LUMINA
Revista do Programa de Pós-graduação em Comunicação
Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora / UFJF
e-ISSN 1981-4070

Cinema as a community practice:

An interview with Isabel Rojas from *Colectivo OaxacaCine*

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Abstract

This interview is part of a doctoral research project developed within the Graduate Program in Visual Arts at the State University of Santa Catarina (UDESC), which investigates the relationships between cinema, education, and sensitive formation, seeking to understand how cinema-education practices can contribute to more critical, participatory, and humanized educational processes. Conducted in Spanish in March 2026, within the context of the doctoral internship carried out in Mexico under the supervision of professor Dr. Mario Barro Hernández, it involved the participation of Isabel Rojas, a member of the OaxacaCine collective, active in the state of Oaxaca. The objective was to understand the trajectory, organizational processes, and practices developed by this community cinema collective, as well as to explore its potentialities and challenges, particularly regarding audiovisual education, cultural production, social participation, and the self-representation of territories. The conversation was conducted through a video call. With the participant's authorization, it was recorded and later fully transcribed by the researcher. After transcription, the material was sent to the participant for verification of the information, validation of the content, and signing of the Consent Form. The research contributed to understanding how this initiative articulates community culture, audiovisual education, and processes of critical and sensitive formation, allowing for the analysis of the strategies employed to promote audiovisual literacy and strengthen the participation of the individuals involved in these experiences.

Keywords

community cinema; OaxacaCine; exhibition; audiovisual; cinema latin american.

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Cinema como prática comunitária no contexto mexicano:

entrevista com Isabel Rojas do coletivo OaxacaCine

Andrei Galkowski [1] e Mario Antonio Barro Hernández[2]

Resumo

Esta entrevista faz parte de uma pesquisa de doutorado desenvolvida no Programa de Pós-Graduação em Artes Visuais da Universidade do Estado de Santa Catarina (UDESC), que investiga as relações entre cinema, educação e formação sensível, buscando compreender de que maneira práticas de cinema-educação podem contribuir para processos educativos mais críticos, participativos e humanizados. Realizada em espanhol, em março de 2026, no contexto do estágio doutoral desenvolvido no México, sob a orientação do professor doutor Mario Barro Hernández, contou com a participação de Isabel Rojas, integrante do coletivo OaxacaCine, atuante no estado de Oaxaca. O objetivo da entrevista foi conhecer a trajetória, os modos de organização e as práticas desenvolvidas por este coletivo de cinema comunitário, bem como compreender suas potencialidades e desafios, especialmente no que se refere à formação audiovisual, à produção cultural, à participação social e à autorrepresentação dos territórios. A conversa foi realizada por meio de uma chamada de vídeo. Com a autorização da participante, foi gravada e posteriormente transcrita integralmente pelo pesquisador. Após a transcrição, o material foi encaminhado à entrevistada para conferência das informações, validação do conteúdo e assinatura do Termo de Consentimento. A investigação contribuiu para compreender como esta iniciativa articula cultura comunitária, formação audiovisual e processos de formação crítica e sensível, permitindo analisar as estratégias mobilizadas para promover a alfabetização audiovisual e fortalecer a participação dos sujeitos envolvidos nessas experiências.

Palavras-chave:

cinema comunitário; OaxacaCine; exibição; audiovisual; cinema latino-americano.

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Cine como práctica comunitaria:

Una entrevista con Isabel Rojas del Colectivo OaxacaCine

Andrei Galkowski [1] e Mario Antonio Barro Hernández[2]

Resumen

Esta entrevista forma parte de una investigación doctoral desarrollada en el Programa de Posgrado en Artes Visuales de la Universidad del Estado de Santa Catarina (UDESC), que investiga las relaciones entre cine, educación y formación sensible, buscando comprender de qué manera las prácticas de cine-educación pueden contribuir a procesos educativos más críticos, participativos y humanizados. Realizada en español en marzo de 2026, en el contexto de la estancia doctoral desarrollada en México bajo la orientación del profesor doctor Mario Barro Hernández, contó con la participación de Isabel Rojas, integrante del colectivo OaxacaCine, actuante en el estado de Oaxaca. El objetivo fue conocer la trayectoria, las formas de organización y las prácticas desarrolladas por este colectivo de cine comunitario, así como comprender sus potencialidades y desafíos, especialmente en lo que se refiere a la formación audiovisual, la producción cultural, la participación social y la autorrepresentación de los territorios. La conversación se realizó mediante una videollamada. Con la autorización de la participante, fue grabada y posteriormente transcrita íntegramente por el investigador. Después de la transcripción, el material fue enviado a la participante para la revisión de la información, la validación del contenido y la firma del Consentimiento Informado.La investigación contribuyó a comprender cómo esta iniciativa articula cultura comunitaria, formación audiovisual y procesos de formación crítica y sensible, permitiendo analizar las estrategias movilizadas para promover la alfabetización audiovisual y fortalecer la participación de los sujetos involucrados en estas experiencias.

Palabras clave

cine comunitario; OaxacaCine; exhibición; audiovisual; cinema latino americano.

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Introducción [1]

Community cinema stands out among the several Latin American experiences that bring together cinema, education, and social participation, for understanding audiovisual practice as a collective process for creating, circulating, and strengthening local territories. Unlike commercial cinema, which is centered on market logic and on the director figure as the work's primary, community cinema values the shared construction of creative processes as it acknowledges communities as protagonists of their own narratives. Accordingly, audiovisual practice is a tool to preserve memory, strengthen cultural identity, and exercise the right to self-representation.

Many Latin American collectives develop their practices inspired by communality principles exercised by Indigenous peoples. These principles find explicit conceptual grounding in the *Plan Especial de Interculturalidad, Pueblos y Comunidades Indígenas y Afromexicanas* (2022–2028) by the State Government of Oaxaca State. This plan characterizes tequio and guelaguetza as living ancestral institutions organized around collective well-being, reciprocity, and compartencia. Tequio is the community labor contribution to help the collective solve issues linked to needs and infrastructure. Guelaguetza, in turn, represents reciprocal assistance, celebration, and the joyful exchange of knowledge and fruits among communities. Likewise, as emphasized in the official document, the territory is the fundamental habitat for the communities' cultural and identity-based survival. It reinforces the value of assemblies and autonomous decision-making practices to guarantee their self-determination and the revitalization of their Indigenous languages.

OaxacaCine stands out against this backdrop OaxacaCine. The collective was launched in 2011, in Oaxaca State to provide itinerant exhibition, audiovisual outspread, and training in different community contexts. It is managed by Isabel Rojas, who is a promoter, programmer, and cultural manager, with Major degree in Cultural Management and Sustainable Development, at the Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca (UABJO). The collective has established itself as a reference point in audience development and democratic access to independent cinema in Southern Mexico. Its trajectory is marked by the articulation of cinema, cultural mediation, and educational processes that have contributed to broaden films' circulation beyond commercial circuits and strengthen spaces of encounter between communities and audiovisual media (OaxacaCine, c2018).

This experience's relevance motivated its inclusion in this study. It was possible broadening our understanding of different articulation forms among cinema, education, and community in Latin America after assessing the OaxacaCine trajectory. The study led to insights into audiovisual media potential as a cultural, educational, and formative practice, as well as into its likely intersection with affective education, educommunication, and film education.

Figure 1– Screening at Felipe Carrillo Puerto Elementary School in San Jerónimo Tlacochahuaya, Oaxaca



Source: Jalil Olmedo. Courtesy of OaxacaCine

Interview with Isabel Rojas

Interviewers

Could you talk a little about your work with the OaxacaCine collective, the main activities it carries out, and how cinema became integrated into this process of working with communities?

Isabel Rojas

I am the director of the OaxacaCine collective, which was launched in 2011. Since then, I have accompanied its trajectory and remained at the helm of the project, although the collective composition has changed over the years. Cinema has been present since the very beginning of our work. The collective emerged precisely because we wanted to work with the cinema language and audiovisual media. We did not go through other stages involving different artistic languages or disciplines; everything began with cinema.

My work focuses on the programming and curation of cinema and audiovisual media, involving not only the selection of works, but also the organization of screenings, cultural mediation, and the creation of spaces for dialogue with audiences. I develop activities related to cultural management, outspread, and promotion, by creating communication strategies and initiatives that bring people closer to films and cinematic experiences.

Interviewers

Who currently participates in the OaxacaCine collective, and who is the primary audience for the activities you develop?

Isabel Rojas

We are a team whose composition expands or shrinks depending on the opportunities available to us and the projects we are developing. Our base is in the city of Oaxaca, where we currently have three members. OaxacaCine operates as an itinerant cinema that organizes activities in different spaces throughout the city and also in communities across the state, including Indigenous communities and other community-based contexts.

In this regard, Jalil Olmedo and Hermenegildo Rojas are responsible for all technical aspects, for ensuring that screenings can take place and addressing the necessary operational requirements. For my part, I am responsible for management, community engagement, and programming, which involves keeping relationships with different institutions, such as film archives, film archives, and other cultural organizations.

In addition to the team based in Oaxaca, we have two members in Mexico City. Amélia Correa collaborates on programming aimed at children and young people, participating both in film selection and in the development of workshops. She has been part of the project since its founding, approximately fifteen years ago. Alejandro Magallanes, who has also been involved since the beginning, is a graphic designer responsible for the project's entire visual identity, including posters, promotional materials, and graphic materials in general. He works from his studio together with two other people.

Our work is sustained through ongoing dialogue. We are a horizontal team in which we share concerns, needs, and decisions regarding the projects' direction. It is an ongoing process of internal management and collective construction.

In addition to the five of us, there is Rigoberto Perezcano, the project's founder in 2011. Although he is no longer actively involved in its day-to-day operations, he remains present and collaborates when necessary, particularly on executive and institutional matters. He is a filmmaker from Oaxaca. We also have Guillermo Quijas, another founding partner who is not currently actively involved, but who was instrumental in managing the project. Guillermo is an editor and bookseller and, although he does not work directly in cinema, he has always been an important source of support for the collective. In addition, we receive advice from a professional who handles accounting matters.

Our primary audience consists of people who live in Oaxaca. The city is currently heavily impacted by tourism, and many cultural activities tend to be head toward that audience. Even events such as the Guelaguetza, which involve local communities, are

deeply shaped by a tourism-oriented logic. For this reason, it is important for us to work primarily with the people who live in the territory.

We organize activities aimed at diverse audiences, including children, young people, adults, and older people. Our programs are open to the entire community in order to welcome different profiles of participants, both those who already attend cultural spaces and those who would not normally have access to these sorts of experiences.

We consider that this expanded reach is also the result of efforts devoted to the outspread and circulation of our activities, as it helps attracting audiences whom we would not normally encounter at other cultural events. Therefore, the audience attending our activities is quite diverse and heterogeneous.

Interviewers

How is the collective organized, and what processes are adopted for decision-making, the definition of priorities, and the planning of activities undertaken by the group?

Isabel Rojas

Something that makes me very happy is realizing that, over time, we have increasingly worked as a collective. Decisions are made jointly, through meetings, assemblies, and other spaces we create to listen to one another, reflect on what we want to do, and determine the direction of the project.

These meetings do not follow a fixed schedule; they take place according to the needs of the collective. Whenever an important issue arises, we meet, discuss the matters on the agenda, and make decisions collectively.

It is important emphasizing that none of the members is exclusively dedicated to OaxacaCine. Everyone involved also pursues other professional activities. Even so, we attach great importance to the project and, for this reason, seek to create the necessary opportunities to come together, organize activities, and deliberate collectively.

Decisions are made based on the projects and activities we develop. We carry out annual planning that defines our goals and broad lines of work bby adjusting our plans and exploring new possibilities as opportunities and challenges arise.

We also seek, every year, to broaden our work into different territories by avoiding confinement to a single space. This constant movement allows us to find new contexts, establish new partnerships, and continue growing as a collective.

With regard to screenings logistics, our organization is also quite flexible. Depending on the characteristics of each activity, we expand or reduce the team involved.

For larger events, with audiences of 300 people or more, for example, it is

necessary to have additional collaborators to receive the audience, organize the spaces, and assist with different operational needs. In these cases, we distribute responsibilities according to the requirements of each activity.

Our organizational structure is flexible and adapts to the people available at any given time. Everyone who participates does so out of conviction and commitment to the project, which contributes to an initiative in which they believe and to which they wish to contribute.

Interviewers

What are the main activities, projects, and initiatives you undertake, and how are they planned, organized, and implemented in collaboration with the different audiences and communities with whom you work?

Isabel Rojas

Our primary work focuses on film programming, curation, and exhibition. Throughout the year, we aim to organize at least two activities per month. We devote a significant portion of our time to researching and selecting the works we wish to screen, whether feature films or short films.

We work with different thematic approaches, including Mexican cinema and cinematography from different parts of the world, with a particular interest in works circulating outside commercial circuits. We seek to give visibility to films that do not usually find space in conventional movie theaters or streaming platforms by promoting other forms of cinema, narratives, and audiovisual experiences.

Thus, exhibition is not limited to films' presentation; it also involves building a relationship with the audiences. Although the expression "audience development" is sometimes used, we approach this concept with caution, as we understand that people already have their own repertoires, experiences, and sensibilities. Rather than developing audiences, we seek to foster encounters. Each screening brings together different people and generates ideas, emotions, and perspectives sharing by creating spaces for dialogue and reflection around cinema.

Some people might argue that community is built in these moments, although this is also a complex concept. What actually takes place is the creation of a listening, dialogue, and debate space, where different viewpoints can coexist, even when there is no consensus. For us, this encounter dimension is fundamental.

Although some people regularly attend our activities, the audience is constantly changing. For this reason, we can say that our three main areas of work are film exhibition, engagement with audiences, and the creation of spaces for dialogue through cinema. We also develop educational activities in which our approach is primarily oriented toward cinematic and audiovisual thinking, rather than film production. Our primary goal is not to teach people how to make films, but to encourage reflection on

the different ways in which we relate to cinema: how we understand it, how it engages us, how we analyze it, and how we develop critical readings of films.

We work through appreciation, reflection, and dialogue, approaching cinema in its aesthetic, historical, critical, and affective dimensions. Although we occasionally offer workshops related to audiovisual creation, our priority has been to deepen the experience of watching, thinking about, and discussing cinema.

Recently, we have begun to explore the field of film and audiovisual preservation, including through domestic and self-managed practices. Although this is not yet a central area of the project, it is a field of interest that we intend to develop and strengthen in the coming years.

Interviewers

In projects and activities involving audiovisual production, how do you seek to ensure the participation and agency of communities in the creation of narratives, the definition of the topics addressed, and the representation of their own territories and experiences?

Isabel Rojas

We do not engage in film production in the strict sense, so there would be no direct answer to that question from this perspective. However, we understand exhibition itself to be a form of production. I have always been convinced that exhibiting cinema is also a way of making cinema. This idea was shared by a colleague from the Cine La Mina project, who argues precisely that "exhibiting is also making cinema." We have embraced this perspective because we understand exhibition work as a way of making cinema possible, creating the conditions for people to access it and experience it.

Based on this understanding, we consider that a production process takes place through the programming and exhibition of the works. With regard to the agency of communities, we believe that it is directly linked to strategies of dissemination, mediation, and engagement with each territory. In other words, it concerns the way in which activities are communicated and developed together with communities, allowing people to appropriate these initiatives and imbue their experiences with meaning.

It is also important to emphasize that building more participatory processes, in which communities directly choose the films they wish to see, requires long-term work. In many cases, particularly among children and young people, cinematic references are strongly associated with commercial productions, which circulate predominantly through social media, mass media, and digital platforms. This is a structural condition that shapes the repertoires available to them.

We seek to balance context-specific curation with spaces for dialogue following

screenings, where communities take on a central role by appropriating the works, interpreting them, and sharing their experiences.

In some cases, however, we respond to specific requests from the communities themselves. One significant example was a tour in the Mixteca region involving twelve communities, where we screened the film Valentina o la serenidad, directed by Ángeles Cruz. The choice of the film came from the communities themselves, as the film resonated deeply with that territory. In such cases, seeing themselves represented on screen generates powerful experiences of identification, dialogue, and belonging.

In our work with children, we often facilitate opportunities for conversation after screenings. The focus is not always on discussing technical aspects of cinema, but rather on the feelings, reflections, and memories prompted by the experience. Children frequently share stories from their lives, relating the content of the films to their own contexts and experiences.

On some occasions, we also propose complementary activities, such as drawing, writing, or expressive exercises related to the emotions elicited by the films, including joy, sadness, anger, and desire, among others. These practices expand the aesthetic experience and foster more sensitive and personal forms of expression.

Since 2024, we have been developing an initiative called "Audiovisual Tour of Schools," through which we bring film programs to elementary schools in different communities, many of them belonging to Indigenous peoples. In this context, we have been experimenting with different strategies for extending the dialogue beyond the screenings.

Among these initiatives, we leave questionnaires and activity proposals for students to complete later in the classroom with the support of their teachers. We then receive the responses they produce, allowing us to maintain a more sustained relationship with school communities and gain a deeper understanding of how the cinematic experience unfolds beyond the screening itself. It is a living process, constantly evolving, which we continue to refine, assess, and learn from with each new experience.

Interviewers

How are listening, affective dimensions, and the everyday experiences of the people and communities involved taken into account and incorporated into processes of meaning-making and the audiovisual narratives developed by the collective?

Isabel Rojas

From the moment we begin publicizing an activity, we are already engaging emotions and fostering affective connections with what people are about to experience. For us, publicity and promotion are integral to exhibition itself; they are central to our working methodology. When we produce posters, graphic materials, and other

forms of communication, we are also generating expectations, arousing curiosity, and cultivating a desire to participate in the cinematic experience.

In this process, we employ different communication strategies. We produce posters, coordinate dissemination efforts with teachers so that they can share information through platforms such as WhatsApp, create audio spots broadcast through community sound systems, and distribute materials in different spaces throughout the territory. All of these actions help generate interest and encourage people to participate.

The second stage of the methodology corresponds to the screening itself. We generally begin with a presentation of the program, followed by the screening of the films, and conclude by opening a space for dialogue. In some cases, depending on the nature of the program, we include an intermediate break to establish connections between the different moments of the activity.

In this context, mediation assumes a fundamental role, particularly in its affective and emotional dimensions. We seek to create welcoming environments in which children and young people can express themselves freely. Unlike the traditional logic of schooling, these sessions do not take place in rigid spaces: during screenings, children are free to move around, run, leave, and return whenever they wish. Many of the activities take place in open spaces, such as community sports courts, which facilitate this kind of dynamic.

At first glance, they may appear distracted, but in reality, they are attentive in a different way. This becomes evident during moments of conversation, when they demonstrate that they have noticed highly specific details in the films. Their mode of attention also operates through the body, movement, and sensory experience.

Each session is unique, even when we screen the same films, because audiences and contexts are constantly changing. For this reason, we understand that the works remain open to multiple interpretations. What matters most is not arriving at a correct answer, but understanding what each person felt, imagined, or associated with the experience.

In this way, we seek to value listening and create spaces in which people can freely express their perceptions, emotions, and thoughts. We are interested in creating moments of exchange in which the sensory, affective, and imaginative dimensions can find a place, allowing each participant to establish their own connections with the narratives and with the experiences shared during the screenings.

Interviewers

How are the audiovisual training processes developed by the collective organized and conducted, both with communities and with the different audiences that participate in its educational activities and initiatives?

Isabel Rojas

The educational processes we develop take place primarily through workshops, spaces in which a particularly close relationship is established both with communities and with participants.

At the community level, the organization of these activities begins when we extend an invitation or receive an expression of interest from a community wishing to undertake some form of work with us. From this initial contact, we seek to respect local protocols and the community's own forms of organization. In Oaxaca, many communities are governed according to what are known as usos y costumbres, with structures such as assemblies and community offices. In this context, we usually engage in dialogue with cultural and education committees, which are responsible for evaluating and authorizing the proposals submitted.

For us, it is essential not to enter a community without any prior connection. We always seek to establish contact through someone who already has a relationship with the territory, even if that person is a member of the collective itself. This process of building relationships, engaging in dialogue, negotiating, and obtaining authorization requires time and care. In some cases, organizing a workshop can take up to a year between the initial conversation and its actual implementation. In addition, the development of these activities also depends on fundraising, as we often need to seek institutional support to make their implementation possible.

Once the proposal has been approved by the community, we begin a more concrete stage of planning and production, defining aspects such as the duration of the workshop, the participating audience, the spaces in which it will take place, and the possible outcomes or products that may emerge throughout the process.

With regard to our relationship with participants, we seek to build horizontal, close, and trust-based relationships. Our aim is to create spaces for curiosity and discovery in which cinema is understood not only as an artistic language, but also as a means of knowledge, reflection, imagination, and critical engagement with the world

Over the years, we have developed workshops on the history of cinema, addressing everything from its origins to contemporary forms of production and circulation of moving images. We have also worked on topics related to video games and new forms of engagement with audiovisual media. Some of these workshops have been conducted in different communities and adapted to the participants' ages, particularly for children and young people.

The relationships built throughout these processes tend to be very close and affective. We do not understand education as a hierarchical relationship between those who teach and those who learn, but rather as an experience of exchange, mutual understanding, and shared learning. Frequently, by the end of the workshops, such meaningful relationships have been established that bringing the activities to a close becomes difficult for both the participants and the team.

Nevertheless, we recognize that these processes have a beginning and an end, primarily due to resource constraints and the organizational conditions of the projects. Even so, the relationships built through the time shared and the experiences lived together endure.

With regard to the development of the content, this work is coordinated primarily by Amelia Correa, although the proposals are developed collaboratively and discussed continuously among the members of the collective.

From a logistical standpoint, communities generally provide the spaces needed for the activities, such as cultural centers or community centers, while we bring the necessary equipment and materials, including a projector, screening screen, and educational resources used in the workshops.

Interviewers

What are the main challenges you face in ensuring the continuity of your activities, the sustainability of your projects, and the ongoing development of the educational, exhibition, and community engagement practices you have established?

Isabel Rojas

One of the main challenges in keeping our practices and projects active is undoubtedly access to financial resources. However, we believe that the challenge goes beyond securing financial resources as such and is related to how we mobilize, manage, and coordinate the different types of resources needed to sustain our work.

When we speak of resources, we are not referring solely to money. We have a fundamental resource: our people—a team that is committed to and deeply engaged with the project, something we consider invaluable. Another essential resource is our audience. Without the people who participate in our activities, our work would lose its meaning. We are fortunate to have a community that consistently supports and participates in our activities, which fills us with pride and reinforces the importance of what we do.

The spaces that host our activities, such as cultural centers, schools, theaters, and public squares, are also essential. These venues make it possible to hold screenings and carry out the other activities developed by the collective. Likewise, the films themselves constitute an indispensable resource for the continuity of the project.

The lack of stable financial resources is an ongoing challenge that requires the collective to restart the search for funding, grant opportunities, and partnerships each year. This process entails a significant administrative and bureaucratic burden that often accumulates alongside the operational tasks of programming, dissemination, and community engagement. The major challenge lies in balancing financial management with cultural work—an ongoing and demanding effort that is nevertheless essential to sustaining activities, covering logistical costs, and seeking to ensure remuneration for

the team. Another important challenge concerns our capacity for internal evaluation and organizational transformation. It is not always easy to create spaces for dialogue within collectives, reflect on mistakes, address conflicts, or promote changes when certain strategies are no longer effective. We strive to keep these spaces open, valuing listening, collective reflection, and a willingness to transform ourselves whenever necessary. Although this is an ongoing and at times complex process, it also represents one of the greatest strengths of collective work.

The organization prioritizes respect for the exhibition rights of the works. When the budget allows, it pays the fees established by the rights holders; when resources are limited, it negotiates agreements with distributors and filmmakers through a system of voluntary audience contributions. In such cases, the funds raised are divided between the rights holders and the collective to cover basic logistical costs. There are also occasions when the filmmakers themselves choose not to receive payment, prioritizing the circulation of their works and supporting the work carried out by the collective. In all cases, agreements are made transparently, respecting the authorized scope of use for each specific screening.

Sustaining a project such as OaxacaCine therefore requires a constant balance among material resources, human relationships, cultural management, collective commitment, and the capacity to adapt. It is precisely this combination of factors that makes it possible to sustain the work over time.

Interviewers

What transformations have you observed in the communities or among the people who participate in the processes of communication, education, and audiovisual production that you promote?

Isabel Rojas

Over the course of these fifteen years, we have observed significant transformations both in communities and in the ways people relate to cinema and audiovisual media. One of the most evident changes is related to technological development. When we began our activities, participation in in-person screenings was much more common, as there were fewer alternatives for accessing films outside collective spaces. Today, with the expansion of digital platforms and the various ways in which audiovisual content circulates, many people have shifted to watching films at home, reducing their participation in in-person screenings.

Despite these current transformations, the organization values maintaining an audience that remains interested in its activities. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable trend whereby some regular attendees now prefer individual experiences through digital platforms. This shift is understood as a contemporary evolution in cultural consumption, without being characterized as either positive or negative. Another

important aspect concerns the enormous volume of audiovisual content currently available. The saturation of information and images, particularly on social media, creates an environment of constant stimulation in which it is often difficult to find space for independent cinematography, local productions, or proposals that depart from dominant formats.

In this context, works produced in community settings or outside the major commercial circuits tend to become less visible. Our work has therefore taken on an increasingly careful and deliberate character. We often use the metaphor of gardening to describe what we do: creating the conditions for certain films to find their audiences while cultivating spaces for encounter, dialogue, and listening. Rather than simply screening works, we seek to foster experiences that enable engagement with other narratives, sensibilities, and ways of understanding the world.

We have observed a growing predominance of audiovisual content characterized by increasingly homogeneous formats and rhythms shaped by digital platforms and mass media. This poses a challenge for initiatives that seek to broaden repertoires and foster engagement with diverse and more complex cinematic languages.

Another particularly relevant aspect concerns forms of sociability and the formation of in-person relationships, especially among children and young people. The pandemic intensified processes that were already underway, increasing the role of technology in mediating social relationships. In workshops and educational activities, we observe that many participants initially have difficulty expressing themselves in group settings, displaying shyness or insecurity in face-to-face situations. However, when environments of trust and welcome are created, these barriers tend to gradually diminish.

It is interesting to note that many people display considerable ease in digital environments but encounter greater challenges when they need to share their opinions and experiences in face-to-face contexts. Clearly, this is not a homogeneous reality, but it seems to point to a transitional moment marked by the coexistence of forms of interaction mediated by technological devices and experiences grounded in in-person encounters.

The main transformations observed over these years concern changes in audiovisual consumption habits, the increasing digitalization of social relationships, and new challenges to the creation of collective spaces for dialogue and shared cinematic experiences. In this context, the work developed by the collective seeks precisely to strengthen the dimensions of encounter, listening, and participation, reaffirming the importance of in-person experiences and of cinema as a shared cultural practice.

Final Considerations

Since 2011, Isabel Rojas and the OaxacaCine collective have democratized the access to cinema in Southern Mexico by understanding film exhibition as both an act of production and a right to sensory experience. The collective seeks to decentralize the traditional cinematic space and expand it into public squares, community sports courts, and schools, by curating and disseminating independent works that operate outside commercial circuits. This practice broadens local repertoires and resists the homogenization of dominant formats by making room for new languages and narratives within these territories.

The OaxacaCine collective's methodology prioritizes critical thinking, aesthetic appreciation, and affective listening over technical training. Therefore, the audiences' agency, mainly children and young people from Indigenous communities, manifests itself in the spaces for dialogue following screenings, where the strictness of formal schooling gives way to more open dynamics that allow participants to process, through their bodies and affectively, the memories and feelings elicited by the works. This educational and community-based approach is grounded in strict respect for local structures, assemblies, and usos y costumbres systems by fostering horizontal relationships of mutual learning.

In the face of the ongoing challenges of fundraising and institutional bureaucracy, the collective sustains its self-managed operation through invaluable human resources, through a team committed out of conviction, the legitimacy conferred by allied spaces, and a loyal yet constantly changing community.

After nearly fifteen years of work, and given the transition toward individualized digital consumption forms that weaken face-to-face social interaction, the collective reinforces the political and affective urgency of cinema as an in-person encounter by reclaiming the power of collective listening, where diverse perspectives can coexist.

Despite the challenges related to the financing and sustainability of its activities, OaxacaCine reinforces the political and affective dimensions of the shared cinematic experience by understanding collective exhibition as a practice fostering the coexistence of multiple perspectives and strengthening the bonds between people and their territories. From this perspective, the power of community cinema lies less in the finished work than in the processes of listening, participation, and collective construction that unfold throughout the cinematic process.

Notes

[1] We declare that the orthographic and grammatical revision, as well as improvements to the clarity of this document, were carried out with the assistance of Generative Artificial Intelligence tools. These technologies were used exclusively for linguistic editing; all analyses, interpretations, and conclusions presented herein are the sole responsibility of the authors.

Article submitted on 06/25/2026 and accepted on 08/19/2026.

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