

Problems and Perspectives of Croatian Cinema: Interview analysis

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SUMMARY

Contemporary social trends such as globalization and technological development affect national cinema as well as world cinema in general. Discussions about national cinema should therefore be placed within the context of the nation-state itself and transnationally. The continuity of film industry in Croatia exists from the very beginnings of the film, but it as a product of the cinema that is closely related to social, political and economic circumstances which had multiple implications on its development.

The aim of the paper was to examine the features of Croatian national cinema as well as the aspects of its affirmation and reception, which ultimately enabled understanding of the developmental and integrative factors of Croatian cinema. Insight into the developmental and integrative factors of Croatian cinema presents a wider picture of the problems and perspectives of Croatian national cinema today. The qualitative approach was used in the research and semi-structured interviews were conducted with interviewees closely related to film and film production.

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The analysis shows difficulties in developing a specific style and achieving greater international visibility. An important moment was the establishment of Croatian Audiovisual Centre which devised a plan for Croatian national cinema and brought financial independence. This consequently led to the rise of investments and quality of films and even to international festival visibility of Croatian cinema. At the beginning of the 21st century Croatian film industry developed infrastructure, provided support for young filmmakers and created the preconditions for quality and innovative film titles.

Keywords: Croatian cinema, social and political context, Croatian Audiovisual Centre, semi-structured interview, developmental and integrative factors.

Introduction: aspects of Croatian cinema as (trans)national cinema

Higson (2000) states that recently key aspects in the formation of a cinema can be more adequately described by the concept of „transnational“ cinema, which is thus opposed to the need also to consider application of the other concept – namely, “national” cinema. Crofts (1993) furthermore points out that the analysis of national cinema is very important due to the influence of contemporary social trends such as globalization and technological development on the world cinema in general. According to the classification given by Crofts (1993), Croatian cinema falls into (at least) one of the models of national cinema (considering its production and distribution). Nevertheless, influenced by social, political and economic changes it overcomes its (national) features and takes the appearance of transnational cinema.

Higson (2000) considers national cinema in the following way: „on the one hand, a national cinema seems to look inward, reflecting on the nation itself, on its past, present and future, its cultural heritage, its indigenous traditions, its sense of common identity and continuity. On the other hand, a national cinema seems to look out across its borders, asserting its difference from other national cinemas, proclaiming its sense of otherness“ (Higson, 2000: 60-61). However, the author also notices that (along with regional and national) these characteristics at the level of film production and distribution/reception hide transnational mode of contemporary cinema. If we assume for now that Croatian cinema can be considered at these two levels, whose features cross national boundaries, the question is what makes it to remain national? To answer this question, it is important to approach the third level, the level of state policy (Higson, 2000).

The concept of national cinema can be articulated through the strategic policies aimed at maintaining cultural identity and economic development. Though, even

then it acts transnationally, especially when it comes to financing. Then again: „to promote films in terms of their national identity is also to secure a prominent collective profile for them in both the domestic and the international marketplace, a means of selling those films by giving them a distinctive brand name“ (Higson, 2000: 62-63). In other words, national cinemas work for the purpose of promoting film culture, or the one that serves as a means of promoting cultural diversity. Hill states that this aspect can prove to be the potential and the strength of national cinema: “it is quite possible to conceive of a national cinema which is none the less critical of inherited notions of national identity, which does not assume the existence of a unique, unchanging ‘national culture’, and which is capable of dealing with social divisions and difference” (Hill according to Higson, 2000: 64).

Higson (2000) argues that Hill advocates the idea of “critical cinema” which in fact provides review of the things and is not limited to the demands of the market: „the case for a national cinema ... may be seen as part of a broader case for a more varied and representative range of film and media output than the current political economy of the communications industries allows“ (Hill according to Higson, 2000: 64). One of the examples of such films pointed out by Higson is „social drama“, or social themes that question issues such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality... which promote sensibility to social and cultural differences (Higson, 2000: 65). Hayward (2000) notes that discussions about national cinema point to the need to consider the relationship between film, nation and production, positioning one cinema against the other(s): „finally, it affords us the means to see how these national cinemas carve out a space (economic/market/audience space) locally and internationally for themselves in the face of the dominant international cinema, Hollywood“ (Hayward, 2000: 85). Although this relationship, in the opinion of the author, can also be seen in relation to other national cinemas.

Croatian cinema through short historical overview

In the trajectory of Peterlić’s thinking, the period closely before and after the First World War, when film art (generally) flourished, is characterized by two features of Croatian cinema. The first one is the inability to follow the world’s development of the film, while the second one relates to the status of the film in Croatia, which is depicted by the disappearance of certain film achievements (Peterlić, 2012: 11). On the other hand, Škrabalo thinks that the audience’s interest in the film at that time was quite large, resulting in the first film screenings in Croatian cities (Škrabalo, 1984: 17). However, according to the insights, reliable data about it are missing as well as the entire production of Croatian feature film from 1917 to 1927, making it difficult to gain an insight into the Croatian cinema heritage (Škrabalo, 1984; Kukuljica, 1997).

This actually leads to posing key questions about the beginnings of Croatian cinema as well as the (non) existence of interest for the domestic film. Gilić notes that the films from that period have no overriding importance in collective cultural memory (Gilić, 2011: 23). Reasons are found in social circumstances and, consequently, in factors that undoubtedly affected the status of the film in that period. The period of the Second World War was a turning point in the relationship between the state and the film. The establishment of NDH (Independent State of Croatia) marked the overcoming of the concept by which the state takes over film production. Even though the principles of capitalism and the market were not completely neglected, Ustasha authorities recognized the propaganda power of the film (Gilić, 2011: 33). Throughout the years, different social and political systems knew the propaganda “value” of the film (Gilić, 2011; Pavičić 2011).

According to Gilić, after efforts to establish the entire cinema infrastructure in the second half of the 1940s, Socialist Yugoslavia succeeded in producing a large number of interesting and technically skilfully films, many of which aroused interest of later generations. Therefore, the 1950s are considered a kind of classic period of Croatian cinema. Term “classic” firstly implies a distant and fundamental period, and secondly, a style based on clarity, consistency and openness, characterized by the classical narrative style that would not be dominant in this respect in later decades of Croatian and Yugoslavian cinema (Gilić, 2011: 47). The financing of cinema affected the number and type of films in this period, which means that social and economic condition determines whether culture is a priority or not (Gilić, 2011: 48).

In the 1960s, two different models in the production and film aesthetics were noticed. Namely, as opposed to a producer-oriented model with a concentrated decision-making process, Gilić states that those years were marked by auteur and modernist tendencies in the film. Throughout the period of auteur and modernist films, genre and populist films were made¹ as well (Gilić, 2011: 70). Despite the significance of the auteur and modernist films representatives in the 1970s, the importance of genres grows again. Among (genre) filmmakers there were politically aligned as well as subversive artists, which makes this period particularly interesting, as Gilić notes. During the 1970s some of the tendencies in film continued and some were developed, regardless of political pressures. In Croatia (like in other Yugoslav republics) there was a kind of (political) break that was also felt in Croatian cinema (Gilić, 2011: 102/103).

The empowerment of communist ideology in the film appeared in the 1980s, largely because of the vulnerability felt by Tito’s death, whereas Gilić considers that Tito was probably the strongest integrative factor of Socialist Yugoslavia (Gilić, 2011: 122). According to Pavičić, after 1989 there was a change in dominant ideology in Croatia. This had influence on the entire cinema, both on the institution and on the

film style. Croatian national cinema including financial support, cinema market, and legislation, (in) formal forms of (auto) censorship was shaped by social, political and economic changes. They also formed thematic preoccupations, recursive motives and typical genres. On the other hand, the social and political context largely shaped the dominant stylistic paradigm as well (Pavičić, 2011: 106).

Film is a multidimensional social phenomenon and as such it necessarily implies reflexive approach. Financially and creatively, the film arises from the social, political and economic circumstances that are visible in the film in two ways; they are mirrored either through criticism or through ideological affirmation. During the 1990s, Croatia was going through simultaneous social and political changes. The development of Croatian society included, on the one hand, a series of social, political and economic reforms, and on the other inevitable engagement in multiple globalization processes (Pavičić, 2011: 14/15). Croatian national cinema found itself in the focus of such processes and changes.

Pavičić (2011) argues that Croatian film industry has recovered by entering the 21st century, when the visibility of Croatian cinema has increased. Gilić also points out that Croatian feature film at the end of the first decade of the 21st century experienced an artistic rise and a greater international echo. This means more production, higher production standards, but also better international contacts. Along with improvements and higher visibility, it is stated that the change of the political paradigm around the year 2000 should not be underestimated. In other words, during that time the Croatian society began to transform into a typical transition society with smaller, although still present, influences of politics on artistic performance, improved economic conditions, but also with stronger influences of the markets and advertising (Gilić, 2011: 163).

Methodological aspects: insights into “cinema route”

Studying the film allows linking history and technological achievements with social ideologies. The production of the film changes over time with respect to content transmission and content itself. Therefore, the film captures and reflects changes in ideologies and other views on social institutions and relations (Higginbotham, 2013: ix). The study of the film is highly interdisciplinary field and includes a variety of disciplines such as anthropology, cultural studies, film studies, sociology, etc. The sociological perspective focuses on the ways in which the film allows an understanding of the society as the way in which the film shows interaction, identities, inequalities and social institutions. At the same time, sociological studies of the film production also point to the audience, the effects of images on real life, the complex interaction of cinematic techniques and the viewer's experience. In other words,

sociology of film focuses on the ways in which the film reflects but at the same time creates the culture of a particular nation or some other social group in a certain area and in a given context and time (Sutherland, Feltey, 2013: 4/5).

The beginnings of Croatian cinema appeared in the mid-twentieth century, and it experienced its flourishing and development in the period of Yugoslavia, where it was part of a wider, Yugoslav film culture. After declaring its independence, like other countries of the former state, Croatia started to establish its own cinema. Therefore, the aim of the research was to gain a deeper insight into the developmental and integrative factors of Croatian cinema for the purpose of understanding the characteristics of contemporary Croatian national cinema. The research was conducted in 2015.² A semi-structured interview was used which, considering its flexible and reflexive approach, was an orientation framework that allowed participants to reflect more freely on some topics and lead the conversation in other direction by following their associations and experiences. It also allows researchers to pose additional questions in order to address the core of the problem and requires from researchers to participate actively in the conversation and to listen carefully to the participants in order to adjust the prepared question plan to the dynamics and direction of the conversation.

Selection of participants focused on nine individuals closely related to the film and film production. Interviews were conducted with filmmakers bearing in mind differences between those who presented their works on film festivals, television, or were given some acknowledgments for their work and younger filmmakers who made several short films mostly in personal production and for student purposes. Interviews with film critics allowed insights into domestic production and promotion of domestic films. The perceptions about Croatian cinema through indirect work on it were obtained through interviews with film theorists. One of them is also a well-known film and television writer, while his experience in working on film, analysing and understanding the seventh art is outstanding in this area. Through experience of working with young filmmakers (students), one film theorist gave us an insight into how to overcome administrative and other difficulties related to the financing. Furthermore, the choice of two affirmed and experienced filmmakers who produced several important films is related to their direct work experience on films and understanding of all key developmental and integrative factors. Both of them participated in international festivals, and have experience in sharing ideas with foreign filmmakers, as well as an insight into the importance of the festivals for affirmation and connectivity of smaller cinemas.

Interview analysis

Developmental factors for Croatian cinema

The initial and important question *what is Croatian cinema?* leads to many difficulties. One of the reasons lies in the fact that Croatia was in different social and political systems during a long period, thus the term remains unclear and vague. We approached the Croatian cinema from the point of view of one of the participants because of the focus he put on the importance of the continuity of the film industry. Placing Croatian cinema in its social and political context, it is described as a phenomenon that exists in all systems. However, due to them and under their influence, the film changes features, character and purpose:

Croatian cinema continues on a certain continuity which comes out of Croatian cinema within Yugoslavia in which existed national studio Jadran film and also production for which we within literary historiography, for films of the sixties, seventies, normally operate with terms that it is Croatian cinema (participant number 5)

Croatia's Homeland war and post-war period influenced the development and position of Croatian film industry that found itself in an unenviable position. This is particularly true regarding ruined infrastructure, which is developmental prerequisite for national cinema. Croatian national cinema was restored only after a long time with great efforts and investments. One significant thing also happened when one of the companies that represented the cornerstone of the domestic cinema – *Jadran film*³ – was privatized among many others during that time. These influences are evident from some reviews on social and political context:

In 1999 only two cinemas worked, there was no multiplex, old network collapsed (participant number 5) / Croatian cinema lost its hardware, and that was Jadran film (participant number 4)

Regarding important development factors for Croatian national cinema, the emphasis was on its thematic and stylistic features of Croatian cinema as well as on some of the distinctive influences of other smaller⁴ national cinemas. The social situation largely determined thematic tendency of the films, so war themes had been dominated since 1990s, as indicated by our participants and illustrated through their remarks:

When you mention to an average viewer what comes to their mind when they hear Croatian cinema, it is war. And war is the most dominant film topic of the nineties (participant number 3) / Unfortunately, according to me, Croatian cinema is still defined by the war so there is a constant need to find new ways to narrate another Croatian war story (participant number 8)

In the coming years, the filmmakers opened up to new themes. Few participants related that to the different treatment of the war, often with a touch of humour or questioning it and some significantly towards social issues. However, substantial thematic diversity in Croatian cinema still does not exist, except for a tendency to producing comedies. Recently the themes are somewhat influenced by current festival trend, which is a kind of market way of thinking, and it is evident from these opinions:

Unfortunately, in my opinion, Croatian cinema is still defined by the war so there is a constant need to find new ways to narrate another Croatian war story (participant number 8) / After dominant war topics came those social, oh poor us, we still feel the aftermath of war (participant number 1) / It seems to me that selecting topics is often done by looking at Europe: what they would watch, with what topic we can be interesting. It's market thinking, but it's understandable (participant number 7)

Considering stylistic features our participants agreed on the lack of a characteristic style in Croatian cinema. However, for affirmation of certain national cinema it is necessary to develop a certain style on authentic, genuine problems of the society. On the other hand, in order to achieve international visibility, style is adapting to the international trends or expectations. By applying the market way of thinking, there is a certain adjustment of the style to the international film festival expectations. This is understood as a platform for existence as well as for affirmation and reception of small cinemas, on which some of the participants commented:

No, we have never had that, not even in the best years of Croatian cinema. Even when there were seven, eight worthy directors, each one was different (participant number 4) / You have that colonial mechanism which, to some extent, forces stylistic adjustment of trends, that is partly strategy of survival (...) So, style adjustment is again economic adjustment (participant number 5)

Nevertheless, affirmation of national cinema facilitates the existence of a distinctive, authentic style as a way of branding on the international film scene. The best examples of this are various film movements that emerged, such as the *French New Wave*, *Black Wave* in Yugoslavia or, more recently, the *Romanian New Wave*. To many Croatian directors the *Romanian New Wave* represented inspiration. On the other hand, due to similar political and social reasons, there was a thought that maybe it could be "our" film style, that came from the same political system, the same minor investment in a film and completely ignored by critics and audiences:

We should develop our own style. Authenticity and specificity are the only things that can be recognized and appreciated. Romanian cinema succeeded in that way, and you can say it is double encoded, like a postmodern film. Romanian cinema reflects social post-transition condition in small. This is recognized in Western

Europe, no matter they don't share these experiences, but it is recognizable especially in similar environments like Croatia (participant number 7)

For a small cinema, such as Romanian and Greek, developing an authentic film style proved important. On the other hand, the influence of the Romanian and Greek aesthetics on Croatian cinema is perceived on two levels. First, in the work of affirmed directors who recognized festival transience of this type, and secondly, among young filmmakers and film students who are fascinated by the new film language:

There surely was an influence. Especially when the boom of Romanian cinema happened (...) (participant number 5) / All small cinemas are under some influence, so it depends, what are trends in the world, that kind of films are made. You can apply that to Croatian short film. Because this is the kind of films students of film academy make when they graduate. As they watch many films from different regions, how trends appear in the world, we try to copy that. And it was very modern to copy aesthetic of Romanian new wave, and now it's modern to do aesthetic of Greek wave (participant number 3)

This opens some interesting questions about “Croatian wave”, i.e. the existence of a group of filmmakers who might be connected stylistically through the continuity of the film industry, and the possibilities for cultural branding of a film culture. This would make it more visible on the international level and would move the interest toward European public. The presence of female film aesthetics that mostly belongs to the younger directors such as Hana Jušić, Sonja Tarokić, Ivona Juka... is noticed in recent years of Croatian cinema. The highest quality and the most eminent film titles since 2010 are mostly directed by female directors of whom people have certain expectations. They are stylistically close, European oriented, successful on festivals, which points to a possible wave, carrying a similar film characteristic and the generational, as well as gender connections, which is quite rare:

I constantly think that one wave will happen, looking at youngsters. We have five, six authors that really have something to say with one language that was partly present, and I think they will bring new movement (participant number 6) / Hana Jušić, Sikavica, Sonja Tarokić. These are the people we can expect something from (participant number 3) / I would say, Zvonimir Jurić, Ivona Juka with her last film, I like her (participant number 1)

Furthermore, in Croatian cinema there is a lack of genre diversity, especially after the 1990s. Our participants recognized this lack of genre. This is understandable for several reasons. Genres require a broader market and more expensive production conditions. In addition, genre films do not have a festival pass rate and no greater success among the audience. The absence of genre film among the participants is seen as a logical sequence of these tendencies:

(...) Simply our genre film doesn't exist and it isn't commercially profitable (participant number 4) / For genre film you need to have more money, and there is a greater possibility that you won't enter the festivals, because there exists certain colonial stereotype (...) (participant number 5)

However, regarding genre film it can be noted that certain films "cleared" as those to which domestic audience pays more attention. Therefore, comedies are still ahead (as they are more popular) of all other film types with the noted growth of interest in children's film, as illustrated in these opinions:

The only thing that people watch in Croatia are three or four comedies. Two from Brežan, one from Hribar. First from Matanić and that is it. „Sonja i bik“, also films for children are watched (participant number 6) / Children films are watched, because there are data. „Koko i duhovi“ is watched, at schools, comedies too are watched, ninety thousand, one hundred thousand people (participant number 2)

Croatian documentary and arthouse films have an interesting and almost an opposite fate. The documentary is easier to make because of the financial and technical reasons. It takes less money than for feature films while the social context is a rich ground for a number of themes that can be processed. With empowerment of important documentary film festival *ZagrebDox* domestic documentaries opened to many currents. With certain level of quality and possibilities of affirmation, they are recognized as a "refuge" for producing a high quality film. Arthouse film in Croatia, on the other hand, is initially intended for an inner circle of the audience and has a specific auteur style and reflection on the film form. This type of film does not have many representatives and unfortunately no wider cinema network to foster art repertoire. This is mostly because of submission to market conditions, which consequently affects its affirmation.

I think that Croatian documentary film is good, I mean really good, it enters the festivals and new people have appeared who think about documentaries in a more creative way. Good thing is ZagrebDox because every year in one place you can find many quality people and different styles (participant number 9) / Because I would call art film something that is viewed by a small number of people. And if you want me to say it, there are no serious authors, but young authors could become serious (participant number 3)

Integrative features of Croatian cinema

Affirmation on the European stage is determined by quality as well as continuity of that quality. Visibility and relevance in international festivals contributes to the af-

firmation of the directors, but so far, there was no continued success of Croatian cinema. Since 2008, on account of the work of the *Croatian Audiovisual Centre/Hrvatski audiovizualni centar* (abbreviation HAVC) more domestic titles have become visible on the international festivals.⁵ Although, only few directors have gained success at international festivals, their work has become internationally visible and, consequently, particular films have become successful among the domestic audience.⁶ Over time, isolated successes may become constant, which means that the Croatian cinema is recognized. The success in the festivals opens doors, not only to certain directors, but also to cinema from which they came from. However, these individual successes are not sufficient for the positioning of Croatian cinema on the international scene because the international importance and quality can be achieved continuously over a long period. Therefore, it is important to maintain the level, reduce oscillations, and develop an authentic style that grows out from self-awareness moment by which the Croatian cinema would be known:

I think that style, if it comes out, could maybe help to recognize Croatian cinema. But it is still important to hit the trend. If we plan to develop, we should work on our style and ignore the trends. Those who follow trends never set them, so in my opinion, developing cinema is harder, longer and painstaking, like every path worth taking (participant number 8) / And one more thing, we should stop having complexes. We should search for topics and social circumstances that concern us (participant number 3)

Due to trends, young filmmakers have the opportunity for affirmation through numerous film festivals as well as technological possibilities, so that now almost everyone is able to make a film. This can lead to overproduction but also to the affirmation of truly talented individuals. In addition, for financially demanding films young filmmakers can sign up for numerous applications. *Croatian Audiovisual Centre* even provides an additional category for debutants so that they do not have to compete for their first feature film with the already established names. Therefore, the *Croatian Audiovisual Centre* with its financial grants is recognized as an opportunity for young filmmakers to make a film that indirectly opens up opportunities for their future affirmation:

Here, HAVC gives to debutants (...). It has a special branch for debutants (...) (participant number 6) / Since HAVC was founded, they have had good polygon to make your first film. Feature film. As far as that is concerned, conditions are ideal, better than in the nineties, because then existed untouchable clique who always got the money (participant number 3)

Many Croatian directors participate in various co-productions, which represent financial and creative additions to the affirmation of small cinema such as Croatian. Some of the participants pointed out that co-productions go along with intervention

in the script or calculations with aesthetics, themes and so on. Nevertheless, co-productions are noted as interesting phenomenon that expands the market, brings up resources that affects the film project itself as well as the entire film industry through easier distribution of the films. In some reflections, co-productions are perceived as a system that works by reciprocity. In other words, they expand the market, but more importantly, set certain connections between cinemas. This way, co-production exchanges funds or human resources:

Coproduction is a positive thing, because you don't open market only to viewers, but even to festivals and you distribute film more easily (participant number 3) / Because every country is legal, let's say, coproducer of the film, if it goes above ten percent of the money. Cinema image largely contributes if you enter in a project as partner, because it is reciprocal (participant number 5)

If Croatian cinema would raise some important names, the reason will surely be in good financial and cultural strategy. One of the integrative factors of Croatian cinema is film funding. The establishment of the *Croatian Audiovisual Centre* is considered as one of the key moments after which thorough restoration of cinema started, including infrastructure that primarily refers to the digitization and restoration of film network. It is noticeable that more and more domestic films enter the international festivals, and make their way even to those most resonant, like in Cannes, Venice and Berlin. With the promotion of Croatian cinema through international festivals, awards incentives to further the work of the authors and investments in projects, an important factor is the cultural policy. Reception of some “film story” depends, on one hand, on the affirmation and entrance to foreign festivals, and on the other, on the audience of the film in cinemas. These are the products of the long-term investment in Croatian cinema and *Croatian Audiovisual Centre* efforts, as pointed out by our participants:

Crucial paradigmatic change happened somewhere in years before the founding of HAVC, around 2006/07 (participant number 5) / Every time our author goes to the festival he makes contacts and spreads the network of contacts, and that is a network of our whole cinema. Hribar, [Hrvoje Hribar, director of the HAVC in 2011-17], actually HAVC, increased that considerably. It is simple, if that cultural policy goes on, it will be like that (participant number 4)

One of the issues is the diversity of cinema programme because it is established according to the market demands. Therefore, the selection of films is such that it tries to attract as many viewers as possible, but consequently it has negative effect on diversity of content and quality. This reflects an important role of *Croatian Audiovisual Centre* that expanded film network through the restoration and digitization of cinemas, and provided more diverse and accessible film content to viewers. On the other hand, Croatia has long struggled with the number of cinemas. Today, when

their number is considered satisfactory, mainly because of the multiplex movie theatres, new interesting trend regarding their positioning appeared. Cinemas are moved from the city centre to the periphery and are centralized in shopping malls. This grafting artistic and cultural “heart” of the city from the centre is interesting social and cultural phenomenon. These matters are illustrated by the following:

The problem with the network is the lack of cinema in the centre, even Zagreb doesn't have that. Split is even not bad in that sense, it has three, although Central will be shut down in the winter, so two will remain. Zagreb has practically two and that is not much for one city. In my opinion that is not good ratio and it excludes non-driving audience (...) Those interest-free borrowings from HAVC are very good for small towns, so even small cinemas are being digitized in Sinj, Vodice, and so on, only, the catch is with towns that don't have a cinema hall in their property (participant number 5)

Despite the specific problems, cities like Split, Zagreb and Rijeka through continuous work of repertory and arthouse cinemas still cherish the art and/or classical program. However, with the multiplex movie theatre oriented toward commercial film on the one hand and arthouse cinema on the other, there are some cinemas which are somewhere between commercial and independent programme. They show independent American films, festival European (art) films and many others that the average audience cannot easily reach and usually circumvent the “regular” movie theatres (i.e. multiplex). According to some reflections, such cinemas together with art cinema and cinematheque repertoire represent the true “keepers” of film heritage:

Repertory cinema Zlatna vrata has always offered some old films that you don't have a chance to see on big screen, because they were made in, for example, the sixties. (participant number 8) / In Croatia we have a few arthouse cinemas which project old films and films from foreign countries, like Tuškanac cinema, which replaced cinematheque that was closed in the nineties, then cinema in Rijeka, which is also great, and it is the best cinema in my opinion (...) (participant number 9) /

Reception of the film is essentially associated with sensitization of film audience, which would then be closer to the film and have more instruments for its evaluation. As part of a wider, global, trend – festivalization of culture – lately in Croatia the number of film festivals significantly increased trying to bring film art closer to the range of viewers. This trend is closely related to the *Croatian Audiovisual Centre* and its efforts to re-establish the film network. The number of festivals can be related to different social and cultural reasons, but nevertheless it is recognized among our participants:

Of course, this festivalization of cinema can be annoying, but generally there are no big deficiencies in it. It is great that there are festivals. Bad ones will disappear. That is a chance for people to see films that otherwise they wouldn't see (participant number 4) / I think there are good festivals but there are too many of them, generally, I think that culture is too much festivalized (participant number 7)

Consequently, festivals revitalize the cultural life of local communities and facilitate reception of the film. Furthermore, festivals have become an important part of urban prestige, because in addition to films, they offer other activities that make festivals more attractive. It is not surprising that some of the local festivals such as the *Motovun film festival* and *Festival mediteranskog filma Split* have become popular beside the films through accompanying program, which is aimed in attracting a larger number of visitors. At parties, workshops and other gatherings following the film screening, film professionals exchange experiences and make contacts, and the rest of visitors enjoy the accompanying events. These features of domestic film festivals are illustrated by these observations:

In the field of festivals there are trends as well so now it is popular to organize summer open-air festivals, like old drive-in cinemas (participant number 8) / Beside that, today people function by certain event approach, so to say. If something plays regularly, no one would come, but if there is some happening afterward, people will come (participant number 4)

Regardless of certain opinions about their quality, some of domestic festivals stand out with interesting and diverse film programs: *Pula film festival* as oldest and most important founded in 1954, *Dani hrvatskog filma* that presents domestic film production of different forms, *Motovun film festival* dedicated to films made in independent and small productions around the world, *Zagreb film festival* that promotes new authors, international festival of documentary film *ZagrebDox* and *Festival mediteranskog filma Split* as manifestation of films from Mediterranean region.⁷ The existence of the festivals and a respectable festival attendance certainly indicates that there is an interest in film on the Croatian cultural scene. This is good for the promotion of films, filmmakers, audiences and cultural scene of certain communities. In the long term, these trends can recover Croatian cinema and re-establish public faith in cinema.

Conclusion

Social and political context as well as changing affiliation towards film influenced Croatian film industry. In the 1990s Croatian cinema found itself in an unenviable position since “breaking up” with Yugoslav tradition while not founding its own style, names or even having infrastructure. Recovery of national cinema lasted more

than ten years, but still it has been characterised by attachment to the state. However, with the establishing of *Croatian Audiovisual Centre* things started to improve. At the beginning of the 21st century Croatian national cinema developed infrastructure, provided support to young filmmakers and created preconditions for innovative film titles. Thus, Croatian cinema today notes some quality works, co-productions, entrance to the international festival and the first awards.

Despite the awards and international visibility, it is necessary to point out that these achievements are related only to few individual directors and that the specific style and aesthetic required for affirmation and reception is still lacking. Thus, analysis of the developmental and integrative factors shows all the typical stereotypes of a small national cinema. That is the lack of genre film, a narrow selection of themes, a small number of internationally successful names, marginalization of art film... but developing one's own style that could emerge with the new generation of filmmakers with specific film aesthetics is considered a crucial step towards cultural branding that would enable further affirmation and reception of Croatian cinema.

Following the considerations of initially stated authors and the conducted interviews it appears that the conceptualization of the domestic cinema with its features is in line with the contemporary (re)definitions of concepts by which we define certain cinema as (trans)national. However, discussion of domestic cinema within its own style (as highlighted by the participants) indicates the tendencies of staying within the national frameworks and developing its own brand in relation towards other cinemas. On the other hand, going further towards some trends (also observed in the interview analysis) such as the presence of female directors and noticed interests for dealing with important social issues, then we are able to redefine the (national) frames through cinema which opens up possibilities (as national cinema) in its social differences.

NOTES

- ¹ Along with the number of popular Partisan and other genre films one spectacle *Bitka na Neretvi* (1969), directed by Veljko Bulajić and with a number of featuring stars (Yul Brynner, Orson Welles, Franco Nero, Sergey Bondarchuk), is particularly important in the history of Croatian and Yugoslavian cinema. An extremely influential film that confirmed the power of Socrealism, achieved a remarkable international success (such as nomination for Oscar) and for the Partisan film secured the status of an important export product (Gilić, 2011: 74/75).

- ² Interviews were conducted for the purpose of the master thesis “Social Contextualization of the Creation and Development of Croatian Film”, defended at the Department of Sociology at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science in Split in 2016. For the purpose of this paper, participants were contacted for further consent to use their citations and for assuring the anonymity their real names were not used.
- ³ *Jadran film* is a film company founded in Zagreb in 1946. It is one of the best and most fully equipped studios in Europe that produced and distributed around 800 feature films. Some of them are very famous like *Sophie’s Choice*, *Tin Drum* as well as adaptation of Kafka’s novel *The Trial*, directed by Orson Welles. After the 1990s the privatization of the company caused its weakening and consequently large financial losses. See: <https://www.jadran-film.com/>
- ⁴ The differences between small and large national cinemas Turković (1999) describes regarding the film funding and its profits, film distributions as well as social and political changes.
- ⁵ Filmmakers were dissatisfied with the state takeover of the cinema, and with joined efforts required the establishment of a center – *Croatian Audiovisual Centre*, which took jurisdiction over the financing, promotion, education, co-production and administrative tasks (Pavičić, 2011: 37).
Croatian Audiovisual Centre is the Government-backed strategic agency for the audiovisual sector in Croatia. It aims to stimulate a successful, vibrant audiovisual industry as well as to promote the widest possible enjoyment and understanding of audiovisual works throughout Croatia. See: <https://www.havc.hr/>
- ⁶ For the list of rewords and all filmography after the establishment of *Croatian Audiovisual Centre*, see more on the website: <https://www.havc.hr/>.
- ⁷ For more information about festivals see:
<http://www.pulafilmfestival.hr/en> <http://danihrvatskogfilma.net/2018/>
<http://www.motovunfilmfestival.com/>
<http://zff.hr/en/>
<http://zagrebdox.net/en/2019/naslovnica>
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Problemi i perspektive hrvatske kinematografije: Analiza intervjua

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SAŽETAK

Suvremeni društveni trendovi, kao što su procesi globalizacije, tehnološki razvoji i slično, utječu na nacionalnu kinematografiju, ali i na svjetsku kinematografiju općenito. Rasprave oko nacionalne kinematografije nužno je stoga smještati unutar konteksta same države-nacije, a jednako tako i transnacionalno. Kontinuitet filmske djelatnosti u Hrvatskoj postoji od samih početaka filma, ali ona je proizvod kinematografije koja je usko vezana uz društvene, političke i ekonomske prilike koje su višestruko utjecale na njezin razvoj. Cilj rada bio je ispitati značajke hrvatske kinematografije te aspekte njezine afirmacije i recepcije, što je u konačnici omogućilo razumijevanje razvojnih i integrativnih čimbenika hrvatskog filma. Uvid u razvojne i integrativne čimbenike hrvatskog filma predstavlja širu sliku problema i perspektiva hrvatske kinematografije danas. U istraživanju je korišten kvalitativni pristup i provedeni su polustrukturirani intervjui sa sugovornicima usko povezanim s filmom i filmskom djelatnošću. Analiza pokazuje svojevrsne poteškoće u razvijanju specifičnog stila i postizanju veće međunarodne vidljivosti. Važan trenutak bila je uspostava Hrvatskog audiovizualnog centra koji je izradio plan za hrvatsku kinematografiju i doveo do financijske neovisnosti što je utjecalo na ulaganja i kvalitetu hrvatskih filmova, pa i na njihovu međunarodnu festivalsku vidljivost. Početkom 21. stoljeća hrvatska kinematografija razvila je infrastrukturu, pružila podršku mladim filmašima i stvorila preduvjete za kvalitetne i inovativne filmske naslove.

Ključne riječi: hrvatski film, društveni i politički kontekst, Hrvatski audiovizualni centar, polustrukturirani intervjui, razvojni i integrativni čimbenici