion of Fourth Cinema by natives for natives. She writes:

> On the one hand, they are finding new modes for expressing indigenous identity through media and gaining access…to serve their own needs and ends. On the other hand, the spread of communications technology…threatens to be a final assault on culture, language, imagery, relationship between generations, and respect for traditional knowledge. (ibid.: 96)

These writings that advance indigenous media unveil the failure or violence attendant in processes of nationalisation and globalisation. They also demonstrate how their circulation on various scales addresses pressing planetary issues and interweaves colonial history and questions of futurity.[12] Notably, these germinal publications were first published in the 1990s, when Kidlat Tahimik, whose cinema I examine in *TEONC*, brought film technology to the Ifugaos of Luzon, in northern Philippines so that they could film their lifeways; the Ifugaos eventually adopted Kidlat in the 2000s. In subsequent chapters, I foreground the apparent insolubility of the politics of Third and Fourth Cinemas in my examination of Kidlat and Mindanaon and non-Mindanaon filmmakers whose collaboration with IPs illustrates how regional cinemas bring to light urgent but peripheralised issues, even as these artists' nonnative cultural location and the Faustian pact that enables them are unresolved.

Potentialities of "Regional Cinema"

TEONC virtually dialogued with the wave of film scholarship on Southeast Asian films that arrived in the new century (Harrison 2006; Khoo & Harvey 2007; Khoo 2007; Baumgärtel 2012; Lim & Yamamoto 2012; Ingawanij & McKay 2012). Contemporary films were not presumed to comprise a national cinema unproblematically in this crop

12 Dillon (2012) offered the analytic of Indigenous futurisms, which outlines how the natives could creatively represent themselves and imagine alternative scenarios of their pasts and futures.

of writings. Rather, in the vein of Berry and Farquhar's cinema and the national, they investigated how films manifested contending ideas about the nation.

For instance, scholars of contemporary Indonesian cinema elucidate how the lionisation of *pribumi* or "native" filmmaking in the critically favoured New Order-era (1965-1998) *film nasional* framework under Suharto tended to be exclusionary and was challenged by the cosmopolitan aesthetics of young *reformasi* filmmakers who took inspiration from global cinema (Sen 2006; Barker 2010; Yngvesson 2015). Another example is how studies on Malaysian film critique a national cinema policed by a conservative ethnonationalist state with aspirations to "go global" and industrially biased toward Malay representation despite addressing a multicultural society. Scholars show how contemporary filmmakers of different ethnicities, empowered by digital, emerged as the Little Cinema, a peripheral formation distinct from but a corrective of Malaysian national cinema, and offered local audiences stories of a "dreamed" instead of an already "imagined" (referring to Benedict Anderson's theory of) national community (Lim 2012; Muthalib 2012; McKay 2012; Bernards 2017).

These examples resonate with the tendencies in Philippine nationalist criticism that I problematise in *TEONC*—the proclivity, despite its progressive agenda, to reify aesthetic and political values under the rubric of the national, marginalising or reinforcing the marginalisation of texts, practices, and subjects that do not neatly conform. Thus, with insight from such analyses of Indonesian and Malaysian cinemas, among others, my aim, as I elaborate in Chapters 2 and 3, has been to revisit overfamiliar nationalist strategies of film valuation, enact topological rereadings that highlight overshadowed aspects of cinemas, and shift my view to peripheral regional formations the monolithic national overlook or sustain.

The emergence of Southeast Asian cinema studies and the regional consciousness they engendered were arguably catalysed by global and transnational cinema studies through the methodological possibilities they advanced and the cultural and industrial grounding required to theorise globality and transnationality (Hjort 2009; Shaw & de la Garza 2010:4; Higbee & Lim 2010:10; Lovatt & Trice 2021). It is the gap between conceptual scales and concrete experiences that the studies on "regional cinema" bridge. In what follows, I refer to ways of perceiving and articulating

regionality in cinema from the top-down view, the ground, and the viewpoint of circulation.

From one end of the spectrum are border-crossing regional definitions. Referencing the academic and artistic outputs built around "Latin American," "African," "Asian," and "Balkan" cinemas, Hamid Naficy identifies how works can be grouped according to the "*shared* features of films from *contiguous* geographic regions" (2008:97, emphasis added). He posits that a regional paradigm can facilitate the discovery of "the many contextual and textual *similarities*…that run through both these societies and their artistic productions" (ibid.:97-98, emphasis added).

From the other end of the spectrum, the rich literature on Indian (national and subcontinental) film cultures offers insight into subnational regional formations that make sense in the opposite direction Naficy takes. According to Ratheesh Radhakrishnan, regional cinemas assume "an *overlap* between language, culture, and territory," implying a gradated spectrum across geography (2021:162, emphasis added). Here, regionality is premised on *diversity* and marks their linguistic *difference,* especially from Hindi and English, the languages of the centre (ibid.: emphasis added).

Other typologies have accounted for international and subnational regionalities. Marsha Kinder offers the terms *microregionalism,* referring to how films are "made within a particular region of a nation in opposition to that nation's dominant cinema," and *macroregionalism*, connoting films that circulate internationally (1993:132-33). Variations of *transnational regionality* have also been employed (Elkington & Nestingen 2005; Vincendeau 2011; Steele 2016). They elucidate how a nation-state's policies, a multicultural society (e.g., in Faroe Islands, Belgium, France), subnational traditions (e.g., in Basque Country, Flanders), supranational identities (e.g., European, Nordic), and the multiple sources of funding simultaneously impact a film's development and circulation.

Each of these analytics clarifies regionality from a particular perspective. However, I turn to a comparatively flexible topological approach to account for dynamic continuities, parallelisms, differences, and connections among sets of relationships that might be dominant in one viewpoint, invisible or latent from another, and transformed from a yet unexplored angle.

For instance, emergent subnational regional cinema in this century is celebrated as a new stage in the development of Philippine national cinema (KR Tan 2017; Rapatan 2018; Deocampo 2022). Nevertheless, the mature regional filmmaking in India, active since the 1940s and continues to transfigure in the digital era, reveals how subnational regional cinema can propagate ambivalent ethnonationalist politics and reproduce rather than overturn "the pitfalls of national cinema imagination" (Radhakrishnan 2021:164).[13] On the other hand, if one follows Naficy's logic, the contexts and texts of local filmmaking in various places in the Philippines would resonate with other parts of Southeast Asia, giving shape to various assemblages of interrelated places constituting a transnational regional cinema.

Moving away from top-down conceptualisations, Florence Martin's (2011) and Ran Ma's (2019) works complement my topological approach by introducing the dynamism of lived subjectivity into the analytical process. Their methods trace artists' experiences and active choices that shift the scales and produce the region on the ground through their practices and movements.

In *Screens and Veils*, Martin posits that a distinct regional Maghrebi women's cinema exists between "African" and "Arabic" cinemas, "cohesive yet diverse" because of the *transvergent* practices of its artists who actively borrow from, but at the same time make a point to resist, the cultural traditions that influence them. "They never follow a model doggedly," according to Martin, but "initiate dissident detours away from hegemonic regimes of truths (whether political, religious, or social)" (2011:24). Thus, the regionality produced by these filmmakers is a process-driven, open-ended negotiation between cultural similarities and differences, historical continuities and discontinuities, and their effort to realise their *allo*, or "other selves," out of the transformation of their consciousness (ibid.:24-25).

Ma investigates the micropractices of *independent border-crossing* filmmakers whose mobile explorations, location shooting, and layered identities articulate the "localized, fragmented experiences of modernity and social transformations as well as the multiple possibilities of belonging" (2019:20). These artists' transgressive

13 See also Berry & Farquhar 2006:5-6. Gokulsing and Dissanayake (2013) offer a compendious coverage of the politics of Bengali, Assamese, Odia, Marathi, Gujarati, Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil Nadu, Telugu, Bhojpuri, and Punjabi cinemas. See also Velayutham & Devadas 2022.

positionalities uncover zones between the homeland and diaspora, geopolitical borders, and multiscalar points of convergence. According to Ma, these filmmakers' cinemas envision "'Asia' [the region] as a cultural text/imaginary of disjuncture, multiplicities, and unevenness wherein the connectivity between the previously marginalised and peripheral subjects, places, and feelings can be realigned, reconnected, and made perceptible" (ibid.:22).[14]

Finally, film festival studies demonstrate how circulation constitutes regional cinemas. I consider here three incisive views pertinent to programming that substantiate the priorities I have assigned to the particularity of places, process orientation, cross-border conversation, and social transformation.

Lindiwe Dovey (2015) underscores the *heuristic function* of film festivals. Considering its vast diversity, she argues that it is untenable to subsume the heterogeneity of African (regional) filmmaking under "African cinema" without doing it a disservice. By being selective and timebound, film festivals activate "a dynamic, dialogical, and more democratic process of knowledge construction" (ibid.:xiii). In this way, each programme is not burdened to offer the final say but can signify how African film is a terrain of conflict and shifting consensus (ibid.:xiii, 20). For their part, Chris Berry and Luke Robinson conceive of the film festival "as a translation machine—a window on the world translating 'foreign' cultures into 'our' culture via the cinema, and vice versa" (2017:1). Here we can grasp the role of programming in opening zones of encounter and inspiring cross-border conversation, ethical spectatorship, and possible solidarity.

Significant work has been published on film festivals' role in activism. The germinal volume *Film Festival Yearbook 4* (2012) investigates how they forge a network of activists across cultures, create "the testimonial encounter" between films and spectators, and mobilise audiences toward enacting social change (Torchin 2012:2). Sonia Tascón and Tyson Wils (2017) characterise activist film festivals as overlapping with but differing in intent from festivals that showcase works according primarily to artistic quality or cultural identity. The chapters in their edited volume

14 See also Müller 2015:35; and Allen 2011:290.

reflect on extra-cinematic practices, such as educational curation and postscreening discussions, that prompt spectators to look "beyond the frame" (ibid.:7).

Tascón (2015) has done work on human rights film festivals, which promote the Universal Declaration but reckon with the struggles of audiences whose rights have been violated not a few times by state forces, translate the meaning of human rights to local cultures that might understand them differently, and negotiate the thorniness of universality and particularity when worldviews collide. These works show how my interest in the topological mapping of regional cinemas can be actuated by activist film programming as a heuristic device and translation machine promoting human rights.

Key Concepts

In the remainder of this chapter, I elaborate on the key concepts that animate my method of analysing regional cinemas as fluidity and shifts of scale and processes of topological interrelations. I discuss them as versatile processes and epistemological frameworks, exemplify how they have been utilised in various disciplines to explain contemporary realities, and consider their ideational capacity in reimagining national and regional cinemas.

From Space to Place

In their survey of the spatial turn in the social sciences and humanities, Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchin affirm how "space and place have become totemic concepts for those exploring social, cultural, economic and political relations" (2011:2).[15] I take as a given Henri Lefebvre's (1991) fundamental assumption that space is not merely a neutral setting where subjects move and act but is actively (re)produced. Edward Soja expatiates on Lefebvre's notion of lived space with his concept of thirdspace and the method of thirding, in which any "original binary choice is not dismissed entirely but is subjected to a creative process of restructuring that draws selectively and strategically

15 See also Morley 2006.

from the two opposing categories to open new alternatives" (1996:5). I adapt Soja's disposition and method to the topological approach I detail below.

Drawing on the work of Yi-Fu Tuan and Tim Ingold in my method, I underscore the distinction between space and place. For Tuan, space is relatively undifferentiated, at once potentially liberating and threatening (2001:3, 6). It is abstract, measurable, and open to conceptualisation. Meanwhile, corresponding to Soja's thirdspace, place is location shaped by lived experience. Human subjects turn to it for survival, stability, and a sense of identity, as we endow it with subjective value and invest it with affect. As I demonstrate in Chapters 2 and 4, transposing the inquiry from the conceptual space of national cinema to the concreteness of places is crucial in spotlighting the plight of people whose national subjecthood or lack thereof they struggle with daily.

The analytic of place is revealing because, as Ingold asserts, one cannot grasp space without moving through and sensing it; in doing so, one gains "inhabitant knowledge" and apprehends place as a "knot of stories," not just a source of empirical information (2011:173). Furthermore, place can be experienced on any scale, from being in one's home or just gazing at a picture of it to joining a virtual community with members worldwide. Thus, it is self-contained but can cut across spaces and intimately connect to other places.

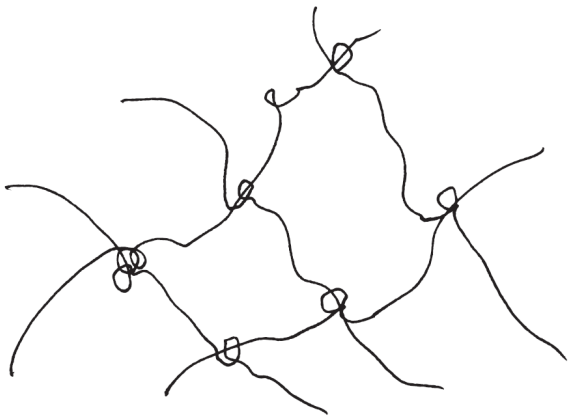


Fig. 1 Ingold visualises how "knots of stories" emerge from the "meshwork" that connects places, people, and movement (ibid.:152)

Correspondingly, films can be analysed in how they materialise places onscreen, especially marginalised ones that are hardly visualised in the mainstream.

Moreover, the work of certain filmmakers, emblematised by Kidlat discussed in Chapter 2, and Mindanaon filmmakers in Chapters 3 and 4, can be appreciated for their place-rootedness and analysed for the contradictions their practices reveal about placemaking.

Scale

A key question is how processes of globalisation are unsettling our entrenched understanding of the world of nations and transforming places on the most local and intimate level; the recognition that such processes are taking place in unprecedented ways signals the need for scalar analysis (Herod & Wright 2002:17). Hence, the concept of scale and how it modulates inquiries regarding national cinema and placemaking films are essential in my methodology.

Scale offers a sense of proportion (e.g., seeing the islands of Mindanao as "smaller" than or nested "within" the Philippines), reveals power relations (how the national can undermine the local, for example, in institutionalising disparate land use), and delineates tangled hierarchies (supposing the global supersedes the national, and the national the local). Scale, Chris Collinge theorises, is an ordering mechanism between ideas/spatiality and materiality/sociality that "draws attention to the coincidence of bounding and unbounding *processes*" (2005:204, emphasis added). In Chapter 3, I probe how familiar and received scales can be critiqued and reconceived in the service of place-rooted cinemas such as those from and in Mindanao.

Like space and place, scale is both an epistemological structure and a material reality (Cox 1998). On the one hand, it is a representational practice or trope that shapes our perception of space and conception of spatial arrangements through abstraction and figuration, for instance, when one refers to "Filipino" films from within the Philippines as "national" cinema or "world" cinema when they are showcased in international festivals. It is an internalised mental fiction concretised by subjective experience and habitual social practice (Hart 1982:21-22).

On the other hand, it is organised by material processes; its social (re)production is "implicated in enabling particular relationships of power and space that advantage some social groups but disadvantage others," as when we speak of

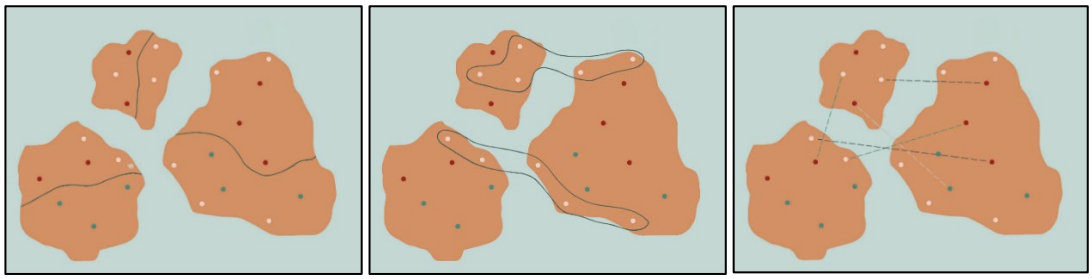
Hollywood or Hallyu as global cinemas or describe Cannes or Berlin as “top-tier” festivals (Jones 1998:28). In other words, subjects operate according to their assumptions about scales and, in so doing, contribute to their (re)production—while scales, as with spaces, produce subjects that, in turn, acquiesce or resist scalar fixes or naturalisation.

As I expound in Chapter 3, we grasp scales and their values in metaphorical language (Herod & Wright 2002:5-6). National film cultures, for instance, hype films that achieve “global breakthroughs,” picturing a plane one punctures and celebrates as national achievements once penetrated. How we imagine scales is crucial in how we engage with the social world. Hence, evaluating our scalar assumptions is decisive in imagining new sociospatialities.

Region

The category of region has long been acknowledged for its versatility in calibrating geographical knowledge and facilitating knowledge production. Peter Haggett pinpoints its capacity as a heuristic device, which can reinforce Dovey’s notion of film programming as a heuristic device. According to Haggett, regionality provides examples to substantiate generalities, illustrates anomalies, serves as analogies for other regions, bridges relations, and classifies systems (1990:78-83). In Chapter 4, I illustrate this process at work in my curation.

In political geography, regional is a semantic component of defining highly charged formations such as empire, nation, and border, but it has “secured a rather neutral reputation” by itself (Middell 2019:8). It has fostered the growth and reassessment of area studies (Maring 2019). It is applied in naming territories but is not strictly associated with the politics of territoriality (Elden 2010). Thus, the regional avoids the hierarchical connotations of scalar relations, for example, where the urban, national, or global is imagined as smaller, narrower, or lower than another; the regional can be located within and across these scales topologically (Herod 2010:153-54).



Figs. 2-4 Territories and regions on areal surfaces: (1) a map of territories enclosed within natural and artificial borders, the dots signifying places; (2) territories with places forming virtual micro- and macroregions based on similar/shared features and contiguity; (3) territories whose places are provisionally connected (in whatever register) as transvergent regions by dotted lines across borders and differences

Despite these affordances, regional thinking avoids hasty conclusions, such as the obsolescence of nations or the borderlessness of the globe but makes it possible to hold them together in tension. According to John Agnew, regions refuse totalising visions because they can "both reflect differences in the world and ideas about differences" and so fill the gap between ideational and material sociospatialities (1999:92-93). For the same reason, it opens an intermediary space to carry forward the synthesis of a dialectical process, theoretical or historical.

Regionalisation facilitates organising and mobilisation toward specific political goals. In global politics and economics, agents and collectives have explored alternative large-scale, small-scale, or multiscalar regionalisation to suit their agenda (Gilbert 1988:221), at times with utopian aspirations to restructure the world set against existing formational apparatuses considered inadequate or corrupted. Here, we can think of diverse entities and critical imaginaries shaped by regional modalities such as the EU and ASEAN or the Global South and Fourth World.

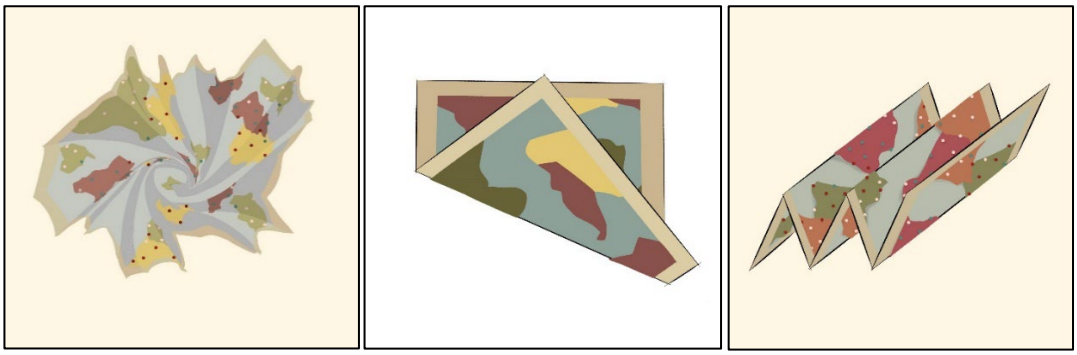
Hence, as I show in Chapter 3, the region is a flexible analytic and rousing formation for thinking about cinema between and beyond the national and the global. It can expand to mark the boundaries of vast spaces (e.g., Southeast Asian cinema), contract to flesh out places (Mindanao cinema), reorient to capture the shifting relationship between locality and mobility (refugee films), and inflect to reveal points of convergence (indigenous films) (Casey 1996; Cox 1998).

Topology

Topology disrupts the taken-for-granted priority of metric space in explaining spatiality. Metric thinking privileges absolute spaces such as nation-states (Agnew 1994). It is entrenched in how we imagine social spaces from an aerial view, think of them as laid out on surfaces such as land areas and maps, and identify them by confining or subdividing them with boundaries. It also entrenches territorial fixity so that spaces we have historically, conventionally, and artificially bounded as areas tend to endure in our minds as being comprehensible according to distances. In metric thinking, connection occurs by proximity; elements located apart are separate.

Topological thinking is a non-metric way of assembling spatiality. Michel Serres pictures topology using the analogy of a spread-out handkerchief with "fixed distances and proximities," which, when crumpled, brings two separate points "close, even superimposed" (1995:60). Gilles Deleuze (1993) likewise uses the imagery of folding to characterise topological thinking. "What interests Deleuze," according to Richard Smith, "are (un)folds, the infinite labyrinth of fold to fold that produces the world's topology as one of *process* that overwhelms the fictions of boundaries, limits, fixity, permanence, embedment" (2003:565, emphasis added). As these metaphors suggest, topological thinking is intuitive and abstract but also sensorial and adaptable. It is partial to open-ended assemblages, so it liberates spatial reasoning. As I demonstrate in Chapter 4, being sensitive to topological interrelations allows the flexible realignment of separate and distant elements to embody regional formations (Allen 2011:290; Müller 2015:35).

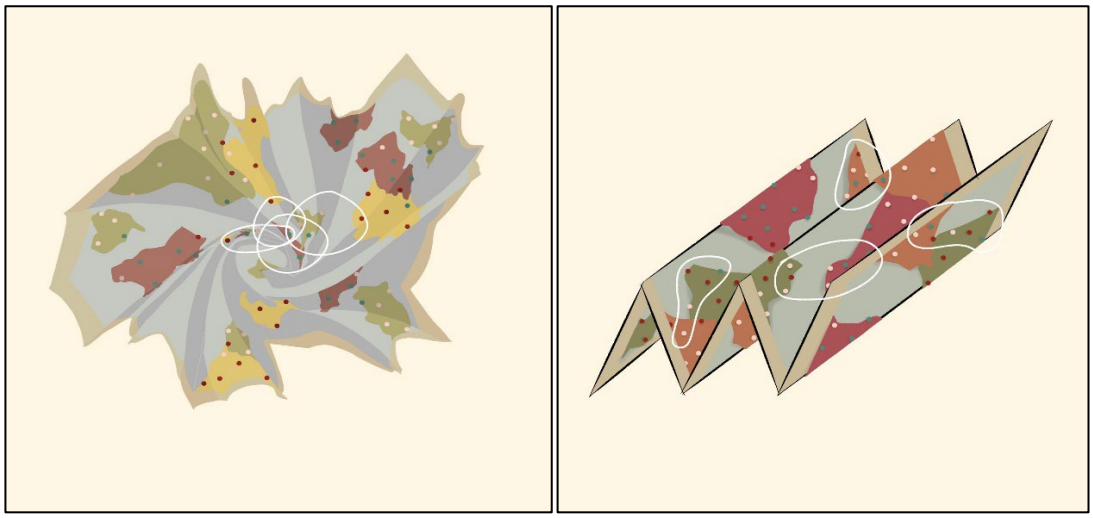
The conjunction of regional and topological thinking overcomes the limitations of nation-centric analyses incapable of accounting for global and highly local processes transforming film cultures. Employing topology and regionality has enabled me to think about the parallel and intersecting developments in Philippine and Southeast Asian cinemas taking place on the level of the national and their respective films' entrance to international film festivals and the global market and the local, in cities, towns, and villages, where filmmaking flourishes beyond the global cultural/economic value chain.



Figs. 5-7 Analogies of topological transformation: (1) Crumpling space, undoing flatness; (2) Topologically connecting spaces metrically separated; (3) (Un)folding as a *process* exceeding the fictions of boundaries, limits, fixity, permanence, embedment

Given how topology unsettles and (re)configures scales, their conjunction can bring new networks or assemblages to light. Of course, the local, national, and global are easily imagined as discrete scales. Still, Smith avers that when we do not imagine them as surfaces, that is, if we imagine them topologically, then we can identify "*the points at which [scales] overlap* and see how they produce zones that can be conceptualised in their own terms" (2003:570, emphasis added). Thus, *scales* can be enfolded or crumpled, converging in *places* simultaneously configured as local, national, global, and planetary "without necessarily being wholly [any one]" (Latham 2002:116).

Bruno Latour argued that metaphors of levels and territories could not capture the world's complexity but is better imagined as "fibrous, thread-like, wiry, stringy, ropy, capillary" scales networked (1996:370). In Chapter 3, I adopt Latour's metaphor and propose to imagine scale as a strand that lengthens, shortens, and groups by (inter)weaving, not by bounding. The metaphor allows me to interpret the knots along a strand, akin to Ingold's knots of stories in the meshwork of places, not as spatial resolutions and scalar fixes but as nodes in an open-ended process. The knots can also indicate tension and irreconcilability, such as that between the praxes of Third and Fourth Cinemas.



Figs. 8-9 Topology produces places and regions beyond areal and territorial imagination

Hence, topology is a means of envisioning regional interdependence on various scales and occasioning spectatorial, if not yet actual, solidarity. A topological approach to programming helps theorise, if not animate, the dynamics of transforming potentiality into actuality and vivify how universal claims (e.g., human rights, Indigenous Peoples' rights) are translated into concrete action when discursively nested in social practices and deployed in the context of activism.

CHAPTER 2 FROM NATIONAL CINEMA TO PLACEMAKING FILMS

Marking the "End" of National Cinema

This chapter focuses on my book, *The End of National Cinema*, broadly a revaluation of Filipino film from the perspective of the 2000s transitioning to digital. As noted, as I was writing *TEONC*, national cinema had been considered a moribund concept (Choi 2011:173-74). However, the assumption that it is démodé fails to account for the fact that, in the Global South, the nation is an incomplete historical and discursive project of self-determination. As the work of the MPP during Martial Law demonstrates, nation-making is disputed in the very constitution of national cinema, in what it is or is supposed to be and to or for whom it speaks. I expound on the polysemous meaning of the book's title and describe my project, thus.

> The work as a whole, centered on the Philippine experience, elucidates the *ends* of national cinema, suspending certain assumptions about how cinema is national to understand how the outside defines the inside or how the inside defines itself in terms of the outside, assessing the *limitations* of speaking of a discrete national cinema and analysing where and how the *boundaries* break down and resharpening the *purpose* of sustaining a vision of the nation in cinema for critical and oppositional ends on behalf of and in solidarity with the national subject. (17-18)

Though preoccupied with a range of issues, *TEONC* does not undertake to formulate a normative theory but enacts a disposition and procedure of reading keen on detecting contradictions, generative tensions, and potentials inherent in efforts to think not only about national cinema but through the relationship between cinema and the nation. It counters what I describe in terms of this thesis as a metric approach that canonises films and periodises history to circumscribe and fix Philippine cinema.

Instead, the book clears an intermediary space for an open-ended and topological remapping attentive to differences, imbrications, and un- or underexplored connections glossed over by a bounded view of the national. Rather than a territorial national cinema, it imagines national cinema as a fluidity of scales converging and enfolding in particular moments and places, which, in turn, continuously reshape it.

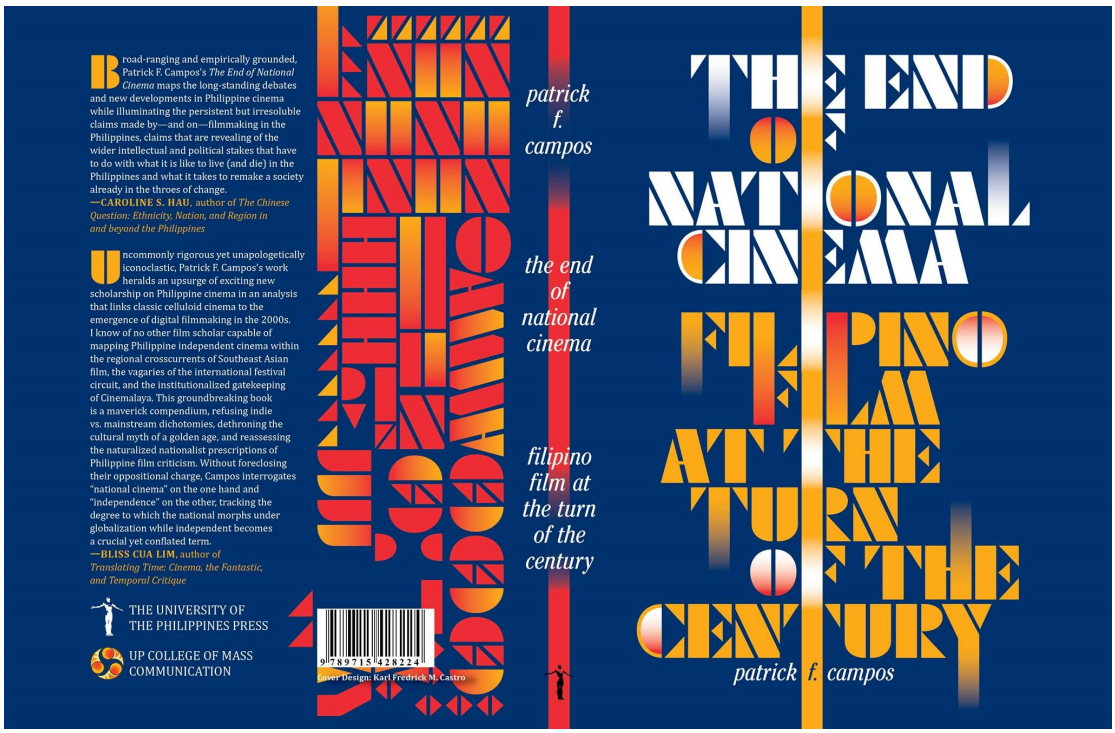


Fig. 10 Artist Karl Castro visualised my topological thinking in his nonrepresentational cover art, rearranging the exact number of "random" shapes on the back cover to spell the book's title on the front, but with a bold line weaving them together.

In this section, I return to *TEONC*'s chapters on the auteurs Mike De Leon, Ishmael Bernal, and Kidlat Tahimik to trace the arc of my inquiry from a preoccupation with national cinema to an interest in subjects engaged in placemaking. These directors made defining works during Martial Law (officially, 1972-1981; unofficially, until 1986), in the conjuncture when Filipino film studies, epitomised by the MPP, initiated writing Philippine Cinema History.

The section on De Leon characterises the efforts of nationalist film critics to form a counterdiscourse whose indictment of Marcos's dictatorship in cinema endures in popular culture and historiography. It explains how my topological rereading of De Leon recuperates the nationalist agenda for the post-Martial Law era. The section on Bernal focused on the legacy of *Manila by Night* (1980), explores the contest, waged across multiple scales, between the artist and the state in figuring the nation. It underlines the most crucial factor in conceptualising national cinema—subjects who bear the weight of national subjecthood and state oppression. Finally, the section on Kidlat examines his border-crossing practice of filming places and how it reveals the limits of the national and the potential of regional imagination.

Topologising the Nationalist Canon

In *TEONC*, I track the shifting position of De Leon in entertainment journalism, on the one hand, and the academic historicisation of Philippine cinema, on the other, to delineate the project of nationalist film criticism. In the entertainment press of the period, he was considered an "insider" of the industry, being the scion of LVN (est. 1939), a major studio from the "Golden Decade" of genre filmmaking in the 1950s (Garcia 1984). Interestingly, showbiz journalists continued to stress his consistent box-office failures even after he had directed his most influential works (Nepales 1980; "Mike de Leon"). Meanwhile, in the work of the MPP, he is affirmatively pictured as a figure in the "margins" (Yuson 1982; Lumbera 1984:209; David 1990:12). That he made few films, practically all flops, was signified as a marker of a no-compromise ethos.

The MPP celebrated and interpreted three of De Leon's films as indictments of Marcosian rule (Tiongson 1983, 1994, 2001). *In the Blink of an Eye* (1981) was seen as allegorising the dictator's incestuous rape of the nation. *Batch '81* (1982) dramatises the formation of the fascist mind. And *Sister Stella L.* (1984) portrays the workers' strike as a microcosm of social unrest and an open call for the public to rise. Employing a topological approach, I offer a provisional assemblage of these films as a coherent and cumulative text to explain their eventual cultural impact despite their initial unpopular reception (*TEONC* 93-97). I anchor this on the MPP's critical reading of the films *during* the Marcos regime that positioned De Leon as a peripheral figure and a "serious" critic of fascism.

Though relatively few vis-à-vis the hundreds of critically unremarked or derided productions, films like De Leon's constituted a "new" Golden Age, lauded for their artistic achievement and, more importantly, their political stance. The power of this counterdiscourse to consolidate insurgent energies and shape public memory is felt until today, as evidenced by how De Leon's cinema is now written about in the entertainment press and deployed in resisting the current historical distortion of Martial Law as the nation's Golden Age.[16]

16 A recent example: "Film Director."

Figs. 11-12 Left: From the unequivocally political *Sister Stella L.*: nuns join a workers' strike; Right: From *Batch '81*, a study on fascist mentality: a fraternity welcomes its new brothers; as an assemblage, both films critique all forms of dogmatism

However, I do more than amplify the nationalist reading. The space of national cinema is not fixed and bound but a site of process, continual contestation, and challenge to hegemony. The MPP's work suggests that the nation's invocation in cinema formation is oriented concurrently toward its history *and* the present and an aspiration for what it can become, even as it recognises the struggle to subvert authority and enable the participation of the many in defining it and its future.

Thus, moving away from MPP's top-down, highly selective, and now reified canon, I explore how reconfiguring De Leon's cinema could recover the significance of his underground and popular films (*TEONC* 97ff). Such an exploration allowed me to reinterpret his oeuvre in light of what the canon excluded, which I, in turn, foregrounded, and retrace his cinema's significance in reverse, as it were, from the perspective of the shortcomings of liberal reformation in national politics *after* Martial Law. In so doing, I demonstrate how, as Deleuze suggests, topology can undo fixity and offer a fiction more responsive to change (1993:19).

From hindsight, it is clear how *Sister Stella*, a social realist film that portrays the abject lives of the working class, is revered as De Leon's most important work—and how it bombed at the tills is part of its legendary status (*TEONC* 102). Here, the unequivocal political intention is preferred over artistic daring and symbolic evocations that could yield multiple meanings. Ironically, we see, too, how De Leon's *Signos* (1984), a political collective documentary distributed surreptitiously in videocassette format, explicit and not only allegorical in its anti-Marcos stance, and *Prisoner of the Dark* (1986), the first Filipino full-length film to be shot entirely on video, arguably his

most radical works produced and circulated *beyond* the mainstream, are not given enough emphasis, if at all.

This glossing locates the mainstream industry as the reference point for no-compromise practice. Despite this, *Heaven Cannot Be Shared* (1985), De Leon's only box-office hit, a *komiks* melodrama of upper-class marriage and betrayal that unmistakably locates the director as an industry insider, is dismissed as "silly" (*TEONC* 98). This elision reveals the under-theorised disjuncture in nationalist criticism between conceptions of the "nation" as signified in favoured films and the "masses," the collective agents and subjects of history. Such a tendency discourages critical consideration of movies that are not overtly political but resonate with the mass public, the disjuncture Lumbera and Tiongson have tried to resolve, and I try to recast in topological terms (Capino 2020:xv-xvi).

My goal in *TEONC* is not to repudiate the nationalist project but to refuse the reification of its reading strategies and its tendency toward reactionary nostalgia. Thus, I reassemble De Leon's cinema by shifting the perspective (not disengaging) from the historical specificity of MPP's anti-Marcos project to the succeeding artistic and political struggles in the post-Marcos period (*TEONC* 99ff). Simultaneously, I foreground the strategies that facilitated MPP's canonisation of a few of De Leon's films (e.g., antifascist and allegorical readings, attention to marginalised figures) and then fold them over onto themselves and unfold them again. That is, I prospected the limits of the canonical assemblage and, from there, explored how other assemblages could refine MPP's strategies and orient De Leon's cinema toward the present as much as the past.

In my alternative assemblage, I allegorise *Heaven Cannot Be Shared*, which the MPP could not read in anti-Marcosian terms, as addressing the elitist post-Marcos social order whose failure, we can argue in retrospect, paved the way for the Marcoses' return to power. I also highlight the political and artistic underground formations addressed by *Prisoner of the Dark* and *Signos*, with the former summoning a public that, though niche, permitted alternative cinema to flourish in the 2000s despite the decline of mass viewership and the latter imagining an ideal public that could usher hoped for social transformation that did not come to fruition after the ousting of Marcos.

My rereading of De Leon and the MPP is a critical intervention that maintains the possibility of retracing the folds of an uncompleted past and allowing them to unfold and refold in new but interconnected ways. Serres, in his conceptual language, pictures this topological process as "knowledge that multiplies gestures in a short time, in a limited space, [that is, in folding into itself and folding out again] so that it renders information more and more dense, until it forms a rarer place" (1991:78).

National Cinema, the State, and Lived Spatiality

In my chapter on Bernal, I revisit the director's landmark film, *Manila by Night*, a multicharacter, plotless city film that visually and narratively symptomatised the social ills, economic deprivation, and political corruption suffered by Filipinos under Martial Law. The chapter is interested in the national subject's lived experience and how it is effaced or evinced by a fascist state's and an antifascist filmmaker's contending spatial conception and production on multiple scales. To wit, the Marcoses' City of Man is conceived as beautiful, safe, and prosperous, where the poor and abject have no place, while *Manila* portrays the kaleidoscopic and tragicomic misadventures of a motley collection of characters that dwell on the underside of the selfsame city (Marcos 1976; David 2017). To apprehend the nuances of how Manila, the capital and metonym of the nation, and the national subjects are envisioned by the Marcoses and Bernal, I reiterate and then depart from its nationalist framing and reread it topologically.

Adapting Soja's disposition and method of thirding (1996:5), I track how *Manila* pivots between the production of "nation" (through the Marcoses' reconstruction of Manila and integration of the country into the global economy) and "national cinema" (as a monumental city film in congregation with city films in world cinema). Within this framework, one can appreciate *Manila* as a city film par excellence for harbouring a critical imagination of the nation and the capacity to censure a rapacious state—that is, for disentangling the nation from the state (*TEONC* 45-48). In particular, it exposes the contradictions and violence of Marcosian modernisation—nominal developmentalism underwritten by onerous government debt, manoeuvred by the IMF-World Bank during the Cold War, and riddled by unprecedented corruption and crony capitalism, but spectacularly dissimulated in the pageantry of the dictatorship's

urban development that whitewashed and displaced the undesirables of the city. The Marcoses built magnificent buildings that showcased national progress to the international community and propagated their official version of national identity (Tadiar 2009:152-53; Molotch 2000:791-823). In short, the film text and its context uncover the crushing burden of the state's machination, weighed heavier by geopolitical and financial forces that exceed the nation, and placed on the backs of generations of Filipinos.

The Marcoses' efforts on the city scale were in step with their hegemonic control over the national film industry and their drive to partake in the "reputational" function of international film festivals (Pollacchi 2017). Their handling of *Manila* indicates how the state's arbitration of national cinema is cognisant of a global process. By underscoring the multiscalar politics of this process, one can better comprehend the violence encoded by the dictatorial regime on the film's exhibition, distribution, text, and legacy.

Manila was invited to compete at the Berlin International Film Festival, which could have canonised the film in world cinema. However, the state refused its permission because of its depiction of Manila's underbelly, a depiction that in part merited its festival invitation (David 2017:17-24). Locally, it was censored, "Manila" was dropped from its new title, *City After Dark*, and the version permitted to screen undercut the director's original vision. The contradiction between the state's image of the city and the film's censored portrayal of urban poverty created a parallax that rendered the nation/city both visible and invisible. Eventually, the integral version was shown at the Manila Film Center, a state-operated space that infamously buried workers when an accident occurred during its feverish construction to meet the opening of the Manila International Film Festival (*TEONC* 50-51).[17] Bernal's film was marketed as a sex fare to attract local viewers, and its well-attended screening in the censorship-exempt theatre generated profit for the state's film projects. All the while, the violence wrought on the film assured its place in the nationalist canon.

17. Imelda Marcos envisioned the MFC as a centre of world cinema and prided herself on founding the MIFF, "the first in Asia." In Ferdinand's speech at the first MIFF, he boasted that his government, though of the Third World, recognised cinema not only as an industry but as an art form that "transcends the boundaries of nations and belongs to all humanity" and can point to "solutions to the [nation's] political and economic problems." See "Primer" 1982; and Marcos 1982.

Fig. 13 *Manila* closes with an enigmatic open-ended image; the protagonist sleeps in the Rizal National Park at daybreak

For good reason, nationalist criticism read Bernal's film as a truth-telling counterpoint to the Marcoses' conception of the bright city, revealing realities hidden by the state (Del Mundo 2001; Tolentino 2012). My topological reading is interested in how the contestation over the film on the national and global scales is registered on the city and the body (*TEONC* 55-63). Thus, I accentuate the film's dimension of lived space, the way it functioned as a harbinger of what Soja describes as the "clandestine or hidden side of social life" (1996:67).

Bernal's film traces the calculated and illicit movements of poachers, squatters, scroungers, and transients, the nation's dispossessed and displaced, in Manila's labyrinthine streets, thus portraying these subjects, who may appear powerless, as appropriating city spaces and actively subverting spatial impositions from above, unmaking and remaking the boundaries between state and society. As enacted by *Manila*, the production of the liveable substratum, vital and dynamic, destabilises the terrain of the governed, functioning as a site of constant symbolic protest against the violence of regimentation. The film constructs the city/nation and represents the national subject in a historical conjuncture overdetermined though not wholly

overtaken by government institutions. Doing so exposes the convergence of scales in particular places of everyday life and how scalar tension generates competing visions of the nation and national cinema.

From National Cinema to Placemaking Films

For my study on Kidlat Tahimik, I participated in his community-based art-making process in Baguio City, Benguet, and the rice terraces of Hapao, Ifugao, to better observe his straddling of conceptual space and concrete places as a national subject.[18] Though well-known beyond Philippine shores, especially by his association with Third Cinema, since he debuted with *Perfumed Nightmare* (1977), Kidlat was not discussed by the MPP during the Martial Law years (*TEONC* 163-65; Shohat & Stam 1994:293, 329; Dixon & Zonn 2005). His avant-garde language meant that his off-centred situation would find no prominent space in the nationalist paradigm. Furthermore, locating his practice outside the film industry to resist capital-intensive and market-driven production, he removed himself from the state-regulated domestic market (Kidlat 1989, 1997, 2011). Hence, his films, being not mass printed, were inaccessible to a broader Filipino public locally while they moved about the international circuit, owing, in part, to the cultural capital they accrued as "Filipino" films.[19]

Revealingly, when writings by Filipino scholars about his cinema were published in the '90s and 2000s, they mostly offered rejoinders to "First World" critics—mainly Fredric Jameson—who, they argue, appropriated Kidlat's "Third World" politics and misread the specificity of his cultural signifiers (San Juan 2000; Tolentino 2000:112-124; Lim 1995). The deictic location of critics vis-à-vis Kidlat became methodologically pivotal in the debates: non-Filipino critics focused on the political edge of what they perceived as Kidlat's "postmodern" innocence. In contrast, Filipino critics called out the orientalism betrayed in this reading and emphasised Kidlat's Brechtian knowingness (San Juan 2000; Tolentino 2000). These writings are animated by the thorny issues surrounding "native" identity and the question of who gets to speak *from* specific

18 Ifugao is a noun that refers to the place and its inhabitants and is also used as an adjective.

19 David (1998:97-98) problematises the Filipinoness of such films. Digital distribution brought Kidlat's films wider Filipino viewership recently.

locations *for* the nation. I argue that their disagreements, apparent incommensurability, and MPP's earlier indifference to him arise from what Florence Martin (2011) and Ran Ma (2019) might characterise as Kidlat's open-ended process, border-crossing and transvergent practice, and his ongoing invention of *allo* or other-selves.

That Kidlat's films are highly localised and engage directly with the places they are filmed is one key to his unravelling of national cinema. His work captures how his inward journey toward native culture parallels his journey toward other cultures. He superimposes a rural village in Laguna and a street market in Paris, the sandstone buttes of the Navajo Nation and the lush mountains of Cordillera, and the passing highland farming practices in both Japan and the Philippines, revealing how imperialism and global capitalism flatten spaces and eviscerate cultures in the name of "progress" (*TEONC* 165).[20] Hence, his movement foregrounds uneven and asymmetrical places, exposing the contradictions of his subjecthood and its irreconcilability with static abstractions such as nationalism (*TEONC* 173-77). His films' simultaneous translocality and situatedness elucidate how "Third World" or "native" spaces, appearing undifferentiated to outsiders, are heterogeneous places connected across different scales (*TEONC* 177).

I chart Kidlat's subject formation in his incessant filming of journeys and homecomings. I hypothesise that his filmmaking is a means of exorcising his personal history, especially his Americanised upbringing, and digging into the indigenous roots of the people with whom he grew up in the mountains of northern Philippines, whose lands were grabbed and never returned, and whose stories and identities were marginalised and appropriated in colonial, and later national, history. Such a project cannot be realised simply by making films *about* Benguet and Ifugao but by *living in* these places.

We can detect the importance of this distinction in Kidlat's placemaking practice and career. His earliest films were allegorical, preoccupied with staging a character's political awakening in conceptual space after a (prospective) journey outward. But then, one discerns Kidlat's evolving relationship with Ifugaos, as his later

20 On transvergent practice and shooting on location, see F. Martin 2011:23-27; and Ma 2019:34-36.

films, beginning with *Why Is Yellow the Middle of the Rainbow?* (1994), chronicle his movement from filming them in fictionalised and essayistic ways, learning from their history and immersing himself in their culture, collaborating with them, to living with them as the community adopts him as their own and gives him a new name (*TEONC* 189-91).

Critics who regard Kidlat as a representative of Third Cinema are uneasy with this trajectory. Christopher Pavsek (2013) considers Kidlat's critique of capitalism incisive but finds his "nostalgia" for old lifeways problematic because they are "simply impossible to resurrect"; he resolves it by theorising the artist's work as an "imaginative translation [of the past] into new contexts." E. San Juan, Jr. underplays Kidlat's "populist return to 'nature'" by characterising it as a Fanonian "strategy" (2000:286, 275). These engagements fail to recognise that Ifugao culture is alive and dynamic, although marginalised and threatened, and that it is not incidental to Kidlat's cinema but central to his subject formation (*TEONC* 175-78).

Fig. 14 Kidlat, wearing a *bahag* (Ifugao loincloth) as a symbol of protest and solidarity in documentary footage of an anti-mining rally in Baguio, addresses young police officers about why they are on the wrong side of a national issue; the footage appears as a fictional scene in his *Balikbayan #1* (2015)

In this way, Kidlat's cinema contributes to activism and embodies the IPs' struggle for self-determination, edging it into the politics of Fourth Cinema (Ginsburg

1995, 1997). However, his practice underscores the complications inherent in Barclay's principle of fidelity to and addressing the indigenous community, premised on the need for the redress of centuries of political, cultural, and economic marginalisation (Barclay 1990, 2003). Kidlat negotiates these, on the one hand, by teaching Ifugaos to film their lifeways as a form of folklore, akin to but radically distinct from Tiongson's notion of cinema as folklore (2008:188-90), for their community's and not the public's consumption, and with their images and image-making processes remaining fundamentally their own (*TEONC* 194-96; cf. Murray 2008:26-27). On the other hand, he continues to redefine himself and promote Ifugao culture in his works that circulate nationally and internationally.

Though this straddling foregrounds more than it resolves the differences between Third and Fourth Cinema politics, I argue in *TEONC* how Kidlat's cinema provisionally arbitrates their aspirations in an intermediary space.

> …Kidlat offers an image of lived life in Ifugao not always as a polemic but as a model of a possible social dynamic that invites hard questions about the particularities of praxis after a revolution, although as a life lived out against the onus of global social order now. Kidlat shows the viewers that Ifugao, as it has been for hundreds of years, is a location of utopia-in-process, as it were. It is certainly not perfect, but aspects of its culture are genuine alternatives…. Its society of the collective is not coerced, cooperation is not strictly hierarchical, and the people's use of land and resources is sustainable. (*TEONC* 177-78)

As such, his anticapitalist films and his striving to live with the Ifugaos and allow their worldview to transform his practice and subjectivity are a form of resistance to the hegemony of western global media and negotiation of Third and Fourth Cinema praxes—parallels processes that are dynamic, syncretic, ongoing. In this light, his interest in addressing and promoting the cultural specificity of concrete places exceeds the national cinema paradigm. It may be considered an expression of nonnational filmmaking for refusing the homogenising tendency of nationalism, whether imposed by the state or promoted by the critics. Yet, at the same time, placemaking films like his, being grounded and community-based, tend to be marginal and decentred, rendering them constantly critical of, and in dialogue with, nationalism.

CHAPTER 3 PLACES AND SCALES: TOWARD REGIONAL CINEMA

From Philippine Cinema to Mindanao Cinema

Kidlat's cinema, transfiguring the national as an assemblage of shifting scales and concrete places, illustrates how territorial units rarely fit homogenous characteristics (e.g., "national" culture). It pioneered twenty-first-century independent filmmaking in places beyond Manila, corresponding to Kinder's notion of microregional, or the subversive marginal formation defined against the dominant national centre, and a subset of them to transnational regional productions that are funded or circulated beyond their locality, from the three primary island clusters of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao (Kinder 1993:14; Steele 2016).

In 1987, mainly referencing Kidlat and the short-lived small-scale film industry in Cebu, central Philippines, Teddy Co broached the idea of a "regional" that could complete the vision of "national" cinema (Co 1987; Grant & Anissimov 2016). In 2009, Co, MPP member Miguel Rapatan, and the rest of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) cinema committee founded Cinema Rehiyon (hereon, CR), which institutionalised the category. It remains the foremost film festival whose primary objective is to forge a vibrant nationwide network of "regional" filmmakers and showcase their best works.

After that, scholars began to theorise regional cinema. Like Co, Rapatan considers its "re-nationalization" of cinema as the source of its significance (2017:91). Following Lumbera, Tiongson, and Cebuano critic Resil Mojares, Katrina Ross Tan (2017) contextualises it as part of national heritage and stresses its role in preserving and promoting local languages. Focused on filmmaking in Cebu and likewise drawing on Mojares, Paul Grant (2014) emphasises its use of vernacular language, enlivened by the dynamism and idiosyncrasies of place, and how this could translate to a vernacular, distinct from national, film language. These studies parallel Radhakrishnan's conception of Indian regional cinema defined according to its overlap with, difference from, and challenge to the dominant cinema in Hindi and English; in the Philippines, regional is defined against historically and industrially Manila-centric, Tagalog-language-based cinema.

This chapter discusses three essays on films set in Mindanao and takes off from these premises. However, it introduces the category of scale in conjunction with a topological approach as the main analytic for theorising regional cinema. As with the other chapters, it begins by reflecting on the regional's entanglement with the national but proceeds to consider how the regional extends beyond it. It suggests, with Naficy (2008), that regionality could be shaped by shared and similar practices, textual characteristics, and contexts across contiguous places—a discussion that carries through Chapter 4.

Fig. 15 The Philippines in the context of Southeast Asia[21]

Mindanao is the southernmost island cluster and the second largest in the Philippine archipelago. A substantial population of IPs inhabits it;[22] the largest, though still a minority, concentration of Muslims (the Philippines is a Christian majority);[23] and settlers from other islands, waves of whom were incentivised by the government to

21 The map is from Peel 2017.

22 Eighteen un-Islamised and un- or recently Christianised indigenous groups in Mindanao, not counting the subgroups, are recognised by the Philippine government: the Subanen, Manobo, B'laan, T'boli, Mandaya, Mansaka, Tiruray, Higaonon, Bagobo, Bukidnon, Tagakaolo, Banwaon, Dibabawon, Talaandig, Mamanua, and Manguangan.

23 Maranao, Maguindanao, Tausug, Kalagan, Sangil, Ilanun/Iranun, Palibugan, Yakan, Sama, Badjao, Jumamapun, Palawanon, Molbog are the 13 Muslim ethnolinguistic groups.

resettle, and groups of them organised as paramilitary troops to colonise the land internally (Abinales 2000). Though it supplies 40% of the country's food and holds 40% of its mineral reserves, Mindanao's poorest provinces are the poorest in the country, and some of its regions have been sites of brutal invasions, long-drawn wars, and insurgencies (Canuday & Sescon 2022:xii).

Beyond Mindanao, its history has been marginalised, with major national historiographies being Manila-centric.[24] From colonial times, it has been pictured as dark and dangerous—until today, if one goes by representations in mainstream media.[25] Because historiographies and popular media fixate on the conflict zones and the perceived otherness of its people, non-Mindanaons possess uneven knowledge of the causes of discord that pester its islands, its prismatic cultures outside stereotypes, its stories of solidarity, resistance, and survival, and its historical connection to places beyond the Philippines.

Peripheral cinemas and practices, according to Iordanova, Martin-Jones, and Vidal, are those "located in positions marginal to the economic, institutional, and ideological centers of image making" that can, precisely for being peripheral, "function as a critical paradigm" (2010:5). In the succeeding sections, I explore the formation of Mindanao cinema in recent years and the various configurations of its regional peripherality.

For the first time in a sustained manner, a cinema explores particular places, everyday lives, and novel themes in Mindanao beyond the exoticising and instrumentalist gaze of the centre (Quintos 2020). The works of Mindanaons Gutierrez Mangansakan II, Arnel Mardoquio, Arbi Barbarona, Bagane Fiola, Sheron Dayoc, Adjani Arumpac, Sherad Anthony Sanchez, and Joe Bacus, to name a few, have offered a broad range of stories from the many cultures and localities and different classes of people in Mindanao in diverse forms. Furthermore, the growth of its filmmaking in the industry's margins has been buoyed by alternative funding sources, from grants or NGO support to crowdfunding with the help of religious or people's organisations, giving its artists the leeway to create beyond the mainstream.

24 National historiographies that rectify this are Abinales and Amoroso 2017; and Gloria 2014.

25 See Canuday & Sescon, Part V.

Fig. 16 Mardoquio's *Riddles of My Homecoming* is a panoramic and strikingly visual meditation of Mindanao's troubled history

Fig. 17 Survivors of the Malisbong mass murder of Muslims during Martial Law confide in Moro filmmaker Mangansakan in *Forbidden Memory*, released on the day Duterte gave Marcos a national hero's burial

More importantly, Mindanao cinema's very existence, punctuated by films that directly tackle the national question like *Riddles of My Homecoming* (2013), *War Is a Tender Thing* (2013), and *Forbidden Memory* (2016) signifies how nation-making has

entrenched divisions and wrought violence upon Mindanaons and laments how places have been peripheralised politically, economically, and historiographically. Hence, it not only decentres national cinema but also unveils the troubled history of nationhood.

Finally, the presence of alternative or subjunctive modes of nationness in Mindanao's regions pluralises national cinema: the Muslims, IPs, and Christian settlers co-existing in a national polity fractured by colonial history (SK Tan 1989; Rodil 2003); the autonomous Bangsamoro (Muslim Nation)[26] and its separatist factions (McKenna 1998; Vitug & Gloria 2000); the "modern" nation localised and intermediated by "traditional" leaders entangled in national politicking, clan feuding, warlordism, and a shadow economy/state (Abinales 2000; Lara 2014; WM Torres 2014); the IPs comprising First Nations (Paredes 2013, 2015); and the deep geographical and historical connection of Mindanao to other parts of Southeast Asia before the Filipinisation of the southern islands (Warren 1981; Hayase 2007).

As I asserted in Chapter 1, how we think about scales shapes how we understand cinema formations and how we might reshape them for particular ends. The subsequent discussions explore how scalar practices and multiscalar circulation and conceptualisation modulate Mindanao cinema's regionality and facilitate its topological reconfiguration that simultaneously harbours national and nonnational meanings.

Scale as a Category of Practice and Analysis

In "Allegories of Scale," I investigate filmmakers' scalar strategies and politics by looking into films by Brillante Mendoza, Lav Diaz, and Fiola set in Mindanao. Here, I take scale as a category of practice and analysis, materialising discourse through citational repetition, for instance, of taken-for-granted scalar values or an artist's habits of expression, "that stabilizes as well as challenges boundary, fixity, and surface effects" (Kaiser & Nikiforova 2008:541-42). Interpreting "scalar narratives,

26 "Bangsa" in Mindanao connotes a complex geographic, political, cultural, and historical entanglement. It is the Malay word for *race* used in different parts of Islamised Southeast Asia as a people-grouping concept emphasising shared ethnicity and a political concept denoting nationhood premised on a civilisational history. It also echoes the Tagalog word "bansa," a geopolitical identity more directly associated with statehood and government. See Yamamoto et al. 2011; and Lingga 2016.

classifications and cognitive schemas" as a way of critiquing national cinema was urgent during the presidency of Rodrigo Duterte (2016-2022) as these attributes of scale, as Adam Moore asserts, constrain or enable specific "ways of seeing, thinking and acting" in the world (2008:214).

Changing our mental image of scales may not directly change the world, but it shapes how we engage with and try to change it. For instance, Duterte is the first president to hail from Mindanao and exploited his geographical origins as a signifier of his "marginality" (Altez & Caday 2017; Braga 2017; Holmes 2017:61). Highlighting the regional over the national and the secondary status of Davao City, where he served as mayor for years, over Manila, he won not only the Mindanao vote but also of people who feel they exist in the margins of the nation. Moreover, upon assuming office, he transposed onto a national scale the authoritarian policies he employed in Davao with the people's mandate (Lamchek 2017). Films set in Mindanao during his regime thus took on the significance of the national (KR Tan & Castillo 2019).

Scales, in varying degrees and combinations, co-constitute the meanings and materiality of films like Mendoza's *Mindanao* (2019), Diaz's *Season of the Devil* (2019), and Fiola's *Wailings in the Forest* (2016). The relationship between the ideational and material aspects of scale raises questions about the positionality of subjects in how they see and project themselves to multitiered and hierarchical spatial units and constitute and politicise their places, localities, and territories across interscalar networks (Brenner 2001:600). The three films exemplify the representation, practice, and politics of scales that contribute to the reification or unsettling of scales in (re)producing the social world.

Otherwise known for his urban films depicting abject poverty and extreme violence, most of which make their rounds in international film festivals, Mendoza directed *Mindanao*, addressed to the Filipino mass public, and produced by his company in cooperation with the government's media agency under Duterte. In an interview, he asserts that no film about Mindanao could be made without reference to its conflicts, ignoring films by Mindanaons (Cruz 2019).

Fig. 18 A promotional image appallingly shows a government soldier wearing a Maguindanaon warrior's suit over his military uniform and bearing the Moro *kris*[27]

Portraying the people of Mindanao as changeless, the non-Mindanaon Mendoza suffers from the provincialism of the centre as he adopts the outsider's view of the government. The problem is his unquestioning acceptance of the state's long-standing scalar fix or reified sense of scale.[28] This scalar fix, entrenched for centuries by the Spanish, American, and Filipino governments, captures Mindanao from a top-down view as an exotic place far away from the centre, a space to be conquered, a national problem (Abinales 2000). By discounting local historicity and refusing a regional perspective, the film obfuscates the meaning of peace and propagandises the state's inflammatory explanation of what ails Mindanao (i.e., unruly, nonconforming Mindanaons themselves).

Meanwhile, Diaz's *Season of the Devil* evokes a scale of terror overwhelming a small town. His scalar strategy historicises sociospatialities by mirroring the atrocious past under Marcos and the dreadful present under Duterte. Over 7,000 soldiers had been deployed in Mindanao since Duterte assumed office; under localised martial law from 2017 to 2019, hundreds of extrajudicial killings, illegal detention, injuries from aerial bombardments, and forced evacuations were reported, not counting the

27 The image is from Cinema Bravo, twitter.com/cinemabravoph/status/1169133980840595456?lang=en

28 On scalar fixes, see Brenner.

casualties of the "drug war" throughout the nation.[29] Diaz takes a locality in Mindanao as a microcosm and transposes the national scale to the regional.

Known for his aesthetics of long duration and expansive visual scales, Diaz is nevertheless symbolically and narratively invested in the scale of individuals who strive under the weight of unjust structures. *Season of the Devil* is no different. Here, he concentrates on the thankless life of a barrio doctor, brutalised and killed by paramilitary soldiers; and the doctor's husband, the poet, struggling to come to terms with her senseless death. Diaz himself abides by a no-compromise ethos, making the films by any means necessary, whether seen by many or few or shown in local theatres or film festivals.[30] He addresses cosmopolitan individuals—doctors and poets—the cultural elite that Trice refers to as the public of art cinema—on a global scale (including Filipino cinephiles taken as global audiences) and invites them to reckon with historical tragedies and conjure an alternative future for the Philippines.

Fig. 19 *Wailings in the Forest*: warring tribes reach a compromise at a zone of encounter

29 On the casualties in Mindanao during Marcos's Martial Law, see Davis 1987, Ch. 5; and during martial law under Duterte, see J. Torres 2019; and Arguillas 2017.

30 In part, Diaz credits his no-compromise ethos to the inspiration of Mike De Leon; see Romulo 2002. On the paradoxical compromise Diaz takes to live by this ethos and the place of Mindanao and other regions in his cinema, see Ingawanij 2021:71; and 2015:109; see Trice on the contradictory publics of alternative cinema.

Homegrown and Mindanao-based Fiola, for his turn, received relatively modest funding from QCinema, a Manila-based competitive grant, to film the lifeways of Matigsalugs, a subgroup of Manobos, in the mountain forests of Marilog, a two-hour trek away from his residence in Davao City (Fiola 2020). The resulting work is *Wailings in the Forest*, whose story and setting are concerned neither with national nor individual scales. Instead, it is about a foraging family living in the jungle and interacting with tribes dwelling in narrower forest clearings and flatter areas. It depicts a nested set of highly localised places populated by different close-knit communities that fix, cross, and redraw unofficial boundaries through conflict, cooperation, or compromise (Swyngedouw 1997:140).

Though not to the extent of Kidlat's position, who lives with the Ifugaos, Fiola, out of place, as it were, negotiated the extent to which he could represent the Matigsalugs and allow them to transform his practice. Though he is from the same province as the setting of his film, he speaks of being taught by the natives about lifeways he never grasped until he moved out of his zone of experience and entered their domain ("Baboy Halas," n.d.; Fiola 2020).

He and his small team immersed themselves in the community, learning its oral tradition that guided their creative process and seeking its permission to film. During production, he invited community members to co-create the film by casting them and asking them to co-direct. When they finished the film, Fiola crowdfunded so that he could return to the community and conduct a proper screening. In other words, their scale of interaction is local and defined by place.

Wailings exemplifies what Ginsburg characterises as the paradoxical flourishing of media founded on the politics of indigenous self-determination "in part *because* of the social and discursive spaces created by the *disjunctures* and *mutual misapprehensions* in the multiple rhetorics of self-making that shape [their] funding, production, and reception" (1995:134). Even "misguided, government policies" and the problematic mismatch of exhibiting native representations in "institutions built on rhetorics of individual self-expression," Ginsburg asserts, occasion "possibilities for [indigenous] communities to envision their current realities and possible futures, and to…create links among indigenous makers around the globe" (ibid.:135). In this light, though Fiola's decisions to enter their domain, collaborate with and screen for the

Matigsalugs, decisions resonating with specific principles of Fourth Cinema, do not produce an indigenous film according to Barclay's irreducible ideal of a native cinema by and for the natives, it highlights a geographically, metaphorically, and politically intermediate and provisional space where a Mindanaon can negotiate his place beside Matigsalugs, recognising their subjectivity, worldview, and shared dwelling.

At the same time, filmed in the forest, *Wailings* leaves no textual clues about its temporal setting. That it bears no markers of modernity indicates the possibility that it is set in the prehistoric past. However, it could also be set in the present, introducing a complex temporality that distinguishes native chronology outsiders might construe as primitive from the viewpoint of colonial or settler time (cf. Dillon 2012). Thus, textually, it is unburdened by the national and unsubordinated to the state. Furthermore, though the film's setting is highly localised, its ecological imagination is horizontally oriented and unbounded, capable of being situated alongside similar jungle spaces across geopolitical boundaries. This reveals how the local and the global scales are conventionally considered discrete, separate, polar, and hierarchical are entangled in planetary space/scale (Swyngedouw 1997; Pratt 2022).

Regionality Transecting Scales of Production and Circulation

In "Small Film, Global Connections" (hereon, *SFGC*), I trace the circulation and map the scalar contexts of *The Right to Kill* (*Tu Pug Imatuy*, 2017), a film from and set in Mindanao by Mindanaon filmmakers Mardoquio (screenwriter) and Barbarona (director), funded by Mindanao-based nongovernmental and people's organisations (Barbarona 2020). Based on actual events, utilising documentary footage, and produced during Duterte's regime, it tells the story of a Manobo indigenous family in the mountains of Talaingod who were abducted, abused, and humiliated and then turned into guides by government soldiers as part of their counterinsurgency campaign. In this section, I analyse the circumstances of its production, distribution, and reception, delineating how regionality transects scales and modulates national cinema in the entanglement of text, context, and address, and reflect further on the complicated intersection between Third and Fourth Cinemas as illustrated by the film.

Fig. 20 *The Right to Kill:* government military men accost, humiliate a Manobo family

The Right's association with and circulation via the film festivals CR and Sinag Maynila illustrate how a film's regionality is shaped by its circulation as much as its text and its author's speaking position. Mardoquio's films were screened as part of CR's inauguration, and Barbarona launched his career in the same festival; all the Mindanaon filmmakers I named above have been programmed, actively participated, and supported CR as a site that could amplify their voices. In addition, they formed associations and bonds through the festival with filmmakers from Luzon, Visayas, and not just Mindanao, that helped produce, promote, and exhibit their films beyond the festival proper.

CR, therefore, is vertically and horizontally configured. On the one hand, under the mandate CR enjoys as a government initiative, the festival names "regional" films out of the national cinema formation. On the other hand, it opens an intermediary space for the parallel activities and grassroots comradeship of artists making films from or in the regions. Hence, a topological approach is crucial in appreciating developments in Philippine cinema because it can distinguish definitions of regionality entangled with the state/centre, which, even in its celebration of diverse re-nationalisation, as Rapatan (2017) puts it, is liable, warns Berry and Farquhar, to suppress internal differences in the name of the nation (2006:5-6). At the same time, it

can shed light on the network of grounded and transvergent expressions of regionality, forming a community that does not necessarily take a scalar leap toward the national.

Despite the success of CR as measured by its longevity and growth,[31] exhibition and distribution infrastructures for local audiences in the Philippines beyond the primary cities remain undeveloped. So, though Mardoquio and Barbarona had been active for about a decade before they made *The Right*, they relied on the commercial distributor-cum-festival Sinag Maynila (lit., rays of/from Manila), which specialises in distributing culture-specific "content" to a niche audience in the Philippines and overseas. In this way, the film's condition of visibility reveals a measure of irony in that an openly political film from Mindanao indicting the state and corporate globalists was expressly sought and promoted as an "art" or "foreign" film by a commercial distributor.

The Right's circulation as an "art film" from Mindanao to Manila and international film festivals and back underlines regionality's deictic relationship to location, with the film, in Galt and Schoonover's terms, mediating "cross-cultural communication even in the face of…[the] impossibility of transparent cross-cultural legibility" (2010:11). This Faustian route, to borrow Ginsburg's (1991) expression, permitted *The Right* to be seen by many, eventually winning national awards, including the best director prize from the MPP, placing it in the nationalist canon, before being screened in an edition of CR near the site where the atrocities depicted in the film were committed.

I accentuate the interscalar networks that buttress films like *The Right* to illustrate how the no-compromise values of nationalist criticism, shunning commercial viability and valorising marginality, are not so easily tenable, at least when applied to local films that aim to address wider audiences and in the case of Mardoquio and Barbarona's film, expose the extent of state-sanctioned violence in the national periphery. Otherwise, these films would hardly be visible, even to the communities nearest them.

A topological outlook permits me to be attentive to the unresolved tension between producing microregional films that subvert dominant national cinema from

31 See Appendix C

peripheral places and macroregional circulation enabled by state and market infrastructures of exhibition and distribution. My critique of *The Right* avoids disparaging the top-down state and market production of national and global scale and privileging only the placemaking and noncapital-centric films that construct scale from the ground up. Instead, as with my critique of Bernal's *Manila*, I am concerned with limning their dialectical relation, uneven co-constitution, and the gaps through which films like *The Right* unsettle established formations.

As I assert in *SFGC*, sensitivity to scales broadens the critical contexts in which a film could be made to resonate. When the film was red-tagged on social media, alleging that it was propaganda for the Communist Party of the Philippines, Barbarona released a statement on Facebook explaining his motivation and locating his position.

> This film is part of my journey as a Mindanaon filmmaker. I have come face to face with the people of Mindanao, the Lumad [IPs of Mindanao] and Moro people, each with a story and a struggle that weaves the story of Mindanao. One such story is that of Ubonay Manlaon, whom I met while doing a documentary on the Manobo *bakwit*.[32] She appeared in the last part of the film, where she narrated how she was maltreated by soldiers who forced her to guide them through the Pantaron forest. I wanted to let the audience experience the Lumad's pain of being maltreated in their own land. I wanted to present a movie that mirrors the issues of Lumad killings, attacks on schools, and the destructive nature of mining. It took time to complete this film, as I had to ask for financial support from friends, fellow filmmakers, and church groups advocating for Lumad rights.[33]

In this brief account, Barbarona explains how living in the shared dwelling exposed him to the IPs' struggle for justice and land rights, compelling him to pick up his camera for their cause alongside other nonnative activists and advocates. More directly than *Wailings, The Right* problematises the core issues attendant to political filmmaking in Mindanao. Reflecting on the question of who has the right to kill, he draws upon the Manobos' worldview that the land is their spiritual inheritance and that a *pangayaw* (tribal war) must be waged in the name of *kaangayan* (justice) as a last resort when injustice is brought upon the community by outsiders and no

32 *Bakwit* is a term derived from "evacuate" and describes or refers to displaced Lumad. Canuday (2009) reorients the term by conceiving of the "power" of the displaced to act upon history, reorganise space, mobilise movement, and invite reflexive solidarity.

33 The full statement on which this redaction is based is posted on Barbarona's account dated 27 September 2018, facebook.com/profile/1294179940/search/?q=statement

compromise is reached (Barbarona 2020:63).[34] In a sequence preceding the Manobo woman's decision to fight back, *The Right* shows communist rebels in a skirmish with the military. It implies that national revolution[35] and indigenous self-determination are connected by the land question and these groups' conflict with the state for its facilitation of development aggression. Nevertheless, it highlights their irreducibility and the film's ambivalence toward the politics of Third and Fourth Cinemas, presenting them both without resolving them (cf. Gaspar 2021:518-25).

Barbarona refers to "Lumad killings, attacks on schools, and the destructive nature of mining"—state violence in collusion with global capital perpetrated against individuals, cultures, and the environment. *The Right* was demonised because it addressed urgent issues on multiple scales. It was reaping national acclaim when Duterte threatened to bomb IP schools in Mindanao for allegedly being instrumentalised by communists ("Duterte" 2017). Its international circulation, meanwhile, did not only reveal the plight of IPs in Mindanao to a wider audience; its critique of the destruction of nature as experienced in indigenous lands is premised on the incommensurability of global capitalism with the planetary future.

Transmogrifications of Regional Cinema

I open my essay, "Topos, Historia, Islas" (hereon, *THI*), by recounting a specific experience in 2017 that elicited my reflection on the significance of imagining Mindanao cinema. I co-programmed *The Right* in CR and watched it with an audience of young people in a private college in Mindanao, which was then under martial law. The moment reminded me that in certain places, programming, screening, and spectating films could be dangerous and substantiated Mindanao films' political edge as a peripheral cinema. It also clarified my subject position as an outsider and my abstract understanding of Mindanao cinema without the grounded knowledge gained from a located exposure to the films and entering the zones of interaction with

34 The injustice and violence brought upon the IPs in Mindanao are well-established and documented. See Rodil 1994; Gaspar 2000; and Alamon 2017.

35 The revolution waged by Philippine communists is characterised as "national democratic." See Sison 2006; cf. Tadem & Samson 2010.

Mindanaon artists, cultural workers, activists, and intellectuals, the kind of paradoxical experience I gained as a co-organiser and co-programmer of CR.

In the essay, I presuppose that place-rooted practice is diverse and that regional dynamics are plural and multidirectional. So, I speculate about three topological configurations of Mindanao cinema's regionality that could amend and exceed the conventional view of national cinema.

First, I inquire: in which directions could national cinema be remade if Mindanao, not Manila, were considered its figural centre? Mindanao had been marginalised for much of colonial and national history, with a significant portion of its population suffering from being caught in crossfires, relative or absolute deprivation, militarisation, and resource exploitation. Therefore, films from Mindanao do not only enrich national cinema. In many instances, their very making is a political expression. Their texts, I assert, "function as primary historical artifacts when they open up spaces for grassroots accounts of historical events" (*THI* 162). From this viewpoint, "remapping Philippine cinema with Mindanao as its figural center foregrounds historical wrongs committed against marginalized [national] subjects" (ibid.).

However, privileging Mindanao cinema, though corrective, could reproduce artificial hierarchies and fuel tribalist sentiments, the regionalism that transposes the dogmatism and exclusionary chauvinism of the national (Radhakrishnan 2021:164; Berry & Farquhar 2006:5-6). Hence, instead of conceptualising a singular national cinema in areal terms as a scale containing "smaller" regional cinemas, I broach the second possibility of conceiving plural, localised, and polycentric national cinema*s* (cf. Agnew 1999). Consequently, this way of thinking unsettles "the long-held view of a singular and self-referential Philippine cinema [and] can now give way to perspectival counter-mapping efforts from [multiple] margins" (*THI* 161). From this deictic viewpoint, the vision of the nation is transfigured depending on where one is located at particular historical moments and how regionality modulates the other scales. In this sense, scalar imagination is remade; Mindanao, Luzon, and Visayas cinemas are national, not merely regional, and are related not hierarchically but horizontally.

Finally, moving away from the national and opening toward deeper prenational and precolonial ties in a broader oceanic network, I propose assembling Mindanao not

as a discrete space but as a place in a broader regional network. In so doing, the regionality of its islands, its "contracting and dilating [space] with shifting boundaries, heterogeneous time frames, and lines of connection beyond absolute spaces," can be disentangled from the scalar fix and state-defined national space (ibid.:163). Much earlier than the formation of the Philippine nation-state, Mindanao had maintained strong cultural affinities and economic ties with neighbouring islands, being part of a trading network that included Singapore, Riau, Jambi, Sabah, and Penang, and extended to as far as Cambodia, Siam, and China (Warren 1981; Sakili 2000). For much longer, Mindanao, not the colonially established capital of Manila, was the focal point of what would become the present-day Philippines' regional connections.

The Spaniards did not fully conquer or proselytise Mindanaons for over three centuries. However, when Spain ceded the islands to the US in 1898, it included Mindanao in the nascent nation, even though many of its people groups, especially those that resisted or eluded the colonisers until the end, did not consider themselves Filipinos. The emergence of nationally defined societies, as the experience of Mindanao shows, disrupted distinct and wider regional interdependence. With a brutal military campaign and tailored territorial administration, the American colonial government completed the conquest and nationalisation of Mindanao, loosening its cultural and economic ties with its neighbours and bounding it in (Abinales 2000).

However, the state-engineered nation administrated according to majoritarian and homogenising biases peripheralised places and produced minorities—biases later indexed in minority-produced films or films about minorities and signified by the existence of films from or about the margins (Anderson 1998; Getachew 2019:179). The state also policed the borders, rendering the "national scale as a container," determining who rightly belongs and can enter and who does not and cannot (Agnew 2008:176). Thus, though oceanic links and deep cultural ties were not entirely severed and places remained porous, inter-island movement without the state's authorisation became illegal and illicit.

Fig. 21 *The Island Funeral*, about young people from Bangkok terrified of driving to the Thai deep south, resonates with Mindanao more than Filipino cinema

As I illustrate in Chapter 4, acknowledging the southernmost archipelago's checkered relationship with the nation and its quilted relationship with the other places in Southeast Asia activates the regional formation's topological potentialities and undermines the top-down nation-state bounded cinema. For instance, ethnic-religious minority films resonate differently depending on where it is produced, circulated, and received. Muslim narratives and images from Mindanao may appear esoteric to Filipinos beyond Mindanao. However, they could be juxtaposed in productive dialogue with dramas about excluding non-Muslim minorities in Kuala Lumpur or the tension between Islamic conservativism and secularism in Yogyakarta. Thus, "national" culture can be flagged on a macroregional scale for its limiting fiction.

CHAPTER 4 PROGRAMMING TOPOLOGICAL PLACES/REGIONS

From Regional Cinema to Cinema and the Regions

My turn to film programming as I was finalising the manuscript of *TEONC* positioned me to explore further and work out in practice the assumptions and methodology that guided my research. From 2014 onward, I became involved in organising and curating festivals and programmes in/from the Philippines, either loosely described or expressly identified as regional but attempting to intervene in national issues and formations. Programming during Duterte's regime also oriented my practice toward activism, using screenings and moderated postscreening discussions to agitate and raise awareness. In addition, programming places and regions permitted me to consider the practice as a means of mobilising and inviting solidarity.

As the director of the UPFI (2018-2020), I opened the Film Center as a rallying space for activist networks and protests against Duterte's authoritarian policies, for which we have been red-tagged and publicly threatened not a few times by the military.[36] Thus, screening an anti-Marcos Mike De Leon film, Mindanaon works about the militarisation of indigenous lands, or an omnibus like *Ten Years Thailand* (2018), which envisions a bleak future for Thailand under military rule, was a political act in itself as the exhibition space became a locus of resistance, gathering cinephiles, activists, the intelligentsia, sectoral leaders, opposition politicians, and concerned citizens, and transforming them into a virtual coalition as they watched communally and discussed spiritedly after the screenings.

As a cinema committee member (2014-2019) of the NCCA, I co-programmed CR and immersed myself in local film cultures. As noted in *THI*, it is in mounting CR that I grasped the political implications of programming microregional films in places beyond Manila. Since 2017, I have also programmed the NCCA-funded Tingin ASEAN Film Festival (tingin, lit. to look, consider, appreciate), a diplomatic project introducing the Filipino public to Southeast Asian cultures via cinema. Through its screenings, I observed how their interface of micro- and macroregional films "asserted the

36 For example: "UP Film" 2008.

subversive force of [the] marginal position and…destabilized (or at least redefined) the hegemonic power of [the] center" in the spectatorial experience (Kinder 1993:389).

Most illuminating were the responses by the local public in Manila to Pimpaka Towira's *The Island Funeral* (2015), a road movie that follows three friends travelling from Bangkok to the southern Muslim region of Thailand; Yosep Anggi Noen's *Solo, Solitude* (2016), about poet-activist Wiji Thukul, a desaparecido under Suharto; and Rithy Panh's *Graves Without a Name* (2018), about the genocide in Cambodia. Their respective postscreening discussions precipitated conversations about the grim situation under Duterte and stimulated memories of Martial Law under Marcos. A woman compared the situation presented in *Island Funeral* to the Mindanao experience and asked actor Heen Sasithorn why her character, who plays a Muslim, dreaded the journey southward. Bayu Filemon, the cinematographer of *Solo, Solitude*, recounted how lines from Thukul's poetry were chanted in protest rallies leading to the fall of Suharto, prompting an audience member to tell Filemon about Filipino poet-activist siblings Pete and Emman Lacaba (the latter martyred during Marcos's regime) and others still to share their personal Martial Law experiences. A tearful young man, his voice trembling, expressed how moved he was after watching *Graves*, wondering, in measured words, how genocide could ever gain widespread support, hinting, I surmise, at Duterte's "war on drugs."

In these and other postscreening discussions, I witnessed how programming served as a translation machine, opening zones of encounter activated by recognising a common strangeness made comprehensible by trauma and terror as much as by latent solidarity and neighbourliness—positioning viewers to learn about historical experiences in neighbouring places while putting their experiences in better focus. As these examples suggest, curatorial work keyed me to emergent film formations, their fluidity and their interrelatedness. More importantly, it offered glimpses of how programming could create testimonial encounters between spectators and films about "other" regions, open intermediary spaces for cultural translation and cross-border communication, cast visions of a different world via provisional assemblages of places, and summon an alternative public advocating social transformation (Torchin 2012:2; Berry & Robinson 2017:1, 4; Galt & Schoonover 2010:11).

In the following sections, I discuss Cinematic Counter-Cartographies of Southeast Asia, This Land Is Ours, and Lumad, programmes I curated independently beyond state-funded initiatives that substantiate my interest in the power of placemaking films in addressing broad issues and, more importantly, probe a modality for embodying the topological processes entailed in thinking about regionality. Each programme poses a place-centric view, sensitive to subjects' lived experiences. Furthermore, it manifests the entanglement of places in the convergence of scales and how programming, considering the origins of production, contexts of circulation, and spaces of exhibition and reception, can constitute regions that simultaneously enfold and exceed national cinema and enact geopolitical critiques.

CINEMATIC COUNTER-CARTOGRAPHIES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

Cinematic Counter-Cartographies of Southeast Asia (hereon, CCSEA) is an online programme I curated for the UPFI and the Association for Southeast Asian Cinemas (ASEAC), an organisation devoted to studying, promoting, and networking cinemas in the region.[37] The ASEAC holds itinerant conferences and screenings. Thus far, they have been held annually in Singapore (2004), Bangkok (2005), Kuala Lumpur (2006), Jakarta (2007), and Manila (2008); then biennially in Ho Chi Minh City (2010), Singapore (2012), Salaya (2014), Kuala Lumpur (2016), and Yogyakarta (2018). When the 2020 edition in Cebu City was cancelled because of the pandemic, members of the association organised a series of virtual talks and screenings from Thailand (Thai Film Archive), Indonesia (Binus University), and the Philippines (UPFI). The online screening of CCSEA, accessible worldwide and held from 26-30 November 2021, attracted about 800 viewers from different countries.

CCSEA expresses my combined interest in placemaking films and the topological conceptualisation of the regional as a mode of critiquing the hegemonic notion of the national. Its genesis is based on ideas I explored in *THI*. So, though I do not make it explicit, the histories, cultures, and political struggles represented in the two Mindanao films in the programme serve as the pivot in my curatorial consideration of micro- and macroregionalities. In *THI*, I suggested that Mindanao

37 See Appendix B.

cinema could be mapped alongside other regional cinemas in Southeast Asia without reference to national cinema or as a means of transmogrifying it. Correspondingly, CCSEA engages in geographical, thematic, and scalar mapping. Adopting Latour's metaphor of scales networked by strands, films in the programme are envisaged as interwoven places forming topologies of regional cinema (1996:370).

Where possible, CCSEA assembles microregional films from beyond industrial film centres, highlighting emergent peripheral cinemas, such as from Borneo Island, where films by indigenous Kadazan-Dusuns promise to variegate Malaysian cinema already decentred years earlier by the Little Cinema but remain concentrated in the peninsula. The notable exception is the film from the recently independent nation-state of Timor Leste, where production contributes to a nascent national cinema, and is selected as a knot in the assemblage to signify national cinema's continuing significance in the region.

CCSEA also critiques the national from a regional perspective: how nationhood is incomplete and how the centre peripheralises places. Thus, selections are indicated by their regions, instead of countries, of setting or origin, for instance, Mindanao and not the Philippines, Sabah, not Malaysia, Pattani and Chiang Mai, not Thailand, and Rakhine, not Myanmar. These specificities are not merely nominal but indicative of political, economic, and cultural issues addressed to their respective and neighbouring states.

Crucially, the programme juxtaposes films about refugee and stateless peoples in localities across Southeast Asia, highlighting the plight of nonnational subjects, indexing movements in and across border zones, and symptomatising deep historical connections disrupted by colonial conquest and national annexation. Such films flesh out the ethical and imaginative proposition of the programme, echoing Agnew's call to imagine places as "'dwelling' rather than national spaces" and consider the "pursuit of a decent life" as a political responsibility "extending beyond the borders of any particular state" (2008:175-76).

Figures 22-30 Promotional images for Cinematic Counter-cartographies of Southeast Asia utilise the tropes of maps and pins

CCSEA is bookended by *Messenger* (2013) from Timor Leste, about the sacrificial deaths that founded the nation, on one end, and *Silence in Mrauk Oo* (2018), about the violent deaths that fell upon protesters in Rakhine, casualties on which majoritarian political and religious institutions turned a blind eye, on another end. The histories of both states, one separatist and another clamouring for autonomy after centuries of colonial maladministration and forcible national annexation, and the emotive forms their respective films take, offer contrasting perspectives on or subjunctives to the Mindanao experience.[38]

38 For the Mindanao context, see Ferrer, Part 3.

Messenger is qualified by *Memoria* (2016), a film from Jakarta that laments the patriarchal drive that fueled Indonesia's conquest of Timor Leste but warns of ethnonationalism's patriarchy as symbolised by the predicament of Timorese women in the film. Meanwhile, *Silence in Mrauk Oo* is complicated by *Michael's* (2015), set on the Thailand-Myanmar border zone, about the stateless Rohingyas who have no legal identity in Mae Sot and are massacred in Rakhine. These narratives resonate with the minority sentiments in Mindanao, as emblematised in the marginalisation of the deaf Moro girl in *Dreams* (2008).

Living Stateless (2014) and *Fragile* (2016) chronicle the plight of Indonesian and Filipino refugees in Sabah. Based on recent films circulated beyond Malaysia, a case can be made that refugee films partly define Sabahan cinema. Like those in *Michael's*, the subjects in both films suffer from having no legal rights as citizens but risk crossing national borders to escape poverty and conflict in Kalimantan and Mindanao. The three films hark back to a deeper prenational flow of people when borders were open, and their inhabitants, including nomadic seafarers, traded and moved freely (Warren 1981; Hayase 2007).

The titular village in *Panicupan* (2015) is located in a war zone in Mindanao, where Moro, Christian, and IP residents caught in crossfires, as the film documents, successfully negotiate a deal with separatist rebels and government military to treat their homeplace as a zone of peace. I juxtapose the film with *Dialect So-So* (2018), located in Pattani, a similarly ethnoreligious-conflict-ridden area, but where generations of multiethnic neighbours, as the film chronicles, have fostered harmonious relationships despite the raging insurgency. Both films, as with all others in CCSEA, point to places with long histories of conflict, dating to colonial times, with regional and global actors influencing its current shape, yet unresolved on the national level (Rood 2016). At the same time, *Panicupan* and *Dialect So-So* invite spectators to witness or enact transformational processes and imagine a world transfigured in local places.

CCSEA assembles a regionality more complex than simply identifying them as "Southeast Asian," though this aspect remains inherent, as do their "nationalities," strategically kept in abeyance. Such contingent linkages of places and scales bring to light far-reaching issues such as disenfranchisement, statelessness, and climate

catastrophe. On the national scale, these "marginal" issues can be minimised as isolated cases, yet their extent and persistence are undeniable on the regional scale.

The films in CCSEA are curated horizontally, and nearly all signification of hierarchy within and across films points to pestering issues needing resolutions on multiple scales. Individually, the films mark the subjects' sites of struggle, national or otherwise. Their assemblage and transvergence offer a map of a regional imaginary that holds out hope for recognition and solidarity.

THIS LAND IS OURS

This Land Is Ours is part of a multi-site human rights film festival dubbed Nation In Visions, held from 4-15 December 2019 at various independent spaces, including artist spaces, screening rooms, bars, private libraries, and public places such as pop-up cinemas in urban-poor communities, local parishes, public schools, and local-government run multipurpose halls nationwide.[39] As the festival name envisages, it inquires about the human rights situation on a national scale. However, its implementation mobilises grassroots activists and addresses local publics.

This Land Is Ours is one of nine modular human-rights-themed programmes curated by various individuals and composed of Filipino works. It focuses on IP rights and comprises five documentaries. In keeping with my exploration of alternative regionalities, I name the three primary island clusters in the programme to evoke simultaneous regionalities and the national scope of the issues presented in the films. I accent urgent works whose goal is not to showcase cultural identity but to expose the plight and responses of the Ifugaos and Agta-Dumagat-Remontados of Luzon, Manobos of Mindanao, and Tumandoks and Atis of the Visayas and invite spectators to stand with them.

The programme tells of the struggles of lowland, highland, and seacoast IPs in defending their ancestral domains and maintaining their lifeways. Constant among the documentaries is their unveiling of the state's collusion with corporations in the takeover of indigenous homeplaces. Through the films, we witness government

39 See Appendix B.

agencies sue Tumandoks, who refuse to give up their land (*Into the Sea*, 2019) or edge Atis out of their dwellings to make way for resource extraction, big businesses, and tourism projects (*Land of God*, 2018). We also learn how the armed forces set up camps beside Manobo native-run schools, forcing them to close down (*The Right to Learn*, 2016).

That the programme was exhibited in independent and public spaces outside commercial and state institutional venues (except the UPFI) in different parts of the country is crucial in the topological apprehension of my curation. The documentaries open to highly localised places of resistance and offer a configuration of regionality attentive to the politics of placemaking films. At the same time, the screening sites configure another way the organisers stage the spectators' engagement with structures and critiques of power (Tascón and Wils 2017:3).

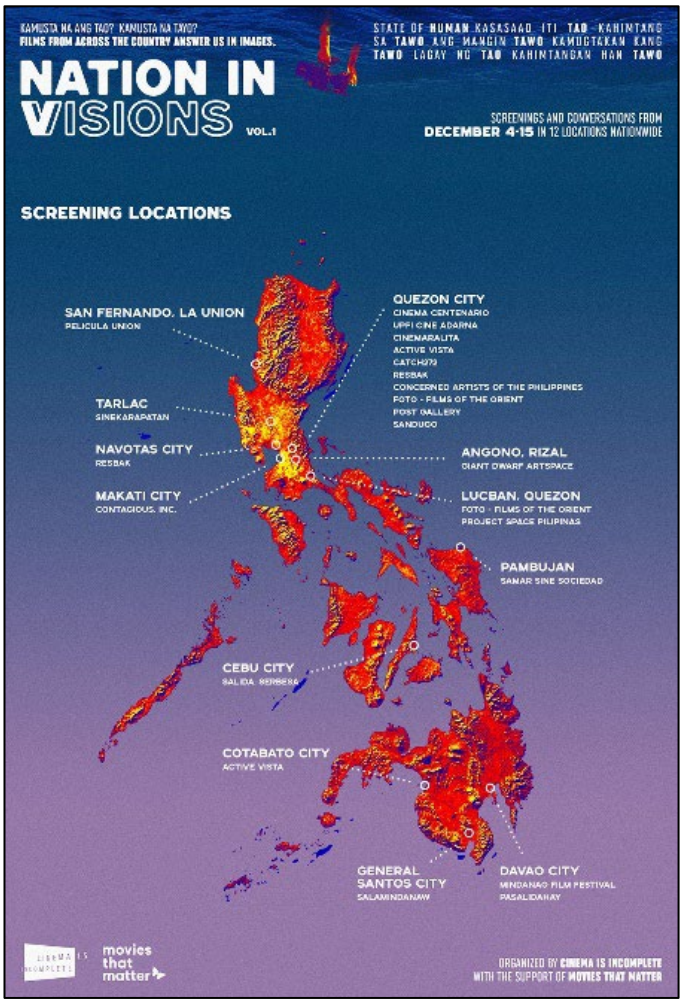


Fig. 31 The programme poster for Nation in Visions details the screening spaces/places

Figs. 32-34 Nation in Visions held in urban-poor communities, bars, artist spaces, etc.

Slum-dwellers, parishioners, public school children, rural folk, and many others are positioned not as cinephiles but as subjects who may have observed, brushed with, or experienced human rights violations in forms similar to or different from the ones presented in the films and are invited to take part in a testimonial encounter mediated by films. Thus, the highly localised exhibition contexts materialise the places of activism, amplifying the programme's resonances and interrelations while allowing spectators and communities to construct their interpretation of human rights from their perspective in light of the plight of others (Tascón 2015:30). The places presented by the films and the networked places of reception are enfolded, unfolded, refolded.

Tascón argues that the "transcendent ideal" of human rights remains "removed from the everyday life of citizens" until it is conceived in "placedness" (ibid.:20-21). However, these rights are emplaced via legal structures within the state apparatus and are arbitrated by "an expert, and elite, knowledge system…in most nations" (ibid.:25).[40] The films in This Land Is Ours concretise this dilemma by exposing how state forces instrumentalise the law to dispossess the IPs. They detail the natives' disenfranchisement and the illiteracy that has kept them from effectively resisting their encroachers on the political and legal fronts. They also show how these groups, in collaboration with advocates and activists, try to raise a new generation of literate land defenders and culture bearers who would not be fooled by legalese (*Inheritance*, 2013; *Into the Sea*). Finally, they show IP leaders' and non-IP allies' efforts to vitalise indigenous cultures and introduce artistic practices in their repertoire of activism (*Tribal Videos*, 2001; *Inheritance*; *Into the Sea; The Right to Learn*).[41]

40 For the IP experience, see Alamon 2017:187-90.

41 *Tribal Videos* documents Kidlat Tahimik's efforts to bring filmmaking to the Ifugaos in the 1990s.

In this way, This Land Is Ours harnesses the energies of Philippine cinema's progressive nationalist tradition and its promotion of political cinema addressing, though in a different and quite direct way, the "masses." At the same time, it contributes to the efforts of nuancing national cinema by heralding marginal filmmaking from and about particular places. However, instead of conceptualising regionality as forming around contiguous spaces, I show how places separated by vast distances share common struggles in the national space. Hence, the programme illustrates how national and regional cinemas are conceptually co-constitutive and materially interdependent. Finally, it demonstrates how films about IPs, as I asserted in Chapter 3 and unpack further below, politicise regional cinema and move it beyond questions of mere cultural representation.

LUMAD

LUMAD comprises four films dramatising and chronicling the travails and activism of the IPs of Mindanao in the 2010s and their fight for their rights to land, education, and self-determination. It was curated for Minikino, a Bali-based organisation that promotes short films and coordinates a network of microcinemas throughout Indonesia. The screenings in May 2021 were free of charge, although audiences were invited to donate to the cause of the IPs through the Save Our Schools (SOS) Network in the Philippines.

Minikino subtitled the films in Bahasa Indonesia, and the programme was presented in three spaces in Bali and one in Aceh. It also organised a hybrid event that allowed me, the filmmakers Barbarona, Kristoffer Brugada, Cha Escala, Davao-based SOS spokesperson Rius Valle, and the documentary subject, Chricelyn Empong, to interact with the audience and the programmers at MASH Denpasar. Empong is from the Tinananon-Manobo indigenous tribe of North Cotabato but was displaced by militarisation to Bukidnon and then to the *bakwit* school hosted at the UP, where she finished her high school education. Her father was extrajudicially executed during the production of *Bullet-Laced Dreams* (2020).

The programme's title does not refer to any particular IP group but, in the vernacular, means native or indigenous. However, Lumad, with the capital L, has been

used since Marcos's Martial Law to refer to the collectivity of politically self-organised non-Moro IPs in Mindanao (Arguillas 2021). While they used Lumad as a form of self-identification originally affirmed by 15 of the 18 ethnolinguistic groups, it became a legal term in the immediate post-Marcos period to distinguish them from Muslims, when the law creating the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao was signed, officially birthing the concept of the tri-people—Lumad, Moros, and Christian settlers. While this development recognises multiculturality in Mindanao and legalises inclusivity, it is liable to flatten the political and economic differences among them and the Lumad's exceptional marginality (Ferrer 2013:68; Paredes 2015; Rodil 1994).

Lumad leaders, activists, and their allies have been constantly harassed and killed for collectivising and resisting trespassers (Gaspar 2000; Alamon 2017). However, while curating the programme, the state was pressing down hard on the Lumad during the presidency of Mindanaon Duterte, no less (Arguillas 2021; Sy 2023). The legal harassment, illegal detentions, and extrajudicial killings of activists and human rights advocates, including the Lumad, were rampant (as the programme documents).

Ironically, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, the state agency formed to look after the welfare of IPs, passed a resolution in 2021 banning the use of Lumad under the pretext that it did not respect the uniqueness of ethnolinguistic groups (Arguillas 2021). Furthermore, the Duterte-created National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict claimed that Lumad was invented by communists ("terrorists"), a claim that doubly endangers IP communities already suffering from the militarisation of their homeplaces ("FALSE" 2021; "VERA FILES" 2021). Fifty-five indigenous schools were forcibly closed that year, totalling 178 since Duterte took office in 2016 (Canuday & Sescon 2022:xii).

The programme was assembled in response to the government's delegitimisation of IP collectivity. It grapples with the claims made by the state and the material ground of regional cinema in Mindanao. It also wrestles with the limits and contradictions of my position as a Manila-based programmer seeking to stand with the Lumad. I relied on years of conversation with activist filmmakers and Lumad advocates for insight into the production processes. Though held in Bali, I made sure to connect the programme to the needs of the *bakwit* schools through the SOS Network and the public resistance to state threats. In the postscreening discussion, it was crucial that

the problem of nonnatives making films about IPs was discussed openly and that Valle and especially Empong could speak for themselves about Lumad matters.

Curating the programme occasioned my reflection on who gets to speak for IPs and from where. For if, as Mary Louise Pratt puts it, “no one is Indigenous until somebody else shows up,” then making films about natives and programming them for publics that may or may not think they have stakes in these natives’ past or future are fraught political acts requiring reflexivity (2022:84; Canuday 2009:161-65). That is, the condition of indigenousness not only denotes origins but recognises a historical situation in which invaders or settlers arrived and displaced subjects from their homeplaces; it also underlines the material reality of encroachment and loss of land (Tuck & Yang 2012). Therefore, being a nonnative, I am simultaneously in a position of complicity and called upon to stand with them, and as long as they have not regained their land and justice and peace are not achieved, then my contradictory position cannot be resolved; I cannot reconcile it myself.

Titling the programme LUMAD signified the priority of political collectivisation for social justice as affirmed by the Lumad themselves against state pressures, from the Martial Law period to the present, over my insistence on advocating place-based cultural specificity (Alamon 2017:192-95; Alejo 2018; Arguillas 2021). Ethnolinguistic groups may possess distinct and continually transforming lifeways depending on their location and interactions, but their common struggle for land and against colonial and state aggressors is part of their shared history as Lumad, a history threatened to be erased. My topological approach permits me to hold these two positions in tension and explore how each programme can embody their urgency and ambivalence, far from offering a final say (Dovey 2015:xiii, 20). In This Land Is Ours, I prioritise the enfolding of geographical distances and particular places, while LUMAD, responding to state threats, supports the Lumad’s defence of the oneness of their identity and cause and the power of their name.

Fig. 35 Filming the Lumad struggle on different fronts: in their highland homeplaces; in the evacuation centres in Mindanao cities; in Manila, the seat of government; and in various communities beyond Mindanao where children pursue their education in dislocation

LUMAD traces the multidirectional movements on the ground that animate the Lumad fight: the Lumad's own efforts in building their schools and defending their homeplaces in the highlands (*Boye's Smile*, 2014); nonnative schoolteachers from the city who share Mindanao as a dwelling, devote their lives to Lumad causes, and live with them even in their displacement (*The Right to Learn*); the Lumad who travel from Mindanao to the seat of state authority in Manila, joined by peasants and labourers, to protest global-regional economic integration that facilitates multinational corporations' entry in their domains (*Kalumaran*, 2015); and the *bakwit* moving around the country, and the host communities and volunteers who come together to support their education and daily needs (*Bullet-Laced Dreams*).

Most films about the Lumad have been made in collaboration with, but not solely by them, that is, not yet with the IPs' complete control of image-making and distribution that Barclay advocated in his call for a Fourth Cinema. Nevertheless, the state's conflation of Lumad and communist "ideologies," the way it demonises the Lumad's belief that land is sacred and is owned by no one and everyone (Gaspar 2021:513-18), and how it mistakes the Lumad's defence of their land as a form of communist rebellion, is telling of why and how political film praxes intersect. Thus, "Lumad cinema," an idea initially suggested in *SFGC* and as the programme conceives it, is located between Third and Fourth Cinemas, allied in certain respects, in dialogue, transvergent, but ultimately unreconciled.

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson makes an edifying assertion about the national dimension of IP activism. According to her, the most radical form of Indigenous resurgence is "nation building, not nation-state building" (2016:22). After all, she asserts with Glen Coulthard, the IPs' struggle is shaped by "their intimate relationship to *place*" and their politico-ethical practices "based on deep reciprocity" (2016:254, emphasis added). It is about land but not land ownership; it is about sovereignty but not state sovereignty; it is about inclusivity and not exclusivity (Watson 2007:20; Goeman 2015; Gaspar 2021). Thus, the emergence at this juncture of a Lumad cinema strikes at the heart of nationalism and inflects the politics of national cinema.

At the same time, according to Linda Tuhiwai Smith, naming IPs as an identity enables "the collective voices of colonised people to be expressed strategically in the *international* arena" (2012:7). For this reason, I programmed LUMAD for Minikino to bring the dialogue on IPs' rights closer to particular places and lived experiences and activate its international call for solidarity (Tascón 2017:30). The programme addressed an Indonesian audience that I assumed, based on their proximity to IP groups in their country, grasped the issues presented in the films. In addition to the Lumad experience, we discussed the semantic distinction in Bahasa between *pribumi* (native), with its racial-national connotation, and *asli* (original), which is nearer the meaning of *lumad*.

Figs. 36-38 Top: screenings in a microcinema in Aceh and al fresco in Bali; bottom: a hybrid-format conversation at MASH Denpasar

Films about IPs politicise regional cinema because their existence attests to the long history and continuation of the process of accumulation by dispossession, whose terminus and holocaust, if uninterrupted, is not just the extinction of IPs but the destruction of the planet. From this perspective, programming places and regions is not restricted to drawing boundaries around idealist notions of natural and cultural endowments but speaks to broader spatial politics such as climate justice, land tenure, and rights to places. In this context, programming indigenous films or activist films about IPs is a form of scale-mapping that produces a range of positions, some contradictory and some incisive.

CONCLUSION

Focusing on the particularity of places where films are produced and circulated can subvert hegemonic cinema formations. It can ramify national cinema imaginaries and foreground the plight, travails, and expressions of subjects who bear the weight of the national, especially as imposed by the state plugged into the global political economy.

At the same time, the topological approach I am proposing highlights the dynamic, incomplete, and contestatory processes of regionalising peripheral place-rooted and placemaking films to offer an alternative to a statist and market-driven national cinema. Such an approach is attentive to how scales, when reified, reproduce the values of dominant cinema that obscures the struggle of (national) subjects; foregrounding alternative scalar interconnections forges new conceptual affiliations. It is also sensitive to points or moments of contradiction, including one's position, inviting constant reflexivity and further reassessment of one's assumptions and practice.

As the discussion indicates, programming places and regions challenges established formations and expands the already flexible concept of regionality. Furthermore, when new variables are introduced in the assemblage, they stimulate non-hierarchical comparisons and an intuitive and associative process of internal reorganisation. Thus, programming CCSEA, This Land Is Ours, and LUMAD is a heuristic and dialogical process that negotiates shifting deictical and dialectical regionalities. It theorises, if not animates, the dynamics of transforming potentiality into actuality and problematises how universal claims (e.g., human rights, IPs' rights) are translated into concrete action/places when nested in social practices and deployed in activism.

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APPENDIX A MORE INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMMES DISCUSSED

2021 Cinematic Counter-Cartographies of Southeast Asia

About the Programme

Cinematic Counter-Cartographies of Southeast Asia is an online programme co-presented by the University of the Philippines Film Institute (UPFI) and the Association for Southeast Asian Cinemas (ASEAC). It explores a configuration of a topological Southeast Asian regional cinema, deliberately moving away from the national cinema framework and showing an open-ended regional formation in process and tension. It emphasises places rather than nations and features nine short films from Dili, Jakarta, Sabah, Mindanao, Pattani, Chiang Mai, and Rakhine.

The programme streamed online for free from 26 to 30 November 2021 and was accessible worldwide; it attracted about 800 viewers from different countries.

About the Organisers

The ASEAC, an organisation devoted to studying, promoting, and networking regional cinemas, holds itinerant conferences and screenings. Thus far, these have been held annually in Singapore (2004), Bangkok (2005), Kuala Lumpur (2006), Jakarta (2007), and Manila (2008); then biennially in Ho Chi Minh City (2010), Singapore (2012), Salaya (2014), Kuala Lumpur (2016), and Yogyakarta (2018). When the scheduled 2020 edition in Cebu City, in the Visayas, central Philippines, was cancelled because of the pandemic, members of the association put together a series of virtual talks and screenings organised *from* Thailand (Thai Film Archive), Indonesia (Binus University), and the Philippines (UPFI) and presented online.

curatorial note

Even if a film does not display a map as such, by nature, it bears an implicit relation with cartography.
—Tom Conley, *Cartographic Cinema* (2007)

No literal maps are highlighted in the nine films from Timor Leste, Jakarta, Sabah, Mindanao, Pattani, Chiang Mai, and Rakhine that constitute the program. However, a range of places are traversed, and identities navigated in figurative cartographic explorations: mountain hideouts, rolling hills, seaside villages, town centers, rural peripheries, periurban communities, humble abodes, and their denizens and residents—natives, migrants, transients, fugitives, unsettled and displaced, trying to make a home, dreaming of the freedom of mobility. The images are rich with topographical elements, and the narratives offer topographical devices to guide spectators in understanding what defines locations, be they neighborhoods connected by dirt roads and

shorelines, paths snaking through informal settlements, unmarked expanses, landscapes divided by wired fences, and seas that bridge islands.

Rural sociologist Nancy Peluso proposed counter-mapping to characterize the maps redrawn by forest users in Kalimantan, Indonesia, that sought to contest state maps that eroded the place of indigenous inhabitants of the domain. The same spirit of counter-hegemonic remapping, critical of official discourses on identities and territorial boundaries, quickens the gathering of these films.

However, the program also performs a cartographic détournement. It takes the most vaunted ideas that underpin the conventional bases for the regionalization of Southeast Asia, such as the celebration of ethnic diversity and multiculturalism, international security agreements, economic integration, and the fiction of uninterrupted national histories that altogether obscure the disciplining operation of cartographic control, and renders these visible from the differential perspective of lived experience on the ground.

The program maps historical, political, economic, and cultural interconnections and entanglements between and among Southeast Asian islands. It offers a comparative opportunity to grapple with the challenges of and responses to territorial overlaps, borderland existence, military aggression, and historical injustices. It does so by moving away from an areal view and the topographical regionalization process on the scale of nations. Instead, it moves toward a topological reinterpretation of place—that is, unfolding the view from *somewhere* and tracing vital nodal connections that happen beyond or despite changes in topography.

The people we meet in these stories and documentaries bear visions of the region, in their mind's eyes, as sites of personal potential yet unrealized and as material locales where they struggle for survival and meaning. Journeying with them, we can gain insight into regional formation's dynamic, situated, and performative processes and find a Southeast Asia that imbues a local substance to our neighborly imaginings.

selection

1. Francisca Maia's *Mensajeiru* (Messenger) / 2013 / Dili, Timor-Leste

   Set in Timor Leste during the 1999 vote for independence from Indonesia, *Mensajeiru* tells the story of a fifteen-year-old boy who follows his brother on a journey to save his community.

2. Kamila Andini's *Memoria* / 2016 / Jakarta, Indonesia

   Set in Timor Leste, the film tells the story of Maria, a victim of sexual violence during the country's dark years of Indonesian occupation, trying to leave her traumatic memory behind while her daughter, Flora, tries to secure their future.

3. Bebbra Mailin's *Rapuh* (Fragile) / 2016 / Sabah, Malaysia

   The documentary follows an Indonesian family living in Sabah, Malaysia, and is told from the perspective of twelve-year-old Nirwana, who dreams of becoming a singer despite her family's struggles arising from their political, economic, and cultural displacement.

4. Vilashini Somiah and Matt Fillmore's *Di Ambang* (Living Stateless) / 2014 / Sabah, Malaysia

   Di Ambang chronicles the lives of undocumented Filipino migrant families fleeing the conflict in Mindanao to live in Sabah. This documentary explores statelessness and its consequences on generations living unrecognized by any country.

5. Sheron Dayoc's *Angan-Angan* (Dreams) / 2008 / Mindanao, Philippines

   The film centers on nine-year-old mute girl, Satra, who lives in Basilan, an island province in the Sulu Archipelago, and is determined to secure a good education despite the strictness of her Yakan Moro cultural upbringing.

6. Bagane Fiola and Keith Bacongco's *Panicupan* (Rendezvous) / 2015 / Mindanao, Philippines

   Panicupan focuses on the titular village in Pikit, North Cotabato, whose residents worked toward clearing "Spaces for Peace," where Moro, Lumad, and Christian settlers could live peacefully and harmoniously amid the conflict between the government forces and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

7. Abdulromae Taleh's *Dialect So-So* / 2018 / Pattani, Thailand

   Dialect So-So documents the success of the Thai-Chinese-Buddhist minorities in fostering harmonious relationships in predominantly Malay Muslim neighborhoods in the Thai South despite the insurgency and conflict in their area due to cultural and religious differences.

8. Kunnawut Boonreak's *Michael's* / 2015 / Chiang Mai, Thailand

   Among the different economic and religious networks in Mae Sot district, a city along the Thailand-Myanmar border, the documentary follows 'Michael Rofik' and 'Michael Mohamad' Yameen, two Rohingyas struggling for their livelihood while trying to maintain their identity. Although both migrated long ago, they do not belong to either Thailand or Myanmar.

9. Than Kyaw Htay and Thadi Htar's *Silence In Mrauk Oo* / 2018 / Rakhine, Myanmar

   The film tells the story of a young man returning from Yangon to Mrauk Oo where a riot broke out between police and Rakhine protesters. He searches for answers about his father's death from political and religious leaders but is met only with silence.

2019 This Land Is Ours

About the Programme

Nation in Visions was a one-off multi-site film festival held from 4 to 15 December 2019 at various spaces in different parts of the Philippines. Implemented around Human Rights Day (10 December), the festival featured nine modular human-rights-themed programmes composed of Filipino works. One of them, **This Land Is Ours**, which I curated, comprises documentaries from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao produced between 2000 and 2019 that tell of the struggles of lowland, highland, and seaside Indigenous Peoples in defending their ancestral domains from encroachers and maintaining the dignity of their lifeways.

About the Organisers

Nation in Visions was organised by the Philippine-based film collective Cinema Is Incomplete, funded by the Netherlands-based Movies That Matter, a nonprofit foundation supported mainly by Amnesty International, and presented by a loose nationwide consortium of grassroots collectives and artists' spaces.

curatorial note

This Land Is Ours brings together five documentaries shot in different localities in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, which show the situations of indigenous communities in the archipelago. Be they lowlanders, mountain peoples, or seaside communities, their struggles are alarmingly similar. They are not only marginalized and considered lowly in the very places where they are the natives. They are also being actively displaced and threatened by state institutions, the military, big businesses, and the tourism industry and forced to give up their birthright—their land and identity.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples reminds us of the rights of the land's original inhabitants—that they should be free of discrimination and free to determine "their own visions of economic and social development" while keeping intact the integrity of their age-old cultures.

The documentaries invite us to reflect on why ancestral lands are the last frontier for state and capital. Indigenous Peoples have valiantly resisted or consistently eluded colonizers and land-grabbers for centuries and continue to resist encroachers, which is why their homeplaces remain the source of the richest natural reserves and corporations, in collusion with law and power, are greedy and restless to dispossess them. These films demonstrate that their fight for education, cultural integrity, and land continues in the present: there is yet time, no cause is lost.

selection

1. Kidlat de Guia's *Tribal Videos* / 2001 / Luzon

   Filmmakers come and go to film the magnificent rice terraces, but an Ifugao village in the mountains of northern Luzon adopts artist Kidlat Tahimik, who in turn teaches the community how to make films so they can document their culture and bring the wisdom of ancient education back into their schools.

2. Jeremy Agsawa, Kel Almazan, Geia de la Peña, and Jen Tarnate's *Pamana* (Inheritance) / 2013 / Luzon

   An Agta-Dumagat-Remontado lowland community in Quezon Province comes together to establish their school to teach academics and, more importantly, help strengthen their young people's sense of cultural identity, hoping that a new generation of culture bearers and land defenders would soon rise to protect the legacy of their ancestors.

3. Arnel Barbarona's *Pagbarug Tu' Pagtuon* (The Right to Learn) / 2016 / Mindanao

   Two kinds of people enter the Lumad community in Davao del Norte, Mindanao: schoolteachers such as Ricky Balilid, who come from the city to bring education to the Lumad children, and the military that sets up camp beside the schools and intimidate the children, their parents, and schoolteachers. This is the story of around 400 Manobo students and teachers from Talaingod, Davao del Norte, who have evacuated their militarized ancestral domain to seek shelter in Davao City.

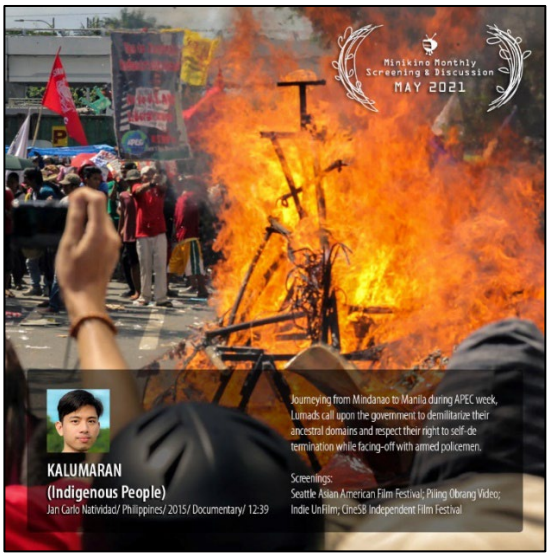
4. Anna Katrina Velez Tejero's *Halawod* (Into the Sea) / 2019 / Visayas

   The state's National Irrigation Administration sues the couple Romeo and Berna Castor, members of the indigenous Tumandok tribe, for refusing to give up the rights to their land in Calinog, Iloilo, while members of their community reflect on their need for literacy and education so that their youth can stand up against invasion in the guise of legalese.

5. Kevin Piamonte's *Lugta Ke Tamama* (Land of God) / 2018 / Visayas

   As the world-renowned seashores of Boracay are continually commercialized and environmentally exploited to attract tourists and bring in so-called development, the Ati, the province's indigenous inhabitants, are forbidden to swim and fish in the sea and pushed further back inland to the margins.

2021 LUMAD



About the Programme

LUMAD is a short film programme I curated in response to an invitation by Minikino for their May 2021 monthly screening. It comprises four films dramatising and chronicling the travails and activism in the 2010s of the Indigenous Peoples of Mindanao, collectively self-organised and named Lumad.

The Lumad have always struggled against their ancestral domains' militarization and the harassment and killing of their leaders. However, at the time of putting together the programme, their illegal detention, extrajudicial execution, the closing of their schools, and even the red-tagging of the name Lumad were becoming more brazen under the counterinsurgency efforts of Rodrigo Duterte's government.

Thus, the programme is motivated by activist intentions and brings the situation to a broader macro-regional audience.

About the Organisers

Minikino is a Bali-based organisation that promotes the short film form, holds a year-round monthly screening programme and the annual Minikino Film Week and Bali International Short Film Festival, and coordinates a network of micro-regional film spaces and organisations throughout Indonesia.

Minikino subtitled the films in Bahasa Indonesia, and the programme was presented in three spaces in Bali (Uma Seminyak, Badung-Bali, MASH Denpasar, Denpasar-Bali, and Rumah Film Sang Karsa, Buleleng-Bali) and one in Aceh (Mini Teater BPNB Aceh).

Minikino also organised a one-off hybrid event that allowed me, the filmmakers Arbi Barbarona, Kristoffer Brugada, and Cha Escala, and the documentary subject of *Bullet-Laced Dreams* (2020), the Lumad Chricelyn Empong, to interact with the audience and the Minikino programmers and speak about the human rights violations happening in the Philippines. The discussions confirmed that most Indonesian viewers recognised the Lumads' experiences as similar to the plight of many IPs in Indonesia.

curatorial note

Lumad, in the Cebuano language, means native. However, in the Philippines in the 1970s and '80s, it referred to the collectivity of Indigenous Peoples in the southern islands of Mindanao that organized themselves and mobilized for cultural regeneration and political self-determination during the Marcos dictatorship. The Lumad comprise 50 per cent of the Indigenous People groups in the archipelago.

The Lumad have resisted or evaded the Spanish and American colonizers through the centuries. Today, they continue to defend their ancestral domains from land-grabbers, resist the militarization of their communities, and struggle

to keep the integrity of their lifeways through education centered on love for their sacred land.

In the last two decades, with the emergence of regional cinema beyond Manila, more and more films that highlight the plight of the Lumad have been produced. The rise of Lumad cinema politicizes regional cinema and situates it in translocal space alongside indigenous cinemas worldwide, where the struggle for land remains vital.

The journey of Indigenous Peoples is at the heart of the Filipino people's history, and their survival is tied up with the future of the nation's land.

The program traces the experiences and crusades of the Lumad during the Aquino and Duterte presidencies. It features films documenting their resilience in the face of displacement and their acts of resistance despite experiences of brutal violence. These works feature the Lumad or were made in collaboration with them.

The program is also a political statement, as Indigenous Peoples are displaced, their schools are closed down, and their families and supporters are harassed, red-tagged, arrested, and killed. As the legitimacy and name of the Lumad collectivity are undermined, depoliticized, and demonized by the state, the program serves as an indictment and calls on our neighboring regional public as witnesses.

selection

1. Hugh Montero's *Pahiyum ni Boye* (Boye's Smile) / 2014

   Lumad girl, Boye, and her community take it upon themselves to build their school, despite the many challenges and threats, to strengthen their cultural bearing and resolve to stand up to encroachers.

2. Arbi Barbarona's *Pagbarug Tu' Pagtuon* (The Right to Learn) / 2016

   Ricky Balilid, who moved from the city to be a schoolteacher at a Lumad community, finds himself in an evacuation center with hundreds of Lumad after military and paramilitary troops occupy their lands.

3. Jan Carlo Natividad's *Kalumaran* / 2015

   Journeying from Mindanao to Manila during APEC week, the Lumad call upon the government to demilitarize their ancestral domains and respect their right to self-determination while facing off with armed police officers.

4. Kristoffer Brugada and Cha Escala's *Bullet-Laced Dreams* / 2020

   As Duterte places Mindanao under martial law, uprooted Lumad children move around the Philippines to pursue their education, protest their displacement, and express their indignation against the continued killings of fellow Lumad back home.

APPENDIX B OTHER REGIONAL FILM FESTIVALS MENTIONED

2014-2019 Co-Programmer/Co-Organizer, Cinema Rehiyon

Cinema Rehiyon (est. 2009) is the only annual Philippine film festival featuring the best and emerging works from the regions outside the film industrial capital of Manila. It is funded by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA).

CR was established as a flagship project by the cinema committee in 2009 to further the mandate of the NCCA and recognise the growing body of films from the regions. Its first two iterations were held at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in Manila to showcase and, by so doing, designate "regional" films. From its third year onward, it was transformed into an itinerant festival held annually in a different city or town in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, although the tenth edition was held again in Manila. In its fourteen-year history, thus far, it has programmed hundreds of films of varying lengths and forms and forged a vibrant nationwide film community grounded in creative and affective commitments to promote national and regional cinema.

Yet, despite its longevity and continual growth as obvious measures of its success, one of CR's most significant challenges—and, for programmers like myself, one of the precious opportunities for theorising it provides—is the need to negotiate constantly the curatorial praxis that underpins it. By the mandate of NCCA as a national agency and CR's reiterative nature, the film festival proceeds from the notion of a unified national cinema as a given. In contrast, each festival iteration produces a contingent regional cinema framework complicated by recognising place-based and

place-rooted filmmaking as points of conceptual departure. Moreover, each edition is spearheaded by a different festival director in close coordination and consultation with the committee. Thus, every CR edition asks: what is regional cinema? The programme in any given year yields a slightly or drastically different answer.

The following have been the venues and themes of Cinema Rehiyon.

2009 Manila, National Capital Region: AlterNativo

2010 Manila, National Capital Region: Films from the Other Philippines

2011 Davao City, Mindanao: Forging Philippine Cinediversity

2012 Bacolod City, Visayas: Empowering Regional Cinema

2013 Los Baños, Luzon: Nurturing Cinemas of Home

2014 Cagayan de Oro City, Mindanao: Filming the Frontiers

2015 Cebu City, Visayas: Sa Kinasang-an sa Ikapitong Alampat (At the Crossroads of the Seventh Art)

2016 Cavite City, Luzon: Celebrating Cinema Communities, Celebrating Cultural Legacies

2017 Compostella Valley, Mindanao: No Walls, No Ceilings

2018 Manila, National Capital Region: One Country. One Cinema. One Future.

2019 Dumaguete City, Visayas: Elevating Regional Cinema

2020 Naga City, Luzon: Sarong Gatos sa Sanga-Sangang Dalan (A Hundred Crossroads)

2021 virtual: Voices from the Margins

2022 virtual: Katilingban. Kalibotan. Kabag-ohan. (Society. Earth. Rebirth.)

2017-2022 Programmer, Tingin ASEAN Film Festival

Tingin ASEAN Film Festival (est. 2017) is dedicated to introducing Southeast Asian cultures to the Philippine public. It is funded by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts of the Philippines (NCCA). Originally held as a one-off event to mark the 50th anniversary of the ASEAN in 2017, the festival has since outgrown its primary diplomatic function, although its notion of the regional remains contained within the ASEAN framework. Before the recent online editions, Tingin was held in mall cineplexes in some of Manila's dense business districts.

Like CR, Tingin is constantly under review and reconfigured. From the generalist selection process of the first two editions ("ASEAN 50," "Southeast Asia Through the Eyes of Cinema"), themes were eventually allowed so that by the third through fifth iterations ("Indigenous Stories," "Remedies for Dis-ease," "Imaginaries of Neighborliness"), more place-based and transnational films in line with my curatorial interests were given space. Recently, NCCA had agreed to drop "ASEAN" and thus its statist connotation from the festival's name and use "Southeast Asian" in its place.

MONOGRAPHS

Allegories of Scale

April 9, 2021, 1:54pm

On Three Films Set in Mindanao

by Patrick F. Campos

Place matters, but scale decides.

—Erik Swyngedouw[1]

At no time in Philippine cinema history has there ever been more active filmmakers nationwide than today. And at no other time have myriad spaces throughout the archipelago been so richly represented onscreen. Thus, there is a need to develop a paradigm that can account for the expansion of cinematic reach and visualization while remaining sensitive to historical context and cinematic place-making politics.

In this essay, I offer a snapshot of contemporary Philippine cinema by looking at three recent films set in the country's southern islands of Mindanao —Brillante Mendoza's *Mindanao* (2019), Lav Diaz's *Ang Panahon ng Halimaw* (Season of the Devil, 2019), and Bagane Fiola's *Baboy Halas* (Wailings in the Forest, 2016). I do so to flesh out themes that can guide us in thinking about differentiated Filipino film at present. I locate these filmmakers in the current landscape and reflect on how they *scale* their cinematic subjects for particular aesthetic effects and ideological ends.

I use the category of scale to highlight these filmmakers' spatial strategies and the social realities these strategies contain, produce, and seek to transform. I analyze how they use scale from where they are to construct a metaphor of society, how they bind and unbind time, spaces, and subjects to represent Mindanao and its people, and how, from distinct perspectives, they help us conceive a gestalt of scale (i.e., the way various scales fit together to form patterns or wholes) of the national imaginary and, by extension, national cinema.[2]

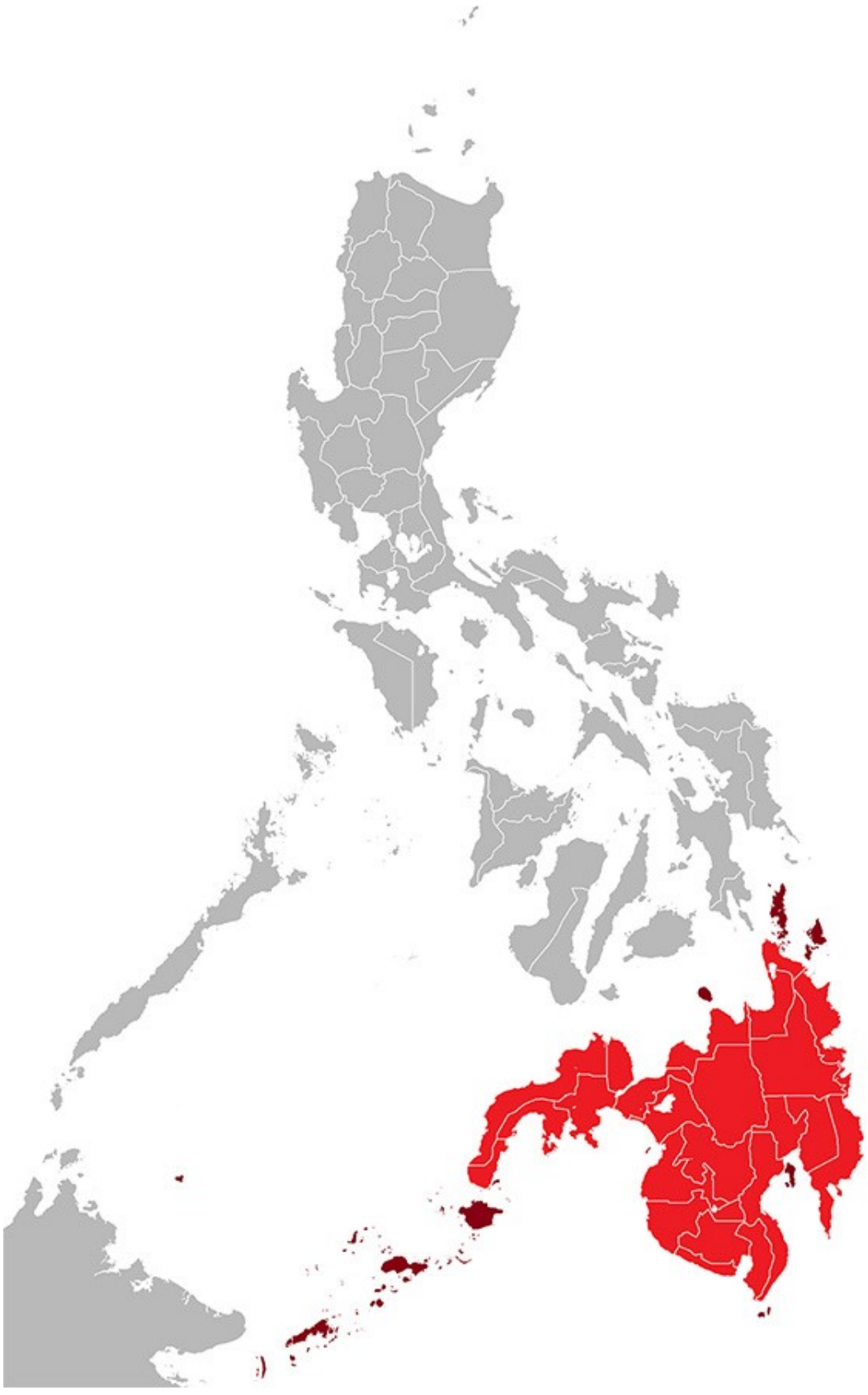


Figure 1. Map of the Philippine islands with Mindanao highlighted. Source: Wikicommons

Mindanao, National Scale, and Mythic Time

"Unrest grips the island of Mindanao for centuries…and the Moro people of today remain unchanged." So declares the text that opens Brillante Mendoza's *Mindanao*, circumscribing an undifferentiated archipelagic space

and a changeless people sorrowing across mythic time. The film's plot itself runs only for a few weeks, and it follows the struggle of a Muslim family —TSgt. Malang Datupalo, a combat medic of the Armed Forces of the Philippines engaged in warfare against Moro rebels in his homeland of Maguindanao; his wife Saima, who is trying to find the best care for their terminally ill child in a war-torn society; and their daughter Aisa whose only relief from physical suffering is her imagination's escape to the world of Indarapatra and Sulayman, heroes in an old Maguindanaon epic retold to her by her parents.

Figure 2. Malang and Saima in a promotional image of Mindanao. Source: Cinema Bravo

A short but tender moment intersects two bloody sequences of death and battle in *Mindanao*. Malang is visibly shaken as he pays his last respects to a slain rebel, a fellow Maguindanaon whose face is mangled beyond recognition. Before his troop proceeds to Mamasapano, where another gunfight unknown to them would erupt, on the shore at dusk, they come across Muslims, mostly women and children, riding colorful vintas (traditional boats native to Mindanao) and waving at them.

A faint smile momentarily visits Malang's weary face upon seeing them, and we can only surmise what hopes flitted his mind. Did he have an inkling of peace, a time when his people of Muslim Mindanao and the Philippine military he serves would one day lay down their arms? Or was he thinking of Aisa, who, in his fantasy perhaps, has won her battle against cancer? Alas, the moment is his last respite before a violent shootout injures him and claims soldiers' lives on both sides. Despite the casualties, however, the war is not won but continues. Upon returning home, he reunites with his wife only to learn that his daughter is no more.

The film locates Mindanao and the viewers in a space akin to Malang's transitory moment of hope, but it can go no further than mourn the dead. *Mindanao*'sscalar framing vaguely alludes to history. It incorporates folklore inhabited by dragons to give the impression of a tremendous temporal scale. Still, the film cannot envision a future for the place because it relies on a long-standing scalar fix, a reified scale that has come to be naturalized, in this case, by the state.[3] Thus, *Mindanao* ends as it began, amid war, with soldiers fighting against the odds for an elusive peace.

Mindanao typifies a highly provincial view from the center, unaware of its parochialism because it takes for granted its own scalar categories and speaks in such proximity to the warping vantage point of power. Mendoza executive produced the film through his Center Stage Productions in cooperation with the Presidential Communications Operations Office, the media agency of the government tasked to "raise consciousness," "enlighten the citizenry," and "build national consensus."[4]

Mindanao is unlike the slow-burn, quasi-documentary films Mendoza is known for in the international film festival circuit. It is a melodrama mixed with fantasy and animation, a hybrid form palatable to the entire family, starring Judy Ann Santos as Siama, one of the most popular dramatic actresses from Manila. Selected as part of the nationwide run of the Metro Manila Film Festival, which happens annually from Christmas Day to New Year's Day when no foreign films can screen locally, it is addressed to the Filipino mass audience and is arguably Mendoza's most accessible film, to date.

In an interview, Mendoza reveals his thought-process in topographically framing the story the way he did. He states, "Whether we like it or not when we say 'Mindanao,' people relate it to the conflict there. Therefore, you cannot just make a film about Mindanao and not mention the conflict."[5] His assumptions give us insight into his sense of scale, power relationship, and hierarchy.

His statement depends on the myopic view that "people" can only imagine "Mindanao" as a conflict site. This opinion privileges the perspective of non-Mindanaons who are prone to reduce the islands into a manageable scale. The film itself is a patchwork of incongruous cultural references and confusing geography that exhibits the filmmaker's disconnected sense of place and history. It projects non-Mindanaon audiences who would be unable to distinguish among the various ethnolinguistic symbols from Muslim Mindanao—for instance, that vintas do not ferry passengers on the coast of Maguindanao. And it imagines those who would respond to highly-charged references—for example, to the botched police mission in Mamasapano that claimed 67 lives, including 44 of the government's Special Action Force in 2015.[6]

Figure 3. Mendoza (center) on the set of Mindanao. Source: Conandaily.Com

Mindanao can also serve as a metaphor for the risky project of scaling national cinema from an aerial view that obfuscates the networked scalar projects on the ground. The braggadocio of the film's title equates Mindanao with a faction of Moros. It elides the islands' other inhabitants, a more variegated population of Muslims, the Lumads or indigenous peoples, and the settlers. Mendoza's statement about the condition and necessity of making *Mindanao* also ignores or undermines Mindanao cinema's contribution to Filipino film whose artists have been laboring even before Mendoza began directing in 2005. Not only have Mindanaon filmmakers represented the Moro conflict in more historically informed and culturally sensitiveways. They have also been imagining Mindanao beyond the Moro conflict for many years now.

Mindanao can only allude to hoped-for peace but cannot imagine the place's future because it peddles the state's viewpoint and is single-minded in singing its military's praises. More than once in the film, Moros displaced by war are made to utter how grateful they are that the army is there to protect them. The retold epic's atrocious dragons are visually associated with Moro rebels, while the state soldiers are problematically associated with the folk heroes. And in one incredible sequence, Malang, wearing a Maguindanaon warrior's costume over his military uniform (in itself a ridiculous proposition), slays a villainous Moro with a kris! For sure, these are not images of reconciliation and concession.

Meanwhile, the film refuses to historicize the antipathy. It is silent about the Muslims' systematic disenfranchisement since the American colonial period; the unregulated migration of settlers into the 1960s that marginalized

Moros and Lumads; the lack of a just land registration system resulting in violent clashes, land-grabbing, and deprivation; and the persistent and widespread militarization of the islands from the 1970s to the present.[7] Thus, as a melodramatic film, *Mindanao* can only resolve the conflict on a familial scale; as a fantasy film, it displaces the battle in time beyond history; and as a war film, it is nothing more than one-sided state propaganda.

Ang Panahon ng Halimaw and the Scale of the Individual

Lav Diaz's *Ang Panahon ng Halimaw* opens with a narrator's voice describing the film's historical milieu and offering an astounding figure that evokes a terrifying scale of terror. "In the year 1977," she begins, "President Ferdinand Marcos authored Presidential Decree 1016.... More than 70,000 civilians were armed and given the power to quell the so-called rebellion of the Communist Party and the secessionist Moros in Mindanao. This paramilitary force was one of the causes of widespread human rights violations during Martial Law."

The narrator positions *Halimaw* in its chronological place but then splits cinematic-historical temporality by locating herself implicitly in the present and dating the story that is yet to unfold "in 1979." This scalar strategy opens for the viewer an encounter with the film as an artifact of the present that mirrors events 40 years prior. Like the titular devil whose head is halved into two faces, front and back, *Halimaw* is scaled as if by a mirror, with two parallel spaces—dystopia and heterotopia (that is, an utterly negative social space, on the one hand, and a strangely ordered place that disrupts the familiar with the presence of the "other," on the other hand)—connected by anachronic time.[8] Like a mirror, the film envisages the Mindanao of the past as an alter-space to the place one occupies and still has agency to change in the present.

Figure 4. The Janus-faced monster surrounded by his minions. Courtesy of Epicmedia Productions Inc.

It is impossible for anyone who has even a faint knowledge of the magnitude of human rights violations committed in the Philippines today to miss the connection drawn by the film between the dictator Marcos and current President Rodrigo Duterte.[9] Hence, it is critical to grasp (1) how the film's representation of scale relates to actual processes that politically and materially construct scale in the social world, and (2) how the film intimates the topological openness and expanding nature of social scale from the level of the individual, the locale, the region, to the nation. Still, it is important not to obscure the particularity of *Halimaw*'s historical and geographical referent. Unlike Mendoza, Diaz, who was born and grew up in Maguindanao, draws on facts about the brutalization of Mindanao's people.

The numbers that figure Mindanao's military brutalization are staggering, like the "7,000" armed civilians that Diaz's narrator brings to our mind's eye. From 1977 to 1985, 1,511 of 2,384 people extrajudicially killed; 445 of 703 forcefully disappeared; and 12,888 of 19,197 illegally detained were from Mindanao.[10] *Halimaw* fleshes out these numbers by dramatizing how, with his vow to hold no one accountable except the "enemies" of the state and endow some people with power over others' lives, the charismatic devil turned one's neighbors into rabid henchmen. They murdered with impunity anyone suspected of being a supporter of communists or secessionists. *Halimaw* tellingly portrays not only the state military but the state-sanctioned paramilitary forces—which is to say civilians with whom one shared "ordinary" community spaces but whose religious hatred and zealous nationalism were armed with the "extraordinary" force of guns.

Figure 5. Neighbors armed against neighbors. Courtesy of Epicmedia

Productions Inc.

When *Halimaw* was shown in the Philippines, Mindanao had been under martial law for over two years even though the terrorist threat, which gave rise to the islands' being placed under military rule, was contained within months from its eruption. Duterte, in May 2017, proclaimed that martial law in Mindanao "will not be any different from what President Marcos did."[11] In a speech, he addressed the armed forces and said, "For this martial law [...], I and I alone would be responsible. [...] You can arrest any person, search any house, without a warrant. Like before," further quipping that "if you rape three, that's on me."[12]

By December 2019, according to Mindanao-based human rights group Barug Katungod, they have documented 162 extrajudicial killings, 704 cases of trumped-up charges, 284 cases of illegal detention, 1,007 victims of aerial bombardments, and forced evacuations of more than 500,000 people resulting from intense militarization.[13] Tragically, what happens in Mindanao is also happening on the broader national scale, and the casualties of one are not reducible to that of the other.

In *Halimaw*, as in many other worlds created by Diaz, murderers and victims are no mere numbers but are individuals who pontificate and brood about the meaning and effects of their actions within their scale of influence. We are made witness to how the panorama of characters wrestles with or rationalizes their decision to resist the devil or to give up their lives for him. Despite the apparent largeness of *Halimaw*'s concept and form (as a four-hour anti-musical), the film is concerned mainly with the calculus of resistance and survival, of how 1 resists decimation and the doom of being reduced—historically, politically, mortally—to 0. Thus, it is invested in the meaning of the central characters Lorena's and Hugo's life choices in the grand scheme of things.

Figure 6. The tortured artist. Courtesy of Epicmedia Productions Inc.

Lorena, a young doctor who could thrive in any place, elects to devote her life serving thanklessly in a rural village, where she would eventually be red-tagged, abducted, raped, and killed. Hugo, a poet and teacher, must struggle with his disillusionment after losing Lorena and live up to his writings' ideals—that every person must at all costs, even at the expense of one's life, fight the devil. *Halimaw*, in this way, is primarily addressing the Lorenas and Hugos of Philippine society, intellectuals and professionals, who are the kinds of audience Diaz's cinema projects.

Diaz's sensibility was shaped by a politicized cinema that boldly responded to Marcos's Martial Law in the 1970s and '80s. He himself would be an exemplar of the no-compromise ethos in the 1990s and 2000s and would help define digital cinema's possibilities. We can say that the scalar priorities of *Halimaw* mirror the auteur's location in Philippine cinema, a position that champions artistic independence above all else to make bold political statements in the form of one's choosing over appealing to a mass audience or seeking to define place-rooted cinema.

Figure 7. Diaz (partly hidden) on the set of Ang Panahon ng Halimaw. Courtesy of Epicmedia Productions Inc.

Diaz's location sets him apart from Mindanaon filmmakers. The scale of his artistic practice, whose outputs have rarely been positioned to recoup investment, has through the years necessitated immense but devoted support from commercial producers who would buy into his national politics and underwrite his continuing global influence. It was the savvy risk-takers

from the production company, Epicmedia, in cooperation with the Malaysian company, Da Huang Pictures, which shares Diaz's ethos, and the resources of Globe Studios, the giant telecommunication corporation's content-creation arm, that made it possible for *Halimaw* to be completed and seen by cinephiles in and beyond the Philippines.

The film's making and narrative illustrate how scales are produced by the conceptual and practical labor of social actors like politicians, soldiers, activists, and artists who reproduce their imagined scales onto the material world by their resources and actions. The film's emphasis is on the scale of networks and relationships, which though uncertain in its ultimate effects, cannot be reified and co-opted wholly and for all time and can always potentially grow in number and influence. Thus, *Halimaw*'s tragic ending is not attributed to the untenability of resisting the devil but to the lack of a critical mass composed of willful individuals that can tip the scale.

Baboy Halas in Trans/Local Space and Deep Time

Nothing—a black screen—opens Bagane Fiola's *Baboy Halas*. And then, faintly at first, we hear the jungle's nocturnal chorus crescendo: birds chirping, insects night-calling, leaves rustling. The first image we see is cinematic, no doubt. A drone trails a human figure running through a field of trees and entering an old-growth forest. Unlike *Mindanao* and *Halimaw*,the film does not tell the viewer where or when *this*, *now*, is. Soon after, we learn that the human figure in an unadorned loincloth is Mampog, an agile hunter who lives in a treehouse in the woodland with his two wives and a daughter. Their family lives in isolation and survives in tension with other tribespeople wearing more intricate clothing, bearing better-crafted arms, and dwelling in communities in the forest's flatland.

Figure 8. Fiola (right) on the set of Baboy Halas. Courtesy of Origane Films.

Baboy Halas shows with ethnographic urge the sociospatial dynamics of these distinct indigenous groups—what causes conflicts between them, how they resolve disputes, when they are expected to make sacrifices, and why they plead for deities to intervene in human affairs. The film insinuates that when Mampog was unable to fulfill his obligation to his family and harmoniously cohabit the land with communities beyond his immediate social space, nature transformed him into a wild boar to restore equilibrium. In this way, the story embodies anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss's well-known axiom that today rings as a warning against tribalism, that "humanity is confined to the borders of the tribe, the linguistic group, or even, in some instances, the village."[14]

Figure 9. Warriors of the clan. Courtesy of Origane Films

The film can be thought of as a nested set of highly localized and interlocking scales populated by kinfolk and close-knit communities. In the world of *Baboy Halas*, the object is not to determine which borders cannot be crossed by outsiders. On the contrary, the project is akin to how geographer Erik Swyngedouw describes the tactic of mobilizing scale politics: that is, to "define the arena of struggle, where conflict is mediated and regulated and compromises settled."[15]

Tellingly, *Baboy Halas* leaves no visual or narrative marks of modern temporality. There are no cities, no cars, no clocks. In our valorization of modern time—which is rooted in the violence of colonial and settler time—we might view Mampog and his neighbors in non-native terms as primitives, trapped in the past, unable to progress. However, Fiola refuses the notion of universal chronology and foregrounds the validity and the vitality of the indigenous peoples' alternative mode of temporality. Apart from being a vehicle for universal wisdom, *Baboy Halas* offers a perspective on nature and social processes in heterochronic time. It gives the audience a novel view of ancient lifeways, which have evolved into various cultural traditions but have continued not to move linearly but to layer across time.

What is remarkable is that the native cultures represented in the film in actuality survive today in varying degrees. Fiola pictures the startling proximity between his urban residence and Mampog's jungle dwelling as a two-hour trek along a forest trail. Fiola's process of conceiving and producing the film also partakes of heterochronicity. He tells of first hearing a fable passed down for many generations from a former Moro rebel commander while shooting a documentary in North Cotabato, a province in Mindanao.[16] Smitten with the tale, he cradled this folk story of a native Moro clan's origins until he began immersing, on and off, for months, in the ancestral land of the Matigsalug tribe in Davao, another region in Mindanao.[17]

Fiola is a homegrown Mindanaon artist who has been active in filmmaking since the early 2000s and has never moved to Manila, the center of the Filipino mainstream film industry. However, he admits that making *Baboy Halas* was his most profound education in indigenous Mindanao culture.[18] When he received a grant from the Metro Manila-based QCinema International Film Festival, he decided to work with a Lumad cast. For 17 days, he and his lean seven-person crew were welcomed to the Lumads' social world, and in turn, they allowed the natives to actively co-create the film world with them. Fiola characterized their collaboration as a ritual—his team "introduced filmmaking to the Lumad as an offering, [and in return, the team was] blessed with the knowledge of Lumad culture and spirituality."[19]

Figure 10. Women in the deep forest. Courtesy of Origane Films

After its premiere in QCinema in 2016, the film traveled to numerous film festivals in the Philippines and abroad, receiving prestigious prizes along the way. However, arguably Fiola's most important exhibition came three years later when he held screenings for the Matigsalug community before an audience of natives, most of whom have never watched a film. The cost and logistical resources of bringing *Baboy Halas* "back home" to the mountains were sourced through crowdfunding and carried by his production crew and Pasalidahay, a film collective co-founded by Fiola, whose goal is to develop

an audience for Mindanao cinema.[20]

Even while it is highly localized, *Baboy Halas* opens to a vast translocal space, a worldwide social network, anywhere where ancestral domains are threatened to be erased by global capital and everywhere where people continue to defend them. Fiola's work, especially by virtue of his process-oriented collaboration with the Matigsalug tribe, can be located alongside indigenous filmmaking internationally, a mode of production that shares similar historical struggles while animated by cultural specificity and is in solidarity with first peoples around the world.[21]

Thus, the film demonstrates a mode of representation that is not burdened by the category of the nation (the social order depicted in the story appears to either precede or exceed the nation), a film in which locality is not subordinated in a scalar hierarchy to the state but is oriented horizontally, capable of crossing geopolitical boundaries internationally. At the same time, it reveals how the local and the global—scales conventionally imagined as discrete and separate, polar opposites, or hierarchical—are paradoxically connected.[22]

The local and the global are coiled in the Anthropocene—Earth's current geologic age, which, based on overwhelming scientific evidence, is characterized by humanity's menacing alteration of the planet's course. The term Anthropocene has been used to name a range of our human behavior's disastrous effects on life and to scale the proximity of our human acts and their dire consequences that generations will have to suffer over millennia.[23] Of the films discussed in this essay, it is *Baboy Halas* that exhibits the Anthropocene aesthetics. In particular, because of its apparent temporal depth, the film can be understood as moving beyond horizontal geographical scale and diving into the fathoms of geological scale.

Through its parabolic storytelling, naturalistic performance, unerring use of wild sound, and observational camerawork, the film involves the viewers in a strange temporality that feels at once distant and immediate. The scale of the dense forest where Mampog appears to be but a speck and his kin-making entanglements with animals (the white pig that enchants him and that he alone sees and the hunted wild boar that he would become to his family) can awe us with a sense of a deep and atavistic past.[24] Moreover, the knowledge both that indigenous peoples coexist with modernity in noncoeval or noncontemporaneous time and that their impending disappearance coincides with humanity's irreversible destruction of nature gives us a proper perspective of a deep and exigent future. Hence, while *Baboy Halas* begins and ends with Mampog, the film's scale orients us toward considering the timeless process of being, interrupted.

[1] From "Neither global nor local: 'Glocalization' and the politics of scale," *Spaces of Globalization: Reasserting the Power of the Local*, ed. Kevin R. Cox (New York: Guilford Press, 1997), 144.

[2] Neil Smith, who first offered the notion of the gestalt of scale, offers an extended definition of "scale" in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, eds. Derek Gregory, Ron Johnston, Geraldine Pratt, and Michael Watts (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 724–27.

[3] On the politics of scalar fixes, see Neil Brenner, "The limits to scale? Methodological reflections on scalar structuration," *Progress in Human Geography*, 25.4 (2001).

[4] See pcoo.gov.ph/about.

[5] Qtd. in Cruz, Marinel Cruz, "Brillante Ma Mendoza: You can't make a film about Mindanao and not mention the conflict," Philippine Daily Inquirer, Nov. 6, 2019, entertainment.inquirer.net/350553/brillante-ma-mendoza-you-cant-make-a-film-about-mindanao-and-not-mention-the-conflict

[6] Nicai de Guzman, Remembering #Fallen44 of the Special Action Forces, *Esquire*, Jan. 28, 2019, www.esquiremag.ph/long-reads/features/remembering-fallen44-of-the-special-action-forces-a1729-20190128-lfrm3

[7] B.R. Rodil provides a historical contextualization of the Moro struggle in *The minoritization of the indigenous communities of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago* (Davao City: Alternative Forum for Research in Mindanao, 1994).

[8] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias," trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5 (1984): 46-49.

[9] Ana P. Santos, "Duterte's four years in power — extrajudicial killings, rights abuses and terror," *Deutsche Welle*, July 7, 2020, www.dw.com/en/dutertes-four-years-in-power-extrajudicial-killings-rights-abuses-and-terror/a-54082293; and "World Report 2019: Philippines," *Human Rights Watch*, 2019, www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/philippines.

[10] The data is from Chapter 5 of Leonard Davis's *The Philippines: People, Poverty, and Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987).

[11] Carolyn O. Arguilla, "Duterte: Martial Law "would not be any different from what President Marcos did," *Mindanews*, May 24, 2017, www.mindanews.com/top-stories/2017/05/duterte-martial-law-would-not-be-any-different-from-what-president-marcos-did.

[12] "Philippines' Duterte jokes about rape amid concern over martial law

abuses," *Reuters,* May 27, 2017, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-duterte-idUSKBN18N05D.

[13] Joe Torres, "Mindanao rights group welcomes lifting of martial law," *Preda Foundation*, Dec. 19, 2019, https://www.preda.org/2019/mindanao-rights-group-welcomes-lifting-of-martial-law/.

[14] *Race and History* (Paris: UNESCO, 1952), 12.

[15] Erik Swyngedouw, "Globalisation or 'glocalisation'? Networks, territories and rescaling," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 17:1 (2004), 42.

[16] The documentary would later be released as "Panicupan" (Catching Peace, 2015), co-directed by Fiola with Keith Bacongco. Apropos of Mendoza's obtuse views on Mindanao, "Panicupan" spotlights a fishing village in North Cotabato where Moros, Lumads, and settlers live peacefully together and whose leaders and residents initiated the establishment of their barangay as a "space for peace" and negotiated with the state army and the rebel forces to respect their community-initiated peace-building process. See "Panicupan," *Origane Films*, n.d.,origanefilms.com/panicupan.

[17] "Baboy Halas," *Origane Films*, n.d., origanefilms.com/wailingsintheforest.

[18] Fiola, in an interview with the author, June 11, 2020.

[19] "Baboy Halas."

[20] "Film Screening in the Forest: A Homecoming of an Indigenous Film," *The Spark Project*, n.d., www.thesparkproject.com/project/film-screening-in-the-forest-a-homecoming-of-an-indigenous-film.

[21] I discuss the concept of Lumad cinema in "Small Film, Global Connections," *Plaridel* 17:2 (forthcoming), plarideljournal.org.

[22] Swyngedouw makes the same argument about the politics of scaling in "Neither Global nor Local."

[23] To understand the term further and appreciate the debates surrounding its meaning, see Will Steffen, Jacques Grinevald, Paul Crutzen, and John McNeill, "The Anthropocene: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, Series A 369 (2011); and Clive Hamilton, "The Anthropocene as Rupture," *The Anthropocene Review* 3:2 (2016).

[24] The idea of human and non-human "kin-making" in a framework that moves beyond the Anthropocene is explored by Donna J. Haraway in *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

About the Author

An Associate Professor at the University of the Philippines Film Institute where he recently served as Director, Patrick F. Campos is a film scholar, programmer, and critic. He is the author of *The End of National Cinema: Filipino Film at the Turn of the Century* (2016), co-author of *Scenes Reclaimed* (2020), and editor of *Pelikula: A Journal of Philippine Cinema*. He has edited several journal special issues, including "Southeast Asian Horror Cinemas" for *Plaridel*, "The Politics of Religion in Southeast Asian Cinemas" for *Situations*, and "Philippine Contemporary Film" for *Art Archive*.Along with regional cinema specialists, he co-organizes the roving biennial Association of Southeast Asian Cinemas Conference. He has programmed for Guanajuato International Film Festival, Image Forum in Tokyo, and Cinema Rehiyon, among others, and he curates Tingin ASEAN Film Festival in Manila. He was a member of the Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino and currently a member of NETPAC.

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ARCHIVE 02

ART

A Collection of Essays
on Philippine Contemporary
Literature & Film

THE
JAPAN
FOUNDATION,
MANILA

SMALL FILM, GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

words by
PATRICK F. CAMPOS

Fig. 1

For us to appreciate what is happening today in the 2010s to Philippine cinema, we can take a step back and consider the situation just before the close of the twentieth century.

The 1990s was a decade of uncertainties. The idea that the years from 1974 to 1987 saw the coming and going of a "golden age" gained currency during this decade. This golden age was extolled for the period's artistic blossoming in spite of industrial limitations and cinema's politicization in a time of repression under Marcos. This was when filmmakers like Lino Brocka, Ishmael Bernal, Mike de Leon, Kidlat Tahimik, Peque Gallaga, Ricky Lee, Mario O'Hara, and Marilou Diaz-Abaya, as well as the more radical experimenters and political film collectives, emerged in the scene. The naming of the period was a kind of wistful celebration of the past and a way of expressing frustration over the present.

A PRELUDE TO DIGITAL CINEMA

No unified artistic and political agenda framed cinema after the People Power uprising of 1986; in retrospect, this situation may be seen as a reason for fictionalizing the oneness of the golden age. In the 1990s, moreover, the exorbitant taxation, accelerating cost of production, global decline in moviegoing, looming financial crisis, and steep competition with imported films drove commercial producers to flood the market with cheap movies—this, in the context of a newly restored democracy. The decline of the film industry amidst newfound freedom was ironic, and as the decade of the 1990s came to a close, pundits declared the film industry dead.

But the dismal state of affairs turned out to be rich soil on which seeds of new ideas, strewn alongside fertile discontent, would be planted. Responding to the gloomy situation, critics, scholars, and cineastes clamored for change and talk of an oncoming "revolution" in Philippine

The digital film cultures in Bacolod, Iloilo, Cebu, Davao, and their outskirts developed alongside the one in Manila, in synchronicity with the development of marginal cinemas not just in the Philippines but also around the world.

cinema was on the lips of independent filmmakers and film students who were coming of age. A palpable need to reinvent cinema characterized the transition into the 2000s. In hindsight, the lack of a unifying discourse on Philippine cinema would prove to be the wellspring of new life for cinema in the twenty-first century.

Digital technologies, which became accessible from the late 1990s to the early 2000s, catalyzed the budding of a new cinema. Suddenly, filmmaking was no longer the sole prerogative of moneyed producers; the power to make films was cascaded down to the people. The ethos of DIY, no-budget, and no-more-excuses cinema defined the period, led by advocates and practitioners of lo-fi video filmmaking.

The establishment of the fund-granting and competitive Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival and Cinema One Originals Film Festival, which yielded the first major harvest of digital features in 2005, signaled the end of the transition and the rebirth of a dynamic Philippine cinema. The uniquely Filipino "festival mode" of production and exhibition would multiply in the years to come. Though far from ideal, these festivals provided a production platform and exhibition network for a significant number of innovative films to take their place in the local market alongside those produced by the more established commercial outfits. The steady production of festival films from 2005 to the 2010s challenged commercial producers to rethink formulas.

Today, the film industry is vibrant again. Notably, with local cinema's rebirth, what had been considered previously as marginal practices of filmmaking, such as the production of short, experimental, and documentary films and films beyond Manila, now outnumber commercial films in quantity and, even if they do not dominate the market, make up a lively alternative film culture. Certainly, these practices continue to be threatened by deeply entrenched structures that work against them, like the cartel of theater owners that exert inordinate power over what gets screened and for how long. But there are now more spaces of engagement than ever before, including the virtual spaces of social media and the community spaces of cinematheques and microcinemas.

Fig. 2

Fig. 1 Still from *Tu Pug Imatuy (The Right to Kill)* (2017), showing vernacular costumes.

Fig. 2 Still from *Tu Pug Imatuy (The Right to Kill)* (2017), showing Obunay humiliated.

NATIONAL CINEMA ON SHIFTING SOIL

How are we to make sense of our particular film history in relation to current experiences that are still uncharted? In what follows, I focus on the contexts of *Tu Pug Imatuy (The Right to Kill)* (2017), a film from Mindanao, in order to chart the contemporary landscape of Philippine cinema and comment particularly on the challenges and opportunities a non-mainstream filmmaker faces in seeking to contribute to the political cinema of our troubled times. Instead of writing a review, I contextualize the film's significance in the shifting patterns of "national," "regional," "local," and "global" formations since the 2000s.

Tu Pug Imatuy (literally, to kill) follows the experiences of a Manobo family, whose peaceful lives are disrupted when soldiers abduct, abuse, and humiliate the parents, Dawin and Obunay, and use them as guides through the forest, while their children, Langit and Ilyan, are left to fend for themselves. The film's screenplay, written by Arnel Mardoquio, is informed by the indigenous peoples' historical and ongoing struggle against encroachers.[1] It focuses on the travails of the *lumad*, or the non-Muslim and non-Christian ethnolinguistic tribes in Mindanao, caught in the crossfire between the state military and the rebel forces. Arbi Barbarona directed and handled all the technical aspects of the creative process, but he worked on his research and production with the *lumad* community.

While *Tu Pug Imatuy*, portrays the centuries-old way of life of an indigenous community, it is undoubtedly a 21st century film, animated by global forces as much as it contributes to regional art production. In both contexts, the film occupies a marginal space, but the significance of these distinct marginalities is not the same. As a local film in a global context, the time for such a film has inevitably come, but as a regional film in the national context, its arrival has actually come quite late.

Mardoquio's and Barbarona's previous films, as well as other films beyond Manila, have been spotlighted in Cinema Rehiyon, the flagship project of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA). Since its arrival in 2008, Cinema Rehiyon has grown significantly, from programming only a handful of films in its first year to showing over a hundred in its tenth. NCCA, through its efforts to develop homegrown and even grassroots talent, has helped put the idea of "regional filmmaking" across to the public by financially supporting the founding or mounting of smaller "festivals in the regions" throughout the archipelago — much more down-to-earth festivals compared to their glitzier counterparts in Manila.

In fact, however, filmmaking outside the National Capital Region began earlier than 2008, and it did not result from the protean period in Manila in the 2000s. The enabling factors of digital technology and the virtual networks of cinephilia were not imported from the capital city to the provinces (the usual route of film culture in the celluloid century), but from the global elsewhere. In other words, the digital film cultures in cities like Baguio, Bacolod, Iloilo, Cebu, Davao, and their outskirts, developed *alongside* the one in Manila, in synchronicity with the development of marginal cinemas not just in the Philippines but around the world.

In this light, "regional" filmmaking could refer just as well to how secondary cities in the Philippines had parallel experiences with independent cinemas across Southeast Asia, ranging from the coming of the "new waves" in Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Saigon, and Bangkok to the steady growth of alternative cinemas in Jogjakarta, Makassar, Purbalingga, Sabah, Luang Prabang, and city-centers like Hanoi, Phnom Penh, Vientiane, and Yangon, to name a few. In short, what galvanized filmmaking in Philippine regions in the digital period are the same global impulses that energized the indie scene in the larger Southeast Asian region.

Thus, the momentous establishment of Cinema Rehiyon and the growing consciousness on regional filmmaking in recent years in the Philippines actually indicate a lag in the recognition of films beyond Manila as part of national cinema, of the long and ongoing struggle for local stories and issues to take their rightful place in the mainstream of the national imaginary. It is remarkable, then, that *Tu Pug Imatuy*, with its urgent call about an age-old national problem, was only made in 2017. At the same time, that it earned wide acclaim in 2018, eventually winning major prizes from national award-giving bodies, FAMAS and Gawad Urian, is a sign that times have changed.

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Global cinema is defined by market forces and is much more open to "other" cinemas that include non-formulaic, esoteric, and highly culture-specific works. For this reason, it has encouraged the production of very diverse films that can harbor the positive qualities of being marginal.

'SINE LOKAL, PANG-INTERNASYONAL'

The changing times have complicated the meaning of international film exhibition and distribution. Unlike the older idea of "world cinema," which connotes a congregation of international artists whose key works comprise the "greatest" films, the contemporary notion of "global cinema" implies a network of film markets. In this sense, a film that goes global becomes accessible to audiences beyond its national borders, though it does not necessarily join the coveted but contested ranks of world cinema.

Global cinema is defined by market forces and is much more open to "other" cinemas that include non-formulaic, esoteric, and highly culture-specific works. For this reason, it has encouraged the production of very diverse films that can harbor the positive qualities of being marginal.

Because Philippine festivals like Cinemalaya are more welcoming of inventive works that would otherwise not be produced by mainstream studios deeply rooted in local mass culture, the interested parties readily plugged into global cinema. At the same time, because not all festival films are distributed internationally, they compete in the local market with big studio films and Hollywood imports, against which they tend to appear "small" with "fringe" special-interest films. Meanwhile, a small fraction goes global and still others figure in world cinema, where a different kind of validation is attained for "national" cinema.

The double-coded aspiration of doing well in the local/global market and being validated in inter/national festivals is typified by Sinag Maynila Film Festival, where *Tu Pug Imatuy* first premiered before being screened in Cinema Rehiyon in the municipality of Nabunturan, Compostela Valley, where, at a that time, not a single movie screen existed. Sinag Maynila (literally, the rays of and from Manila) is funded by distribution company Solar Entertainment, which imports and exports commercial content, and its films are selected by Cannes Film Festival-prizewinner, Brillante Mendoza.

Unlike other festivals, Sinag Maynila does not produce films but rather scouts for homegrown stories that are potential content for wider distribution in the Philippines and in niche markets abroad. The festival, whose identity is anchored on the image of Manila as the center of filmmaking, is also branded s enabling "sineng lokal, pang-internasyonal" (local films for the international market), which alerts us to the complexity of the contemporary situation where initiatives by the state and private corporations are providing platforms for regional filmmakers.

That *Tu Pug Imatuy*, a fearlessly political film with a shoestring budget, was programmed in Sinag Maynila indicates how older paradigms dating back to the 1960s that made clear distinctions between First, Second, and Third Cinemas, or industrial, art, and political cinemas, respectively, have become inoperable.[2]

First Cinema refers to commercial filmmaking and its ultimate model is Hollywood. Film practices in this category were honed in the 1930s and refined in postwar Philippine cinema. Movies made in this system, needless to say, have been the most productive and avidly patronized locally for the most part of the twentieth century, and Solar Entertainment is doubtless one of the conduits and enablers of this system of filmmaking today.

Following a parallel path, nonconforming filmmakers have throughout history questioned the formulaic and profit-oriented industry values that define conventional movies. These filmmakers have promoted instead a cinema that refuses to compromise artistic vision, a filmmaking stance that forms an alternative Second Cinema. Films of this type are realized by independent artists rather than studio-employed craftspeople. The tradition of Second Cinema films in the Philippines grew enough to become a wave in the 1970s and a series of waves from the 1980s to the 2000s. And the daring of the artists that rode them continues to challenge the system and push the boundaries of the cinematic arts today. Interestingly, Sinag Maynila is part of this cultural and political economy as well, driven by festival production that encourages newness and innovation for an expanding market.

Third Cinema is militant, anticolonial, and antifascist cinema, exemplified by a number of social realist and personal films by the likes of Brocka and Kidlat Tahimik and more pointedly by political film collectives during and after the Marcos period. Such films did not necessarily aspire to be art nor did they endeavor to be distributed commercially for profit, but they needed to be seen by many because they exposed national realities concealed in mass media.

Tu Pug Imatuy dramatizes the *lumad*'s experience of dislocation, and its imagery gestures toward vanishing forest covers and massive mining operations. Quite startlingly, akin to political collective films, it closes with documentary footage of the real Obunay, speaking of the trauma of fleeing her militarized village in Talaingod, Davao del Norte, and traveling with over a thousand others to Davao City as a *bakwit* (evacuee), only to be kidnapped by soldiers. Clearly, the desire to shed light on what is obscured in public consciousness and to reach a wide audience is at the heart of the production of *Tu Pug Imatuy*.

In the older paradigm, Second and especially Third Cinema films were expected to steer clear of the First Cinema structures. Any form of "compromise" was anathema to "independence." But the globalization of marginal films is now well documented, and the myriad experiences of filmmakers laboring in the peripheries caution us from making sweeping claims and invite us to consider concrete cases, such as that of *Tu Pug Imatuy*.

From being conceived in Davao City, shot on location in the border between Davao and Bukidnon, distributed through a Manila company and exhibited in Tokyo, Berlin, Luxor, and Jogjakarta, to moving back to small-town, open-air screenings around Mindanao, the itinerary of *Tu Pug Imatuy* is instructive, for it reveals the constraints and options that regional filmmakers as ground-level agents must negotiate in order to be visible and yet continue to harbor the potential for political resistance.

Thus, a Mindanawon film casts in relief the shape of contemporary cinema in a particular way: a small production made out of passion and conviction by a duo of mavericks from the region, riding on the new wave of art cinema, lending itself as content for Sinag Maynila, bending over backward in search of a national audience, and extending its reach to an international audience.

Fig. 3 The outdoor Luang Prabang Film Festival screening.
Fig. 4 The outdoor Cinema Rehiyon screening.

LUMAD CINEMA AND ITS GLOBAL CONTEXTS

It is a truism that mainstreaming the arts from the ethnolinguistic cultures throughout the islands can help create a more complete tapestry of Filipino identity. In this sense, Tu Pug Imatuy vividly portrays what regional films contribute best to Philippine cinema. Moviegoers are permitted to see the colors and hear the music of lumad culture that is peripheral in everyday national consciousness.

In the first third of the film, we are made to appreciate the wild beauty of the mountains. We hear the distinguished sounds of native instruments accompanying the images, and we observe the Manobo family donning their regal red garments adorned by native designs and accessories whose patterns intermingle brilliantly with lush greens and the verdant earth.

As the film opens, we witness the dynamics of family and community life, and we learn about the Manobos' views on nature and their belief that the spirits of the departed come back to guard their ancient ancestral land. We are also given insight on their folklore and how new tales are created by the community as they struggle against trespassers. In this borderland that may seem faraway to moviegoers, history may be understood not as a line moving forward but as space layered in time, building up a place resistant to the outsiders' fiction of "progress" that renders the *lumad* "backward."

The aesthetics and creative strategies of *Tu Pug Imatuy* resonate with the project of Fourth Cinema, a term proposed by Mäori filmmaker Barry Barclay in the 1990s to identify indigenous films produced in settler colonial nations like New Zealand.[3] The notion of Fourth Cinema is Barclay's reply to the three-cinema paradigm discussed above. It implies that First, Second, and Third Cinemas have functioned as "invader cinemas" and have obscured the narratives of the first peoples of the land, rendering them static, vanished, or exotic.

Fourth Cinema is a distinct mode of filmic production that is partial to indigenous expression, dignified representation of place and identity, and political engagement both on screen and off screen. The processes of Fourth Cinema capture well the experience of Barbarona in filming the plight of and working with the *lumad*, who have been subjected to oppression by colonizers, settlers, land grabbers, and the state.

Barbarona's process of working with the locals to make a film that speaks of the native's tragic experiences instantiates community, collaboration, and reciprocity in the spirit of Fourth Cinema. *Tu Pug Imatuy* reminds us that the *lumad* are the original inhabitants of the land who nevertheless stand to lose the most in the face of a never-ending war waged in the name of development. In fact, because the term "*lumad*" does not refer to a particular tribe but to the universal "native of the land," the idea of Fourth Cinema may be imagined in terms closer to home as "lumad cinema," of which *Tu Pug Imatuy* is one of hopefully many more instances.

Framed in this way, the political project of art-making is seen from a longer historical perspective and a wider geographical view. The Manobos, in this context, stand side-by-side with Apaches in Oklahoma, Yup'ik Eskimos in Alaska, Martus in Australia, Veddas in Sri Lanka, Was in Myanmar, and the other lumad of the world, the subject of Fourth Cinema. In such a context, another kind of "world" and another mode of "globality," distinct from what is connoted by "world" (canonical) and "global" (market-driven) cinemas, become imaginable.

Regional films enrich Philippine cinema, yes, but more significantly, some of them reactivate the radical potential of the margins that the proliferation of indie films have tamed. This reactivation allows us to interrogate the constitution not only of national cinema but also of the nation itself. Here again, *Tu Pug Imatuy* as a particular case is instructive, because it aimed (and in my opinion succeeded) to reveal how global forces have been relentless in their drive to erase societies in the peripheries in collusion with the state. For this reason, the production of such a film from the margins is necessary, to emend the dominant narrative that sees indigenous peoples merely as enriching Filipino identity and to address a wider public about the actual plight of the *lumad*.

On the level of the national, we have frequently heard about the situation of the *lumad* framed in media as a question of political instrumentalization. *Tu Pug Imatuy,* indeed, shows the *lumad* caught in the middle, their places of refuge militarized, as rebels blend with them while the government military utilizes them in their counterinsurgency efforts. But the logic of the appalling threats made recently by the president of bombing *lumad* schools because they have been politicized and have taken sides, misses the bottom line—*whose birthright is the land?* This is the fundamental question of Fourth Cinema.

And why are *lumad* places being militarized? Ultimately, this question cannot be addressed without reference to an international situation. The valiant "lumad of the world" have for centuries fought and today continue to resist encroachers, be they Kankanaeys in Benguet, Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwugs in Ontario, Amungmes in West Papua, Mayans in Guatemala, or others, which is why the richest natural reserves that transnational businesses are greedy to extract can still be found in indigenous lands.[4] The strategy of progress by dispossession and militarizing indigenous territories so that extractive industries could rapaciously pillage is a global threat, which have resulted to environmental degradation and human rights abuses, such as those shown in the film, like displacement, persecution, humiliation, coercion, torture, rape, and extrajudicial killings. In this light, *Tu Pug Imatuy*, a little film from an outpost of national cinema, is calling the world's powers to account. ■

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

Fig. 5 Poster for *Tu Pug Imatuy* (2017) by director Arnel Barbarona.
Fig. 6 Arbi on location with the Lumad community.
Fig. 7 Arnel Barbarona in Tokyo International Film Festival.

[1] To better understand the historical and sociopolitical contexts of this issue, see Arnold P. Alamon, *Wars of Extinction: Discrimination and the Lumad Struggle in Mindanao* (Iligan City: RMP-NMR, Inc., 2017).
[2] For in-depth discussions on these cinemas, see Jim Pines and Paul Willemen, eds. *Questions of Third Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 1989).
[3] Barry Barclay, *Our Own Image* (Auckland: Longman Paul, 1990).
[4] For a global accounting of the problem, see Andy Whitmore, ed. *Pitfalls and Pipelines: Indigenous Peoples and Extractive Industries* (Baguio City, Copenhagen, and London: Tebtebba Foundation, IWGIA, and PIPLinks, 2012).

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JAPANFOUNDATION

Patrick F. Campos

Topos, Historia, Islas: Film Islands and Regional Cinemas

TOPOS

A line cuts across the screen between the green earthy mountains and the gray overcast skies. Three figures wearing ornate bright-red garments—those of the lumad father Dawin and his children—dot the landscape. They are accosted on their way home from gathering food by camouflaged military men carrying firearms. One of the soldiers snatches Dawin's cannikin, scatters his mung beans, and taunts him, saying, "Do you know how to pray the rosary? Pick them up one by one!"

The implication of this scene from *Tu pug imatuy* (*The Right to Kill*, Arbi Barbarona, 2017) is far-reaching if one recognizes it as a film from Mindanao, a regional island cluster in the Philippines inhabited by indigenous peoples, Moros, and Christian settlers. I watched it in horror not only because it foreshadowed the worst that was yet to come in the story but also because of where and when I saw it: in an auditorium of a private Catholic college in Compostela Valley (now Davao de Oro) in Mindanao in August 2017. Outside the auditorium, armed military men not unlike the ones in the film were on patrol, and I was anxious that at any moment, one of them would enter and watch with us a film that depicted the brutality of the military toward the lumadnon.

Mindanao, the southernmost part of the Philippines, had been placed under martial law months earlier amid widespread protests by activists who resisted any governmental move that resembled Marcosian rule.[1] Martial law

1 Antonio J. Montalvan II, "What Did Duterte's Martial Law Achieve in Mindanao?," Al Jazeera, December 30, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/duterte-martial-law-achieve-mindanao-191230054020719.html. Ferdinand Marcos was the tenth president of the Philippines (1965–1986) who ruled as a dictator and kleptocrat; he put the nation under martial law from 1972 to 1981.

Patrick F. Campos, "Topos, Historia, Islas: Film Islands and Regional Cinemas," *JCMS* 60, no. 3 (Spring 2021): 159–164.

was declared following sustained urban gunfights between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and radical Islamist groups, Maute and Abu Sayyaf, in the Islamic city of Marawi. This conflict went on for months, affecting the entire Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

When the soldier snatched Dawin's cannikin, the college students in the auditorium laughed nervously, not knowing how to react to a kind of film they have never seen before, a film about familiar indigenous peoples living in the Pantaron Mountain Range surrounding their own homeplace and oftentimes forced to evacuate to the lowlands due to escalating militarization. I presumed that the film resonated with them. *Tu pug imatuy*, which is based on real events that occurred in 2014, fictionalizes how the military abducted unarmed lumadnon, tortured and humiliated them, and then used them as guides through rugged terrains to locate rebels and further the government's counter-insurgency campaign. I was watching Barbarona's film with local students and visiting delegates as part of the ninth edition of Cinema Rehiyon, a roving film festival held annually in different provinces beyond the national capital city of Manila.[2]

Just the day before, on the festival delegates' journey to Compostela Valley from Davao City, our bus was halted at several checkpoints and boarded once by a suspicious soldier. He let us pass when he learned that we represented the film sector because, he said, he was a movie fan. Over seven thousand soldiers have been deployed in Mindanao since President Rodrigo Duterte assumed office in 2016, further militarizing the cities, towns, and indigenous ancestral domains, which are sought after by mining and logging corporations.[3]

The tense three-hour drive contrasted with the languid environment of the festival site in the municipality of Nabunturan (which translates as "surrounded by mountains"). At the time, Nabunturan boasted of a thriving filmmaking community despite the absence of movie theaters. Local residents watched films in the evenings with over one hundred filmmakers and cinephiles from different parts of the Philippines, alfresco-style in the plaza, with a setup akin to homey screenings held in Bali, Chiang Mai, Luang Prabang, Yangon, and other places in Southeast Asia.

At that point, I had been serving as co-organizer of Cinema Rehiyon for five years and had been observing the remarkable growth of regional cinemas for over a decade. This essay, based on my field notes, looks into the emergence of regional filmmaking in the Philippines, taking Mindanao cinema as its paradigmatic example. Drawing upon concepts from nissology and geography and illustrating my arguments with brief discussions of Mindanao films, I reflect on the possibilities of remapping Philippine cinema with Mindanao as its center.

Being *in* Mindanao for Cinema Rehiyon while remaining acutely aware of being not *from* there, I had a keen sense of observing Philippine national

2 The festival was established in 2009 by the cinema committee of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, which continues to fund it and other regional film festivals.

3 Segundo J. E. Romero Jr., "Duterte's Rise to Power in the Philippines," Heinrich Böll Stiftung, September 26, 2016, https://www.boell.de/en/2016/09/26/dutertes-rise-power-philippines-domestic-and-regional-implications.

cinema at a remove, recognizing how it is neither homogeneous nor singular. Watching *Tu pug imatuy* and apprehending the many layers of Mindanao's history on- and off-screen imbricated in one instance, I hit a moment of clarity: Philippine cinema is not a unitary and inert object but a complex subject composed of filmmakers and stakeholders who act with intentionality, imagined by other subjects—movers of other regional cinemas, including the one based in Manila—at particular points in history and geography.

In that room, I grasped quite viscerally what I had known intellectually: that Manila, my own location, was exceedingly "provincial," where the norm had been to capture Philippine cinema as an object beheld from an aerial view, obscuring the details of its coordinates.[4] For over one hundred years, cinema in the Philippines was centered and defined in the capital city. Consequently, filmmaking in the subnational regions tended to fall epistemologically and materially in the margins of an undifferentiated national cinema imaginary.

As an observer and participant in Cinema Rehiyon, I was afforded a vantage point from which to see how the emergence of cinematic subjects in regional digital media demands that we conceive of national cinemas *within* the nation-state as localized, polycentric, and networked.[5] This way of thinking has at least two important consequences. First, the long-held view of a singular and self-referential Philippine cinema can now give way to perspectival counter-mapping efforts from the margins. Second, understanding regional cinematic formations through their historical and geographical experiences helps us interrogate states of exception and shed light on injustices that have produced and sustained "the national."[6]

HISTORIA

There is no more illuminating place to begin decentering, reorienting, and interrogating Philippine (film) history than Mindanao. Because the stories of Mindanaon subjects, especially those of the lumadnon and the Moros, have been marginalized in the larger drama of Philippine history, their narration in cinema, especially as it relates to the cultural, political, and economic struggles of various people groups beyond the screen, carries a burden of representation, to use the influential analytic by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam.[7] Their historic disenfranchisement has rendered them ill-equipped to represent themselves not only in cinema but also in broader democratic processes for much of history. Contemporary Mindanao films thus signify the capacity of Mindanaons to articulate their subjectivities.

4 I owe this insight to Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

5 I adapt this notion of shifting geographical analysis from an aerial to a networked view from Kevin R. Cox, "Spaces of Dependence, Spaces of Engagement and the Politics of Scale, or: Looking for Local Politics," *Political Geography* 17, no. 1 (1998): 1–23.

6 Achille Mbembe engages with this concept, which is akin to states of emergency that serve as pretext to declare martial law, in an essay that explores the state's wielding of the right to kill; see Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 11–40.

7 Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

Arriving in number and force only in the twenty-first century with the emergence of digital filmmaking, films by Mindanaons occupy a unique location in Philippine cinema. Because relatively few Mindanao films enjoy wide distribution, in key instances, they function as primary historical artifacts when they open up spaces for grassroots accounts of historical events.[8] This was demonstrated with immediacy when the documentary *Forbidden Memory* (Gutierrez Mangansakan II, 2016) was released in Manila on the day of the burial of Ferdinand Marcos's remains in Hero's Cemetery on November 18, 2016. In a public speech, Duterte uttered a barefaced lie, saying, "Whether or not [Marcos] performed worse or better, there's no study, no movie about it, just the challenges and allegations of the other side."[9]

Forbidden Memory exposes Duterte's preposterous claims. The film contains firsthand accounts of Mindanaons who survived the horrors of any of a number of brutal "pacification" operations by military and paramilitary forces against Muslims during the Marcos years.[10] Notably, the interviewees repeatedly address the filmmaker, claiming, "If it were not for you, I would not speak of this." In other words, the position of Mangansakan as a Moro Mindanaon is crucial in enabling the subjects to tell their own stories.

In this way, *Forbidden Memory* serves as a memorial for obscured events and facilitates the reorientation of the nation's collective and intergenerational memory. So do other Mindanao films that traffic in the past and its relationship with the troubled present, such as *Ang mga tigmo sa akong pagpauli* (*Riddles of My Homecoming*, Arnel Mardoquio, 2013), *War Is a Tender Thing* (Adjani Arumpac, 2013), and *Women of the Weeping River* (Sheron Dayoc, 2016), to name a few. Remapping Philippine cinema with Mindanao as its figural center foregrounds historical wrongs committed against marginalized subjects. Recognizing them, one can only hope, could lead to cultural literacy and a film practice that is sensitive to identity claims and, ultimately, oriented toward achieving social justice.

ISLAS

We can theorize a decentered Philippine cinema further if we take the islands of Mindanao as "a model, rather than simply a site" of cinema formations.[11] In this project of counter-mapping, we can re-present Mindanao's archipelagic identity and interaction with other islands in time and space.[12] By doing so, we can imagine them not as fixed territories but as a topolog-

8 The *Report of the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission* (Makati, Philippines: Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission, 2016) mentions how the Moros and lumadnon have always felt that their stories are misrepresented and undermined in history books and the media (27–28).

9 Manuel Mogato and Karen Lema, "Philippine Dictator Marcos Buried at Heroes' Cemetery amid Protests," Reuters, November 17, 2016, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-marcos/philippine-dictator-marcos-buried-at-heroes-cemetery-amid-protests-idUSKBN13D0DQ.

10 Cf. *Report of the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission*, 30–43.

11 The quoted phrase is from Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith, introduction to *Islands in History and Representation* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 7.

12 The project of archipelagraphy, or counter-mapping archipelagos, was developed by Elizabeth DeLoughrey in *Routes and Routes: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007).

ically contracting and dilating region with shifting boundaries, heterogeneous time frames, and lines of connection beyond absolute spaces like the nation-state's. For instance, the themes, narratives, and images in Sheron Dayoc's *The Crescent Rising* (2015) and *Ways of the Sea* (2010), particular as they may be topically and aesthetically, can arguably be more productively clustered with seemingly unrelated films about multiethnic disharmony, religious intolerance, and human trafficking—such as the religious romance *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (*Verses of Love*, Hanung Bramantyo, 2008) from Indonesia and the action film *One Two Jaga* (Nam Ron, 2018) from Malaysia—than with movies from closed-in Manila.

The Crescent Rising, for instance, is a documentary on three Moros. Its contemporary stories of violence alert us to the long-active borders of Mindanao that result from historically rooted secessionist movements dating back to the Spanish and American colonization of the Philippine islands (1565–1946) as well as from the radicalization of rebels oriented toward al-Qaeda. *Ways of the Sea*, however, alludes to how Sabahans and Mindanaons so easily awaken their affinities with each other on the ground level of community life. The film recalls how both islands were once part of a regional slave-raiding route animated by the tides of imperialism and the formation of a world economy until Mindanao was Filipinized by the north, its ties severed from its neighbors, and its economy subsumed under far-off Manila.[13] At the center of *Ways of the Sea* are the Badjaos (orthography varies) that belong to the regional tribes of sea nomads whose lifeways are premised on archipelagic unboundedness but have long been threatened by environmental degradation and the geopolitical limitations of closed territories.

Where *Ways of the Sea* concerns itself with the question of human security, it is deeply connected to the ecological questions raised by *Laut Bercermin* (*The Mirror Never Lies*, Kamila Andini, 2011), an Indonesian film that exhibits the integrity of the Badjaos' oceanic sense-making. These and similar works in the region help us conceive of cinema formations with open borders and *film islands* existing alongside other film islands. And instead of the bounded territory pictured by national cinema, we conjure spaces of shared dwelling and are reminded that the "political responsibility for the pursuit of a 'decent life' [extends] beyond the borders of any particular state."[14]

This logic of connection spans the gap not only between seafarers and coastal communities but also between lowlanders and highlanders, who have in many instances been pushed upward because of conflicts and resettlements. Today, the lumadnon, who have lived in mountains and forests and kept the integrity of their sustainable lifeways, are constantly under attack. Just as chains of islands and open seas are territorially disputed for the economic gains and military advantages they can yield, so have the ancestral lands of the first peoples become the last frontier of global capital everywhere. Their struggles are represented in Mindanao films like *Tu pug imatuy*,

13 James Francis Warren, *The Sulu Zone: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery, and Ethnicity in the Transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981).

14 John Agnew, "Borders on the Mind: Re-Framing Border Thinking," *Ethics and Global Politics* 1, no. 4 (2008): 176.

Huling balyan ng buhi (*The Woven Stories of the Other*, Sherad Anthony Sanchez, 2006), *Hunghong sa yuta* (*Earth's Whisper*, Arnel Mardoquio, 2008), and *Baboy halas* (*Wailing in the Forest*, Bagane Fiola, 2016).

Films about indigenous peoples provide viewers with entrance to zones of temporality that do not abide by the clocks of labor productivity and offer parables of sustained resistance to encroachers. Thus, while Mindanaon filmmakers have been immersing in lumad cultures, learning from their ecological worldviews and collaborating with them to co-create films that carry the burden of representation, they have also been contributing toward the formation of indigenous cinemas worldwide that advocate native self-determination.[15]

The goal of theorizing Mindanao cinema, as I have essayed here, is not to reproduce existing regional configurations. It is to offer an archipelagic model for pursuing emergent lines of solidarity across boundaries and educing latent transformative cinematic cartographies, whether on the national, subnational, or the supranational level. Imagining Mindanao at the center of Philippine cinema reminds us that film islands, like consciousness, are neither insular nor enclosed and can therefore be realigned to form new subjectivities, explore alternative vistas, and pursue new horizons.

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15 I pursue this line of argument in "Small Film, Global Connections," in *Art Archive 02* (Manila: Japan Foundation, 2019), 28–35, https://jfmo.org.ph/events-and-courses/art-archive-02/.

Topologies of Regional Cinema:
Philippine, Mindanaon, and Southeast Asian Films

PATRICK F. CAMPOS

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requirements of the University of Westminster
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This PhD by Publication investigates the entanglements of national and regional cinema formations. It explores the potential of peripheral regional cinema imaginaries and proposes a topological approach to film research, interpretation, and curation informed by the geographical concepts of place and scale. The national and regional contexts addressed are Philippine, Mindanao, and Southeast Asian cinemas.

The portfolio comprises (1) my book*, The End of National Cinema: Filipino Film at the Turn of the Century* (2016), which interrogates the significance and limitations of the national cinema paradigm and the ramification of placemaking films in forming imaginaries beneath and beyond the nation-state; (2) three essays—"*Tu Pug Imatuy*: Small Film, Global Connections" (2019), "Allegories of Scale: On Three Films Set in Mindanao" (2021), "Topos, Historia, Islas: Film Islands and Regional Cinemas" (2021)—that conceptualise regional cinema by centring on films made or set in Mindanao; and (3) three film programmes, This Land Is Ours (2019), Cinematic Counter-Cartographies of Southeast Asia (2021), and LUMAD (2021), curated with activist intentions, concretising the micro- and macro-regional contexts of Mindanao films in the Philippines and Southeast Asia.

The submission is methodologically attentive to placemaking, scale mapping, and topological thinking. It demonstrates how they facilitate a process-oriented, open-ended, and comparative understanding of contemporary regional cinema sensitive to the volatile politics of (national) inclusion, marginalisation, and exclusion, the contradictions of one's practice vis-à-vis one's location, and the possibilities of solidarity and collaboration within and across borders.

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PROGRAMMES

2019. Nation in Visions: This Land Is Ours. Movies that Matter and Cinema Is Incomplete. 4-15 December.

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2021. Lumad. Minikino. 16, 28, 29, 30 May.

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* * *

Many rights, land, and truth defenders, including Lumad and their allies, and countless victims of state and police aggression in the heinous "war on drugs" have been killed while I was writing this thesis.

I offer this work to their memory and join the call for justice and remembrance.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my work.

Patrick F. Campos
21 May 2023

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Commentary

I am a Filipino film researcher and programmer whose scholarly output in the early part of my career (2005-2015) was occupied with the problematics of "national cinema." While completing my book, *The End of National Cinema: Filipino Film at the Turn of the Century* (2016; hereon, *TEONC*), I expanded my research agenda to include "regional cinemas," referring to filmmaking in Southeast Asia and different parts of the Philippines beyond Manila.[1] I branched out to film programming in the next stretch of my career (2014-present) while writing several essays based on my curatorial work.

This commentary traces the trajectory and itinerary of my thinking from interrogating national cinema to conceptualising topologies of regional cinema. It demonstrates the unity of my shifting but continual process of theorising the national and regional as expressed in research and curatorial work produced between 2016 and 2021. The commentary's structure, mirrored in the section sequences of each chapter, reiterates an arc from complicating the national view to reconfiguring the regional.

In Chapter 1, I engage with currents in Philippine cinema, reworkings of national cinema in the era of globalisation, and various modes of conceptualising regional cinema and introduce key concepts that enable my methodology. Chapter 2 is focused on *TEONC* and revisits its first four chapters, where I establish the significance of nationalist criticism, the priority of (national) subjects in the contest to define national cinema, and the ramification of placemaking films in forming imaginaries beneath and beyond the national. Chapter 3 discusses three essays—"*Tu Pug Imatuy*: Small Film, Global Connections" (2019), "Allegories of Scale: On Three Films Set in Mindanao" (2021), "Topos, Historia, Islas: Film Islands and Regional Cinemas" (2021)—centred on recent films made or set in Mindanao and explores how scales modulate configurations of regional cinema. Finally, in Chapter 4, I reflect on three programmes, This Land Is Ours (2019), Cinematic Counter-Cartographies of Southeast Asia (2021),

1 In this commentary, Manila refers both to the capital city, where Philippine cinema was born, and the megalopolis of Metro Manila, officially designated as the National Capital Region (NCR), where the film industrial centre is located.

and LUMAD (2021), which investigate the entanglements of national and regional cinemas and the potential of place-rooted peripheral cinema imaginaries through a topological approach to film research, interpretation, curation.

The commentary evaluates my research and curatorial methodology and explains how attentiveness to placemaking, scale mapping, and topological thinking can unsettle national cinema. More importantly, it demonstrates how they facilitate process-oriented, open-ended, and comparative analyses of regional cinema sensitive to the volatile politics of (national) inclusion, marginalisation, and exclusion, the contradictions of one's practice vis-à-vis one's location, and the possibilities of solidarity and collaboration within and across borders.

Research Questions

Underlying my research and programming work are the following questions:

1. How can a shift from the national to the regional view revaluate, nuance, and reorient the politics of "national" cinema?
2. How can the geographical concepts of *place*, *scale*, *region*, and *topology* activate the progressive potential and protean imaginary of a "regional" cinema not subordinated to the nation-state?
3. How can developing a method of film curating that is attentive to topological interrelations and the power of place provide alternative ways to conceptualise national and regional cinemas?

CHAPTER 1 DEPARTURES & TRAJECTORIES

This chapter comprises four sections. The first situates the emergence of my critical project at the University of the Philippines (UP) and the nationalist, anticolonial, and antidictatorial critical traditions it nurtured. The second provides an overview of engagements with national cinema in the era of globalisation. The third characterises the conjuncture that gave rise to Southeast Asian cinema studies and reflects on top-down, grounded, and programming-oriented conceptualisations of regional cinema. The last elaborates on the key concepts of place, scale, region, and topology and discusses their ideational power to bring new social spatialities and cinema formations to mind as a prelude to struggling to realise them materially.

Sites of Intellectual Development

My introduction to film studies at the UP came in two registers, formal and informal. The Department of Film and Audiovisual Communication (est. 1984) was shaped by the intellectual tradition surrounding nationalism prevailing at the UP since the postwar period (Ileto 1993). The professors were artists, scholars, and critics involved in the anti-Marcos movement in the 1970s and '80s and advocates of variations of "native" and "anticolonial" scholarship.[2] In the classrooms, I learned about the canon comprising a Golden Age, produced by filmmakers that spoke to the Filipino experience under Marcos's dictatorship.

Most of the readings about Philippine cinema were written or edited by founding, active, or former members of the Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino (lit. Critics of the Filipino Film; hereon, MPP), established in 1976 during Martial Law.[3] The work of two of its founders typifies the project of then-emergent film studies. The late Bienvenido Lumbera sought to bring popular culture into the ambit of academic research and critical reflection. His historiographic sketches and valorisation of the

2 Nativist, Filipinist, and nationalist frameworks and approaches vary; some overlap, while others clash. See Guillermo, 2009.

3 By highlighting the significance of the MPP's historical emergence, I am not suggesting that the group was solely responsible for establishing Filipino film studies, nor that the MPP subscribed to a monolithic theory. I must also disclose that I was a member of the MPP from 2016 to 2018.

"new" cinema spearheaded by Lino Brocka, Ishmael Bernal, Mike De Leon, and cohorts profoundly impacted the way Filipino film is appreciated as a political as much as a cultural form (1983, 1989, 1992). His criticism exhibited the tension of being committed to taking the mass audience of popular movies seriously while also helping canonise social realist and art films that tended to be unpopular.

Meanwhile, Nicanor Tiongson's scholarship situated Filipino film in the broader context of folklore, and his work as editor sought to produce a continuous and glorious Philippine Cinema History. He edits the MPP's *Urian Anthology* series with four volumes to date (1983, 2001, 2010, 2013). Apart from reviews and critical essays, each volume provides a ten-year historical overview and names the decade's best films. Tiongson is also the editor-in-chief of two editions of the massive multivolume *CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art* (1994, 2017). Here, Philippine cinema is an integral part of the national cultural heritage. Thus, the films named in these compendious publications form an influential canon.

The MPP favoured politically liberal or radical films considered representative of Filipino Culture. Their publications emphasised a progressive nationalist framework, which, though prone to essentialism, rendered any consideration of Filipino film inseparable from taking into account the deep-seated political instability, economic inequality, and social crisis in the Philippines, that is, these films' national-historical context.[4] So, my education in Filipino film studies coincided with my conviction that cinema is political and instilled in me a concern for the nation's ideational, material, and affective bearings that, as I discuss in Chapter 2, mattered ultimately to subjects denominated as national.

The other factor in my education was my informal association with cinephiles at the UP Film Center (est. 1976). If at the Film Department students were conscienticised to change the film industry and taught about this industry's distinguished history, it was at the Film Center where I discovered "alternative" cinema. The Film Center promoted non-industrial forms during and beyond the Martial Law period (Deocampo 2022). Its programming has maintained a strong preference for art cinema and the avant-garde and opened its spaces as a home for artists working

4 On Filipino cultural nationalism's tendency toward essentialism, see Guillermo, 2009; and JN Garcia, 2004.

beyond the mainstream. Here, I witnessed the importance of cradling a vibrant community of artists and cineastes that, though niche, could disrupt traditions and conventions in its call to make cinema new.

In their early years, the cinemas that the Film Department and the Film Center promoted differed. One preferred "serious" full-length films that circulated commercially but overcame crass commercialism; the other extolled short films that would never break through commercial cinema.[5] Yet, as I analyse in *TEONC*, despite their differences, both schools were, and are, invested in National Cinema (244-57). Notably, former Film Center programmer Nick Deocampo's historiography sought to establish alternative cinema as the "real" national cinema with its own canon and Golden Age.[6]

However, by the late 1990s, as technologies shifted to digital, the espoused filmmaking practices of the two schools converged. Short filmmakers were turning to full-length and contributing to mainstream cinema (including Deocampo), while some commercial filmmakers began adopting the maverick stance of alternative filmmakers that disrupted popular conventions. By the mid-2000s, the camps constituting the alternative and the mainstream were no longer neatly distinguishable (De la Cruz 2010; Tiongson 2013b; Del Mundo 2016). Furthermore, film communities formed beyond the industrial film centre of Manila. In these places, self-educated filmmakers were unburdened by the National Capital Region's prevailing cultural politics. Many were unexposed to the inaccessible canon and alternative films but were informally schooled in world cinema via digital piracy.

In *City of Screens*, focusing on screening spaces and events in Manila in this crucial period from 2005 onward, Jasmine Nadua Trice reorients the conversation from the institutional strategies of reading and promoting "ideal" films toward the alternative practices of film circulation and reception as "an *aspirational* approach to cinema's place in public culture" (2021: 3). Stressing the contradictory situation of films with radical forms, modes of production, and representations of the marginalised in class-divided societies like the Philippines that attract viewership from the cultural

5 On the notion of "serious" films, see *TEONC*; see 133-4n.10. Ch. 4 maps various conceptions of independent cinema.

6 The introductory chapters of his *Cine*; *Film*; and *Eiga* elaborate on the thesis of National Cinema. *Alternative Cinema* employs the concept of rhizomes to theorise recent filmmaking, though it retains a linear historicisation before the digital era.

elite, she postulates that Filipino films comprised "an aspiring national cinema without a national audience" (ibid.).

Thus, her work demonstrates how theorising cinema's "ideal" publics is compelling.[7] The yet "fantasized, future" publics overcoming the "inherent paradoxes" of culture renders them speculative; they constitute an alternative culture that envisions their arrival and summons them to existence (ibid.: 6, 11, 29). According to Trice, film circulation is "the engine of this trajectory" that calls forth publics of a national cinema advocating social transformation (ibid.: 6). As I discuss in the next section and illustrate in Chapter 4, I share Trice's preoccupation with film circulation, specifically its programming component, and the speculative future-making potential it aspires. However, apart from examining how alternative programming, distribution, and exhibition adumbrate the dream of the national, I propose a spatial and process-oriented method of thinking about Philippine cinema through the prism of the regional, whose ideal publics comprise national and nonnational subjects.

The changes in Philippine film culture were further manifested in 2003 by the merger of the Film Department and the Film Center to form the UP Film Institute (UPFI), where I joined the teaching staff and eventually served as its co-programmer. From this central location, I problematised the nation's contested and contradictory manifestations in the institutional, critical, and political projects of engineering the discourse of National Cinema at different conjunctures. Rather than endorse one school over the other, my inquiry in *TEONC* reassessed their gains and deficiencies in light of contemporary cinema.

Here, too, I negotiated my relationship with emergent cinemas beyond Manila, with a keen interest in developments in Mindanao, as well as with the variegated cinemas of Southeast Asia, through my work as a co-programmer of the Film Center, curator for state-funded initiatives Cinema Rehiyon and Tingin ASEAN Film Festival, and independent programmer. My location at the UP and NCR challenged me to constantly acknowledge the affordances and limitations of my purview, decentre my

7 Notably, Brocka approached the same conundrum in a 1983 essay, though he argues, echoing Lumbera, that artists should learn from the taste of the mass audiences and nurture it patiently, prioritising the Great Filipino Audience rather than the Great Filipino Film. See "Philippine Movies."

subject position to activate the critical potential of regionality, and, most importantly, learn humbly from places I am not.

Transmogrifications of "National Cinema"

When I began researching and writing *TEONC*, "[t]he notion of National Cinema [had] been under fierce attack," with scholars retreating from the concept that, as JungBong Choi argues, had been disparaged as "antiquated," "obsolete," "parochial," and "taboo" (2011: 173-74). Such an attitude contrasted with the bearing I had cultivated at the UP and provided the tension that impelled my interrogation of national cinema.

The tide of interest in or resistance to globalisation stirred the mounting rejection of the once-dominant paradigm (James & Steger). Film scholars analysed how film production, circulation, and reception—the diversification of the sources of capital, labour, stories, and images, channels of distribution, and the cultural location of artists, markets, audiences, critics, and fans—may be understood to have become global and, thus, no longer understandable in terms only of the national (Willemen 1994:216-19; Higson 2000:63-74; Ezra & Rowden 2006). The concepts of "global," "transnational," and a revalued sense of "world" cinema actuate the scholarship along these lines (Ezra & Rowden 2006; Shaw & De La Garza 2010; Higbee & Lim 2010).

Film scholars either welcomed the new turn, remained suspicious, or explored novel ways to engage with the national. An example of the first is captured in Stephanie Dennison and Song-Hwee Lim's (2006) assertion, keyed to the cultural politics of representation, that attention to films beyond the US and Europe in the new century has enabled the reimagination of a world cinema without fixed centres. In contrast to such optimism, Jyotsna Kapur and Keith Wagner, whose critical focus is on the political economy of global cinema, contend that "any and all cinema is the localised expression of a globalised integration" (2011:6). In this view, promoting national distinction could be coopted by or complicit with the processes of globalisation that obscure their repressive operation with the veneer of diversity. The third broad response is located between these opposing views. I summarise three frameworks that have informed my work.

Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover take a position between these two stances in their consideration of "global art cinema," which they assert is a "resolutely international category" but with an "ambivalent relationship to location," in that, a popular film from a national cinema can be considered an international art film elsewhere (2010:7). This ambivalence signals film's deictic, or locationally contextual, relationality vis-à-vis how producers, distributors, and receivers locate it.

Unlike Galt and Schoonover, Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar (2006) accentuate internal cultural boundaries. They propose to abandon the "national cinema" analytic in favour of the "cinema and the national" framework. Critiquing the cinemas of China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Chinese diaspora, they maintain that their refashioned framework uncovers how cinemas manifest contending ideas of the [Chinese] nation from the transnational perspective to viewpoints within or without discrete and overlapping (sub)national borders.

Meanwhile, focusing concurrently on the global and the national, Dina Iordanova, David Martin-Jones, and Belén Vidal, in their edited volume (2010), offer the abstractly spatial and embracive notion of "peripheral" cinemas, or any cinema that subverts centres or centring patterns in film industries, markets, and cultures, for instance, small-national cinemas vis-à-vis filmmaking in the global centres, stateless cinemas vis-à-vis films propped up by ethnonationalist states, and Aboriginal films vis-à-vis settler films. They recuperate the oft-derogated category of the peripheral and illuminate the shifting modes of production and circulation that sustain the representation and reception of oft-suppressed marginal identities and histories. The framework stresses the deictical aspect of centrality and peripherality while limning the interrelatedness of peripheries within, across, and beneath dominant structures.

Common among these responses to globalisation is the assumption that cinema is not insular. Any attempt to conceive national cinema must acknowledge the simultaneity of its particularity and relationality (*TEONC* 17). Also shared by these works is their supposition that various forms of national and global territorialisation are not absolute and breed asymmetries in power relations between minority and majority populations. *TEONC* and my programming work exhibit a similar disposition in assessing national cinema's uses, limits, and persistence. As with their premises, I concede the global processes transforming cinema but am critical of how political and

economic borders are broken down to benefit hegemonic powers at the expense of national subjects. Moreover, I have focused on the role of place in curbing the totalising claims of the national and global. More crucially, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, I use a topological approach to trace interrelated peripheries that network as regional formations.

Such a reorientation made me sensitive to the implications of Philippine cinema's renewed global visibility beginning in the 2000s—a subtext that runs through *TEONC*. At the same time, it made me attentive to the developments in regional cinema—a term I unpack in Chapter 3. Works in various forms and languages representing myriad ethnicities from this peripheral formation, such as those from Mindanao, where films about and by Christian settler, Muslim, and indigenous artists unsettle national cinema, even as some circulate internationally under the undifferentiated signifier of "Filipino" film.

The case of Mindanao films is complicated by their polylinguistic and multiethnic dimension and the heterogeneity of nationness Mindanaons[8] address—the fractured nation with a troubled colonial and Filipino history in Mindanao; the "modern" nation presided over by local "traditional" leaders whose influence pivots between the central government, feuding clans and their private armies, and rebels; the autonomous as well as the separatist Moro nation (Bangsamoro), and the indigenous groups, roughly corresponding to "First Nations,"[9] struggling to keep their cultural dignity and ancestral domains. In my programming of Mindanao cinema, it became vital to evaluate films about the internally displaced minority of Indigenous Peoples (hereon, IPs),[10] some of the most marginalised groups by any sociopolitical

8 Mindanaon, locally Mindanawon, means of or from Mindanao.

9 The term picturing communities long before the formation of colonial states and modern nation-states is used mainly to refer to the Indigenous Peoples of Canada and Australia but is alluded to here for how it expresses a sense of small-scale, sovereign nationhood that has existed for centuries apart from the state apparatus. See Simpson 2016:22.

10 Indigenous Peoples is a problematic term because it groups a host of diverse populations with vastly different histories, cultures, and struggles. Names used by the communities as self-identification are preferred, but the relatively recent "Indigenous Peoples" (with I and P capitalised and pluralised with an s to signify distinctions) have been adopted by many groups to internationalise the political issues of natives in different parts of the world, collectivise their efforts in gaining and safeguarding their rights to self-determination, and strategically activating cross-border networks and alliances. The Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2007 resulted from such an international mobilisation. Official terms such as First Peoples, First Nations, and Aborigines differ worldwide; in the Philippines, Indigenous Peoples, shortened to IPs, is used legally to refer to nearly 200 ethnolinguistic groups throughout the nation-state whose rights

and economic measure in the Philippines, as elsewhere. Thus, scholarship on indigenous media's critique of national and global formations is germane to my work.

In *Our Own Image* (1990), Māori director Barry Barclay reflected on his advocacy of complete indigenous control over their image, image-making, and distribution, the gravity of respecting and primarily addressing one's community and allowing its members to participate in production, his fidelity to the worldview of his culture as translated into practice, and the difference of his resulting work from other cinemas. These principles comprise what he would call Fourth Cinema, in contradistinction to what Argentine filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino defined as First Cinema, typified by Hollywood genre movies, Second Cinema, exemplified by European auteurist works, and militant, revolutionary Third Cinema, which for Barclay are settler or invader cinemas incapable of speaking for the native experience (Barclay 2003; Murray 2008:21-26; Milligan 2015:349).[11]

Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (1994) called for deprovincialised and polycentric media studies in which "Third World" and "Fourth World" productions, roughly corresponding to Third and Fourth Cinemas, each in its way, without reconciling them, occupy a central role in the radical decolonisation of global culture. Amy J. Elias and Christian Moraru (2015) have argued that a planetary turn away from a globalist view, a turn of which Shohat and Stam's work may be considered a forerunner, has occurred in this century and is remaking critical theory. This turn is keyed to "the planet as a living organism, as a shared ecology, and as an incrementally integrated system" and "the risk environment brought about by the ever-escalating crises of world ecologies" (ibid.: xii, xi). Though they only broached the concept in the 1990s, it is noteworthy that Shohat and Stam's critique of globalisation in their generative book links humanity's shared "planetary destiny" with the histories and survival of "indigenous communitas" (1994:32).

Finally, in a series of essays that brought anthropological approaches to bear upon media studies, Faye Ginsburg (1991, 1995, 1997) articulated how indigenous production embodied a rhetoric of self-determination and served as a tool for

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are recognised by the Indigenous People's Rights Act of 1997, although as I discuss in Ch. 4, the term Lumad for the IPs of Mindanao signifies a specific political experience. See LT Smith 2012:6-7; and Rodil 1994.

11 Solanas and Getino's, as well as the other manifestoes of Third Cinema, are in MT Martin 1997.

activism. Like Shohat and Stam, she deictically situates indigenous production as a counterpoint to media globalisation, another form of western imperialism inundating native culture. At the same time, she underscores the contradiction of indigenous production enabled by the same technological processes of globalisation. That natives wield the same media counterdiscursively is characterised by Ginsburg (1991) as a Faustian paradox, complicating Barclay's notion of Fourth Cinema by natives for natives. She writes:

> On the one hand, they are finding new modes for expressing indigenous identity through media and gaining access…to serve their own needs and ends. On the other hand, the spread of communications technology…threatens to be a final assault on culture, language, imagery, relationship between generations, and respect for traditional knowledge. (ibid.: 96)

These writings that advance indigenous media unveil the failure or violence attendant in processes of nationalisation and globalisation. They also demonstrate how their circulation on various scales addresses pressing planetary issues and interweaves colonial history and questions of futurity.[12] Notably, these germinal publications were first published in the 1990s, when Kidlat Tahimik, whose cinema I examine in *TEONC*, brought film technology to the Ifugaos of Luzon, in northern Philippines so that they could film their lifeways; the Ifugaos eventually adopted Kidlat in the 2000s. In subsequent chapters, I foreground the apparent insolubility of the politics of Third and Fourth Cinemas in my examination of Kidlat and Mindanaon and non-Mindanaon filmmakers whose collaboration with IPs illustrates how regional cinemas bring to light urgent but peripheralised issues, even as these artists' nonnative cultural location and the Faustian pact that enables them are unresolved.

Potentialities of "Regional Cinema"

TEONC virtually dialogued with the wave of film scholarship on Southeast Asian films that arrived in the new century (Harrison 2006; Khoo & Harvey 2007; Khoo 2007; Baumgärtel 2012; Lim & Yamamoto 2012; Ingawanij & McKay 2012). Contemporary films were not presumed to comprise a national cinema unproblematically in this crop

12 Dillon (2012) offered the analytic of Indigenous futurisms, which outlines how the natives could creatively represent themselves and imagine alternative scenarios of their pasts and futures.

of writings. Rather, in the vein of Berry and Farquhar's cinema and the national, they investigated how films manifested contending ideas about the nation.

For instance, scholars of contemporary Indonesian cinema elucidate how the lionisation of *pribumi* or "native" filmmaking in the critically favoured New Order-era (1965-1998) *film nasional* framework under Suharto tended to be exclusionary and was challenged by the cosmopolitan aesthetics of young *reformasi* filmmakers who took inspiration from global cinema (Sen 2006; Barker 2010; Yngvesson 2015). Another example is how studies on Malaysian film critique a national cinema policed by a conservative ethnonationalist state with aspirations to "go global" and industrially biased toward Malay representation despite addressing a multicultural society. Scholars show how contemporary filmmakers of different ethnicities, empowered by digital, emerged as the Little Cinema, a peripheral formation distinct from but a corrective of Malaysian national cinema, and offered local audiences stories of a "dreamed" instead of an already "imagined" (referring to Benedict Anderson's theory of) national community (Lim 2012; Muthalib 2012; McKay 2012; Bernards 2017).

These examples resonate with the tendencies in Philippine nationalist criticism that I problematise in *TEONC*—the proclivity, despite its progressive agenda, to reify aesthetic and political values under the rubric of the national, marginalising or reinforcing the marginalisation of texts, practices, and subjects that do not neatly conform. Thus, with insight from such analyses of Indonesian and Malaysian cinemas, among others, my aim, as I elaborate in Chapters 2 and 3, has been to revisit overfamiliar nationalist strategies of film valuation, enact topological rereadings that highlight overshadowed aspects of cinemas, and shift my view to peripheral regional formations the monolithic national overlook or sustain.

The emergence of Southeast Asian cinema studies and the regional consciousness they engendered were arguably catalysed by global and transnational cinema studies through the methodological possibilities they advanced and the cultural and industrial grounding required to theorise globality and transnationality (Hjort 2009; Shaw & de la Garza 2010:4; Higbee & Lim 2010:10; Lovatt & Trice 2021). It is the gap between conceptual scales and concrete experiences that the studies on "regional cinema" bridge. In what follows, I refer to ways of perceiving and articulating

regionality in cinema from the top-down view, the ground, and the viewpoint of circulation.

From one end of the spectrum are border-crossing regional definitions. Referencing the academic and artistic outputs built around "Latin American," "African," "Asian," and "Balkan" cinemas, Hamid Naficy identifies how works can be grouped according to the "*shared* features of films from *contiguous* geographic regions" (2008:97, emphasis added). He posits that a regional paradigm can facilitate the discovery of "the many contextual and textual *similarities*…that run through both these societies and their artistic productions" (ibid.:97-98, emphasis added).

From the other end of the spectrum, the rich literature on Indian (national and subcontinental) film cultures offers insight into subnational regional formations that make sense in the opposite direction Naficy takes. According to Ratheesh Radhakrishnan, regional cinemas assume "an *overlap* between language, culture, and territory," implying a gradated spectrum across geography (2021:162, emphasis added). Here, regionality is premised on *diversity* and marks their linguistic *difference,* especially from Hindi and English, the languages of the centre (ibid.: emphasis added).

Other typologies have accounted for international and subnational regionalities. Marsha Kinder offers the terms *microregionalism,* referring to how films are "made within a particular region of a nation in opposition to that nation's dominant cinema," and *macroregionalism*, connoting films that circulate internationally (1993:132-33). Variations of *transnational regionality* have also been employed (Elkington & Nestingen 2005; Vincendeau 2011; Steele 2016). They elucidate how a nation-state's policies, a multicultural society (e.g., in Faroe Islands, Belgium, France), subnational traditions (e.g., in Basque Country, Flanders), supranational identities (e.g., European, Nordic), and the multiple sources of funding simultaneously impact a film's development and circulation.

Each of these analytics clarifies regionality from a particular perspective. However, I turn to a comparatively flexible topological approach to account for dynamic continuities, parallelisms, differences, and connections among sets of relationships that might be dominant in one viewpoint, invisible or latent from another, and transformed from a yet unexplored angle.

For instance, emergent subnational regional cinema in this century is celebrated as a new stage in the development of Philippine national cinema (KR Tan 2017; Rapatan 2018; Deocampo 2022). Nevertheless, the mature regional filmmaking in India, active since the 1940s and continues to transfigure in the digital era, reveals how subnational regional cinema can propagate ambivalent ethnonationalist politics and reproduce rather than overturn "the pitfalls of national cinema imagination" (Radhakrishnan 2021:164).[13] On the other hand, if one follows Naficy's logic, the contexts and texts of local filmmaking in various places in the Philippines would resonate with other parts of Southeast Asia, giving shape to various assemblages of interrelated places constituting a transnational regional cinema.

Moving away from top-down conceptualisations, Florence Martin's (2011) and Ran Ma's (2019) works complement my topological approach by introducing the dynamism of lived subjectivity into the analytical process. Their methods trace artists' experiences and active choices that shift the scales and produce the region on the ground through their practices and movements.

In *Screens and Veils*, Martin posits that a distinct regional Maghrebi women's cinema exists between "African" and "Arabic" cinemas, "cohesive yet diverse" because of the *transvergent* practices of its artists who actively borrow from, but at the same time make a point to resist, the cultural traditions that influence them. "They never follow a model doggedly," according to Martin, but "initiate dissident detours away from hegemonic regimes of truths (whether political, religious, or social)" (2011:24). Thus, the regionality produced by these filmmakers is a process-driven, open-ended negotiation between cultural similarities and differences, historical continuities and discontinuities, and their effort to realise their *allo*, or "other selves," out of the transformation of their consciousness (ibid.:24-25).

Ma investigates the micropractices of *independent border-crossing* filmmakers whose mobile explorations, location shooting, and layered identities articulate the "localized, fragmented experiences of modernity and social transformations as well as the multiple possibilities of belonging" (2019:20). These artists' transgressive

13 See also Berry & Farquhar 2006:5-6. Gokulsing and Dissanayake (2013) offer a compendious coverage of the politics of Bengali, Assamese, Odia, Marathi, Gujarati, Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil Nadu, Telugu, Bhojpuri, and Punjabi cinemas. See also Velayutham & Devadas 2022.

positionalities uncover zones between the homeland and diaspora, geopolitical borders, and multiscalar points of convergence. According to Ma, these filmmakers' cinemas envision "'Asia' [the region] as a cultural text/imaginary of disjuncture, multiplicities, and unevenness wherein the connectivity between the previously marginalised and peripheral subjects, places, and feelings can be realigned, reconnected, and made perceptible" (ibid.:22).[14]

Finally, film festival studies demonstrate how circulation constitutes regional cinemas. I consider here three incisive views pertinent to programming that substantiate the priorities I have assigned to the particularity of places, process orientation, cross-border conversation, and social transformation.

Lindiwe Dovey (2015) underscores the *heuristic function* of film festivals. Considering its vast diversity, she argues that it is untenable to subsume the heterogeneity of African (regional) filmmaking under "African cinema" without doing it a disservice. By being selective and timebound, film festivals activate "a dynamic, dialogical, and more democratic process of knowledge construction" (ibid.:xiii). In this way, each programme is not burdened to offer the final say but can signify how African film is a terrain of conflict and shifting consensus (ibid.:xiii, 20). For their part, Chris Berry and Luke Robinson conceive of the film festival "as a translation machine—a window on the world translating 'foreign' cultures into 'our' culture via the cinema, and vice versa" (2017:1). Here we can grasp the role of programming in opening zones of encounter and inspiring cross-border conversation, ethical spectatorship, and possible solidarity.

Significant work has been published on film festivals' role in activism. The germinal volume *Film Festival Yearbook 4* (2012) investigates how they forge a network of activists across cultures, create "the testimonial encounter" between films and spectators, and mobilise audiences toward enacting social change (Torchin 2012:2). Sonia Tascón and Tyson Wils (2017) characterise activist film festivals as overlapping with but differing in intent from festivals that showcase works according primarily to artistic quality or cultural identity. The chapters in their edited volume

14 See also Müller 2015:35; and Allen 2011:290.

reflect on extra-cinematic practices, such as educational curation and postscreening discussions, that prompt spectators to look "beyond the frame" (ibid.:7).

Tascón (2015) has done work on human rights film festivals, which promote the Universal Declaration but reckon with the struggles of audiences whose rights have been violated not a few times by state forces, translate the meaning of human rights to local cultures that might understand them differently, and negotiate the thorniness of universality and particularity when worldviews collide. These works show how my interest in the topological mapping of regional cinemas can be actuated by activist film programming as a heuristic device and translation machine promoting human rights.

Key Concepts

In the remainder of this chapter, I elaborate on the key concepts that animate my method of analysing regional cinemas as fluidity and shifts of scale and processes of topological interrelations. I discuss them as versatile processes and epistemological frameworks, exemplify how they have been utilised in various disciplines to explain contemporary realities, and consider their ideational capacity in reimagining national and regional cinemas.

From Space to Place

In their survey of the spatial turn in the social sciences and humanities, Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchin affirm how "space and place have become totemic concepts for those exploring social, cultural, economic and political relations" (2011:2).[15] I take as a given Henri Lefebvre's (1991) fundamental assumption that space is not merely a neutral setting where subjects move and act but is actively (re)produced. Edward Soja expatiates on Lefebvre's notion of lived space with his concept of thirdspace and the method of thirding, in which any "original binary choice is not dismissed entirely but is subjected to a creative process of restructuring that draws selectively and strategically

15 See also Morley 2006.

from the two opposing categories to open new alternatives" (1996:5). I adapt Soja's disposition and method to the topological approach I detail below.

Drawing on the work of Yi-Fu Tuan and Tim Ingold in my method, I underscore the distinction between space and place. For Tuan, space is relatively undifferentiated, at once potentially liberating and threatening (2001:3, 6). It is abstract, measurable, and open to conceptualisation. Meanwhile, corresponding to Soja's thirdspace, place is location shaped by lived experience. Human subjects turn to it for survival, stability, and a sense of identity, as we endow it with subjective value and invest it with affect. As I demonstrate in Chapters 2 and 4, transposing the inquiry from the conceptual space of national cinema to the concreteness of places is crucial in spotlighting the plight of people whose national subjecthood or lack thereof they struggle with daily.

The analytic of place is revealing because, as Ingold asserts, one cannot grasp space without moving through and sensing it; in doing so, one gains "inhabitant knowledge" and apprehends place as a "knot of stories," not just a source of empirical information (2011:173). Furthermore, place can be experienced on any scale, from being in one's home or just gazing at a picture of it to joining a virtual community with members worldwide. Thus, it is self-contained but can cut across spaces and intimately connect to other places.

Fig. 1 Ingold visualises how "knots of stories" emerge from the "meshwork" that connects places, people, and movement (ibid.:152)

Correspondingly, films can be analysed in how they materialise places onscreen, especially marginalised ones that are hardly visualised in the mainstream.

Moreover, the work of certain filmmakers, emblematised by Kidlat discussed in Chapter 2, and Mindanaon filmmakers in Chapters 3 and 4, can be appreciated for their place-rootedness and analysed for the contradictions their practices reveal about placemaking.

Scale

A key question is how processes of globalisation are unsettling our entrenched understanding of the world of nations and transforming places on the most local and intimate level; the recognition that such processes are taking place in unprecedented ways signals the need for scalar analysis (Herod & Wright 2002:17). Hence, the concept of scale and how it modulates inquiries regarding national cinema and placemaking films are essential in my methodology.

Scale offers a sense of proportion (e.g., seeing the islands of Mindanao as "smaller" than or nested "within" the Philippines), reveals power relations (how the national can undermine the local, for example, in institutionalising disparate land use), and delineates tangled hierarchies (supposing the global supersedes the national, and the national the local). Scale, Chris Collinge theorises, is an ordering mechanism between ideas/spatiality and materiality/sociality that "draws attention to the coincidence of bounding and unbounding *processes*" (2005:204, emphasis added). In Chapter 3, I probe how familiar and received scales can be critiqued and reconceived in the service of place-rooted cinemas such as those from and in Mindanao.

Like space and place, scale is both an epistemological structure and a material reality (Cox 1998). On the one hand, it is a representational practice or trope that shapes our perception of space and conception of spatial arrangements through abstraction and figuration, for instance, when one refers to "Filipino" films from within the Philippines as "national" cinema or "world" cinema when they are showcased in international festivals. It is an internalised mental fiction concretised by subjective experience and habitual social practice (Hart 1982:21-22).

On the other hand, it is organised by material processes; its social (re)production is "implicated in enabling particular relationships of power and space that advantage some social groups but disadvantage others," as when we speak of

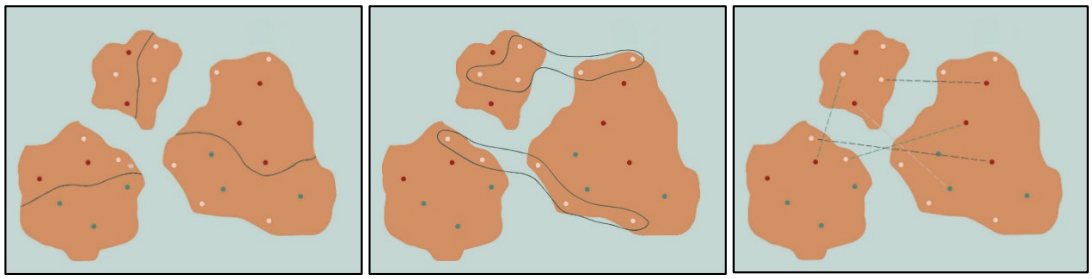
Hollywood or Hallyu as global cinemas or describe Cannes or Berlin as “top-tier” festivals (Jones 1998:28). In other words, subjects operate according to their assumptions about scales and, in so doing, contribute to their (re)production—while scales, as with spaces, produce subjects that, in turn, acquiesce or resist scalar fixes or naturalisation.

As I expound in Chapter 3, we grasp scales and their values in metaphorical language (Herod & Wright 2002:5-6). National film cultures, for instance, hype films that achieve “global breakthroughs,” picturing a plane one punctures and celebrates as national achievements once penetrated. How we imagine scales is crucial in how we engage with the social world. Hence, evaluating our scalar assumptions is decisive in imagining new sociospatialities.

Region

The category of region has long been acknowledged for its versatility in calibrating geographical knowledge and facilitating knowledge production. Peter Haggett pinpoints its capacity as a heuristic device, which can reinforce Dovey’s notion of film programming as a heuristic device. According to Haggett, regionality provides examples to substantiate generalities, illustrates anomalies, serves as analogies for other regions, bridges relations, and classifies systems (1990:78-83). In Chapter 4, I illustrate this process at work in my curation.

In political geography, regional is a semantic component of defining highly charged formations such as empire, nation, and border, but it has “secured a rather neutral reputation” by itself (Middell 2019:8). It has fostered the growth and reassessment of area studies (Maring 2019). It is applied in naming territories but is not strictly associated with the politics of territoriality (Elden 2010). Thus, the regional avoids the hierarchical connotations of scalar relations, for example, where the urban, national, or global is imagined as smaller, narrower, or lower than another; the regional can be located within and across these scales topologically (Herod 2010:153-54).



Figs. 2-4 Territories and regions on areal surfaces: (1) a map of territories enclosed within natural and artificial borders, the dots signifying places; (2) territories with places forming virtual micro- and macroregions based on similar/shared features and contiguity; (3) territories whose places are provisionally connected (in whatever register) as transvergent regions by dotted lines across borders and differences

Despite these affordances, regional thinking avoids hasty conclusions, such as the obsolescence of nations or the borderlessness of the globe but makes it possible to hold them together in tension. According to John Agnew, regions refuse totalising visions because they can "both reflect differences in the world and ideas about differences" and so fill the gap between ideational and material sociospatialities (1999:92-93). For the same reason, it opens an intermediary space to carry forward the synthesis of a dialectical process, theoretical or historical.

Regionalisation facilitates organising and mobilisation toward specific political goals. In global politics and economics, agents and collectives have explored alternative large-scale, small-scale, or multiscalar regionalisation to suit their agenda (Gilbert 1988:221), at times with utopian aspirations to restructure the world set against existing formational apparatuses considered inadequate or corrupted. Here, we can think of diverse entities and critical imaginaries shaped by regional modalities such as the EU and ASEAN or the Global South and Fourth World.

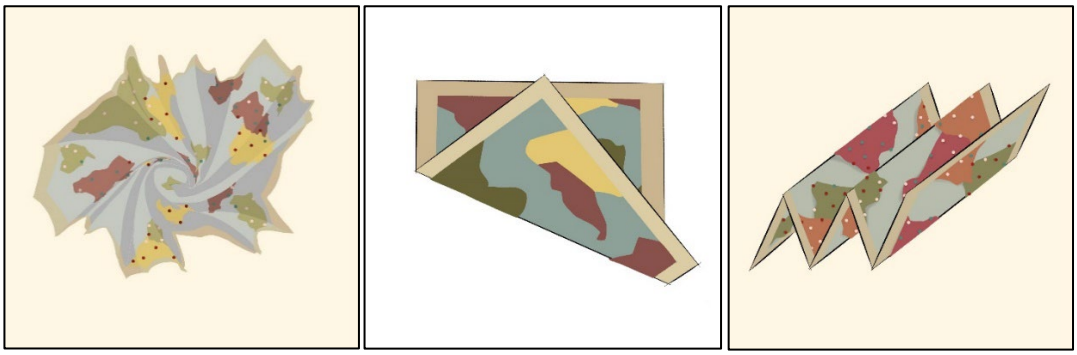
Hence, as I show in Chapter 3, the region is a flexible analytic and rousing formation for thinking about cinema between and beyond the national and the global. It can expand to mark the boundaries of vast spaces (e.g., Southeast Asian cinema), contract to flesh out places (Mindanao cinema), reorient to capture the shifting relationship between locality and mobility (refugee films), and inflect to reveal points of convergence (indigenous films) (Casey 1996; Cox 1998).

Topology

Topology disrupts the taken-for-granted priority of metric space in explaining spatiality. Metric thinking privileges absolute spaces such as nation-states (Agnew 1994). It is entrenched in how we imagine social spaces from an aerial view, think of them as laid out on surfaces such as land areas and maps, and identify them by confining or subdividing them with boundaries. It also entrenches territorial fixity so that spaces we have historically, conventionally, and artificially bounded as areas tend to endure in our minds as being comprehensible according to distances. In metric thinking, connection occurs by proximity; elements located apart are separate.

Topological thinking is a non-metric way of assembling spatiality. Michel Serres pictures topology using the analogy of a spread-out handkerchief with "fixed distances and proximities," which, when crumpled, brings two separate points "close, even superimposed" (1995:60). Gilles Deleuze (1993) likewise uses the imagery of folding to characterise topological thinking. "What interests Deleuze," according to Richard Smith, "are (un)folds, the infinite labyrinth of fold to fold that produces the world's topology as one of *process* that overwhelms the fictions of boundaries, limits, fixity, permanence, embedment" (2003:565, emphasis added). As these metaphors suggest, topological thinking is intuitive and abstract but also sensorial and adaptable. It is partial to open-ended assemblages, so it liberates spatial reasoning. As I demonstrate in Chapter 4, being sensitive to topological interrelations allows the flexible realignment of separate and distant elements to embody regional formations (Allen 2011:290; Müller 2015:35).

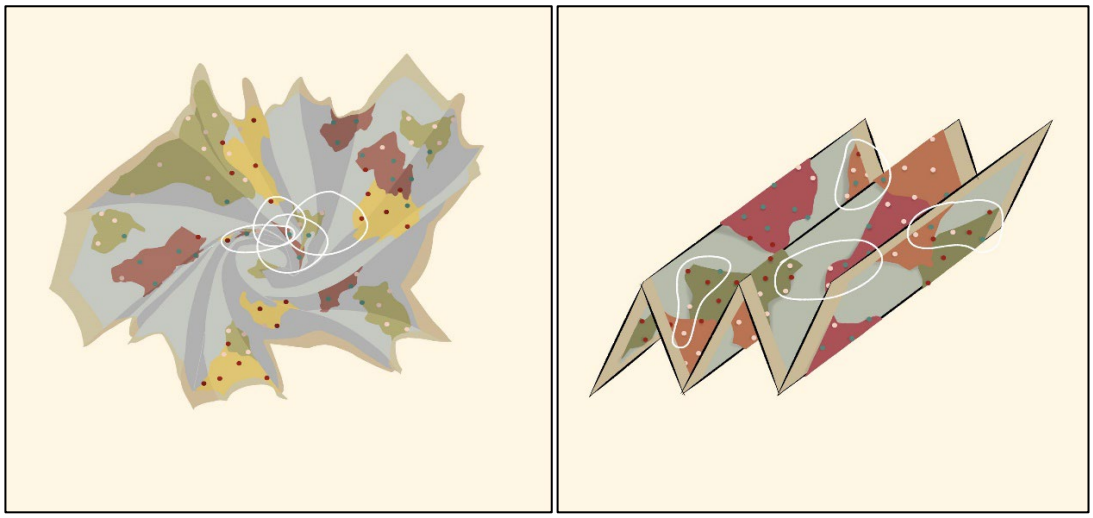
The conjunction of regional and topological thinking overcomes the limitations of nation-centric analyses incapable of accounting for global and highly local processes transforming film cultures. Employing topology and regionality has enabled me to think about the parallel and intersecting developments in Philippine and Southeast Asian cinemas taking place on the level of the national and their respective films' entrance to international film festivals and the global market and the local, in cities, towns, and villages, where filmmaking flourishes beyond the global cultural/economic value chain.



Figs. 5-7 Analogies of topological transformation: (1) Crumpling space, undoing flatness; (2) Topologically connecting spaces metrically separated; (3) (Un)folding as a *process* exceeding the fictions of boundaries, limits, fixity, permanence, embedment

Given how topology unsettles and (re)configures scales, their conjunction can bring new networks or assemblages to light. Of course, the local, national, and global are easily imagined as discrete scales. Still, Smith avers that when we do not imagine them as surfaces, that is, if we imagine them topologically, then we can identify "*the points at which [scales] overlap* and see how they produce zones that can be conceptualised in their own terms" (2003:570, emphasis added). Thus, *scales* can be enfolded or crumpled, converging in *places* simultaneously configured as local, national, global, and planetary "without necessarily being wholly [any one]" (Latham 2002:116).

Bruno Latour argued that metaphors of levels and territories could not capture the world's complexity but is better imagined as "fibrous, thread-like, wiry, stringy, ropy, capillary" scales networked (1996:370). In Chapter 3, I adopt Latour's metaphor and propose to imagine scale as a strand that lengthens, shortens, and groups by (inter)weaving, not by bounding. The metaphor allows me to interpret the knots along a strand, akin to Ingold's knots of stories in the meshwork of places, not as spatial resolutions and scalar fixes but as nodes in an open-ended process. The knots can also indicate tension and irreconcilability, such as that between the praxes of Third and Fourth Cinemas.



Figs. 8-9 Topology produces places and regions beyond areal and territorial imagination

Hence, topology is a means of envisioning regional interdependence on various scales and occasioning spectatorial, if not yet actual, solidarity. A topological approach to programming helps theorise, if not animate, the dynamics of transforming potentiality into actuality and vivify how universal claims (e.g., human rights, Indigenous Peoples' rights) are translated into concrete action when discursively nested in social practices and deployed in the context of activism.

CHAPTER 2 FROM NATIONAL CINEMA TO PLACEMAKING FILMS

Marking the "End" of National Cinema

This chapter focuses on my book, *The End of National Cinema*, broadly a revaluation of Filipino film from the perspective of the 2000s transitioning to digital. As noted, as I was writing *TEONC*, national cinema had been considered a moribund concept (Choi 2011:173-74). However, the assumption that it is démodé fails to account for the fact that, in the Global South, the nation is an incomplete historical and discursive project of self-determination. As the work of the MPP during Martial Law demonstrates, nation-making is disputed in the very constitution of national cinema, in what it is or is supposed to be and to or for whom it speaks. I expound on the polysemous meaning of the book's title and describe my project, thus.

> The work as a whole, centered on the Philippine experience, elucidates the *ends* of national cinema, suspending certain assumptions about how cinema is national to understand how the outside defines the inside or how the inside defines itself in terms of the outside, assessing the *limitations* of speaking of a discrete national cinema and analysing where and how the *boundaries* break down and resharpening the *purpose* of sustaining a vision of the nation in cinema for critical and oppositional ends on behalf of and in solidarity with the national subject. (17-18)

Though preoccupied with a range of issues, *TEONC* does not undertake to formulate a normative theory but enacts a disposition and procedure of reading keen on detecting contradictions, generative tensions, and potentials inherent in efforts to think not only about national cinema but through the relationship between cinema and the nation. It counters what I describe in terms of this thesis as a metric approach that canonises films and periodises history to circumscribe and fix Philippine cinema.

Instead, the book clears an intermediary space for an open-ended and topological remapping attentive to differences, imbrications, and un- or underexplored connections glossed over by a bounded view of the national. Rather than a territorial national cinema, it imagines national cinema as a fluidity of scales converging and enfolding in particular moments and places, which, in turn, continuously reshape it.

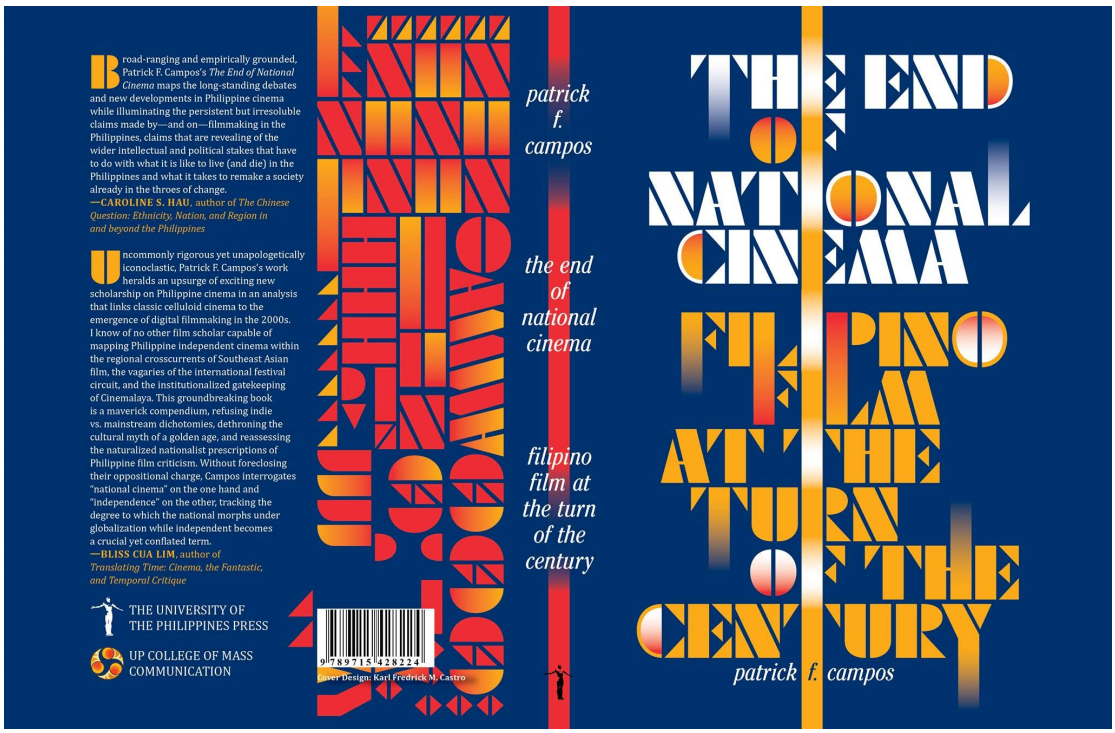


Fig. 10 Artist Karl Castro visualised my topological thinking in his nonrepresentational cover art, rearranging the exact number of "random" shapes on the back cover to spell the book's title on the front, but with a bold line weaving them together.

In this section, I return to *TEONC*'s chapters on the auteurs Mike De Leon, Ishmael Bernal, and Kidlat Tahimik to trace the arc of my inquiry from a preoccupation with national cinema to an interest in subjects engaged in placemaking. These directors made defining works during Martial Law (officially, 1972-1981; unofficially, until 1986), in the conjuncture when Filipino film studies, epitomised by the MPP, initiated writing Philippine Cinema History.

The section on De Leon characterises the efforts of nationalist film critics to form a counterdiscourse whose indictment of Marcos's dictatorship in cinema endures in popular culture and historiography. It explains how my topological rereading of De Leon recuperates the nationalist agenda for the post-Martial Law era. The section on Bernal focused on the legacy of *Manila by Night* (1980), explores the contest, waged across multiple scales, between the artist and the state in figuring the nation. It underlines the most crucial factor in conceptualising national cinema—subjects who bear the weight of national subjecthood and state oppression. Finally, the section on Kidlat examines his border-crossing practice of filming places and how it reveals the limits of the national and the potential of regional imagination.

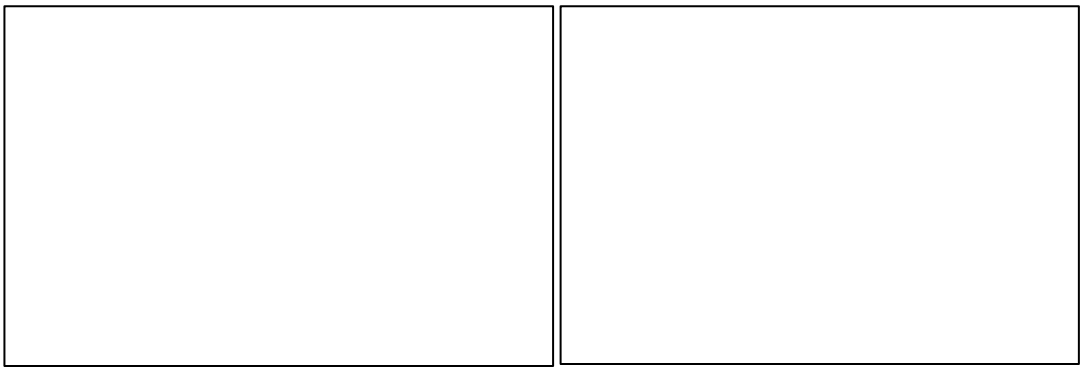
Topologising the Nationalist Canon

In *TEONC*, I track the shifting position of De Leon in entertainment journalism, on the one hand, and the academic historicisation of Philippine cinema, on the other, to delineate the project of nationalist film criticism. In the entertainment press of the period, he was considered an "insider" of the industry, being the scion of LVN (est. 1939), a major studio from the "Golden Decade" of genre filmmaking in the 1950s (Garcia 1984). Interestingly, showbiz journalists continued to stress his consistent box-office failures even after he had directed his most influential works (Nepales 1980; "Mike de Leon"). Meanwhile, in the work of the MPP, he is affirmatively pictured as a figure in the "margins" (Yuson 1982; Lumbera 1984:209; David 1990:12). That he made few films, practically all flops, was signified as a marker of a no-compromise ethos.

The MPP celebrated and interpreted three of De Leon's films as indictments of Marcosian rule (Tiongson 1983, 1994, 2001). *In the Blink of an Eye* (1981) was seen as allegorising the dictator's incestuous rape of the nation. *Batch '81* (1982) dramatises the formation of the fascist mind. And *Sister Stella L.* (1984) portrays the workers' strike as a microcosm of social unrest and an open call for the public to rise. Employing a topological approach, I offer a provisional assemblage of these films as a coherent and cumulative text to explain their eventual cultural impact despite their initial unpopular reception (*TEONC* 93-97). I anchor this on the MPP's critical reading of the films *during* the Marcos regime that positioned De Leon as a peripheral figure and a "serious" critic of fascism.

Though relatively few vis-à-vis the hundreds of critically unremarked or derided productions, films like De Leon's constituted a "new" Golden Age, lauded for their artistic achievement and, more importantly, their political stance. The power of this counterdiscourse to consolidate insurgent energies and shape public memory is felt until today, as evidenced by how De Leon's cinema is now written about in the entertainment press and deployed in resisting the current historical distortion of Martial Law as the nation's Golden Age.[16]

16 A recent example: "Film Director."



Figs. 11-12 Left: From the unequivocally political *Sister Stella L.*: nuns join a workers' strike; Right: From *Batch '81*, a study on fascist mentality: a fraternity welcomes its new brothers; as an assemblage, both films critique all forms of dogmatism

However, I do more than amplify the nationalist reading. The space of national cinema is not fixed and bound but a site of process, continual contestation, and challenge to hegemony. The MPP's work suggests that the nation's invocation in cinema formation is oriented concurrently toward its history *and* the present and an aspiration for what it can become, even as it recognises the struggle to subvert authority and enable the participation of the many in defining it and its future.

Thus, moving away from MPP's top-down, highly selective, and now reified canon, I explore how reconfiguring De Leon's cinema could recover the significance of his underground and popular films (*TEONC* 97ff). Such an exploration allowed me to reinterpret his oeuvre in light of what the canon excluded, which I, in turn, foregrounded, and retrace his cinema's significance in reverse, as it were, from the perspective of the shortcomings of liberal reformation in national politics *after* Martial Law. In so doing, I demonstrate how, as Deleuze suggests, topology can undo fixity and offer a fiction more responsive to change (1993:19).

From hindsight, it is clear how *Sister Stella*, a social realist film that portrays the abject lives of the working class, is revered as De Leon's most important work—and how it bombed at the tills is part of its legendary status (*TEONC* 102). Here, the unequivocal political intention is preferred over artistic daring and symbolic evocations that could yield multiple meanings. Ironically, we see, too, how De Leon's *Signos* (1984), a political collective documentary distributed surreptitiously in videocassette format, explicit and not only allegorical in its anti-Marcos stance, and *Prisoner of the Dark* (1986), the first Filipino full-length film to be shot entirely on video, arguably his

most radical works produced and circulated *beyond* the mainstream, are not given enough emphasis, if at all.

This glossing locates the mainstream industry as the reference point for no-compromise practice. Despite this, *Heaven Cannot Be Shared* (1985), De Leon's only box-office hit, a *komiks* melodrama of upper-class marriage and betrayal that unmistakably locates the director as an industry insider, is dismissed as "silly" (*TEONC* 98). This elision reveals the under-theorised disjuncture in nationalist criticism between conceptions of the "nation" as signified in favoured films and the "masses," the collective agents and subjects of history. Such a tendency discourages critical consideration of movies that are not overtly political but resonate with the mass public, the disjuncture Lumbera and Tiongson have tried to resolve, and I try to recast in topological terms (Capino 2020:xv-xvi).

My goal in *TEONC* is not to repudiate the nationalist project but to refuse the reification of its reading strategies and its tendency toward reactionary nostalgia. Thus, I reassemble De Leon's cinema by shifting the perspective (not disengaging) from the historical specificity of MPP's anti-Marcos project to the succeeding artistic and political struggles in the post-Marcos period (*TEONC* 99ff). Simultaneously, I foreground the strategies that facilitated MPP's canonisation of a few of De Leon's films (e.g., antifascist and allegorical readings, attention to marginalised figures) and then fold them over onto themselves and unfold them again. That is, I prospected the limits of the canonical assemblage and, from there, explored how other assemblages could refine MPP's strategies and orient De Leon's cinema toward the present as much as the past.

In my alternative assemblage, I allegorise *Heaven Cannot Be Shared*, which the MPP could not read in anti-Marcosian terms, as addressing the elitist post-Marcos social order whose failure, we can argue in retrospect, paved the way for the Marcoses' return to power. I also highlight the political and artistic underground formations addressed by *Prisoner of the Dark* and *Signos*, with the former summoning a public that, though niche, permitted alternative cinema to flourish in the 2000s despite the decline of mass viewership and the latter imagining an ideal public that could usher hoped for social transformation that did not come to fruition after the ousting of Marcos.

My rereading of De Leon and the MPP is a critical intervention that maintains the possibility of retracing the folds of an uncompleted past and allowing them to unfold and refold in new but interconnected ways. Serres, in his conceptual language, pictures this topological process as "knowledge that multiplies gestures in a short time, in a limited space, [that is, in folding into itself and folding out again] so that it renders information more and more dense, until it forms a rarer place" (1991:78).

National Cinema, the State, and Lived Spatiality

In my chapter on Bernal, I revisit the director's landmark film, *Manila by Night*, a multicharacter, plotless city film that visually and narratively symptomatised the social ills, economic deprivation, and political corruption suffered by Filipinos under Martial Law. The chapter is interested in the national subject's lived experience and how it is effaced or evinced by a fascist state's and an antifascist filmmaker's contending spatial conception and production on multiple scales. To wit, the Marcoses' City of Man is conceived as beautiful, safe, and prosperous, where the poor and abject have no place, while *Manila* portrays the kaleidoscopic and tragicomic misadventures of a motley collection of characters that dwell on the underside of the selfsame city (Marcos 1976; David 2017). To apprehend the nuances of how Manila, the capital and metonym of the nation, and the national subjects are envisioned by the Marcoses and Bernal, I reiterate and then depart from its nationalist framing and reread it topologically.

Adapting Soja's disposition and method of thirding (1996:5), I track how *Manila* pivots between the production of "nation" (through the Marcoses' reconstruction of Manila and integration of the country into the global economy) and "national cinema" (as a monumental city film in congregation with city films in world cinema). Within this framework, one can appreciate *Manila* as a city film par excellence for harbouring a critical imagination of the nation and the capacity to censure a rapacious state—that is, for disentangling the nation from the state (*TEONC* 45-48). In particular, it exposes the contradictions and violence of Marcosian modernisation—nominal developmentalism underwritten by onerous government debt, manoeuvred by the IMF-World Bank during the Cold War, and riddled by unprecedented corruption and crony capitalism, but spectacularly dissimulated in the pageantry of the dictatorship's

urban development that whitewashed and displaced the undesirables of the city. The Marcoses built magnificent buildings that showcased national progress to the international community and propagated their official version of national identity (Tadiar 2009:152-53; Molotch 2000:791-823). In short, the film text and its context uncover the crushing burden of the state's machination, weighed heavier by geopolitical and financial forces that exceed the nation, and placed on the backs of generations of Filipinos.

The Marcoses' efforts on the city scale were in step with their hegemonic control over the national film industry and their drive to partake in the "reputational" function of international film festivals (Pollacchi 2017). Their handling of *Manila* indicates how the state's arbitration of national cinema is cognisant of a global process. By underscoring the multiscalar politics of this process, one can better comprehend the violence encoded by the dictatorial regime on the film's exhibition, distribution, text, and legacy.

Manila was invited to compete at the Berlin International Film Festival, which could have canonised the film in world cinema. However, the state refused its permission because of its depiction of Manila's underbelly, a depiction that in part merited its festival invitation (David 2017:17-24). Locally, it was censored, "Manila" was dropped from its new title, *City After Dark*, and the version permitted to screen undercut the director's original vision. The contradiction between the state's image of the city and the film's censored portrayal of urban poverty created a parallax that rendered the nation/city both visible and invisible. Eventually, the integral version was shown at the Manila Film Center, a state-operated space that infamously buried workers when an accident occurred during its feverish construction to meet the opening of the Manila International Film Festival (*TEONC* 50-51).[17] Bernal's film was marketed as a sex fare to attract local viewers, and its well-attended screening in the censorship-exempt theatre generated profit for the state's film projects. All the while, the violence wrought on the film assured its place in the nationalist canon.

17. Imelda Marcos envisioned the MFC as a centre of world cinema and prided herself on founding the MIFF, "the first in Asia." In Ferdinand's speech at the first MIFF, he boasted that his government, though of the Third World, recognised cinema not only as an industry but as an art form that "transcends the boundaries of nations and belongs to all humanity" and can point to "solutions to the [nation's] political and economic problems." See "Primer" 1982; and Marcos 1982.

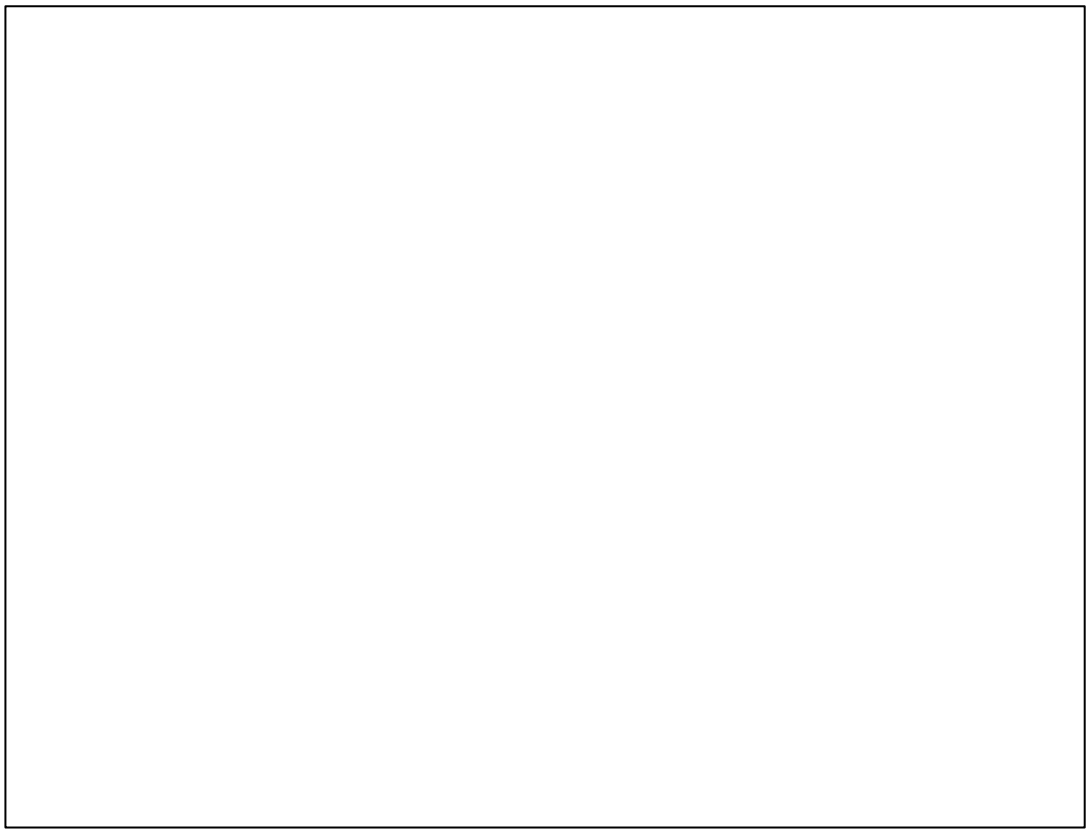


Fig. 13 *Manila* closes with an enigmatic open-ended image; the protagonist sleeps in the Rizal National Park at daybreak

For good reason, nationalist criticism read Bernal's film as a truth-telling counterpoint to the Marcoses' conception of the bright city, revealing realities hidden by the state (Del Mundo 2001; Tolentino 2012). My topological reading is interested in how the contestation over the film on the national and global scales is registered on the city and the body (*TEONC* 55-63). Thus, I accentuate the film's dimension of lived space, the way it functioned as a harbinger of what Soja describes as the "clandestine or hidden side of social life" (1996:67).

Bernal's film traces the calculated and illicit movements of poachers, squatters, scroungers, and transients, the nation's dispossessed and displaced, in Manila's labyrinthine streets, thus portraying these subjects, who may appear powerless, as appropriating city spaces and actively subverting spatial impositions from above, unmaking and remaking the boundaries between state and society. As enacted by *Manila*, the production of the liveable substratum, vital and dynamic, destabilises the terrain of the governed, functioning as a site of constant symbolic protest against the violence of regimentation. The film constructs the city/nation and represents the national subject in a historical conjuncture overdetermined though not wholly

overtaken by government institutions. Doing so exposes the convergence of scales in particular places of everyday life and how scalar tension generates competing visions of the nation and national cinema.

From National Cinema to Placemaking Films

For my study on Kidlat Tahimik, I participated in his community-based art-making process in Baguio City, Benguet, and the rice terraces of Hapao, Ifugao, to better observe his straddling of conceptual space and concrete places as a national subject.[18] Though well-known beyond Philippine shores, especially by his association with Third Cinema, since he debuted with *Perfumed Nightmare* (1977), Kidlat was not discussed by the MPP during the Martial Law years (*TEONC* 163-65; Shohat & Stam 1994:293, 329; Dixon & Zonn 2005). His avant-garde language meant that his off-centred situation would find no prominent space in the nationalist paradigm. Furthermore, locating his practice outside the film industry to resist capital-intensive and market-driven production, he removed himself from the state-regulated domestic market (Kidlat 1989, 1997, 2011). Hence, his films, being not mass printed, were inaccessible to a broader Filipino public locally while they moved about the international circuit, owing, in part, to the cultural capital they accrued as "Filipino" films.[19]

Revealingly, when writings by Filipino scholars about his cinema were published in the '90s and 2000s, they mostly offered rejoinders to "First World" critics—mainly Fredric Jameson—who, they argue, appropriated Kidlat's "Third World" politics and misread the specificity of his cultural signifiers (San Juan 2000; Tolentino 2000:112-124; Lim 1995). The deictic location of critics vis-à-vis Kidlat became methodologically pivotal in the debates: non-Filipino critics focused on the political edge of what they perceived as Kidlat's "postmodern" innocence. In contrast, Filipino critics called out the orientalism betrayed in this reading and emphasised Kidlat's Brechtian knowingness (San Juan 2000; Tolentino 2000). These writings are animated by the thorny issues surrounding "native" identity and the question of who gets to speak *from* specific

18 Ifugao is a noun that refers to the place and its inhabitants and is also used as an adjective.

19 David (1998:97-98) problematises the Filipinoness of such films. Digital distribution brought Kidlat's films wider Filipino viewership recently.

locations *for* the nation. I argue that their disagreements, apparent incommensurability, and MPP's earlier indifference to him arise from what Florence Martin (2011) and Ran Ma (2019) might characterise as Kidlat's open-ended process, border-crossing and transvergent practice, and his ongoing invention of *allo* or other-selves.

That Kidlat's films are highly localised and engage directly with the places they are filmed is one key to his unravelling of national cinema. His work captures how his inward journey toward native culture parallels his journey toward other cultures. He superimposes a rural village in Laguna and a street market in Paris, the sandstone buttes of the Navajo Nation and the lush mountains of Cordillera, and the passing highland farming practices in both Japan and the Philippines, revealing how imperialism and global capitalism flatten spaces and eviscerate cultures in the name of "progress" (*TEONC* 165).[20] Hence, his movement foregrounds uneven and asymmetrical places, exposing the contradictions of his subjecthood and its irreconcilability with static abstractions such as nationalism (*TEONC* 173-77). His films' simultaneous translocality and situatedness elucidate how "Third World" or "native" spaces, appearing undifferentiated to outsiders, are heterogeneous places connected across different scales (*TEONC* 177).

I chart Kidlat's subject formation in his incessant filming of journeys and homecomings. I hypothesise that his filmmaking is a means of exorcising his personal history, especially his Americanised upbringing, and digging into the indigenous roots of the people with whom he grew up in the mountains of northern Philippines, whose lands were grabbed and never returned, and whose stories and identities were marginalised and appropriated in colonial, and later national, history. Such a project cannot be realised simply by making films *about* Benguet and Ifugao but by *living in* these places.

We can detect the importance of this distinction in Kidlat's placemaking practice and career. His earliest films were allegorical, preoccupied with staging a character's political awakening in conceptual space after a (prospective) journey outward. But then, one discerns Kidlat's evolving relationship with Ifugaos, as his later

20 On transvergent practice and shooting on location, see F. Martin 2011:23-27; and Ma 2019:34-36.

films, beginning with *Why Is Yellow the Middle of the Rainbow?* (1994), chronicle his movement from filming them in fictionalised and essayistic ways, learning from their history and immersing himself in their culture, collaborating with them, to living with them as the community adopts him as their own and gives him a new name (*TEONC* 189-91).

Critics who regard Kidlat as a representative of Third Cinema are uneasy with this trajectory. Christopher Pavsek (2013) considers Kidlat's critique of capitalism incisive but finds his "nostalgia" for old lifeways problematic because they are "simply impossible to resurrect"; he resolves it by theorising the artist's work as an "imaginative translation [of the past] into new contexts." E. San Juan, Jr. underplays Kidlat's "populist return to 'nature'" by characterising it as a Fanonian "strategy" (2000:286, 275). These engagements fail to recognise that Ifugao culture is alive and dynamic, although marginalised and threatened, and that it is not incidental to Kidlat's cinema but central to his subject formation (*TEONC* 175-78).

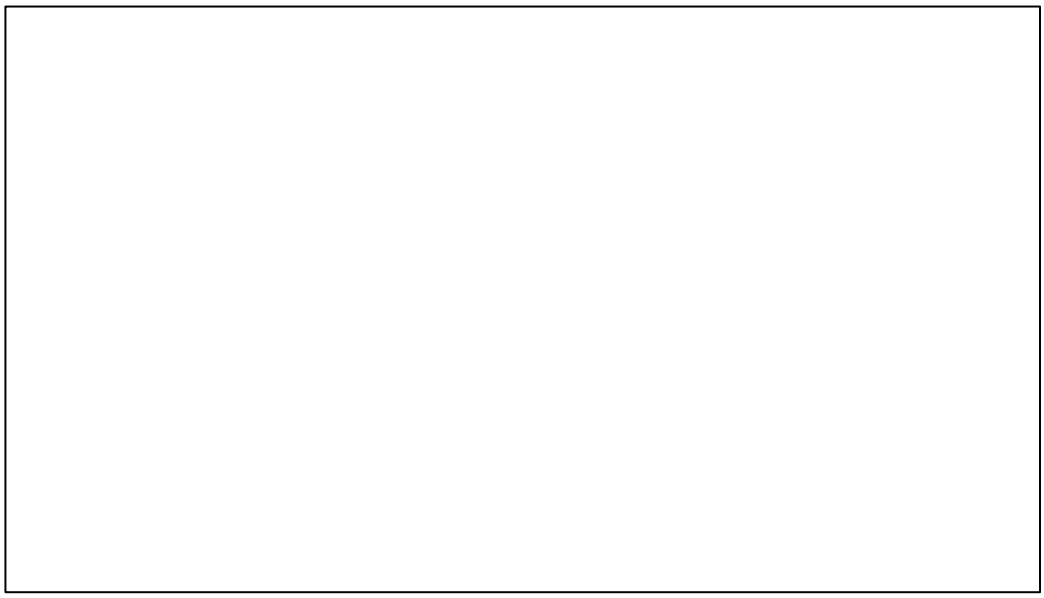


Fig. 14 Kidlat, wearing a *bahag* (Ifugao loincloth) as a symbol of protest and solidarity in documentary footage of an anti-mining rally in Baguio, addresses young police officers about why they are on the wrong side of a national issue; the footage appears as a fictional scene in his *Balikbayan #1* (2015)

In this way, Kidlat's cinema contributes to activism and embodies the IPs' struggle for self-determination, edging it into the politics of Fourth Cinema (Ginsburg

1995, 1997). However, his practice underscores the complications inherent in Barclay's principle of fidelity to and addressing the indigenous community, premised on the need for the redress of centuries of political, cultural, and economic marginalisation (Barclay 1990, 2003). Kidlat negotiates these, on the one hand, by teaching Ifugaos to film their lifeways as a form of folklore, akin to but radically distinct from Tiongson's notion of cinema as folklore (2008:188-90), for their community's and not the public's consumption, and with their images and image-making processes remaining fundamentally their own (*TEONC* 194-96; cf. Murray 2008:26-27). On the other hand, he continues to redefine himself and promote Ifugao culture in his works that circulate nationally and internationally.

Though this straddling foregrounds more than it resolves the differences between Third and Fourth Cinema politics, I argue in *TEONC* how Kidlat's cinema provisionally arbitrates their aspirations in an intermediary space.

> …Kidlat offers an image of lived life in Ifugao not always as a polemic but as a model of a possible social dynamic that invites hard questions about the particularities of praxis after a revolution, although as a life lived out against the onus of global social order now. Kidlat shows the viewers that Ifugao, as it has been for hundreds of years, is a location of utopia-in-process, as it were. It is certainly not perfect, but aspects of its culture are genuine alternatives…. Its society of the collective is not coerced, cooperation is not strictly hierarchical, and the people's use of land and resources is sustainable. (*TEONC* 177-78)

As such, his anticapitalist films and his striving to live with the Ifugaos and allow their worldview to transform his practice and subjectivity are a form of resistance to the hegemony of western global media and negotiation of Third and Fourth Cinema praxes—parallels processes that are dynamic, syncretic, ongoing. In this light, his interest in addressing and promoting the cultural specificity of concrete places exceeds the national cinema paradigm. It may be considered an expression of nonnational filmmaking for refusing the homogenising tendency of nationalism, whether imposed by the state or promoted by the critics. Yet, at the same time, placemaking films like his, being grounded and community-based, tend to be marginal and decentred, rendering them constantly critical of, and in dialogue with, nationalism.

CHAPTER 3 PLACES AND SCALES: TOWARD REGIONAL CINEMA

From Philippine Cinema to Mindanao Cinema

Kidlat's cinema, transfiguring the national as an assemblage of shifting scales and concrete places, illustrates how territorial units rarely fit homogenous characteristics (e.g., "national" culture). It pioneered twenty-first-century independent filmmaking in places beyond Manila, corresponding to Kinder's notion of microregional, or the subversive marginal formation defined against the dominant national centre, and a subset of them to transnational regional productions that are funded or circulated beyond their locality, from the three primary island clusters of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao (Kinder 1993:14; Steele 2016).

In 1987, mainly referencing Kidlat and the short-lived small-scale film industry in Cebu, central Philippines, Teddy Co broached the idea of a "regional" that could complete the vision of "national" cinema (Co 1987; Grant & Anissimov 2016). In 2009, Co, MPP member Miguel Rapatan, and the rest of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) cinema committee founded Cinema Rehiyon (hereon, CR), which institutionalised the category. It remains the foremost film festival whose primary objective is to forge a vibrant nationwide network of "regional" filmmakers and showcase their best works.

After that, scholars began to theorise regional cinema. Like Co, Rapatan considers its "re-nationalization" of cinema as the source of its significance (2017:91). Following Lumbera, Tiongson, and Cebuano critic Resil Mojares, Katrina Ross Tan (2017) contextualises it as part of national heritage and stresses its role in preserving and promoting local languages. Focused on filmmaking in Cebu and likewise drawing on Mojares, Paul Grant (2014) emphasises its use of vernacular language, enlivened by the dynamism and idiosyncrasies of place, and how this could translate to a vernacular, distinct from national, film language. These studies parallel Radhakrishnan's conception of Indian regional cinema defined according to its overlap with, difference from, and challenge to the dominant cinema in Hindi and English; in the Philippines, regional is defined against historically and industrially Manila-centric, Tagalog-language-based cinema.

This chapter discusses three essays on films set in Mindanao and takes off from these premises. However, it introduces the category of scale in conjunction with a topological approach as the main analytic for theorising regional cinema. As with the other chapters, it begins by reflecting on the regional's entanglement with the national but proceeds to consider how the regional extends beyond it. It suggests, with Naficy (2008), that regionality could be shaped by shared and similar practices, textual characteristics, and contexts across contiguous places—a discussion that carries through Chapter 4.

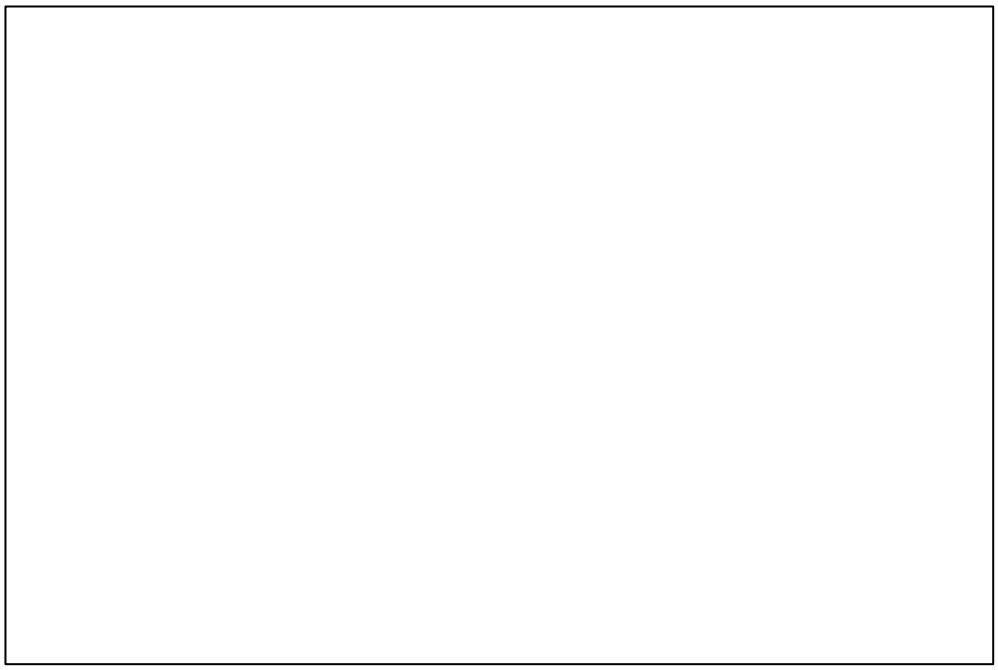


Fig. 15 The Philippines in the context of Southeast Asia[21]

Mindanao is the southernmost island cluster and the second largest in the Philippine archipelago. A substantial population of IPs inhabits it;[22] the largest, though still a minority, concentration of Muslims (the Philippines is a Christian majority);[23] and settlers from other islands, waves of whom were incentivised by the government to

21 The map is from Peel 2017.

22 Eighteen un-Islamised and un- or recently Christianised indigenous groups in Mindanao, not counting the subgroups, are recognised by the Philippine government: the Subanen, Manobo, B'laan, T'boli, Mandaya, Mansaka, Tiruray, Higaonon, Bagobo, Bukidnon, Tagakaolo, Banwaon, Dibabawon, Talaandig, Mamanua, and Manguangan.

23 Maranao, Maguindanao, Tausug, Kalagan, Sangil, Ilanun/Iranun, Palibugan, Yakan, Sama, Badjao, Jumamapun, Palawanon, Molbog are the 13 Muslim ethnolinguistic groups.

resettle, and groups of them organised as paramilitary troops to colonise the land internally (Abinales 2000). Though it supplies 40% of the country's food and holds 40% of its mineral reserves, Mindanao's poorest provinces are the poorest in the country, and some of its regions have been sites of brutal invasions, long-drawn wars, and insurgencies (Canuday & Sescon 2022:xii).

Beyond Mindanao, its history has been marginalised, with major national historiographies being Manila-centric.[24] From colonial times, it has been pictured as dark and dangerous—until today, if one goes by representations in mainstream media.[25] Because historiographies and popular media fixate on the conflict zones and the perceived otherness of its people, non-Mindanaons possess uneven knowledge of the causes of discord that pester its islands, its prismatic cultures outside stereotypes, its stories of solidarity, resistance, and survival, and its historical connection to places beyond the Philippines.

Peripheral cinemas and practices, according to Iordanova, Martin-Jones, and Vidal, are those "located in positions marginal to the economic, institutional, and ideological centers of image making" that can, precisely for being peripheral, "function as a critical paradigm" (2010:5). In the succeeding sections, I explore the formation of Mindanao cinema in recent years and the various configurations of its regional peripherality.

For the first time in a sustained manner, a cinema explores particular places, everyday lives, and novel themes in Mindanao beyond the exoticising and instrumentalist gaze of the centre (Quintos 2020). The works of Mindanaons Gutierrez Mangansakan II, Arnel Mardoquio, Arbi Barbarona, Bagane Fiola, Sheron Dayoc, Adjani Arumpac, Sherad Anthony Sanchez, and Joe Bacus, to name a few, have offered a broad range of stories from the many cultures and localities and different classes of people in Mindanao in diverse forms. Furthermore, the growth of its filmmaking in the industry's margins has been buoyed by alternative funding sources, from grants or NGO support to crowdfunding with the help of religious or people's organisations, giving its artists the leeway to create beyond the mainstream.

24 National historiographies that rectify this are Abinales and Amoroso 2017; and Gloria 2014.

25 See Canuday & Sescon, Part V.

Fig. 16 Mardoquio's *Riddles of My Homecoming* is a panoramic and strikingly visual meditation of Mindanao's troubled history

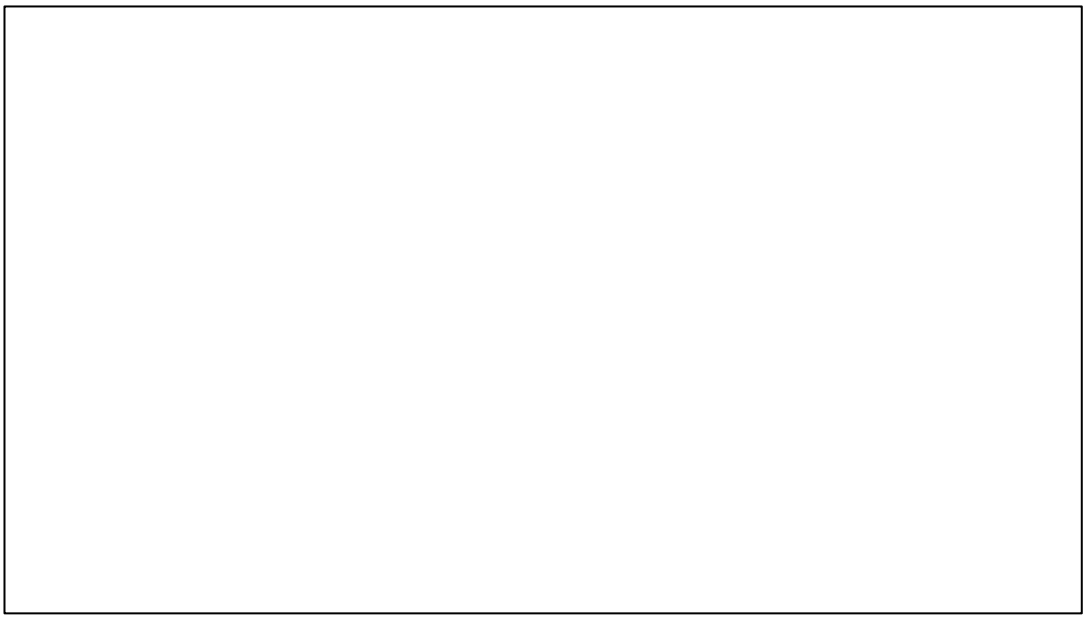


Fig. 17 Survivors of the Malisbong mass murder of Muslims during Martial Law confide in Moro filmmaker Mangansakan in *Forbidden Memory*, released on the day Duterte gave Marcos a national hero's burial

More importantly, Mindanao cinema's very existence, punctuated by films that directly tackle the national question like *Riddles of My Homecoming* (2013), *War Is a Tender Thing* (2013), and *Forbidden Memory* (2016) signifies how nation-making has

entrenched divisions and wrought violence upon Mindanaons and laments how places have been peripheralised politically, economically, and historiographically. Hence, it not only decentres national cinema but also unveils the troubled history of nationhood.

Finally, the presence of alternative or subjunctive modes of nationness in Mindanao's regions pluralises national cinema: the Muslims, IPs, and Christian settlers co-existing in a national polity fractured by colonial history (SK Tan 1989; Rodil 2003); the autonomous Bangsamoro (Muslim Nation)[26] and its separatist factions (McKenna 1998; Vitug & Gloria 2000); the "modern" nation localised and intermediated by "traditional" leaders entangled in national politicking, clan feuding, warlordism, and a shadow economy/state (Abinales 2000; Lara 2014; WM Torres 2014); the IPs comprising First Nations (Paredes 2013, 2015); and the deep geographical and historical connection of Mindanao to other parts of Southeast Asia before the Filipinisation of the southern islands (Warren 1981; Hayase 2007).

As I asserted in Chapter 1, how we think about scales shapes how we understand cinema formations and how we might reshape them for particular ends. The subsequent discussions explore how scalar practices and multiscalar circulation and conceptualisation modulate Mindanao cinema's regionality and facilitate its topological reconfiguration that simultaneously harbours national and nonnational meanings.

Scale as a Category of Practice and Analysis

In "Allegories of Scale," I investigate filmmakers' scalar strategies and politics by looking into films by Brillante Mendoza, Lav Diaz, and Fiola set in Mindanao. Here, I take scale as a category of practice and analysis, materialising discourse through citational repetition, for instance, of taken-for-granted scalar values or an artist's habits of expression, "that stabilizes as well as challenges boundary, fixity, and surface effects" (Kaiser & Nikiforova 2008:541-42). Interpreting "scalar narratives,

26 "Bangsa" in Mindanao connotes a complex geographic, political, cultural, and historical entanglement. It is the Malay word for *race* used in different parts of Islamised Southeast Asia as a people-grouping concept emphasising shared ethnicity and a political concept denoting nationhood premised on a civilisational history. It also echoes the Tagalog word "bansa," a geopolitical identity more directly associated with statehood and government. See Yamamoto et al. 2011; and Lingga 2016.

classifications and cognitive schemas" as a way of critiquing national cinema was urgent during the presidency of Rodrigo Duterte (2016-2022) as these attributes of scale, as Adam Moore asserts, constrain or enable specific "ways of seeing, thinking and acting" in the world (2008:214).

Changing our mental image of scales may not directly change the world, but it shapes how we engage with and try to change it. For instance, Duterte is the first president to hail from Mindanao and exploited his geographical origins as a signifier of his "marginality" (Altez & Caday 2017; Braga 2017; Holmes 2017:61). Highlighting the regional over the national and the secondary status of Davao City, where he served as mayor for years, over Manila, he won not only the Mindanao vote but also of people who feel they exist in the margins of the nation. Moreover, upon assuming office, he transposed onto a national scale the authoritarian policies he employed in Davao with the people's mandate (Lamchek 2017). Films set in Mindanao during his regime thus took on the significance of the national (KR Tan & Castillo 2019).

Scales, in varying degrees and combinations, co-constitute the meanings and materiality of films like Mendoza's *Mindanao* (2019), Diaz's *Season of the Devil* (2019), and Fiola's *Wailings in the Forest* (2016). The relationship between the ideational and material aspects of scale raises questions about the positionality of subjects in how they see and project themselves to multitiered and hierarchical spatial units and constitute and politicise their places, localities, and territories across interscalar networks (Brenner 2001:600). The three films exemplify the representation, practice, and politics of scales that contribute to the reification or unsettling of scales in (re)producing the social world.

Otherwise known for his urban films depicting abject poverty and extreme violence, most of which make their rounds in international film festivals, Mendoza directed *Mindanao*, addressed to the Filipino mass public, and produced by his company in cooperation with the government's media agency under Duterte. In an interview, he asserts that no film about Mindanao could be made without reference to its conflicts, ignoring films by Mindanaons (Cruz 2019).

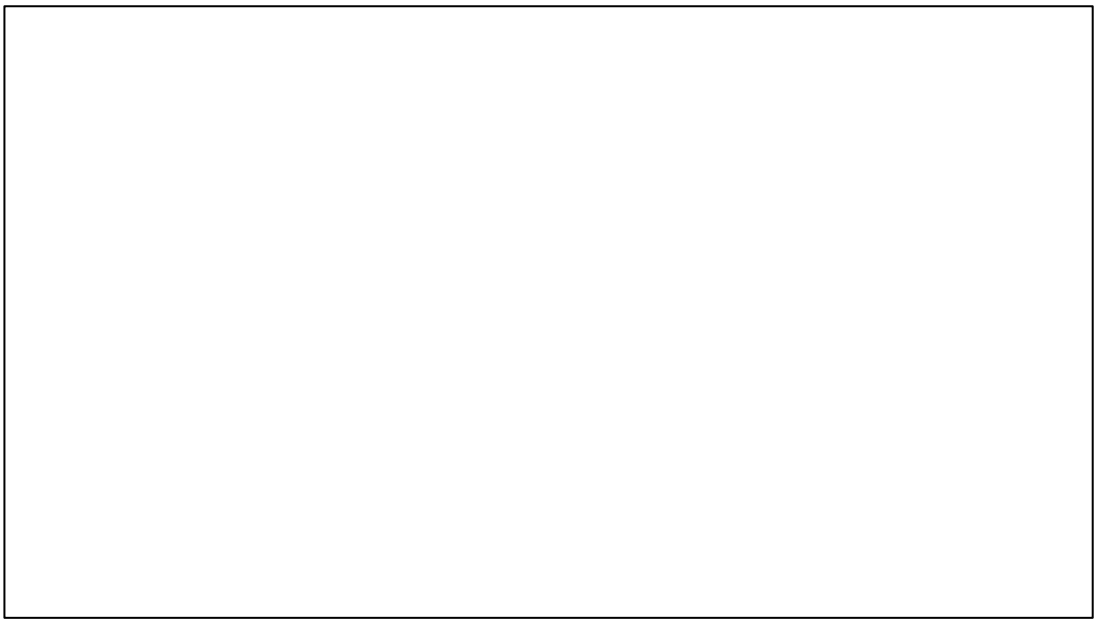


Fig. 18 A promotional image appallingly shows a government soldier wearing a Maguindanaon warrior's suit over his military uniform and bearing the Moro *kris*[27]

Portraying the people of Mindanao as changeless, the non-Mindanaon Mendoza suffers from the provincialism of the centre as he adopts the outsider's view of the government. The problem is his unquestioning acceptance of the state's long-standing scalar fix or reified sense of scale.[28] This scalar fix, entrenched for centuries by the Spanish, American, and Filipino governments, captures Mindanao from a top-down view as an exotic place far away from the centre, a space to be conquered, a national problem (Abinales 2000). By discounting local historicity and refusing a regional perspective, the film obfuscates the meaning of peace and propagandises the state's inflammatory explanation of what ails Mindanao (i.e., unruly, nonconforming Mindanaons themselves).

Meanwhile, Diaz's *Season of the Devil* evokes a scale of terror overwhelming a small town. His scalar strategy historicises sociospatialities by mirroring the atrocious past under Marcos and the dreadful present under Duterte. Over 7,000 soldiers had been deployed in Mindanao since Duterte assumed office; under localised martial law from 2017 to 2019, hundreds of extrajudicial killings, illegal detention, injuries from aerial bombardments, and forced evacuations were reported, not counting the

27 The image is from Cinema Bravo, twitter.com/cinemabravoph/status/1169133980840595456?lang=en

28 On scalar fixes, see Brenner.

casualties of the "drug war" throughout the nation.[29] Diaz takes a locality in Mindanao as a microcosm and transposes the national scale to the regional.

Known for his aesthetics of long duration and expansive visual scales, Diaz is nevertheless symbolically and narratively invested in the scale of individuals who strive under the weight of unjust structures. *Season of the Devil* is no different. Here, he concentrates on the thankless life of a barrio doctor, brutalised and killed by paramilitary soldiers; and the doctor's husband, the poet, struggling to come to terms with her senseless death. Diaz himself abides by a no-compromise ethos, making the films by any means necessary, whether seen by many or few or shown in local theatres or film festivals.[30] He addresses cosmopolitan individuals—doctors and poets—the cultural elite that Trice refers to as the public of art cinema—on a global scale (including Filipino cinephiles taken as global audiences) and invites them to reckon with historical tragedies and conjure an alternative future for the Philippines.

Fig. 19 *Wailings in the Forest*: warring tribes reach a compromise at a zone of encounter

29 On the casualties in Mindanao during Marcos's Martial Law, see Davis 1987, Ch. 5; and during martial law under Duterte, see J. Torres 2019; and Arguillas 2017.

30 In part, Diaz credits his no-compromise ethos to the inspiration of Mike De Leon; see Romulo 2002. On the paradoxical compromise Diaz takes to live by this ethos and the place of Mindanao and other regions in his cinema, see Ingawanij 2021:71; and 2015:109; see Trice on the contradictory publics of alternative cinema.

Homegrown and Mindanao-based Fiola, for his turn, received relatively modest funding from QCinema, a Manila-based competitive grant, to film the lifeways of Matigsalugs, a subgroup of Manobos, in the mountain forests of Marilog, a two-hour trek away from his residence in Davao City (Fiola 2020). The resulting work is *Wailings in the Forest*, whose story and setting are concerned neither with national nor individual scales. Instead, it is about a foraging family living in the jungle and interacting with tribes dwelling in narrower forest clearings and flatter areas. It depicts a nested set of highly localised places populated by different close-knit communities that fix, cross, and redraw unofficial boundaries through conflict, cooperation, or compromise (Swyngedouw 1997:140).

Though not to the extent of Kidlat's position, who lives with the Ifugaos, Fiola, out of place, as it were, negotiated the extent to which he could represent the Matigsalugs and allow them to transform his practice. Though he is from the same province as the setting of his film, he speaks of being taught by the natives about lifeways he never grasped until he moved out of his zone of experience and entered their domain ("Baboy Halas," n.d.; Fiola 2020).

He and his small team immersed themselves in the community, learning its oral tradition that guided their creative process and seeking its permission to film. During production, he invited community members to co-create the film by casting them and asking them to co-direct. When they finished the film, Fiola crowdfunded so that he could return to the community and conduct a proper screening. In other words, their scale of interaction is local and defined by place.

Wailings exemplifies what Ginsburg characterises as the paradoxical flourishing of media founded on the politics of indigenous self-determination "in part *because* of the social and discursive spaces created by the *disjunctures* and *mutual misapprehensions* in the multiple rhetorics of self-making that shape [their] funding, production, and reception" (1995:134). Even "misguided, government policies" and the problematic mismatch of exhibiting native representations in "institutions built on rhetorics of individual self-expression," Ginsburg asserts, occasion "possibilities for [indigenous] communities to envision their current realities and possible futures, and to…create links among indigenous makers around the globe" (ibid.:135). In this light, though Fiola's decisions to enter their domain, collaborate with and screen for the

Matigsalugs, decisions resonating with specific principles of Fourth Cinema, do not produce an indigenous film according to Barclay's irreducible ideal of a native cinema by and for the natives, it highlights a geographically, metaphorically, and politically intermediate and provisional space where a Mindanaon can negotiate his place beside Matigsalugs, recognising their subjectivity, worldview, and shared dwelling.

At the same time, filmed in the forest, *Wailings* leaves no textual clues about its temporal setting. That it bears no markers of modernity indicates the possibility that it is set in the prehistoric past. However, it could also be set in the present, introducing a complex temporality that distinguishes native chronology outsiders might construe as primitive from the viewpoint of colonial or settler time (cf. Dillon 2012). Thus, textually, it is unburdened by the national and unsubordinated to the state. Furthermore, though the film's setting is highly localised, its ecological imagination is horizontally oriented and unbounded, capable of being situated alongside similar jungle spaces across geopolitical boundaries. This reveals how the local and the global scales are conventionally considered discrete, separate, polar, and hierarchical are entangled in planetary space/scale (Swyngedouw 1997; Pratt 2022).

Regionality Transecting Scales of Production and Circulation

In "Small Film, Global Connections" (hereon, *SFGC*), I trace the circulation and map the scalar contexts of *The Right to Kill* (*Tu Pug Imatuy*, 2017), a film from and set in Mindanao by Mindanaon filmmakers Mardoquio (screenwriter) and Barbarona (director), funded by Mindanao-based nongovernmental and people's organisations (Barbarona 2020). Based on actual events, utilising documentary footage, and produced during Duterte's regime, it tells the story of a Manobo indigenous family in the mountains of Talaingod who were abducted, abused, and humiliated and then turned into guides by government soldiers as part of their counterinsurgency campaign. In this section, I analyse the circumstances of its production, distribution, and reception, delineating how regionality transects scales and modulates national cinema in the entanglement of text, context, and address, and reflect further on the complicated intersection between Third and Fourth Cinemas as illustrated by the film.

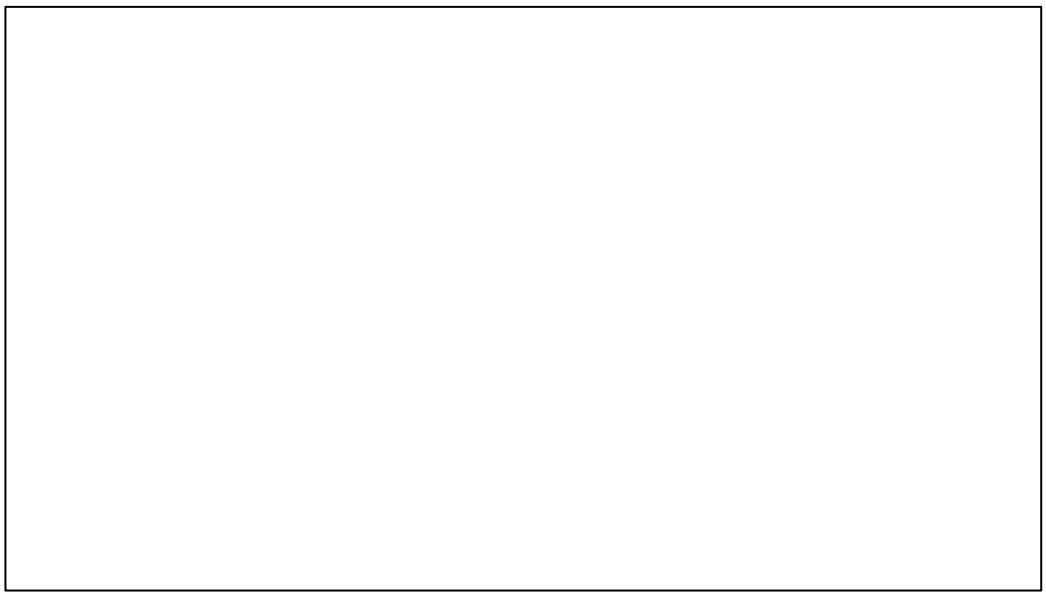


Fig. 20 *The Right to Kill:* government military men accost, humiliate a Manobo family

The Right's association with and circulation via the film festivals CR and Sinag Maynila illustrate how a film's regionality is shaped by its circulation as much as its text and its author's speaking position. Mardoquio's films were screened as part of CR's inauguration, and Barbarona launched his career in the same festival; all the Mindanaon filmmakers I named above have been programmed, actively participated, and supported CR as a site that could amplify their voices. In addition, they formed associations and bonds through the festival with filmmakers from Luzon, Visayas, and not just Mindanao, that helped produce, promote, and exhibit their films beyond the festival proper.

CR, therefore, is vertically and horizontally configured. On the one hand, under the mandate CR enjoys as a government initiative, the festival names "regional" films out of the national cinema formation. On the other hand, it opens an intermediary space for the parallel activities and grassroots comradeship of artists making films from or in the regions. Hence, a topological approach is crucial in appreciating developments in Philippine cinema because it can distinguish definitions of regionality entangled with the state/centre, which, even in its celebration of diverse re-nationalisation, as Rapatan (2017) puts it, is liable, warns Berry and Farquhar, to suppress internal differences in the name of the nation (2006:5-6). At the same time, it

can shed light on the network of grounded and transvergent expressions of regionality, forming a community that does not necessarily take a scalar leap toward the national.

Despite the success of CR as measured by its longevity and growth,[31] exhibition and distribution infrastructures for local audiences in the Philippines beyond the primary cities remain undeveloped. So, though Mardoquio and Barbarona had been active for about a decade before they made *The Right*, they relied on the commercial distributor-cum-festival Sinag Maynila (lit., rays of/from Manila), which specialises in distributing culture-specific "content" to a niche audience in the Philippines and overseas. In this way, the film's condition of visibility reveals a measure of irony in that an openly political film from Mindanao indicting the state and corporate globalists was expressly sought and promoted as an "art" or "foreign" film by a commercial distributor.

The Right's circulation as an "art film" from Mindanao to Manila and international film festivals and back underlines regionality's deictic relationship to location, with the film, in Galt and Schoonover's terms, mediating "cross-cultural communication even in the face of…[the] impossibility of transparent cross-cultural legibility" (2010:11). This Faustian route, to borrow Ginsburg's (1991) expression, permitted *The Right* to be seen by many, eventually winning national awards, including the best director prize from the MPP, placing it in the nationalist canon, before being screened in an edition of CR near the site where the atrocities depicted in the film were committed.

I accentuate the interscalar networks that buttress films like *The Right* to illustrate how the no-compromise values of nationalist criticism, shunning commercial viability and valorising marginality, are not so easily tenable, at least when applied to local films that aim to address wider audiences and in the case of Mardoquio and Barbarona's film, expose the extent of state-sanctioned violence in the national periphery. Otherwise, these films would hardly be visible, even to the communities nearest them.

A topological outlook permits me to be attentive to the unresolved tension between producing microregional films that subvert dominant national cinema from

31 See Appendix C

peripheral places and macroregional circulation enabled by state and market infrastructures of exhibition and distribution. My critique of *The Right* avoids disparaging the top-down state and market production of national and global scale and privileging only the placemaking and noncapital-centric films that construct scale from the ground up. Instead, as with my critique of Bernal's *Manila*, I am concerned with limning their dialectical relation, uneven co-constitution, and the gaps through which films like *The Right* unsettle established formations.

As I assert in *SFGC*, sensitivity to scales broadens the critical contexts in which a film could be made to resonate. When the film was red-tagged on social media, alleging that it was propaganda for the Communist Party of the Philippines, Barbarona released a statement on Facebook explaining his motivation and locating his position.

> This film is part of my journey as a Mindanaon filmmaker. I have come face to face with the people of Mindanao, the Lumad [IPs of Mindanao] and Moro people, each with a story and a struggle that weaves the story of Mindanao. One such story is that of Ubonay Manlaon, whom I met while doing a documentary on the Manobo *bakwit*.[32] She appeared in the last part of the film, where she narrated how she was maltreated by soldiers who forced her to guide them through the Pantaron forest. I wanted to let the audience experience the Lumad's pain of being maltreated in their own land. I wanted to present a movie that mirrors the issues of Lumad killings, attacks on schools, and the destructive nature of mining. It took time to complete this film, as I had to ask for financial support from friends, fellow filmmakers, and church groups advocating for Lumad rights.[33]

In this brief account, Barbarona explains how living in the shared dwelling exposed him to the IPs' struggle for justice and land rights, compelling him to pick up his camera for their cause alongside other nonnative activists and advocates. More directly than *Wailings, The Right* problematises the core issues attendant to political filmmaking in Mindanao. Reflecting on the question of who has the right to kill, he draws upon the Manobos' worldview that the land is their spiritual inheritance and that a *pangayaw* (tribal war) must be waged in the name of *kaangayan* (justice) as a last resort when injustice is brought upon the community by outsiders and no

32 *Bakwit* is a term derived from "evacuate" and describes or refers to displaced Lumad. Canuday (2009) reorients the term by conceiving of the "power" of the displaced to act upon history, reorganise space, mobilise movement, and invite reflexive solidarity.

33 The full statement on which this redaction is based is posted on Barbarona's account dated 27 September 2018, facebook.com/profile/1294179940/search/?q=statement

compromise is reached (Barbarona 2020:63).[34] In a sequence preceding the Manobo woman's decision to fight back, *The Right* shows communist rebels in a skirmish with the military. It implies that national revolution[35] and indigenous self-determination are connected by the land question and these groups' conflict with the state for its facilitation of development aggression. Nevertheless, it highlights their irreducibility and the film's ambivalence toward the politics of Third and Fourth Cinemas, presenting them both without resolving them (cf. Gaspar 2021:518-25).

Barbarona refers to "Lumad killings, attacks on schools, and the destructive nature of mining"—state violence in collusion with global capital perpetrated against individuals, cultures, and the environment. *The Right* was demonised because it addressed urgent issues on multiple scales. It was reaping national acclaim when Duterte threatened to bomb IP schools in Mindanao for allegedly being instrumentalised by communists ("Duterte" 2017). Its international circulation, meanwhile, did not only reveal the plight of IPs in Mindanao to a wider audience; its critique of the destruction of nature as experienced in indigenous lands is premised on the incommensurability of global capitalism with the planetary future.

Transmogrifications of Regional Cinema

I open my essay, "Topos, Historia, Islas" (hereon, *THI*), by recounting a specific experience in 2017 that elicited my reflection on the significance of imagining Mindanao cinema. I co-programmed *The Right* in CR and watched it with an audience of young people in a private college in Mindanao, which was then under martial law. The moment reminded me that in certain places, programming, screening, and spectating films could be dangerous and substantiated Mindanao films' political edge as a peripheral cinema. It also clarified my subject position as an outsider and my abstract understanding of Mindanao cinema without the grounded knowledge gained from a located exposure to the films and entering the zones of interaction with

34 The injustice and violence brought upon the IPs in Mindanao are well-established and documented. See Rodil 1994; Gaspar 2000; and Alamon 2017.

35 The revolution waged by Philippine communists is characterised as "national democratic." See Sison 2006; cf. Tadem & Samson 2010.

Mindanaon artists, cultural workers, activists, and intellectuals, the kind of paradoxical experience I gained as a co-organiser and co-programmer of CR.

In the essay, I presuppose that place-rooted practice is diverse and that regional dynamics are plural and multidirectional. So, I speculate about three topological configurations of Mindanao cinema's regionality that could amend and exceed the conventional view of national cinema.

First, I inquire: in which directions could national cinema be remade if Mindanao, not Manila, were considered its figural centre? Mindanao had been marginalised for much of colonial and national history, with a significant portion of its population suffering from being caught in crossfires, relative or absolute deprivation, militarisation, and resource exploitation. Therefore, films from Mindanao do not only enrich national cinema. In many instances, their very making is a political expression. Their texts, I assert, "function as primary historical artifacts when they open up spaces for grassroots accounts of historical events" (*THI* 162). From this viewpoint, "remapping Philippine cinema with Mindanao as its figural center foregrounds historical wrongs committed against marginalized [national] subjects" (ibid.).

However, privileging Mindanao cinema, though corrective, could reproduce artificial hierarchies and fuel tribalist sentiments, the regionalism that transposes the dogmatism and exclusionary chauvinism of the national (Radhakrishnan 2021:164; Berry & Farquhar 2006:5-6). Hence, instead of conceptualising a singular national cinema in areal terms as a scale containing "smaller" regional cinemas, I broach the second possibility of conceiving plural, localised, and polycentric national cinema*s* (cf. Agnew 1999). Consequently, this way of thinking unsettles "the long-held view of a singular and self-referential Philippine cinema [and] can now give way to perspectival counter-mapping efforts from [multiple] margins" (*THI* 161). From this deictic viewpoint, the vision of the nation is transfigured depending on where one is located at particular historical moments and how regionality modulates the other scales. In this sense, scalar imagination is remade; Mindanao, Luzon, and Visayas cinemas are national, not merely regional, and are related not hierarchically but horizontally.

Finally, moving away from the national and opening toward deeper prenational and precolonial ties in a broader oceanic network, I propose assembling Mindanao not

as a discrete space but as a place in a broader regional network. In so doing, the regionality of its islands, its "contracting and dilating [space] with shifting boundaries, heterogeneous time frames, and lines of connection beyond absolute spaces," can be disentangled from the scalar fix and state-defined national space (ibid.:163). Much earlier than the formation of the Philippine nation-state, Mindanao had maintained strong cultural affinities and economic ties with neighbouring islands, being part of a trading network that included Singapore, Riau, Jambi, Sabah, and Penang, and extended to as far as Cambodia, Siam, and China (Warren 1981; Sakili 2000). For much longer, Mindanao, not the colonially established capital of Manila, was the focal point of what would become the present-day Philippines' regional connections.

The Spaniards did not fully conquer or proselytise Mindanaons for over three centuries. However, when Spain ceded the islands to the US in 1898, it included Mindanao in the nascent nation, even though many of its people groups, especially those that resisted or eluded the colonisers until the end, did not consider themselves Filipinos. The emergence of nationally defined societies, as the experience of Mindanao shows, disrupted distinct and wider regional interdependence. With a brutal military campaign and tailored territorial administration, the American colonial government completed the conquest and nationalisation of Mindanao, loosening its cultural and economic ties with its neighbours and bounding it in (Abinales 2000).

However, the state-engineered nation administrated according to majoritarian and homogenising biases peripheralised places and produced minorities—biases later indexed in minority-produced films or films about minorities and signified by the existence of films from or about the margins (Anderson 1998; Getachew 2019:179). The state also policed the borders, rendering the "national scale as a container," determining who rightly belongs and can enter and who does not and cannot (Agnew 2008:176). Thus, though oceanic links and deep cultural ties were not entirely severed and places remained porous, inter-island movement without the state's authorisation became illegal and illicit.

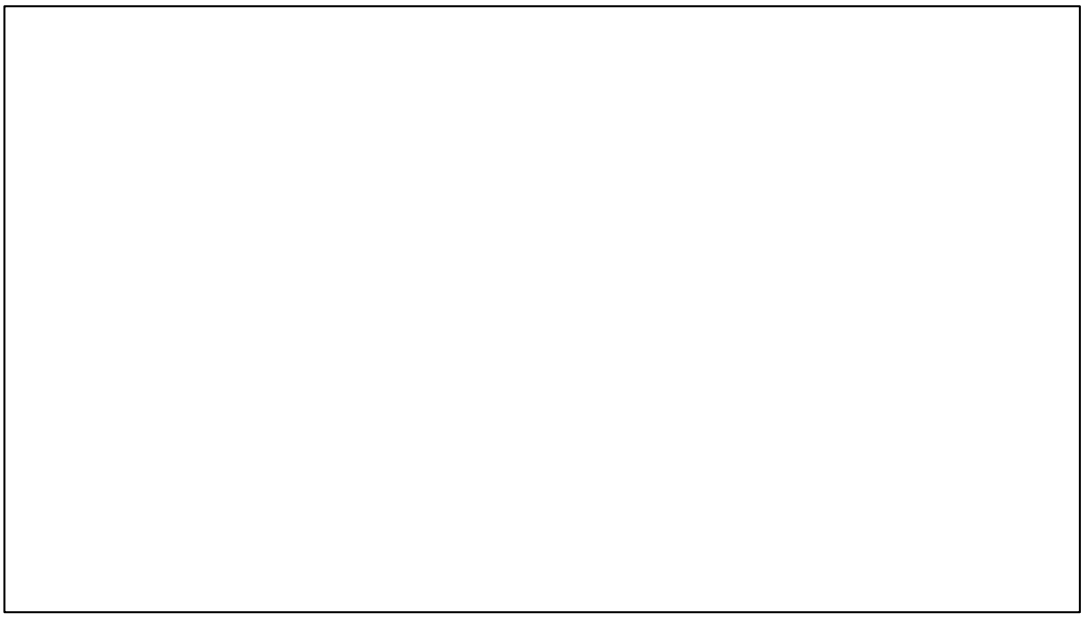


Fig. 21 *The Island Funeral*, about young people from Bangkok terrified of driving to the Thai deep south, resonates with Mindanao more than Filipino cinema

As I illustrate in Chapter 4, acknowledging the southernmost archipelago's checkered relationship with the nation and its quilted relationship with the other places in Southeast Asia activates the regional formation's topological potentialities and undermines the top-down nation-state bounded cinema. For instance, ethnic-religious minority films resonate differently depending on where it is produced, circulated, and received. Muslim narratives and images from Mindanao may appear esoteric to Filipinos beyond Mindanao. However, they could be juxtaposed in productive dialogue with dramas about excluding non-Muslim minorities in Kuala Lumpur or the tension between Islamic conservativism and secularism in Yogyakarta. Thus, "national" culture can be flagged on a macroregional scale for its limiting fiction.

CHAPTER 4 PROGRAMMING TOPOLOGICAL PLACES/REGIONS

From Regional Cinema to Cinema and the Regions

My turn to film programming as I was finalising the manuscript of *TEONC* positioned me to explore further and work out in practice the assumptions and methodology that guided my research. From 2014 onward, I became involved in organising and curating festivals and programmes in/from the Philippines, either loosely described or expressly identified as regional but attempting to intervene in national issues and formations. Programming during Duterte's regime also oriented my practice toward activism, using screenings and moderated postscreening discussions to agitate and raise awareness. In addition, programming places and regions permitted me to consider the practice as a means of mobilising and inviting solidarity.

As the director of the UPFI (2018-2020), I opened the Film Center as a rallying space for activist networks and protests against Duterte's authoritarian policies, for which we have been red-tagged and publicly threatened not a few times by the military.[36] Thus, screening an anti-Marcos Mike De Leon film, Mindanaon works about the militarisation of indigenous lands, or an omnibus like *Ten Years Thailand* (2018), which envisions a bleak future for Thailand under military rule, was a political act in itself as the exhibition space became a locus of resistance, gathering cinephiles, activists, the intelligentsia, sectoral leaders, opposition politicians, and concerned citizens, and transforming them into a virtual coalition as they watched communally and discussed spiritedly after the screenings.

As a cinema committee member (2014-2019) of the NCCA, I co-programmed CR and immersed myself in local film cultures. As noted in *THI*, it is in mounting CR that I grasped the political implications of programming microregional films in places beyond Manila. Since 2017, I have also programmed the NCCA-funded Tingin ASEAN Film Festival (tingin, lit. to look, consider, appreciate), a diplomatic project introducing the Filipino public to Southeast Asian cultures via cinema. Through its screenings, I observed how their interface of micro- and macroregional films "asserted the

36 For example: "UP Film" 2008.

subversive force of [the] marginal position and…destabilized (or at least redefined) the hegemonic power of [the] center" in the spectatorial experience (Kinder 1993:389).

Most illuminating were the responses by the local public in Manila to Pimpaka Towira's *The Island Funeral* (2015), a road movie that follows three friends travelling from Bangkok to the southern Muslim region of Thailand; Yosep Anggi Noen's *Solo, Solitude* (2016), about poet-activist Wiji Thukul, a desaparecido under Suharto; and Rithy Panh's *Graves Without a Name* (2018), about the genocide in Cambodia. Their respective postscreening discussions precipitated conversations about the grim situation under Duterte and stimulated memories of Martial Law under Marcos. A woman compared the situation presented in *Island Funeral* to the Mindanao experience and asked actor Heen Sasithorn why her character, who plays a Muslim, dreaded the journey southward. Bayu Filemon, the cinematographer of *Solo, Solitude*, recounted how lines from Thukul's poetry were chanted in protest rallies leading to the fall of Suharto, prompting an audience member to tell Filemon about Filipino poet-activist siblings Pete and Emman Lacaba (the latter martyred during Marcos's regime) and others still to share their personal Martial Law experiences. A tearful young man, his voice trembling, expressed how moved he was after watching *Graves*, wondering, in measured words, how genocide could ever gain widespread support, hinting, I surmise, at Duterte's "war on drugs."

In these and other postscreening discussions, I witnessed how programming served as a translation machine, opening zones of encounter activated by recognising a common strangeness made comprehensible by trauma and terror as much as by latent solidarity and neighbourliness—positioning viewers to learn about historical experiences in neighbouring places while putting their experiences in better focus. As these examples suggest, curatorial work keyed me to emergent film formations, their fluidity and their interrelatedness. More importantly, it offered glimpses of how programming could create testimonial encounters between spectators and films about "other" regions, open intermediary spaces for cultural translation and cross-border communication, cast visions of a different world via provisional assemblages of places, and summon an alternative public advocating social transformation (Torchin 2012:2; Berry & Robinson 2017:1, 4; Galt & Schoonover 2010:11).

In the following sections, I discuss Cinematic Counter-Cartographies of Southeast Asia, This Land Is Ours, and Lumad, programmes I curated independently beyond state-funded initiatives that substantiate my interest in the power of placemaking films in addressing broad issues and, more importantly, probe a modality for embodying the topological processes entailed in thinking about regionality. Each programme poses a place-centric view, sensitive to subjects' lived experiences. Furthermore, it manifests the entanglement of places in the convergence of scales and how programming, considering the origins of production, contexts of circulation, and spaces of exhibition and reception, can constitute regions that simultaneously enfold and exceed national cinema and enact geopolitical critiques.

CINEMATIC COUNTER-CARTOGRAPHIES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

Cinematic Counter-Cartographies of Southeast Asia (hereon, CCSEA) is an online programme I curated for the UPFI and the Association for Southeast Asian Cinemas (ASEAC), an organisation devoted to studying, promoting, and networking cinemas in the region.[37] The ASEAC holds itinerant conferences and screenings. Thus far, they have been held annually in Singapore (2004), Bangkok (2005), Kuala Lumpur (2006), Jakarta (2007), and Manila (2008); then biennially in Ho Chi Minh City (2010), Singapore (2012), Salaya (2014), Kuala Lumpur (2016), and Yogyakarta (2018). When the 2020 edition in Cebu City was cancelled because of the pandemic, members of the association organised a series of virtual talks and screenings from Thailand (Thai Film Archive), Indonesia (Binus University), and the Philippines (UPFI). The online screening of CCSEA, accessible worldwide and held from 26-30 November 2021, attracted about 800 viewers from different countries.

CCSEA expresses my combined interest in placemaking films and the topological conceptualisation of the regional as a mode of critiquing the hegemonic notion of the national. Its genesis is based on ideas I explored in *THI*. So, though I do not make it explicit, the histories, cultures, and political struggles represented in the two Mindanao films in the programme serve as the pivot in my curatorial consideration of micro- and macroregionalities. In *THI*, I suggested that Mindanao

37 See Appendix B.

cinema could be mapped alongside other regional cinemas in Southeast Asia without reference to national cinema or as a means of transmogrifying it. Correspondingly, CCSEA engages in geographical, thematic, and scalar mapping. Adopting Latour's metaphor of scales networked by strands, films in the programme are envisaged as interwoven places forming topologies of regional cinema (1996:370).

Where possible, CCSEA assembles microregional films from beyond industrial film centres, highlighting emergent peripheral cinemas, such as from Borneo Island, where films by indigenous Kadazan-Dusuns promise to variegate Malaysian cinema already decentred years earlier by the Little Cinema but remain concentrated in the peninsula. The notable exception is the film from the recently independent nation-state of Timor Leste, where production contributes to a nascent national cinema, and is selected as a knot in the assemblage to signify national cinema's continuing significance in the region.

CCSEA also critiques the national from a regional perspective: how nationhood is incomplete and how the centre peripheralises places. Thus, selections are indicated by their regions, instead of countries, of setting or origin, for instance, Mindanao and not the Philippines, Sabah, not Malaysia, Pattani and Chiang Mai, not Thailand, and Rakhine, not Myanmar. These specificities are not merely nominal but indicative of political, economic, and cultural issues addressed to their respective and neighbouring states.

Crucially, the programme juxtaposes films about refugee and stateless peoples in localities across Southeast Asia, highlighting the plight of nonnational subjects, indexing movements in and across border zones, and symptomatising deep historical connections disrupted by colonial conquest and national annexation. Such films flesh out the ethical and imaginative proposition of the programme, echoing Agnew's call to imagine places as "'dwelling' rather than national spaces" and consider the "pursuit of a decent life" as a political responsibility "extending beyond the borders of any particular state" (2008:175-76).

Figures 22-30 Promotional images for Cinematic Counter-cartographies of Southeast Asia utilise the tropes of maps and pins

CCSEA is bookended by *Messenger* (2013) from Timor Leste, about the sacrificial deaths that founded the nation, on one end, and *Silence in Mrauk Oo* (2018), about the violent deaths that fell upon protesters in Rakhine, casualties on which majoritarian political and religious institutions turned a blind eye, on another end. The histories of both states, one separatist and another clamouring for autonomy after centuries of colonial maladministration and forcible national annexation, and the emotive forms their respective films take, offer contrasting perspectives on or subjunctives to the Mindanao experience.[38]

38 For the Mindanao context, see Ferrer, Part 3.

Messenger is qualified by *Memoria* (2016), a film from Jakarta that laments the patriarchal drive that fueled Indonesia's conquest of Timor Leste but warns of ethnonationalism's patriarchy as symbolised by the predicament of Timorese women in the film. Meanwhile, *Silence in Mrauk Oo* is complicated by *Michael's* (2015), set on the Thailand-Myanmar border zone, about the stateless Rohingyas who have no legal identity in Mae Sot and are massacred in Rakhine. These narratives resonate with the minority sentiments in Mindanao, as emblematised in the marginalisation of the deaf Moro girl in *Dreams* (2008).

Living Stateless (2014) and *Fragile* (2016) chronicle the plight of Indonesian and Filipino refugees in Sabah. Based on recent films circulated beyond Malaysia, a case can be made that refugee films partly define Sabahan cinema. Like those in *Michael's*, the subjects in both films suffer from having no legal rights as citizens but risk crossing national borders to escape poverty and conflict in Kalimantan and Mindanao. The three films hark back to a deeper prenational flow of people when borders were open, and their inhabitants, including nomadic seafarers, traded and moved freely (Warren 1981; Hayase 2007).

The titular village in *Panicupan* (2015) is located in a war zone in Mindanao, where Moro, Christian, and IP residents caught in crossfires, as the film documents, successfully negotiate a deal with separatist rebels and government military to treat their homeplace as a zone of peace. I juxtapose the film with *Dialect So-So* (2018), located in Pattani, a similarly ethnoreligious-conflict-ridden area, but where generations of multiethnic neighbours, as the film chronicles, have fostered harmonious relationships despite the raging insurgency. Both films, as with all others in CCSEA, point to places with long histories of conflict, dating to colonial times, with regional and global actors influencing its current shape, yet unresolved on the national level (Rood 2016). At the same time, *Panicupan* and *Dialect So-So* invite spectators to witness or enact transformational processes and imagine a world transfigured in local places.

CCSEA assembles a regionality more complex than simply identifying them as "Southeast Asian," though this aspect remains inherent, as do their "nationalities," strategically kept in abeyance. Such contingent linkages of places and scales bring to light far-reaching issues such as disenfranchisement, statelessness, and climate

catastrophe. On the national scale, these "marginal" issues can be minimised as isolated cases, yet their extent and persistence are undeniable on the regional scale.

The films in CCSEA are curated horizontally, and nearly all signification of hierarchy within and across films points to pestering issues needing resolutions on multiple scales. Individually, the films mark the subjects' sites of struggle, national or otherwise. Their assemblage and transvergence offer a map of a regional imaginary that holds out hope for recognition and solidarity.

THIS LAND IS OURS

This Land Is Ours is part of a multi-site human rights film festival dubbed Nation In Visions, held from 4-15 December 2019 at various independent spaces, including artist spaces, screening rooms, bars, private libraries, and public places such as pop-up cinemas in urban-poor communities, local parishes, public schools, and local-government run multipurpose halls nationwide.[39] As the festival name envisages, it inquires about the human rights situation on a national scale. However, its implementation mobilises grassroots activists and addresses local publics.

This Land Is Ours is one of nine modular human-rights-themed programmes curated by various individuals and composed of Filipino works. It focuses on IP rights and comprises five documentaries. In keeping with my exploration of alternative regionalities, I name the three primary island clusters in the programme to evoke simultaneous regionalities and the national scope of the issues presented in the films. I accent urgent works whose goal is not to showcase cultural identity but to expose the plight and responses of the Ifugaos and Agta-Dumagat-Remontados of Luzon, Manobos of Mindanao, and Tumandoks and Atis of the Visayas and invite spectators to stand with them.

The programme tells of the struggles of lowland, highland, and seacoast IPs in defending their ancestral domains and maintaining their lifeways. Constant among the documentaries is their unveiling of the state's collusion with corporations in the takeover of indigenous homeplaces. Through the films, we witness government

39 See Appendix B.

agencies sue Tumandoks, who refuse to give up their land (*Into the Sea*, 2019) or edge Atis out of their dwellings to make way for resource extraction, big businesses, and tourism projects (*Land of God*, 2018). We also learn how the armed forces set up camps beside Manobo native-run schools, forcing them to close down (*The Right to Learn*, 2016).

That the programme was exhibited in independent and public spaces outside commercial and state institutional venues (except the UPFI) in different parts of the country is crucial in the topological apprehension of my curation. The documentaries open to highly localised places of resistance and offer a configuration of regionality attentive to the politics of placemaking films. At the same time, the screening sites configure another way the organisers stage the spectators' engagement with structures and critiques of power (Tascón and Wils 2017:3).

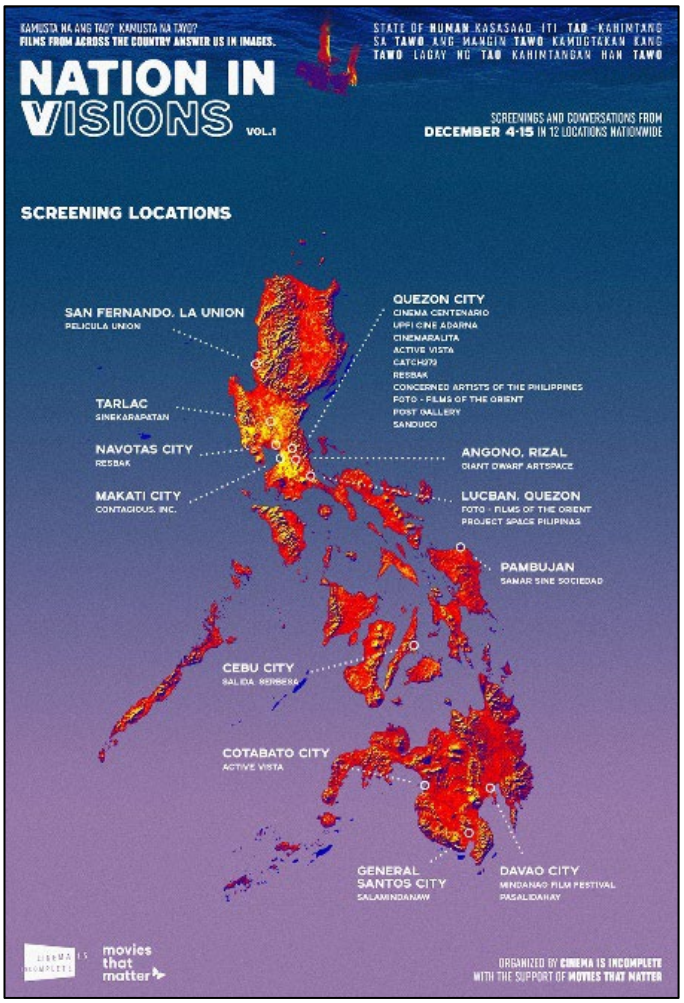


Fig. 31 The programme poster for Nation in Visions details the screening spaces/places

Figs. 32-34 Nation in Visions held in urban-poor communities, bars, artist spaces, etc.

Slum-dwellers, parishioners, public school children, rural folk, and many others are positioned not as cinephiles but as subjects who may have observed, brushed with, or experienced human rights violations in forms similar to or different from the ones presented in the films and are invited to take part in a testimonial encounter mediated by films. Thus, the highly localised exhibition contexts materialise the places of activism, amplifying the programme's resonances and interrelations while allowing spectators and communities to construct their interpretation of human rights from their perspective in light of the plight of others (Tascón 2015:30). The places presented by the films and the networked places of reception are enfolded, unfolded, refolded.

Tascón argues that the "transcendent ideal" of human rights remains "removed from the everyday life of citizens" until it is conceived in "placedness" (ibid.:20-21). However, these rights are emplaced via legal structures within the state apparatus and are arbitrated by "an expert, and elite, knowledge system…in most nations" (ibid.:25).[40] The films in This Land Is Ours concretise this dilemma by exposing how state forces instrumentalise the law to dispossess the IPs. They detail the natives' disenfranchisement and the illiteracy that has kept them from effectively resisting their encroachers on the political and legal fronts. They also show how these groups, in collaboration with advocates and activists, try to raise a new generation of literate land defenders and culture bearers who would not be fooled by legalese (*Inheritance*, 2013; *Into the Sea*). Finally, they show IP leaders' and non-IP allies' efforts to vitalise indigenous cultures and introduce artistic practices in their repertoire of activism (*Tribal Videos*, 2001; *Inheritance*; *Into the Sea; The Right to Learn*).[41]

40 For the IP experience, see Alamon 2017:187-90.

41 *Tribal Videos* documents Kidlat Tahimik's efforts to bring filmmaking to the Ifugaos in the 1990s.

In this way, This Land Is Ours harnesses the energies of Philippine cinema's progressive nationalist tradition and its promotion of political cinema addressing, though in a different and quite direct way, the "masses." At the same time, it contributes to the efforts of nuancing national cinema by heralding marginal filmmaking from and about particular places. However, instead of conceptualising regionality as forming around contiguous spaces, I show how places separated by vast distances share common struggles in the national space. Hence, the programme illustrates how national and regional cinemas are conceptually co-constitutive and materially interdependent. Finally, it demonstrates how films about IPs, as I asserted in Chapter 3 and unpack further below, politicise regional cinema and move it beyond questions of mere cultural representation.

LUMAD

LUMAD comprises four films dramatising and chronicling the travails and activism of the IPs of Mindanao in the 2010s and their fight for their rights to land, education, and self-determination. It was curated for Minikino, a Bali-based organisation that promotes short films and coordinates a network of microcinemas throughout Indonesia. The screenings in May 2021 were free of charge, although audiences were invited to donate to the cause of the IPs through the Save Our Schools (SOS) Network in the Philippines.

Minikino subtitled the films in Bahasa Indonesia, and the programme was presented in three spaces in Bali and one in Aceh. It also organised a hybrid event that allowed me, the filmmakers Barbarona, Kristoffer Brugada, Cha Escala, Davao-based SOS spokesperson Rius Valle, and the documentary subject, Chricelyn Empong, to interact with the audience and the programmers at MASH Denpasar. Empong is from the Tinananon-Manobo indigenous tribe of North Cotabato but was displaced by militarisation to Bukidnon and then to the *bakwit* school hosted at the UP, where she finished her high school education. Her father was extrajudicially executed during the production of *Bullet-Laced Dreams* (2020).

The programme's title does not refer to any particular IP group but, in the vernacular, means native or indigenous. However, Lumad, with the capital L, has been

used since Marcos's Martial Law to refer to the collectivity of politically self-organised non-Moro IPs in Mindanao (Arguillas 2021). While they used Lumad as a form of self-identification originally affirmed by 15 of the 18 ethnolinguistic groups, it became a legal term in the immediate post-Marcos period to distinguish them from Muslims, when the law creating the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao was signed, officially birthing the concept of the tri-people—Lumad, Moros, and Christian settlers. While this development recognises multiculturality in Mindanao and legalises inclusivity, it is liable to flatten the political and economic differences among them and the Lumad's exceptional marginality (Ferrer 2013:68; Paredes 2015; Rodil 1994).

Lumad leaders, activists, and their allies have been constantly harassed and killed for collectivising and resisting trespassers (Gaspar 2000; Alamon 2017). However, while curating the programme, the state was pressing down hard on the Lumad during the presidency of Mindanaon Duterte, no less (Arguillas 2021; Sy 2023). The legal harassment, illegal detentions, and extrajudicial killings of activists and human rights advocates, including the Lumad, were rampant (as the programme documents).

Ironically, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, the state agency formed to look after the welfare of IPs, passed a resolution in 2021 banning the use of Lumad under the pretext that it did not respect the uniqueness of ethnolinguistic groups (Arguillas 2021). Furthermore, the Duterte-created National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict claimed that Lumad was invented by communists ("terrorists"), a claim that doubly endangers IP communities already suffering from the militarisation of their homeplaces ("FALSE" 2021; "VERA FILES" 2021). Fifty-five indigenous schools were forcibly closed that year, totalling 178 since Duterte took office in 2016 (Canuday & Sescon 2022:xii).

The programme was assembled in response to the government's delegitimisation of IP collectivity. It grapples with the claims made by the state and the material ground of regional cinema in Mindanao. It also wrestles with the limits and contradictions of my position as a Manila-based programmer seeking to stand with the Lumad. I relied on years of conversation with activist filmmakers and Lumad advocates for insight into the production processes. Though held in Bali, I made sure to connect the programme to the needs of the *bakwit* schools through the SOS Network and the public resistance to state threats. In the postscreening discussion, it was crucial that

the problem of nonnatives making films about IPs was discussed openly and that Valle and especially Empong could speak for themselves about Lumad matters.

Curating the programme occasioned my reflection on who gets to speak for IPs and from where. For if, as Mary Louise Pratt puts it, “no one is Indigenous until somebody else shows up,” then making films about natives and programming them for publics that may or may not think they have stakes in these natives’ past or future are fraught political acts requiring reflexivity (2022:84; Canuday 2009:161-65). That is, the condition of indigenousness not only denotes origins but recognises a historical situation in which invaders or settlers arrived and displaced subjects from their homeplaces; it also underlines the material reality of encroachment and loss of land (Tuck & Yang 2012). Therefore, being a nonnative, I am simultaneously in a position of complicity and called upon to stand with them, and as long as they have not regained their land and justice and peace are not achieved, then my contradictory position cannot be resolved; I cannot reconcile it myself.

Titling the programme LUMAD signified the priority of political collectivisation for social justice as affirmed by the Lumad themselves against state pressures, from the Martial Law period to the present, over my insistence on advocating place-based cultural specificity (Alamon 2017:192-95; Alejo 2018; Arguillas 2021). Ethnolinguistic groups may possess distinct and continually transforming lifeways depending on their location and interactions, but their common struggle for land and against colonial and state aggressors is part of their shared history as Lumad, a history threatened to be erased. My topological approach permits me to hold these two positions in tension and explore how each programme can embody their urgency and ambivalence, far from offering a final say (Dovey 2015:xiii, 20). In This Land Is Ours, I prioritise the enfolding of geographical distances and particular places, while LUMAD, responding to state threats, supports the Lumad’s defence of the oneness of their identity and cause and the power of their name.

Fig. 35 Filming the Lumad struggle on different fronts: in their highland homeplaces; in the evacuation centres in Mindanao cities; in Manila, the seat of government; and in various communities beyond Mindanao where children pursue their education in dislocation

LUMAD traces the multidirectional movements on the ground that animate the Lumad fight: the Lumad's own efforts in building their schools and defending their homeplaces in the highlands (*Boye's Smile*, 2014); nonnative schoolteachers from the city who share Mindanao as a dwelling, devote their lives to Lumad causes, and live with them even in their displacement (*The Right to Learn*); the Lumad who travel from Mindanao to the seat of state authority in Manila, joined by peasants and labourers, to protest global-regional economic integration that facilitates multinational corporations' entry in their domains (*Kalumaran*, 2015); and the *bakwit* moving around the country, and the host communities and volunteers who come together to support their education and daily needs (*Bullet-Laced Dreams*).

Most films about the Lumad have been made in collaboration with, but not solely by them, that is, not yet with the IPs' complete control of image-making and distribution that Barclay advocated in his call for a Fourth Cinema. Nevertheless, the state's conflation of Lumad and communist "ideologies," the way it demonises the Lumad's belief that land is sacred and is owned by no one and everyone (Gaspar 2021:513-18), and how it mistakes the Lumad's defence of their land as a form of communist rebellion, is telling of why and how political film praxes intersect. Thus, "Lumad cinema," an idea initially suggested in *SFGC* and as the programme conceives it, is located between Third and Fourth Cinemas, allied in certain respects, in dialogue, transvergent, but ultimately unreconciled.

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson makes an edifying assertion about the national dimension of IP activism. According to her, the most radical form of Indigenous resurgence is "nation building, not nation-state building" (2016:22). After all, she asserts with Glen Coulthard, the IPs' struggle is shaped by "their intimate relationship to *place*" and their politico-ethical practices "based on deep reciprocity" (2016:254, emphasis added). It is about land but not land ownership; it is about sovereignty but not state sovereignty; it is about inclusivity and not exclusivity (Watson 2007:20; Goeman 2015; Gaspar 2021). Thus, the emergence at this juncture of a Lumad cinema strikes at the heart of nationalism and inflects the politics of national cinema.

At the same time, according to Linda Tuhiwai Smith, naming IPs as an identity enables "the collective voices of colonised people to be expressed strategically in the *international* arena" (2012:7). For this reason, I programmed LUMAD for Minikino to bring the dialogue on IPs' rights closer to particular places and lived experiences and activate its international call for solidarity (Tascón 2017:30). The programme addressed an Indonesian audience that I assumed, based on their proximity to IP groups in their country, grasped the issues presented in the films. In addition to the Lumad experience, we discussed the semantic distinction in Bahasa between *pribumi* (native), with its racial-national connotation, and *asli* (original), which is nearer the meaning of *lumad*.

Figs. 36-38 Top: screenings in a microcinema in Aceh and al fresco in Bali; bottom: a hybrid-format conversation at MASH Denpasar

Films about IPs politicise regional cinema because their existence attests to the long history and continuation of the process of accumulation by dispossession, whose terminus and holocaust, if uninterrupted, is not just the extinction of IPs but the destruction of the planet. From this perspective, programming places and regions is not restricted to drawing boundaries around idealist notions of natural and cultural endowments but speaks to broader spatial politics such as climate justice, land tenure, and rights to places. In this context, programming indigenous films or activist films about IPs is a form of scale-mapping that produces a range of positions, some contradictory and some incisive.

CONCLUSION

Focusing on the particularity of places where films are produced and circulated can subvert hegemonic cinema formations. It can ramify national cinema imaginaries and foreground the plight, travails, and expressions of subjects who bear the weight of the national, especially as imposed by the state plugged into the global political economy.

At the same time, the topological approach I am proposing highlights the dynamic, incomplete, and contestatory processes of regionalising peripheral place-rooted and placemaking films to offer an alternative to a statist and market-driven national cinema. Such an approach is attentive to how scales, when reified, reproduce the values of dominant cinema that obscures the struggle of (national) subjects; foregrounding alternative scalar interconnections forges new conceptual affiliations. It is also sensitive to points or moments of contradiction, including one's position, inviting constant reflexivity and further reassessment of one's assumptions and practice.

As the discussion indicates, programming places and regions challenges established formations and expands the already flexible concept of regionality. Furthermore, when new variables are introduced in the assemblage, they stimulate non-hierarchical comparisons and an intuitive and associative process of internal reorganisation. Thus, programming CCSEA, This Land Is Ours, and LUMAD is a heuristic and dialogical process that negotiates shifting deictical and dialectical regionalities. It theorises, if not animates, the dynamics of transforming potentiality into actuality and problematises how universal claims (e.g., human rights, IPs' rights) are translated into concrete action/places when nested in social practices and deployed in activism.

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APPENDIX A MORE INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMMES DISCUSSED

2021 Cinematic Counter-Cartographies of Southeast Asia

About the Programme

Cinematic Counter-Cartographies of Southeast Asia is an online programme co-presented by the University of the Philippines Film Institute (UPFI) and the Association for Southeast Asian Cinemas (ASEAC). It explores a configuration of a topological Southeast Asian regional cinema, deliberately moving away from the national cinema framework and showing an open-ended regional formation in process and tension. It emphasises places rather than nations and features nine short films from Dili, Jakarta, Sabah, Mindanao, Pattani, Chiang Mai, and Rakhine.

The programme streamed online for free from 26 to 30 November 2021 and was accessible worldwide; it attracted about 800 viewers from different countries.

About the Organisers

The ASEAC, an organisation devoted to studying, promoting, and networking regional cinemas, holds itinerant conferences and screenings. Thus far, these have been held annually in Singapore (2004), Bangkok (2005), Kuala Lumpur (2006), Jakarta (2007), and Manila (2008); then biennially in Ho Chi Minh City (2010), Singapore (2012), Salaya (2014), Kuala Lumpur (2016), and Yogyakarta (2018). When the scheduled 2020 edition in Cebu City, in the Visayas, central Philippines, was cancelled because of the pandemic, members of the association put together a series of virtual talks and screenings organised *from* Thailand (Thai Film Archive), Indonesia (Binus University), and the Philippines (UPFI) and presented online.

curatorial note

Even if a film does not display a map as such, by nature, it bears an implicit relation with cartography.
—Tom Conley, *Cartographic Cinema* (2007)

No literal maps are highlighted in the nine films from Timor Leste, Jakarta, Sabah, Mindanao, Pattani, Chiang Mai, and Rakhine that constitute the program. However, a range of places are traversed, and identities navigated in figurative cartographic explorations: mountain hideouts, rolling hills, seaside villages, town centers, rural peripheries, periurban communities, humble abodes, and their denizens and residents—natives, migrants, transients, fugitives, unsettled and displaced, trying to make a home, dreaming of the freedom of mobility. The images are rich with topographical elements, and the narratives offer topographical devices to guide spectators in understanding what defines locations, be they neighborhoods connected by dirt roads and

shorelines, paths snaking through informal settlements, unmarked expanses, landscapes divided by wired fences, and seas that bridge islands.

Rural sociologist Nancy Peluso proposed counter-mapping to characterize the maps redrawn by forest users in Kalimantan, Indonesia, that sought to contest state maps that eroded the place of indigenous inhabitants of the domain. The same spirit of counter-hegemonic remapping, critical of official discourses on identities and territorial boundaries, quickens the gathering of these films.

However, the program also performs a cartographic détournement. It takes the most vaunted ideas that underpin the conventional bases for the regionalization of Southeast Asia, such as the celebration of ethnic diversity and multiculturalism, international security agreements, economic integration, and the fiction of uninterrupted national histories that altogether obscure the disciplining operation of cartographic control, and renders these visible from the differential perspective of lived experience on the ground.

The program maps historical, political, economic, and cultural interconnections and entanglements between and among Southeast Asian islands. It offers a comparative opportunity to grapple with the challenges of and responses to territorial overlaps, borderland existence, military aggression, and historical injustices. It does so by moving away from an areal view and the topographical regionalization process on the scale of nations. Instead, it moves toward a topological reinterpretation of place—that is, unfolding the view from *somewhere* and tracing vital nodal connections that happen beyond or despite changes in topography.

The people we meet in these stories and documentaries bear visions of the region, in their mind's eyes, as sites of personal potential yet unrealized and as material locales where they struggle for survival and meaning. Journeying with them, we can gain insight into regional formation's dynamic, situated, and performative processes and find a Southeast Asia that imbues a local substance to our neighborly imaginings.

selection

1. Francisca Maia's *Mensajeiru* (Messenger) / 2013 / Dili, Timor-Leste

   Set in Timor Leste during the 1999 vote for independence from Indonesia, *Mensajeiru* tells the story of a fifteen-year-old boy who follows his brother on a journey to save his community.

2. Kamila Andini's *Memoria* / 2016 / Jakarta, Indonesia

   Set in Timor Leste, the film tells the story of Maria, a victim of sexual violence during the country's dark years of Indonesian occupation, trying to leave her traumatic memory behind while her daughter, Flora, tries to secure their future.

3. Bebbra Mailin's *Rapuh* (Fragile) / 2016 / Sabah, Malaysia

   The documentary follows an Indonesian family living in Sabah, Malaysia, and is told from the perspective of twelve-year-old Nirwana, who dreams of becoming a singer despite her family's struggles arising from their political, economic, and cultural displacement.

4. Vilashini Somiah and Matt Fillmore's *Di Ambang* (Living Stateless) / 2014 / Sabah, Malaysia

   Di Ambang chronicles the lives of undocumented Filipino migrant families fleeing the conflict in Mindanao to live in Sabah. This documentary explores statelessness and its consequences on generations living unrecognized by any country.

5. Sheron Dayoc's *Angan-Angan* (Dreams) / 2008 / Mindanao, Philippines

   The film centers on nine-year-old mute girl, Satra, who lives in Basilan, an island province in the Sulu Archipelago, and is determined to secure a good education despite the strictness of her Yakan Moro cultural upbringing.

6. Bagane Fiola and Keith Bacongco's *Panicupan* (Rendezvous) / 2015 / Mindanao, Philippines

   Panicupan focuses on the titular village in Pikit, North Cotabato, whose residents worked toward clearing "Spaces for Peace," where Moro, Lumad, and Christian settlers could live peacefully and harmoniously amid the conflict between the government forces and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

7. Abdulromae Taleh's *Dialect So-So* / 2018 / Pattani, Thailand

   Dialect So-So documents the success of the Thai-Chinese-Buddhist minorities in fostering harmonious relationships in predominantly Malay Muslim neighborhoods in the Thai South despite the insurgency and conflict in their area due to cultural and religious differences.

8. Kunnawut Boonreak's *Michael's* / 2015 / Chiang Mai, Thailand

   Among the different economic and religious networks in Mae Sot district, a city along the Thailand-Myanmar border, the documentary follows 'Michael Rofik' and 'Michael Mohamad' Yameen, two Rohingyas struggling for their livelihood while trying to maintain their identity. Although both migrated long ago, they do not belong to either Thailand or Myanmar.

9. Than Kyaw Htay and Thadi Htar's *Silence In Mrauk Oo* / 2018 / Rakhine, Myanmar

   The film tells the story of a young man returning from Yangon to Mrauk Oo where a riot broke out between police and Rakhine protesters. He searches for answers about his father's death from political and religious leaders but is met only with silence.

2019 This Land Is Ours

About the Programme

Nation in Visions was a one-off multi-site film festival held from 4 to 15 December 2019 at various spaces in different parts of the Philippines. Implemented around Human Rights Day (10 December), the festival featured nine modular human-rights-themed programmes composed of Filipino works. One of them, **This Land Is Ours**, which I curated, comprises documentaries from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao produced between 2000 and 2019 that tell of the struggles of lowland, highland, and seaside Indigenous Peoples in defending their ancestral domains from encroachers and maintaining the dignity of their lifeways.

About the Organisers

Nation in Visions was organised by the Philippine-based film collective Cinema Is Incomplete, funded by the Netherlands-based Movies That Matter, a nonprofit foundation supported mainly by Amnesty International, and presented by a loose nationwide consortium of grassroots collectives and artists' spaces.

curatorial note

This Land Is Ours brings together five documentaries shot in different localities in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, which show the situations of indigenous communities in the archipelago. Be they lowlanders, mountain peoples, or seaside communities, their struggles are alarmingly similar. They are not only marginalized and considered lowly in the very places where they are the natives. They are also being actively displaced and threatened by state institutions, the military, big businesses, and the tourism industry and forced to give up their birthright—their land and identity.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples reminds us of the rights of the land's original inhabitants—that they should be free of discrimination and free to determine "their own visions of economic and social development" while keeping intact the integrity of their age-old cultures.

The documentaries invite us to reflect on why ancestral lands are the last frontier for state and capital. Indigenous Peoples have valiantly resisted or consistently eluded colonizers and land-grabbers for centuries and continue to resist encroachers, which is why their homeplaces remain the source of the richest natural reserves and corporations, in collusion with law and power, are greedy and restless to dispossess them. These films demonstrate that their fight for education, cultural integrity, and land continues in the present: there is yet time, no cause is lost.

selection

1. Kidlat de Guia's *Tribal Videos* / 2001 / Luzon

   Filmmakers come and go to film the magnificent rice terraces, but an Ifugao village in the mountains of northern Luzon adopts artist Kidlat Tahimik, who in turn teaches the community how to make films so they can document their culture and bring the wisdom of ancient education back into their schools.

2. Jeremy Agsawa, Kel Almazan, Geia de la Peña, and Jen Tarnate's *Pamana* (Inheritance) / 2013 / Luzon

   An Agta-Dumagat-Remontado lowland community in Quezon Province comes together to establish their school to teach academics and, more importantly, help strengthen their young people's sense of cultural identity, hoping that a new generation of culture bearers and land defenders would soon rise to protect the legacy of their ancestors.

3. Arnel Barbarona's *Pagbarug Tu' Pagtuon* (The Right to Learn) / 2016 / Mindanao

   Two kinds of people enter the Lumad community in Davao del Norte, Mindanao: schoolteachers such as Ricky Balilid, who come from the city to bring education to the Lumad children, and the military that sets up camp beside the schools and intimidate the children, their parents, and schoolteachers. This is the story of around 400 Manobo students and teachers from Talaingod, Davao del Norte, who have evacuated their militarized ancestral domain to seek shelter in Davao City.

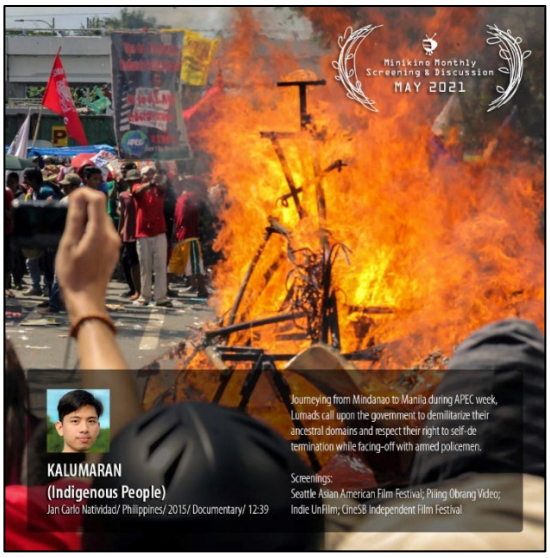
4. Anna Katrina Velez Tejero's *Halawod* (Into the Sea) / 2019 / Visayas

   The state's National Irrigation Administration sues the couple Romeo and Berna Castor, members of the indigenous Tumandok tribe, for refusing to give up the rights to their land in Calinog, Iloilo, while members of their community reflect on their need for literacy and education so that their youth can stand up against invasion in the guise of legalese.

5. Kevin Piamonte's *Lugta Ke Tamama* (Land of God) / 2018 / Visayas

   As the world-renowned seashores of Boracay are continually commercialized and environmentally exploited to attract tourists and bring in so-called development, the Ati, the province's indigenous inhabitants, are forbidden to swim and fish in the sea and pushed further back inland to the margins.

2021 LUMAD



About the Programme

LUMAD is a short film programme I curated in response to an invitation by Minikino for their May 2021 monthly screening. It comprises four films dramatising and chronicling the travails and activism in the 2010s of the Indigenous Peoples of Mindanao, collectively self-organised and named Lumad.

The Lumad have always struggled against their ancestral domains' militarization and the harassment and killing of their leaders. However, at the time of putting together the programme, their illegal detention, extrajudicial execution, the closing of their schools, and even the red-tagging of the name Lumad were becoming more brazen under the counterinsurgency efforts of Rodrigo Duterte's government.

Thus, the programme is motivated by activist intentions and brings the situation to a broader macro-regional audience.

About the Organisers

Minikino is a Bali-based organisation that promotes the short film form, holds a year-round monthly screening programme and the annual Minikino Film Week and Bali International Short Film Festival, and coordinates a network of micro-regional film spaces and organisations throughout Indonesia.

Minikino subtitled the films in Bahasa Indonesia, and the programme was presented in three spaces in Bali (Uma Seminyak, Badung-Bali, MASH Denpasar, Denpasar-Bali, and Rumah Film Sang Karsa, Buleleng-Bali) and one in Aceh (Mini Teater BPNB Aceh).

Minikino also organised a one-off hybrid event that allowed me, the filmmakers Arbi Barbarona, Kristoffer Brugada, and Cha Escala, and the documentary subject of *Bullet-Laced Dreams* (2020), the Lumad Chricelyn Empong, to interact with the audience and the Minikino programmers and speak about the human rights violations happening in the Philippines. The discussions confirmed that most Indonesian viewers recognised the Lumads' experiences as similar to the plight of many IPs in Indonesia.

curatorial note

Lumad, in the Cebuano language, means native. However, in the Philippines in the 1970s and '80s, it referred to the collectivity of Indigenous Peoples in the southern islands of Mindanao that organized themselves and mobilized for cultural regeneration and political self-determination during the Marcos dictatorship. The Lumad comprise 50 per cent of the Indigenous People groups in the archipelago.

The Lumad have resisted or evaded the Spanish and American colonizers through the centuries. Today, they continue to defend their ancestral domains from land-grabbers, resist the militarization of their communities, and struggle

to keep the integrity of their lifeways through education centered on love for their sacred land.

In the last two decades, with the emergence of regional cinema beyond Manila, more and more films that highlight the plight of the Lumad have been produced. The rise of Lumad cinema politicizes regional cinema and situates it in translocal space alongside indigenous cinemas worldwide, where the struggle for land remains vital.

The journey of Indigenous Peoples is at the heart of the Filipino people's history, and their survival is tied up with the future of the nation's land.

The program traces the experiences and crusades of the Lumad during the Aquino and Duterte presidencies. It features films documenting their resilience in the face of displacement and their acts of resistance despite experiences of brutal violence. These works feature the Lumad or were made in collaboration with them.

The program is also a political statement, as Indigenous Peoples are displaced, their schools are closed down, and their families and supporters are harassed, red-tagged, arrested, and killed. As the legitimacy and name of the Lumad collectivity are undermined, depoliticized, and demonized by the state, the program serves as an indictment and calls on our neighboring regional public as witnesses.

selection

1. Hugh Montero's *Pahiyum ni Boye* (Boye's Smile) / 2014

   Lumad girl, Boye, and her community take it upon themselves to build their school, despite the many challenges and threats, to strengthen their cultural bearing and resolve to stand up to encroachers.

2. Arbi Barbarona's *Pagbarug Tu' Pagtuon* (The Right to Learn) / 2016

   Ricky Balilid, who moved from the city to be a schoolteacher at a Lumad community, finds himself in an evacuation center with hundreds of Lumad after military and paramilitary troops occupy their lands.

3. Jan Carlo Natividad's *Kalumaran* / 2015

   Journeying from Mindanao to Manila during APEC week, the Lumad call upon the government to demilitarize their ancestral domains and respect their right to self-determination while facing off with armed police officers.

4. Kristoffer Brugada and Cha Escala's *Bullet-Laced Dreams* / 2020

   As Duterte places Mindanao under martial law, uprooted Lumad children move around the Philippines to pursue their education, protest their displacement, and express their indignation against the continued killings of fellow Lumad back home.

APPENDIX B OTHER REGIONAL FILM FESTIVALS MENTIONED

2014-2019 Co-Programmer/Co-Organizer, Cinema Rehiyon

Cinema Rehiyon (est. 2009) is the only annual Philippine film festival featuring the best and emerging works from the regions outside the film industrial capital of Manila. It is funded by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA).

CR was established as a flagship project by the cinema committee in 2009 to further the mandate of the NCCA and recognise the growing body of films from the regions. Its first two iterations were held at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in Manila to showcase and, by so doing, designate "regional" films. From its third year onward, it was transformed into an itinerant festival held annually in a different city or town in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, although the tenth edition was held again in Manila. In its fourteen-year history, thus far, it has programmed hundreds of films of varying lengths and forms and forged a vibrant nationwide film community grounded in creative and affective commitments to promote national and regional cinema.

Yet, despite its longevity and continual growth as obvious measures of its success, one of CR's most significant challenges—and, for programmers like myself, one of the precious opportunities for theorising it provides—is the need to negotiate constantly the curatorial praxis that underpins it. By the mandate of NCCA as a national agency and CR's reiterative nature, the film festival proceeds from the notion of a unified national cinema as a given. In contrast, each festival iteration produces a contingent regional cinema framework complicated by recognising place-based and

place-rooted filmmaking as points of conceptual departure. Moreover, each edition is spearheaded by a different festival director in close coordination and consultation with the committee. Thus, every CR edition asks: what is regional cinema? The programme in any given year yields a slightly or drastically different answer.

The following have been the venues and themes of Cinema Rehiyon.

2009 Manila, National Capital Region: AlterNativo

2010 Manila, National Capital Region: Films from the Other Philippines

2011 Davao City, Mindanao: Forging Philippine Cinediversity

2012 Bacolod City, Visayas: Empowering Regional Cinema

2013 Los Baños, Luzon: Nurturing Cinemas of Home

2014 Cagayan de Oro City, Mindanao: Filming the Frontiers

2015 Cebu City, Visayas: Sa Kinasang-an sa Ikapitong Alampat (At the Crossroads of the Seventh Art)

2016 Cavite City, Luzon: Celebrating Cinema Communities, Celebrating Cultural Legacies

2017 Compostella Valley, Mindanao: No Walls, No Ceilings

2018 Manila, National Capital Region: One Country. One Cinema. One Future.

2019 Dumaguete City, Visayas: Elevating Regional Cinema

2020 Naga City, Luzon: Sarong Gatos sa Sanga-Sangang Dalan (A Hundred Crossroads)

2021 virtual: Voices from the Margins

2022 virtual: Katilingban. Kalibotan. Kabag-ohan. (Society. Earth. Rebirth.)

2017-2022 Programmer, Tingin ASEAN Film Festival

Tingin ASEAN Film Festival (est. 2017) is dedicated to introducing Southeast Asian cultures to the Philippine public. It is funded by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts of the Philippines (NCCA). Originally held as a one-off event to mark the 50th anniversary of the ASEAN in 2017, the festival has since outgrown its primary diplomatic function, although its notion of the regional remains contained within the ASEAN framework. Before the recent online editions, Tingin was held in mall cineplexes in some of Manila's dense business districts.

Like CR, Tingin is constantly under review and reconfigured. From the generalist selection process of the first two editions ("ASEAN 50," "Southeast Asia Through the Eyes of Cinema"), themes were eventually allowed so that by the third through fifth iterations ("Indigenous Stories," "Remedies for Dis-ease," "Imaginaries of Neighborliness"), more place-based and transnational films in line with my curatorial interests were given space. Recently, NCCA had agreed to drop "ASEAN" and thus its statist connotation from the festival's name and use "Southeast Asian" in its place.