



ENC ANALYSIS



Film festivals and cities: A view for south-eastern Europe

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About the author



Dr. Eleni Sideri, holds a Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from SOAS/University of London. She did extensive fieldwork in the Caucasus, in former Yugoslavia (Sarajevo), and in Greece. She taught social anthropology in various departments and she has published in different languages. She recently completed her research in three countries of southeastern Europe (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, and Greece) on film co-production networks and the identity of Europe.

Abstract

The paper explores the development of creative economy in the urban context. In particular, it examines how film festivals in the European periphery, in southeastern Europe, contributed to the transformation of three cities, which have turned into regional film centers, Thessaloniki, Sarajevo, and Tbilisi. Based on a two-year multimodal and multi-sited research, the paper studies the ways film festivals, especially film markets, became a tool for cities to address economic and political challenges raised within the framework of Europeanization but also, how the past through cultural memory seems to entangle with these changes and become an important factor for the transformation of these cities.

Keywords: city, film, festival, Europeanization, southeastern Europe

Introduction

In his introduction to the special theme publication of *Ethnos*, which was dedicated to festivals and carnivals, Nicola Frost underlined (2016: 569), Recast in the age of instrumental art as agents for social cohesion and neighborhood economic regeneration, festivals are seen to earn their keep, and merit a slice of increasingly scarce public resources. Festivals are judged (by some) to provide multicultural color in the inner-city, or authentic cultural heritage in the countryside, often alongside quantifiable economic impact.

As this paper will discuss, in post-war Europe festivals turned into significant spaces of negotiating of social challenges and economic transformations. In the last decades, though, their proliferation should be explored in connection to the emerging urban regeneration and super-diversity, as well as the gradual entanglement of culture with the economy through the framework of the creative economy.

Especially in southeastern Europe, the above changes were tightly connected with the process of Europeanization. Film festivals, in particular, are strongly enmeshed in the creation of a more distinctive European culture through the formation of a more coherent, European, audience and market. Cultural coherence was the main objective of film policies of the EU which adopted a cultural-oriented agenda since the 1980s and 1990s in order to deepen integration beyond economic interests.

The paper is based on multi-sited research in the film festivals of Thessaloniki, Sarajevo, and Tbilisi from 2016-2018 and more specifically, their film markets. The three cities were chosen to challenge binarism produced in the Cold War period. Comparing three cities and film industries with different histories and positions within the Cold War and post-Cold War geopolitics, I tried to overcome methodological nationalism and hegemonic ideas regarding film traditions (big-capitalist driven film industries and smaller, ideologically-driven socialist industries) postulating the complexity of the histories of the Cold War which could be exhausted in a bipolar approach between West/East. My research was concentrated on field trips and participant observation in different film markets, interviews with policymakers, festival practitioners, and creators, and research in film databases like the MEDIA-Library, Lumiere, and IMDB. The main question of my research was to examine the ways film coproductions contributed to the formation of networks that were shaped by imagined perceptions of Europe but at the same time, they were engaged in constructing new ideas of Europe. In other

words, I tried to explore how the idea of Europe is constructed by these agents and networks but at the same time, to what extent dominant perceptions in the EU often fostered in film policies play a role in the coproduction of films and the idea of Europe.

Below, I will discuss in brief film festival histories in the three cities, then, I will refer to the economic and political changes that led the EU to launch its film policies and how they affected the three cities and their film festivals and finally, I will draw some comparative aspects regarding the three film festivals and regional urban development and how they affect and become affected by Europeanization.

Festivals in post-war Europe

Migrations from the colonies to the metropolitan centers as well as from south to north Europe in the post-war period produced the need in the 1970s for inclusion beyond the traditional nation-state policies like for example, formal education. In other words, the guest workers (*Gastarbeiter*) and their children decided to stay for good in their host countries, which generated the need for more inclusive membership. Festivals granted recognition and visibility in the public space and thus, generated spaces of inclusion for the offspring of migrants who were born and tried to succeed in full membership in Western societies. In addition to the emergence of multiculturalism, the rise of tourism and the quest for authenticity and roots facilitated the proliferation of festivals in Europe during that period (see Kockel et al. 2019).

Festivals played also a significant role in the other side of the Iron Curtain. Socialist countries also tried to accommodate their own multiculturalism, especially in the Soviet context, by celebrating national cultures until the final passage to a socialist citizenship. Festivals generated a secular calendar which created habit and routine to socialist citizens and also, a belonging and as sense of togetherness. Moreover, festivals showcased national distinction which was fostered within the socialist umbrella as part of equal recognition of all cultures. At the same time, festivals coloured the often regimented with bureaucracy and Party rhetoric, everyday life (see Kajanová, Pickhan and Ritter 2016).

Film festivals, though, follow the binary nature of cinema which, on the one hand, is an art and on the other hand, it is connected to industry and technology. This binarism is exhibited in the way film festivals are organized. On the one hand, they

are spaces open to cities and people with film screenings of new productions or old ones (retrospectives), public talks of creators, and parallel activities, like exhibitions, and parties. On the other hand, film festivals organize specialized film markets targeting only the industry, in other words, creators, producers, broadcasters, distributors, and sale agents. This double nature makes film festivals differentiate from other types of festivals in terms of budget and infrastructure needed but also their multiple instrumentality within cities.

Film festivals were born in the mid-war period. The first film festival in Venice in 1932 was a showcase of the best examples of national film productions. The Venice festival legitimized cinema as part of the national-bourgeois-high culture ending the ambiguity regarding cinema as art (the loss of aura for Benjamin, 2006), but it also exemplified national competition on the eve of the Second World War. In the post-war period, economic protectionism that European nation-states adopted, also affected cinema. The foundation of national film centers and the launching of policies to support national film production (facilitation of production through taxes, ticket subsidies, etc.) helped the recovery or led to the development of national film industries. The measures tried to boost national culture and heritage where cinema was included.

In addition, film festivals, like that of Cannes (started in 1938 but it was relaunched in 1946), were identified with a high culture which gradually became the branding of the European cinema vis-à-vis Hollywood's mass production and popularity in world markets. European cinema emerged through this opposition (Higson 1998) between the quality of European film and Hollywood's big studios' productions. Film festivals in Europe adopted this mission, to showcase the artistry of the European filmmakers by selecting the best films and talents from the national production. In this way, the internalized idea of national bounded cultures were embedded in this context as well. Film festivals in the socialist bloc also offered the opportunity to the regimes to showcase their national cultures making them internationally recognized but also to reinforce their ideological alliances against the bourgeois, western cinema (see Razlogova 2020 on Moscow and Tashkent Film Festivals).

In that post-war period, coproductions emerged as a way to instill capital in European production from the US. but at the same time, to lower the cost of the Hollywood's productions (Siefert 2012). Nevertheless, coproductions were not only an economic activity but a cultural one. For example, Jäckel (2019) underlined that not only geographical proximity but also cultural one turned the cooperation

between France and Italy in film coproductions profitable. At the same time, Cold War divisions turned coproduction into a political tool to forge ideological alliances, something that was heavily used by the USSR in the 1960s and 1970s, but we should not underestimate similar efforts in the West (see Sideri 2023).

In the 1970s and 1980s, both economic and political changes brought changes in the festival landscape. First of all, there was a gradual paradigm shift in the economy with the first global energy crisis forcing a transformation in national economies which set the start of de-industrialization in Europe, something that I will discuss below in relation to film festivals and urban economies. Then, post-colonial creators and the emergence of more political cinema started to bloom and circulate among cinema markets all over the world. This fact could be ignored by the old and recognized film festival. The rise of 'world cinema' as a cinematic label tried to provide a more inclusive take on cinema, especially, the cinema of non-western auteurs. This shift signified the gradual de-centering of the film industry from the traditional Europe film centers to the periphery without, though, challenging the hegemonic ideas regarding the quality of European cinema. World cinema enhanced rather than reduced Othering. Creators becoming known through this process were considered representative of territorialized, national, high cinematic cultures. In addition, these creators and their films managed to travel abroad exactly because they respected and worked within the tradition of the European art house cinema and as representatives of their cultures. In other words, the colonial tradition of categorizing, essentializing, and naturalizing continued. This decentering, though, paved the way for the 1990s and the launching of the EU film policies as well as the formation of the circuits of film festivals and festival-cities, global film markets which gave rise to the outburst of film festivals.

Creative economy, creative cities and film festivals

The EU film policies were developed in the 1990s with the launching of the Media programme in 1990/1991 (in 2013 Media became a section of the programme Creative Europe), which followed the introduction of a corresponding programme EURIMAGES by the Council of Europe (1989/1990). The programme was the result of a decade of policies that tried to shape a European culture and identity (European anthem, flag, orchestra, institution of European capitals development of TV policies, "TV without frontiers", special programmes for translating European literature, etc). As Criss Shore (2006) underlined the 1980s was the period that the

EU invented a series of biopolitics to generate a more cohesive and integrated European identities and emotional attachment and not only an economic agenda and shared interests. In this framework, cultural and film policies were shaped in order to gradually form a common cultural space and identity.

Media programme was inspired as a mechanism to support all fields of audiovisual production, distribution, and exhibition. In terms of production, MEDIA targeted more the formation of spaces of networking and training for the development of entrepreneurial and marketing skills for scriptwriters and producers than the direct financial investment to film production. For distribution and exhibition, MEDIA generated spaces for the promotion and sales of European films like festivals and film markets as well as the programme invested in a network of cinema halls (CINEMAS EUROPAS) for the subsidized screening of European films. The three film festivals I am examining below were all funded in different ways by MEDIA. Moreover, the inclusion in the programme was connected with European integration. Member-states like Greece could enjoy all the benefits of the membership since the launching of the programme whereas Bosnia-Herzegovina or Georgia participated as a reward for their successful integration process. Georgia was included in Eurimages in 2011 and Media in 2015 as part of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Bosnia-Herzegovina became a member of EURIMAGES in 2005 and aspects of Creative Europe in 2012 with full participation in the Culture and MEDIA sub-programmes since 2015.

The main underlying objective, as I stated above of the European cultural and film policies was the formation of Europeanness. As a result, one of the criteria for a successful application for funding is for the project and the creative team to prove the European Added Value of the production. Trying to understand what this meant during my research made me aware that there was no well-defined definition of the European Added Value. One professional in the Greek National Centre stated, “we are talking about work of art, not potatoes”. But what it emerged as an approach was the fact that the European Added Value did not refer to the content but more, it referred to their capacity to circulate in different European markets, some that co-produced film has a prerequisite. For this circulation, the circuit generated by the film festivals and their markets is extremely important.

At the same time, the interrelation of culture with the economy, creating films to circulate and in this way, to shape a European (film) market is at the heart of the creative economy. Cities involved in this circuit seem to become recognized as adapting and adopting to European values like innovation, clustering,

entrepreneurial spirit which is how the EU understands the notion of creativity and how it should be applied in an urban context. This made, Marylin Strathern (from Hirsch and Macdonald 2021: 188) wonder about the ways modern audit cultures in Europe turned in the end self-referential, adopting dominant ideas and turning creativity into a capitalist agenda of fashioning markets and in the end Europe itself. Could there be different understandings and perceptions? Below, I will discuss the formation of these changes and how they were connected to the creative economy and coproductions in the urban context and I will try to trace these different perceptions that seem to emerge in regional film markets.

The EU's attention to regions started in the 1970s when a more equal development was envisioned especially for the poorer peripheries. Costis Hadjimichalis (2019) trying to set a genealogy of the EU regional development believed that the EU shift towards its peripheries was drawn from a post-war mindset for development and modernization. This mindset divided the world between core and periphery. The division was based on economic differences but also ideological criteria. For example, all the socialist countries were considered less advanced and were categorized as the Second World (see Chari and Verdery 2005) in opposition to the capitalist West where the US was the leading power. Next to that, political challenges where national minorities lived, for example, the Baque country, North Ireland, etc. needed to be addressed by national and European centers.

At the same time, the energy crisis of 1973 set a series of changes that led to a paradigm shift in the global economy often described as the passage from Fordism to post-Fordism, from the economy of production towards that of consumption and services. The EU regional policies were envisioned as a plan for equal integration and fair distribution of resources, which, however, targeted, the infrastructure and connectivity of the less advanced regions without, though, channeling investments to production or manufacture. The first policies in the 1960s-1970s were funded by national governments and then, they were supplemented in the 1980s and 1990s with EU funding. Only in the 2000s private sector was engaged in regional development securing at the same time, benefits for its own interests. The alliance of the public and private produced a transnational economic elite that accumulated capital through public dispossession (Harvey 2005).

Social anthropology in the past approached the idea of region and regionalism through the concepts of ethnicity, borders/boundaries, and territorialized cultures (Bitusikova 2009: 31). The geopolitical changes in the 1990s, described above,

coincided with the EU enlargement shed a new light in the study regions in connection to new conceptual tools. Enlargement towards the post-socialist Europe became a process that combined the above challenges, the introduction of neoliberal policies (structural adjustment, privatization, shrinking of the public sector, etc.) with long-standing Orientalist perceptions and Cold War ideological presuppositions regarding the former socialist world. As Kušić, Lotthoz, and Manolova (2019: 9) underlined, the transformation of the Balkans into southeastern Europe was and still is a process that did not erase cultural and symbolic distance and the sense of lacking one step behind (Leontidou 2004) which was translated into political and cultural distance. The process of Europeanization preserved this condition of difference and distance by internalizing power structures and symbolic differences. This difference was often translated into a more permanent condition, innate in peripherality.

The EU policies for regional development, as Hadjimichalis (2019: 68) stated, introduced a specific blueprint of 'best practices' such as 'learning, innovative and intelligent regions' (ibid: 68-69). In this framework, the idea of a creative economy was central. The gradual de-industrialization since the 1970s of the economy started to be filled in among other things with a shift towards cultural and creative industries, for example, the regeneration of cities and gentrification of neighborhoods, especially, old commercial centers. In other words, creative economy started to become a permanent feature of city development and economy. As Deborah Steveson argued (2003), global cities gradually since the 1990s became more independent actors in the global economy and cultural and creative industries played a role in that shift, as they fitted in masterplan the new economic paradigm fostered, for example, development of the economy of events and consumption. Gradually, cultural and creative industries started to rise in southeastern Europe. According to the Cultural and Creative Industries in Employment in Southeast Europe Report published in 2005 (Primorac 2007), in the early 2000s, creative industries were introduced to the Balkan countries. Nearly 10% of economic development was contributed by this type of industry in less than five years in countries like Croatia, Bulgaria, and Romania (ibid: 51). Similarly, in Greece, which, although it was an old member state in the EU (since the 1980s), its economic transformation took place in the 1990s, the Annual Report of the National Bank of Greece in 2014, showed that creative industries contribute 1.4% of the GDP.

In this framework, film festivals were developed as part of the regeneration of cities within the framework of creative economy. Often film festivals prolonged the

tourist season as they took place off-season producing extra capital by extending the tourist period or generating thematic city breaks (specific packages for tourists for the festival season) (Wallin, Collin, and Hull 2013: 231). Moreover, film festivals seemed to supplement city branding taking advantage of cities' historical legacy- in cases it existed- and introducing new destinations by proposing an appealing cultural agenda. In this way, film festivals were supported by cities as part of their development and a way to address the global competition for investment and development.

Festival Cities

Since the 1990s, globalization and technological changes but also transnational migrations and communities turned cities into important hubs of economic and socio-cultural development. Moreover, the de-politicization of the economy (less control by the national government over the economy) and the transformation of the so-called inter-state system (Sassen 2005) allowed cities to become significant global economic actors beyond the control of national governments. The process was slow and differed upon the context but it can be traced in all three cities I studied. It was also connected, as I will show, to their film festivals. Below, I will compare the three cities of my ethnography and how they became peripheral actors in the cinematic landscape of southeastern Europe.

Thessaloniki

Thessaloniki is known as *symprotevousa* (co-capital). The term concentrates the turbulent history of the early 20th century of Greece but also the tensions that exists between Athenian centre and its periphery. The formation of the Greek state as it is known today was a long, bloodshed process of wars and political struggles from the mid-19th until the end early 20th century. Thessaloniki remained an Ottoman city even after its liberation by the Greek army after the Balkan Wars in 1913, in the sense that it preserved its multi-ethnic profile of the different religious communities of the Ottoman administration (Greek-Orthodox, Muslim, and Jewish). Only after the arrival in Greece of almost one million- Greek-speaking refugees from Asia Minor in 1922, a great part of which was settled in North Greece and Thessaloniki, and the Second World War, which destroyed the significant Sefardi community, the city became Hellenized. Moreover, the Cold War period was a period of tight control of the northern borders. North Greece shared borders and significant Slavic-speaking communities with the Communist Balkans, and as a result, the Athenian center tried to have under surveillance, political, and military

the northern borderland. Besides until very recently (see Sideri 2019) centralization characterized the Greek state in all aspects of economic and political life.

The history of the Thessaloniki Film Festival, at first a film week dedicated to Greek cinema, started in the 1960s as an initiative of a group of young intellectuals belonging to prominent families, Elliniki Evdomada Kinimatografou (The Week of Greek Cinema). This week was financially supported by HELEXPO (the National Institution for the Organization of Exhibitions, Congresses and Cultural Events) whereas now, it is funded by MEDIA, national developmental programmes (ESPA), and private sponsors. The group was inspired by the French Nouvelle Vague and tried to show the ties between the Greek arthouse the European cinema. Thessaloniki International Film Festival (TIFF) was institutionalized as such in 1986. Gradually the Film Festival turned into a city event, in other words, one of those events that produce a collective memory, a moment in the annual calendar of the city that acts as a secular ritual every year re-establishing the city's identity and memory (Lee 2020).

In the 1980s a programme for the regeneration of the old city center, especially the area next to the port was launched. This area had lost its commercial significance after decades of the expansion of the city eastwards and westwards, the transformation of this commercial zone into a banking and financial center and the practical problems of traffic and lack of parking in the center of Thessaloniki. A program of regeneration supported by the municipality and the Ministry of Culture as well as the EU set the beginning of the gentrification of the area into a zone of high culture and entertainment (Gospodini 2007). The changes continued in the 1990s and included also the waterfront and the city port. The area that became gentrified, Ladadika, became a cluster for cultural and creative industries promoting entertainment and tourism (bars, coffeehouses, galleries). They are of the old port with the docks embracing high culture, hosting the film festival as well as four museums. At the same period, Thessaloniki became the European Cultural Capital in 1997 when the Film Festival became international. Since then, the city tried to become a tourist destination, something that was achieved in the last decades when the charismatic mayor Yiannis Boutaris' (2011-2019) aimed at turning Thessaloniki into a city-break destination. This objective included the rediscovery and promotion of Thessaloniki's cosmopolitan (Jews, Turks, Slaves).

All these changes took place amid public debates regarding the identity of the city. The process of Europeanization forced a review of the past under the light of the more multicultural and tolerant examples of co-existence, like that of the Ottoman

Thessaloniki which was identified as matching the EU values and was promoted as a distinctive feature of the city's life before the advent of the national administration. It seemed that through the process of Europeanization, local politics became central to revisiting the national history. However, a less inclusive attitude was adopted towards the flow of immigrants from the former Soviet Union and the Balkans who arrived in the city in the 1990s. These immigrants and their integration seemed not to fall under the radar of these discourses of the cosmopolitan past (Hatziprokopiou 2012).

The internationalization of the film festival created new needs and mechanisms. For example, it was organized into two parts, the Greek and the international section. Moreover, it organized a film market and many educational programmes for schools and publications. The festival also founded a special section, the Balkan Survey (Maties sta Valkania) (1994), which showcased the 'creativity of the Balkan countries which, even under the most unfavorable conditions, never stopped to produce work nor to seek, through culture, for communication bridges nor roots [...] (Kerkinos 2013: 251-252).

The film festival is the most successful mega event for Thessaloniki's scale. For the Festival market's officials, the success was the combination of the touristic aspects and the festival's curation, "good food, weather, the sea, relaxed atmosphere", they told me in our interviews, but also a good structure and selection of film projects and creators festival officials make each year. For Eleftheria Deltsoy, a social anthropologist who studied the process of Europeanization through local artistic activism in Thessaloniki, different instances of openness of the city was a process of 'coeval and coequal participation in hegemonic Europeanness' (ibid:137). For Deltsoy, adopting the ideal of a creative city was an example of compliance with the dominant European discourse. In other words, Europeanization hid "a crypto colonial condition" which produced imagination of "an alternative future", that of Thessaloniki as a European or global city. This very imagination was "embedded in a hegemonic becoming" (Sideri 2023: 127). In this way, the film festival was enmeshed in complex narratives of European regionalism, local competition for cultural distinction and resources, and global competition for capital which though did not preclude the condition of peripherality at the same time, it connected Thessaloniki to a network of (peripheral) cities beyond national borders.

Sarajevo

The XIV Winter Olympic Games in 1984 just after Tito's death created for Sarajevo a different condition in relation to the rest of the former Yugoslavia. The Games set an agenda for modernization and globalization, according to Maurice Roche (2011) by creating jobs in the midst of an economic crisis that started in the mid-1970s in the former Yugoslavia. This booming in jobs that the Games generated prolonged the idea of brotherhood in the city according to Zlatko Jovanovic (2017); it managed to preserve, 'a trope inseparable from the very idea of Yugoslavness' (ibid: 780) but also, it retained the international outlook of the city. In this sense, the 1980s was for both Thessaloniki and Sarajevo a period for regeneration and the construction of a more extrovert and international profile. Maybe, that is why the tragedy of the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s was such a shock for the city.

After the war and the Dayton Agreement in 1995, which produced a very complicated political reality (cantonization) based on the balance of different ethnic groups in power, the Sarajevo Canton Development Strategy was gradually launched and until 2015 started to take effect. The regeneration of the city was funded by the international community (WB, IMF, EU) but also private funds. This regeneration included the development of infrastructure and gentrification of neighborhoods, reconstruction or preservation of old buildings which managed to survive the war and the blockade, struggle against poverty, and public sector transparency and efficiency (Sarajevo Canton Development Plan 2021).

The Sarajevo Film Festival was launched twice. The first one, was during the blockade, when the Head of International Theatre Festival, professor of the Dramatic Arts Academy Haris Pašović, had the idea to launch Beyond the End of the World Sarajevo Film Festival. The second was after the war in 1995, when the Obala Art Centre team, a non-profit organization, relaunched the festival following the idea of an open-air festival like Locarno. The inclusion of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the Media programme as part of the country's becoming an EU candidate member-state helped the development of the festival both financially as well as networking with other festivals like the Berlinale. The film festival tried to combine international productions with regional one and soon, it became a peripheral leader, both as a regional film market but also, as an artistic event. According to reports the festival had 100,000 visitors in Sarajevo (Jukic 2015) and had an important impact on the city's economy (Petkovic 2018). For the festival's film market, Sarajevo Film Festival is successful because it combines "the small and human size of the city and a well structure programme".

In 2019, UNESCO recognized the festival 'as an event in line with the priorities of the Organization aimed at promoting dialogue and tolerance through the arts. This became a great boost for the city's tourist industry. As a result, the City of Sarajevo has embraced the festival to attract investments and tourists. For example, the municipality has set a special Sarajevo City of Film Project Grant which invites young creators to shoot their films in the city in natural settings. The Grant tries to support art and at the same time, to promote the city itself. From above, it seems that Sarajevo Film Festival was a pioneer for the city's development and internationalization after the war in the 1990s.

Tbilisi

As Salukvadze and Golubchikov (2016) underlined, almost 15% of Tbilisi's population immigrated (p.3) in the 1990s either abroad or to rural areas (internal migration) where survival was easier. The conditions got worse due to deindustrialization and de-urbanization. After the 2000s, and the Rose Revolution in 2004, the regeneration of the city was made possible through the gentrification of different areas, especially the Old City, and new housing projects. The project of regeneration was supported by international donors and public funding (ibid: 8-12). The war in South Ossetia/Samchablo and the economic crisis of 2008 stopped these shifts (see World Bank Georgia-Housing Report 2015) which restarted after the war (Pilz 2018, 57-81).

Tbilisi International Festival started in 2000 but in 2002 due to financial reasons almost came to an end. Despite the Soviet tradition of festivals and the heavy subsidies in that period which celebrated national cultures and artistic accomplishments, present film festivals in Tbilisi were a private investment. Prometheus Cinema Art Centre, a civil society organization was the group that initiated the launching of the Tbilisi Film Festival as in the case of Sarajevo and Obala Centre.

According to its Head, Gaga Chkheidze (Micucci 2014), who 'learnt the job' at the Berlin Film Festival (Focus on New Cinema section), the festival embraced the production of young creators (first and second feature works). In 2004 Prometheus received funding from the Georgian National Film Centre, and in 2006 it was supported by the Georgian Ministry of Culture and Tbilisi City Hall. The festival, like in Sarajevo had many private sponsors but also funding by the Ministry of Culture the Georgian National Film Centre, and the Adjara Autonomous Region.

The festival's programme tries to educate the Georgian audience about new art house and fresh film trends. But it also comprises national and international film sections and special thematic screenings dedicated to specific European film traditions each time. Often these special screenings are funded by the European Embassies which want to promote their national cinematographies. Moreover, the Tbilisi festival acts as the space to promote films from the Balkans and eastern Europe, but also from film industries from the Caucasian neighborhood, Armenia Azerbaijan or Ukraine. As some of the practitioners of the festival stated, "Tbilisi could become a hub for the Black Sea cinema".

In all three cases discussed above, there are certain similarities: the shift towards a creative economy in the 1980s/1990s, the launching of new in Sarajevo or Tbilisi or the internationalization of older film festivals like in Thessaloniki as part of the challenges of creative economy. The latter took place through a process of regeneration of the city (development of infrastructure, gentrification especially the old city centers and its neighborhoods, clustering). The changes took place within a process of Europeanization which created an integrated culture of urban development where culture was part of the city's marketing and branding within the global competition to attract tourists and investors. The film festivals were developed as part of this process and were funded, among other national or private sponsors by Media. As the interviews with the officials showed, each city's branding, for example, weather or food in Thessaloniki, the small size and friendly atmosphere, or the geopolitical position of Tbilisi, is considered as an asset for a successful festival. However, from a regional perspective, what these cities offer could be seen as similar. Besides, all three are peripheral cities, with a rich cultural history and a geopolitical position in southeastern Europe which address the same pool of creators, mostly young artists from the region who are in the first years of their professional careers.

Trying to turn this weakness into a strength, film festivals and especially film market officials seem to imagine the region in a different way, reshaping cinematic neighborhoods in order to strengthen their position in the European market. My research has postulated that Sarajevo film festival's coproduction market seems to a great extent, to regenerate a former Yugoslav space, as creators from the republics of former Yugoslavia participate the most there. From these countries, Slovenia and Croatia appear to be the cinematic engines of this new space. Both countries lead or participate in numerous coproductions, taking advantage of their full membership in the EU, their infrastructure in studios and their film policies to

support cinema. The proximity of the former Yugoslav countries in terms of geographic distance-beneficial for production costs-but also in terms of language and culture plays a significant factor. On the contrary, Georgia cannot benefit from a similar cinematic neighbourhood despite its federal and socialist past, similar to the former Yugoslavia, as economic but mostly political problems (conflicts with Russia, war in Ukraine and Nagorno Karabakh, political instability) shape a different context. That is why, the cinematic neighborhood for Georgia extends to the west side of the Black Sea, the Baltics, and eastern Europe, for example, Poland.

Finally, Greece seems that only since the so-called debt crisis in 2009 started to build cinematic bridges with its neighboring countries in the Balkans with the exception of Turkey with whom Greece had cinematic relations since the 1990s, when both countries joined the Eurimages. Until then, the most numerous coproductions of Greece were with countries of traditional big film industries from Europe like France or Germany. In this sense, film markets seem to combine cultural memory, and economic and political relations in order to shape partnerships and in this way to create a niche market for their festivals which could overcome the regional competition. They also try to work in complementary and not in competition in order to go against their peripherality.

The same creators with their films join the regional film markets in different phases during the filmmaking. For instance, the same creators could join the film market in Thessaloniki for script development when the film is still in initial stages and then, to join Sarajevo in order to find a sales agent when the film is ready to go onscreen. In this way, film markets and festivals seem to act in solidarity to overcome their peripheral condition in the festivals' circuit. However, the presence of big cinematographies and festivals is significant in all these film markets. France and Germany have a very central position as sponsors but also as markets for their creators participating in film markets. Moreover, the two countries act as training spaces for the people working in the regional festivals, for example, many officials in all three festivals were trained in the big festivals like Berlinale. Both France and Germany have an important presence in the coproduction markets in all three festivals As one official in Thessaloniki told me "Cinema is an industry after all, and industry means money".

Conclusion

Dušan Bjelic (2011) in his book *Normalizing the Balkans* underlined that the imagination (and knowledge) is found at the core of the colonial project. EU

enlargement is not impermeable to this colonial legacy of knowledge and integration of southeastern Europe and the process of Europeanization is a self-fashioning project for the 'south' and 'eastern' of Europe, according to perceptions of superiority of the North, the metaphor of transition in the 1990s reflected this political geography and the unequal power relations embedded in that geography. The regeneration of the three cities in the 1990s discussed here showed the way de-industrialization and the introduction of post-Fordist economy turned creative economy to lifeline for development and access to global capital. In that framework, film festivals tried to engage with the ambiguities of their peripheral position. On the one hand, they stressed their difference as a comparative asset to more advanced and sizeable festivals (good food, weather, friendly atmosphere), on the other hand, they tried to carefully design a strategy of the development of film coproduction taking into account both cost or infrastructure but also cultural memory for example, the relation between former Yugoslav countries or Greece and Turkey.

The connections between festivals were attributed to the mechanisms of Europeanization and were depicted as the three festivals for a regional network that participates in a wider, global festival eco-system. These relations should be seen as both organic but also the result of complex power relations that sought to unite the European periphery of southeast Europe through the slow and complex process of Europeanization. The condition of peripherality that the three cities and festivals face carried the risk of this condition becoming a comprehensive concept of identity building by internalizing hierarchies and inferiority complexes within Europeanization and post-socialism. At the same time, research showed that film markets try to address this issue by refashioning their network through memory as well as an economic agenda.

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