Petar Mitrić (Charles University in Prague / University of Copenhagen)
Tamara Kolarić (Bard College Berlin)

A Popular Post-Yugoslav Cinema: Does it Exist and Why (Not)?

Abstract

Building an audience is currently the most challenging task for national film industries in Europe. This article scrutinizes this challenge by focusing on a specific European region — the post-Yugoslav one. Following the disintegration of Yugoslavia, a large joint film market which regularly produced highly successful films was replaced by seven national cinemas. In industry terms, these cinemas operate in a very different context from that of the former Yugoslavia, including no integrative film policy, fragmented territories and audiences. Yet a number of post-Yugoslav films have managed to reach a significant national and/or regional audience.

Relying on the concepts of low-brow, middle-brow, high-brow cinema and the ideal European co-production, and using data from the LumierePro database and national film centers, we map out films that achieved success domestically and those that managed to traverse national borders, in order to understand what attracts domestic, regional and (occasionally) international audiences. We also identify the main obstacles to a better box-office of post-Yugoslav films and discuss possible policy steps to remedy them. For this, we analyze film texts, production processes, as well as observational data from two industry events.

Our analysis paints a complex picture. While audiences across the region do differ, some thematic and style preferences are shared — a situation that can be harnessed through the development of quality regional ideal European co-productions. But new distribution strategies are needed, together with more scholarly efforts to understand the audiences and their engagement.

Keywords

popular cinema, post-Yugoslav region, ideal European co-productions, Serbia, Croatia, Yugoslavia

— — —

Introduction

Building an audience is currently the most challenging task for national film industries in Europe. While the past several decades have seen a massive cross-border movement of European film professionals and a surge in the number of European films, those films only occasionally attract a wider (inter)national audience. This is due to multiple reasons. First and foremost, the European continent is fragmented linguistically and films in local languages are not likely to appeal to foreign distributors. At the same time, due to the rules of geo-blocking and territorial exclusivity, many European films remain technically inaccessible to European audiences outside the home territories. Global streaming platforms like Netflix, HBO or Disney+ offer plenty of popular content in English and thus additionally alienate the European audiences from local and European titles. Moreover, despite numerous distribution subsidies administered by European public film funds, the theatrical windows of European films in many territories remain too short and the promotional campaigns too conservative to prompt communication with wider audiences.

This article scrutinizes these challenges by focusing on a specific European region — the one that emerged after the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1992. The post-Yugoslav countries make an illuminating case as they nominally have the potential to avoid some of the above challenges. For example, the region knows almost no linguistic barriers as the local languages (except for Kosovo) are either identical (Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Montenegrin) or similar (Slovenian and Macedonian). Producers from these countries actively engage in regional co-productions. The largest regional film festival — Sarajevo Film Festival — offers networking infrastructure for the regional film professionals. Finally, the post-Yugoslav audiences share the legacy of having lived in the same country for decades, which implies some commonalities when it comes to their taste in popular culture. There are indeed examples of films from the history of Yugoslav cinema that attracted large audiences within (and outside) Yugoslavia. Many of these films were either low-brow comedies or Second World War epics, but some of them were also dramas that attracted audiences with their controversial depictions of WWII and the everyday life of Yugoslavs. Echoes of this audience loyalty to local films are still present. As we discuss in this article, there are a number of recent films that generated solid admissions within the individual post-Yugoslav states, but also across the region. However, the situation is far from the glorious days of Yugoslav cinema.

The purpose of this article is to systematize popular genres in the (post-)Yugoslav region as well as to discuss possible policy actions that can bring audiences in the region closer to local films. Relying on four concepts which we elaborate on below — low-brow, middle-brow, high-brow (art) cinema and the ideal European co-production — we map out the films that were successful in their domestic post-Yugoslav markets, as well as those that managed to successfully traverse national borders, achieving distribution and some success in the post-Yugoslav and occasionally also the European film market. Due to the lack of comprehensive data for all post-Yugoslav states, but also the fact that they constitute the two largest national film markets, we focus primarily on two countries: Croatia and Serbia. We identified the most popular post-Yugoslav films by consulting European

Audiovisual Observatory's LumierePro database and documents of the Film Center Serbia (FCS) and the Croatian Audiovisual Centre (HAVC).[1)]

We then move on to identifying the main obstacles to post-Yugoslav films achieving (domestic and regional) success, and discuss some possible policy steps to remedy them in the future. For this, we analyzed the texts and distribution processes of a number of films in question and observed the workshop "Digitalni Propeler" that was held in Belgrade on November 9–10, 2020 as well as industry webinars on digital distribution during the Sarajevo Film Festival in August 2020, to learn more about the challenges to audience-building in the region and the possible digital strategies to respond to these challenges.

Our analysis shows that there are no easy answers: audience preferences in Serbia and Croatia (and judging by the limited available data, also in other post-Yugoslav states) do differ somewhat, and they are also evolving and are marked by changes in their local contexts. However, there is indication that films can travel successfully across borders (Serbian commercial cinema in particular has demonstrated this in recent years) and that some thematic and style preferences are shared — a situation that can be harnessed through the development of quality regional co-productions that are best described as ideal European co-productions. However, regional authors and producers should also turn to new distribution platforms, while scholars should invest more effort into understanding the preferences of regional audiences and the possibilities they open up, as our analysis indicates audience preferences cannot always be determined just from box office numbers.

Post-Yugoslav Cinema and Popular Genres

Defining the audience-friendly genres in the context of the post-Yugoslav cinema is a complex task, just as it is the case in European cinema in general. Audience-friendly post-Yugoslav films cannot be posited simply under the generic definition of European popular cinema. This definition refers to all films with large box office, regardless of their genre, format, cultural and artistic value,[2)] or to commercial, but specifically national, films that do not fall into the modernist canon of European *auteur* (anti-commercial and anti-Hollywood) cinema.[3)] Such popular films exist and are relevant for film studies and in the context of this article. However, European film polices insist on films that combine audience-potential with cultural value. This problematizes the notion of popular cinema as it sometimes makes purely commercial projects unpopular among independent European producers, who heavily depend on the culture-oriented European public financing.

According to the European Audiovisual Observatory, the two most important financing sources on the European level are direct public funding and broadcaster investment,

1) LumierePro is a subscription-based database that contains details about the distribution of European films. The documents from FCS and HAVC include different reports that are available on the websites of the two institutions. The references to specific reports can be found in the footnotes throughout the text.

2) Richard Dyer and Ginette Vincendeau, eds., *Popular European Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1993).

3) Dimitris Eleftheriotis, *Popular Cinemas of Europe: Studies of Texts, Contexts and Frameworks* (London: Continuum, 2001).

which altogether make for around 50% of the total film financing.[4] In small European countries, such as the ones that emerged after the breakup of Yugoslavia, the percentage of direct film financing is even larger as there are few significant 100%-national films or majority co-productions that are not in some way co-financed by public film funds. The reason why producers are dependent on public funds to such a high extent lies in the fact that national markets are too small to finance the entire film budgets.

Thus, the main goal of both policymakers and independent producers in the post-Yugoslav region is not to encourage more popular films, but more popular films with cultural value. The film studies literature has provided several definitions for such films including "popular European art films", "quality films" and "artsy mainstream films".[5] Yet, the most all-encompassing term referring to the popular European cinema with cultural value is *middle-brow*. Tim Bergfelder refers to middle-brow European cinema as cinema that ensures prestige and quality. Middle-brow films combine high production value and classical narrative with good acting, authentic locations and serious subject matters.[6] They manage "to be both popular and receive critical accolades and prizes by avoiding radical experimentation in terms of content, narration or visual composition, but also by distinguishing itself from obviously too generic, low-brow or mass cultural association".[7] According to the book anthology *Middlebrow Cinema* (2016),[8] the middle-brow quality of a film is determined by analysis of the film's text, audiences, and the institutions that back the film.

Finally, Petar Mitrić defines a specific category of European arthouse films with a broader appeal as "the ideal European co-production", building on the policy priorities of the main players in the European film industry — the European public film funds. To become an ideal European co-production, a film should be able to attract some selective public financing as a token of cultural or artistic value; should not be low-brow even when it follows conventional genres, translates Hollywood or is in great part financed by the market; should win awards at A-category film festivals (e.g. Cannes, Berlin, Venice, Toronto) and ideally combine them with an appropriate box-office success; should be socially relevant. Mitrić, however, emphasizes that such films are not a common practice in the European film industry, but rather the ultimate goal of the policymakers, as only a handful of European film co-productions meet all these criteria.[9]

---

4) Martin Kanzler, *Fiction film financing in Europe: A sample analysis of films released in 2017* (Strasbourg: European Audiovisual Observatory, 2019).

5) See Mariana Liz, *Euro-Visions: Europe in Contemporary Cinema* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 32–33; For further references to such films see also, Michael Wayne, *Politics of Contemporary European Cinema: Histories, Borders, Diasporas* (London: Intellect, 2002), 73–74 and Birger Langkjær, "Realism as a third practice," *MedieKultur* (SMID) 51, no. 3 (2011), 40–54.

6) Tim Bergfelder, "Popular European cinema in the 2000s: cinephilia, genre and heritage," in *The Europeanness of European Cinema: Identity, Meaning, Globalization*, eds. Mary Harrod, Mariana Liz and Alissa Timoshkina (London: I.B. TAURIS, 2015), 44–48.

7) Ibid., 45.

8) Sally Faulkner, *Middlebrow Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2016).

9) Petar Mitrić, "Co-produce or Perish: An Interpretive Study of European Film Co-production Policies" (PhD dissertation, University of Copenhagen, 2019), 43.

Yet, our closer textual and reception analysis of relevant post-Yugoslav films elucidated one additional aspect of popular films. While 50,000 admissions may be an ultimate success for one film, it would be an absolute failure for another. Hence, we argue that the former film should also be classified as a popular film if it reaches its 50,000 targeted admissions through unique positioning in the market as well as tailor-made story-telling, distribution and marketing.

In this article we will operationalize the above concepts in order to categorize the post-Yugoslav audience-appealing films into *middle-brow films*, *low-budget popular (low-brow) films*, *ideal European co-productions* and *popular 100% national arthouse (high-brow) films*. In addition, we discuss how the digital distribution is, and might be, utilized in making more regional films popular within their own category.

Popular Middle-brow, Low-brow, and High-brow Films in the Socialist Yugoslavia (1969–1992)[10)]

The cinema of the socialist Yugoslavia[11)] was traditionally marked by popular titles. These popular films sometimes resulted from the specific state-sponsored film policies. Some films were popular because their producers vigorously followed the market principles, whereas a number of *auteur* and arthouse films reached wide popularity due to their controversial subject matters. In order to understand what makes some of today's — post-Yugoslav — titles popular, it helps to first revisit these three traditions within the popular Yugoslav cinema and identify their patterns.

The presence of a state-sponsored film policy is clear already from a simple analysis of the Yugoslav film hits about the glorification of the role of the Yugoslav communists in WWII — their production set-ups, box-office, themes and ideology. The initial success story of such a film policy was the first globally-known Yugoslav film, *The Battle of Neretva* (Bitka na Neretvi: Veljko Bulajić, 1969). This film fulfilled the principal policy goal of building a Yugoslav cinema as an industry with attached cultural and artistic aspects.[12)] Despite the lack, as well as inaccuracy, of available data about the exploitation of *The Battle of Neretva*, there are several facts that explain why this film became the first globally competitive Yugoslav title.

The film had a high production value due to its 12 million USD budget, which in the late 1960s by far exceeded the average film budgets.[13)] It was made as, at the time, a first-class international co-production that, in addition to the four large Yugoslav production companies, also included experienced Italian, German and the US minority co-producers.

10) Unless otherwise specified, the admissions data in this section are taken from Marina Fafulić Milosavljević, *50 godina filmskog hita u srpskoj kinematografiji, 1969–2019* (Beograd: Filmski centar Srbije, 2020), 533–553.

11) While the socialist Yugoslavia was established earlier, we start our analysis from the year of the biggest success story of domestic film policy.

12) Milosavljević, *50 godina filmskog hita u srpskoj kinematografiji*, 529.

13) "Bitka na Neretvi," IMDB, accessed June 16, 2021, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0064091/; see also "Za 'Neretvu' čak i Pikaso odbio honorar i dva prava mosta dignuta u vazduh," Danas.rs, accessed June 16, 2021, https://www.danas.rs/kultura/za-neretvu-cak-i-pikaso-odbio-honorar-i-dva-prava-mosta-dignuta-u-vazduh/.

Yugoslavia had already participated in German and Italian large-scale projects as a service provider and minority co-producer,[14] but *The Battle of Neretva* was the first large international production wherein the Yugoslav producers took over the role of the majority producer to make a war spectacle based on a local Yugoslav story from WWII.[15] This co-production set-up also ensured a wider distribution of the film across Western Europe and the US, which all led to an Oscar nomination. Furthermore, the film featured stars from the co-producing countries such as Yul Brynner, Hardy Krüger, Franco Nero and Orson Welles, which increased its international appeal. *The Battle of Neretva* attracted a large theatrical audience. In Serbia the film achieved more than one million admissions,[16] and reached over 4.1 million viewers in the whole of Yugoslavia.[17]

The Battle of Neretva was not an isolated example of one popular, policy-driven Yugoslav war film. It was rather the beginning of the wave of expensive film spectacles about WWII in Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav state was ready to finance these expensive films as they propagated the proclaimed ideology of brotherhood and unity among the Yugoslav nations as well as the cult of the Yugoslav president Tito, while also entertaining the spectators and attracting them to cinemas due to their high production value comparable to the global film hits at the time. There was on average at least one popular war spectacle per year until the beginning of the 1980s when their popularity abated. These films include titles such as *Walter Defends Sarajevo* (Valter brani Sarajevo; Hajrudin Krvavac, 1972) that in Serbia alone sold 500,000 tickets, *Sutjeska* (Stipe Delić, 1973) that was seen by 1.5 million people in Serbia alone and probably by two-three times more people in the rest of Yugoslavia,[18] and *Guns of War* (Užička republika; Žika Mitrović, 1974) with around 1.4 million tickets sold in Serbia alone.

If we recall the film studies literature, the above Yugoslav war epics fall into the category of middle-brow cinema. Just as classic middle-brow films, they ensured prestige and quality by combining high production value with a classical narrative, good acting and serious subject matters. These films demonstrated cultural value and distanced themselves from the low-brow and mass culture even though they attracted ever larger domestic (and sometimes international) audiences. This distancing was also institutionally recognized, as these films often received festival awards and affirmative reviews from film critics. Finally, from an audience perspective, these films epitomized Pierre Bourdieu's definition of middle-brow art as the type of serious content aimed at "socially heterogeneous public" frequently referred to as "average spectators" who do not consume high-art.[19]

14) Tim Bergfelder, *International Adventures: German Popular Cinema and European Co-Productions in the 1960* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 55–82.

15) Francesko Di Chiara, "Looking for New Aesthetic Models through Italian-Yugoslavian Film Co-Productions: Lowbrow Neorealism in Sand, Love and Salt," *Iluminace* 25, no. 3 (2013), 37–49.

16) Milosavljević, *50 godina filmskog hita u srpskoj kinematografiji*, 533.

17) See "Bitka na Neretvi," Baza HR kinematografije, accessed April 13, 2021, http://hrfilm.hr/baza_film.php?id=79.

18) Reliable data is often hard to find. However, some sources list that *Sutjeska* had, by the end of September 1975, been seen by 4 325 491 viewers in Yugoslavia. See "Iznenadit će vas koliko su zapravo zaradili ratni spektakli Sutjeska i Neretva," Index.hr, December 18, 2017, accessed April 13, 2021, https://www.index.hr/magazin/clanak/iznenadit-ce-vas-koliko-su-zapravo-zaradili-ratni-spektakli-sutjeska-i-neretva/1014468.aspx.

19) Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 125.

The second wave of popular Yugoslav movies were low-brow comedies of the 1980s. These films were completely financed from the free market — mostly as co-productions between exhibitors from all over Yugoslavia — and as such had to use unrefined and simple humor to appeal to a wide audience recoup their costs and make profit. They were meant only for the local Yugoslav audiences and their dramaturgy built on common stereotypes about gender relations, different professions and classes within the Yugoslav society. They owed their popularity in part also to featuring extremely popular folk singers at the time as guest actors. These films did not aspire to any cultural or artistic value, which was reflected also in their absence from film festivals and negative and cynical reviews from film critics. The profit was the producers' one and only driving force, and the admissions demonstrate that this mission was often accomplished. For example, some of the ten films from the franchise *Foolish Years* (Lude godine; 1977–1992) were the most popular films in the Yugoslav cinemas in the mid-80s. The eighth film in the franchise generated over 2.5 million cinema admissions in 1986, earning three times more money than was invested. In addition to *Foolish Years,* there were three other equally profitable low-brow franchises in the same period, as well as some titles that were based on the nation-wide popularity of some TV series.

Finally, there were some popular arthouse films in the socialist Yugoslavia. Despite their high-brow aspects such as refined and sophisticated humor, unconventional dramaturgy and experimentation with genre, some of the Yugoslav *auteur* films managed to reach a wider audience. The most appealing elements of these films were the superb acting of the main protagonists, politically controversial subject matters, well-developed scripts, and a humane depiction of every-day challenges in the lives of ordinary Yugoslavs.

The first wave of these films was made by the so-called "Prague group" — a group of Yugoslav directors who graduated from the Film and TV School at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (FAMU) during the late 1960s and the 1970s.[20] Even though the Prague group authors do not consider themselves as part of the same movement as they never created and followed a joint manifesto, we still perceive them, in the context of this article, as members of the same wave for several reasons. Firstly, as the film scholar Dejan Dabić writes, the Prague group films refreshed the Yugoslav cinema on the thematic, formal, and aesthetic level. Their films were open-ended dramas with comedic reliefs that evoked the humor, sarcasm and social engagement from the renowned Czechoslovak New Wave authors such as Miloš Forman, Jiří Menzel or Věra Chytilová.[21] The characters from their films were ordinary middle-class people or people from the social margin who are depicted with humanism, empathy, without any distance. Finally, the Prague group films were superbly shot (many directors of photography also studied at FAMU), precisely framed and well-edited films that skillfully used music as a dramaturgical element. All these characteristics made the Prague group films audience-friendly and attracted mainstream Yugoslavs to cinemas.

20) The term "Prague group" refers primarily to six directors — Lordan Zafranović, Rajko Grlić (Croatia), Emir Kusturica (Bosnia), Goran Paskaljević, Goran Marković, and Srdjan Karanović (Serbia) as well as a number of Yugoslav cinematographers who made notable international and national career after graduating from FAMU.

21) Dejan Dabić, "Praška škola ne postoji," *Preporuke Filmova*, December 7, 2012, accessed January 22, 2021, https://www.filmovipreporuke.com/praska-skola-ne-postoji/.

During the late 1970 and throughout the 1980s, the *auteurs* from the Prague group shot over twenty films that were seen by over one million people each. The most popular titles, however, were the films by Sarajevo-based Emir Kusturica, whose *Do You Remember Dolly Bell?* (Sjećaš li se Doli Bel?; 1981), *When Father Was Away on Business* (Otac na službenom putu; 1985) and *Time of the Gypsies* (Dom za vešanje; 1988) sold millions of cinema tickets, the latter two being the biggest successes in domestic cinemas in the years of their distribution. Additionally, the Prague group films were also screened at all major international film festivals[22)] and gathered accolades from film critics all over the world. The most notable was Kusturica's *When Father Was Away on Business*, which was unanimously awarded the *Palme d'Or* and was an Oscar nominee for the Best Foreign Language Film. Therefore, the Prague group films certainly joined the group of the few European films that achieved the ever-lasting ideal of the European film policies to create popular high-brow films analogous to today's ideal European co-productions.

All in all, the above analysis of the three strands among popular films in the Socialist Yugoslavia points to several important patterns. Firstly, there is no formula for making popular films. The prescription-based policy that insists solely on high production value, classical narrative and star systems is certainly needed, but is not enough. Secondly, policy mechanisms of internationalization and co-production can trigger more popular films. Yugoslav international co-productions with Italy, Germany and US did not only lead to valuable knowledge transfers, but also enabled access to international theatrical markets, financing sources and stars. A similar process happened within Yugoslavia as well, in the sense that a majority of popular films were also inter-Yugoslav co-productions between (some or all of) the eight Yugoslav federal units. These internal co-productions ensured a better circulation of films throughout the entire Yugoslav market of some twenty million people and trained film practitioners from the smaller or less developed Yugoslav regions. Finally, the Yugoslav popular cinema managed to acclimate to the two highly disruptive technological revolutions — the emergence of television in the early 1970s and home-video (VHS) in the late 1980s. Namely, all the popular titles that we have mentioned above, and many others that we have not, managed to become theatrical hits despite the multiplication of the release windows. In many cases, these new release windows were an opportunity for reaching a non-theatrical audience, rather than a threat of losing the loyal cinemagoers.

The Landscape of Popular Post-Yugoslav Cinema (1992–)

It is sometimes said that the breakup of Yugoslavia started with a film event, namely with the cancellation, in July 1991, of the annual Festival of Yugoslav Feature Film in Pula, the

22) Aside from Kusturica, other notable examples include *Palme d'Or* nominations for Rajko Grlić (Bravo Maestro, 1978), Lordan Zafranović (*Occupation in 26 Pictures* [Okupacija u 26 slika, 1979]) and Goran Paskaljević [Poseban tretman, 1980]); Venice *Golden Lion* nomination for Zafranović (*The Fall of Italy* [Pad Italije, 1981]); and two Berlin *Golden Bear* nominations for Paskaljević (*Beach Guard in Winter* [Čuvar plaže u zimskom period, 1976]; *The Dog Who Loves Trains* [Pas koji je voleo vozove, 1978]).

largest national festival for showcasing domestic film production.[23] While the anecdote is exaggerated[24] and a film-related event did not mark the beginning of the end of the country, the reverse was in fact the case: the breakup of the Yugoslav federation also marked the end of a joint national cinema.

The dissolution means that there are now seven countries where there used to be one federation: Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia, North Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo. Instead of one, there are now also seven national cinemas, each of which had its own trajectory of development.

All of them started off with significant disadvantages, first due to the wars that engaged most of the countries, followed by processes of political transition and privatization. As a result, filmmaking was significantly slowed down (or even halted) during the 1990s, with only Slovenia rebuilding a proper system of audiovisual production headed by the Slovenian Film Fund, founded in 1994.[25] In Croatia and Bosnia, the war partly or entirely destroyed the screening network,[26] reducing the number of viewers. Due to the lack of quality local content, audiences developed a disinterest in domestic film production,[27] turning to Hollywood instead. On the other hand, in Serbia, the UN-imposed economic sanctions (1992–2000) meant little competition from abroad for domestic films. The absence of direct conflict on Serbian territory (until the 1999 NATO bombing) meant that the screening network was mostly intact. The dissolved state funding system meant films were financed primarily from private sources, and were audience-oriented, as producers were trying to return (and increase) their investments. These factors together led to the emergence of a national cinema that was popular with its domestic audiences, while also developing specific genre and thematic focus.[28] Serbia and Croatia would eventually restore their national film policies by introducing public film agencies — Film Center Serbia (FCS) in 2004 and the Croatian Audiovisual Centre (HAVC) in 2008. The other post-Yugoslav countries also went through their own transitions.

In light of these changes, what films dominated the national markets, and which successfully travelled across the borders? We explore the answers to these questions in the following sections. Due to data availability, we focus primarily on Serbia and Croatia. Yet before we do, a note of clarification is in order. While we acknowledge the significant impact that the 90s conflicts have had on cinema in the region — and the impact cinema had in mobilizing nationalism and shaping post-conflict memory[29] — our analysis will not deal

23) Ana Janković Piljić, "Ko se boji Alise u zemlji čuda?," in *Uvođenje mladosti: Sami sebe naslikali*, ed. Miroljub Vučković (Beograd: Filmski centar Srbije, 2008), 27–41.

24) Jurica Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film: Stil i ideologija* (Zagreb: Hrvatski filmski savez, 2011), 14.

25) Jurica Pavičić, "Pregled razvoja postjugoslavenskih kinematografija," *Sarajevske Sveske*, 2008, accessed October 11, 2018, http://sveske.ba/en/content/pregled-razvoja-postjugoslavenskih-kinematografija.

26) For example, the number of cinemas in Croatia dropped from 188 to 84, and then to barely over 50 throughout the decade following the war. Tomislav Kurelec, "Institutions, Infrastructure, Industry: Croatian Film or a Battle for Survival," in *In Contrast: Croatian Film Today*, eds. Aida Vidan and Gordana P. Crnković (Zagreb: Hrvatski filmski savez; Berghain Books, 2012), 41–48.

27) Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film*.

28) See Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film*.

29) On the intersection between film and politics in the region, see Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film*; specifically, on Croatia, see Tamara Kolarić, "Hidden Dialogues with the Past: Cinema and Memory of the 'Homeland War'" (PhD dissertation, Central European University, 2019).

with the political dimension of the filmic narratives or their societal implications, unless where necessary to understand the reception of a particular film.

Serbia: From Popular Arthouse to Popular Low-brow[30)]

The specific situation in Serbia in the 90s opened up the possibility for domestic films to reach domestic audiences. At the beginning of the decade, Serbian films had respectable audience numbers, especially considering the situation of economic uncertainty and the wars the country engaged in. This was partly due to the continuous popularity of low-brow comedies, both familiar sequels — *A Tight Spot 4* (Tesna koža; Mica Miloševic, 1991) — and debut films by unknown directors, such as the graduate film by Srđan Dragojević, *We Are Not Angels* (Mi nismo anđeli; 1992). More interestingly, the period saw high box office numbers for distinctly recognizable art films by the Prague group authors. Reflecting on the Yugoslav period, Goran Marković made *Tito and Me* (Tito i ja; 1992), a gentle demystification of the Yugoslav period through the eyes of a boy slowly coming of age; while Emir Kusturica made *Underground* (1994), a Cannes *Palme d'Or* winner that became a benchmark for the ideal European co-production, boasting a recognizable style, distinct social relevance, festival awards and box office success.

However, the true intersection between domestic art films and audiences would happen in the next few years. Moving away from low-brow comedies, Dragojević made the most commercially successful film of the era: *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* (Lepa sela lepo gore; 1996), about the roots of the conflict in Bosnia. Filled with grotesque humor, metaphors, intertextuality (including references to both American and Yugoslav partisan films) and stereotypically "Balkan" masculinity, and made on a respectable budget partly supported by the Serbian culture ministry and state television, the film drew in over 600,000 viewers. In 1998 came its follow-up, *The Wounds* (Rane; 1998) with 320,000 admissions, about youth and crime in contemporary Belgrade, made in the by now recognizable style. Interestingly, *The Wounds* was the first Serbian film distributed in Croatia after the war, where it was seen by over 80,000 people,[31)] a difficult-to-achieve number for most of the local productions.[32)]

Another Prague group director, Goran Paskaljević, made the award-winning *Cabaret Balkan* (Bure baruta; 1998), whose depiction of the then Belgrade as a city of rising ten-

30) In this section, unless otherwise specified, the admissions data for the period before 2000 are taken from Milosavljević, *50 godina filmskog hita u srpskoj kinematografiji*, 533–553; data for the 2000–2009 period are taken from "Lista gledanosti domaćih filmova u bioskopima 2000 — 2009," Filmski centar Srbije, accessed January 28, 2021, http://www.fcs.rs/new/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Lista-gledanosti-2000.pdf; data for the 2010–2019 period are taken from "Lista gledanosti domaćih filmova u bioskopima 2010 — 2019," Filmski centar Srbije, accessed January 28, 2021, http://www.fcs.rs/new/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Lista-gledanosti-2.pdf. Data were cross-referenced with LumierePro whenever possible.

31) Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film*, 48.

32) Even during the war, Serbian film and culture in general were sought-after in Croatia, often available as illegal copies at video stores. See Gordana P. Crnković, "Non-Nationalist Culture, Under and Above the Ground," in *Croatia since Independence*, eds. Sabrina P. Ramet, Konrad Clewing, and Reneo Lukić (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2008), 233–250; Edward Alexander, "Yugosphere Insiders or Croatian Outsiders: The Reception of Serbian Films in Croatia since the Breakup of Yugoslavia," *Image & Narrative* 18, no. 1 (2017), 45–62.

sions waiting to explode into violence was seen by 350,000 viewers. Finally, two more films deserve a mention. In 1998, Kusturica made the romantic Roma comedy *Black Cat, White Cat* (Crna mačka, beli mačor; 1998), which arrived with accolades from the Venice Film Festival and was seen by nearly half a million cinemagoers. And amidst the arthouse successes, one middle-brow film stood out: the nationalist epic *Knife* (Nož; Miroslav Lekić, 1998) was seen by nearly the same number of viewers in 1999.

The unusual box office dominance of arthouse films during the 1990s makes developments in the next decades particularly striking. During the 2000s, following the fall of Milošević and the end of economic sanctions, the box office numbers for domestic films grew further, but with an obvious shift in audience preferences. The audience no longer gravitated predominantly towards distinctly authored films (except for 2–3 random titles), but settled for more escapist stories, whether in the form of costumed period pieces or popular comedies. Among the former, *Zona Zamfirova* (Zdravko Šotra, 2002), a historical romance set in the "better times" of the 19th century, surpassed one million viewers, becoming the most successful Serbian film at the domestic box office to this day. Three other films — *We Are Not Angels 2* (Mi nismo andjeli 2; Srđan Dragojević, 2005); *Ivko's Feast* (Ivkova Slava; Zdravko Šotra, 2005); and *Dudes* (Munje!; Radivoje Andrić, 2001) — managed to reach over half a million viewers each.

The other popular films of the time remained decidedly middle-brow both in their depiction of society and the use of film tools. Some of those films reflected on contemporary political events such as the 1999 NATO bombing (*Sky Hook* [Nebeska udica; Ljubiša Samardžić, 2000]) and the fall of Milošević (Natasha [Nataša; Ljubiša Samardžić, 2001]). Others re-envisioned the national past, whether through satire — as in Dragojević's *Saint George Shoots the Dragon* (Sveti Georgije ubiva aždahu; 2009) — or as romantic fantasy (*Tears for Sale* [Čarlston za Ognjenku; Uroš Stojanović, 2008]). One notable exception, and proof that the Yugoslav filmmaking tradition still held relevance after two decades, was the return of Dušan Kovačević, the director of one of the most beloved Yugoslav comedies, *Balkan Spy* (Balkanski špijun; 1984). His comedy *The Professional* (Profesionalac; 2003) was, with 215,000 viewers, the most successful middle-brow film of the decade.

The 2010–2019 period brought a decline in the number of viewers for the most successful domestic films. It also tipped the scale further from once popular arthouse films: ironically, as Serbian arthouse cinema was becoming more diverse in both style and themes, it was becoming less relevant to domestic audiences. The most successful film of the decade was, however, no longer a period piece or a popular comedy, but a fairly generic genre film: *South Wind* (Južni vetar; Miloš Avramović, 2018), a story of the Belgrade criminal underground featuring the young Miloš Biković, a familiar face advertised at home as a star in Russia. The film was seen by almost 620,000 domestic viewers.

In terms of content, successful productions continued to focus on reimagining the unity and togetherness of the Serbian nation, now through historical epics focusing on national heroes of WWI (*King Petar The First* [Kralj Petar I; Petar Ristovski, 2018]; around 200,000 viewers) or sport success stories, such as the two films about the Yugoslav national team at the 1930 FIFA World Cup *Montevideo: Taste of a Dream* (Montevideo, Bog te video!; Dragan Bjelogrlić, 2010) and *See You in Montevideo* (Montevideo, vidimo se!; Dragan Bjelogrlić, 2014), each achieving about half a million viewers.

Audience-targeting market-driven films continued to focus on humorous urban crime stories for the young, as well as the familiar historical romances or biopics. A representative of the former are the films made in collaboration between the critic and screenwriter Dimitrije Vojnov and the director Danilo Bećković, *Little Buddho* (Mali Budo; 2014) and *The Samurai in Autumn* (Jesen samuraja; 2016), with over 200,000 and over 140,000 viewers respectively.

One interesting thing is the renewed success of Serbian productions across the former Yugoslavia (aside from Kosovo), but this time in the form not of art, but commercial popular film. *South Wind* is a good example, with a distribution in 12 countries and significant successes in several post-Yugoslav countries: just over 100,000 viewers in Bosnia, 30,000 in Croatia, almost 35,000 in Montenegro, 13,000 in Macedonia and 11,000 in Slovenia — a true feat for an entirely domestically produced film. A similar example is the comedy *Taxi Blues* (Taksi bluz; Miroslav Stamatov, 2019), with 270,000 viewers at home and a respectable, even if smaller, distribution in four other countries in the region. Also of interest is the case of *We Will Be the World Champions* (Bićemo prvaci sveta; Darko Bajić, 2015), which could be labelled as an attempt to create an ideal post-Yugoslav co-production. A middle-brow production about the Yugoslav basketball team and its success in the 1970s, it was co-produced by Serbia, Slovenia, and Croatia, and screened in all countries of the former Yugoslavia except Kosovo to a moderate success (56,440 viewers across all markets), on top of being a domestic hit. While the film did not have a particular festival visibility (except in Croatia, where it was awarded the audience award at the Pula Film Festival), a shared topic of interest enabled it to travel beyond one national context, even if without big results.[33)]

Croatia: Skeptical Audiences and Children's Films[34)]

In Croatia, the landscape of popular film looks somewhat different, with less emphasis on low-brow cinema and a particular place for children's film. However, the market is also smaller, and unlike in Serbia, where national cinema has enjoyed popularity since Yugoslavia's dissolution, in Croatia the audiences have been more critical and skeptical.[35)] So, while film production has been steadily growing in the last three decades, this growth (for

33) The admission numbers are taken from European Audiovisual Observatory's LumierePro database.

34) Unless otherwise specified, the admissions data in this section for the period 1992–2016 were taken from "Nacionalni program promicanja audiovizualnog stvaralaštva 2017.–2021.," Hrvatski audiovizualni centar, 97–104, accessed January 28, 2021, https://www.havc.hr/file/publication/file/havc-nacionalni-program-promicanja-audiovizualnog-stvaralastva-2017-2021.pdf; data for the subsequent years 2017–2019 were taken from "Brojke & slova za 2017," Hrvatski audiovizualni centar, accessed January 28, 2021, https://www.havc.hr/file/publication/file/havc-facts-figures-prijelom-2017.pdf; "Brojke i slova za 2018," Hrvatski audiovizualni centar, accessed January 28, 2021, https://www.havc.hr/file/publication/file/havc-facts-figures-2018.pdf; and "Brojke i slova za 2019," Hrvatski audiovizualni centar, accessed January 28, 2021, https://www.havc.hr/file/publication/file/havc-facts-figures-2019-digital.pdf; All data were cross-checked with the LumierePro database where possible. Data for international admissions were obtained from the LumierePro database.

35) One could, however, ask if the skepticism was truly the case still. In a 2014 survey on film-watching habits, the second most selected answer to why individuals choose to watch Croatian films was "I like Croatian films" (10,1%). Drago Perić, "Croatians Love to Laugh at Themselves When Times Are Tough," *Croatian Cinema*, no. 1 (2014), 9–10.

the most part both in quantity and in quality of the films produced) has not always been reflected in the domestic audiences' interest in films measured at the box office — leading some to ask whether something like a "Croatian blockbuster" is even possible.[36] What have the Croatian audiences been enjoying since the 90s?

During the first half of the 90s, production was small and went on under specific circumstances of an armed conflict happening in the country. A few of the first audience-attracting films — such as *Countess Dora* (Kontesa Dora; 1993; 40,000 viewers) by the established modernist Zvonimir Berković — were produced before the breakup of Yugoslavia.[37] In others, topics of "national interest" dominated. Films such as Oja Kodar's Italian coproduction *A Time for…* (Vrijeme za…; 1993; 60,000) or *Vukovar: The Way Home* (Vukovar se vraća kući; 1994; 35,000) were meant to tell the story of suffering during war to domestic and foreign audiences in a serious manner that evokes middle-brow projects — although not always adhering fully to the classical narration or featuring grandiose budgets (the latter likely due to circumstances); yet the results were often underwhelming. This opens a specifically Croatian question with regard to middle-brow cinema: should it be categorized with the acknowledgment of the intent and the way a film was presented, or solely by the outcome? Unlike in Serbia, where ideologically debatable films during the 1990s were made by authors with a unique style or at least good storytellers, in Croatia, the focus on ideology led to a number of unremarkably executed, often critically poorly received films, which were still endorsed by the state (although some were even partially privately produced), and — for Croatian circumstances — seen by a respectable audience. The latest example of this trajectory is the 2019 *The General* (General; Antun Vrdoljak). As a fictionalized account of the life of a prominent general of the Croatian army during the 90s conflict, it received significant funding from both HAVC and the Croatian public service broadcaster (HRT), as well as logistical aid in military equipment from the Ministry of Defense. However, the resulting film was not a quality epic — perhaps in the style of the Yugoslav partisan films that once relied on similar state aid, or even Serbia's *King Petar the First*, with which it shared some similarity in terms of their respective states' endorsement, but also notable differences (a heroic vs. a tragic story of statehood). Instead, it was a chaotic film that catered to an uncritical audience, shunned by the critics.[38] It was seen by 74,000 viewers, not a remarkable feat considering its large budget[39] and the 97 copies in distribution, yet still relatively high for the Croatian market.

The small domestic market size and skeptical audiences might be why low-brow productions are not as popular as in Serbia, as making films for profit in such circumstances is risky. The one title that stands out as a successful market experiment is *Lara's Choice: The Lost Prince* (Larin izbor: izgubljeni princ; Tomislav Rukavina, 2012), a spin-off of a popu-

36) Nenad Polimac, "Hrvatski blockbusteri," *Hrvatski filmski ljetopis*, no. 40 (2004), 17–20.

37) Hrvoje Turković in Anja Šošić, "Film i rat u Hrvatskoj: Refleksije jugoslavenskih ratova u hrvatskom igranom filmu," *Zapis*, nos. 64–65 (2009).

38) See, for example, Damir Radić, "General poslije bitke," *Novosti*, July 20, 2019, accessed June 16, 2021, https://www.portalnovosti.com/filmska-kritika-general-poslije-bitke; Jurica Pavičič, "General je suh, siv i dosadan," *JutarnjiLIST*, August 14, 2019, accessed June 16, 2021, https://www.jutarnji.hr/kultura/film-i-televizija/general-je-suh-siv-i-dosadan/9118070.

39) IMDB lists it at approximately 3 million USD, which is significantly over the standard budget for a Croatian film.

lar TV soap opera with almost 80,000 admissions in Croatia (and some 15,000 in Slovenia), despite having been shunned by a major distributor and not receiving state support.[40] At the same time, interest does exist for films catering to wide audiences, as the successes of the urban-rural romance *Sonja and the Bull* (Sonja i bik; Vlatka Vorkapić, 2012; 98,000 admissions) or the Yugoslav football fan rivalry comedy *ZG80* (Igor Šeregi, 2016; 65,685 admissions) demonstrate. However, state funding and quality authorship push these crowd-pleasers towards layered, middle-brow territory. The prime example is *What is a Man without a Moustache?* (Što je muškarac bez brkova?; Hrvoje Hribar, 2006), a popular comedy also riffing on the urban-rural divide and religion but with an intelligent political subtext, which amassed just over 150,000 viewers.

In Croatia, one category of films continuously does well — namely children's films, which can be understood as a specific subcategory of middle-brow cinema. The second place for the biggest domestic box office success is still held by an animated feature film for children: the Croatian-German co-production *Lapitch the Little Shoemaker* (Čudnovate zgode šegrta Hlapića; Milan Blažeković, 1997), with over 220,000 viewers, while a live action film based on the same story *The Brave Adventures of a Little Shoemaker* (Šegrt Hlapić; Silvije Petranović, 2013) was seen by 137,523 domestic viewers. Up to this day, eight children's films managed to reach over 30,000 viewers, putting them in the top 25 overall. These films tend to be based on well-known children's books, featuring popular characters. In 2019, an interesting new model was tried out with a children's European co-production *My Grandpa is an Alien* (Moj dida je pao s Marsa; Marina Andree Škop, Dražen Žarković), a pilot-project including a manual and videos for teaching film to children, all accessible online.[41] However, while the film did reasonably well domestically, amassing almost 30,000 viewers, it wasn't a particular success in the other co-producing countries (Bosnia, the Czech Republic, Luxemburg, Slovakia and Slovenia).

Finally, the most popular Croatian film since the country's independence, with 338,000 domestic cinemagoers,[42] is multiply indicative of the market. Vinko Brešan's *How the War Started on My Island* (Kako je počeo rat na mom otoku) was released in 1996, produced by the HRT initially as a made-for-TV film. Made with a modest budget (estimated at just over 280,000 EUR) and in a style combining "Mediterranean grotesque"[43] with the influence of Czech comedies, offering familiar and relatable characters, *How the War Started…* was the first invitation for the Croatian audience to laugh at the absurdity and sadness of the Homeland War (1991–1995). Relying on good comedic writing (including drawing on local stereotypes), impressively acted and politically relevant, the film was an all-around (unexpected) success. Brešan's next film, the political comedy *Marshal Tito's Spirit* (Maršal; 1999), marketed as the director's follow-up and made on a bigger budget (about 1 million EUR) managed to attract an audience of just over 100,000, while also achieving some fes-

40) Nenad Polimac, "Filmski nastavak Larinog izbora veliki je hit," *JutarnjiLIST*, August 3, 2012, accessed April 14, 2021, https://www.jutarnji.hr/kultura/film-i-televizija/filmski-nastavak-larinog-izbora-veliki-je-hit-1537650.

41) Filmovi ne padaju s Marsa, accessed April 14, 2021, http://didasmarsa.com/filmovi-ne-padaju-s-marsa/.

42) For comparison, to this day the most viewed film in Croatian cinemas since independence, James Cameron's *Titanic* (1997), attracted 480,483 cinemagoers.

43) Nikica Gilić, *Uvod u povijest hrvatskog igranog filma* (Zagreb: Leykam International, 2014), 144.

tival success abroad. Both were co-written with Brešan's father, the known playwright Ivo Brešan, which might have contributed to their success.

With regard to style or themes, can we see any patterns emerging among the Croatian audiences? The war and the contested recent past remain relatively popular, as do films that thematize the everyday difficulties of "ordinary citizens", which sometimes become unexpected hits (*Cashier Wants to Go to the Seaside* [Blagajnica hoće ići na more; Dalibor Matanić, 2000]; 48,849); however, for every one of these films that becomes a success, many remain unnoticed. A comedic approach[44] or a classical narrative expectedly do better than art films: while by now there are several established arthouse directors, their films rarely get to 20,000 viewers, even in the case of controversial topics domestically. The audience particularly seems to shy away from demanding or critically intonated films about the war period; but even quality, high-production films with a patriotic bent do not necessarily do well.

Slovenia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Kosovo, Bosnia: Small Markets, Strong films[45]

While we dedicate less space to the other post-Yugoslav national cinemas, they have all had their own interesting trajectories. In Slovenia, the initial interest was mostly in films about either the Yugoslav past (*Outsider* [Andrej Košak, 1997] — 90,954 viewers and the first post-Yugoslav film theatrically released in all post-Yugoslav countries) or films bringing together characters — and familiar actors or public figures — from across the post-Yugoslav countries (*Cheese and Jam* [Kajmak i marmelada; Branko Đurić, 2003]; about 150,000 or *Rooster's Breakfast* [Petelinji zajtrk; Marko Naberšnik, 2007]; about 180,000 admissions). More recently however, the biggest success were low-brow comedies such as *Pr' Hostar* (Luka Marčetič, 2016) with 211,721 viewers or — as in the case of their next-door neighbors — family-friendly films: *Going Our Way* (Gremo mi po svoje; Miha Hočevar, 2010; 208,737 viewers);[46] *Let Him Be a Basketball Player* (Kosarkar naj bo; Boris Petkovič, 2017; 87,501) and its eponymous 2019 sequel (76,824). However, for a country of two million, Slovenia also has a solid culture of viewership for art film, with titles such as *Class Enemy* (Razredni sovražnik; Rok Biček, 2013) with 60,000 viewers and a remarkable festival success.

Two things prevent us from covering the next three post-Yugoslav states — Montenegro, North Macedonia and Kosovo — in detail: the unavailability of reliable data on their domestic cinema audiences, and the lack of visible, box-office successful films coming from these countries. While they all have had some critical successes, they are yet to have truly commercial hits.

Finally, there is Bosnia and Herzegovina. The country went from hardly any fiction film productions until the year 2000 to producing by now well-known successes at major European festivals. However, there is limited viewer interest in home-produced films: in

44) In fact, when asked, both the audiences and the producers seem to agree that the preferred genre is comedy (and children's films). See Perić, "Croatians Love to Laugh at Themselves When Times Are Tough," 9–10 and Igor Tomljanović, "Ljestvica gledanosti visoko je podignuta. možemo li je održati?," *Croatian Cinema*, no. 1 (2014), 40–46, accessed April 14, 2021, https://www.havc.hr/file/publication/file/croatian-cinema-01-en.pdf.

45) In this, section all admissions data are taken from LumierePro database.

46) Interestingly, the film also had a sequel, yet it barely managed to get over 10,000 viewers.

2020, only 3,23% of viewers opted for domestic films — an increase from 0,18% (!) in the previous year.[47] In one thing, however, the country is an exceptional case: while its domestic audience may not have enough access to (and perhaps interest in) domestic art cinema, its producers have — partly due to domestic funding limitations, and partly due to the potential shown by its authors — perfected the art of co-producing, and specifically in creating ideal European co-productions. In fact, this co-production model has shown much potential in the post-Yugoslav region, including at the box office.

(Ideal European) co-productions: A way forward?[48]

As we mentioned earlier, same or similar languages and a long period of building some similarities in tastes make the post-Yugoslav states the natural markets for each other's films. This was, as our earlier analysis shows, sometimes successfully utilized — in recent years mostly by exporting Serbian cinema to other countries in the region, or by co-producing films on topics of shared interest that resonate across borders, sometimes producing conventionally narrated, solid quality films. However, a particularly interesting story is that of successful co-productions that were also made to high artistic standards and that managed to travel across borders, fitting Mitrić's definition of the ideal European co-production. Many of these films are co-produced by multiple post-Yugoslav countries (with or without further European funding), made by respected *auteurs*, achieving critical success and doing well across the post-Yugoslav market (and sometimes beyond).[49]

The pilot for the category could be *The Border Post* (Karaula; Rajko Grlić), the 2005 co-production between all then existing post-Yugoslav cinemas as well as Great Britain, Hungary, and France, helmed by the Prague group director Rajko Grlić, a well-known name across the region, and supported by Eurimages. The film, a comedy about fictional events in a Yugoslav National Army's military post on the border with Albania, featured a post-Yugoslav cast, Grlić's recognizable style — and a retelling of the Yugoslav narrative that, with its reminiscence of a peaceful period of not co-existence, but mutual friendship between the Yugoslav nations, could appeal to audiences across the region. And it did. With 43,000 viewers in Croatia, the film was a relative hit — while also attracting just over 100,000 in Serbia, making it the second most successful domestic film in that year, and enjoying moderate success in Slovenia (around 13,000).[50]

47) Vesna Besic, "Broj posjetitelja u kinima u BiH u prošloj godini pao za 70 posto," *Andalou Agency*, January 8, 2021, accessed February 2, 2021, https://www.aa.com.tr/ba/kultura-i-umjetnost/broj-posjetitelja-u-kinima-u-bih-u-prošloj-godini-pao-za-70-posto/2103179.

48) All admissions data in this section are taken from the LumierePro database, except for data for Croatia which were taken from "Nacionalni program promicanja audiovizualnog stvaralaštva 2017.–2021.," Hrvatski audiovizualni centar, 97–104, accessed January 28, 2021, https://www.havc.hr/file/publication/file/havc-nacionalni-program-promicanja-audiovizualnog-stvaralastva-2017-2021.pdf and cross-checked with the LumierePro database.

49) As Lydia Papadimitriou and Ana Grgić note, this kind of resonant collaboration has become a feature recently not just of post-Yugoslav, but of Balkan cinemas more broadly. See Lydia Papadimitriou and Ana Grgić, "Introduction," in C*ontemporary Balkan Cinema: Transnational Exchanges and Global Circuits*, eds. Lydia Papadimitriou and Ana Grgić (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 10.

50) The data for the other countries were not available to us.

Even more successful was Srđan Dragojević's 2011 film *The Parade* (Parada), a Serbian-North Macedonian-Slovenian-Croatian[51] co-production about a homophobic Serbian gangster who recruits a troupe of ex-Yu "enemies" to protect a gay pride event in Belgrade. Again, supported by Eurimages, the film was a big regional success, with over 300,000 viewers in Serbia, 170,000 in Croatia (making it the third most viewed domestic film overall since independence) and about 100,000 in the rest of the post-Yugoslav countries. It also received a wide distribution abroad.

However, it wasn't just films that thematically encompassed, in one way or another, the whole of Yugoslavia that were successful. In 2013, Vinko Brešan released *The Priest's Children* (Svećenikova djeca), a film about a young priest who comes to a small Dalmatian island the population of which is slowly going extinct — so he decides to act on it by secretly puncturing holes in condoms sold at the local newsstand. This Croatian-Serbian co-production (supported again by Eurimages) drew around 160,000 viewers domestically, capitalizing on Brešan's familiar name and style with the local audiences, while also achieving a successful European distribution and a favorable reception in Serbia. While achieving some — sometimes remarkable — box office success, these films also continued to screen at prestigious festivals (e.g. San Sebastian in the case of *The Border Post*, Berlinale Panorama for *Pride*, and Karlovy Vary for *The Priest's Children*).

In terms of the ideal European co-productions, however, by far the most successful are the films by the Bosnian female author Jasmila Žbanić. Eschewing the comedic bend for a somber tone and a fairly classical narrative, her Bosnian-Croatian-Austrian-German co-production *Esma's Secret — Grbavica* (Grbavica; 2006), about wartime rape in the country, won the Golden Bear at the 2006 Berlinale, while also receiving wide European distribution (a little short of 300,000 viewers) and reaching over 20,000 viewers in Croatia alone; its 2010 successor *On the Path* (Na putu), dealing with the present-day Islamic radicalization, was also fairly successful. Her last film, the Oscar-nominee *Quo Vadis, Aida?* (2020), which was screened in Venice and picked up for the UK VOD distribution by Curzon (with cinemas closed or limited due to the pandemic), was a successful multi-platform release.

Other notable examples include films by Vinko Brešan, Rajko Grlić, Srdan Golubović, Dalibor Matanić (whose *High Sun* [Zvizdan, 2015], winning the 2015 Un Certain Regard Jury Prize, is perhaps the country's greatest critical, while also being a solid commercial success), as well as those by Aida Begić (*Snow* [Snijeg; 2008]; *Children of Sarajevo* [Djeca; 2012]), Alen Drljević (*Men Don't Cry* [Muškarci ne plaču; 2017]), Dana Budisavljević (*The Diary of Diana B* [Dnevnik Diane Budisavljević, 2019]). To this list, we might soon need to add works by Kosovan directors such as Visar Morina (Sarajevo Film Festival 2020 winner and Sundance-screened *Exile* [Exil]) and Blerta Basholli, who just recently won the Jury, Audience and Best Director awards in the World Cinema selection at the 2021 Sundance Film Festival with *Hive* (Zgjoi; 2021) — although their distribution and possible audience success remain yet to be seen.

51) LumierePro database lists also Germany and Hungary as co-producers.

Can Digitization Make the Post-Yugoslav Cinema More Popular?

The above analysis of popular films in the post-Yugoslav theatrical market points to several structural challenges within the current distribution sector in the region. The overall challenge is the lack of any regional distribution policy. As we could see, some individual examples of films such as *The Wounds* (1998), *The Border Post* (2005), *Pride* (2011) or *Taxi Blues* (2019) show that the cross-regional appetite for certain titles remains. It comes as no surprise, as the post-Yugoslav countries in great part share the taste in popular culture due to the same (or similar) language and the common Yugoslav past. However, these films are random and unpredictable examples as there are no policies in place that would streamline and capitalize on the existing potential. A number of initiatives for a regional distribution policy have been discussed. For example, the Sarajevo Film Festival arranged a forum on this topic in August 2013,[52] while the Head of Serbian MEDIA Desk revealed plans about a regional distribution fund during the last edition of the Free Zone film festival in Belgrade.[53] Yet, none of those initiatives have come to fruition.

Furthermore, a common problem across the post-Yugoslav region is massive and uncontrolled piracy. According to the last available report from 2016, almost a quarter of the population in the region illegally downloads and streams films and series.[54] The situation with piracy has been improving on the regulatory level in those parts of the post-Yugoslav region that have aligned their legislations with the relevant EU laws. However, the regulatory framework is not enough to eradicate the two major reasons for piracy in the post-Yugoslav countries — low economic standard and inaccessibility of arthouse films that disappear after several festival screenings in big cities and a too short (or non-existent) theatrical release.

Finally, the entire post-Yugoslav distribution market is monopolized by a handful of players whose dominant presence hinders any competition-driven and non-traditional way of thinking when it comes to strategies for reaching a wider audience. One example is the monopolist Serbian company MegaCom Film. In addition to being the regional distribution leader whose catalogues combine studio-titles with independent, arthouse and domestic films, MegaCom is a partner of many regional film festivals, providing the rights to prominent international arthouse films. The company also organizes film festivals, the most notable being Belgrade's Auteur Film Festival, supplies exhibitors across Serbia and owns the major Serbian VoD platform — MojOFF. Spanning the distribution and exhibition of both studio titles and arthouse and domestic films, MegaCom Film is in the position to generate a high turnover from the market as well as to receive the greatest share of the available public subsidies for distribution of European arthouse cinema.

In such a socio-political and economic context — with no regional distribution policy in place, where the post-Yugoslav distribution markets are monopolized and the viewers'

52) See "State of the Region 2013," Sarajevo Film Festival, accessed January 28, 2021, https://www.sff.ba/upload/documents/State%20of%20the%20Region13_print.pdf.

53) At the industry workshop "Digital Propeller" in Belgrade on 9 November 2020.

54) Jovan Djurić, "Internet piraterija: Zbog skidanja filmova možete da odete u zatvor," *B92*, November 13, 2019, accessed January 28, 2021, https://www.b92.net/biz/vesti/srbija.php?yyyy=2019&mm=11&dd=13&nav_id=1616436.

media behavior affected by low incomes — a more prominent digital distribution seems like one viable solution for making local films more visible and accessible. The recent penetration of global streaming platforms (e.g. Netflix and HBO) to the region and the global pandemic only speeded up this process. Although it is early to evaluate the digital distribution initiatives in the post-Yugoslav region as many are still nascent and no systematic data reports have been made available, it is worth exploring the current situation in this area. The digital distribution potential in popularizing post-Yugoslav titles has been visible in three forms: through collaboration with HBO, the presence on YouTube as a free video-sharing platform and the emergence of local TVOD platforms.

Two local post-Yugoslav film directors, Mila Turajlić and Danis Tanović, have collaborated with HBO in two different ways. Turajlić's creative documentary *The Other Side of Everything* (Druga strana svega; 2017), an ideal European co-production that combines traditional forms of public financing with the financing from HBO Europe, had a wide festival release after it won the main IDFA award in 2017, a limited — but very successful — theatrical release in Belgrade[55] and the long-term digital release on HBO. The digital release made the film accessible to many viewers in the post-Yugoslav region who would otherwise find the film impossible to access, or would not even hear of it.

The Oscar-winning Bosnian director Danis Tanović directed HBO's first and, thus far, only original production in the post-Yugoslav region — the high-end mini-series *Success* (Uspjeh, 2018). Tanović's collaboration with HBO is reminiscent of the production models from the golden era of Yugoslav popular middle-brow co-productions. Commissioned and executive produced by a global streaming platform, *Success* is simultaneously a mix of creative and production elements from different parts of former Yugoslavia — written by a Croatian/Macedonian scriptwriter, shot in Croatia with the majority Croatian crew and cast and the Serbian actor in the main role.

Moreover, HBO has been increasingly picking up a variety of post-Yugoslav titles for their catalogue, which prolongs their exploitation life and makes them visible and accessible to a wider audience. Thus, in addition to *The Other Side of Everything* and *Success* that HBO (co-)produced, the platform's catalogue currently includes over thirty local films made between 1999 and 2019. The list includes primarily ideal European co-productions made by local directors, the theatrical distribution of which was too short and underpromoted, but there is also a number of middle-brow theatrical successes as well as genre films.

Finally, the collaboration with HBO and other international streaming platforms who are entering the post-Yugoslav region shall be furthered by virtue of Article 13 of the new EU's Audiovisual Media Directive (AVMSD). Article 13 enables the European countries to impose more stringent obligations for the streaming platforms regarding the production and promotion of the local content. The implementation of Article 13 has already given results across several European territories (e.g. France, Italy, Germany, Flanders)[56] and

55) According to the Film Center Serbia's database, the film earned 7,000 cinema admissions during only several available screenings in one cinema in Belgrade.

56) Ivana Kostovska, Tim Raats, and Karen Donders, "The rise of the 'Netflix tax' and what it means for sustaining European audiovisual markets," *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Research* 33, no. 4 (2020), 423–441.

will certainly be more exploited across European countries, including some post-Yugoslav states in the near future.[57)]

The most intriguing phenomenon regarding the digital distribution of post-Yugoslav films is, however, a critical number of theatrical flops that attract hundreds of thousands of viewers within a short period once they are shared on YouTube for free. **Table 1** provides a few examples that give a taste of how drastic this phenomenon is.

Title	Cinema Admissions	YouTube Views	Production Year	YouTube Upload Date	Category
Halima's Path	8,500	2.1 mil.	2012	14 April 2014	Middle-brow
72 Days	198	700,000	2010	5 June 2020	Middle-brow
Motel Nana	6,000	1 mil.	2010	Unknown[58)]	Ideal Eur. co-pro
Name: Dobrica, Last Name: Unknown	4,500	660,000	2016	14 Mar 2018	Low-budget popular film
Enclave	28,000	523,000	2015	16 Dec 2020	Ideal Eur. co-pro
Tour	40,000	500,000	2008	22 Maj 2020	Ideal Eur. co-pro
The Man Who Defended Gavrilo Princip	15,000	434,000	2014	30 Aug 2017	Middle-brow
Children of Sarajevo	22,000	261,000	2012	26 Jan 2014	Ideal Eur. co-pro
Circles	33,000	227,000	2013	Unknown	Ideal Eur. co-pro
My Beautiful Country	1,500	225,000	2012	Unknown	Ideal Eur. co-pro

Table 1: Popular post-Yugoslav films on YouTube and their cinema admissions. Source: European Audiovisual Observatory, Film Center Serbia and YouTube (as of January 29, 2021)

A quick look into Table 1 shows that a number of arthouse post-Yugoslav films may have a wider audience appeal than their low cinema admissions suggest. Moreover, the thousands of comments under the uploads of these films indicate their social relevance, as they inspire an array of discussions and emotions among the viewers who originate from different post-Yugoslav nations and social classes. They discuss Yugonostalgia, nationalisms, war-related PTSDs (among other things) and thus prompt what in the discourse of the European public film funds — as well as in the definition of the ideal European co-production — is called "cultural value", which in part justifies the costs of these films.

The YouTube popularity of these films leads to the conclusion that post-Yugoslav theatrical flops are not necessarily unwatchable, bad or elitist films. On the contrary, they may have a latent audience. However, those people may not have money for cinema, or may have no access to cinemas (for instance, diasporic and rural audiences), or they simply

57) Petar Mitrić and Petr Szczepanik, *Pomůže Netflix českému filmu? Výzvy a příležitosti implementace článku 13 revidované směrnice o audiovizuálních mediálních službách* (Praha and Olomouc: Univerzita Karlova; Univerzita Palackého, 2020).

58) Films marked as "unknown" were removed from YouTube by the time we checked the date.

may miss films due to the distributor's poor promotional strategies. Therefore, the local policymakers as well as distributors and exhibitors may certainly consider innovative digital strategies for making regional films more visible and more accessible. Making the films legally available online for a lower price would decrease illegal downloading, increase the revenue streams and help distributors track the data about the number and demographics of local audiences.

The challenge of visibility and accessibility of European films is already being addressed across Europe by virtue of several business models based on digital distribution. These business models include Premium-VOD (PVOD) platforms, virtual cinemas, film festival VOD platforms and digital aggregators which aggregate digital release for independent exhibitors. These business models allow distributors to go very wide and very targeted without having to build and run a cinema in one geographical location. They also empower customers to watch films in multiple ways and at different prices, and enable distributors to track the data about their clients' digital behavior.

It is the pandemic and the closures of cinemas that also stimulated distributors and exhibitors in the post-Yugoslav region to commit more to online distribution. They either used the existing local SVOD and TVOD platforms or opened new ones during the first lockdown to offer content for free streaming. The idea was to attract a new audience and offer an alternative to loyal cinema-goers, which according to Igor Stanković, the CEO of MegaCom Film, was very successful:

> Once you provide something for free, people in our region are keen to watch it. We experienced it with the platform Moj-OFF that we launched on 24 March. We provided five film slots a day for newest arthouse films for 14 days. Those films were scheduled for cinemas, but we made them available across ex-Yugoslavia online for free. Already during the first night, we had 60,000 unique clicks. By the end of this 14-day online festival, our website received almost 4 million visits. That was the second most visited website on the platform we used to host the site in those fourteen days in the entire world. We will transform it into a transactional VoD platform, with an intention of becoming a PVOD for films which will be screened on festival and then, a day after, on that platform. So, developing their own platform is a MUST-DO for all the local distributors. Moj-OFF cinema will keep copying the Curzon-cinema Premium-VOD model.[59)]

Other platforms in the region followed the same model in the spring 2020, including the only regional SVOD platform Pickbox, which focuses mostly on commercial serial content but has recently also become open for all kinds of regional content during the lockdown.

Finally, a number of smaller TVOD platforms (e.g. Kino Meeting Point OnDemand and KinoKauch) were launched either to host the online screenings during the pandemic editions of local film festivals or to provide a digital release window for new films. These

59) Igor Stanković, at "Cine link talks: Radical New Distribution Strategies" — an industry panel at the Sarajevo Film Festival, August 15, 2020.

new platforms innovate the post-Yugoslav distribution sector in two ways. Firstly, the same film can be released across several of these platforms as none of them receive exclusive rights, which is never the case with theatrical distribution. Secondly, the new platforms provide a digital release of local films across ex-Yugoslavia (or sometimes even globally), making them more accessible, more visible, and cheaper when compared to the situation during cinema release.

An illuminating example in this regard is the recent digital release of *Quo Vadis, Aida?* by Jasmila Žbanić — the first film about the Srebrenica genocide perpetrated in July 1995 by the Bosnian Serb Army against the local Muslim population. Even though this ideal European co-production has an obvious audience appeal (a linear dramaturgy, classic narrative, high production value, Venice-competitor, and a well-known topic), it will never be released in cinemas in some parts of ex-Yugoslavia due to strictly political reasons. However, thanks to its digital distribution on Kino Meeting Point OnDemand, the film overcame the political obstacles and became legally accessible at an affordable price across the post-Yugoslav region. Furthermore, in addition to watching the film in high-quality, the viewers can read the film's reviews and see video interviews with the actors. Most interestingly, even though the digital release of the film ended in mid-January 2021, at the audience request, the film was digitally re-released across the region in early February. This is definitely a trend that the post-Yugoslav theatrical distribution of arthouse films has never seen.

All in all, the commercial digital distribution of post-Yugoslav films is still very modest when compared to some other parts of Europe such as Scandinavia and the Czech Republic where the presence of digital players is much more vibrant. Also, the effects of the digital distribution on popularizing of post-Yugoslav films are still difficult to measure as there is almost no available streaming data. Yet, the above-described developments regarding both legal and illegal digital distribution of popular local films show that the regional digital distribution infrastructure, although underdeveloped, is steadily evolving and becoming increasingly complementary with the theatrical one.

Conclusion

In this article, inspired by the broader policy challenges of building film audiences for European films in an age of digitization, but also prompted by the current epidemiological situation that brought on new challenges for film distribution, we analyzed the preferences of film audiences of one specific film market — namely that of the former Yugoslavia. The post-Yugoslav space — with some similarities in preferences among the local audiences as well as with its long history of collaborative filmmaking that was abruptly interrupted by the dissolution of the Yugoslav federation in the early 90s — is in many ways a natural market for films from respective national cinemas of what are now seven independent states. We wanted to understand what kinds of post-Yugoslav films capitalize on this historical potential in order to find their way to the audiences in the region most successfully and contribute to the completion of a major European film policy goal of creating audience-appealing films with an inherent cultural value. In doing so, we categorized

the popular films across the region into four categories: low-brow, middle-brow, popular arthouse films and, drawing on the theoretical work by Petar Mitrić, ideal European co-productions.

While audiences everywhere are difficult to analyze and predict, some patterns — and reasons for optimism, but also invitations for creative thinking about both film production and distribution — emerge from our analysis. On the one hand, we find that, while caution is needed when considering films popular in different contexts due to market size and other factors, some post-Yugoslav countries have yet to create truly popular films, domestically or beyond. Others — specifically Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia — each show their individual, distinct trends, with certain genres and themes dominating in popularity over others. However, we also find that when created in the region as joint co-productions between the post-Yugoslav states (with or without additional European funding), films that can be categorized as ideal European co-productions often do well in and beyond their national markets. They can attract significant audiences — with one possible outlier being Bosnia, whose highly critically accomplished films seem to still be searching for a domestic audience, but more data is needed to be able to say this with confidence.

What we also do find, however, is that interest in and legal access to films do not always overlap in the post-Yugoslav region. This happens due to familiar reasons like the domination of Hollywood titles and absence of locally made films on major VOD networks, but also more locally specific issues such as widespread piracy, low living standard and insufficient access to cinemas, as well as distributor-side limitations. Hence, in the last section of our paper, drawing on qualitative data from two different industry events, we explored some indicators for what might be considered key issues — both in getting films to viewers successfully and in studying and understanding that success or lack thereof — as well as possible places to start addressing them, in the region and beyond.

Funding

This work was supported by the European Regional Development Fund project 'Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions of the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World' (reg. no.: CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16_019/0000734).

Bibliography

Alexander, Edward. "Yugosphere Insiders or Croatian Outsiders: The Reception of Serbian Films in Croatia since the Breakup of Yugoslavia," *Image & Narrative* 18, no. 1 (2017), 45–62.

Bergfelder, Tim. *International Adventures: German Popular Cinema and European Co- productions in the 1960* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005).

Bergfelder, Tim. "Popular European cinema in the 2000s: cinephilia, genre and heritage," in *The Europeanness of European Cinema: Identity, Meaning, Globalization*, eds. Mary Harrod, Mariana Liz and Alissa Timoshkina (London: I.B. TAURIS, 2015), 33–58.

Besic, Vesna. "Broj posjetitelja u kinima u BiH u prošloj godini pao za 70 posto," *Andalou Agency*,

January 8, 2021, accessed February 2, 2021, https://www.aa.com.tr/ba/kultura-i-umjetnost/broj-posjetitelja-u-kinima-u-bih-u-prošloj-godini-pao-za-70-posto/2103179.

"Bitka na Neretvi", IMDB, accessed June 16, 2021, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0064091/.

"Bitka na Neretvi," Baza HR kinematografije, accessed April 13, 2021, http://hrfilm.hr/baza_film.php?id=79.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

"Brojke i slova za 2017", Hrvatski audiovizualni centar, accessed January 28, 2021, https://www.havc.hr/file/publication/file/havc-facts-figures-prijelom-2017.pdf.

"Brojke i slova za 2018", Hrvatski audiovizualni centar, accessed January 28, 2021, https://www.havc.hr/file/publication/file/havc-facts-figures-2018.pdf.

"Brojke i slova za 2019", Hrvatski audiovizualni centar, accessed January 28, 2021, https://www.havc.hr/file/publication/file/havc-facts-figures-2019-digital.pdf.

Crnković, Gordana P. "Non-Nationalist Culture, Under and Above the Ground," in *Croatia since Independence*, eds. Sabrina P. Ramet, Konrad Clewing, and Reneo Lukić (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2008), 233–250.

Dabić, Dejan. "Praška škola ne postoji," *Preporuke Filmova*, December 7, 2012, accessed January 22, 2021, https://www.filmovipreporuke.com/praska-skola-ne-postoji/.

Di Chiara, Francesco. "Looking for New Aesthetic Models through Italian-Yugoslavian Film Co-Productions: Lowbrow Neorealism in Sand, Love and Salt," *Iluminace* 25, no. 3 (2013), 37–49.

Djurić, Jovan. "Internet piraterija: Zbog skidanja filmova možete da odete u zatvor," *B92*, November 13, 2019, accessed January 28, 2021, https://www.b92.net/biz/vesti/srbija.php?yyyy=2019&mm=11&dd=13&nav_id=1616436.

Dyer, Richard and Ginette Vincendeau, eds. *Popular European Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1993).

Eleftheriotis, Dimitris. *Popular Cinemas of Europe: Studies of Texts, Contexts and Frameworks* (London: Continuum, 2001).

Fafulić Milosavljević, Marina. *50 godina filmskog hita u srpskoj kinematografiji, 1969–2019* (Beograd: Filmski centar Srbije, 2020).

Faulkner, Sally. *Middlebrow Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2016).

"Filmovi ne padaju s Marsa," accessed April 14, 2021, http://didasmarsa.com/filmovi-ne-padaju-s-marsa/.

Gilić, Nikica. *Uvod u povijest hrvatskog igranog filma* (Zagreb: Leykam International, 2014).

"Iznenadit će vas koliko su zapravo zaradili ratni spektakli Sutjeska i Neretva," Index.hr, December 18, 2017, accessed April 13, 2021, https://www.index.hr/magazin/clanak/iznenadit-ce-vas-koliko-su-zapravo-zaradili-ratni-spektakli-sutjeska-i-neretva/1014468.aspx.

Janković Piljić, Ana. "Ko se boji Alise u zemlji čuda?," in *Uvođenje mladosti: Sami sebe naslikali*, ed. Miroljub Vučković (Beograd: Filmski centar Srbije, 2008).

Kanzler, Martin. *Fiction film financing in Europe: A sample analysis of films released in 2017* (Strasbourg: European Audiovisual Observatory, 2019).

Kolarić, Tamara. "Hidden Dialogues with the Past: Cinema and Memory of the 'Homeland War'" (PhD dissertation, Central European University, 2019).

Kostovska, Ivana, Tim Raats, and Karen Donders. "The rise of the 'Netflix tax' and what it means for sustaining European audiovisual markets," *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Research* 33, no. 4 (2020), 423–441.

Kurelec, Tomislav. "Institutions, Infrastructure, Industry: Croatian Film or a Battle for Survival," in

In Contrast: Croatian Film Today, eds. Aida Vidan and Gordana P. Crnković (Zagreb: Hrvatski filmski savez; Berghain Books, 2012), 41–48.

Langkjær, Birger. "Realism as a third practice," *MedieKultur* (SMID) 51, no. 3 (2011), 40–54.

"Lista gledanosti domaćih filmova u bioskopima 2000 — 2009.", Filmski centar Srbije, accessed January 28, 2021, http://www.fcs.rs/new/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Lista-gledanosti-2000.pdf.

"Lista gledanosti domaćih filmova u bioskopima 2010 — 2019.", Filmski centar Srbije, accessed January 28, 2021, http://www.fcs.rs/new/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Lista-gledanosti-2.pdf.

Liz, Mariana. *Euro-Visions: Europe in Contemporary Cinema* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016).

Mitrić, Petar. "Co-produce or Perish: An Interpretive Study of European Film Co-production Policies" (PhD dissertation, University of Copenhagen, 2019).

Mitrić, Petar and Petr Szczepanik. *Pomůže Netflix českému filmu? Výzvy a příležitosti implementace článku 13 revidované směrnice o audiovizuálních mediálních službách* (Praha and Olomouc: Univerzita Karlova; Univerzita Palackého, 2020).

"Nacionalni program promicanja audiovizualnog stvaralaštva 2017.–2021.," Hrvatski audiovizualni centar, 97–104, accessed January 28, 2021, https://www.havc.hr/file/publication/file/havc-nacionalni-program-promicanja-audiovizualnog-stvaralastva-2017-2021.pdf.

Papadimitriou, Lydia and Ana Grgić. "Introduction," in C*ontemporary Balkan Cinema: Transnational Exchanges and Global Circuits*, eds. Lydia Papadimitriou and Ana Grgić (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 1–17.

Pavičić, Jurica. "Pregled razvoja postjugoslavenskih kinematografija," *Sarajevske Sveske*, 2008, accessed October 11, 2018, http://sveske.ba/en/content/pregled-razvoja-postjugoslavenskih-kinematografija.

Pavičić, Jurica. *Postjugoslavenski film: Stil i ideologija* (Zagreb: Hrvatski filmski savez, 2011).

Pavičić, Jurica. "General je suh, siv i dosadan," *JutarnjiLIST*, August 14, 2019, accessed June 16, 2021, https://www.jutarnji.hr/kultura/film-i-televizija/general-je-suh-siv-i-dosadan/9118070.

Perić, Drago. "Croatians Love to Laugh at Themselves When Times Are Tough," *Croatian Cinema*, no. 1 (2014), 9–10.

Polimac, Nenad. "Hrvatski blockbusteri," *Hrvatski filmski ljetopis*, no. 40 (2004), 17–20.

Polimac, Nenad. "Filmski nastavak Larinog izbora veliki je hit," *JutarnjiLIST*, August 3, 2012, accessed April 14, 2021, https://www.jutarnji.hr/kultura/film-i-televizija/filmski-nastavak-larinog-izbora-veliki-je-hit-1537650.

Radić, Damir. "General poslije bitke", *Novosti*, July 20, 2019, accessed June 16, 2021, https://www.portalnovosti.com/filmska-kritika-general-poslije-bitke.

"State of the Region 2013," Sarajevo Film Festival, accessed January 28, 2021, https://www.sff.ba/upload/documents/State%20of%20the%20Region13_print.pdf.

Šošić, Anja. "Film i rat u Hrvatskoj: Refleksije jugoslavenskih ratova u hrvatskom igranom filmu," *Zapis*, nos. 64–65 (2009).

Tomljanović, Igor. "Ljestvica gledanosti visoko je podignuta. možemo li je održati?," *Croatian Cinema*, no. 1 (2014), 40–46.

Wayne, Michael. *Politics of Contemporary European Cinema: Histories, Borders, Diasporas* (London: Intellect, 2002).

"Za 'Neretvu' čak i Pikaso odbio honorar i dva prava mosta dignuta u vazduh," Danas.rs, accessed June 16, 2021, https://www.danas.rs/kultura/za-neretvu-cak-i-pikaso-odbio-honorar-i-dva-prava-mosta-dignuta-u-vazduh/.

Filmography

Feature films

72 Days (72 dana; Danilo Šerbedžija, 2010)
A Tight Spot 4 (Tesna koža 4; Mica Milošević, 1991)
A Time for… (Vrijeme za…; Oja Kodar, 1993)
Balkan Spy (Balkanski špijun; Dušan Kovačević, 1984)
Beach Guard in Winter (Čuvar plaže u zimskom period; Goran Paskaljević, 1976)
Black Cat, White Cat (Crna mačka, beli mačor; Emir Kusturica, 1998)
Bravo Maestro (Rajko Grlić, 1978)
Cabaret Balkan (Bure baruta; Goran Paskaljević, 1998)
Cashier Wants to Go to the Seaside (Blagajnica hoće ići na more; Dalibor Matanić, 2000)
Cheese and Jam (Kajmak i marmelada; Branko Đurić, 2003)
Children of Sarajevo (Djeca; Aida Begić, 2012)
Circles (Krugovi; Srdan Golubović, 2013)
Class Enemy (Razredni sovražnik; Rok Biček, 2013)
Countess Dora (Kontesa Dora; Zvonimir Berković, 1993)
Do You Remember Dolly Bell? (Sjećaš li se Doli Bel?, 1981)
Dudes (Munje!; Radivoje Andrić, 2001)
Enclave (Enklava; Goran Radovanović, 2015)
Esma's Secret — Grbavica (Grbavica; Jasmila Žbanić, 2006)
Exile (Exil; Visar Morina, 2020)
Foolish Years (Lude godine; 1977–1992)
Going Our Way (Gremo mi po svoje; Miha Hočevar, 2010)
Guns of War (Užička republika; Žika Mitrović, 1974)
Halima's Path (Halimin put; Arsen Anton Ostojić, 2012)
High Sun (Zvizdan; Dalibor Matanić, 2015)
Hive (Zgjoi; Blerta Basholli, 2021)
How the War Started on My Island (Kako je počeo rat na mom otoku; Vinko Brešan, 1996)
Ivko's Feast (Ivkova slava; Zdravko Šotra, 2005)
King Petar the First (Kralj Petar I; Petar Ristovski, 2018)
Knife (Nož; Miroslav Lekić, 1998)
Lapitch the Little Shoemaker (Čudnovate zgode šegrta Hlapića; Milan Blažeković, 1997)
Lara's Choice: The Lost Prince (Larin izbor: Izgubljeni princ; Tomislav Rukavina, 2012)
Let Him Be a Basketball Player (Kosarkar naj bo; Boris Petkovič, 2017)
Little Buddho (Mali Budo; Danilo Bećković, 2014)
Marshal Tito's Spirit (Maršal; Vinko Brešan, 1999)
Men Don't Cry (Muškarci ne plaču; Alen Drljević, 2017)
Montevideo: Taste of a Dream (Montevideo, Bog te video!; Dragan Bjelogrlić, 2010)
Motel Nana (Predrag Velinović, 2010)
My Beautiful Country (Die Brücke am Ibar; Michaela Kezele, 2012)
My Grandpa is an Alien (Moj dida je pao s Marsa; Marina Andree Škop, Dražen Žarković)
Name: Dobrica, Last Name: Unknown (Ime: Dobrica, prezime: nepoznato; Srđa Penezić, 2016)
Natasha (Nataša; Ljubiša Samardžić, 2001)

Occupation in 26 Pictures (Okupacija u 26 slika; Lordan Zafranović, 1979)
On the Path (Na putu; Jasmila Žbanić, 2011)
Outsider (Andrej Košak, 1997)
Pr' Hostar (Luka Marčetič, 2016)
Pretty Village, Pretty Flame (Lepa sela lepo gore; Srđan Dragojević, 1996)
Quo Vadis, Aida? (Jasmila Žbanić, 2020)
Rooster's Breakfast (Petelinji zajtrk; Marko Naberšnik, 2007)
Saint George Shoots the Dragon (Sveti Georgije ubiva aždahu; Srđan Dragojević, 2009)
See You in Montevideo (Montevideo, vidimo se!; Dragan Bjelogrlić, 2014)
Sky Hook (Nebeska udica; Ljubiša Samardžić, 2000)
Snow (Snijeg; Aida Begić, 2008)
Sonja and the Bull (Sonja i bik; Vlatka Vorkapić, 2012)
South Wind (Južni vetar; Miloš Avramović, 2018)
Special Treatment (Poseban tretman; Goran Paskaljević, 1980)
Sutjeska (Stipe Delić, 1973)
Taxi Blues (Taksi bluz; Miroslav Stamatov, 2019)
Tears for Sale (Čarlston za Ognjenku; Uroš Stojanović, 2008)
The Battle of Neretva (Bitka na Neretvi; Veljko Bulajić, 1969)
The Border Post (Karaula; Rajko Grlić, 2005)
The Brave Adventures of a Little Shoemaker (Šegrt Hlapić; Silvije Petranović, 2013)
The Diary of Diana B (Dnevnik Diane Budisavljević; Dana Budisavljević, 2019)
The Dog Who Loves Trains (Pas koji je voleo vozove; Goran Paskaljević, 1978)
The Fall of Italy (Pad Italije; Lordan Zafranović, 1981)
The General (General; Antun Vrdoljak, 2019)
The Man Who Defended Gavrilo Princip (Branio sam Mladu Bosnu, Srđan Koljević, 2014)
The Other Side of Everything (Druga strana svega; Mila Turajlić, 2017)
The Parade (Parada; Srđan Dragojević, 2011)
The Priest's Children (Svećenikova djeca; Vinko Brešan, 2013)
The Professional (Profesionalac; Dušan Kovačević, 2003)
The Samurai in Autumn (Jesen samuraja; Danilo Bećković, 2016)
The Tour (Turneja, Goran Marković, 2008)
The Wounds (Rane; Srđan Dragojević, 1998)
Time of the Gypsies (Dom za vešanje; 1988)
Tito and Me (Tito i ja; Goran Marković, 1992)
Underground (Emir Kusturica, 1994)
Vukovar: The Way Home (Vukovar se vraća kući; Branko Schmidt, 1994)
Walter Defends Sarajevo (Valter brani Sarajevo; Hajrudin Krvavac, 1972)
We Are Not Angels (Mi nismo anđeli; Srđan Dragojević, 1992)
We Are Not Angels 2 (Mi nismo anđeli 2; Srđan Dragojević, 2005)
We Will Be the World Champions (Bićemo prvaci sveta; Darko Bajić, 2015)
What is a Man without a Moustache? (Što je muškarac bez brkova?; Hrvoje Hribar, 2006)
When Father Was Away on Business (Otac na službenom putu; Emir Kusturica, 1985)
Zona Zamfirova (Zdravko Šotra, 2002)
ZG80 (Igor Šeregi, 2016)

TV series

Success (Uspjeh; created by Marjan Alčevski; Danis Tanović, 2019)

Biographies

Petar Mitrić is a senior researcher at Charles University in Prague and postdoc at the University of Copenhagen. His research focuses on audio-visual policies, film co-production and audience-design strategies for audio-visual content. In 2019, Petar co-edited the book *European Film and Television Co-production: Policy and Practice* (Palgrave Macmillan).

Tamara Kolarić is an independent researcher and lecturer with OLIve Weekend, a Central European University-affiliated program in Budapest led by Open Education. Her research explores the intersections between memory and film in the post-Yugoslav region.