Mapping cinema-going experiences in 1950s Italy

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We know a lot about the directors and stars of Italian cinema’s heyday, from Roberto Rossellini to Sophia Loren. But what do we know about the Italian audiences that went to see their films? In its golden years, the 1940s and '50s, Italian cinema produced the internationally influential Neorealist movement, with figures like Visconti, De Sica and Fellini achieving world fame. At that time cinema-going was the most popular national pastime, bringing Italians film entertainment on an unprecedented scale. However, little is known about how Italian audiences chose films, what genres and stars they preferred, and how region, location, gender, and class influenced their choices. In this lecture I will present the initial results of the first large-scale empirical research into Italian film audiences of the 1950s, when Italians went to the cinema more than almost any other nation in Europe. The project explores the importance of films in everyday life in Italy, and the social experience of cinema-going, by interviewing surviving audience members, and analyzing their responses. Moreover, I will discuss the use of ‘cinematic cartography’ in the project, by offering an overview of spatial visualization technologies in mapping film exhibition, distribution as well as memories of cinema-going.

References:
Colin Arrowsmith and Deb Verhoeven (2011) Visual methods for showing cinema circuits at varying temporal and spatial scales, (GSR_1 Symposium, Melbourne, 12-14 December 2011)

Bio
Dr. Daniela Treveri Gennari is Reader in Film Studies at the School of Arts at Oxford Brookes University (UK). She works on post-war Italian cinema audiences as well as on film exhibition and distribution. Her book publications include Post-war Italian Cinema. American Intervention, Vatican Interests (Routledge, 2009), The Phoenix Picturehouse. 100 years of Oxford Cinema Memories (with Deborah Allison and Hiu M. Cha, Picturehouse Publications, 2013) or Moralizing cinema: Film, Catholicism and Power (with Daniel Biltereyst, Routledge, 2014). Daniela currently works on a project on spectatorship in post-war Rome as part of British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship. She is also currently principal investigator of the AHRC-funded project Italian Cinema Audiences. Info: http://italiancinemaaudiences.org