

Short Film in the Balkans and Eastern Europe

Deadline for abstracts: February 15 2025; deadline for submissions: May 15 2025.

Guest Editors:

Fabio Bego (Independent Researcher)

Ana Grgic (Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania)

Irina Tcherneva (CNRS — Centre national de la recherche scientifique, France)

Archives are spaces of power expressions. They are places where power is stored and information is selected and converted (Azoulay 2019). At their foundation, archives are essentially patriarchal, paternal, and colonial institutions designated to preserve and expand the political order which founded them (Derrida 1996), however archives are also “sites of memory” (Nora 1989) which preserve traces of cultural and social experiences, practices, and resistances. For this special issue, we invite scholars to consider how short films reinforce and challenge archival power. Our aim is to draw attention to the way in which short films reverberate and reflect the (dis)continuities of state-building projects, political activism, and regime changes in the Balkans and Eastern Europe throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. More than thirty years after the end of the Cold war, the region now demands a decolonial view of its past, archives and memory, one that is shaped by “a multivocal discourse” (Sendyka 2022), encompassing multiplicity of creative expressions and intersected temporalities (Petkovska 2024). This special issue aims to shift film studies perspective in four ways: by focusing on short films (non-fiction, fiction, and hybrid forms) that tend to have a marginalised position within distribution circuits as a result of social, cultural, and economic practices, and technological advancements; by approaching their aesthetic, political and narrative specificities, their artistic and archival re-usage in contemporary times; by examining transnational connections, networks, and exchanges of filmmaking practices; and, finally, by decentering our gaze on the context of the Balkans and Eastern Europe. Doing so, we hope to make a contribution at the intersection of area studies, film studies and postcolonial studies (see Mazierska, Kristensen, & Naripea 2014). Ultimately, we seek to understand how the meanings, histories, and practices of the short film have contributed to reinforcing or challenging categories, taxonomies, and relations which have served to shape our knowledge of the Balkans and Eastern Europe, given that the short film has rarely attracted scholarly attention.

While the history of “author”-centric and national cinemas of Eastern Europe and the Balkans is quite well-established (see Imre 2005, 2012; Iordanova 2001, 2003; Mazierska & Goddard, 2014), the histories and filmmaking practices of abundant and varied short film forms are lesser known and rarely considered (see Česálková & al, 2024). We are interested in original research on hybrid and experimental works, newsreels, and documentaries made by filmmakers, artists, amateurs, and film professionals both within smaller state-funded studios and within film clubs, film collectives, and other institutions. This special issue also invites scholars to engage with the historicity of short formats by questioning the connections between short film practices, archives, and their dependence on the political conjectures throughout

the 20th and 21st centuries. What room for manoeuvre did the short format allow for collectives, minority groups, filmmakers and political activists? To what extent was the short film affected by censorship practices within specific national contexts? And how did the short format contribute to forms of alternative filmmaking practices (in terms of film expression and sometimes political orientation)? How did the intertwining of the market economy, political liberalism, and the predominant role of festivals and archives in the film industry since the 1990s shape the directions it took?

Furthermore, the uniqueness of short formats should be seen as contributing to cultural exchanges between the various blocs during the Cold War. After World War II, films were used as a way of stimulating collaboration and solidarity between the socialist Eastern European and Balkan countries and the communist and socialist movements of (post)colonial states and societies (see Salazkina 2023). With the end of communism, a major part of this film heritage was deemed as mere propaganda and marginalised by the dominant discourse in national film histories and historiographies. However, these films remain relevant today, since the discourses and events that marked the history of Eastern Europe and the Balkans echo the imperial and colonial politics prevalent in other parts of the world. Through the analysis of short films, we aim to reflect on the way in which the wake of democratic regimes and “Westernisation” affected conceptions of race and politics of transnational relations.

Through this special issue, we also hope to reconsider such films, in order to explore the memories and limits of decolonial politics in state socialism and beyond. What was the role of film in fostering direct and flexible transnational connections between the countries of Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the rest of the world? How did coproductions affect short film plots, creativity and the perspectives through which stories are told? Could these connections be mapped out dynamically, and what form might they take at the beginning of the 21st century? We are especially interested in case studies which explore the relations between Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and (post)colonial states in Asia, Africa, and South America through fiction and non-fiction short films (e.g. films or newsreels documenting anti-colonial movements, such as the Angolan war of independence, the anti-apartheid movement, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Cuban revolution, the Vietnam war, etc.).

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- The aesthetics and history of an evolving short cinematic form (politics of production and usage of audiovisual archives in Eastern Europe and the Balkans; censorship in archival film practices and creative approaches used in short films to circumvent censorship, etc.)
- Exhibition practices and spaces (film festivals and short films; film collections and modes of programming short film; film museum exhibitions; curation and programming of archival short films in cinemas; short film programmes on TV and digital streaming platforms, etc.)
- Short film and archives (short film archives, regional cooperation and civic engagement; low budget and DIY approaches to experimenting with short forms and archives; queer film history and archiving in the context of the short form; community and collective archiving, resistance archives and short audiovisual forms)
- Short film and memory (transition from analog to digital in the context of film archives and accessibility; memory and short cinematic forms in a digital age; re-use of archival short films in compilation film; curating and exhibiting short films in film museums or cinemateques)
- Transnational perspectives, inter-regional connections, and decolonial practices (third cinema; the non-aligned movement; militant films, newsreels and anti-colonial move-

ments; feminist movements and short film practice; short films and post-colonial/post-imperial histories in the Balkans and Eastern Europe)

Submission Guidelines:

We invite scholars to submit papers that engage with these topics, offering fresh perspectives and rigorous analysis. Submissions should be original, unpublished works that contribute to the study of the short film form in the Balkans and Eastern Europe.

Please send an abstract (250 words + 3–5 bibliographic references) and a short bio (150 words) to lucie.cesalkova@nfa.cz, jiri.anger@nfa.cz, irina.tcherneva@cnrs.fr, bego.fabio@gmail.com and ana.grgic@ubbcluj.ro by **February 15, 2025**. The authors will be informed of the decision by **February 28, 2025**. The deadline for submitting the full article is **May 10, 2025**. The special issue is slated for publication in January 2026. The detailed submission guidelines can be found on our journal's website here.

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