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### Greek European Film Co-Productions in the Three Major European Film Festivals from 2001 to 2013

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Film co-production is a complex phenomenon that involves different countries and cultures and therefore closely linked to their social and economic situation during the specific time periods that takes place. Given the economic changes that Greece and Europe in general has undergone during the years from 2001 to 2013, the purpose of this study is first to present the number of Greek productions and co-productions in three major European Film Festivals during the years 2001-2013 and secondly to compare Greece and European countries with similar Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2007 and 2011, before and during the economical crisis and with similar amount of population, in terms of their co-productions in the three above mentioned film festivals. Our findings show that although there was a decline in film production and co-production in Greece during the years from 2004 to 2009, Greek cinema in general witnesses a revival from 2009 onwards. In addition, the number of co-productions is closely linked to the fame of a director. The comparison of European countries with similar GDP and similar or equal amount of population to Greece has shown that the number of co-productions is probably dependent on their geographical position, the more centrally in Europe are located the more co-productions they present, as well as their multicultural environment and the proximity of languages spoken in the countries involved. However, given that Greece is not a centrally located country in Europe, some recommendations are made in terms of legal framework and tax incentives which will facilitate Greek European co-productions with subsequent benefits for Greek society.

**Keywords:** Co-productions, film productions, Greece, Europe.

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## 1.0 Introduction

It is obvious that film co-production is a phenomenon that involves various countries and cultures in the procedure of its creation. Without doubt, it relies on the artistic involvement of a wide range of people from different countries, with direct consequence the involvement of a number of societies which during different time periods have undergone social and economic changes that affected their collaborations.

The time period between 2001-2013 has been crucial, in terms of economic and social changes, for Europe and most importantly for Greece which has suffered a severe economical crisis. Therefore, it seems important to see how the phenomenon of film co-production which relies on collaborations between countries has been affected during this time period.

In this paper we will examine the phenomenon of the European co-production in Greece from 2001 to 2013. More specifically, we will analyze the number and the presence of these co-productions in the three major European Film Festivals, the Cannes Film Festival, the Berlin Film Festival and the Venice Film Festival. Furthermore, we will draw conclusions, based on a comparison of European countries with similar Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to Greece, on the growth or diminution of co-productions as a phenomenon and the presence of co-productions in the three Film Festivals. Finally, a population based comparison concerning Greece and European countries with similar population will be made.

## 2.0 Literature review

Film co-productions seem to correspond to a need in our globalized society as they are “suitable for global stories which transcend cultural boundaries” (Morawetz, 2009). Co-productions in Europe “have almost doubled from 1997 to 2006, increasing from 127 to 242 in 2006” (Baltruschat, 2002).

Film co-production is a complex phenomenon which seems to depend on various factors such as the economic condition of the producing country, its geographical location in Europe, the multicultural environment and the proximity of the languages spoken in the countries involved as well as the fame of the creators that live or come from the producing country. In addition, it also depends on the legal framework relevant to film production. The legal framework can either propel or push down the number of co-productions. In addition, the presence or not of tax incentives which can offer economic benefits to foreign producers is an equally important factor.

Furthermore, between 2001 and 2013 Greek society -as well as the general European economic situation-have underwent several changes that can certainly be reflected on its film production and the amount of co-productions. It is well known that this time period has been crucial in terms of economy for the whole of Europe and subsequently for the film industry. Greece has been in the center of economic and social changes and film co-production is a European phenomenon which is closely linked to economic and social changes. Therefore, examining the subject of Greek-European co-productions during this time period presents serious interest and has never been examined in this perspective before.

## 3.0 Methodology

In the first section of the paper, the number and the presence of Greek productions and co-productions in the three major European Film Festivals (Cannes, Venice, Berlin) are analyzed. In the second section, a comparison of the closest to Greece's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) European countries is made in relation to the number of co-productions in the three Festivals, in the years 2007 and 2011, before and during the economical crisis respectively. European countries which are ranked from position 11 to 15,

according to the European GDP ranking, have been selected. In the third section, a population based comparison is made concerning countries with similar population to Greece and the relevant number of co-productions in the three above mentioned Film Festivals. European countries with population lower or equal with 10.000.000 have been selected which also, as film markets, represent a low amount of the total film co-production in Europe.

## 4.0 Findings

### 4.01 Numbers of Greek productions and co-productions in the festivals

#### *Cannes Film Festival*

In the Cannes Film Festival from 2001 to 2013 Greece was present with only one film in 2009, as shown in Table 1., the film *Dogtooth* by Yorgos Lanthimos which was the winner of the section Un Certain Regard and was eventually nominated for the Oscar of Best Foreign Film. However, this film was not a co-production as it was only produced by Greece.

Table 1. Greek productions and co-productions in the Cannes Film Festival

Years	Greek Productions At The Cannes Film Festival	Sections	Co-Productions
2009	1	Un certain regard	0

#### *Berlin film festival*

In the Berlin Film Festival we observe that Greece has a more active role. So, Greece had been present with 9 different films between 2001 and 2013, as shown in Table 2. In addition, in the Berlin Film Festival Greece had three different films screened in Competition without though having obtained any awards.

Table 2. Greek productions and co-productions in the Berlin Film Festival

Years	Greek Productions At The Berlin Film Festival	Sections	Co-productions
2001	My Sweet Home	In Competition	Germany/Greece
2002	One day in August	In Competition	
2004	Trilogy: The Weeping Meadow	In Competition	Greece/France/Italy
2009	Eden is West	Out of Competition	France/Greece/Italy
2011	Amnesty	Forum	Albania/Greece/France
2012	Meteora	In Competition	Germany/Greece/ France
2013	Before Midnight	Out of Competition	United States/Greece

#### *Venice film festival*

In the Venice Film Festival Greece has also had an active role from 2001 to 2013, as shown in Table 3. Greece had six different films screened in different sections of the Festival. More specifically, Greece had four different films In Competition at the Venice Film Festival during those years. In addition, three different films from 2010 to 2013 earned various awards.

Table 3. Greek productions and co-productions in the Venice Film Festival

Years	Greek Productions At The Venice Film Festival	Sections	Co-productions	Awards
2004	Delivery	In Competition		
2006	Akamas	Special Events	Cyprus/Greece/ Hungary/Turkey	
2007	Callas Assoluta	Evento Orizonti	France/Greece	

2010	Attenberg	In Competition		Volpi Cup For Best Actress and Lina Mangiacapre Award
2011	Alps	In Competition	Greece/France/Canada	Golden Osella For Best Screen play
2012	Miss Violence	In Competition		Best Euro-Mediterranean Film, Silver Lion for Best Director, Volpi Cup for Best Actor, Young Cinema Award for Best Film in Competition

#### 4.02 Co-Productions and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in European countries

The co-productions of four countries, namely Switzerland, Norway, Austria and Denmark which are closer to Greece according to their GDP and more specifically they are ranked from position 11 to 15, according to the European GDP ranking, are presented in Tables 4 and 5. Table 4. shows the number of co-productions by those countries in 2007, before the economical crisis, and Table 5. the equivalent number in 2011, during the economical crisis.

Table 4. Co-productions by European countries comparable in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2007

European Countries From Place 11-15 According To Their Gdp In 2007	Co-Productions Cannes Film Festival	Co-Productions Berlin Film Festival	Co-Productions Venice Film Festival	Total
Switzerland	0	4	1	5
Norway	0	1	0	1
Austria	0	6	0	6
Greece	0	0	1	1
Denmark	0	1	0	1

Table 5. Co-productions by European countries comparable in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2011

European Countries From Place 11-15 According To Their Gdp In 2011	Co-Productions Cannes Film Festival	Co-Productions Berlin Film Festival	Co-Productions Venice Film Festival	Total
Sweden	0	2	1	3
Norway	0	1	0	1
Austria	0	7	1	8
Denmark	0	2	1	3
Greece	0	1	1	2

#### 4.03 Co-Productions in relation to population count in European countries

The co-productions between the European countries, namely Austria, Sweden, Hungary and Portugal which have a similar amount of population with Greece, notably lower than or equal with 10.000.000, are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Co-productions in European countries with population higher than or equal with 10.000.000

European Countries With Population Higher Than Or Equal With 10.000.000	Number Of Co-Productions At The Cannes Film Festival	Number Of Co-Productions At The Berlin Film Festival	Number Of Co-Productions At The Venice Film Festival	Total
Greece	0	4	3	7
Austria	8	8	1	17
Sweden	5	6	0	5
Hungary	3	2	0	5
Portugal	3	0	5	8

## 5.0 Discussion

In the first section of the study, it is shown that Greece has a fairly good presence with films in the Berlin Film Festival and the Venice Film Festival up to 2004. However, between 2004 and 2009 we

observe a certain decline: there are only two films screened in the Venice Film Festival and notably not in Competition but in other sections.

By contrast, from 2009 onwards we observe that Greek cinema witnesses a revival. The beginning takes place with the film *Dogtooth* by Yorgos Lanthimos that was the winner of the section «Un certain regard» of the Cannes Film Festival and which ended to being nominated for an Oscar of Best Foreign Film. This production of Greek films of high artistic quality continued over the following years and has been characterized as “A New Wave” of Greek Cinema. The presence of films like *Meteora*, *Alps*, *Attenberg* and *Miss Violence*, in competition in the Venice and Berlin Film Festivals testify to this effect.

It is to be noted that this “New Wave” does not seem to be a temporary phenomenon but it is rather an on-going trend phenomenon in continuous development with new films such as «Wild Duck» by Yannis Sakaridis. This film was screened in the Toronto International Film Festival, in 21<sup>st</sup> Raindance Film Festival, in the 18<sup>th</sup> Busan Film Festival, in the 49<sup>th</sup> Chicago Film Festival, in the 37<sup>th</sup> Mostra- Sao Paulo Film Festival and in the 44<sup>th</sup> International Film Festival of India, Goa.

Notice, however, that the above concern mostly film production in Greece generally and not co-productions. Herein below we shall turn our attention to co-productions strictly speaking.

A first observation is that there seems to be an important relationship between the name and fame of a particular director and the interest of foreign countries in co-productions. The politico-economic situation has affected “the current financial set-up for co-productions that provides opportunities exclusively for established European auteurs” (Iordanova, 2002). Thus, during the first years up to 2004 we see that acclaimed directors like Theo Angelopoulos and Constantinos Giannaris are the directors behind co-productions, as “co-productions are being mainly motivated by film and television producers who seek to gain international market access to increase their revenues” (Pendakur, 1990) and count on the name of acclaimed directors. The same conclusion holds for the “New Wave” of Greek Cinema. Despite its great festival “voyage” till its Oscar nomination, the film *Dogtooth* was a Greek production as the director Yorgos Lanthimos was still relatively unknown at the time. However, his second film *Alps*, which followed his Oscar nomination and the award at the Cannes Film Festival, was a Greek, French and Canadian co-production. Lanthimos’ newest film *The Lobster* is also a co-production of Greece, Ireland and the United Kingdom. Also, both award-winning *Attenberg* and *Miss Violence*, were Greek productions most likely because their directors were not yet recognizable in the European cinema community.

In the second section of the study, it is shown that there is a certain rise in the total amount of co-productions from countries which are closer to Greece according to their GDP from 2007 to 2011.

It seems that it is mostly the Central European countries that are active in co-productions and not the Northern European countries and Greece. A variety of possible explanations of this phenomenon present themselves: geographical proximity, community of language, multicultural environment are some of these. Firstly, central European countries are close in terms of geographical position which facilitates collaborations. In addition, countries like Germany, Austria and Switzerland share the same or slightly different languages, a fact that can promote film co-productions between them. Finally, as these countries are in central Europe people originating from a wide range of countries reside in them which renders co-productions easier in terms of collecting pan-European crew.

In the third section of the study, the conclusion drawn is the same as that from the previous section. By comparing the number of co-productions between European countries with a similar amount of population to Greece, we observe that it is mostly Austria, a Central European country which is active in the field of co-productions.

The high number of co-productions produced by Austria possibly occurs because of the facility to create collaborations provided by its place in central Europe and its multicultural character.

## 6.0 Conclusion and policy implications

In summary, the basic findings of the issues analyzed in the three sections above are as follows. Firstly, by examining the number of films screened at the three major European Film Festivals it is observed that Greek artistic cinema is reborn. Concerning the number of co-productions we can only note that the interest of foreign countries in co-productions depends on the fame of the director. In our next two sections, concerning the GDP comparison and the population based comparison, our basic conclusion is that the amount of co-productions of European countries is closely linked to the place of the country in Europe. Consequently, central European countries definitely have a more active role in the field of co-productions.

It is an undeniable fact that Greece lacks in terms of its geographical position as it is in South Europe far from Central Europe and its multicultural environment. However, as it has already been mentioned in the Literature review, geographical position, proximity of languages and multicultural environment are not the only factors which promote film co-production. The legal framework and the presence of tax incentives are equally important factors. Therefore, a different policy should be undertaken by Greece in order to maximize the benefits of European co-productions for Greek society. The changes that have to be put into effect in Greece concern the current state of legal framework and tax incentives.

As far as the legal framework is concerned, the mechanism of granting licenses for filming in archeological sites and cultural monuments, which are abundant in Greece, should be revised and made a lot simpler. In addition, as the absence of tax incentives in Greece is obvious when the number of European collaborations in Greece is compared to that of countries which have already adopted a different policy towards tax incentives, the need to follow a different path is delineated.

In conclusion, the axe in which Greek film policy should be orientated is the adoption of a simple legal framework and the provision of tax incentives, both of which will facilitate collaboration between Greece and other European countries and in combination with the fact that Greek film industry witnesses a revival especially from 2009 onwards, will increase the number of Greek European film co-productions with the subsequent benefits for Greek society.

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