

## The Silenced Screen: Fostering a Film Industry in Paraguay

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En *Hamaca paraguaya*, el silencio es político, es cierto, pero yo quería que fuera también humano. Nosotros tenemos largas historias de guerras perdidas, otras ganadas (pero también perdidas), de dictaduras que nos han callado y que terminaron [...] pero no terminaron, y eso es algo que se siente en este país, y afecta principalmente a la humanidad de la gente.

In *Hamaca paraguaya* (*Paraguayan Hammock*), the silence is political, it's true, but I also wanted it to be human. We have long histories of lost wars, other wars that were won (but also lost), of dictatorships that have silenced us and that ended [...] but they haven't ended, and that is something that one feels in this country, and it fundamentally affects people's humanity.<sup>1</sup>

The above comments by Paz Encina on her internationally acclaimed debut feature *Hamaca paraguaya* (*Paraguayan Hammock*; 2006) suggest much about Paraguay as a nation and, by extension, the situation of filmmaking there. Paraguay's history has certainly been marked by war and poverty, but perhaps the event that has most marked recent decades is that it endured the longest-standing dictatorship in South America, which led to a repression that imposed an atmosphere of silence, fear, and isolation and whose effects reverberate to the present day, both in terms of the

<sup>1</sup> Paz Encina, 'Arrastrando la tormenta', in *Hacer cine: Producción audiovisual en América Latina*, ed. Eduardo A. Russo (Buenos Aires: Editorial Paidós, 2008), pp. 331–43 (p. 332). Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

content of the films made in Paraguay and in terms of the ongoing battle for these films to be made and seen.

Filmmakers in Paraguay face unique challenges because their country has been culturally and economically marginalised for much of the twentieth century, with the result that it has virtually no presence at all in the realm of cinema. Very little has been written on cinema in Paraguay and so this chapter is largely based on interviews with filmmakers, as well as material from numerous websites showcasing the work of Paraguayan cineastes.<sup>2</sup> The reasons for the lack of a cinematic presence for Paraguay are many: General Alfredo Stroessner's dictatorship from 1954 to 1989 meant that any kind of cultural expression was stifled by fear of repression and widespread censorship; an enduring history of corruption protects the vested interests that control much local industry, including cinemas; and there is a huge black market in CDs and DVDs.<sup>3</sup> Local filmmakers also suffer from a lack of infrastructure, including film schools or a local market sufficient to sustain production, thus making the inherently costly business of filmmaking even more difficult. Moreover, there is no cinema law that would facilitate the organisation of co-productions or help to develop collaborations with international film production organisations, although, as we shall see later in this chapter, there are ongoing attempts to establish a cinema law and thus foster a national film industry.

Lack of funding or possibilities for distribution are not, of course, problems unique to Paraguay. Stam and Shohat note that lack of finance and possibilities for distribution are widespread in what they term Third World cinema, which they define mainly as Latin American, Asian and African cinema:

[T]he global distribution of power still tends to make the First World countries cultural 'transmitters' and to reduce most Third World countries to the status of 'receivers.' [...] In this sense, cinema inherits the

<sup>2</sup> I would like to express my sincere thanks to the filmmakers Joaquin Baldwin, Leticia Coronel, Paz Encina, Juan Carlos Maneglia, Silvana Nuovo, Ricardo Álvarez, and Tana Schémbori. Thanks are also due to all at Paraguay Cine, especially Cristina Rey, Cristian Nuñez, Érika Mesa and Javier López, for welcoming me on visits to Asunción in 2007 and 2008 and for their open and frank discussions on their work and the situation of filmmaking in Paraguay today. Warm thanks also to Carla Fabri. I am particularly grateful to Fabián Bozzolo of Canal 13, without whose generosity and support this research would have been impossible.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed study of the corruption during Stroessner's dictatorship, see Roberto L. Céspedes, 'Corrupción', in *Realidad Social del Paraguay*, ed. Javier Numan Caballero Merlo (Asunción: Biblioteca de Antropología, 1998), pp. 693–715.

structures laid down by the communication infrastructure of empire, the networks of telegraph and telephone lines and information apparatuses which literally wired colonial territories to the metropole, enabling the imperialist countries to monitor global communications and shape world events.<sup>4</sup>

While other nations in Latin America, particularly those without a history of cinematic production, such as Bolivia and Ecuador, are doubtless at a major disadvantage compared to countries such as Mexico, Argentina and Brazil, which have long-established film industries that have traditionally enjoyed strong state support, the lack of a cinema law and the fact that Paraguay is the only South American nation not to be a member of Iber-media make filmmaking exceptionally challenging for local filmmakers.

The struggles faced by Paraguayan filmmakers in financing their work is a theme that emerges time and again in interviews with filmmakers. Tana Schémbori notes that:

[E]l cine no se ha planteado como industria ni como un bien cultural. Todas las películas (entiéndase video o cine) se han hecho con inversiones independientes, coproducciones o ayudas mínimas del FONDEC, único fondo existente para la cultura. [...] En Paraguay no existe el audiovisual (cine o video) como negocio y mucho menos como una manifestación cultural.

Cinema has not been established as an industry or as a valuable cultural asset. All (Paraguayan) films (whether video or film) have been made with private investments, co-productions or minimal support from FONDEC, the only existing fund for the arts [...] In Paraguay the audiovisual (film or video) does not exist as a business and much less as a reflection of culture).<sup>5</sup>

Commenting on the making of his documentary *Paraguay fue noticia* (*Paraguay in the News*), Ricardo Álvarez observes that during the two years that the making of the film took:

[N]o cubrimos el presupuesto. Esos dos años nos buscamos la vida haciendo otros trabajos institucionales, dando clases en la universidad, el editor pidió prestado a sus padres etc. Uno sobrevive.

<sup>4</sup> Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p.30.

<sup>5</sup> Personal interview with Tana Schémbori, 8 July 2008.

We did not cover our costs. During those two years we tried to make a living doing other institutional work, teaching at the university, the editor got a loan from his parents and so on. You get by.<sup>6</sup>

Ramiro Gómez notes that financial difficulties can also mean that the distribution of completed films, including his, suffers:

La situación de los dos documentales (*Tierra roja* [*Red Earth*] y *Frankfurt*) es la siguiente; con los últimos fondos de Helvetas conseguimos pagar la confección de los DVDs con menú interactivo [...], con traducción a 3 idiomas para poder hacer circular la obra como se debe, pero sólo conseguimos pagar lo que es la matriz o sea el original y algo así como 100 copias de cada documental, todo esto en Transeuropa, una empresa Argentina.

The situation of the two documentaries (*Tierra roja* [*Red Earth*] and *Frankfurt*) is this: with the last remaining funds from Helvetas we managed to pay for the manufacture of the DVDs with interactive menus, with subtitles in three languages to help distribute the work as it should be, but we could only pay for the master, that is the original, and about 100 copies of each documentary, all of which was done by Transeuropa, an Argentine company.<sup>7</sup>

The problems outlined above, which have greatly impeded the development of a film industry in Paraguay, are examined in this chapter, as are the history of Paraguayan cinema and some productions made in recent years. The campaign to establish a cinema law in the country, the contribution made by FONDEC to national cinema, and the outlook for the future of Paraguayan cinema are also addressed.

### **Paraguay: an invisible cinema?**

In the draft document of the proposed Ley de Cine, the veteran Paraguayan filmmaker Hugo Gamarra notes that Paraguay is, in terms of cinema, ‘un país invisible, sin rostro ni identidad en el mundo’ (‘an invisible country,

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Ricardo Alvarez. Available at: <http://elpororo.com/category/03-entrevistas/> (Last accessed 3 June 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Ramiro Gómez. Available at: <http://elpororo.com/category/03-entrevistas/> (Last accessed 20 July 2010). In this interview, Gómez notes that Helvetas Paraguay was an NGO that supported the making of *Tierra roja* but that has since withdrawn from Paraguay.

without an image or an identity in the world').<sup>8</sup> Paraguay is one of the least known Latin American countries, largely due to the enduring and extremely repressive dictatorship of General Alfredo Stroessner. The celebrated Paraguayan writer Augusto Roa Bastos, who spent most of his life in exile for criticising Stroessner's government, as did many intellectuals, is best known for his 1975 novel *Yo, El Supremo* (*I, The Supreme*), a satire that centres on an authoritarian dictator.<sup>9</sup> Roa Bastos notes that Stroessner's regime made artistic expression almost impossible:

The fragmentation of Paraguayan culture, together with the imbalance of its forces of production and this paralysing fear which has taken on the characteristics of both a public and a private, an individual and a collective consciousness, has had a profound effect [...] on the creative forces of [...] society. Brutality and terror have dried up the sources which feed those works of writers and artists that illustrate the originality of a people.<sup>10</sup>

Aníbal Orué Pozzo, in his study of journalism in Paraguay, confirms that it was only in 1992, when a new Constitution was written, that censorship and repression ceased to be the norm, as they were under Stroessner's dictatorship:

La censura y autocensura era 'normal'. Se perseguía y reprimía a diversos sectores sociales y políticos, incluyendo a periodistas y medios de comunicación.

Censorship and self-censorship were 'normal'. Diverse social and political sectors were persecuted, including journalists and communications media.<sup>11</sup>

*The Washington Post's* obituary of Stroessner, published on 17 August 2006, notes that under his rule Paraguay became 'a haven for Nazi war criminals, deposed dictators and smugglers'.<sup>12</sup> James Cockcroft adds that

<sup>8</sup> 'Pre-proyecto de ley del cine y el audiovisual paraguayo'. Available at: [http://www.recam.org/\\_files/documents/pre\\_proyecto\\_ley\\_de\\_cine.doc.pdf](http://www.recam.org/_files/documents/pre_proyecto_ley_de_cine.doc.pdf). (Last accessed 30 May 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Efraim Cardozo, *Breve historia del Paraguay* (Asunción: Servilibro, 2007), p. 158.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in John King, *Magical Reels: A History of Cinema in Latin America* (London: Verso, 1990), pp. 101–2.

<sup>11</sup> Aníbal Orué Pozzo, *Periodismo en Paraguay: estudios e interpretaciones* (Asunción: Arandurá Editorial, 2007), p. 184.

<sup>12</sup> Adam Bernstein, 'Alfredo Stroessner, Paraguayan Dictator', *The Washington*

for those who attempted to oppose the regime ‘fear of kidnapping, torture or death was a daily reality’ (p. 440).

Stroessner’s Colorado Party ruled Paraguay for 61 years, the longest uninterrupted rule of any party in the world.<sup>13</sup> Following his election as president for the sixth consecutive time in 1983, with over 90 per cent of the vote, the newspaper *ABC Color*, which had attempted to investigate state corruption, was closed down in March 1984. Humberto Rubin, the director of Radio Ñandutí, which had also been openly critical of the government, was arrested on numerous occasions, and the station was closed in 1987.<sup>14</sup> Stroessner’s successor, General Andrés Rodríguez, was not a promising candidate for reform, given that he had links with drug trafficking and black market trade in livestock, coffee, arms and precious stones. The fact that Juan Carlos Wasmosy, who took up office on 15 August 1993, was the first civilian president to be elected after the end of Stroessner’s dictatorship, did not mean an end to corruption. In 2008, Lambert summed up the situation since the end of Stroessner’s dictatorship as follows:

Since 1989 Paraguay has suffered three attempted coups d’etat (1996, 1999, 2000), the assassination of a Colorado vice president (1999), and sustained economic recession and stagnation (1996–2003), during which yearly per capita income dropped below \$1,000. It has also seen the growth of pervasive, institutionalized corruption, reflected in the indictment on corruption charges of two former presidents, Juan Carlos Wasmosy (1993–98) and Raul Gonzalez Macchi (1998–99). A third, outgoing president Nicanor Duarte Frutos, may soon face similar charges.<sup>15</sup>

The campaign of the former bishop Fernando Lugo finally seemed to bring the promise of a real transition government, almost 20 years after the supposed return to democracy in Paraguay. Since 2005, Lugo has led the APC, a coalition that relies heavily on the support of the Liberal Party

*Post*, 17 August 2006. Available at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/16/AR2006081601729.html> (Last accessed 10 February 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Benjamin Dangl and April Howard, ‘New vs. Old Right in Paraguay’s Election’, *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 41 (2008), p. 14.

<sup>14</sup> Frank O. Mora and Jerry W. Cooney, *Paraguay and the United States: Distant Allies* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2007), p. 208.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Lambert, ‘A New Era for Paraguay’, *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 41 (2008), pp. 5–8 (p. 5).

(PLRA). On 15 August 2008, Lugo delivered his inaugural address, partly in Spanish and partly in Guaraní, saying:

Today [...] marks the end of an exclusive Paraguay, a Paraguay of secrets, a Paraguay known for its corruption; today is the start of a Paraguay whose government and whose citizens will have no truck with those who steal from the people, with actions which cloud over transparency in public life and with those few feudal lords of a strange country of yesteryear which has somehow survived to the present day.<sup>16</sup>

As well as tackling corruption, Lugo sought to bolster the nation's economy by renegotiating contracts with Brazil so that Paraguay could sell its surplus energy to its partner at prices closer to market rates, rather than at cost, as a contract signed into law by Stroessner stipulated.<sup>17</sup>

Since his election, Lugo has faced criticism over what many see as the slow pace of the promised reform, although he has achieved some successes, such as tackling corruption in Customs and the Port Administration and creating a five-year plan that combines sustainable growth with social justice.<sup>18</sup> He has also consolidated Paraguay's partnership in the Mercosur by assuming the presidency of the organisation for six months and reaffirming the country's commitment to the free-trade association in Brussels in May 2011.<sup>19</sup> The significance of this affirmation cannot be overlooked, because, as Ligia García Béjar points out, the association has cultural as well as trade provisions, and she sees membership of the Mercosur as a key way in which a film industry could develop in Paraguay:

Probably, the only possibility for Paraguay, as with other small Latin American countries, in developing a motion-picture industry is to give

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Hugh O'Shaughnessy, *The Priest of Paraguay: Fernando Lugo and the Making of a Nation* (London: Zed Books, 2009) pp. 6–7.

<sup>17</sup> Alexei Barrionuevo, 'Ex-Cleric Wins Paraguay Presidency, Ending a Party's 62-Year Rule', *New York Times*, 21 April 2008. Available at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/21/world/americas/21paraguay.html?\\_r=1&ref=paraguay](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/21/world/americas/21paraguay.html?_r=1&ref=paraguay). (Last accessed 21 July 2010).

<sup>18</sup> Diego Abente-Brun, 'Paraguay: The Unraveling of One-Party Rule', *Journal of Democracy*, 20 (2009), 143–56 (p. 152).

<sup>19</sup> EFE, 'Paraguay y CE insisten en ventajas de pacto UE\_Mercosur', *ABC Color*, 24 May 2011. Available at: <http://www.abc.com.py/nota/paraguay-y-ce-admiten-obstaculos-pero-insisten-en-ventajas-pacto-ue-mercosur/>. (Last accessed 29 May 2011).

an incentive of international co-production in collaboration with neighboring countries and especially members of Mercosur.<sup>20</sup>

On 15 August 2010, Lugo issued a statement on the second anniversary of his election confirming that the revision of the Itaipú contract with Brazil, which would result in Brazil paying three times more for energy bought from Paraguay, would be signed into law soon. He also reaffirmed his commitment to reforming the country's infrastructure, education, health system, and employment creation and suggested that the improvement in Paraguay's international image would lead to more investment in the country.<sup>21</sup> This last claim seems to be supported by the fact that he announced on 13 June 2010, that he had granted 5,520 million guaraníes from the funds resulting from the newly renegotiated contract to the Ministry for Culture, with a view to financing bicentennial celebrations and establishing a National Centre for Culture.<sup>22</sup> The monies from this fund were partly allocated to a new project by Paz Encina, the director of *Hamaca paraguaya* (*Paraguayan Hammock*), which screened to great acclaim at the Cannes Film Festival in 2006. Encina was awarded €70,000 by the Bicentennial Programme, but she ultimately failed to make up the remaining funds needed for a shoot projected to cost €350,000 overall, despite having a shortfall of only €50,000 as a result of securing funding from Fonds Sud of France, Hubert Bals of Holland and FONDEC. She has subsequently re-applied to the Bicentennial Programme to get funding for the making of a short film instead. While this is clearly a substantial investment from Paraguay in her work, it falls far short of Lugo's promise to give her his full support when they met for a press conference in 2008, soon after Encina's first feature premiered at Cannes.<sup>23</sup>

It may seem churlish to suggest that Lugo should prioritise the development of a film industry over economic reform or the tackling of corrup-

<sup>20</sup> Ligia García Béjar, 'The Media in Paraguay: A Locked Nation in Times of Change', in Alan B. Albarran, *The Handbook of Spanish Language Media* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 186.

<sup>21</sup> 'El mensaje de Lugo por sus 2 años de Gobierno', *Ultima hora*, 15 August 2010. Available at: <http://www.ultimahora.com/notas/349059-El-mensaje-de-Lugo-por-sus-2-anos-de-Gobierno>. (Last accessed 11 August 2010).

<sup>22</sup> Cardozo, José, 'Lugo aprobó donar G. 5520 millones de Itaipú', *ABC Color*, 13 June 2010. Available at: <http://www.abc.com.py/nota/134133-lugo-aprobo-donar-g-5-520-millones-de-itaipu/>. (Last accessed 25 May 2011).

<sup>23</sup> Marlene Aponte Branco, 'Pese a reconocimientos, Paz Encina no puede filmar', *ABC Color*, 14 June 2010. Available at: <http://www.abc.com.py/nota/134639-pese-a-reconocimientos-paz-encina-no-puede-filmar/>. (Last accessed 2 May 2011).



tion in a country where it was estimated in 2007 that up to 20 per cent of the population live in extreme poverty, but it has to be said that this limited support may well reflect a lack of understanding of how film could benefit Paraguay not only in terms of its culture but also economically.<sup>24</sup>

### **Paraguayan film history: An overview**

Despite Gamarra's comment that Paraguayan cinema is invisible, it does in fact have a long history. Juan Carlos Maneglia and Tana Schémbori in their unpublished 2001 MA thesis on Paraguayan film history, make it clear that far from having no film culture, Paraguay has, despite a complete lack of state support until very recently, produced an extraordinary number of documentaries, features, and shorts:

Si bien es cierto que en una primera lectura la actividad cinematográfica en el Paraguay pareciera no tener una historia, la realidad demuestra otra cosa.

While it is true that at first glance filmmaking in Paraguay seems not to have a history, the reality is quite different.<sup>25</sup>

This view is substantiated by Juan Manuel Salinas Aguirre, who notes that, although the fact that a film shot using 35 mm film can easily cost up to \$1 million makes filmmaking almost prohibitively expensive for local producers, there has been a sporadic but significant history of film production in Paraguay.<sup>26</sup>

According to journalist Manuel Cuenca's 2005 essay on Paraguayan film history, the first film shows were held in Paraguay in 1900, when a programme of ten black-and-white shorts, on subjects including 'Juegos de niños' (Children's Games) and 'Artistas del circo' (Circus Artists) was presented. Filmmaking began in Paraguay in 1905, only a decade

<sup>24</sup> O'Shaughnessy, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Juan Carlos Maneglia and María Rossana (Tana) Schémbori, 'El video de ficción en la década de los '80', MA thesis, Departamento de Ciencias de la Comunicación, Facultad de Filosofía y Ciencias Humanas, Universidad Católica Nuestra Señora de la Asunción, Asunción, 2001, p. 35.

<sup>26</sup> Juan Manuel Salinas Aguirre, 'El cine en Paraguay'. Available at: [http://www.paraguaycine.com/cine\\_nacional.html#3](http://www.paraguaycine.com/cine_nacional.html#3). (Last accessed 12 June 2010).

after the first film projections in Paris.<sup>27</sup> The initial period of filmmaking in Paraguay was entirely focused on documentaries, normally made by foreigners, such as the group of French filmmakers who, in the early 1920s, failed in their attempt to make a film about the Chaco War and because of financial difficulties, were forced to sell their camera. It found a buyer in Hipólito Jorge Carrón, who, with his brother-in-law Guillermo Quell and his nephew Nicolás Carrón Quell, made the first films by Paraguayans in the country. In 1925 their 35 mm film *Alma paraguaya* (*The Soul of Paraguay*) portrayed a traditional religious pilgrimage to the town of Caacupé. Another important figure in local filmmaking was Agustín Carrón Quell, who made a 16mm film in 1947 that portrayed an operation carried out by Dr Héctor Blas Ruiz, who removed a tumour weighing 16 kilos from the body of a young woman. Before the Chaco War broke out, Agustín Carrón Quell also filmed the first aerial scenes of Asunción (Maneglia and Schémbori, p. 21).

While Stroessner undoubtedly stifled any creative or critical filmmaking, he did support the idea of the *Noticioso Nacional*, which from 1954 to the 1980s showed 35 mm documentary films about political events to cinema audiences. The head of this newsreel was Jorge Peruzzi, with technical support from the Brazilian Domingo Soares. In its early years, the films were made in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro, but later Soares built a laboratory in Asunción, so that for the first time film was processed and edited in the country (Maneglia and Schémbori, p. 23). The 1960s saw a strong influence from the New Argentine Cinema and also European auteur cinema that led to the foundation of the group 'Cine Arte Experimental' by director Carlos Saguier in 1964. The movement had little chance of survival in such a repressive atmosphere, however; a reality underlined by the censorship of Saguier's 1969 film *El Pueblo* (*The People*), which portrays life in a remote village and is considered by many to be a cornerstone of national cinema (J. King, p. 101). Another key development in this decade was the foundation by the Jesuit Francisco de Paula Oliva of the Departamento de Ciencias de la Comunicación in the Universidad Católica de Asunción (Maneglia and Schémbori, p. 31).

The 1970s and 1980s saw the rise of video, which led to the production of numerous amateur films, but the most significant film to be produced was *Cerro Corá* (1978), directed by Guillermo Vera y Rendía, a propaganda film described by the dictatorship as the first colour feature made

<sup>27</sup> Manuel Cuenca, 'El cine en Paraguay'. Available at: [http://www.paraguaycine.com/cine\\_nacional.html#3](http://www.paraguaycine.com/cine_nacional.html#3). (Last accessed 10 August 2010).

in Paraguay and as a homage to Stroessner on his birthday. The film made explicit links between Stroessner and the nineteenth-century military hero General Solano López (Getino, pp. 140–1). A positive outcome of this film was the return to Paraguay of Hugo Gamarra, who would become a key figure in developing a national film culture. Gamarra is a journalist, scriptwriter and director who received a Masters degree in film and television from the School of Communications of the University of Austin, Texas, in 1980. In an interview, Gamarra notes that in 1980, as he was graduating from Austin, the team who made *Cerro Corá* invited him to Paraguay to make a film about the Chaco War. He accepted the opportunity to return and oversee a Paraguayan film studio but was confronted with a harsh reality:

During my first five years back I was disappointed to realize that the people from the Paraguayan government were trying to use filmmaking for their own political–economic purposes, to support certain political attitudes rather than try to foster a real national cinema. Film production was being used for corrupt purposes, to make money for some individuals and to confirm the idolatry of the Paraguayan dictator, Alfredo Stroessner.<sup>28</sup>

Gamarra went on to make several documentaries, as well as a 45-minute drama called *Marcelina*, and when Stroessner's 35-year dictatorship ended in 1989, he was among the founders of the Fundación Cinemateca y Archivo Visual del Paraguay. He also established the Festival Cinematográfica Internacional de Asunción. Among his best known works are *El portón de los sueños* (*The Gateway to Dreams*, 1988), a documentary following Augusto Roa Bastos' return from exile; his script for *El toque del oboe* (*The Call of the Oboe*, 1998), a feature co-produced with Brazilian director Claudio McDowell; and the more recent documentary about a film projectionist in Paraguay, *Profesión cinero* (*Profession Cineaste*, 2007).

<sup>28</sup> Noel King, 'Film Culture in Paraguay: An Interview with Hugo Gamarra Etcheverry', *Senses of Cinema*. Available at: [http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/02/21/echeverry\\_interview.html](http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/02/21/echeverry_interview.html). (Last accessed 6 July 2010).

### **La Ley del Cine, FONDEC and Ibermedia**

Octavio Getino notes that cinema screenings in Paraguay have increased in recent years because of the investments of film companies in installing new cinemas in shopping centres. The growth of this cinema industry is also the result of investment by North American distribution companies in marketing and advertising. Getino cites Gamarra's comment about how the overwhelming dominance of US filmmaking in Paraguay has a profoundly negative impact on local filmmakers:

La gran mayoría del público está [...] definitivamente colonizada por los relatos audiovisuales norteamericanos, a tal punto que le cuesta aceptar otro estilo y ritmo narrativo. (Getino, p.143)

The vast majority of the public is thoroughly colonised by North American audiovisual narrative, to the point where it is difficult for them to accept another style or narrative rhythm.

The limited possibilities for distribution also remains a severe obstacle in Paraguay and other countries without a strong national film industry, as Deborah Shaw points out:

Filmmakers from all over Latin America have produced interesting work that [...] audiences should have access to, however, because of the nature of the market and the difficulties in ensuring distribution deals with globally powerful companies, many high-quality films are never seen outside the countries in which they are made, and even then, many are shown in very few theatres for a limited time.<sup>29</sup>

Paraguayan filmmakers have sought to address these and other difficulties by establishing a Cinema Law. The draft proposal for this law is based on the cinema laws of Argentina, Brazil and Chile and was co-written by Ray Armele, Richard Careaga, Leticia Coronel, Renate Costa, Gustavo Delgado, Hugo Gamarra, Juan Carlos Maneglia, Claudia Rojas, Billy Rosales, Carlos Saguier, Tana Schémbori and Tatiana Uribe. The main provisions of the proposed law are the development and recognition of the work of filmmakers in Paraguay and the establishment of a Film Institute. The first aim of the law is outlined in Article 2:

<sup>29</sup> Deborah Shaw, *Contemporary Cinema of Latin America: Ten Key Films*, (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 1.

La presente ley tiene por objeto el desarrollo, fomento, difusión, protección y preservación de las obras cinematográficas y artes audiovisuales nacionales, como así también el reconocimiento de una industria cinematográfica y audiovisual, incentivando a la investigación y el desarrollo de nuevos lenguajes.

This law seeks to develop, foster, distribute, protect and preserve national cinematographic works and audiovisual arts, as well to achieve the recognition of a cinematographic and audiovisual industry, providing incentives for research and the development of new languages.<sup>30</sup>

The responsibilities of the Instituto del Cine y el Audiovisual Paraguayo (ICAP) are outlined in Article 7 and include allocating the new funds available for film and audiovisual production, known as the Fondo de Fomento Audiovisual; supporting audiovisual education through grants, residencies, and other means; proposing the necessary legislation for the development of cinematic and audiovisual culture; supporting technical education; collaborating with the Ministry of Education to incorporate the audiovisual into the education system; and establishing relationships with governmental institutions from other countries.

It is envisaged that the finance required for the Fondo de Fomento Audiovisual would come from taxes on film screenings of national and international films. Five years have passed since this first draft was written, however, and the government has yet to act to sign it into law. Christian Núñez, president of the Organización de Profesionales del Audiovisual Paraguayo (OPRAP), notes that the tax would mean that cinemas would pay 12,000 guaraníes (about \$2.50) per film opening, while cable channels would pay 5,000 guaraníes (about \$1) per viewer. He adds that the approval of the law has been frustrated by the opposition of powerful interest groups who refuse to pay the tax. The businesses opposed to the law include communications regulator Cerneco, advertising agency APAP and Argentine-owned video and cable company Multicanal. During a recent tribute to her work, Paz Encina called on the government to keep dialogue about the law open, noting that the best tribute the government can pay to filmmakers is to allow them to produce their work and tell their stories.<sup>31</sup> Juan Carlos Maneglia also emphasises the importance of having a cinema law:

<sup>30</sup> 'Pre-proyecto ley del cine', [http://recam.org/\\_files/documents/pre\\_proyecto\\_ley\\_de\\_cine.doc.pdf](http://recam.org/_files/documents/pre_proyecto_ley_de_cine.doc.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> Marisol Ramírez, 'Cineastas piden diálogo en torno a la Ley de Cine', *Última*

Puede contribuir a fortalecer los fondos para el cine, para proteger a sus directores, técnicos, actores y todos los que intentan vivir de este arte. Puede contribuir a organizar a los extranjeros que quieran realizar sus proyectos en este país, y también para proteger lo poco que se ha realizado.

It could help to boost funds for cinema, to protect directors, technicians, actors and everyone trying to make a living in this field. It could contribute to organising foreigners who want to film in this country, and also to protect the little (cinema) that has been produced.<sup>32</sup>

Silvana Nuovo echoes Maneglia's insistence on the need for the law, but she notes that the prioritisation of short-term financial gain over long-term investment in the arts presents a formidable obstacle to its passing:

Los políticos no se dan cuenta de la importancia de que haya una industria cultural, de que exista un cine paraguayo, que además en el inmediato no va a retribuir económicamente, es una inversión a largo plazo. Para que haya cine tiene que haber escuelas de cine aquí todavía no hay, la inversión tiene que empezar en la formación. Las salas de cine y los canales de TV son inversiones privadas, no parece que les interese el desarrollo cultural del país, solo las ganancias en el inmediato.

Politicians don't realise the importance of having a culture industry, of having a Paraguayan cinema, which moreover will not give an economic return immediately, it's a long-term investment. In order to have cinema one must have cinema schools here, which don't exist; the investment has to begin in education. Cinemas and TV stations are private investments, and it appears that they are not interested in the country's cultural development but in immediate returns.<sup>33</sup>

In September 2011, *7 cajas* won the San Sebastián Film Festival's 20th Films in Progress award, which covers the expenses of post-production to allow the film to be screened in cinemas. Coronel notes that the draft proposal of the law was rewritten in 2009, although the content is substantially the same as the original document, and that it is hoped that it will finally be passed into law in 2011.<sup>34</sup> In the absence of the law, the only

*hora*, 10 October 2009. Available at: <http://www.ultimahora.com/notas/263099-cineastas-piden-di%Ellogo-en-torno-a-la-ley-de-cine>. (Last accessed 10 July 2009).

<sup>32</sup> Personal interview with Juan Carlos Maneglia, 8 July 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Personal interview with Silvana Nuovo, 17 August 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Personal interview with Leticia Coronel, 5 August 2010.

source of national funding available to filmmakers at present is FONDEC (Fondo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes), which as Schémbori notes, does not acknowledge that filmmaking is a particularly expensive discipline that requires far more funding than a ballet or an art exhibition.<sup>35</sup>

Nor is FONDEC in a position to fully finance a film. Coronel notes that she only received funding from the agency for *Yo, mujer sola (I, A Woman Alone)* after already securing finance from France, Spain, Mexico and Argentina.<sup>36</sup> The case of Encina's *Hamaca paraguaya* is also illustrative of the constraints under which the fund operates. The total budget for the film was \$624,589, of which the French organisation Fonds Sud Cinema contributed \$120,000.<sup>37</sup> FONDEC's investment of 102,000,000 guaraníes (just over \$21,500), although the largest single sum awarded to any national cultural project in that year, was still substantially less than the funding provided for the film by foreign partners.<sup>38</sup> When one considers that the total budget for all arts projects available from FONDEC in 2004 was 1,301,646,995 guaraníes, which is approximately \$275, 480, or not much more than double the contribution of Fonds Sud Cinema to a single project, one begins to appreciate just how limited the resources for filmmaking are in Paraguay. Questions have also been raised about the way in which FONDEC allocates its funding. Nuovo comments that its management could be greatly improved and that its selection criteria seem arbitrary.<sup>39</sup> Gómez has reported on his very negative experience with the funding agency:

Yo tuve un problema con el FONDEC, hice una denuncia de corrupción que no fue atendida, sólo la prensa le dio divulgación y ahí quedó, como todo en Paraguay. *Tierra roja* fue un proyecto que no fue adjudicado por esta institución, no le dieron futuro [...] *Frankfurt* si recibió el apoyo de la institución, pero no como pensé que debieron haberlo hecho, entonces los denuncié. De ahí en adelante todo fue más difícil para mí en este país.

<sup>35</sup> Personal interview with Tana Schémbori, 25 August 2010.

<sup>36</sup> Personal interview with Leticia Coronel, 5 August 2010.

<sup>37</sup> France Diplomatie website. [http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/france-priorities\\_1/cinema\\_2/cinematographic-cooperation\\_9/production-support-funding\\_10/films-benefiting-from-aid\\_13/film-listby-country\\_15/paraguay\\_2688/hamaca-paraguaya\\_2834/index.html](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/france-priorities_1/cinema_2/cinematographic-cooperation_9/production-support-funding_10/films-benefiting-from-aid_13/film-listby-country_15/paraguay_2688/hamaca-paraguaya_2834/index.html). (Last accessed 1 August 2010).

<sup>38</sup> FONDEC website, <http://www.fondec.gov.py/recursos/f12082009-adj-2004.pdf>. (Last accessed 6 June 2010).

<sup>39</sup> Personal interview with Silvana Nuovo, 17 August 2010.

I had a problem with FONDEC, I made a complaint about corruption that was not addressed, only the press reported it and that was it, like everything in Paraguay. *Tierra roja* was a project that was not supported by this institution, they did not think it had a future [...] *Frankfurt* did receive the institution's support but not in the way I thought it should have, so I filed a complaint. From then on, everything became more difficult for me in this country.<sup>40</sup>

This experience suggests that corruption is not a distant memory in Paraguay and that even the success of former projects brings no guarantee of increased funding. Moreover, the fact that Paraguay does not belong to Ibermedia, the largest filmmaking body in Latin America, is hugely detrimental to the development of projects with other nations.

### **Globalisation, co-productions and their discontents: the case of *Hamaca Paraguaya (Paraguayan Hammock)***

Notwithstanding the aforementioned problems in securing finance both nationally and internationally, a younger generation of filmmakers has produced a diverse body of work that reflects their international backgrounds and exchanges and that encompasses several genres. Tana Schémbori and Juan Carlos Maneglia are perhaps the best known of this new generation. The pair studied Communications at the Universidad Católica in Asunción and first worked together in the 1990s at the production company Alta Producciones, where they made over 100 advertisements and TV series including 'El ojo' ('The Eye') and 'Río de fuego' ('River of Fire'). In 1996, they formed Maneglia Schémbori Realizadores, producing advertisements and short films, including *Artefacto de primera necesidad (An Essential Artefact, 1995)*, which has been shown to great acclaim at film festivals nationally and internationally, winning first prize in the category of Short Fiction Films at the Tercer Festival Internacional de Rosario in 1995 and for Best Experimental Short at the International Film and Drama Fest of Oklahoma in 1997. In 1999, they were granted scholarships to study at the New York Film Academy, where Schémbori made *Extraños vecinos (Strange Neighbours)* and Maneglia made *Say Yes*, both short fiction films that were screened in New York at the Museum of Modern Art. In 2002, their short *Amor basura (Love*

<sup>40</sup> Personal interview with Ramiro Gómez, 25 August 2010.



*is Rubbish*) (35 mm) was screened before major films in Asunción and was so popular that it remained in cinemas for two and a half months. Their first digital short, *Horno ardiente* (*Burning Oven*) was completed soon after this. They have just completed the shooting of their first feature-length film on 35 mm, a thriller entitled *7 cajas* (*Seven Crates*) set in Asunción's Mercado 4, which, despite lacking minimal standards of hygiene and health, according to Elisa Ferreira, is extremely popular with locals.<sup>41</sup>

The Colombian Silvana Nuovo and her Cuban filmmaking partner Ricardo Álvarez have focused on documentaries and are the producers and directors of the Paraguayan–French co-production *Ogwa* (2006), which charts the story of the renowned Paraguayan artist. This film has received national and international recognition, including being featured as the Official Selection at the Festival de Cine Bogotá in 2007 and receiving the award for the best documentary about visual arts at the Festival de Cine Documental de Asunción in 2007. Their most recent work, the feature-length *Paraguay fue noticia* (*Paraguay in the News*, 2008), debuted on Canal 13 in 2009. This film exposes the corrupt practices of the owners of the Ycua Bolaños supermarket in Asunción, which was burned down by a fire on 1 August 2004, killing some 400 people and injuring 500. *Paraguay fue noticia* follows the trials that followed after it was revealed that the doors were deliberately shut after the fire broke out to prevent people from leaving without paying for their shopping.<sup>42</sup> Ramiro Gómez, another filmmaker in his thirties, is the director of the documentaries *Tierra roja* (*Red Earth*, 2006) and *Frankfurt* (2008). Like Saguier's groundbreaking *El pueblo* (*The People*), *Tierra roja* represents everyday life in Paraguay through the stories of four families living in the countryside. *Frankfurt*, meanwhile, follows the fortunes of the players in a rural football league in Paraguay. The Paraguayan filmmaker Érika Mesa and her Cuban filmmaking partner Javier López produce what they term 'videoperformances'. One such example is *Haciendo mercado* (*Making a Market*), which features a Guaraní shaman who preaches the

<sup>41</sup> Elisa Ferreira, *Las mujeres productoras de alimentos en Paraguay: Tecnología y comercialización* (Venezuela: IICA Biblioteca, 1996), p. 54. In September 2011, *7 cajas* won the San Sebastián Film Festival's 20th Films in Progress award, which covers the expenses of post-production to allow the film to be screened in cinemas: see <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118043228?categoryid=13&cs=1&cmpid=RSS%7CNews%7CFilmNews>. (Last accessed 15 December 2011.)

<sup>42</sup> Kinemultimedia website: <http://www.kinemultimedia.com/en/documentales/paraguay-fue-noticia>. (Last accessed 2 July 2010).

words of economist Philip Kotler, thus raising questions about globalisation, post-colonial economic dependencies and the tensions between indigenous cultures and the New World Order.

A younger generation of filmmakers, still in their twenties, has generally studied outside Paraguay but continues to develop a film practice that relates to the nation's history and socioeconomic concerns. Leticia Coronel studied Communications at the Universidad Católica de Asunción, Paraguay, and continued her studies in Argentina, Madrid and Cuba. She is the director of short films including *Ingravidez y Gravidez* (*Weightlessness and Pregnancy*), a film based on the life of María de la Cruz, a 30-year-old mother of nine from the town of San Joaquín, some 200 km from Asunción. This film has been screened to much acclaim at festivals including the Primer Ciclo de Videoarte Latinoamericano, Valencia, Spain, in 2006 and at the 9 Mostra del Cinema Latinoamericano di Cremona, Italy, in the same year. She is currently producing the feature *Yo, mujer sola* (*I, A Woman Alone*), which presents the interweaving stories of five Paraguayan women, including a 52-year-old artist returning from exile and a 40-year-old indigenous woman who lives on a reservation outside Asunción. Joaquín Baldwin, a Paraguayan filmmaker based in Los Angeles, has won over 100 awards for his animated films *Papiroflexia* (2007) and *Sebastian's Voodoo* (2008), the latter of which won a student Academy Award in 2009. He was also the South American winner of Pangea Day, an international event that celebrated filmmaking as a means of erasing borders between peoples, in 2008.<sup>43</sup>

Co-productions are a key element in what Deborah Shaw terms the 'internationalization process' of Latin American film.<sup>44</sup> Since the 1990s, co-productions in Latin America have increased dramatically, and there has been an increase in the distribution and availability of films by Latin American directors. As Ambrosio Fernet notes, 'with limited budgets, devalued currencies, and soaring production costs, few filmmakers in Latin America enjoy the luxury of single-source local financing',<sup>45</sup> thus co-productions offer a valuable opportunity to get finance for films that otherwise could not be made.

The financial operations of co-production agencies are not always

<sup>43</sup> For further information on this event, see Pangea Day website, <http://www.pangeaday.org/aboutPangeaDay.php>. (Last accessed 2 May 2011).

<sup>44</sup> Deborah Shaw (ed.), *Contemporary Latin American Cinema: Breaking into the Global Market* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Ann Marie Stock, *Framing Latin American Cinema: Contemporary Critical Perspectives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. xxiii.

straightforward, however. Libia Villazana, in her study of the role of Ibermedia in co-productions with Latin America, notes that the 14 member countries are obliged to pay at least \$100,000 a year to the fund, while Spain contributes \$2 million, thus making it the major financial partner. She also observes that the fund is controlled by Spain, as its offices are based in Spain, most of its staff is Spanish, and the selection of projects to be funded is overseen by the Spanish head of the Technical Unit of Ibermedia, Elena Villardel.<sup>46</sup> Villazana concludes that Ibermedia's rigid control over its co-productions and privileging of its own goals over those of Latin American co-producers amounts to a subtle 'form of neo-colonialism' (Villazana, p. 66). Falicov also expresses some reservations about the fund, noting that, like its European counterparts, it has not avoided 'problems of paternalism and the inherent power dynamics that surface when there are inequalities of power and resources'.<sup>47</sup> Notwithstanding this caveat, she notes that the fund is important because it has remained stable from year to year, unlike national funding agencies. She adds that it also promotes distribution as well as helping to finance film production, and many of the films it has produced have achieved international success.

Several Paraguayan filmmakers have expressed concerns about the fact that Paraguay is not a member of Ibermedia. Coronel suggests that this decision is again the result of a lack of political will, as Salvador Vayá, the former director of the Centro Cultural de España en Asunción invited representatives from Ibermedia to Asunción in 2007. Coronel and other members of the group Gente de Cine addressed the Chamber of Deputies in a bid to convince them that joining Ibermedia was an important move, but they were not interested and no agreement was made.<sup>48</sup> As Nuovo asserts, the lack of an agreement with Ibermedia hampers possibilities for filmmakers:

El artista necesita tiempo para crear, y es difícil crear cuando se está pensando en como ganarse la vida ... el cine es trabajo en equipo que necesita inversiones importantes, a falta de interés a nivel nacional hay que acudir a los fondos internacionales, que muchas veces no apoyan pues no tenemos el suficiente nivel, porque no hay ejercicio cinematográfico ni inversiones en tecnología.

<sup>46</sup> Libia Villazana, 'Hegemony Conditions in the Coproduction Cinema of Latin America : The Role of Spain', *Framework*, 49 (2008), 65–85 (p. 78).

<sup>47</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>48</sup> Personal interview with Leticia Coronel, 5 August 2010.

Artists need time to create their work, and it's difficult to create when one is thinking of how to make a living ... cinema is team work that needs significant investment, because of the lack of interest on a national level, one has to apply for international funds, which often don't support us because we do not achieve the required level, because there is no cinematographic training or investment in technology.<sup>49</sup>

The lack of an agreement with Ibermedia means that the lack of a cinema law is even more detrimental to the film industry in Paraguay, as the experience of Paz Encina illustrates. Set in 1935 in rural Paraguay, *Hamaca paraguaya* is a poetic, almost static account of an elderly couple, Candida and Ramón, who await the return of their son from the Chaco War. This co-production with Argentina, France and Holland has been widely screened and distributed, and has received several prestigious international awards, including the FIPRESI Prize at Cannes and the Buñuel Award for Best Latin American Film at the San Sebastián Film Festival. In the interviews that accompany the DVD release, Argentine co-producer Lita Stantic suggests that the film may be the catalyst needed to develop a film industry in Paraguay:

La historia del cine paraguayo es casi inexistente. Por eso, *Hamaca paraguaya* va a ser una especie de inicio de una historia, ya que existe en Paraguay una idea de armar algo así como un instituto de cine y hay jóvenes que tienen proyectos. Por eso es importante lo que puede generar esta película en su país.

Paraguayan film history scarcely exists. Therefore, *Hamaca paraguaya* will be a kind of beginning of a history, since there exists in Paraguay an idea of establishing something like a cinema institute and there are young people working on projects. Consequently, what this film could give rise to in its country is important.<sup>50</sup>

While the suggestion that Paraguay lacks a film history is inaccurate, it is perhaps a fair representation of the image that people have of Paraguay outside the country, and it also reflects its complete lack of a presence in the international film world until very recently. Encina describes her experience of working with the co-producers of *Hamaca paraguaya* in resolutely positive terms:

<sup>49</sup> Personal interview with Silvana Nuovo, 17 August 2010.

<sup>50</sup> Interview in the DVD release of *Hamaca Paraguaya* (TransEuropa Video Entertainment, 2006).

Fue un sueño. *Hamaca* fue una película que con una rapidez extrema consiguió todos los fondos para ser filmada, y tuvo un circuito bellissimo, pero creo que es una experiencia que no se va a repetir en mucho tiempo.

It was a dream come true. *Hamaca* got all the funds needed for filming extremely quickly, and its reception was wonderful, but I think it's an experience that won't be repeated for a long time.<sup>51</sup>

Given that Stantic and the film's other co-producer Marianne Slot are known for producing alternative and even subversive films, it would seem likely that they allowed Encina to follow her vision and to direct her film, which is based on her own script, in her own way. The hopes that Stantic expressed about the film giving rise to a new era where a film institute and other long-held dreams could be realised have proved to be unfounded, however. As Encina notes, her attempts to film a script entitled *Un suspiro (A Sigh)* have come to nothing, thanks in part to the difficulties she encountered in finding co-producers because of the lack of a cinema law in Paraguay. Moreover, when asked about the fact that I could not find a copy of the film for sale in Paraguay and that the copy I bought in Argentina is marked 'Cine Argentina' she responded that:

Ese es un doble juego, porque yo no encontré en Paraguay alguien que quería editar la película, por lo tanto, no se puede comprar una copia en Paraguay, por lo tanto la única forma de que *Hamaca* llegue a todo el mundo fue la piratería.

That's a Catch 22, because I couldn't find anyone in Paraguay who wanted to release the film on DVD, so you can't buy a copy of it in Paraguay, with the result that the only way people saw the film was through pirated copies.<sup>52</sup>

The fact that a filmmaker whose work was recognised at Cannes has given up on filming her next project suggests that while co-productions are extremely important to Latin American filmmakers, they are not a panacea and cannot overcome difficulties that are particularly stark in the case of Paraguay – lack of finance and infrastructure, rampant piracy that stifles any hope of a market for DVDs, the lack of a cinema law, and a

<sup>51</sup> Personal Interview with Paz Encina, 2 April 2010.

<sup>52</sup> Personal interview with Paz Encina, 2 April 2010.

lack of interest on the part of the government in supporting young filmmakers.

### **Projecting the future**

A further issue to consider when discussing the topic of film finance and Paraguayan cinema is the possibilities offered by digital technology. All of the filmmakers interviewed agreed that digital technology offered significant opportunities for the development of filmmaking in Paraguay. Nuovo asserts that it is an excellent option for a developing cinema, as does Gómez, who notes that, as well as allowing filmmakers to experiment and make mistakes without wasting a lot of money, digital technology represents

el paso más importante e inteligente que puede dar el cine paraguayo, la falta de recursos y oficio no nos permite filmar en celuloide, además que al hacerlo estaríamos dependiendo de otras industrias (para los procesos de revelado y demás que sólo en un laboratorio son posibles) y del cambio del dólar y de la disponibilidad de éstos.

The most important and intelligent step that Paraguayan cinema can take, the lack of resources and training prohibits us from filming on celluloid, as well as the fact that doing so would make us dependent on other industries (for developing film and other steps that can only be carried out in laboratories) as well as on the value of the dollar and access to that currency.<sup>53</sup>

Coronel has some reservations about the medium, noting that it has been used to make features that have been successful in local cinemas, but that on an international level, many festivals do not show digital films, while the possibilities for international distribution of digital films are limited.<sup>54</sup> Undoubtedly the most successful experiment with digital film by a Paraguayan filmmaker is Joaquin Baldwin's multiple award-winning *Sebastian's Voodoo*, which as well as winning a student Academy Award was the recipient of the Short Film Corner Award at Cannes. Baldwin's animated film about a voodoo doll who sacrifices himself to save his friends from a torturer is based on contemporary torture chambers and was mainly

<sup>53</sup> Personal interview with Ramiro Gómez, 25 August 2010.

<sup>54</sup> Personal interview with Leticia Coronel, 5 August 2010.

inspired by events such as Guantánamo Bay. He concedes, however, that he may have been subconsciously influenced by the repressive atmosphere of Stroessner's dictatorship.<sup>55</sup> Baldwin believes that for animators in particular, digital filmmaking is the future: 'You need a computer, no crew, no cameras, no lights, nothing but a computer, and you can get an Academy Award if you use it correctly. Zero budget films are everywhere now, and so are the learning resources.'<sup>56</sup> Baldwin's opportunity to study at UCLA was made possible because of scholarships he received, which he acknowledges were the only way that he could have completed a BA in the USA, although he adds that his funding was for tuition rather than specifically for his films and that while film festivals have been instrumental in his success, participating in them can be costly: 'Even with just the submission fees, applying to festivals can be slightly prohibitive for many. There's other costs involved, such as shipping, DVD duplication, creating tapes in different formats for exhibition, promotional materials, etc.'<sup>57</sup>

Baldwin is currently preparing a DVD release of his films which has been the result of a laborious process where he creates all aspects of the DVD, from the menus to the labels and then sells them one by one. He adds that he is not expecting to make money from the DVDs and that they are intended for fans and for promotional purposes.<sup>58</sup> The main reason why he expects to make very little money from this DVD is that his films are available online, a clear downside of the global dissemination of materials through the Internet. Moreover, when asked whether he would set an animated film in Paraguay, he noted that the average costs involved in making an animated feature are generally about \$120 million, and so it would be impossible to make such a film in the country, although he observes that there is a market on the Internet for animated shorts, no matter where the director lives.<sup>59</sup>

The online distribution of films is constrained, however, by access to the Internet, which is not within reach of the majority of people living in Paraguay. In 2007, a study by Fundación Telefónica noted that only 3.6 per cent of Paraguayans use the Internet (García Béjar, p. 187). While a similar study conducted by the UN's International Telecommunications

<sup>55</sup> Personal interview with Joaquín Baldwin, 14 May 2010.

<sup>56</sup> Personal interview with Joaquín Baldwin, 14 May 2010.

<sup>57</sup> Personal interview with Joaquín Baldwin, 14 May 2010.

<sup>58</sup> Personal interview with Joaquín Baldwin, 14 May 2010.

<sup>59</sup> Sergio Colman, Interview with Joaquín Baldwin. Available at: <http://elpororo.com/category/03-entrevistas/> (Last accessed 3 June 2010).

Union in November 2008 cited usage figures of 7.8 per cent of the population, this figure is still extremely low.<sup>60</sup> Apart from the issue of access to the Internet, the prevalence of illegal downloading of films online also complicates the issue of making money from films distributed solely in this manner.

When asked whether the success of Encina and Baldwin's films had changed the situation of filmmaking in Paraguay, the filmmakers interviewed were unanimous in praising their work, but they ultimately felt that little had changed. There was little optimism either that Lugo's government would bring dramatic changes in the area of culture. Moreover, when asked what the biggest obstacle they faced was, all of them mentioned financial constraints. Schémbori stressed the need for a dedicated cinema fund that would address the particular financial demands of the medium. She estimates that her first feature, co-directed with Juan Carlos Maneglia, has cost approximately \$435,000 and could not have been made without the support of numerous sponsors, including Yacyreta (a dam between Argentina and Paraguay). Maneglia believes that the future of cinema in Paraguay is very uncertain, though he notes that the fact that so many talented people are now working in the area may be reason for optimism. While Gómez is also less than optimistic about the future, he is clear about what needs to be done:

Debemos empezar con lo básico. Una escuela que genere cineastas paraguayos, una escuela nacional de cine que todavía no la hay, en pleno 2010.

We must start with the basics. A school that would produce Paraguayan filmmakers, a national cinema school that still does not exist, even in 2010.<sup>61</sup>

While this less than rose-tinted vision of the future is only to be expected, the achievements of Paraguayan filmmakers are such that there is much reason to suppose that they will continue to make films in a wide range of genres that tell uniquely Paraguayan stories or that deal with Paraguay's position in a world that largely ignores it. Baldwin has recently released his new film, *The Windmill Farmer*, *7 cajas* is in post-production, and Coronel is on the way to completing *Yo, mujer sola*. The establishment of

<sup>60</sup> Fundación Telefónica, <http://www.internetworldstats.com/sa/py.htm>. (Last accessed 20 April 2011).

<sup>61</sup> Personal interview with Ramiro Gómez, 25 August 2010.



a permanent exhibition that documents Paraguay's cinema history in the Museo del Barro is also a tribute to the achievements of local filmmakers, while the venue provides an invaluable space for cinema screenings and festivals. Festivals nationally, such as the annual Ta'anga, and internationally have also been hugely important in promoting Paraguayan film. The silenced screen is no more, and it is to be hoped that the eventual passing of a cinema law may lead to an increased presence internationally for Paraguayan cinema and an improved situation for its filmmakers.