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A vision of Latin America and the Caribbean countries

12 march 2024

Weekly Newsletter covering Latin America and the Caribbean issues. A Project between Green Zone Foundation and Telesur.

Latin American Cinema after the 50s, Social Commitment

The International Festival of New Latin American Cinema was the response to the urgent demand for a space that would guarantee a consistent encounter between the continent's cinematography and their creators.

Latin American cinema took a completely new turn in the 1950s, going from a purely commercial approach, as in its beginnings, to taking the pulse of the region's economic and social evolution.



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The first film to inaugurate this type of cinema is entitled "Los olvidados," a work by the great Spanish filmmaker Luis Buñuel, filmed in Mexico. Buñuel thus inaugurates an auteur cinema committed to the social reality in the region. This cinematographic trend that emerged in Latin America is contemporary to the English free cinema or the French nouvelle vague. In addition to Buñuel in Mexico; prominent are Glauber Rocha and Nelson Pereira dos Santos in Brazil; Tomás Gutiérrez Alea in Cuba; Fernando E. Solanas, Octavio Getino and Fernando Birri in Argentina; Jorge Ruiz and Jorge Sanginés in Bolivia; Patricio Guzmán in Chile, and a long etcetera.

This new type of cinema lacks in resources, although it has great esthetic values. Its main scenery is the outdoors, the reality, both urban and rural. Thus arose a popular cinema that made the people the protagonist and pursued a clear educational purpose aimed at raising awareness about the reality of the country, about poverty and injustice. This new way of doing makes the new film products actors in the social transformation of their own environment.

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International Festival of New Latin American Cinema

The project that brought this new form of filmmaking to the forefront was the International Festival of New Latin American Cinema, inaugurated on December 3, 1979, in Havana, Cuba. It was conceived as a continuation of the festivals of Viña del Mar (1967 and 1969), Mérida (1968 and 1977) and Caracas (1974), which brought together films and filmmakers representative of the most innovative cinematographic tendencies in Latin America. The International Festival of New Latin American Cinema was the response to the urgent demand for a space that would guarantee a consistent encounter between the continent's cinematography and their creators.

As expressed in its founding announcement, the Festival aimed to "promote the regular meeting of Latin American filmmakers whose work enriches the artistic culture of our countries (...); ensure the joint presentation of fiction films, documentaries, cartoons and current affairs (...), and contribute to the dissemination and international circulation of the main and most significant productions of our cinematography."

Throughout its history, the Festival has sought to recognize and promote cinematographic productions that contribute, due to their significance and artistic values, to the enrichment and reaffirmation of the Latin American and Caribbean cultural identity.

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Every year the event calls for Fiction, Documentary and Animation, Opera Prima, Unpublished Screenplays and Posters contests. In addition, meetings and seminars are organized on various topics of cultural and, especially, cinematographic interest. The Festival's program also includes a wide and representative sample of contemporary cinema from the rest of the world.

The themes and poetics of the New Cinema are identified with those of the literature of the boom, where the marvelous real permeates everything. The world of fantasy is not at odds with that of reality, with a predominance of travel films as a way of searching for personal, cultural and social identities through geographical context. In this regard, stands out the search for the true origins as a balm in the face of heartbreak, as a response to a new way of life that allows lying the foundations of a better world. Above all, it looks for a solution to the disconsolation and "isolation" of human beings in a globalized and increasingly dehumanized world.

Steeped in a strong social commitment, this new cinema brings the human condition to the forefront, transposing people's experiences, limitations, hardships while denouncing certain social injustices.

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Latin America: A Race for Space

The first space programs in the region were launched in 1960 by the governments of Argentina and Brazil, followed by Mexico, which created an agency in 1962.

In Latin America, such programs are much less developed than in other parts of the world. There are currently some 3,000 satellites in orbit around the Earth, but only 85 of them belong to or are operated by countries in the region.



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Space travel and exploration, as it is known today, began with the launch of the first objects into space in 1957. Since then, many nations have pursued the creation and operation of agencies to achieve what once seemed impossible. However, not as many have been able to fully advance their goals, mainly due to the high cost of developing space technology.

The **Soviet Union** and the **United States** were the two great powers during the early stages of space travel, which became known as the space race during the Cold War period. Since then, many other nations have formed space programs, operating satellites, launching facilities and sending people outside the Earth's atmosphere. Today, countries such as China, Japan, India, Pakistan, Iran and the European Space Agency have space programs with vast capabilities and resources.

The first space programs in the region were launched in 1960 by the governments of Argentina and Brazil, followed by Mexico, which created an agency in 1962. However, despite their longevity, these programs have not achieved worldwide recognition by the space community. While most countries in the region have experienced exponential growth in space technology and development over the past two decades, no country has built orbital launch vehicles or reached full operational capability.

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Currently, the only countries in the region that have a space program and have launched satellites into space are **Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.**

Brazil, which has the most important and developed space program in Latin America, is looking to the future of space missions, preparing, training and collaborating with other countries for a future mission to Mars. The Brazilian Space Agency is supporting a training project that uses the South American country's semi-arid region to simulate the Mars environment. In 2017, the project had logged 65 missions and 30 more were scheduled. To date, 213 people from 29 different countries have contributed to this project.

Mexico is another country with a strong interest in developing a space race. The first major project of the Mexican government was the deployment of the Morelos satellites in the 1980s to provide communication to rural areas of the country. In the 1990s, students from the Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) designed and built microsatellites named Solidaridad I and II to replace the Morelos satellites. After a difficult litigation and six years on hold, the Mexican Space Agency was officially created in 2010, under the Ministry of Communications and Transportation.

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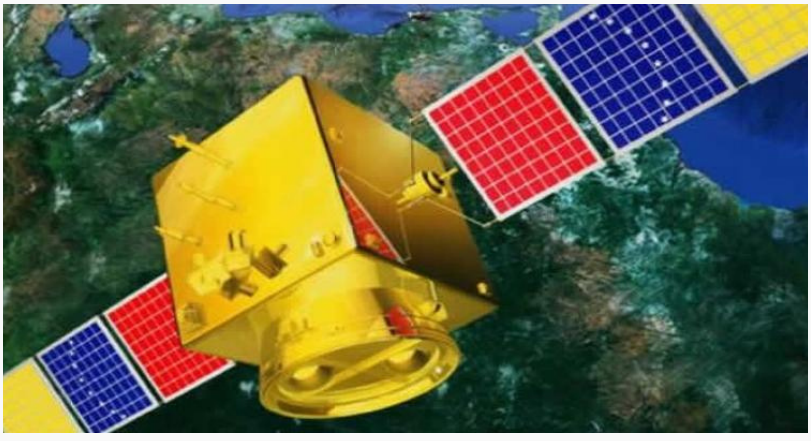
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They immediately set about the task of developing state-of-the-art space technology, and thus the D2/AtlaCom-1 nanosatellite projects were born. They are currently developing the NanoConnect-2 nanosatellite, which will be the first of a series of satellites that will position Mexico as a major player in the development of space instruments and applications for lower earth orbit.

Venezuela embarked on the development of the space industry in 2008 with the founding of the Bolivarian Agency for Space Activities (ABAE). ABAE's objective is to manage and develop space policies. The two main projects managed by the agency are the VENESAT-1 -a telecommunications satellite also known as "Simón Bolívar"-, and the VRSS-1 and VRSS-2.42 earth observation satellites.The project was carried out in collaboration with China, which used its launch vehicles to deploy the satellites, entirely of Venezuelan production.



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Current Challenges

One of the most important challenges for Latin American countries is the lack of qualified people to work on their space programs. There are not many recognized and certified educational facilities and curricula. Relatively few people from Latin American countries have achieved successful space careers. Some of the few who have made it into space include the first Latin American astronaut, Arnaldo Tamayo Méndez of Cuba, who participated in the Soviet Soyuz 38 mission in 1980; Rodolfo Neri Vela of Mexico, who was part of the U.S. STS-61-B mission in 1985; and Franklin Chang Diaz of Costa Rica, a physics professor and director of NASA's Advanced Space Propulsion Laboratory, who participated in seven U.S. space missions.

However, a significant advance was the creation in 2020 of the Latin American and Caribbean Space Agency (ALCE), which seeks to join efforts to have technological freedom that does not make them dependent on other programs. It also seeks to invest in the development of satellites and future important space missions. Space development is an investment in the future that could provide better technology, help education in rural areas, create diverse jobs, attract civil and international capital and provide public support. Today's space programs will define tomorrow's outcomes.

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Habano Festival, A Luxury Opportunity

At the recently concluded 24th Habano Festival, the Habanos S.A. corporation raised 17.8 million euros during the traditional charity auction that closes the event.

Throughout the years, the Habano Festival continues to be the ideal scenario and the largest international gathering for lovers of what is considered the best cigar in the world: the Habano.



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Created in 1999, the Festival is held annually in the last week of February in Cuba's capital, Havana, keeping intact its spirit of celebration and homage to the best tobacco in the world. Not only has it become the best exponent of Habanos' fundamentals of excellence and quality, but it is also recognized as the ideal place for the exchange of experiences among enthusiasts from all over the world.

For a week, Habano lovers gather to pay tribute to the Habano and delve into the secrets of a tradition treasured for centuries. The program of activities ranges from guided visits to the collection and production centers to Habano tasting seminars and important social events. Participants also have the privilege of being among the first to taste the new Habanos presented during the Festival.

Within the framework of the event, an important business forum is held in which international companies, collectors and those interested in the latest trends in the Cuban market converge. This event is a perfect place to forge alliances, agreements and exchanges between the many international personalities attending from the fields of culture, gastronomy, cinema, fashion, sports, collecting and the world of luxury.

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At the recently concluded 24th Habano Festival, the Habanos S.A. corporation raised 17.8 million euros during the traditional charity auction that closes the Festival. Six humidors (furniture for the preservation of cigars) were auctioned, money that will be used to improve the quality of Cuban Public Health services.

The humidors auctioned paid tribute to the world-renowned cigar brands Cohiba, H.Upmann, Romeo y Julieta, Hoyo de Monterrey, Partagás, Montecristo, and Trinidad.



The tweet reads, "2,900 attendees from 108 nations, including smokers, producers and industry professionals, attended the 24th Habano Festival in Cuba from Feb. 26 to Mar. 1, 2024."

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Haiti: Education of Resilience

The increase in the number of schools that do not comply with the Ministry of Education's operating standards has hindered the work of professionals who, since the end of the last century, have been striving to provide young people with a comprehensive education.

In **Haiti**, a movement known as "Peyi Lòk" (Blocked Country) stands out, involving educators who undertook their own neighborhood-by-neighborhood projects to bring needed educational aid, especially to children.



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The strength and resilience of the Haitian people are historically based as, since its independence in 1804, it has had to struggle and overcome not only natural disasters, but also recurrent periods of political instability. The last few years have been particularly difficult in the country due to social movements and the COVID-19 pandemic. The Caribbean country is currently undergoing an acute general crisis affecting all areas.

Under these circumstances, education has been totally neglected. The lack of functionality of state and private organizations, which are unable to reach students with the quality required, is a constant in the country's history.

The Haitian education system is divided into two main groups: public and non-public. Non-public establishments include private, denominational, community schools, among others. The increase in the number of schools that do not comply with the Ministry of Education's operating standards has hindered the work of professionals who, since the end of the last century, have been striving to provide young people with a comprehensive education. It is important to note that in this country, which is characterized by a high illiteracy rate, there is a glaring disparity between schools that cater to the children of the elites and those that cater to children from other social categories.

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Unlike the former, the latter are generally housed in buildings that do not have the necessary infrastructure to ensure their full development. Thus, in some regions, classes are held in churches, houses and even in the open air.

In view of these disastrous conditions, educators grouped in a movement that became known as "Peyi Lòk" (Blocked Country) undertook their own neighborhood-by-neighborhood projects to bring the necessary educational assistance, especially to children, considering that the first years of life are fundamental for their future. For this purpose, they have built schools with local resources and in the best of cases they use old warehouses, abandoned buildings, generally in urban areas. The teachers do this out of purely community interest, without receiving salaries or any attention from the authorities. At the beginning, the movement did not receive much attention from the population, but as the country does not manage to get out of the deep crisis and the state cannot provide the necessary assistance, many families, even from the wealthy classes, began to see it as an option. Therefore, this method of providing education became a popular and effective way to help the country overcome the severe crisis that is shaking the country.

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To understand the magnitude of the effort that teachers put into this work, we must understand that Haiti is the poorest country in Latin America and the Caribbean, with almost 77% of its citizens living on less than $2 a day and at least 60% of them unemployed or underemployed, with 4.9 million people (43% of the population) who do not have enough to eat.

Practically the country's economy is sustained by aid from international organizations. UNESCO in particular has given some help to the independent teachers' movement by providing them with materials and other types of assistance. Some NGOs also manage, at the neighborhood level, these alternative ways of providing education to the youngest.

Undoubtedly an experience worthy of replication elsewhere, but one that should never happen. Education is the future of any nation.

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