



FINANCING ANTALYA GOLDEN ORANGE FILM FESTIVAL: A POLITICAL ECONOMY PERSPECTIVE

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RESEARCH ARTICLE



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Abstract

The academic field of study called film festival studies examines film festivals from various perspectives and has produced a vast literature. However, it is observed that studies in this field do not sufficiently address the political economy of festivals. This study aims to analyze the Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival, Türkiye's most important and longest-running film festival, from a political economy perspective. The Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival is financed by a mixed method. In this method, the local government is the main financial actor, while the central government, the private sector, civil society organizations and the university contribute at various levels. Despite the various managerial problems brought about by this complex financial structure, the Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival has been able to meet the expectations of both the cinema industry and the cinema audience in Türkiye to a certain extent since 1964. However, the fact that the financial support provided by the central government through the Ministry of Culture and Tourism varies greatly over the years for political reasons prevents the festival management from achieving a healthy and stable structure.

Keywords: *Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival, Film Festivals, Cinema Industry in Turkey, Political Economy of Film Festivals, Creative Industrie*

Introduction

Film festivals have been the subject of scientific investigation and research from various perspectives. Studies on this subject have become increasingly widespread in the literature and have begun to be called the field of "film festival studies" both in the world (De Valck, 2016) and in Türkiye (Akbulut, 2021). Some of the studies on film festivals deal with the changes that festivals have undergone in the historical development process and examine festival-industry relations (e.g.: Elsaesser, 2005; De Valck, 2007; Batık, 2008; Varlı Görk, 2010; Wong, 2011; Ostrowska, 2016; Çakar Bikiç, 2020; Vallejo, 2020). In other studies, the cinematographic features and selection processes of the films selected and awarded in festivals are examined (e.g.: Czach, 2004; Oktuğ Zengin, 2014; Dovey, 2015; Çakar Bikiç, 2018; Seçen, 2019; Aşkan, 2021). Apart from these, some studies also focus on the impact of film festivals on the country and city where they are held in various aspects, especially tourism (e.g.: Stringer, 2001; Ooi & Pedersen, 2010; Ekin, 2011; Polat, Polat, & Halis, 2013; Uğurlu & Aşkan, 2018; Kilimci, 2019).

As can be seen from this brief literature review, studies on the political economy of film festivals are quite limited. Undoubtedly, studies in the literature have examined the economic and political aspects of film festivals. However, these studies have generally focused on the relationship between film festivals and the film industry. For example, a significant part of Wong's (2011) study is devoted to the relationship between film festivals and the film industry. However, the issue is important enough to require a more comprehensive political economy assessment than the impact of film festivals on the film industry and the city. I hope that the present study can make a certain contribution to this gap in the literature.

The Golden Orange Film Festival has also been the subject of many studies and researches in various aspects. Varlı Görk (2010), in her study on the transformation of the Festival during the restructuring process of Antalya, argues that the neo-liberal urban management approach commoditized the Festival based on the Bourdieuan concept of space. Veren (2018), who analyzed the Festival within the framework of functional folklore theory, evaluated the Festival in terms of its place in Antalya's cultural memory. Tunç (2009), who compared the content of the Festival website with the Academy Awards Oscar

website, concluded that the Golden Orange Festival website has deficiencies in terms of providing information, participation and in-site navigation.

Altıntaş (2009), who examines the Festival in the context of the sustainability problematic, interprets the data obtained from interviews with six people and argues that the participation of the city people in the Festival used to be higher, but this participation has decreased with internationalization, and this situation will lead to sustainability problems. In his short evaluation of the Golden Orange International Film Festival, Akser (2013) emphasizes that the tensions between the bureaucratic-political structures at the local and general level have led the Festival to a national-global debate, but that it is important to preserve the traditional structure of the Festival, which has developed as a value of the city since its inception. Durmaz, Yiğitcanlar and Velibeyoğlu (2008), who examine the Festival in the context of creative cities and industrial relations, state that Antalya, which has many positive features, has the potential to become a new Eurasian film center thanks to the international competition section. Işıklar (2018), who semiotically analyzes the award-winning films in the International Competition section of the Festival, emphasizes the intercultural communication dimension of the Festival. Oktuğ Zengin (2014), who analyzed the award winners in the Best Actress, Best Actor, Best Supporting Actress and Best Supporting Actor categories since the beginning of the Festival, found that the average age of the male award winners was higher than the average age of the female award winners and that women received awards at a younger age than men. The author interprets this situation as sexist attitudes causing double jeopardy for older female actors. Seçen (2018), who analyzed 52 films that won the best film award at the Festival in terms of their technical and artistic features, found that there has been an increase in the number of women-themed films and women directors since the 1980s. Aşkan (2021), who analyzed the films competing in the national category at the Festival, concluded that these films have not sufficiently carried the characteristics of “national cinema” in recent years. Ekin (2011), who examined the Festival in terms of event tourism in the context of destination marketing, suggested that the principle of volunteerism should be emphasized and developed in the Festival and other activities related to the Festival. Finally, among the studies on the Antalya Golden Film Festival, is a detailed history prepared by Agah Özgüç (2003) for the 40th anniversary of the Festival.

As can be seen from this literature review, the lack of a political economy perspective is also the case for the literature on the Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival. However, Yetkiner's (2019) study is an exception in this respect. This study provides detailed data on the history, financing, institutional organization, etc. of major film festivals in Türkiye, including the Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival, and evaluates them from a political economy perspective. The present article, on the other hand, aims to build on Yetkiner's study by adding up-to-date data and evaluating the political economy implications of the financing of film festivals. Mosco (2009: 24) defines political economy as “the study of the social relations, particularly the power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources”. Film festivals lie at the heart of the film production, distribution and consumption. In this context, the financing of film festivals is a highly significant issue from a political economy perspective.

Global Film Festivals

Film festivals first emerged in Europe and this emergence has always been politically motivated. The initial aims of the “big three”, Venice, Cannes and Berlin, are important in terms of political economy. The Venice Film Festival, which started in 1932, aimed to show the cultural power of fascist Italy, the Cannes Film Festival, which started in 1946, aimed to restore France's international cinema market power lost to Hollywood, and the Berlin Festival, which started in 1951, aimed to turn West Berlin into a cultural center against the Soviets during the Cold War (De Valck, 2007; Ostrowska, 2016). Today's film festivals have similar functions and are designed to strengthen the soft power of hosting countries. In this context, they often receive financial and organizational support from institutions such as ministries of culture and tourism, due to their duty to contribute to the promotion of the country. However, as in the entire film industry, film festivals have also come under the dominance of the film industry and have become significantly commercialized. Even film festivals that claim to be independent have been affected to a certain extent by this commercialization process. Today, film festivals operate in line with the political economy of the film industry and play a key role in the production, distribution and screening processes of films.

Table 1 shows the list of top 5 global film festivals. This ranking is taken from the ranking list made by Stephen Da Vega (2024), a professor at Santa Barbara City College. Attendance figures for the Cannes, Venice and Sundance festivals are from the festival websites, other data is from Da Vega's lists.

Rank	Name	Establishment	Attendance	Media Attendance
1	Festival de Cannes	1946	35,000	4,376
2	Berlin International Film Festival	1951	340,000	3,696
3	Venice Film Festival	1932	35,000	3,500
4	Sundance Film Festival, Utah	1978	72,000	900
5	Toronto International Film Festival	1976	340,843	1,000

Table 1: Top 5 Global Film Festivals (Da Vega, 2024 and Festivals' web sites)

As can be seen by examining the list, all of these festivals are from the Western world and festivals from the so-called global South are not included in the list. There are, of course, alternative rankings to Da Vega's subjective ranking. However, this ranking is often referred to as the big five and is widely agreed upon as the most important and prestigious festivals. In recent years, a ranking of the next five has also been proposed, including Busan, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Kerala and Karlovy Vary. However, organizations such as the International Federation of Film Producers Associations (FIAPF), which accredits festivals, also play a decisive role in the importance and prestige of film festivals (Harbord, 2002). It is clear that the political attempts to establish a multipolar world order observed in recent years will now be reflected in the importance and prestige of world film festivals.

Film Festivals in Türkiye

The history of film festivals in Türkiye can be traced back to 1948 (Yetkiner, 2019; Erkıılıç, 2021). The Domestic Film Competition organized by the "Society of Domestic Filmmakers" in Istanbul in 1948 can be considered Türkiye's first film festival, although not in the modern film festival sense. Following this competition, the festivals organized by the Turkish Film Friends Association for three years in 1953, 1954 and 1955 have an important place in the history of Turkish film festivals (Yıldırım, 1990). In addition to these, there are also small-scale festivals or competitions organized by various associations, etc. in various cities in Türkiye, especially in Istanbul. However, Türkiye's major film festivals, as they are known today, began in the 1960s. Started in 1964 in Antalya and 1969 in Adana, these festivals were far from meeting the need for strong film festivals for Turkish cinema, which had already reached a certain stage, but they still aroused great interest among filmmakers and the public.

Undoubtedly, more professionally organized film festivals emerged after the 1980s. The Istanbul Film Festival, organized by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, was launched in 1982, while the Ankara Film Festival, organized by the World Mass Communication Foundation, was launched in 1991. Table 2 presents a list of the 5 major international film festivals in Türkiye. These festivals are among the international festivals listed on the official website of the General Directorate of Cinema of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Of course, the subjectivity of the ranking in this list can also be discussed. However, these festivals are included in the list because they are feature-length film festivals that have been organized regularly in recent years and receive a certain amount of financial support from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Rank	Name	Establishment Year	Attendance	Ministry Financial Support USD	Total Budget USD
1	Istanbul International Film Festival	1982	90.000	500.000	2.000.000
2	Antalya Golden Orange International Film Festival	1964	40.000	260.000	1.300.000
3	Adana Golden Boll International Film Festival	1969	35.000	345.00	1.000.000
4	Ankara International Film Festival	1991	50.000	290.000	1.000.000
5	Flying Broom International Women's Film Festival	1998	10.000	125.000	800.000

Table 2: Top 5 International Film festivals in Türkiye[1]

Apart from the ones on this list, there are many other important festivals that are specifically dedicated to short and documentary films. These include the Izmir International Short Films Festival, the Association of Documentary Filmmakers Documentary Festival and the Altın Safran International Documentary Film Festival. Today, it is claimed that there is an inflation of film festivals in Türkiye. Especially universities, local governments and various associations organize many film festivals that do not last long. However, it should be foreseen that some of these festivals will overcome difficulties and join the ranks of important and prestigious festivals in the years to come.

The most important issue discussed on financing is the political conflict between the local government and the central government. The debate becomes an important political issue when the local government and the central government are from different parties. Table 3 presents data to explain this political debate. The data here is the data announced by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. However, the Ministry has stopped publicizing the data since 2015. Therefore, the data presented in Table 3 covers the data between 2007 and 2014. Nevertheless, even this data can clearly show the political debate over its financing.

Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival

Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival started in 1964 with the initiatives of Avni Tolunay, the mayor of the period, in order to support the development of national cinema. Initially named as the "Antalya 1st Turkish Film Festival", the Festival has been called by different names over the years and has become an international festival since 2005 (Sözen, 2023). While the Festival was initially managed directly by the Antalya Municipality, the management was later undertaken by the Antalya Culture and

Arts Foundation (AKSAV), which was established in 1995 (Seçen, 2019). Since 2011, ANSET, a company of Antalya Metropolitan Municipality, started to work together with AKSAV in terms of financial management. When AKSAV was closed down in 2014 due to legal lawsuits, ANSET assumed the entire management of the Golden Orange Film Festival.

The financing of the Golden Orange Film Festival has been one of the most debated issues. Since its beginnings, the financing of the Festival has largely been undertaken by the Antalya Metropolitan Municipality. However, central government contribution has also been an important financing element in almost every period. In addition, various commercial sponsors and non-governmental organizations also contribute to the financing to a certain extent. The most important issue discussed on financing is the political conflict between the local government and the central government. The debate becomes an important political issue when the local government and the central government are from different parties. Table 3 presents data to explain this political debate. The data here is the data announced by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. However, the Ministry has stopped publicizing the data since 2015. Therefore, the data presented in Table 3 covers the data between 2007 and 2014. Nevertheless, even this data can clearly show the root causes of the political debate over its financing.

As can be seen from the analysis of Table 3, in the years when the Antalya Metropolitan Municipality was run by the Justice and Development Party (AKP), the average Ministry support was around 2 million USD per year. However, in the years when the Mayor's office was held by the Republican People's Party (CHP), the average annual Ministry support dropped to 377 thousand USD. A similar situation was observed for the period of CHP rule before 2004. This difference is at the heart of the political debate mentioned above. The determination of ministerial support according to the change of political power has been the subject of heated debates in both the Turkish Grand National Assembly and the Antalya Metropolitan Municipality Assembly. This problematic situation has also been mentioned both in Turkish art circles and in academic discussions (e.g.: Varlı Görk, 2010; Sözen, 2023).

Year	USD	Party
2002	37.772	CHP
2003	16.207	CHP
2004	251.072	CHP
2005	1.305.483	AKP
2006	2.098.342	AKP
2007	2.307.160	AKP
2008	2.697.287	AKP
2009	1.617.390	AKP
2010	533.689	CHP
2011	359.109	CHP
2012	278.987	CHP
2013	0	CHP
2014	708.895	CHP

Table 4: Financial Support from The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, by Years and Party[2]

On the other hand, the financing debate is still ongoing today. It was stated that the Festival budget for 2023 was 30.0000 million TL (1.300.000 USD) and the Ministry's contribution was 2 million TL (87.000 USD)[3]. However, in 2023 the Festival was cancelled due to political conflicts, and this budget was not realized. For 2024, Mayor Böcek stated that they will organize the Festival entirely with their own means, but the Governor of Antalya announced in his opening speech that the Ministry of Culture and Tourism supports the Festival. However, neither the Municipality nor the Ministry provided any information about the amount of support.

There have been many different assessments of the size of the Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival budget. For example, For the 2007 Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival's budget, Minister Ertuğrul Günay stated a total of 35 million TL (27 million USD) in his written answer to a parliamentary question[4]. On the other hand, Varlı Görk (2010), based on information in the press, states that the 2008 budget was 21 million TL. (16 million USD). The information that the 2024 Festival had a budget of 30 million TL (1,3 million USD) is not based on any real data other than the statement of Mayor Böcek in the press. Just as the Ministry does not disclose the financial support data, the Municipality does not disclose the real total budget data for the Festival. It is interesting that the Ministry and the Municipality, despite belonging to rival political parties, are jointly tight-lipped about the Festival budget.

Discussions and Conclusion

In this article, I have tried to discuss the financing of film festivals from a political economy perspective in the context of the Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival. The available data shows that the financial support given to the Festival by the Ministry varies depending on which party is in charge of the Metropolitan Municipality administration. This problem is a major obstacle to a healthy and stable structure of the Festival management. The financial burden of the Festival is borne by the Municipality,

as in other examples around the world. However, the healthiest way is a budget structure established through the coordination of different financial sources. Within this structure, the contribution of companies and civil society organizations is as important as the balance between central and local government.

The Ministry's contribution or the Municipality's primary financing must not overlook the fact that the funds used by both institutions are public money. Political competition should not legitimize the irrational use of public funds to any extent. In this context, both the Ministry and the Municipality agree on a lack of transparency regarding the public funds they use. This situation exacerbates the issues, hindering the promotion of democratic participation and the realization of public benefit expected from the festivals. For these reasons, it is an urgent duty for both the Ministry and the Municipality to publish all detailed data related to the financial aspects of the festivals. On the other hand, this responsibility for transparency does not rest solely with central and local governments; it also extends to sponsoring companies and civil society organizations. Unfortunately, the same lack of transparency is equally evident among private sector companies and civil society organizations.

This article undoubtedly has certain shortcomings. A significant limitation is the inability to obtain a longer period data related to the financial processes under review. Therefore, future studies are expected to include data suitable for longer-term historical analysis. Additionally, it is evident that examining the topic in comparison with other film festivals in Turkey, and in the world would enhance the academic strength of the study. Undoubtedly, all such studies could contribute to fostering more democratic, participatory, and functional film festivals.

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[1] Attendance figures are the estimates from the festivals' press releases and are not officially announced. Budget figures are also the estimates from the festivals' press releases and are not officially announced. Ministry financial support figures are the average values of the data officially released by the Ministry between 2007 and 2014 (Yetkiner, 2009). The financial support and budget figures for the Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival are taken from the speech made by CHP MP Cavit Arı at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey on 15.11.2023 (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 15.11.2023).

[2] Ministry Financial Support figures are from the data officially released by the Ministry between 2007 and 2014 (Yetkiner, 2009). Financial support figures for 2002, 2003, and 2004 are the official data from the written answer of Minister Ertuğrul Günay to a parliamentary question on 4.8.2009 (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 4.8.2009).

[3] CHP MP Cavit Arı's speech at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey on 15.11.2023. (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 15.11.2023).

[4] TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 23.7.2008.

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