

Full Length Paper

International Film Festivals: A Cinema Struggling to Exist Between New Resources and New ‘Dependencies’

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Accepted 29 January 2012

The article using qualitative research methods analyses the development of the directors’ cinema in Turkey against the background of the International Film Festivals as counterweight to Hollywood Studio Productions. The study concludes that the economic, financial advantage that may have been provided in view of international screening, sales and distribution of Turkish producer-director-cinema by the festivals, international co-producers and distributors also lead to interventions that tend to deconstruct national culture and ideology whilst not being sufficient to make the films, really financially successful.

It further argues that the Independent Film Festivals network of relationships are similar to Hollywood’s and are creating structures that are determining the films’ production process. They are at the same time mounting pressures on the Turkish producer-director of the arts cinema into becoming a dependence variable that may turn the art-films to films just for economic consumption.

Keywords: Turkish Cinema; Directors’ Cinema; International Film Festivals; Film Industry; Film Production.

INTRODUCTION

As a new film language emerges in post-1990 Turkish cinema, the production relationships are determined by new dynamics. A large part of these components which shaped the production of the post-1990 films find their sources in the change which took place in cinema between 1970 and 1980.¹ American distribution companies entering the country, the closing of large halls, the distributors dominating the new halls and the implementation of the package programs in the early 1990s reduce the films’ chances of being screened thus restricting production opportunities. The subsidies of the Ministry of Culture begin in this period, but fall short in the face of film production costs. The establishment of economic relations with the United States and the submissive policy the Turkish government follows in the field of

¹While Yeşilçam (the Turkish film industry) was living its demise, the directors of that period tried individualistic ways to make films and some directors created their own film companies. Thus the first steps of the post-1990 production period were taken. On the other hand, the conditions of art film production improved in the 1980s. Efforts to construct a unique cinematic language and examples of a conception of cinema carrying personal marks were encountered during that period: a few ‘auteur’ directors came to the fore and, with the visibility provided by the international film festivals, expectations of orientalism became an issue. Also at that time, the films which can be regarded as art films competed with popular cinema under the domination of Arabesk films, which began to increase in number with the post-1980 cultural transition.

communications lead to compromises in the cultural field. Although, the state could not play a constructive role in film production during this period, a new understanding of production developed by individual efforts, started in the 1980s, begins to settle in the second half of the 1990s. The production subsidies provided by Eurimages, which Turkey joined in 1990, becomes a significant factor in the establishment of this new understanding. While the 'directors' cinema', in this period, begins to take shape around the axis of individualism, the popular cinema also gains significant presence. Television, advertising and sponsorship become the added components of film production.

On one side of the structure which emerged in the second half of the 1990s, there is the field of the 'directors' cinema', and on the other, the popular cinema following in the footsteps of the Hollywood films, under the domination of the influence of the distributors, it has fallen. The most important and threatening characteristic of the dominant cinema as can be understood through the concept of culture industry, is that it communicates a specific ideology through cultural products. In order to find audiences and halls, the 'directors' cinema' field in Turkey, too, was forced to compete with the popular field of Turkish cinema, and fell weak against the dominant ideology. While in 1996, a large mass of audience went to the cinema for the first time with *Eşkiya* (Turgul, 1996), *Tabutta Rövaşata* (Zaim, 1996) was only able to attract a very small audience but formed the starting point for a conception of cinema which will contain major productions created by individual efforts, producing universal, deep, lasting meanings, putting forth a unique cinematic language, bearing a quest for truth and criticism within.

By 2010, that is, 15 years after the emergence of this new cinema conception, the directors wanting to wriggle out of the market conditions are forced to enter into new dependency relationships in order to make their own cinema. The fundamental reason which creates this obligation is the limiting circumstances of film production in Turkey. Ensuring the continuity of these films produced without commercial concerns depends on the coming together of many different components, most of them consisting of subsidies. Among these components, the international film festivals occupy an important place. Before we talk about the relationship that was established with the international film festivals and its likely effects on the Turkish cinema, it is necessary to mention, albeit briefly, the production components outside the festivals in order to grasp the production structure of today and to discuss the place of the international film festivals in Turkish cinema.

In order to be more independent and to produce the films they want, the film directors who work in the 'directors' cinema' field choose to become producers. Such a choice requires the production conditions to be arranged by the director. The production field becomes a creative process for the director, who has to find solutions to reduce the budget and to use it wisely. In this situation, we encounter a kind of director who dominates the entire process. Within the concept of director-producer², each director owns a production company; however, the fact that a director has a production company does not mean that he can create his own budget. Especially in the field of the 'directors' cinema', the box-office revenues cannot provide the financial resource required to maintain the production process. The fact that directors establish production companies in order to become independent is actually a result of the imposition of

² For detailed information, see Tülay Çelik, *Post-1990s Film-Production Process in Turkey in the 'Directors' Cinema' Field (1990 Sonrası Türkiye'de 'Yönetmen Sineması' Alanında Film Üretim Süreci)*, unpublished PhD thesis, Marmara University, SBE, 2009.

other dependency relations, because the three main resources that feed the film production process in Turkey—the Ministry of Culture, Eurimages and the festivals³—require that the director have a working relationship with a production company.⁴

The other components in the process of film production which can be seen as financial resources can be identified as sponsorship, television sales and DVD sales. However, these are not sufficient to feed production.⁵ Under these circumstances, the main components of production in the Turkish cinema appear to be the Ministry of Culture, Eurimages and the Festivals.

The MINISTRY of CULTURE, EURIMAGES in RELATION to the FILM FESTIVALS in TURKISH CINEMA

The support of the Ministry of Culture is important in the process of film production. Although seen as a small amount compared to other European countries, this support is necessary for the directors who have to work with low budgets to produce films, since there are no other institutions or organisations in Turkey which provide such support. Furthermore, this support provides a major contribution which in effect creates a budget which can receive Eurimages' support. However, the fact that the Ministry of Culture holds the films exempt from many obligations, on the condition that they are screened and awarded at certain festivals, leaving the assessment of their quality to the initiative of a group of national or international film festivals emerges as an ideological issue. As one can talk about a particular network of relationships and system of priorities in regard to the festivals within the national arena, when considering the international festivals as institutions which have commercial functioning at their centre (the commercial structure of the festivals will be discussed in detail in the next section), the state's decision regarding the cultural field signifies surrendering the cultural field to uncertain preferences, market conditions and the dependency relationships which not only shape the international network, but string national and local directors along the same course.

One of the important factors of the production process is the support of Eurimages. Although this support is not granted many films, it creates activity in the field of film production and exists as an important option especially for the 'directors' cinema' field. There has been an increase in the technical quality and improvement in the international film production with the growing number of joint productions. However, in Turkey some difficulties were experienced in the process of entering a co-production network with European standards, because of not having fully broken away, yet, from the production mentality of the past. In the present day, important steps towards the elimination of shortcomings in the functioning of the co-production process are observed. The start of joint productions with major countries has accelerated the process of increase in the number of the international components of a film with joint productions, co-producers and the support these producers receive. Screening a film in the co-

³In order to apply for the subsidies of both the Ministry of Culture and Eurimages, it is necessary to own a production company or to obtain the approval of one. Similarly, to facilitate the sales of the film through the festivals requires the existence of the production company. Funds abroad deal with the producers. Under these circumstances, every director has to establish—or to make a contract with—a production company before beginning the film-production process.

⁴We encounter a new component added to the production process: the role of the executive producer. Due to the long production process, the necessity to provide the financing for the film from various sources and the necessity to carry out the international distribution work of the film, the collaboration with executive producers began.

⁵ The factors we mention are becoming a more important source of income for the popular cinema.

producing countries increases the number of international audience while expanding the area of responsibility of the director. Another factor evident from joint productions is that the pressure from the partners can be an issue and their intervention perceived as a variable dependent upon the will of the director.⁶

The international film festivals, which we discuss in this study from the perspective that they create a new dependency relationship, exist as an important factor which facilitates the film circulation as well as one that determines the production process. To see the relationship established with the festivals in detail, it is necessary, first of all, to talk about the emergence of the film festivals, the change in the structure of the international film festivals and the functioning mechanisms of the festivals.

INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVALS

The film festivals, in which films from different countries meet an international audience, begin to appear after World War II. Many different reasons can be advanced for their emergence; however, it is known that policies of cultural nationalism and the aims and activities of nation-states are at their origin (Stringer, 2001: 136). Another reason is the desire to gain some field of existence via art films in the face of Hollywood (Elsaesser, 2005: 85-89). While, on one hand, the national aspect of the festival comes to the fore, on the other, the festivals have provided an important opportunity for the field of art film to demonstrate itself as an area where the countries positioned themselves against Hollywood.⁷ In the festivals, nationality becomes visible. However, the festivals have been very important areas in the context of finding the opportunity for the international distribution of art films, being accepted as an art, being rewarded and balancing the artistic value with the commercial potential (Neale, 1981: 35). Attention was drawn to the important 'auteurs' of the 1950s and 1960s through the festivals (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003: 716). Furthermore, from the 1970s onwards, the venues which have become hosts to new trends have also been the film festivals. Minorities and pressure groups, women's cinema, gay and queer cinema, ecological movements (Elsaesser, 2005: 92-100), third-world political films (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003: 716), have found an opportunity for expression at the festivals. In this regard and in the context of bringing art cinema into existence, being a point of visibility for different areas, establishing and maintaining relationships in a multicultural perspective (Stringer, 2001: 134), the film festivals have been a central location in the world film culture (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003: 716).

The transformation witnessed in the festivals since their emergence reveals that the festival structure should now be evaluated by using different concepts. The growing internationalisation of cinema in connection with economic and political changes, the collapse of the studio system of Hollywood, proliferation of the independent film production (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003: 716) also have a determining impact on the identity of the festivals. The

⁶For the study titled *Film-Production Process (Film Üretim Süreci)*, see Tülay Çelik, *Post-1990s Film-Production Process in Turkey in the 'Directors' Cinema' Field (1990 Sonrası Türkiye'de 'Yönetmen Sineması' Alanında Film Üretim Süreci)*, unpublished PhD thesis, Marmara University, SBE, 2009.

⁷Here, it is necessary to remember Neale's views associated with the convergence of national cinema and art cinema. 'Art cinema is always, then, a matter of balance between these two aspects [international and national]. The nature of this balance can perhaps best be exemplified by the fact that during the course of their international circulation, Art films tend nearly always to retain a mark which serves simultaneously as a sign of their cultural status and a sign of their national origin. This mark is that of the national language.'(Neale, 1981: 36).

1980s can be viewed as the years in which the changes occur. The classical festival centres begin to change. New festivals emerge in Asia, Australia and North America (Sundance, Toronto, and Montreal) and these festivals acquire an important status. These festivals, although following the global trends, greatly affect the distribution of national circulation and local screening (Elsaesser, 2005: 91).

In the 1990s, as the number of festivals continues to grow rapidly, global distribution gains importance. While there were a hundred annual festivals in 1981, this number increases to seven hundred in 2001. The festivals became diversified in terms of duration, themes, genres, awards and categories. However, as variety increased, a classification of the festivals was initiated. The prestigious Class A festivals are the effective ones in the circulation network (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003: 716-717). All of these changes reveal that the festivals have an important role in marketing the films made outside of Hollywood and in reaching the international audience.⁸

After listing the fundamental characteristics of the festivals associated with their emergence and the changes in their structure, we can review and discuss the relationship of this structure with Turkish cinema and the crucial role of this relationship in the production process, by relating the experiences of directors who produced films in Turkey and took them to international festivals. In the course of this review, studying many different components of the film festivals, grouped in three main categories—Festival Funds, Criteria and Giant Distribution Network—will clarify the basic factors that should be questioned and which would allow us to see the functioning of the production process, clearly.

Festival Funds: Making a Festival Film

Applying for funds within the scope of festivals is not only beneficial in terms of receiving support, but also in facilitating a more comfortable entry into the later stages of the process of circulation by the prestige and recognition this support provides. Semih Kaplanoğlu says that he benefitted from the Hubert Bals Script Development Fund within the scope of the Rotterdam Film Festival for the film *Meleğin Düşüşü* (Kaplanoğlu, 2004). Kaplanoğlu wrote the script after the film received that support and began to look for a partner for Eurimages applications. He says that the search for a partner was long because it was his second film, but indicates that with the reference of the fund he was able to find a Greek producer. After he found this partner, the Hubert Bals Fund also supported the post-production. Kaplanoğlu states that this fund is important for his cinema. 'I had sent them a scenario. If this support had not been granted—because I had nothing, I mean, not even a company—if this support had not been granted, I may not have been able to venture into this path.' (Kaplanoğlu, 2009). Once the support from a fund is received, one reaches a certain level of recognition and the process runs much smoother.

⁸Iranian 'independent' cinema, which became popular through the festivals, achieved great international fame and reached audiences around the world thanks to the festivals (Kirel, 2007: 401-403). Latin American cinema is considered as part of Europe also thanks to being invited to festivals (Elsaesser, 2005: 465).

The contribution of the fund continues even after the film is completed. For example, after the completion of the movie *Meleğin Düşüşü*, the Rotterdam Film Festival, with which the Hubert Bals fund is associated, admitted the film to its competition section. When Kaplanoğlu was admitted to the Berlin Film Festival at the same time, he chose to go there, but the process seen here proves that the support, which started with a script development fund, did not end there, because the reference provided by receiving the support of a fund had a positive effect in the process of being selected for the Berlin Film Festival. The interest of the German and French media and the publication about the film after the screening of *Meleğin Düşüşü* in the Berlin Film Festival cleared the way for its director (Kaplanoğlu, 2009).

Among the expectations from sending a film to a festival is eliciting reviews in the press. A director who attended a festival has a very high chance of securing his next film (Elsaesser, 2005: 97-98). Thanks to the visibility and recognition, the director can find the opportunity to benefit from various funds for his next film (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003: 716).

There are also various platforms in the scope of the festivals. For example, the script of *Süt* (Kaplanoğlu, 2008) was selected for the Atelier program of the Cannes Film Festival. It was presented there to producers. Kaplanoğlu states that these circles create an opportunity to see who does what in the world cinema (Kaplanoğlu, 2009) and he also states that after the acquaintances there, producers begin to follow what the directors are doing. This increases the chances of the production process to be supported. There are also other organisations outside the scope of the festivals. But these platforms still have some links—even if by way of personal relationships—to the festivals. One of these is the ‘Paris Project’. Within the scope of this platform, producers and directors meet every year in July. The projects submitted and auditioned go before the French producers, distributors and televisions. Kaplanoğlu met Arizona Films, the French co-producer of his film *Süt*, there. Furthermore, this meeting resulted in his adventure in Cannes: during the ‘Paris Project’, Kaplanoğlu met the coordinator of the Atelier of the Cannes festival, who was following his film, and thus he was invited to the Atelier.⁹

According to Zaim, the festivals are important areas where deals and acquaintances are made, and many of the established development platforms associated with these festivals facilitate venturing abroad. Zaim, who received post-production support for his film *Çamur* (Zaim, 2002), expresses that being acquainted with the decision-making group makes things easier (Zaim, 2009).¹⁰

Another example of the relationship of the funds and the festivals is Yeşim Ustaoglu’s film *Bulutları Beklerken* (Ustaoglu, 2004). Having received support from the script development

⁹Kaplanoğlu indicates that both the project-development platforms and festivals are important for meeting with many respected directors, discussing cinema and production conditions, meeting and establishing relationships with producers. On one hand, he adds that it has a motivating aspect but on the other he admits that it becomes an obligation since the films cannot be produced with the box-office revenues. ‘100,000 spectators on the average could allow me to make good films; then I may not feel the need to allocate so much time here [in the festivals] and I could focus on directing, but this is not possible.’ (Kaplanoğlu, 2009)

¹⁰According to Zaim, these funds are important contributions for the films about critical issues. ‘Projects tackling the Kurdish problem, Cyprus, military coups, sexual relationships and homosexuality—such as *Güneşe Yolculuk*, *Fotograf*, *Palto*, *Hoşçakal Yarın*, *Lola ve Bilidikid*, *Çamur*, *Gitmek*, *Fırtına*—have found the opportunity to benefit from these funds.’ (Zaim, 2008a: 55). At this point, deducing that only the political films are supported by these funds would be a reductionist approach. These funds should be considered as opportunities for the critical attitude.

fund of the DAAD granted the film the right to be screened at the Berlin festival (Zaim, 2008a: 55). As the examples show, the funds in view of the scope of the festivals constitute an important component of the festival network and become a factor which renders obvious the role of the festivals in the production process.

While the prestige of the festivals becomes a plus which affects the film's box-office revenues, the increasing chances of the directors to receive co-production offers¹¹ become an important opportunity (Elsaesser, 2005: 97). Furthermore, as mentioned in the introduction, the fact that, in countries like Turkey, the reimbursement of the support received from the state is not required if an international award is won at a festival making these awards all the more important for the producers.

Criteria: Being Selected and Awarded

The festivals also provide the films with opportunity to meet international audiences. Semih Kaplanoğlu, who became known through the International Festivals, nevertheless states that he did not take into account the international audience that he was able to reach through the festivals. He says that it is normal for the film to go beyond its native territory and become recognised when it tells a human story. By espousing such view, he underlines how important it is to be recognised abroad for the 'directors' cinema' field in Turkey (Kaplanoğlu, 2009).¹² Again, Yeşim Ustaoglu, who participated and was conferred with awards at many international festivals, chooses to highlight the nature of the film when it comes to the choice of festival. She stresses that the film itself, no matter where in the world, would be able to get in touch with its audience (Ustaoglu, 2009). The emphasis of Yeşim Ustaoglu and Semih Kaplanoğlu on the artistic quality of the film is an attitude that can be justified, when considering the universality of a film in this area; however the conditions for entering into the distribution network should not be disregarded as they don't always depend on the nature of the film. Here, many criteria play a decisive role.

As producer Serkan Çakarer suggests, to be selected for a festival, the first criterion is the significance of the names of the director, the producer, the vendor firm and the references. The aforementioned funds have an eminent influence on providing these references. Çakarer states that the project on which he is currently working has received an award in the Sarajevo Film Festival, and thus it was qualified directly to participate in the competition. He also draws attention to the importance of personal relationships in regard to festival selections. For example, he says that if he were to apply with a new project to the San Sebastian Film Festival—which he previously attended and in which some of the projects that he produced received awards—he would be taken into consideration because of his past works (Çakarer, 2009). To be featured at a film festival increases the chances of finding joint production opportunities. Özcan Alper, who participated in the Locarno Film Festival, does not have any difficulties at the moment in finding partners and financing due to this recognition, although he will be making his second film, and he states that he can easily find a partner from Hungary,

¹¹ In this area, the directors who identify themselves as political, avant-garde and independent received the state's support and made co-productions with televisions. Since they appeal to the general audience, they became international auteurs (Elsaesser, 2005: 468).

¹² Directors are aware of the importance of being noticed. 'This cinema was discovered and spread abroad by the foreigners through the festivals. Turkey noticed this later and began to acknowledge it. This acknowledgement happened five of six years later.' (Kaplanoğlu, 2009).

Romania, Bulgaria or Germany.

Whereas the big festivals provide prestige and opportunities in the distribution network, they do not give money awards. The festivals organised in Turkey provide a certain amount of prestige within the country and can affect the number of the spectators,¹³ but they also give money awards.¹⁴

At the same time, the festivals become the primary path for the circulation of parallel films (Elsaesser, 2005: 468).¹⁵ There, the video distributors and cable television companies find new material to feed the communication line (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003: 718). The festivals become a market where they buy films classified in the category of World cinema or New Wave, to meet their 'auteur' quotas. This represents a new market for movies produced in a country like Turkey. In addition, the television companies also sell the films they have co-produced in this market (Elsaesser, 2005: 92). Many films in the field of the 'directors' cinema' in Turkey receive support from foreign television channels. Derviş Zaim's film *Çamur* received contribution from the TV channels Rai Cinema and TSI (Sivas, 2007: 157), and Kaplanoğlu's films *Sût* and *Bal* (Kaplanoğlu, 2010) received contribution from the TV channels Arte and ZDF.

According to Thompson and Bordwell, the film festivals, being the only competitor to Hollywood, now function as a global distribution system. Elsaesser talks about the coming closer of the two fields through festivals and says that the distinction between them is becoming less apparent. The similarity between the functioning of the festivals and that of Hollywood becomes the manifestation of the evolution towards the field which Elsaesser calls 'world cinema' (Elsaesser, 2005: 103-104).

The first similarity established between the two fields is related to the criteria for preparing festival programmes. After the 1970s, in the process of selecting the films there is a shift from nation and country towards the festival directors. This situation incidentally draws attention to small countries as it also establishes a structure where the 'auteurs' come to the fore. However, not only small countries but also the 'auteurs' of America become the stars of the festivals (Elsaesser, 2005: 91). The festival awards become the most effective way to draw attention. When we add to this the rumours (Thompson and Bordwell, 2005: 718), scandals, talks, discussions and writings around the axis of the festival, we see that these agenda-setting clichés of popular culture and tabloid press are not any different from those of

¹³The film *Sonbahar* (Alper, 2007) was bought by the distributors at the Adana Golden Boll Film Festival. In addition to this, the prestige brought by the festivals abroad is much more influential within the country. *Tabutta Rövaşata* was not successfully distributed although it was released after receiving the Best Film Award in the Antalya Film Festival, but it was released again after receiving awards in the festivals abroad (Sivas, 2007: 156).

¹⁴On the other hand, it is necessary to emphasise that the money awards given by the festivals in Turkey constitute a very important support for the 'directors' cinema' field. It should not be ignored that, with the ability of paying the debts, even if this is not regarded as a production variable—in this context, directors paying their debts should be taken as an important component of the production process—and the elimination of the obligation to pay back the support of the Ministry of Culture, the awards become a decisive factor in the film production process of the 'directors' cinema' field in Turkey and this decisiveness is associated with the obstruction in the functioning of the production system.

¹⁵ Having signed contracts with the British Channel 4, Italian RAI, French Antenne 2 [now France 2] and German WDR, they upgraded the status of their television joint productions to the level of art cinema (Elsaesser, 2005: 468).

Hollywood (Elsaesser, 2005: 102).¹⁶

The festival directors and programmers have a decisive role. The festival programmers establish close relationships with the existing film producers and find the talented names. The Class A festivals send discovery teams all around the world to visit other festivals and to watch the forms and works in progress (Thompson and Bordwell, 2005: 718). Again, the directors and programmers determine the different sections. In the view of Elsaesser, through this determination, the world's annual film production is in fact categorized and classified with selections, awards and accolades. An artistic level of discernment and appraisal is in question. Elsaesser says that this undemocratic discernment is valid for all the sections. He speaks of a new power structure based on inclusion and exclusion, a hierarchy. This structure is known by the producers, if not by the audience (Elsaesser, 2005: 96).¹⁷ During the reformations, expectancy of acceptance by the West may prevail and this can start the 'self-orientalise' process which progresses through the artists (Kirel, 2007: 412).

The kind of influence relation we are talking about, in fact, becomes an indication of the mechanism of establishing control through the auteurs film and this control, while incompatible with the traditional qualities of auteur cinema, reveals another example of similarity between the rules of Hollywood's distribution network in the world market and the globalizing festivals. In this sense, the festivals give, in Elsaesser's words, post-national cinema the tendency of European cinema and reconstruct its identity (Elsaesser, 2005: 83-93). The most basic factor pertaining to the rewriting of the identity is the structure which affects the film production process. According to Kirel, who uses Iranian cinema as an example, being evaluated by the West takes into consideration the West's ways of looking at the East. This, in turn, creates the danger of producing under the influence of the images of orientals that affect the West. There are common points in the content and the form of expression of the Iranian films in the festivals and this situation finds its source in the fact that these films are produced for the international audiences rather than their own (Kirel, 2007: 378-398). Furthermore, in this context, the uniformity of the festival audiences should also be emphasised (Elsaesser, 2005: 101).

Even though the selections seem to point to an area where the intervention issue which appeared in relation to the joint producers and vendor firms becomes less obvious, the president of the Cannes Film Festival, Gilles Jacob, stating openly that there are interventions with the films (Regnier and Sotinel, 2006: 4), reveals that there is a direct routing mechanism at the festivals. The directors claim that the festival expectations do not affect their cinema. Semih Kaplanoğlu declares that to compromise his film in order to be selected for a festival is

¹⁶ In this context, the media relations have a key importance since they possess the power to draw the public attention towards the films. While establishing close relationships, predicting and debating the awards and bringing the hot topics to the forefront are regarded as a continuation of these clichés, a special attention is given to the field of criticism. The journalists and the press are presented with special opportunities. The FIPRESCI award is a significant honour for beginners. The critics take part in the jury and help determine the awards. The festival programmers and distributors pay attention to the critics in regard to the promising names (Thompson and Bordwell, 2005: 718).

¹⁷ This is evidenced by what Kirel says in regard to the effect on directors of the prestigious welcome the Iranian cinema receives—he sees it as a debt relationship—in the festivals: 'However, this debt, as any other, is the kind which harbours some problematic and debatable areas within itself. Artists can transform their subject at hand under the influence of this debt relationship.' (Kirel, 2007: 412).

out of the question¹⁸: While stating that staying true to the story told is more important,

Kaplanoğlu stresses that he is also responsible towards the people who believe in him and if he were to do otherwise, there would be no reason left to try as hard as he does. Özcan Alper states that the festivals are not everything: 'If one finds right the work done by one's own conscience, even though there might be a little something lacking or in excess, one should be able to shrug off the rest. If one places these things—festivals and such—at the centre, one would slide off one's own centre.' Alper underlines the necessity for a director not to place too much importance on the festivals and to focus on the cinema they want to make (Alper, 2009). Zaim questions the imposed expectancies, which create the conditions of the intervention itself. First of all, he articulates his suspicions pertaining to the criteria employed in the selection of the projects.¹⁹ 'People who are making the selection have their own principles, but these principles are always vague' (Zaim, 2009).²⁰

According to Zaim, what receives a 'yes' today may receive a 'no' tomorrow or a similar project produced under similar conditions may encounter a completely different attitude (Zaim, 2009).²¹ Having to comply with certain criteria and being selected or awarded only in this way lead to serious limitations and manipulation. The directors are aware of this danger and they are putting up a fight to protect themselves.

The Giant Distribution Network: Selling the Film

In the festivals, which are the power grid of the film management, a social force is applied via the mediators, namely, festivals managers, curators and the shoppers (Elsaesser, 2005: 83). This force turns into the intervention in the field of distribution. The coming forward of a film or a director is not in question. What is determined at festivals now is what will be showcased in art-house cinemas that year, which films will be screened in a few halls allocated to festival films in the multiplexes. These determined films usually belong to independent distributors (Elsaesser, 2005: 91).²²

The close relationship of Miramax, one of the biggest independent distributors, with the Sundance Film Festival comes to mind. The structure established here is very different from

¹⁸ 'I cannot do this; if I do, then my current existence would be damaged. This is important: because the present moment, today's festivals, the world of the now and the film's adventure now do not concern me much. It may seem that I utter this too easily but it is something I say by thinking and knowing: what really matters is what the film will become in twenty years from now.' (Kaplanoğlu, 2009).

¹⁹ Zaim mentions the likelihood of the people who make the selections manipulating the selection criteria according to their own fancy, the grey areas in the selection process and the possibility of these grey areas making more room for people to manoeuvre (Zaim, 2009).

²⁰ In addition to the past festival and production career of the director which we mentioned in the previous sections, Zaim lists the selection criteria as follows: 'The place of the film's context within the international balance of powers; where and how the film stands in this balance; the commercial potential of the film, the power of the seller, the power of the distribution company; the producer's influence capacity before the festival; the aesthetic and production value of the film... the film's capability of adding to the prestige of the festival; the attitude of the critics related to the festival towards the directors career; the attitude of the critics towards the film; the promotional and marketing budget of the film.' (Zaim, 2008b: 43).

²¹ Zaim states that Nuri Bilge Ceylan is the best example of this situation. The film *Uzak*, which was not even selected to a parallel section of the Venice Film Festival, was selected to the Cannes Film Festival. Moritz de Hadeln was at the head of the selection committee in Venice. Previously, de Hadeln was in the management of the Berlin Film Festival at the period when *Kasaba Mayıs Sıkıntısı* was selected for the festival.

²² Miramax (US), Sony Pictures Classics (US) and Castle communications (UK) are among these. The smaller ones among these companies are Sixpack (Austria) and Fortissimo (Netherlands) (Elsaesser, 2005: 91).

the Hollywood monopoly but still, there is a network of commercial relationships developed through the dependencies in question. The prestige which the distribution company gets from the festival is very important, because a new 'popular' field is emerging. This field consists of the films carried into the global market through Cannes, Berlin, Venice and Miramax. Elsaesser defines these films as 'indie blockbusters' (Elsaesser, 2005: 92).

Entering into contract with the distributors takes the festivals to a very important place as launch pads (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003: 717). As Kirel emphasised for the example of the Iranian cinema, the national cinema films produced in the field of independent and alternative cinema can earn money thanks to the distribution network they acquire through the festivals (Kirel, 2005: 413).

Tevfik Başer states that the distributors began to run after him after the acceptance of his film *40 Metrekare Almanya* (Başer, 1986) in the Critics' Week section of the Cannes Film Festival. Zaim adds that the chances of being distributed are lower in the parallel sections, stresses that Turkey does not match the criteria for being selected to the main sections and explains the rationale behind this as follows: "When compared to the cinema of developed countries, Turkish cinema has a weak capacity to create the momentum that will attract the attention of world media during festivals by bringing a 'different' film and a star actor every year, continuously and consistently, which would be for the benefit of the big festivals. Turkish cinema—again, with some exceptions—is generally classified as the kind of cinema which is showcased mostly in the parallel sections." (Zaim, 2008b: 42). Despite the fact that the film *Çamur* received the UNESCO Award in the 2003 Venice Film Festival, it was not sold intensely outside of Italy and Switzerland (Zaim, 2008b: 42).

The competition sections render the films attractive for big sales and especially for the major sales companies²³. For example, when *Süt* was selected for the competition section of the Venice Film Festival, The Match Factory wanted to buy the global rights of the film. There is no sales company involved in Kaplanoğlu's film *Meleğin Düşüşü*. Many companies wanted to buy the film *Yumurta* (Kaplanoğlu, 2007) after it was selected for the Directors' Fortnight section of the Cannes Film Festival, but the director Kaplanoğlu, who wants to decide which festivals he attends, chose to make a one-year trial with a French-Spanish sales company. Eventually, he was not satisfied and thought that he could sell his films himself. However, when he experienced problems such as not receiving the money following a sale to a country, not being able to make copies of the film in that country or to clear copies through the customs, he did not want to be bothered any more by this exhausting process and made a contract with a big sales company. This company called The Match Factory made a tempting offer to Kaplanoğlu after his film *Süt* was selected for the Venice Film Festival, bought both *Yumurta* and *Süt*, showed interest in *Bal* and gave money to Kaplanoğlu (Kaplanoğlu, 2009).

The sales rights of Yeşim Ustaoglu's earlier films were sold to the company called Celluloid Dreams. The sales rights of her film *Pandoranın Kutusu* (Ustaoglu, 2008) were bought by The Match Factory. Ustaoglu states that these companies are more knowledgeable in sales and

²³Currently, there is no company capable of buying global sales rights in Turkey. Çakarer states that they are making an attempt to begin the preparations but since the well-known directors prefer to work with big companies, it would be difficult to realise at this stage. Yeşim Ustaoglu thinks that it is necessary to support this infrastructure. (Ustaoglu, 2009, Çakarer 2009).

they follow and select the festivals; however, she stresses that she has the final word. Apart from the criteria including being a selection of the festivals, the decisive factors in the selection of the films by the companies are the screenplay—if the film is still at the script-writing stage—and the director's earlier projects. The Match Factory joined *Pandoranın Kutusu* at the script stage and became one of Ustaoglu's partners. Ustaoglu states that the company invested in the completion of the movie and made a return of investment from the sales revenues (Ustaoglu, 2009). As was the case with *Pandoranın Kutusu*, the company which holds the global sales rights of Ceylan's films *İklimler* (Ceylan, 2006) and *Üç Maymun* (Ceylan, 2008) is also the co-producer.²⁴

Besides the large sales companies, the smaller ones also make a choice over the films appearing at festivals. However, these companies also pay attention to the films in the parallel sections (Çakarer, 2009).²⁵

The fact that large companies co-produce films brings to the table the much-debated intervention issue regarding the co-producers. As Semih Kaplanoğlu also indicates, these companies which possess a large sales and marketing network and know how to use it well create strategies in order to obtain selections at the festivals. Kaplanoğlu underlines the need to be alert against the manipulation of the sales companies, which are profit-driven although they move through the field of art-house films, and he also emphasises that he is aware that their world is different from a director's world.²⁶ Although Derviş Zaim worked with a French distribution company in his film *Çamur* and preferred to distribute *Cenneti Beklerken* (Zaim, 2005) and *Nokta* (Zaim, 2008) himself, he states that he is in search of new opportunities. In relation to the film distribution companies, Zaim states that the small companies may not reflect the revenues exactly and that the big companies may be indifferent to the films and, like Kaplanoğlu, he points out that the director's position is important when the sales companies want to intervene in the film (Zaim, 2009).

Here, it must be underlined that the distribution revenues of a film are not very substantial. In this case, it is obvious that the international distribution network, in fact, is not sufficient to make room for the directors working in the 'directors' cinema' field, except if they are working with low budgets; however, we see that the international sales have become almost a *sine qua non* condition for these cinemas to survive. Being able to get into the distribution field harbours the danger of being exposed to the intervention of the sales companies in addition to that of other components. As is valid in the American 'indie' cinema, the profits of the low-budget films become attractive for the market in this sense.

²⁴*İklimler* (n.d.) <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0498097/> *Üç Maymun*, (n.d.) <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1233381/> (2 Temmuz 2009).

²⁵For example, the sales rights of the film *Tatil Kitabı* were sold to Wide Management after the film participated in the Forum section of the Berlin Film Festival.

²⁶Kaplanoğlu states that the functionality of the festivals is not very different from that of the commercial cinema and that there is a goal to make profit. He says it is necessary to wonder where the innocence of the films and production is and to be able to resist at certain points (Kaplanoğlu, 2009). Kaplanoğlu states that the demands made—such as reading the script at the stage of filming, interfering with the editing, asking the film to be more understandable, cutting out certain parts, suggesting formats, meddling with the colours, etc.—although put politely by the companies, may aim at carrying the director to a certain point and underlines the importance of the director's stance and the addition of the rules related to his stance in the contract (Kaplanoğlu, 2009).

The other important point about the festivals is that the directors are better known in the festivals than they are in their own countries (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003: 716). The reason for this is that, because of the tight space left by Hollywood; these directors can only find room for themselves at the festivals. However, market opportunities can be found through the festivals (Kirel, 2007: 401-403). Turkish cinema has followed a similar path. While not known in his country, Nuri Bilge Ceylan is recognised in the world. One of the most significant reasons why Semih Kaplanoğlu's films are being watched abroad is because of a similar mechanism at play.

CONCLUSION

From demonstrating the functioning of the festivals and the outline of the Turkish cinema's relationship with them through the directors and films cited in examples, it can be seen that the festivals are not only instrumental in facilitating the circulation of the films but also exist as an important factor that determines the film-production process. The recognition brought by the festivals guarantees the film production for the directors. Funds, within the scope of festivals are important resources for the 'directors' cinema' field; the prestige of these funds increases the chances of the films to be screened at the festivals and this enables the sales of the films. Paradoxically, granting the global sales rights of a film to certain companies in the context of the festivals increases the number of components which may interfere with the film-production process. With these companies becoming the co-producers of the films, the only decisive factor regarding the potential problems seems to be the will of the directors.

The Ministry of Culture, Eurimages and the festivals, while being fundamental components of the films' production process, cannot finance film productions by themselves. In order to produce films, many components must be put together at the same time. Since it is difficult to find resources in Turkey and not possible for the films in the 'directors' cinema' field to pay for themselves with the box-office revenues, we encounter a structure which depends on the international platform in terms of support and distribution.

In regard to these dependency relationships, the conditions require both an economic and a cultural reconstruction. As we have seen, the concept of director-producer, the development of the executive-producer concept—that came about because of the complexity of the process and its structure, which brings the producer to the fore—the establishment of the criteria to receive the Ministry of Culture's support related to the production process through the festivals, and the economic and cultural conditions that the co-production process brings about are the important building blocks of this reconstruction. Assessing the components of the film-production process shows that the international dependency relationships are prominent. The dependency in question is both material and intellectual (Tomlinson, 2004: 109), and equality is out of the question in this dependency field. Under these circumstances, expecting the directors—who are evaluated unequally and are producing films in Turkey, which is defined as a developing economy—to resist the co-production interventions by their personal stance would mean being unable to grasp the process as a whole and ignoring the ideological issues of the process.

When considering the production conditions that we have listed, the danger of the production-distribution relationship established at the festivals, influencing the quality of the films in the

'directors' cinema' field and transforming them, can be clearly seen. The influx in the festivals brings about not only an intense activity but also the consumption. The directors are aware that they can be forgotten and this creates an element of pressure. (Kirel, 2007: 405).²⁷

This fluid market needs to be fed and supported with new products continuously. This necessity poses the danger of reducing the art film to a consumption material, because the festivals try to gain a foothold and to be permanent as a structure striving to exist in a global market.²⁸

The festivals have become an arena where commercial cinema and art cinema are intermixed. As Elsaesser emphasised, the festivals, which are at the centre of the globalising commercial functioning, aim at building a new identity within the symbolic global economy system (Elsaesser, 2005: 83). There is a strong commercial mechanism in this area advancing through the art-house cinema. The big festivals and the distributors linked to them have begun to control the distribution network of the entire world cinema. As this bustling market is always in need of new films, the films are reduced to consumption material.

While the festivals have such a commercial structure integrated into the global market and, as Wallerstein stated, while the commercial mechanism is entwining itself around the particularistic and local culture (Wallerstein, 1998: 137), the 'director's cinema' field in Turkey existing at the festivals and continuing its production dependent on this structure endangers its quality as an art form. At the point where selections and awarding should take place, there can be limitation, transformation and manipulation of culture. The explicit intervention of both the festival programmers and the sales companies as well as the director's creative limitations due to his concerns over being selected force the films produced in the 'directors' cinema' field in Turkey to try to survive in new dependency relationships at the level of content and form.

²⁷ Jafar Panahi's words reveal the pressure the directors feel: 'We are conscious of the fact that the destiny of the Iranian cinema is in our hands, that it depends on us. While, on one hand, our country's cinema is becoming globally known, on the other hand, we are conscious that if we do not produce a film or two every year, it may be forgotten very easily' (Genç, 2000: 83).

²⁸ According to Stringer, conceptualisation is very important in order for the festivals to compete for global financing. The festivals 'have to create their own sense of community, and hence their own marketable trademark or brand image.' (Stringer, 2001: 139)

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