

## EURIMAGES MEMBERSHIP AND TURKISH CINEMA

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**Abstract:** Cinema-State relationship in Turkey until 1990s developed mostly around the issues of censorship and taxes. Neo-liberal economic and cultural politics after 1990s caused crucial breakups for the future of Turkish cinema. Turkey, on the one hand, organized a series of regulations in order for the free circulation of international capital and enabled Off-Shore Media Project in cinema through those regulations. On the other hand, the country became a member of international programs and institutions such as Eureka, MEDEA, See Cinema Network which were organized within the scope of European Union cinema politics, and carried forward its relationship with Eurimages. Eurimages membership caused a transformative effect in Turkish cinema in terms of economy, culture and art. Eurimages membership can be described as a new era of Turkish cinema or a moment when the country had an opportunity to rediscover itself. In this study, economic, cultural and artistic gains that Turkish cinema acquired thanks to Eurimages will be discussed. Besides, suggestions on how those gains can be carried forward in the future will be given.

### EU CINEMA POLITICS

Today, cinema is in the position of a globally-running industry. It can be seen that, especially Hollywood cinema dominates the world movie market and tries to disseminate the American lifestyle. Representations of a culture are taken over from the culture you are in and internalized. From this aspect, representations are politically crucial. Today, cinema products presented by a global marketing are important in terms of carrying out the political struggle. Ryan and Kellner (1997: 38) explains this struggle as: “Political interests in cinema are extremely powerful, because movies become a part of a wider cultural representations keeping alive the social institutions by manipulating the common thought of what the world is and what it should be, and the psychological stands that form a basis for building social reality one way or the other.”

Many countries have a common dilemma in cinema politics: the relationship between culture and trade. Here there is always a struggle between the desires for forming a powerful economic sector that provides employment areas and the desires for a representative and local cinema that can help serious thinking upon the society through drama (Miller, 2000: 44). Ben Gibson states from the example of England that (1992: 30-31) the best way to understand the place of the governments while creating a movie industry is the necessity to arrange the related arguments between economic realities and a set of cultural priorities. Cultural priorities require the explanation of these issues: In which market the business should be carried out or which market is the one to provide service? Does it matter who shoots the movies of a country? What are our arguments for making a movie? Who is busy with trade and who produces culture or is culture a business of trade? Gibson expresses that (32) English producers could not attempt such a work because they did not believe there would be a market for a ‘European’ movie or the lack of their market-related experiences and information. The writer associates the problem related to film production which has various cultural characteristics in cinema with the distribution and marketing process of the movie. It seems that those problems related to the relationship between culture and trade can increase and occupy the agenda in the future. Miller (2000: 44) suggests avoiding economic and cultural minimalist (reductionist) approaches towards the solution of the problem.

With the development of globalization concept, some sort of changes can be seen in film industries and national and international policies that organize the relations in those

industries. While the term ‘national cinema’ has been used for long years in the history of cinema, the terms ‘multiculturalism’ in 1990s and ‘transnational’ by and after 2000 have been used. Cinema has an international characteristic from the beginning due to the movie dealing between countries or co-productions. With the economic, cultural and political outcomes of the globalization process, national limits have been exceeded, and cinema has gained a transnational quality. “Neoliberalism”, which is based on the circulation of capital exceeding national limits, and internationalization of labour are the prominent reasons of the appearance of globalization process. It can be stated that globalization process caused hopes and concerns about many issues as well as its positive and negative aspects. Considering the fact that 22 companies out of top 50 that run cinema, television, entertainment and music industries are USA-based, it can be seen Hollywood’s dominant and hegemonic position in the concept of globalization can be seen (Ulusay, 2008: 23-24).

Globalization process further stratified the relations of film industries and cinema of the countries with economy and politics. Concepts such as international circulation of the capital and labour, the structure of ownership which changes due to the vertical and horizontal coalescences, convergence of mass media and the related sectors create different perspectives on the analysis of cinema through political economy.

Starting from the Hollywood example, Wasko (1999: 226-227) states that the purpose of political economy approach is to realize the distribution of power in film industry and criticize it. Labour problems should be pointed out and efforts for producing alternatives for commercial movies should be made. Instead of adopting the status quo, people should stand up to that. Film industry as a whole should be considered a part of the society as a huge part of the communication and media industry. How one can become dominant in international movie markets and by which mechanisms is the dominance of the market sustainable should be pointed out. How the film export is associated with the market of the other media products, domestic film industry of the countries and political and cultural outlooks because of that situation should be focused on.

“European, Europeanness, belonging to Europe” and similar definitions have been discussed in and outside of Europe in terms of culture, society, politics, economy and philosophy, in addition, it can be stated that “European thinking” has become a current issue through movies. The idea of “European Cinema” has the similar discussions as well. Besides those discussions, transnational interactions and intercultural reception topics can be mentioned. According to Tim Bergfelder, who claims that European Cinema studies mostly equal to the national cinema studies, this situation reflects the main problem of European project existent from the very beginning; how can the desire of protecting national identity and cultural differences be associated with a society ideal? (2005: 191). When considered from the perspective of cinema history, it might not be necessary to use the definition of European cinema years ago. Instead of that definition, terms such as “French movie” or “Italian movie” were much more commonly used. “European Cinema” has become a category mentioned during the years when the limitations of European Union, Europeanness and Europe have been discussed in different platforms (Sevgen, 2005: 7).

Since the first years of cinema, Europe which has been considered a huge and profitable market by USA brought up art house films against Hollywood movie industry. “In addition to its indication of a production and narration style which exists in almost every country’s cinema no matter how different cultural characteristics it has or its place in the world geography is, art house film has been generally associated with European cinema” (Ulusay, 2003: 63). In relation to Hollywood film industry’s policies of gaining predominance as a market in Europe, it can be stated that Europe tended towards more protective politics, cultural diversity and art house films in the cultural field.

The formation of a holistic policy related to cinema and the other mass media in European community started in 1980s. As it will be mentioned later, a set of programs have been formed. About the process regarding Europe's coalescence in 1992, Bergfelder (2005: 192) talks about two important conferences that caused European cinema regain significance by academic environment in 1989. Both conferences brought into question three important issues: "Problematizing Europe; the problem of national and cultural identity and differentiation and hierarchy between advanced culture and popular culture." When viewed from a general perspective, these issues are still at the centre of debates.

European art house cinema is the prominent concept reconsidered in Europe in 1990s. European art house cinema, which places importance on the history of masterpieces, different cinema schools, the director himself/herself and brings forward auteur methods, has constituted a significant reference point in the determination of European culture politics. This idea, in a sense, has formed the basis of GATT negotiations during mid-1990s.

Bergfelder (2005: 191) points out that in order to provide persistence and protection for the art house cinema, the applications and institutions seen in European countries have been organized in a similar way for the last 40 years. A production based on state support as it is seen especially in France and Germany is the leading element in these mechanisms. Furthermore, dissemination of intra European distribution network and art house-based projection style, which are based on the marketization of the movies via film festivals such as Berlin, Venice and Cannes, finally, formation of magazine and newspaper network that believes in the spirit of art house cinema and its industrial structure are among these mechanisms. In addition, criticisms on European art house cinema have appeared. The major topics criticized are that European art house cinema created a cultural homogenization, it takes side with high culture and it is a reproachable elitist cinema with that aspect. Its exclusion of popular culture and the audience has taken the criticisms/discussions to extreme points. It has been stated that European art house cinema has been supporting a cultural and an ethnic 'European stronghold' (Bergfelder, 2005: 192).

The basic concept that is questioned within these developments is where the place of the European cinema in the expanding picture of the world cinema would be. State-funded cinema perception, which provides an individual expression through "Auterist" point of view, has made itself evident in the 1993 GATT negotiations, and a defensive discourse against Hollywood hegemony has become prominent. In this respect, initiatives supporting co-operation in Europe have been supported. Besides, national tendencies of European art house cinema –as it has been mentioned above- have been debated by the academe, intra-national formations and inter-cultural reception topics in film production have been pointed out (Göktürk, 2005: 57). Within these changes, it is seen that Europe has been discussed around the identity concept since 1980s. The geographical and cultural borders of continental Europe have been discussed. European geography has reshaped within the scope of cultural-local connection in terms of economy, culture, and politics. Europe, which has been shaped in such a position, faces, in Ulusoy's (2008: 45-47) words, two different concepts of 'other'. On the one hand, the *other* is Hollywood which is the biggest rival against the European cinema. On the other hand, it is possible for Europe to encounter the *other* in itself which arises from its colonial history.

Within those discussions and improvements, the studies which have been carried out with the purpose of gaining Europe a holistic politics started in 1980s. Europe has founded funds and prepared programs for supporting the development of visual-audial culture and production-distribution opportunities. Units such as European Script Fund (SCRIPT) and Europe Distribution Office (EFDO) have been founded within MEDIA (Mesurés Pour

Encourager le Développement de l'Industrie de Production Audio-Visuelle), and it has been aimed to support European cinema industry (Ulusay, 2003: 65).

On the one hand, a cultural space with a European scale has been formed through those programs; on the other hand supporting the industry (culturally and economically) in the competition with the USA has been targeted. The main supports given with that purpose are; Advocating co-productions, distribution networks and cinema halls, paving the way for futuristic and innovative projects, giving a demonstration of the movies through festivals and presenting them to the market.

### **TURKEY'S EURIMAGES MEMBERSHIP**

One of the prominent characteristics seen in the politics of European cinema, as it is in Eurimages example, is advocating the projects open for cultural diversity and innovation. In addition, Herold states (2005: 291-292) that there is a tension in Europe between liberal commerce principles and cultural protective attitudes. The conflict between market concerns and cultural concerns is the idiosyncratic and dual –cultural and economic- characteristic of the movie. In effect, the problem centres around the discussions on how coherence can be achieved between those two characteristics as well as sacrificing the cultural one. It can be said that Europe seems closer to the cultural concerns within this dilemma. European attitude was clear-cut in the 1987-1994 GATT negotiations. According to that attitude, cinema is more of a cultural concept rather than a commercial one like vegetable or computer (Ulusay, 2003: 63).

Supporting co-productions is one of the most important developments in the European cinema politics. It can be stated that co-production practice brings a lot of advantages in production-distribution-projection areas. Cinema has an international quality from the beginning until today. This is seen not only in movie dealing, but also in the co-productions whose number has been increasing gradually. Cinema in many countries shows a tendency towards co-productions to be able to compete with the Hollywood industry. Although co-production, roughly defined as a work that is produced thanks to the integration of two or more countries' economic and technical utilities of their cinema, is a concept which has been supported in Europe since 1920s against the competition with the Hollywood movies, it experienced its major development in 1990s. European Council's co-production support fund Eurimages has been put into practice in 1989, however some members of the European Council did not participate in this program.

The number of the Eurimages members was 27 in 2000, but in 2005 it was 30 (Göktürk, 2005) and became 32 in 2008. Eurimages, which was founded in order to support co-production and distribution, has revived movie production in Europe. Having categories during the evaluation process of the projects such as artistic value, cinematic diversity, innovative movies, Eurimages has major goals such as supporting the productions with cultural diversity and investing in the cinema industry as an art (Ulusay, 2003: 67-68). On one hand productions that reflect many aspects of the European society have been supported, on the other hand investments have been made into "an industry which takes into consideration the commercial success as well as accepting cinema as an art like the other branches of art by acting according to these issues" (Ulusay, 2005; 347).

Turkey became a member of international programs and institutions in 1990s which were established within the scope of European Union cinema politics such as Eureka, MEDEA, See Cinema Network, and continued its relationships with Eurimages. Turkey became a member of Cinematographic and Visual-Audial Co-Production and Distribution European Support Fund (Eurimages) in 1990, and undertook Eureka Audiovisuel's National Coordinatorship which is an important foundation of the Ministry of Culture visual-audial

field. Visual-audial Eureka was closed in 2003 with the decision of Eureka Coordinators Committee with the thought that the foundation has successfully accomplished its mission. Ministry of Culture keeps its relationship going with See Cinema Network (South-eastern European Countries Cinema Network) which was established in 2000 and of which Turkey has been a founder member. The purpose of the foundation is to encourage South-eastern European Countries about cinema and carry out co-productions through co-operation between each other. As a result of the evaluations, points such as preparation of new regulations on taxation and sponsorship, application of copy rights, effective campaigns against knockoff products, securing the rights of cinema employees with legal regulations and supervision of their use of existent rights have been emphasized, and foundation of Cinema Institution regarding reconfiguration of the cinema field has been offered.

Co-production has been an experience which Turkey was not that interested in until 1990s. Turkish cinema participated in co-production of only 40 movies between 1931 and 1990 (Ulusay, 2005: 339). With Eurimages membership, it is seen that the same number has been reached in a short period of time; i.e. 9 years. Eurimages supported 40 movies between 1990 and 1998 among which 4 of them were documentaries and 36 of them were full-length movies. This is a considerable number for a country where co-production works are considered new. International co-productions not only revived Turkish cinema in and after 1990s, but also gave hope for the future. In this new era, where new generations have participated in Turkish cinema and co-production experience has developed, Turkish cinema has started to be mentioned in international environments.

Thanks to Eurimages membership, the problems of cinema related to freedom and production have been more or less overcome. Besides, it brought economic contributions. Europe's protection of itself from the effect of the American cinema or for the sake of forming a cinema image, European culture image, European countries have preferred the settlement whose centre was located in Strasbourg. Eurimages which can be considered a 'union of cinema' in European Union brought not only chances on the basis of freedom and expansions, but also provided economic contribution for Turkish cinema.

Eurimages was one of the two important developments that helped Turkish cinema get out of the financial bottleneck in 1990s. Before 1990 and in 1995, cinema experienced two predicaments that it was almost impossible to shoot films. During the first predicament, Ministry of Culture helped to overcome the situation, and during the second predicament between 1996 and 1997 Eurimages stepped in; 80% of the movies shot during those years were supported by Eurimages (Yurdatap, 1997: 4). Eurimages not only provides an important resource for the production network of the cinema sector, but also paves the way for meeting other countries' cinema practices and making use of their technical utilities. Except the above-mentioned issues, the most important contribution of Eurimages to Turkish cinema has appeared within the concept of "art house cinema". "Art house cinema", which is a differentiating concept for the determination of European cinema identity against Hollywood, has been legitimized in Turkey thanks to Eurimages-supported productions (Ulusay, 2002: 237). It is not correct to associate this change with only Eurimages. "Socialist-realist" movements at the beginning of 1960 and in 1970s and the movies of directors such as Refiğ, Erksan and Güney can be considered within the context of "art house cinema". "Women films" shot after 1980 and the movies dealing with before and after 12<sup>th</sup> of September have a role in emergence of this tendency. Knockoff video and cassette market presented many alternatives for the consumer and this helped them make a connection with the art house movies. Also, the channel TRT2's display of classical cinema examples and the festivals became a kind of a guide in this issue (235-239). However, the concept of "art house cinema" has gained a new momentum in Turkey thanks to Eurimages. Experience and talent exchange

in movie production techniques were shared thanks to co-productions, and some scripts which would not find any producer in Turkey were taken into consideration through this way.

1990	1.000.000 FF	4.800.000 FF
1991	3.000.000 FF	6.250.000 FF
1992	4.500.000 FF	1.750.000 FF
1993	4.500.000 FF	5.400.000 FF
1994	4.500.000 FF	6.800.000 FF
1995	4.500.000 FF	10.600.000 FF
1996	4.500.000 FF	8.000.000 FF
1997	4.500.000 FF	9.550.000 FF
1998	4.500.000 FF	9.300.000 FF
1999	6.000.000 FF	5.800.000 FF
2000	6.000.000 FF	6.650.000 FF
2001	6.000.000 FF (914.964 Euro)	1.019.000 Euro
2002	914.694 Euro	1.838.000 Euro
2003	914.000 Euro	1.690.970 Euro
2004	1.000.000 Euro	1.477.400 Euro
2005	966.511 Euro	1.300.145 Euro
2006	767.173 Euro	1.071.350 Euro
2007	822.088,09 Euro	1.021.250 Euro

**Table 1: Table of subscription fees and subventions**

When looking at the table of subscription fees and subventions (Table 1), it is seen that Turkey has benefited from Eurimages membership. Except a few years, both subscriptions fees and subventions increased. In 18 years, Turkey paid 47.500.000 FF and 62.994.30 Euro subscription fee between 1990 and 2007, and had 74.900.000 FF and 94.181.15 Euro subvention in return. These subventions were disbursed for full-length movies and documentaries, distribution support for European movies, Turkish movies which took distribution support in Europe and cinema halls in Turkey.

5 documentaries and in total 84 full-length movies have been supported financially within 18 years. Until 1994 Eurimages did not fund the cinema halls in Turkey. It has started with funding 4 cinema halls in 1994, and it has been seen that until 2002 5 to 8 cinema halls in average each year were funded. After 2003, funding rates of the cinema halls increased: 11 halls in 2003, 15 halls in 2004, 21 halls in 2005, 23 halls in 2006, and 23 halls in 2007 have been financially supported. The audience had an opportunity to watch many European movies in Turkey thanks to the financial support of European movies distribution. 277 European movies in total within 18 years have been funded by Eurimages to be projected in Turkey.

Eurimages membership provided many new gains for Turkish cinema in terms of economy, culture and art. Eurimages membership, which has a transformative impact with these new gains upon Turkish cinema, can be called in a sense a new era for Turkish cinema. Within this context, Turkish cinema having an opportunity to rediscover itself with Eurimages membership should be supported more after 2000 when the relations with EU intensified, unlike previous periods, and should participate in other programs within the body of EU thanks to the regulations compatible with European cinema politics.

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