

# EUROPEAN CINEMA

## Spectator- or spect-actor-driven policies

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### Introduction

With the project of European integration, the European Single Market signaled a new phase of international politics and trade, whose focus on cultural goods was among the major aims of its core economic policy. Without borders, double taxation or duties, complex administrative hurdles, and conflicting legislation of national markets and territories, films produced in the EU or entering the EU would be circulated at much lower costs. This means that together with broadcasts crossing borders, the conditions for the circulation of films and audiovisual services became easier and less costly in a 'borderless' internal market than in one with multiple administrations and borders. European filmmakers and politicians raised the issue that, given the global integrationist tendencies of the market, the position of the European audiovisual industries required strengthening if they were to compete in an increasingly globalized market. Furthermore, as Europe aimed at furthering its political integration, cultural services and goods, and especially cultural content, was thought to be an important asset, both financially and politically, that could not be left to the forces of 'free' market alone.

As a result, a set of film and audiovisual policies and instruments was developed, deriving from and reflecting conflicting, albeit occasionally intersecting, motivations. On the one hand, the aim has been to protect European cinema industries against neoliberal tendencies of commodification of audiovisual products. The political aim has been to ensure that in the integration process, the stories of cultures and nations in Europe would be told in authentic ways. On the other hand, the protection of European film industry was based on the aim to strengthen an industry vis-à-vis the US global majors. Although these two motivations are not necessarily exclusive, they prioritize different aims and require different tools to achieve those. As we are discussing in this chapter, these differences often result in clear divisions of support for film and audiovisual content more generally.

Specifically, we explore the ways in which, under the pressure of the current economic crisis, film policy in Europe is disrupted, while the traditional notion of *quality* inherent to what has been mainstreamed as 'autonomous auteur European cinema' is being redefined. In pursuing this objective, we will evoke some of the main discourses on European cinema from the field of media and film studies – from the ones that see cinema primarily as part of job-creating cultural industries and 'new economy' to the Marxian discourse of European cinema



as a stronghold of European social-democratic values. We will also demonstrate the presence of certain neoliberal tendencies within the film sector, especially as these are explored through attention to quantitative *quality evaluation methods* suggested by the European film policies, and we will finish by putting these in the context of the dichotomous *spectator/spect-actor* concepts as these were developed by Augusto Boal and Thomas Gutierrez Alea. As we will argue, despite the proclamations of film being one of the core ways of authentic European 'story-telling' as an antipode to commercialized, prescription-based stories, European regulation and practice have positioned such film-making increasingly at the margins of a policy framework that prioritizes marketability.

### The two philosophies of European cinema

The major policy principles governing European cinema are the exemption of audiovisual goods from free-trade agreements, as in the case of the World Trade Organization (WTO), inclusion of cultural 'Europeanness' in the constitutional laws of the EU, and the ratification of the European Convention on Cinematographic Co-production and Audiovisual Services Directive. Their joint goal has been primarily to address the domination of Hollywood production in European markets through developing mechanisms of support for European films and through this way to strengthen the sense of European identity by safeguarding its cultural diversity (Pauwels, De Vinck and Van Rompuy 2007; De Vinck 2009; de Smaele 2007; Sarikakis 2004; Wayne 2002; Finney 1996; Rivi 2007). A symbolic act in this regard was the establishment of the European Film Awards in 1988, which was based on the idea of celebrating the uniqueness of European filmmaking and common European identity in the unifying post-Cold War Europe. At the first Award ceremony held in Berlin in 1988, Polish filmmaker Krzysztof Kieslowski won the Best European Film Award for his *Short Film about Killing* (1988) produced in – at the time still – socialist Poland. The award was also accompanied by the public appeal of the most renowned European film auteurs of the time from both sides of the iron curtain,<sup>1</sup> whereby they alarmingly warned of the danger of "cultural homogeneity, a downfall in artistic taste and a pollution of intellectual and spiritual values – all of which would gradually suppress national identity, native tongues, [their] inborn desire for the natural beauty of 'otherness'."<sup>2</sup>

Nowadays, more than 25 years later, while Europe is struggling with the effects of the global financial crisis, socioeconomic divisions between the rich North and the 'peripheral' South become increasingly brazen "leading to the construction and reinforcement of a selective Europeanness" (Sarikakis 2014: 65–66). When the vision of a united post-1989 Europe paradoxically resulted in division (Western and Eastern Europe) or even the tri-vision (East, West and the Balkans) of Europe (Ellmeier and Rasky 2006: 13), the idea of preservation of the authentic European cinema driven by autonomous authors in an ever-unifying Europe necessitates a revisit.

The historical Hollywood–Europe antagonism, a burning issue in the public agenda for the policy-makers in the 1990s, has given way to new issues, such as questions of governing digital content, copyright or privacy. However, the issue of digital content and protection of culture remains a terrain of tensions. Despite state support, the European film industry fails to attract audiences for its films as envisioned but also defies the prevalent neoliberal logic "that if something is not popular, then it is not necessary – or, in other words, consumers determine the market" (Lodge and Sarikakis 2013: 168). Hence, the rich European countries invest in national film-making with the aim to attract audiences – often at any price – thereby improving annual statistical data the public film agencies are obliged to present to the tax-payers and

politicians. As a consequence, in an attempt to ensure more audience for, and visibility of, their films, European national cinemas increasingly sacrifice their long-standing emphasis on auteurism and autonomy in favor of more 'predictable' commercial successes. Accordingly, they reconfigure their initial film policy goals and the type of communication they used to maintain with their audiences, the basis of which was primarily the art film. As it is clear then, the problem does not only come from Hollywood anymore, but also from within Europe, from the national and supranational policies that remain neither liberal enough to pursue large audiences and profit by commercial films (despite many such recent tendencies) nor reforming enough to open up for the social and political risks and experiments film-making in Europe used to be famous for.

If we evoke the notion of auteurism in European cinema from Francois Truffaut's concept of *politique des auteurs* (1954) via the *auteur theory* (1962) by Andrew Sarris, to theoretically less constrained concepts that do not reduce authorship to directors but define it as synergy of different creative agencies (Finney 1996), it is the idea of autonomy and recognizable 'stamp' (discursive and intellectual as much as visual and aesthetic) in the film content that have traditionally characterized the art cinema in Europe.

The idea of auteur cinema emerged in the 1950s when a group of film critics, known as the *Cahiers* group, dismissed the traditional French cinema for being "script-led, redolent with safe psychology, lacking in social realism and of being produced by the same old script-writers and filmmakers" (Hayward 1996: 32). They assigned the central role in the film to the director/auteur as "sole producer of meaning" (ibid). In the decades to come, the auteur concept would evolve. It was influenced by structuralism in the 1960s when the auteur ceased to be the only source that produces meaning since other structures (linguistic, social and institutional) emerged along with the significance of the auteur's relation to them. In the 1970s, under the influence of post-structuralism, feminism and deconstruction, the notion of ideology and its relationship to viewers was introduced. What became designated as the producer of meaning in the European auteur cinema was the "interplay between double articulation of discourses and non-discourses (that is the said and the not said)," 'auteurial intertextuality,' and film-spectator relationship (Hayward 1996: 32–38).

From the 1950s through 1970s, auteur cinema became the representative cinema of individual European countries from both sides of the Iron Curtain, and of Europe as a whole, taking over the primacy from popular/commercial and propagandist cinemas. Its prominence grew, however, not because of its market share or big audience, but thanks to its visual and philosophical qualities. It can be said that auteur cinema reflected the "social-national, supranational and micro/individual contexts of identity formation and representation" (Sarikakis 2014: 59). Therefore, many films of Italian Neorealism, French New Wave or East European film styles provided new post-World War II national identities based on the "common experience of resistance and liberation" (Rivi 2007: 45) and breaking away from anachronistic canons. Their supranational dimension reflected in the fact that most of them were set up as co-productions or meant to tell local stories using a universal language and, on the top, they provided new aesthetic experiences with their often revolutionary and innovative visual styles. In her book, *European Cinema after 1989: Cultural Identity and Transnational Production*, Luisa Rivi shows that the important status of the auteur cinema was already visible with Italian Neorealism. Namely, only 10 per cent of the Italian production in the first post-World War II decade was neorealist, and very few of the neorealist films were acclaimed, but they managed to rehabilitate the Italian nation and give it a new identity and international visibility (Rivi 2007: 44–46). The neorealist movement and, later on, the French New Wave defied the dominant mainstream cinema and the hegemonic values it mediated in its respective



country, providing the freedom for a diversity of voices to speak up. At the same time, auteurism showed a distinct Europeanization potential since it spread throughout both sides of Iron Curtain, contesting the concept of 'the Other Europe' and creating a cultural Europeanness. The influence of Italian Neorealism can be seen in Poland as early as in the 1950s.<sup>3</sup> The French New Wave inspired the internationally acclaimed Czech New Wave and the Yugoslav Black Wave, whereas the rise of the so-called Polish School and the cinema of moral anxiety in Poland inspired Western cineastes like Peter Greenaway and Lindsay Anderson to visit the film school in Lodz.

The development of the auteur cinema, however, was not immediately followed by the extensive policy measures and institutionalization that would emphasize a supranational European identity. Cross-national collaboration in the form of bilateral co-production treaties among the European states became part of the international film industry in the 1950s, after France and Italy signed the first agreement of the sort to rebuild their national film industries in the aftermath of the World War II. The phenomenon grew stronger after the Treaty of Rome instituted the European Economic Community in 1957. Indeed, the results of this collaboration left imprints on film budgets, access to film locations as well as cast and crew from other European countries enabling auteur cinema to become more competitive with Hollywood. However, the idea of official co-production treaties signed between government representatives was still rather pragmatic than cultural. It was primarily about intergovernmental policies that did not "translate into a supranational dimension but operated rather as the autonomous acts of national governments that had formed a privileged and circumscribed sphere of action" (Rivi 2007: 42).

The advent of European co-productions was both criticized and praised. On one hand, it gave birth to so-called 'Euro-puddings' – co-productions that by combining too many elements of different nations in order to attract more financing and bigger audiences eventually create the opposite effect, "appealing only to the lowest common denominator of cultured interest with little hope for broad social or political resonance" (quoted in Morawetz *et al.* 2007: 428). Co-productions were also designated as a "murky area" or "thorn problems" (Hayward 1993: 37) and disastrous and forced "swerving away from national tradition" (Betz 2001:8; Liehm 1984: 183). Perhaps more important, co-productions also tended to be perceived as a new chance for the Hollywood majors to penetrate into the European cinema and 'corrupt' the European auteurs with their financial investments and distribution arrangements (Guback 1969).

On the other hand, co-produced films certainly offered a starting point for an inquiry into the first policy moves toward the establishment of a 'European' cinema. Already by the 1960s co-productions became "a necessity for countries with a modest film industry and a small market potential" (Jaeckel 2001: 155). France signed bilateral co-production treaties with countries from 'the Other Europe' (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, USSR, and Yugoslavia) in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>4</sup> Germany and Italy followed the same example. Although the policy of bilateral co-production treaties led to many so-called "marriages of convenience" (industry driven co-productions) among the European states, it also resulted in a number of so-called "true loves" ('natural' co-productions) (Morawetz *et al.* 2007: 426) that Europeans could identify with.<sup>5</sup>

In terms of content, ideology, and audience, European auteur films tried to establish a balance between national and international points of view. Peter Lev, however, argues that the European "art film does not only aim at the international audience but is *intended* for an international audience with shared class and cultural backgrounds or pretensions" (quoted in Betz 2001: 15). As a result, the term 'European auteur film' has been "employed to indicate

separate movements across time, 'major' directors or auteurs, and a canon of supposedly 'great' works, while it has often been identified with an elitist and denationalized idea of art cinema" (Rivi 2007: 39). Indeed, Albert Moran posits the idea of European art cinema in the context of a cultural imperialist discourse that he discards as anachronistic and a "rerun of the mass culture/high culture debate," arguing that proponents of this discourse only showcase their personal aesthetic taste (in particular against Hollywood films) (Moran 1996: 10).

Despite the fact that the idea of pan-European cinema and identity remains strongly highlighted in the policy field, in the past two decades, the European auteur cinema has tended to be described as "audience failure" since it "never lived up to the expectations aroused for audiences by the often exaggerated claims of the critics" (Finney 1996: 56). Some producers and policy-makers have criticized the European subsidy structures for emphasizing "creation of art over an industrial product," and for "doing away with the producer" (Finney 1996: 116). In order to make the European cinema more inclusive and blur the high-/low-culture line, some new film policies have been set to support films that will gain more audience through hybridization of its commercial/popular, artistic and, whenever possible, political value, and through prioritizing widely appealing classical narratives. The funding guidelines of national film funds thus introduce separate market schemes that favor large-audience films whose cultural aspect is narrowed down to the mere use of the local language or dealing with a popular historical topic.

The change from a 'protect the national culture' paradigm that had permeated most film support policies in Europe in the past, to a 'build the local industry' strategy is also to be seen against the background of the film industry becoming increasingly viewed as a shining example of the 'new economy.'

(Morawetz *et al.* 2007: 428)

A variety of new neoliberal financial incentives such as tax credits/rebates/shelters/breaks have been introduced to bring additional investment into the film industry and raise the number of mid- and high-budget films to the detriment of small and low-budget projects.

It is clear then that such a status of the European audiovisual industry symbolically reflects two conflicting philosophies in European film industry and policy. On the one hand, there is still a determination on part of the national European governments to sustain the tradition of social democracy through willingness to intervene in cultural market outcomes to protect the European audiovisual industry (and the individual national industries that constitute it). On the other hand, the second tradition is the 'neo-liberal' philosophy whose keystone is doing away with as many social (cultural) and political commitments as possible (Wayne 2002: 10; Lodge and Sarikakis 2013: 176).

### Current film policy framework in Europe

In the end of 2013, after long negotiations with and interventions from the film industry professionals, the European Commission passed the 2013 Cinema Communication on state aid for films and other audiovisual works which updated aid and incentives that had been introduced by earlier policies (European Commission 2013). It welcomed approval of the Creative Europe Programme by the European Parliament, while the Council of Europe's co-production film fund Eurimages had launched already in 2012 the initiative for the revision of the European Convention on Cinematographic Co-production in order to foster co-production activity in Europe. However, certain neglected processes in Europe, such as national state aid and funding,



support for distribution, training and educational support, as well as a wider economic malaise that has pushed to poverty levels more than one-third of the population in Greece and over 60 percent of unemployment among youth in Spain stemming from the current economic crisis, threaten further implementation of policies of support in general (Trading Economics 2015). Indeed, if policy approaches do not adjust to the crisis-struck Europe, we may soon witness new forms of 'Othering' due to the intensified North–South division, internal political and cultural hegemonies within the EU, and, finally, the absence of diverse voices of autonomous auteurs.

The hegemonic position of powerful and rich countries represents an imbalanced information flow between North and South. "Rich and dominant countries fail to account for processes of hybridity, evolution and dialogue among cultures" (Sarikakis 2005: 81). In the 1990s, cultural imperialism and cultural hegemony were linked to the domination of global entertainment conglomerates supported by Hollywood production whose invasion threatened the cinemas of Europe. The main goals of the film policies then emphasized freedom of expression, cultural diversity, and development of co-productions. In post-2008 Europe, it seems that the Hollywood cultural hegemony has been superseded by similar practices of *internal cultural domination* (Sarikakis 2007: 95–112), currently most visible at the expense of the crisis-hit Europeans, especially, the South European countries, the Baltic countries and even the UK. Protectionist film cultural policies thus become controlled by and beneficial only for the economically stable nation states. The absence of solidarity among the states, on the other hand, threatens to distance the large and weaker European audiovisual industries, whereas the voices from the crisis countries are getting weaker and their access to the pan-European funds scarcer.

Film professionals in many European countries are severely struck by the economic crisis and consequent saving measures imposed by their respective governments. Public film funds in Greece, Portugal, and Spain, to mention a few, were drastically cut down. The Hungarian National Film Fund was entirely restructured in 2011 to suit primarily production of profitable, commercial Hungarian films, which provoked vociferous protests among the European film auteurs (Hertlik 2010). The Brussels administration stays mostly supportive of these public spending cuts since they are all in compliance with the principle of subsidiarity in the cultural field. This principle states that the central organs of the Community should only be concerned with the most essential areas of policy, leaving everything else to sovereign national governments (Rivi 2007: 28; Kaufmann and Raunig 2003: 21). Instead, the European Commission is engaged primarily in communicating positive messages about European governance in "an anodyne, nonprescriptive, nonpartisan a-political way" (Lodge and Sarikakis 2013: 176).

The pan-European film fund Eurimages, established in 1989 with the objective to safeguard European cultural diversity, freedom of expression, and development of democracy, is facing the lack of financial sources to help out the European national cinemas in financial crisis. The annual budget of Eurimages never exceeds 25 million euros. The fund supports up to 70–80 co-productions per year from its 36 member states, and at no more than 15 percent of the total budget of a film. The fact that up to 500 co-productions are annually produced in Europe (EAO 2010), and that the public film funds in rich European countries have budgets two to three times higher than Eurimages (MEDICI 2012) demonstrates that Eurimages' support gives only a quality label to a supported project. Its mission, in fact, completely depends on the status of the public film funds in the member countries. Namely, the basic Eurimages criterion is that the project applying for the Eurimages support already secured at least 50 percent of its financing (Eurimages 2012). On the other hand, film production in European countries, especially the crisis-stricken ones, relies exclusively on the public funding that in the time of economic crisis gets cut down as part of governments' rationalizations of the public spend. Consequently,

the producers of arthouse films in such countries face difficulties to secure money from what are often the only major sources available – public film funds. Without their support they could not seek for co-producers or apply to Eurimages. In such a situation, Eurimages runs the risk of turning into a fund only for co-productions among the rich European countries that can afford to subsidize national cinema.

In order to diminish this problem, Eurimages launched the initiative for revision of the European Convention on Cinematographic Co-production in 2012 with the intention to decrease the minimal participation of minority co-producers from 10 percent (as it is now) to 5 percent (Olsberg 2012), and therefore express support for the smaller film cultures. Whether this is going to produce better results than in the past for the most crisis-affected European film industries remains to be seen.

Another problem is that such limited financing resources in the European countries with small production capacity become available mostly to members of the highest cultural elite – renowned filmmakers whose commercial and festival success is predictable. Therefore, young directors or filmmakers with innovative projects are often prevented from securing enough financing to enter co-production deals and releasing their films outside the home country. Facing the lack of financing, they are doomed to shoot films with micro budgets and cheap technology, which, more often than not, neither helps them to qualify for any major film festivals nor makes their films appealing to sales agents. As a consequence, their voices remain unheard. The auteurs' freedom within the scope of the representative cinema production becomes restricted, and filmmakers are increasingly compelled to seek for alternative forms of film production outside the state subsidy structures in order to ensure higher creative freedom.

The second pan-European film fund, MEDIA program of the European Union (which has been merged into the Creative Europe scheme), was set up to support so-called "harmless areas" (Kaufmann and Raunig 2003: 12) of the European film industry (development, distribution, and training), unlike Eurimages that mainly supports the core segment in the film value chain – production. MEDIA has a higher budget than Eurimages; its beneficiaries include mostly experienced companies (never individuals) and big distributors whose turnover is often significantly realized through distribution of Hollywood blockbusters. In addition, the development schemes of MEDIA do not include separate calls for young and first-time filmmakers, although there are incentives in the form of extra points for the MEDIA-member countries with small audiovisual industries. Some critics of MEDIA took issue with the abandonment of smaller, individual creative people in favor of large companies and industries already with the second MEDIA cycle in the mid-1990s. They accused the MEDIA program of "doing little more than support Europe's largest countries and advantaged companies" (Finney: 1996: 135). Hence, a project, say, by a first-time Greek director would compete against major filmmakers such as Lars von Trier or Ken Loach and therefore is unlikely to receive funding.

Furthermore, MEDIA co-sponsored training programs for students or young filmmakers usually include high fees that make such programs financially inaccessible to applicants from the poor European countries in particular. The new cycle of MEDIA program, merged together with Culture program under Creative Europe, unfortunately did not take into consideration any of these challenges, although it launched three new schemes in 2014: a support scheme for international co-production funds, a scheme for video game development, and an action dedicated to audience development (Petti 2013), which might start redressing the balance. However, the question of two conflicted European philosophies comes up again. Will Creative Europe additionally support economy and large companies to the detriment of independent and autonomous artistic expression and talent across Europe?



### Audience building as a cultural policy? An outlook

When the auteur cinema was defined in the late 1950s with the advent of the French New Wave, the dictum to provide aesthetic pleasure just as to be “strong, honest, intelligent and provocative,” and to “speak about politics but not to be political” (de Beacque 1998: 84, 106) prevailed. Films about personal topics, produced mostly at low cost, reflected and contemplated society. Although they often appealed to significant audiences (both national and European/international), their main purpose was to ‘free’ viewers from the hegemony of the mainstream dominant cinema coming from both Hollywood and Europe. ‘Audience-building,’ one of the ‘buzz-words’ of the current European cultural policies, seems to have revolved around the building of what theatrical practitioner Augusto Boal calls *spect-actors*. According to Boal, *spect-actors* “liberate themselves, they think and act for themselves instead of delegating their power to any ruling structure that solely portrays their ideals and makes the audience passive spectators and the victims of the dominant ideology” (quoted in Frances, 2004: 75).

Film theorist Tomas Gutierrez Alea applied the same spectator/spect-actor dichotomy to cinema in his seminal book *The Viewer's Dialectic* (1988). He differentiates between the *passive-contemplative* and *active* spectators. The former contemplate film as a mere object. By watching a movie the spectator satisfies “their need for enjoyment and aesthetic pleasure, but their activity does not go beyond the cultural plane.” As he put it, “here cultural plane is offered to people as a simple consumer object and any reference to the social reality that conditions it is reduced to the affirmation of its values or, in other cases, to a complacent critique” (1988: 38). On the other hand, an *active spectator* engages himself or herself in a consequent participation that implies people’s concrete reaction to social reality they live in. Just as Augusto Boal, Gutierrez Alea refers here to Berthold Brecht’s *estrangement effect* (*Verfremdungseffekte*) in order to emphasize that in cinema, as much as in theater, spectators should not communicate with a film only at the emotional level through identification with the characters and catharsis. “The estrangement effect must replace any emotion with the specific emotion of discovering something, of finding a truth which has previously been obscured by accommodation to daily life” (Gutierrez Alea 1988: 45; Leslie 2005: 47–52). According to this view, the ultimate goal of a filmmaker should be to estrange or alienate the spectators from the reality they live in, because only by distancing themselves from that reality emotionally, they can understand it rationally and objectively, and act accordingly.

In the past decade, the dominant policy goal of the European cinema has been an amalgamation of artistic and commercial quality where quality is measured quantitatively (box office, numbers of territories with theatrical release, admissions, number of festival awards, etc.). What triggered such a policy were the significant economic potential of film as part of creative industries and the fact that poor circulation of European films became a serious argument of the neo-liberal lobbyists against public film funding in Europe.

What occasionally increases the market share of the European films, though, are high-budget UK–US co-productions (for example, the Harry Potter films, the James Bond franchise, or high-profile films such as *The King's Speech* (Hooper, 2010)). In many countries such films generate multiple times higher box-office than the rest of the theatrically released non-domestic European films altogether. They are mostly made for the European audiences that frequent the commercial multiplex cinema theatres merely as consumers and not as active citizens, whose participation, to use Gutierrez Alea’s words, is *illusory* not *real* and whose response could be elicited during a film but never *vis-à-vis reality* (1988: 39–40).

The other instrument for increasing the market share of domestic cinema is the favoring of renowned authors whose films predictably attract attention, and improve quantitative

performance of domestic production, at least short-term. Therefore, European countries tend to give generous grants to a single project of a celebrated filmmaker. A recent example is the 8 million euro *Amour* (2012) by Michael Haneke, a film that was shot in a few locations only but which was predicted to have a big audience and make annual statistical reports show an increase in market share, neglecting the fact that this has happened thanks to a single film.<sup>6</sup> As a consequence, we can hear news about a successful year of Dutch, Austrian, or Lithuanian cinema thanks to one or two films only, but the market share most often drops again next year.

Due to this economy/art dichotomy, the ideal European film for the European public financiers has increasingly become one that is visually and aesthetically striking, opens up grand controversial topics (wars, racism, xenophobia) but by the end is reduced to a warm human story of the main hero, isolated from the European social totality. Such a trajectory distracts spectators, preventing them from any critical examination of their reality and invisible hegemonic ideological apparatuses. Instead, it makes them only identify or empathize with problem-solving heroes that, instead of improving their society, normalize it as it is, through conflict and resolution. In the words of Gutierrez Alea again: “we leave the theatre with the sensation that all is [eventually] well, that we do not need to change anything” (1988: 38).

The ideological and political neutrality of the majority of European filmmakers makes the essential challenging of axiomatic truths an absence. The ‘European’ ways of seeing are found in ‘creative’ documentaries, by well-funded directors from wealthy European countries who embark on costly trips to ‘exotic’ destinations like North Korea, Afghanistan, Kosovo or Colombia and present those countries’ tragedies as disturbing but exotic stories of uncivilized ‘Others’. These films disturb Western audiences for a moment, make them feel engaged and shaken for a while, but eventually tranquilize them with the feeling that they were lucky to be born *In a Better World* (2010) as the Oscar-winning film by Suzanne Bier’s suggests by its title. Showing the violence of the openly repressive world regimes on screen, they only incite cheap repulsion of the audience towards easily recognizable and predictable violence in North Korea, Sudan or elsewhere – the type of violence that is visible, albeit in more stylized ways, in an average Hollywood thriller. At the same time, European cinema starts lacking films that would create a discerning audience, capable of tracing hidden, symbolic violence that is not apparent and explicit (Milovic 2006: 243–257).

### Conclusion

The European film policies are increasingly taking a market-prioritizing turn. The quality of European films is measured through quantitative data (box office, admissions, number of awards, etc.), while their socio-political relevance is neglected. Audience-building, as one of the major activities dictated by the most recent European film policies, is perceived as an ideal marketing tool for proving that even subsidized films can make money. However, while collecting and counting spectators is a skill, creating socially disobedient *spect-actors* remains a difficult art. In the crisis-hit Europe, when quality keeps being measured through the number of consumers, an essential task of creating socially and politically aware citizens seems quixotic. Hence, in addition to providing an overview of the film policy field in Europe, we want to mention here that there are still filmmakers in Europe who keep up the paradigm of a European cinema marked by social disobedience, subversion, and other supranational unifying drives. Sometimes such filmmakers exist because they live in rich European countries whose governments, despite neoliberal policies, still maintain arthouse



support schemes (for instance, the work of the acclaimed Dardenne brothers from Belgium or by young Swedish director Lisa Langseth). In 'poor countries' these filmmakers increasingly operate underground, guerilla-style, because their governments are dismantling subsidy structures, thus segregating the local scenes from any kind of a common European cinematic landscape. A non-homogenous, but authentic, cinematic 'voice' seems to occupy almost a fetishist status in European film policies and practices, depending on structural and ideological pre/dispositions: while wealthy countries may use arthouse productions as proof of their 'commitment' to domestic political demands for supporting the Arts and towards European-wide proclamations of protection of European culture, others under the discourse of austerity, crisis, and scarcity of resources ensure that subsidies dry in this direction. In either case, policy scripts are not innocent bystanders of national idiosyncrasies, but rather actors in shaping the European cinematic landscape.

### Notes

- 1 The list includes Theo Angelopoulos, Ingmar Bergman, Dusan Makavejev, Istvan Szabo, Wim Wenders, Federico Fellini, to mention a few.
- 2 The full letter available at: <http://www.europeanfilmacademy.org/Appeal-from-European-Film-Directors.187.0.html> (retrieved as of 25/09/2013).
- 3 For example, *The Five from Barska Street* (1953) by Polish director Alexander Ford that won the special mention at the Cannes Film Festival in 1954 shows a clear neorealist influence in describing the post-World War II drab Polish reality.
- 4 For the full list of co-production treaties signed by France see: *Centre national du cinema et de l'image animee*, <http://www.cnc.fr/web/en/co-production-agreement> (accessed on 15 January 2014).
- 5 *Blow-Up* (1960) and *La Notte* (1961), both directed by Michelangelo Antonioni, *Canterbury Tales (I racconti di Canterbury)* (1974) by Pier Paolo Pasolini, and later on, *Paris, Texas* (1984) by Wim Wenders or *Europa* (1991) by Lars von Trier are largely considered to be "marriages of love." On the other hand, film such as *I am Dina* (2001) by Ole Bornedal (Norway/Sweden/France/Germany/Denmark) and *The Disappearance of Finbar* (1996) by Sue Clayton (Ireland/Sweden/UK) have been cited as "marriages of convenience/europudding," as case studies of forced and compromising co-productions (see Neumann and Appelgren 2007; Wayne 2002).
- 6 Indeed, *Amour* was successful, commercially grossing \$20 million worldwide ([www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)).

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