

# Research on Colombian Cinema

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## 1. A Look Back: A Brief Account of Audiovisual Production in Colombia

An investigation into Colombian cinema bears a strong resemblance to the cinema production of that country. Both are marked by a general unfamiliarity with what preceded them; both are incipient but more important than the general public estimates; and both lose their impact when fragmented or not communicated to others.

National cinema has always been subject to the ebb and flow of cultural politics of a state that goes from little support for the film industry to not supporting it at all, and back again to providing some help. The promotion of the industry has not been enough, even though we must recognize that in the last years this situation has improved a little thanks to Law 814 in 2003 (the “Cinema Law”), which for the first time regulates and promotes cinema activity in the country.

The public and Colombian cinema have undergone a relationship marked by encounters and disagreements, mutual convenience and the ongoing complaints of audiences facing the combination of cinema reality and violence that appears in Colombian cinema. This has led to the public’s inability to connect with the stories that the national cinema presents.

In the first half of the 20th century, Colombian cinema took inspiration from Colombian literature. This gave it characteristics similar to that literature: bucolic, local, romantic, with high doses of nostalgia for the countryside (especially in the transition from rural to urban areas, which began in the fifties with a massive migration to the cities). These characteristics clearly appear in works of literature such as *María* by Jorge Isaacs; in 1922 this became the first movie in Colombian cinema (Máximo Calvo, director). In these early years, other movies that claim the “campesino” style include *Alma Provinciana* (Félix Rodríguez, 1925), *Allá en el trapiche* (Roberto Saa, 1943), and *Flores del valle* (Máximo Calvo, 1941). Unfortunately for the history of Colombian cinema, many of the early movies were lost or have deteriorated in family or personal archives, and today none of these copies are conserved due to the lack

of state policies on archives and document conservation, policies that took form only in 1986.

Between the first years and the 1940s, Colombian cinema dedicated itself to designing an idealized image of the country through a nostalgic cinema featuring rural values, traditional customs, and folklore. Between 1922 (the year of the first production) and 1940, Colombian cinema released 13 movies featuring these themes alone. From the 1950s only five productions remain, none of them representative of the national film history; only in 1965 did the first milestone in national film making occur, with the exhibition of the movie *El Rio de las tumbas* (Julio Luzardo, 1965), a political film of good technical quality and storytelling. This movie preceded another big production *Pasado el meridiano* (José María Arzuaga, 1967), which according to many critics, marked a pivotal point for the history of Colombian cinema.

In the 1960s and 1970s the influence of international movements such as Italian Neo-realism, the French New Wave, and the Brazilian Cinema Novo became evident in Colombian cinema. A committed and activist film movement, with Marxist political influence and a greater tendency to documentary, introduced a new group of young filmmakers educated abroad. They brought to the big screen “complaint stories,” inspired by internal conflicts and social inequalities.

The 1980s manifested the need in Colombia to build a national film industry, even over the objections of a wide range of critics and aesthetic concerns. Some good movies had to share space with a variety of films of the so-called “popular cinema,” which sought to reach the public with light products, ranging from the purely entertaining to the grotesque. Its main purpose was to build up a Colombian film tradition that a mass audience would enjoy, through a simple narrative technique with low technical costs—a cheap film that would achieve good results. Some Mexican movies of great commercial impact in Latin America such as *Sor Tequila*, *Capulina*, and *La India María* compounded this phenomenon by highly influencing the Colombian industry. The Mexican industry’s success generated similar stories in Argentina and Brazil (*pornochanchada*). The big dif-

ference for Colombian cinema against other Latin American output was a very tentative initiative to include sexual ingredients in a conservative society.

In the 1990s the number of films produced in a year decreased considerably. This was in part due to the closure of FOCINE (the state enterprise dedicated to the promotion of the film industry in Colombia). However, this low production coincided with the production of some of the best movies in the history of the country such as *La estrategia del caracol* (Sergio Cabrera, 1993), *La gente de la Universal* (Felipe Aljure, 1993) and *Confesión a Laura* (Jaime Osorio, 1990). (One should not seek a causal link between these events.) Since the launch of the new law regarding cinema, the film industry in Colombia has experienced a boom characterized by the production of more than 10 movies a year, with more public assistance to movie theaters and an increase of film premieres on television. This latter increase arises from the support that private TV channels give to Colombian films. RCN, for example, created a division called RCN Film dedicated to investing in the executive production of films. This has benefitted the film industry in terms of marketing and promotion, though it has not proven as beneficial to film narrative, which has been affected by an aesthetic of television drama. However, this rate of production, speaking in terms of the industry, is still fairly paltry compared with other countries in the region such as Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina. Ticket sales are completely inadequate since, for example, Colombia's highest-grossing films in history barely reached a little more than a million viewers and since 1996 (the year of launch of the industry) only 19 films reached the minimum audience of 200,000. A look at 2006, which is the most successful year so far for Colombian films, shows that the national cinema box office reported 2,807,000 viewers out of a total of more than 20 million total cinema viewers, or only 13.8% (according to data to 2007 from the Fundación Proimágenes en Movimiento, which administers the cinema law). In the same period we find more dramatic cases, such as in 1997 and 1999, where the box office for local films did not constitute 1% of the total cinema admissions, a situation similar to the consistent figures before 1990, although there is not much hard data about this issue.

Recent years have generated much optimism and, certainly, the film industry in Colombia is growing little by little; yet we must be realistic in affirming that we have only changed the diapers to enter a period of early childhood in Colombian film.

## 2. The Study of Colombian Cinema

It is important to clarify, first of all, that the information presented below does not constitute a "state of the research" done in Colombia and other countries on Colombian film, but rather a description of some of works published on this issue, intersected, obviously, by government policies of research encouragement and support. This provision could serve as input for a study of these things, which not only identify which and how many studies have occurred but also report the results and the methods used to address the study objectives, as well as the main topics studied. Such a report would help to avoid the repetition of similar works, which often take no account of their direct antecedents.

There has been little research on film in Colombia, in fact less than what academics might think, though, in recent years, interesting initiatives to compile what has been achieved in this way have emerged. It is frustrating to discover almost a commonplace in research projects that "in Colombia nothing has been done in audiovisual research." (Personally, when I serve in juries in competitions at the local or national level for assessment of undergraduate and master's theses, I note that the citations used usually refer to international authors, some Latin American, but only a couple of Colombian authors. The research projects undertaken in Colombia rarely appear as background for future national research on similar topics.) The responsibility for this lack of knowledge about what has been achieved in research does not rest solely on the researchers, but also on the (increasing) efforts in classifying the material in Colombia—the results of investigations which could find publication in books and articles.

In recent years, however, there have been some good and important initiatives to promote audiovisual research and raise awareness about what has been done. We should acknowledge the work that entities such as the Ministry of Culture and the Mayor of Bogotá have done. Similarly, we have inventories of the work of institutions like the Museo Nacional de Colombia and the Bogotá District Cinematheque, as well as the presentation of the 12th Annual Ernesto Restrepo Tirado History Lecture, which in 2008 had the theme "versions, subversions, and representations of Colombian cinema: Recent investigations." Similarly, we find the important database of "Colciencias" (Departamento Administrativo Colombiano para el Fomento de la Ciencia y la Tecnología) which lets you view the titles of research in all fields of knowledge in the country. For

this review, we conducted a thorough search of the research on Colombian film in areas of communications and the arts. The database does have a major drawback: it only mentions the names of the projects, without any possibility of knowing the contents and results of these studies. Magazines like *Extrabismos* and *Kinetoscopio* have also carried out reviews of research into film in Colombia. All of them were taken as the basis of the information in this text.

One of the major difficulties in a review such as this arises with the thin line between film criticism and history, since many of the most important books on the subject of national cinema and its history do not rest on research but on criticism or film appreciation, which slightly reduces the scientific impact. In addition to addressing the major international theoretical issues which deal with related subjects of film studies and the visual image, one could say that the vast majority of film studies in Colombia are based on two emblematic authors who have addressed the issue of film history in Colombia: Hernando Martinez Salcedo Pardo and Hernando Silva. The vast majority of the works probed have as a reference the works of these important authors, whose work was essentially between the 1970s and the late 1990s in examining the different periods of Colombian cinema and understanding a little better whether we can speak of a Colombian film style in the strict sense of the word.

In 1978 Hernando Martinez Pardo published *Historia del Cine Colombiano*, which first compiled the main Colombian milestones and has become an indispensable book for those who wish to draw different historiographies of national cinema. That noted, we cannot ignore the major French film critic Georges Sadoul (1973) who briefly referred to Colombian film. The work of Martinez Pardo is the most important historical record of hits in national filmography. It constitutes an important analysis of the development and evolution of cinema in Colombia, so much so that more than 30 years later a work that updates or supplements the tracking and analysis that Martinez did has not yet appeared.

Meanwhile, in the early 1980s, Hernando Salcedo Silva (1981) offered an interesting collection and analysis of the Colombian silent cinema period, tracing it from the first signs of cinema in the country (two years after the invention of the cinema), through the first feature films in the 1920s, reaching the late 1940s. His work combines anecdotes about the film activity in the country with an interesting approach to a periodization

of cinema in Colombia. In this last category its ranking of the critical periods in Colombia and their relationships to newspaper reports, film appreciation, literary criticism, and scholarship stand out. The film chronicles of Hernando Valencia Goelkel (1974), one of the most important film critics of the country, provides a benchmark that appears frequently in later studies. It provides not only the chronicles but also important documentation about the cinema of the period in which it was written, taking into account the important career of its author, who began this task in the early 1950s.

The work of these authors is very important, but unfortunately many theoretical investigations on the subject of Colombian cinema do not go beyond these references, and it is clear that each new project does not know much about its direct antecedents, which has led to repeatedly addressing the same issues regardless of the findings of similar initiatives. This situation has generated a great ignorance of what is researched at various institutions as well as a general feeling that nothing has been done on film research in Colombia.

Apart from the books mentioned before, we must consider other less widely used texts such as Valverde (1978), with its important testimonial collection of some of the most important figures of the Colombian film, and Laurens (1988), which makes some important contributions from the historiography of the period but mainly from criticism. Several compilations of texts of important Colombian critics have appeared, such as the three volumes of Alvarez (1988, 1992, 1998), which include chapters collecting some of his work published in the newspaper *El Colombiano*, on the issue of Colombian cinema. Other important compilation books are Ramos (1982) and Osorio (2005). Both works collect articles already published by their authors; in the second case it is very important to acknowledge the author's intention to take an historical approach to the selection of certain articles so that it is not just a compilation text. The compilation of major articles by Caicedo (1999), a novelist and film critic of the caleño film, deserves a special mention as well. He has become a cult author, who throughout the 1970s directed the magazine *Ojo al cine* and whose work of film criticism was picked up by friends and filmmakers Luis Ospina and Sandro Romero. From a thematic point of view, one can find books such as Sanchez (1987) on film violence, which does not constitute an analysis of the topic, but provides an important resource for research by presenting the transcripts of the original scripts of four of the most important Colombian films



on the subject. Despite its nascent state, we must recognize that what has appeared contributes much more than what people have usually estimated. We should also recognize a great evolution between the first academic papers, which are very akin to the critics where data alternates with opinions, and the later ongoing investigations, with their greater scientific rigor and more appropriate methodologies for the study of national film culture, drawing on disciplines as diverse as history, sociology, literature, linguistics, and communication, among others.

According to the Colombian historian and critic Oswaldo Osorio, it could be said that “what has been written about the film in the country does not even correspond, as it would be logical, to the slow and episodic dynamics of film production, but its process has been even more sluggish” (2008a, p. 6).

### 3. Research Interests

Clearly, however, a renewed interest in research related to national cinema has now emerged, fueled by growing interest in film production in Colombia and by the rise of Colombian professionals studying for their Masters and Doctorates in this field at (mostly foreign) universities. According to Pedro Adrián Zuluaga “If in the '60s the practice of cinema in Colombia was hit by the return of directors formed outside their country, something will happen, or is already happening in the field of audiovisual studies” (Osorio, 2008a, p. 4). Reviewing the titles of the studies that we have inventoried in the aforementioned collections, we find a large interest in the topics of (a) periods of Colombian film, (b) the relationship between film and industry in Colombia, (c) the work of auteurs, (d) the documentary, and (e) film criticism and film societies.

#### A. Periods of Colombian cinema

Perhaps the most studied period in the history of Colombian cinema is the pioneer one. Scholars from disciplines such as history, communication, and sociology have taken this approach, which obviously constitutes a crossing of interesting paradigms, seen often in interdisciplinary studies. In addition to the texts by Laurens (1988), Valencia (1974), Salcedo (1981), and Ramos (1982), we see other initiatives that study particular periods. As noted, the first pioneers of cinema receive the most attention, without a doubt. This subject interests Edda Pilar Duque (1988, 1992). In these texts, Duque explores the beginnings of Colombian cinema with reference to the activities of film direc-

tors, as well as to the efforts of early exhibitors, highlighting among others the figure of Camilo Correo, the founder of the oldest cinema chain that still exists in Colombia, Procinal.

Along the same line we find some texts that aim to go beyond the storage of important archival material to propose more careful analysis; cultural or educational institutions (national or regional) primarily sponsor these studies. In this regard we have work by González and Nieto (1987) examining 50 years of “talkies” from the Acevedo archive; by Nieto and Rojas (1992) on the Olympia film group and the Di Domenico family, a work funded by the Colombian Film Heritage Foundation; by Atehortúa (1999) on the larger cultural impact of early film experience; by López (2008) examining the mixed background of the culture of “Manizales,” a work sponsored by the institute for Culture and Tourism of Bogota; and by Cadavid (2006) on the visual memory of Colombia in film, released by the University of Antioquia press.

On the period of the “surcharge law” [basically, the 1970s, named for a 1972 law that affected film company organization and production policies — ed.], a number of books analyze the audiovisual products made under the policies of FOCINE: an edited volume by Cinemateca Distrital (1982) specifically on the effects of the law and Restrepo (1989) on the short- and medium-length films of the period. On the cinema of the 1980s one finds fewer research studies; among them it is interesting to point out the autobiography of Gustavo Nieto Roa, *Una vida de película* (1997). The book provides an inside look at a kind of autobiography often overlooked in the country, with a focus on commercial and popular cinema, whose main representative is the author of the book and whose accomplishments are so important that we speak of *nietorroismo* to refer to the Colombian comic film directed to the general public. Of the approaches to this issue, perhaps the most important as an input for researchers in the field is the collection assembled by the Fundación Patrimonio Fílmico Colombiano (2005), *Largometrajes colombianos en cine y video 1915-2004*, an important compilation that includes not only references to documentary and fiction films in the history of Colombia but also synopses, some data concerning production, and brief critical comments on some of the films. Here we see a beginning of work from the universities by research groups.

### *B. The relationship between cinema and industry in Colombia*

This subject is also outlined in some texts. Some books refer to the subject of legislation on cinema. Besides the brochures and information on the law of cinema, Suárez (1988) specifically discusses Colombian legislation on cinema; more economic detail appears in the studies published in Convenio Andrés Bello/Ministerio de Cultura/ Proimágenes en Movimiento (2003). Rey (2003) examines cultural policies and trends in cinema in *Evocar la vida: Contextos y variaciones en el cine latinoamericano reciente*, a piece based on a conference given at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston in September, 2003.

Despite the absence of many books on the subject, this topic appears over and over in the calls for research conducted on the subject of film and in thesis programs in communication and economics. Along these lines, Acosta (2008, p. 34) found 13 papers related to this issue in the country. Along with the projects related to the history of Colombian cinema (19 projects) such research addresses the more common interests in Colombia, many of them having a very strong presence of conflict issues, violence, and cinema. This interest appears more strongly in studies from the U.S. academy where we can find over a dozen papers on the topic of violence in Colombian and Latin American cinema. The studies made by American universities show very important details about Colombian film from an outside perspective; these include the work of Suarez (2005, 2008a, 2008b), Caro (2006, 2008), Kantaris (2007, 2008) and Lopez (2000, 2003).

### *C. The work of auteurs*

When it comes to the work of auteurs, the films of Victor Gaviria, with their neo-realistic character and quasi-documentary nature, strongly related to contemporary urban violence in the country, receive a great deal of interest. The historical, social, and stylistic relevance has captured the attention of researchers; therefore, we can find interviews and analysis of his films in Ruffinelli (2002) which, according to the critic Oswaldo Osorio “is the most complete treatment that has been done on the Antioquian director, addressing his visual universe, literary themes, and methods from several perspectives: Criticism, analysis, interviews, and testimony of its employees” (Osorio, 2008b). His work has a powerful attraction to researchers from U.S. universities who have discussed the issue of Colombian cinema—for a list, see Suárez (2008b).

This is why we can find studies of his work published in Venezuela (Dunno Gottberg, 2003), as well as two interviews made with Gaviria (2002; Driver & Jennings Tweddell, 2008). In addition there are studies such as the doctoral thesis by Jácome (2006) and the analytical work on the issue of the “disposable human condition” made by Jáuregui and Suárez (2002) starting from the analysis of the characters in three Colombian films, where issues such as the objectification of the individual and the loss of their human dignity in the term “disposable” is explored. Wilson (2007) explores Gaviria’s film, *Rodrigo D No Futuro* and offers a comparison between the film *Umberto D* by the Italian neorealistic director Vittorio De Sica and the film by Victor Gaviria.

On the cinema of violence in Colombia, as well as touching the work of Gaviria, Kantaris (2008) published an article on urban cinema and violence in Colombia, and Quintero (2007) investigates Gaviria’s work in his doctoral thesis at Wayne State University. Other auteurs who have received academic attention relate more to the subject of the documentary, which I will mention in the next section.

### *D. The documentary*

The theme of the documentary is particularly important for Colombia, since these films are particularly important in the 1970s, starting from the interest of the filmmakers to denounce the country’s social problems and to make an important contribution to community support. The documentary of the 1970s is characterized, as already mentioned, by the political tendencies of the left and the almost militant position in support of the communities affected by social problems in Colombia.

It is important to note that, unlike film, documentary production is not centralized in Colombia. The most important schools of documentary filmmakers in Colombia have emerged in Cali in the 1970s and Medellín in the 1980s. Important initiatives have also emerged with projects from the Colombian Caribbean coast, and of course, from Bogotá. The development of the documentary in recent years has also been strengthened by the appearance of film schools like the National University in Bogotá and the impetus given by the school of documentary filmmakers from Cali that has grown under the School of Social Communication at the Universidad del Valle.

Gender has also received support from regional and national television, and in this regard we find projects of documentary series such as *Yuruparí* (promoted

by Audiovisual, the state capital firm in the 1980s), *Rostros y rastros* of the Universidad del Valle de Cali and *Muchachos a lo bien* of the Regional Corporation and the Social Foundation in Medellín. These projects, among others, have not only had a major impact on the momentum of the documentary, but also in recording the history and stories of the country and its regions.

In the order of ideas, research on documentary has also gained great significance and has received greater interest in research projects in the country. Among the works we find books such as Gutiérrez and Aguilera's (2002) study of the Colombian documentary and more than a dozen graduate theses related to the topic. It should be noted that from the research groups registered in "Colciencias" several projects relate to the theme of the documentary, although the number is probably bigger than what has been reported.

### *E. Film criticism and film societies*

Critics and film clubs in Colombia have not been limited to their everyday work and, given the great importance of both movements in the country, have published some work on their craft, and the significance and limitations of what they do in a country like Colombia with its major problems of cultural policy and management. The memories of film critics' meetings in Pereira appear in Ossa (1999); short stories and essays by film clubs promoted by the National Association of "Cineclubes," in Colmenares (2003); works on and about journalistic film criticism, in Posada (1996) and Restrepo (1997).

## **4. Academic Research**

To the panorama above we can add projects funded by the universities of the country. These appear marginalized by many of the compilations due to their low profile and little impact, resulting in a limited number of books and articles available for search. Colciencias, the main government agency responsible for the promotion of research in Colombia has a database to register production research groups called GroupLac. GroupLac assembles lists of researchers, projects, products, and research groups by areas of knowledge and universities. If the registration of titles of research appears in the database, though, it will only mention that they have been made or were made, but without further references to these studies we can only assume that the files will be on the shelves of universities with limited access. To this situation we must add the fact that Colciencias Colombia lists very little in regards to the promotion of

research from the social sciences or from the arts, because it channels its support primarily towards technological innovation, towards experimentation in the hard sciences, and towards the neuralgic problems of the country where they have identified strategic interests. Communication is obviously absent in the big picture and film is only a little less so.

A review of the GroupLac database, without doing an exhaustive check of the existence of the published results of the studies, shows projects related to Colombian film from the faculties of arts, communication, and social sciences. To search for what was investigated in the film area, we conducted a search of the research groups that relate to communication, sociology, history, and visual arts, finding a total of 445 research groups. In communication 95 groups appear in Colciencias, of which only 26 are recognized and grouped by Colciencias in categories A, B, and C, according to their level of expertise and intellectual production. Of the 95 groups, only five have some level of output related to the subject of the study of film from some perspective, although more than 10 declare film in their statements as their object of study.

The research group on Colombian communication, culture, and citizenship of the National University of Colombia reports a research line in film history in the 1970s and two projects related to the theme of film, but curiously none of them in relation to the 1970s. The products are an article published in the journal *Signo y Pensamiento* (Acosta, 1999) and a book published by Goliardos (Mora, 1999).

The Javeriana University of Bogotá has a group working on communication, media, and culture; it has a line of investigation in culture and media narrative and one which produced studies on narration in Colombian film from 1950-2000 (Alba & Ceballos, 2002) and two articles by Arias: "Cine y vida cotidiana en la Bogotá de los años veinte" (2007a) and "Glauber Rocha: una estética (política) del cine" (2007b). The group also presented a paper on nationalistic discourse in recent Colombian cinema at the Twelfth Annual Lecture of History Ernesto Restrepo Tirado in 2008. Similarly, we find listed the doctoral thesis of Maritza Ceballos of the Autonomous University of Barcelona *Puesta en escena de las pasiones en el cine. Tesis de doctorado; 1998 – 2005,* [Staging the Passions at the Movies, 1998-2005]. Published in TDX (Theses and Dissertations Online) in 2006, it forms the basis for two articles Ceballos, 2006a, 2006b).

At the University of La Sabana we find listed the Media Research Center, which declares a line of



research that focuses on mass culture and cultural industries with a study project called “Narratives of the conflict set up in Colombian cinema” developed by Sandra Ruiz Moreno and Jerónimo Rivera Betancur between 2007 and 2009. The publications of the group include articles on armed conflict and Colombian cinema (Ruiz, Escallón, Niño, Romero, & Rueda, 2007), characters in Colombian films (Rivera, 2007a), the history of Colombian cinema (Rivera, 2007b), and cinema as entertainment (Rivera, 2008).

In the city of Medellín the research group IMAGO has developed two projects related to film. In the first, Jerónimo Rivera, Uriel Sánchez, and Jhon Jaime Osorio have conducted research on the consumption habits and preferences of the students of the first semester of communication in relation to the cinema and the contribution of the former to their skills prior to their college entrance. The second project, undertaken by Ernesto Correa and Jerónimo Rivera, was about the characters, the actions and the scenarios of the Colombian film between 1990 and 2005. Among the projects listed appear papers for the meetings of the Latin American Federation of Faculties of Communication (Felafacs, Bogotá, 2006), the Film Festival “Feria de las Flores de Medellín,” the VII Conference on Research at the University of Medellín, and the 10th anniversary of the Faculty of Communication of the Catholic University de San Antonio in Murcia, Spain in 2007. We also find articles on the film consumption patterns of students (Rivera, Osorio, & Sanchez, 2006a), images and sound (Rivera, Sanchez, & Osorio, 2006), villains in Colombian movies from 1990 to 2005 (Lopera, 2007), the fragmented continuity between cinema fact and fiction (Correa, 2002), anecdotal cinema (Velez, 2007), and the fictional treatment of local events (López, 2005). From the same center comes a book on film narrative (Correa, Rivera, Caminos, & Ruiz, 2008). It was published under the imprint of the University of Medellín with the participation of research groups in Colombia, Argentina, and Spain and came about as a result of the VIII Conference on Research at the University of Medellín.

Also at the University of Medellín, the Communication and Identity group conducted a research project related to the topic of cinema: the representation of identities of Medellín in a documentary about the city between 1994 and 2005. Derived from this project and other works of the group, C. López (2008) wrote about identity and industry in Colombian film, based on university practices, while A. López (2008) reports on the

documentary as a text in representing the city, a chapter of the book resulting from the journeys of investigations of the University of Medellín.

The communication research center at the University of Manizales has presented three film projects: “Tropología del Cine. Metáfora, metonimia, alegoría y símbolo en el cine de autor” [Film Tropology. Metaphor, metonymy, allegory and symbol in the art-house] (2008) and “Trabajo de análisis poético y retórico de tropos al interior del cine de autor contemporáneo” [The work of poetic analysis and rhetorical tropes within the contemporary auteur cinema] and “Mitos y arquetipos en el cine contemporáneo occidental” [Myths and archetypes in contemporary Western cinema] (2007). The center has also published features on the productions written by Carlos Fernando Alvarado for the newspaper, *Página*, which from their titles could be criticism or movie reviews rather than research texts.

Out of all the research groups from history departments, we found one that relates history to visual sources from the National University of Colombia in Medellín. This group presents a tutorial on Italian neorealism and a project planned to create a basis for consultation of audiovisual materials and theoretical literature on image, film, and video to structure a line of research in history and film. However, we do not know in what state the project is, which was dated for 2006. It is worth noting that, although there are groups with topics that could be studied by way of film such as identity and cultural memory, we did not find any projects listed from studies related to film and history.

Finally, I have the feeling there is a large undercount in the area of the arts. Out of 145 groups registered in Colciencias, only 16 groups appear recognized and updated. Some names of the groups suggest an interest in cinema and audiovisual research, but one cannot know the details of their academic approaches. At the same time, we must recognize that the format established by Colciencias favors scientific research and many research groups in the area of film mix academic research with artistic work. This explains why they probably will not appear in light of the measurement rubric applied to them. In this regard, researchers in this area have complained in several academic scenarios where Colciencias has previously made its presence. However, we must recognize the existence of some projects that come from the area of arts. First, the research group, “Reflections on the production of audiovisual material” at the Manuela Beltrán

University of Bogota presents three research projects on audiovisual production which has products related to the theme of film. These include the “Painted scenarios of expressionist cinema” by Ricardo Guerra in the seminar, “Let there be light: a journey through the history of cinematography photography” (2008) and “the use of film and audiovisual as a source for historical research” by Juana Rubio in the Audiovisual Festival of “El Cerro de Guadalupe” (2008). There are also some degree projects related to the topic of cinema. Some groups with names and lines of research that are very interesting appear yet they do not provide any information on projects. This is the case of the groups “Documentary Colombia” and “Kinos, perpetual motion” of the National University. This last one only mentions the completion of a study in 2006 on film technology. This situation also occurs with the research group “History of the Colombian film” of the University “Nueva Colombia,” which has no information recorded. The research group “Estudios de la imagen de la Universidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano de Bogotá” presents research in Colombia, 2007–2008, which has no related information that has been published.

We know that beyond the borders of Colombia, some research dedicated to the theme of Colombian cinema exists. Yet there also exists a great ignorance in the country about it, indicated by the small number of references to this work—only some texts from master’s and doctoral study on literature or Latin American studies from universities in the U.S. and Europe.

## 5. Professional Associations of Researchers

If research in the field of audiovisual communication, and particularly in the field of cinema, is emerging, much more has the intention of researchers to validate similar studies or share knowledge with colleagues and peers from other universities. Here, then, we must highlight the efforts (most of them isolated) of some groups of researchers who have tried to build a scientific community around the topic of communication research.

First, we must mention Redicom, an association of communication researchers convened from the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana. Its main objective is to strengthen the academic field of communication through research, development, and management; through the production and circulation of knowledge in communication and culture; and through the ongoing

exchange of research projects and output of different researchers and groups, including the exchange and circulation of publications, the creation of discussion forums on policy issues of communication and culture, the realization of joint research projects, and the promotion of events and possible academic programs.

In the Iberoamerican area, the Iberoamericana Audiovisual Narrative Research Network (INAV) has, since 2005, promoted research and academic exchange among media professionals of Latin America with a common interest in the study of visual narratives. Among its main objectives, it looks to increase the presence of the study of audiovisual narratives in the meetings of communication faculty and researchers in Latin America, promoting the development of research in Latin American countries and generating common methodologies through discussion of research methodologies in visual narratives. The network has 79 research members from Spain, the USA, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Ecuador, Brazil, Argentina, and Chile.

## 6. Conclusion

Much remains to be done but the road traveled has already begun. It is clear, however, that the efforts have not been few but have been widely dispersed. The first task should be, in the spirit of this article, the classification and categorization of research made in Colombia on the various aspects related to films from different sectors involved in the issue: state agencies and academic and independent researchers. Such a review should, of course, set aside the projects implemented in other countries (mainly in the United States) for researchers interested in the Colombian and Latin American cinema.

Anyway, we must recognize that this picture is probably just an illusion because we know the titles of research projects, papers, and books but we do not have much information on their content. Similarly, it is very possible that there are many other projects not included here since they are only known in the institution that sponsored them. So, after joining forces, the researchers in the field should agree on certain lines of investigation that permit them to develop this field of study and exercise pressure for the support and promotion of policies to fund research, which from the state are still very insufficient.

In conclusion, let me emphasize the words of Pedro Adrián Zuluaga, Colombia’s leading film critic “This wave of scholars is the call to produce new knowledge about a cinema like Colombia’s that has



always been there, like a dragon waiting to be awakened” (Zuluaga, qtd. in Osorio, 2008a, p. 4).

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