

Films from Countries in Crisis and Switzerland: The New Argentine Cinema, Greek New Wave and Swiss Film Institutions

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Abstract

This paper will explore the relationship between Swiss film institutions and cinematic New Waves that appear in countries which were or are in crisis. To this end, it will compare how the New Argentine Cinema (NAC) and Greek New Wave (GNW) were received at the Locarno Film Festival, the Fribourg Film Festival and the Visions sud est Fund (case studies). Argentina's wave emerged just before the country's default in 2001, while the Greek wave arose at the same time as the sovereign-debt crisis in Greece in 2009. Switzerland plays a role in their success, since it has always maintained a rich cinematic culture with historic festivals and producers, as well as government agencies and foundations assisting filmmakers from (semi-)peripheral countries. The first aim of this paper is to (i) investigate how the NAC and GNW were received at the Locarno and Fribourg festivals. By analysing the material in their official programmes, it will (ii) determine whether there is a proliferation of crisis-related terms in the way these waves are presented. Finally, this paper will (iii) expound on their support by Visions sud est Fund and other Swiss institutions and assess the impact of Swiss funding on the NAC and GNW.

Keywords: Film Festivals; Economic Crisis; Greek Cinema; Argentine Cinema; Switzerland.

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Introduction

The prime objective of this article is to explore the relationship between European film institutions and cinematic New Waves from countries that, on the one hand, have been hit by economic, social or humanitarian crises and, on the other, were well-received and generously supported by the aforementioned film institutions. These New Wave filmmakers have received aid that was crucial for them.¹ Such filmmakers are usually too young and inexperienced to attract private investors and have limited access to public funding, which is already scarce due to the crises.²

How do European institutions receive cinematic New Waves from countries in crisis? Does the international attention on their problems influence the often enthusiastic reception of their filmmakers? To what extent are these New Waves supported by European institutions and how does European funding impact their consolidation? This article will investigate these questions by comparing how the so-called New Argentine Cinema (NAC) and Greek New Wave (GNW) were received at the Swiss Locarno and Fribourg Film Festivals, as well as the support they offered along with the Visions sud est Fund (case studies).

The Locarno Film Festival (LFF) was chosen as the only A-listed Swiss festival, a prestigious institution of international repute. On the contrary, the Fribourg International Film Festival (FIFF) will serve as an example of a festival that focuses exclusively on films from developing countries, such as Argentina. As for Visions sud est, it only supports projects from developing countries and is an esteemed national film fund, equivalent to the Dutch Hubert Bals Fund or the German World Cinema Fund. Therefore, it was of prime importance to our research. Granted, the Locarno and Fribourg Film Festivals do not represent the totality of Swiss feature film festivals, e.g. the Zurich Film Festival is also an important hub of the film festival circuit. They can, however, give us an overview of the relationship between cinematic New Waves from countries in crisis and Swiss (and subsequently European) institutions in the limited space of an article and serve as a basis for further research.

This article takes a closer look at how the NAC and GNW films were received at the Locarno and Fribourg festivals based on the number of selections. Moreover, it analyses the material in their official programmes to determine whether there is a proliferation of crisis-related terms in the way the waves are presented. The final aim is to expound on the support they received from the Visions sud est Fund and other Swiss institutions, and assess how these affected the development of these waves as cinematic trends.

1 Comparing the New Argentine Cinema and the Greek New Wave

The New Argentine Cinema and Greek New Wave were chosen as case studies primarily because these two nations have become global symbols of crisis in the twenty-first century and represent two of the most recognisable New Waves in recent years. With respect to the economic crises, Argentina entered a period of recession in 1998 and eventually defaulted in 2001. A few years later, it was Greece's turn. In 2009, one year after the Global Financial Crisis, Greece's economy was raising alarms. In 2010, the Greek government requested international financial aid and, in 2015, almost left the Eurozone ("Grexit"). These crises have been followed by every major media outlet and the international public has come to associate both countries with financial troubles. Moreover, the two crises have often been compared by economists, journalists and politicians because of their similarities, including the involvement of the International Monetary Fund, the implementation of Capital controls and bank runs.

"The Greek crisis: a cautionary tale from Argentina" (Velasco 2012), "Can bankrupt Greece take lessons from Argentinian default?" (Seibt 2011) and "What can Greece learn from Argentina's default experience?" (Bennett-

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1. Other contemporary examples where filmmakers received aid include the Romanian New Wave that started in the early 2000s, and the Colombian New Wave starting in the 2010s.
 2. It is characteristic that the first films of the NAC (some of which were the first feature films of their directors) were funded by the Dutch Hubert Bals fund and later selected by Swiss festivals. To give a few examples: *Pizza, birra, faso* | *Pizza, Beer, and Cigarettes* (Bruno Stagnaro, Adrián Caetano, 1997), *Mundo grúa* | *Crane World* (Pablo Trapero, 1999) and *La libertad* | *Liberty* (Lisandro Alonso, 2001). Similarly, the Locarno Filmmakers Academy supported young filmmakers Jacqueline Lentzou and Christos Massalas, who were directing shorts at the time. However, it is important to mention that not all of these filmmakers share the same profile: their aesthetics and themes may vary, their perspectives on filmmaking might not be aligned and they might target different audiences.

Jones 2015) are only a few articles that compare these two nations. Nobel-prize winner Paul Krugman (Princeton University / London School of Economics) explained that the Argentine default could be viewed as a cautionary example for Greece and prompted readers not to “Cry For Argentina”, which “went through a brief severe downturn, but soon began a rapid recovery that continued for a long time” (Krugman 2011). Ha-Joon Chang (University of Cambridge) has also pointed out the similarities between the two crises and characterised Argentina and Greece as “debt colonies” (Chang 2012). Another example is the article “History repeating itself: From the Argentine default to the Greek tragedy?” by economists Cinzia Alcidi, Alessandro Giovannini and Daniel Gros for a publication of the European Think Tank CEPS (Alcidi et al 2011).

In this climate, it didn’t take long before the Greek and Argentine juxtaposition was discussed in Greek Parliament. In August 2012, Minister of Finance Giannis Stournaras insisted that, despite its misfortunes, “Greece has not become Argentina” (Iefimerida 2012). The living standard of the Greeks may have decreased, but it had not plummeted like that of the Argentines after 2001. Almost a week later, Alexis Tsipras, leader of the opposition at the time and a fervent opponent of austerity, responded: “I wish that Greece were Argentina” (To Vima 2012). He explained that the Argentines, who responded differently than the Greeks to the debt crisis, managed to stand on their own feet with dignity.

The constant comparison between the Argentine and Greek crises is all the more impressive since the two nations have considerable differences. Argentina is a large Latin American country in terms of territory, population, economic perspectives and its language, Spanish, is one of the most widely-spoken in the world. Argentine territory was recently colonised and settled by Europeans and subsequently has a history of oppression and violence towards its indigenous peoples. On the other hand, Greece is a relatively small European country, with symbolic significance as it is perceived by many as the “cradle of the Western civilisation”, albeit with a marginally spoken language. Nevertheless, the consensus is that their economies shared many characteristics during the 2001 and 2009 crises.

An additional similarity is that the Argentine and Greek film productions flourished during the economic downturns. Their New Wave filmmakers attracted attention from critics and festival programmers all over the world. For instance, *Pizza, Beer, and Cigarettes* (*Pizza, birra, faso*, 1997), dir. by Bruno Stagnaro and Adrián Caetano, one of the early NAC films, was presented at the Mar del Plata International Film Festival in 1997. Two years later, *Crane World* dir. by Pablo Trapero (*Mundo grúa*, 1999) won the awards for best director and best actor at the Buenos Aires International Festival of Independent Film (BAFICI). Some of the NAC films that followed, such as *The Swamp* dir. by Lucrecia Martel (*La ciénaga*, 2001), *Liberty* dir. by Lisandro Alonso (*La libertad*, 2001) and *Lost Embrace* (*El abrazo partido*, 2004) dir. by Daniel Burman, were selected for screening at A-listed international film festivals where they often won awards. After such a warm reception, it was clear that a new era was dawning for Argentine cinema in terms of film aesthetics, production and distribution, a phenomenon that has been thoroughly studied by Latin American Film Studies scholars internationally (Andermann 2012, Falicov 2007, Aguilar 2008).

Like their Argentine counterparts, Greece’s new generation of directors were introducing novel approaches to filmmaking (Chalkou 2012). In 2009, when the sovereign-debt crisis started, *Dogtooth* dir. by Yorgos Lanthimos (*Kynodontas*, 2009) won the Un Certain Regard prize at the Cannes Film Festival and, surprisingly, earned a nomination for Best Foreign Language Film at the Academy Awards (Oscars). This significant achievement brought to the forefront a group of festival-orientated films such as *Attenberg* dir. by Athina Rachel Tsangari (2010), *Plato’s Academy* dir. by Filippos Tsitos (2009), and *Alps* dir. by Yorgos Lanthimos (*Alpeis*, 2011), as well as *A Blast* dir. by Syllas Tzoumerkas (2014) and *Miss Violence* dir. by Alexandros Avranas (2013), which won several prizes at international festivals. Foreign critics and scholars, both Greek and international, quickly began defining and analysing these recent productions (Scott 2010, Papadimitriou 2013).

2 Why Switzerland?

This article concentrates on Switzerland because, despite the fact that it is a small nation with a limited production of fiction films, it has a rich cinematic culture that historically has been very open to new cinematic trends from peripheral countries. Furthermore, Switzerland boasts many international film festivals and internationally acclaimed institutions like the Cinémathèque suisse, as well as a number of arthouse cinemas,

cineclubs and Film Studies Departments. Switzerland’s pioneering tradition of connecting industrialised countries with the developing world in various fields has definitely included cinema. This is reflected in the work of Swiss festivals, which expose international films to the global film circuit, as well as by Swiss producers, government agencies, foundations and NGOs, which fund and distribute films from peripheral countries and/or the “Global South” (Asia, Africa and Latin America). Granted, there are larger European countries, such as France or Germany, which are more influential in film production and the international film festival circuit. Nevertheless, Switzerland plays a crucial role along with other small yet wealthy European countries, such as the Netherlands with the Hubert Bals Foundation.

3 Selections and Prizes at the Locarno Film Festival

The Locarno Film Festival is the most well-known film festival in the country. It prides itself for being one of the longest-running film festivals that has historically encouraged international dialogue and offered a safe space for persecuted filmmakers such as the anti-fascists under Mussolini. Moreover, despite being smaller than other A-listed festivals like Cannes, Berlin and Venice, Locarno is also known as a prestigious platform for art house films. In fact, the Locarno Film Festival has wholeheartedly embraced the “dogma of discovery”, not unlike the other A-listed festivals mentioned above. According to Marijke de Valck, most festivals follow the “dogma of discovery”, whereby new art/world films are found and new waves/cinemas from countries are recognised (de Valck 2007: 175). The LFF boasts a long tradition of selecting and supporting filmmakers that are young and/or from less wealthy countries. Discovering new talent is such a big part of the festival’s mission that its organisers characterise it as, “the world capital of auteur cinema. We discover new talent, give voice to emerging filmmakers” (Locarno Festival 2009). This is clearly reflected by their choice of key words for section titles, such as “emerging directors”, “from all over the world”, “explore film’s frontier territories” and shorts by “independent filmmakers” or “film school students”.

Let’s examine the different sections of the festival where films from the Argentine and Greek New Waves have been discovered. It is worthwhile to note, however, that some selections are not as “prestigious” as others. Nevertheless, their status and mission are worth noting. Piazza Grande in Locarno hosts open-air screenings that attract large audiences, including tourists, making it the most mainstream section. The International Competition is reserved for established filmmakers and is extensively covered by the international press. On the other hand, Filmmakers of the Present is “dedicated to emerging directors from all over the world and devoted to first, second, and third features” (Locarno Festival n.d.). Moving Ahead is smaller and showcases experimental and idiosyncratic films. Pardi di Domani “screens shorts and medium-length films by independent filmmakers or film school students,” which accounts for its limited press coverage (Locarno Festival n.d.). Additionally, the Open Doors lab organises screenings of films from foreign countries that it has helped produce. Lastly, there are popular screenings of retrospectives or non-competing films but they are not central to the festival.

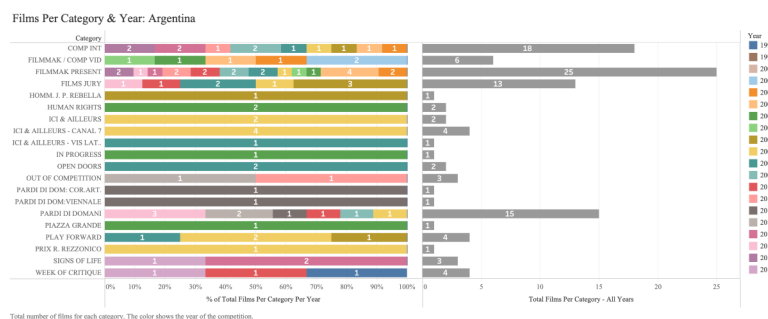


Fig. 1. Argentine films screened at the Locarno Film Festival between 1998 and 2017 (Source: Locarno Film Festival).

We will now explore how many films from both countries were selected and assess the importance of each selection based on the section that chose it. The data I retrieved shows that the number of Argentine films selected between 1998 and 2017 rose to a total of 85, most of which were directed by a new generation of

filmmakers. As one can see in Fig. 1, from 1998 to 2001, before the Argentine default, only three films were selected, mostly in “minor” sections, the Semaine de la Critique, and Filmmakers of the Present (Competition in Video). However, after 2002 there is a constant increase. In 2007, as many as 13 films were selected, some for the tribute to Argentina “Ici & Ailleurs – 200 años – Ciclo de telefilms argentinos producido por Canal 7”.

From 1998 to 2017, a total of 26 films from Greece were screened. As one can also see with Argentina, attention on Greek cinema increases, albeit on a larger scale (Fig. 2). Greece advanced from eight selections between 1998 and 2008, to 18 from 2009 to 2017. Most of these films were directed by the best-known young directors, including Athina Rachel Tsangari, Syllas Tzoumerkas and Filippos Tsitos, as well as new and emerging short-film directors like Konstantina Kotzamani, Loukianos Moschonas and Jacqueline Lentzou.

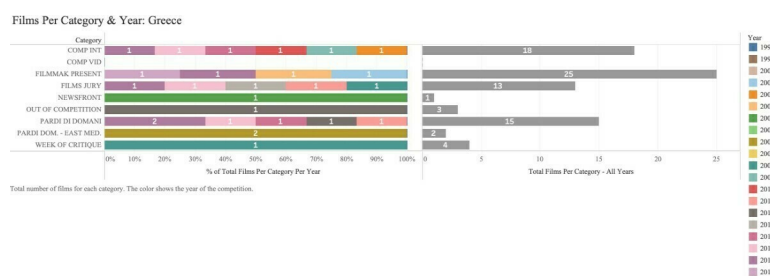


Fig. 2. Greek films screened at the Locarno Film Festival between 1998 and 2017 (Source: Locarno Film Festival).

Argentine and Greek Films projected at the Locarno Film Festival 1998-2017

Country	Year																	Total			
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014		2015	2016	2017
ARG	1	0	0	2	4	6	6	2	6	13	9	5	5	4	3	3	5	5	4	2	85
GR	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	2	0	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	3	5	1	26

Sum of Films broken down by Year vs. Country.

Fig. 3. Comparison of the numbers of Argentine and Greek films screened at Locarno chronologically (Source: Locarno Film Festival).

Not all of the films belong to the aforementioned waves, however. Some were directed by non-Greek or non-Argentine directors and were actually co-productions. This is especially true for Greece, where two of the films selected in competition were co-productions, e.g. *Slava* (Kristina Grozeva, Peter Valchanov, 2016). Moreover, like with Argentina, one Greek production was included as part of a tribute, in this case to films from the Eastern Mediterranean. Other films were selected as Jury’s Films, such as *Libertad* by Lisandro Alonso in 2010. Undoubtedly, not all Argentine and Greek films were selected in competition and every section is very unique. Nevertheless, I argue that organising tributes and selecting Argentine and Greek films at various sections is not contradictory, but rather indicates an increased interest in Argentine and Greek productions in the period during and after the crises.

4 Swiss Festivals, the Crises, the NAC and the GNW

Lydia Papadimitriou argued that the Greek financial crisis “[...] at the level of publicity at least, turned ‘Greece’ into a keyword that made people who would not otherwise have taken notice of Greek cinema, do so” (Papadimitriou 2013: 5). One could assume that the Argentine financial crisis generated a similar level of publicity. The international media’s extensive coverage of how local populations were suffering, as well as the extraordinary way in which the debts were restructured and could potentially affect millions around the world, helped create this phenomenon. The “corralito” in Argentina, Capital Controls in Greece,³ the “cacerolazos,”⁴ De la Rúa’s dramatic helicopter escape, the Syntagma square riots and infamous “bank runs” in both countries, were

3. The Argentine and Greek governments imposed capital controls on bank transfers from local to foreign banks to stabilise the economy.
 4. Huge masses of people demonstrated and expressed their anger by knocking on pots - *cacerolas* in Spanish - they had brought from home to show that they did not know how to put food on the table.

all unfortunate events that grabbed international attention and could indeed have boosted the popularity of Argentine and Greek productions at the Locarno Film Festival.

Actually, the way critics perceived the NAC and GNW films was compatible, if not directly associated, with the media's coverage. Initially, the former wave was received as "neorealist" by international audiences because films, such as *Pizza, birra, faso* and *Mundo grúa*, touched on social issues. Critics and scholars actually compared the Argentine wave to Italian Neorealism due to common themes like poverty and unemployment, the use of reality as a point of reference, the inclusion of non-professional actors and non-studio locations and the low-budget methods of filmmaking (Page 2009: 34, Aguilar 2008: 28). The LFF official programme confirms that there were several such films. This could represent a *clin d'oeil* to an audience that would be interested in a film from the crisis-stricken Argentina or, worse, that they would watch this film only to confirm the stereotype of Argentina as a symbol of economic problems. However, the film synopses in the official programme do not make overt connections to the crises, nor do they include many crisis-related terms.

Like these Argentine films, numerous Greek productions adopt a realistic approach that reflects a contemporary Greek society shaped by austerity measures and recession. Poverty, unemployment, migration, despair, xenophobia, crime, social deviance and rebellion are common themes shared by these films, including the two that premiered at Locarno in competition: *Plato's Academy*, dir. by Filippos Tsitos (*Akadimia Platonos*, 2009), and *A Blast*, dir. by Syllas Tzoumerkas (2014). Shorts by younger Greek filmmakers that premiered at Locarno can also be added to this category. The protagonists in shorts such as *Fox (Alepou)*, 2016 dir. by Jacqueline Lentzou, tend to be young and underprivileged. However, not all Greek films made references to Greece's socio-economic conditions at the time. In fact, the most well-known films of the GNW, namely Lanthimos' *Dogtooth* and Tsangari's *Attenberg*, are set in universes that seem removed from Greek socio-economic reality. They also adopt different aesthetics, coined as "weird" by critics from the English-speaking world, who named it the "Weird Wave of Greek Cinema." (Scott 2010, Rose 2011). *Attenberg* (2010), dir. by Athina Rachel Tsangari, was shown in the framework of the Special programme: Jury's films. Similarly, *Afterlov* (2016) dir. by Stergios Paschos at the section Filmmakers of the Present, was certainly not a statement on the Greek crisis, but a romantic comedy featuring two lovers isolated in a villa. Interestingly, even when there was no obvious reference to the crisis in the films, it didn't prevent many in the film world from interpreting them through this prism. As Erato Basea states, "more importantly, (some of) the Greek new wave films' opaque meaning encouraged film critics and scholars to read this cinema as an allegorical critique of neoliberal politics in crisis-era Greece" (Basea 2016: 63). Therefore, one could argue that there was an increased interest in Greek and Argentine productions during and after the crises, even those that were not overtly political.

5 Dogma of Discovery and the Importance of Being "Discovered" in the (Semi-)Periphery⁵

According to de Valck's "dogma of discovery", discovering new art films from (semi-)peripheral countries – with or without crises – has been the main objective of the film festival world since the 1970s. This tendency developed as a response to protests against the structure of the festivals in the late 1960s. During that period the major European festivals created sections such as Quinzaine des Réalisateurs at Cannes, or Forum at Berlin which not only showcased the achievements of Western directors but also highlighted cinematic cultures unfamiliar to Western audiences, including the Argentine and Greek. In other words, the festivals were "increasingly looking for mind-blowing discoveries similar to the one generated by the archetypal French New Wave" and they appropriated the notion of New Waves as strategic discourse (de Valck 2007: 175).

5. The concept of "periphery" is commonly used by scholars working on "World Cinema" and/or "World Literature". Thus, "world cinemas" are generally divided into three categories: the centre, semi-periphery and periphery, following the notions introduced by sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein in his "world-system" theory (see Wallerstein, 2004). In his famous articles on world literature, Franco Moretti adopts these three categories (see Moretti, 2000; Moretti, 2003). Similarly, in the collective work *Cinema at the Periphery*, several contributors interrogate their objects in terms of "cinemas of the periphery", confronting the theoretical issues that arise from using this concept (see Iordanova et al., 2010). Thus, Argentine Cinema would belong to the "semi-periphery", due to its importance for film industries in the Spanish-speaking world and irrespective of the crisis in the early 1990s.

If this is true, they likely consider other factors as well. Certainly, selecting films from countries in the limelight, such as crisis-stricken Argentina and Greece, helps festivals attract attention from audiences and media all over the world. This does not indicate that the festivals ignored aesthetics; they simply added another parameter to their decision-making process.

As the Locarno data confirms (Fig. 3), the numbers of selected Argentine and Greek films rose consistently after the 2001 and 2009 crises. This does not indicate, however, that there is a direct cause-and-effect relationship between an event of global scale in a country and the immediate development of its cinema. Even though crisis can be a decisive factor, it does not automatically spark unprecedented creativity in local filmmakers and subsequent New Waves. After all, many films were discovered and several New Waves were born in stable, wealthy countries, like Denmark's *Dogma 95*.

The festivals encourage these creative booms by honouring filmmakers who work under adverse conditions. The distinctions awarded at international festivals, such as Locarno, not only recognised the artistic value of new generations of Argentine and Greek filmmakers, they helped NAC and GNW films expand their distribution internationally, usually in arthouse cinemas. Thomas Elsaesser went as far as arguing that, since the vast expansion of the "film festival networks" in the 1990s, it is hard for art and world films to be distributed without winning a festival prize or gaining extensive exposure in the annual festival circuit (Elsaesser 2005).

Film festival recognition for NAC and GNW films is even more important for a few additional reasons. First, Greece does not have a tradition of "exporting" films, except for those made by directors such as Theo Angelopoulos and Michael Cacoyannis, who were considered masters and whose films often premiered at festivals abroad. Therefore, the emergence of an entire generation that systematically had its films screened at festivals abroad is a novelty.⁶ On the contrary, Argentine cinema has been very successful abroad. The Argentine film industry was one of the main exporters of films in Latin America until the 1950s. Moreover, Argentine filmmakers from the 1960s New Argentine Cinema and later have won many accolades at international festivals and impacted world cinema. This success also explains the tributes to Argentine cinema organised at the Locarno Festival and especially the Fribourg Film Festival (Fig. 1). Secondly, Argentine film production was stagnating towards the end of the 1990s, something that changed with the NAC.⁷

Last but not least, both films from these waves tended not to be watched by general audiences at home, despite being recognised by the local media as globally-renowned national cultural products. For the most part, these films had their national premieres at local film festivals and were screened at arthouse cinemas. Not anticipating commercial success, however, Argentine and Greek filmmakers relied heavily on government funding, European funds, co-productions and film festival funding instruments. As we will also see in the final part of this article, some festivals cooperate with national agencies to set up these funding instruments.

6 FIFF

Moving on, let's examine how the NAC was received by the Fribourg International Film Festival (FIFF), another Swiss institution quite different than Locarno. Primarily, the Fribourg is not A-listed, is much smaller and has a less established tradition since it was founded 1987, almost 40 years after Locarno. More importantly, the festival focuses on films from less wealthy parts of the world. The International Competition for feature films presents productions exclusively from Asia, Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe. What's more, competition for shorts only includes films from Latin America, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. In other words, apart from sections with screenings from around the globe, such as retrospectives on a country or filmmaker, Fribourg's main objective is to discover films from the so-called "Global South." Its programmers actively seek productions from these parts of the world that "stand out for their innovation and capability to touch the audience," including Argentina (Fiff n.d.). Specifically, the section "New Territory" aims

6. This could be partially attributed to the vast expansion of the film festival and the internationalisation of film culture.

7. Argentine film production has been remarkable over the years. Numerous films were commercially successful during the "Golden Age" of Argentine cinema until the 1950s and have greatly impacted Latin American cinema. The first New Argentine Cinema of the 1960s and Argentine cinema after the military dictatorship also left a mark on world cinema. Despite its great film tradition, Argentine film production was in significant decline towards the end of the 1990s.

to cinematographically explore one part of the world that the western public is less familiar with. The “New Territory” in 2022, for instance is Nepal (Fiff n.d).

Since its inception, Fribourg has showcased numerous Argentine films. Internationally renowned filmmakers from the 1960s and ’70s, such as Eliseo Subiela and Fernando E. Solanas, have presented their work at Fribourg. These screenings gave them an opportunity to highlight pressing sociopolitical issues, such as the impact of the 1976-1983 dictatorship as well as common themes among the older generations of filmmakers. Since the New Argentine Cinema of the 1960s took an overtly political stance, it fit right into the Fribourg’s platform to be identified as a festival that “gives preference to films that stimulate reflection and provoke discussion” (Fiff n.d). Furthermore, the festival presented Argentine screenings in various other sections as well as tributes to Argentina, such as the retrospective “El Tango en el Cine (1933-1944)” in 1998.

Combine this framework with the festival’s interest in “new territories”, and it is clear to see why the FIFF “discovered” the Argentine wave in such a timely fashion. As early in 1996, the festival had organised a tribute to Argentine shorts by young filmmakers such as Lucrecia Martel, Pablo Trapero and Adrián Caetano, who would become important figures of the NAC. Two years later, Fribourg became the first international festival to select what is considered the first NAC film, *Pizza, birra, faso*. In 2000, it also selected *Mundo Grúa* among other contemporary Argentine films, such as *Just for today (Sólo for hoy, 2000)*, and *Bolivia (2001)*. In other words, the Fribourg festival was instrumental in the NAC being recognised outside of Argentina before its films were selected at A-listed festivals, like with *La ciénaga* at the Berlinale or *La libertad* at Cannes.

Interestingly, this spirit of “discovery” is engraved in Fribourg’s history and aims, which are deeply influenced by the Swiss tradition in Non-governmental development organisations. In 1980, Magda Bossy, who was working for the Swiss Non-governmental organisation (NGO) Helvetas, organised an event for the 25th anniversary of this French-speaking Swiss association. Convinced that film would be an excellent medium for expressing cultural richness, she offered a platform for filmmakers from the “Global South.” Its success prompted a second edition entitled “Festival de Films du Tiers-Monde” (Third-World Film Festival). In the 1990s, Fribourg dropped the “Third-World” title and changed its name to Fribourg International Film Festival.

Two elements of its history stand out. First, its willingness to promote dialogue. According to the Fribourg’s website, it aims to promote “understanding between the cultures and more particularly between the so-called North and South” (Fiff n.d.). Secondly, the festival’s connection to Swiss NGOs, evidenced by their advertisements throughout the festival’s programmes, especially the first editions. A similar readiness to assist filmmakers in need and/or from countries in crisis also prevailed after the 2000s when Swiss festivals didn’t just screen films, but also supported and/or co-produced them.

7 LFF, FIFF and Other Swiss Institutions Supporting Argentine and Greek Productions

European Film festivals have played an important role in supporting film production because they fund filmmakers. This is particularly true for the Argentines and Greeks who were deeply affected by the crises. With state funding for film production significantly reduced, filmmakers had to explore different solutions. One of them was to find new, transnational funding instruments to finance their films. These included co-productions with international companies, funds, foundations and institutions such as the Visions sud est.

The Swiss fund Visions sud est was initiated in 2005 by the trigon-film Baden Foundation and the Fribourg Film Festival, along with the collaboration of Nyon’s Visions du Reel and the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). In 2011, the LFF joined the fund, as did the short-film festival Internationale Kurzfilmtage Winterthur in 2019. In the end, the most well-known Swiss film festivals collaborated with a fund that supports film productions from Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe (but excluding EU members, such as Greece). This fund gives films from these countries worldwide exposure and guarantees their distribution in Switzerland (keeping all distribution rights in Switzerland). Since 2005 the Visions sud est has supported the production of many Argentine films of the “Second Wave” of the NAC, including *La Flor* by Mariano Llinás (Aguilar 2015).

In the case of the LFF, the new, transnational funding instruments were the Locarno Filmmakers Academy as well as the Open Doors programme. Locarno's Open Doors was established in 2002 by the LFF in partnership with the federal government's Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). This programme is "devoted to raising the profile of film-makers from developing countries and at the same time making the best possible contribution to good inter-cultural relations" (Fust 2006: 320). From its inception, the Open Doors has focused on different regions, including Argentina in 2006. Specifically, the Locarno Film Lab collaborated with the Buenos Aires Lab (BAL), the Latin American co-production market for independent cinema, within the framework of the BAFICI (Buenos Aires International Independent Film Festival) and in co-production with TyPA (Teoría y Práctica de las Artes). The BAL's main goal was "to stimulate innovative, courageous, open-minded and original filmmaking", which it did (Locarno Festival 2006). This programme supported – among others – NAC directors Albertina Carri, Celina Murga and Pablo Fendrik. It is worth adding that the Open Doors programme currently consists of not just one, but three parallel activities: the Open Doors Hub, an international co-production platform; the Lab, a workshop for eight producers/filmmakers-producers and screenings from the Open Doors focus region, which we mentioned earlier.

Furthermore, there's the Locarno Filmmakers Academy, a "training program dedicated to young directors, industry professionals, and film critics, from both Switzerland and abroad" (Locarno Festival 2019). The LFF website states that throughout the eleven days of the festival, Locarno hosts a group of emerging talents and young professionals from all over the world expressly for training purposes. Several young Greek filmmakers, such as Jacqueline Lentzou and Christos Massalas, have enhanced their skills and extended their network thanks to this program. In 2016, the LFF solidified its commitment to up-and-coming talent by collaborating with the Thessaloniki Film Festival and establishing the Thessaloniki-Locarno Industry Academy, a training program for young cinema professionals from South-Eastern Europe.

8 Assessing the Role of Swiss Funding

Even though the creation of the European and Swiss funds, foundations and institutions can be attributed to cinephilia, a deep sense of solidarity or government policies, like with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), there is still room for criticism. For instance, could it be that the "discovered" Argentine and Greek films/new waves were not only screened at European and Swiss festivals, but also produced for, and to an extent, by them? A few researchers have already responded. In 2005, Thomas Elsaesser argued that funding instruments demand filmmakers follow the festivals' requirements (Elsaesser 2005: 88). This is because the festivals were no longer just exhibition sites for the films they were screening but also (co-)producers through their funding instruments. Interestingly enough, the FIFF, Nyon's Visions du Reel, Locarno Film Festival and the short-film festival Internationale Kurzfilmtage Winterthur are all partners of the Swiss fund Visions sud est. According to Elsaesser, festivals could use their funding instruments to impose their own criteria on filmmakers such as for aesthetics or themes, thus influencing which kinds of films will be on the market for other festivals (Elsaesser 2005: 88).

Miriam Ross takes a step further and critiques the role of film festival as producer through her famous analysis of the Hubert Bals Fund (HBF) of the Rotterdam Film Festival. Similarly to Locarno's Open Doors and Visions sud est, this fund "is a curatorial fund dedicated to supporting filmmakers from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and parts of Eastern Europe in every stage of the filmmaking process – from script development to post-production" (Iffr n.d.). Indeed, the HBF played a pivotal part in the production of the earliest NAC films, and its name even appeared in most of their titles, including *Pizza, birra, faso* and *Libertad*. Similar support from Open Doors and Visions sud est was impossible because they weren't founded until 2002 and 2005, respectively. Despite the HBF's support of filmmakers from the (semi-)periphery and/or countries in crisis, Ross observes "the sense of an uneven, benefactor-beneficiary relationship at work when filmmakers engage in a working contract with the fund because filmmakers and production companies participate as both cultural producers and representatives of sites in need of first-world support" (Ross 2011: 263).

This sense of an uneven relationship between filmmakers in need and foreign institutions is apparent in the case of Argentina and Greece. Given their dire socioeconomic conditions during the crises, as well as the limited public funding for film production, it is safe to assume that European funds, foundations and institutions

not only influenced international reception but – to some extent – the production of NAC and GNW films. Interestingly, European institutions rushed to help Greek and Argentine film professionals and even created specific programmes, such as a bilateral funding initiative for co-productions with Greece (and Portugal) by the French CNC.⁸ As for the Swiss institutions, their support of Argentine and Greek cinema was limited to a few programmes, namely Locarno's aforementioned Open Doors in Argentina, which supported *La Rabia* (2008), the Locarno Film Academy, which accepted several young Greek filmmakers and the Thessaloniki-Locarno Industry Academy.

Did the European funds, foundations and institutions actually favour specific topics and aesthetics when it came to Argentina and Greece? Apart from testimonies from Greek filmmakers that some European co-producers demanded poverty and crisis-related images be included in their films, one cannot generalise such an assertion (Koutsogiannopoulos 2021). There are, however, three things that the waves have in common. First, they received a great amount of attention at film festivals, including those in Switzerland. Secondly, the NAC and GNW films initially faced a rather lukewarm reception in Argentina and Greece. In other words, the “discovered” films were indeed produced to be screened at foreign festivals and for international cinephiles, not local audiences. This development is not problematic per se. After all, European funding freed many filmmakers from the expectations of local audiences, who may have preferred films with more narrative transparency and conventional aesthetics. Nevertheless, a number of “discovered” Argentine and Greek films that seem specially tailored for international audiences unjustifiably show a disproportionate amount of images revealing poverty, crisis and misery.

Lastly, the discovery of young Argentine and Greek filmmakers and their subsequent funding seems to have stimulated them and helped them develop artistically. To mention a few examples: Adrián Caetano, Pablo Trapero and Lisandro Alonso, who all received grants by Hubert Bals Fund for their first films, continued making their presence felt at the film festival circuit. Similarly, Yorgos Lanthimos and Syllas Tzoumerkas, who were both “discovered” at the Cannes Film Festival, have proved to be important voices of Greek cinema. The former is now directing English-speaking international such as *The Favourite* (2018), which have been selected at film festivals and nominated for Academy Awards. The latter continues to collaborate with foreign production companies such as *The Miracle of the Sargasso Sea* (2019) co-produced by companies in Greece, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands and presented at the Berlinale. By extension, the discovery and support of these key figures of the NAC and the GNW seem to have helped with the development of film production in terms of number of productions and co-productions in Argentina and Greece (González 2021, Papadimitriou 2018).⁹

These developments in Argentina and Greece seemingly contradict the otherwise convincing general assertion that the dogma of discovery does not bring lasting changes to local industries. According to de Valck, this dogma implies that “every new wave would inevitably have a limited life span at the festival circuit” (de Valck 2007: 176). After assisting a generation of filmmakers in one country, programmers and funding instruments usually move on to other generations and nations. This stance is systematically problematic and goes against the principle of sustainability revered by the European funding instruments, including those in Switzerland. How did Argentina and Greece achieve stable growth of their film industries? While the festivals and funds indeed galvanised a new generation of filmmakers, local authorities seized the momentum and took measures for film development: schools were founded to train technicians, new laws were passed to create opportunities (e.g. cash rebate scheme) and institutions were established to support local film production (Chalkou 2012, Aguilar 2008: 8-28).¹⁰ However, less wealthy nations may not be able to afford such initiatives. Undoubtedly,

8. Although the CNC has already been criticised for similar programmes in the past, it did help with the completion of a few NAC films, such as *Moon 66 Questions* (Jacqueline Lentzou, GR/FR 2020) (Halle, 2010).

9. Although we are analysing two comparable periods of crisis in Argentina and Greece, we acknowledge that the Argentine and Greek film industries have considerable differences. As previously mentioned, Argentina has a more important filmmaking tradition and the film industry is bigger than that of Greece. Argentine productions also have an important advantage in comparison to the Greek ones: the Spanish language spoken by millions. Additionally, the depreciation of the peso in 2002 made the financing of Argentine productions and foreign productions in Argentina more attractive, while the currency of Greece, namely the euro, was not depreciated during the Greek crisis.

10. Greece introduced a cash rebate system in 2018 and as a result many more foreign film and television productions opted to shoot in Greece (Nikolaidis 2022). Subsequently, there was an increased demand for Greek film production companies and professionals

further research on more New Waves and festivals is called for.

Conclusion

The Swiss Locarno and Fribourg festivals received the Argentine and Greek New Waves in a timely, positive manner, and helped expand their popularity. While crisis-related terms were not prevalent in the way these waves were presented in Locarno's official programmes, Fribourg's programmes featured advertisements by Swiss NGOs and relevant texts. Subsequently, NAC films ran the risk of being perceived as cultural products from "sites in need of first-world support", as Ross put it (Ross 2011: 263). The support by Visions sud est Fund and other Swiss institutions was limited and the impact of Swiss funding on both waves was minor compared to that of larger European countries, such as Germany or France, and the Netherlands, because of the Hubert Balls Fund's long history.

who, by applying their newly acquired skills, knowledge and international network, would help advance future Greek endeavours.

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