Digital European Cinema Audiences. Data and methodologies for the investigation of 1950s European cinema cultures.

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This short introduction will present the AHRC-funded European Cinema Audiences project (or ECA), a comparative research that explores European film cultures in the 1950s in seven mid-sized European cities (Leicester, Ghent, Bari, Brno, Rotterdam, Gothenburg, Magdeburg). ECA provides the first large scale comparative study of cinema audiences in post-war Europe in order to investigate the importance of film in the everyday lives of its citizens. In order to visualize, analyse the data and disseminate the research results, the project makes use of digital tools to construct a digital archive, which will be available as a model to other researchers for comparative work. The digital archive includes a database of archival and contextual material on the film exhibition structures of the seven cities and film programming dataset for all cinemas active between 1951 and 1953. It also includes 140 video-interviews of cinema-going memories. The digital archive will function as a virtual research environment to facilitate collaborative and further comparative research.This presentation focuses on the data model of the digital archive, where cinemas across the cities under scrutiny are mapped via digital interactive maps, and contextual material - such as photographs, exhibition and programming material, press accounts, adverts and articles in the popular press and in cinema magazines - are integrated and used to articulate the oral history. The visual data is used to supplement the oral history collection, in order to identify practices of cinema-going. Moreover, making these materials universally accessible through a digital archive connected to the ECA programming and oral history data is key, thereby ensuring wide dissemination both of cinema memories and of economic data of the period. In this presentation, we will first describe how the data model of the digital archive was designed and built and demonstrate its use as a research tool. We then explain how the digital archive was used to stimulate the memories of the interview respondents, as the use of the digital

archive made clear that the audio-visual medium had a powerful effect on participants, whose collective as well as individual memories were triggered by the viewing of memorable photos of stars, maps of their city's cinemas, pictures of the venues, newspaper clippings of premieres or weekly film venue flyers. Finally, the presentation will briefly show the potential of the digital archive as a research tool by showcasing its functionalities, evaluating the digital archive as a virtual research environment.