

Why should public policies for cinema take non-commercial exhibition into account? The analysis of the Portuguese Institute of Cinema and Audiovisual database, 2007-2017

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Marta Miranda: Faculty of Economics, University of Porto/ PORDATA-Francisco Manuel dos Santos Foundation, marta.miranda94@gmail.com

Helena Santos: Faculty of Economics, University of Porto/ CITCEM & CEF.UP, hsantos@fep.up.pt

Luís Delfim Santos: Faculty of Economics, University of Porto/ CEF.UP, luisd@fep.up.pt



Perspective (1)

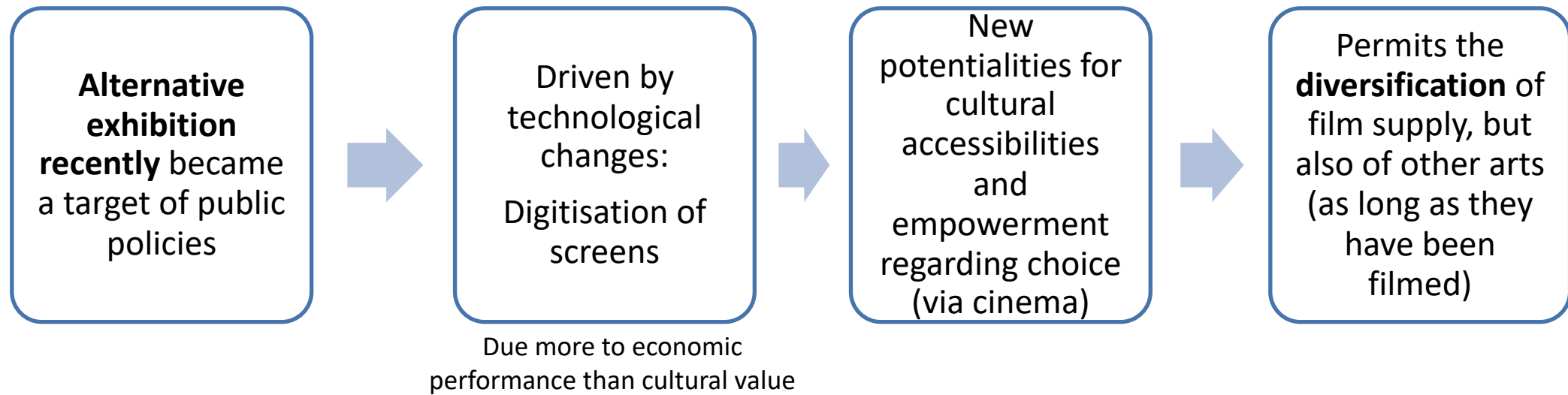
- **Cinema policies in Europe remain largely targeted to the market-driven aspects of the industry, rather than the cultural ones. Although this might be regarded as a quasi-natural effect of countering the US hegemony, questions arise when we go beyond the general picture.**
- **Cultural policy arguments widely recognize the power of cinema in shaping people's "visions of the world", i.e. perceptions, expectations, practices, identities, life styles... But culture has been addressed as an instrument for cinema economics, rather than the other way around, and this was reinforced by the liberal turn of the last decades of the 20th century (and the concomitant "creative turn" in European cultural policies, which induced the retreat of public policies).**
- **Articulating cinema economics and culture is particularly complex, and building an EU shared framework faces different obstacles, first of all due to uneven national characteristics and circumstances/ backgrounds.**

The opposition between the 'commercial' and the non-commercial (...) is always an opposition between small-scale and the large-scale ('commercial') production, i.e. between the primacy of production and the field of producers (...) and the primacy of marketing, audience, sales and success quantitatively; between the deferred, lasting success of 'classics' and the immediate, temporary success of [blockbusters] (...)"

Pierre Bourdieu, 1993 [1986]: 82 ('blockbusters' added instead of 'best-sellers' in the original)

- **Production is the main target of policies for cinema, the lion share of public funding and regulations, aiming at experimental, artistic-driven or not entertainment-only films. Distribution and exhibition are more dependent on market forces, thus more difficult to be intervened by the state. Digital technology (streaming) is aggravating this broad scenario, empowering (ever-growing) major global distribution companies.**
- **Many films produced with public support do not get theatrical release, as they do not fit commercial exhibition. When they do, they usually integrate the so-called alternative exhibition circuits (under public regulation); and face several barriers to attract "less competent" audiences, i.e. audiences that are not familiar with arts and culture out of mass media and entertainment industries.**
- **Non-commercial exhibition, included in the definitions of "alternative exhibition", refers to intrinsic cultural goals, thus calling upon the convergence between economics and cultural-educational policies. In other words, it means prioritising cultural democratisation (in the sense of wide cultural accessibility) combined with cultural democracy, i.e. sociocultural empowerment as the basis for free (critical) individual choices.**
- **The impacts of non-commercial exhibition are not immediate, and certainly impossible to measure by numbers of admissions. It is thus an almost invisible segment when we address cultural policies for cinema.**

Perspective (3)



What is the non-commercial exhibition segment?

“Traditional film societies screening films to members with a common interest in film appreciation, to pop-up screening events in non-traditional venues and village hall screening programmes offered by local groups for social and recreational purposes.”

(Jim Barratt & Sarah Jones, 2014: 8)



Additional details: [Project - NON-COMMERCIAL FILM EXHIBITION IN PORTUGAL \(weebly.com\)](http://Project-NON-COMMERCIAL-FILM-EXHIBITION-IN-PORTUGAL.weebly.com)

Portugal

- Small country (~10M inhabitants) with high socio-territorial asymmetries
- Peripheral European country
- Long-lasting dictatorship (1926-1974)
- Joined EU in 1986
- Recent, not stabilised, cultural policies
- **Portuguese cinematography internationally recognized and awarded (authorial), little national visibility/recognition**

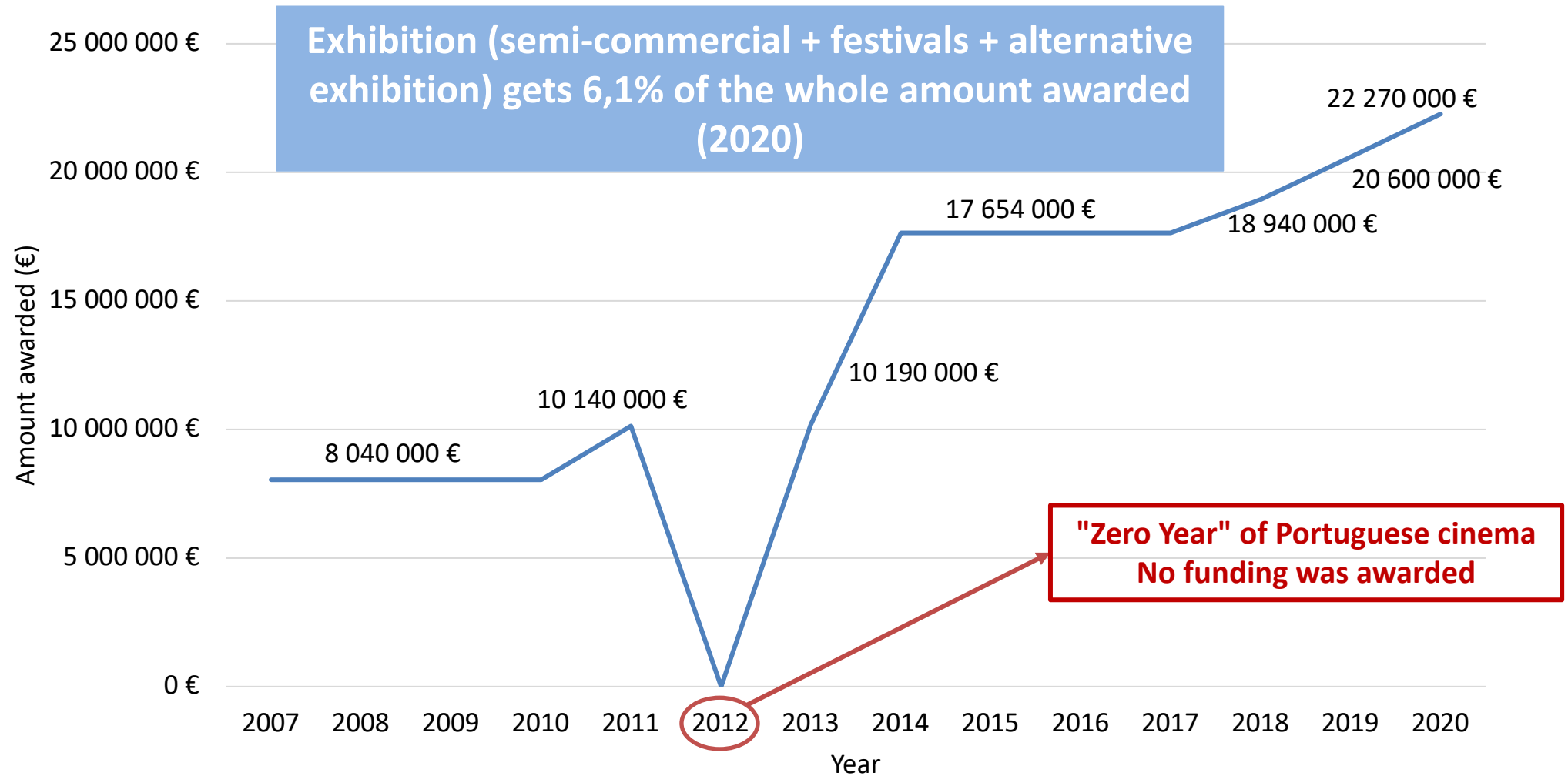
Portuguese Institute of Cinema and Audiovisual (ICA)

- (Stable organism since 2007)
- Responsible for the development of cinematographic and audiovisual activities
- Indirect administration by the state, with administrative and financial autonomy
- **Support programme for film exhibition in alternative circuits (targeted to non-profit entities)**
 - Exhibitors' requirements for eligibility:
 - Informatized ticketing system (implemented in 2004)
 - Exhibit minority filmographies (national and international, whose distribution in Portugal is inferior to 5% of the market share)
 - Program a minimum of 30 different sessions per year
 - Quota of national films
 - Provide a detailed exhibition programme

High centralisation of public support for cinema

Main trends (1)

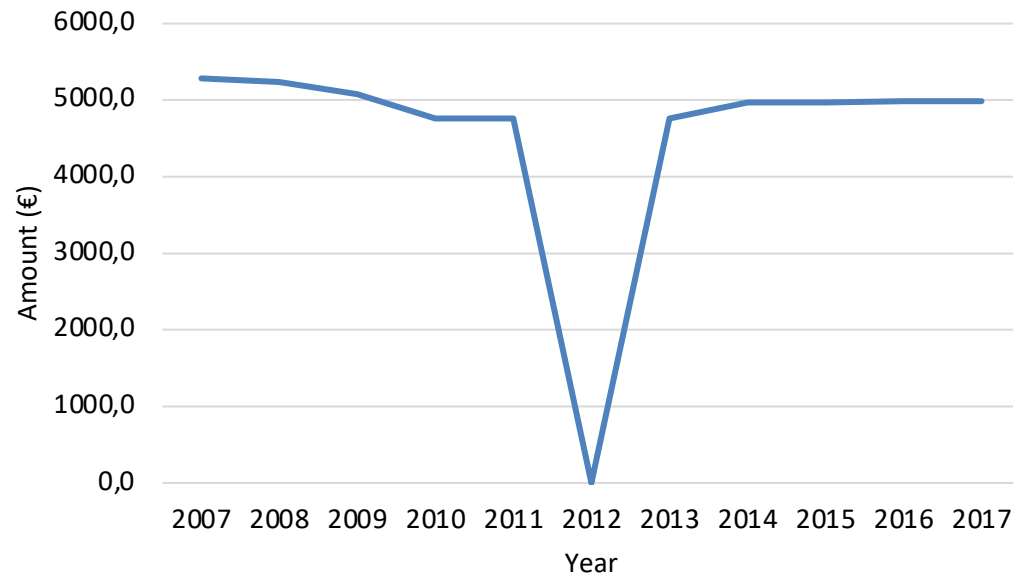
Amount of public support to the cinema and audiovisual sector between 2007 and 2020*



* non-deflated values

Main trends (2)

Average amount of funding awarded to alternative exhibition per entity and per year (2007-2017)⁽¹⁾ ⁽²⁾

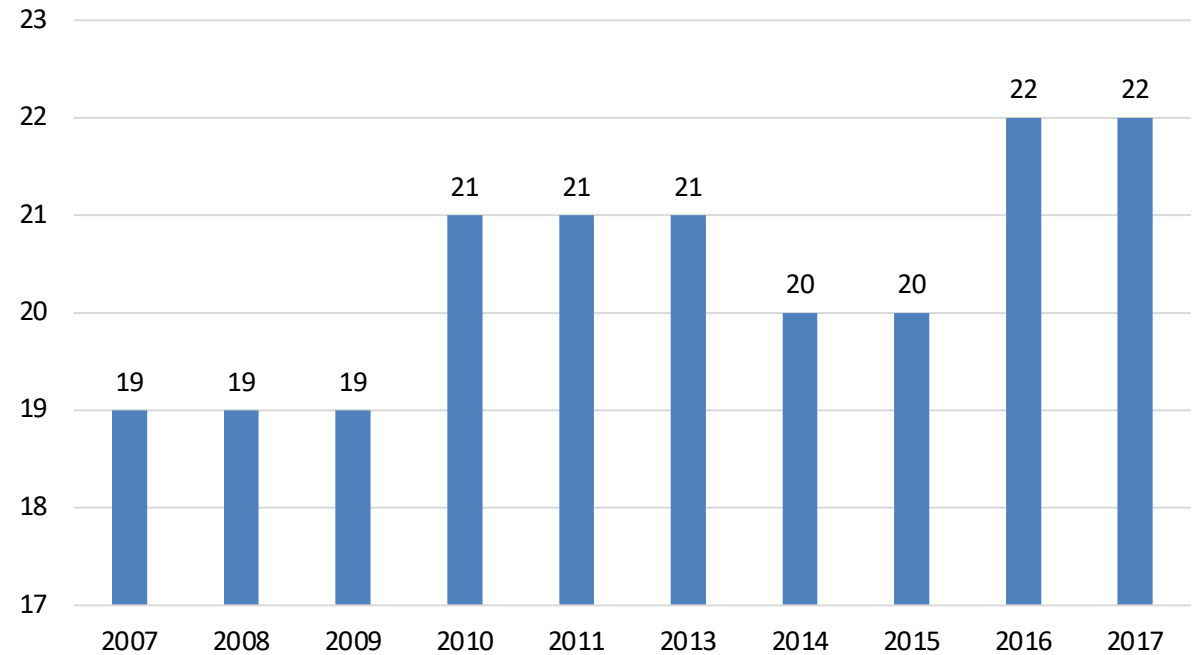


⁽¹⁾ non-deflated values

⁽²⁾ 2021: €10000 per year

**Funding is awarded through
bi-annual contests since
2014**

Number of financed entities (2007-2017)



Non-commercial exhibition database



- Started in 2004 (informatized ticket system implemented in 2013)
- More than 60 variables
- Agents involved
- Place of exhibition
- Resources used and funding amounts
- Films exhibited
- Target demographic
- A 'dynamic' database

ICA's NCE database ≠ Financial database

47
Exhibitors (NCE
database)

34
Exhibitors with ICA
support
(financial database)

14742
Film sessions

3753
Movie Titles

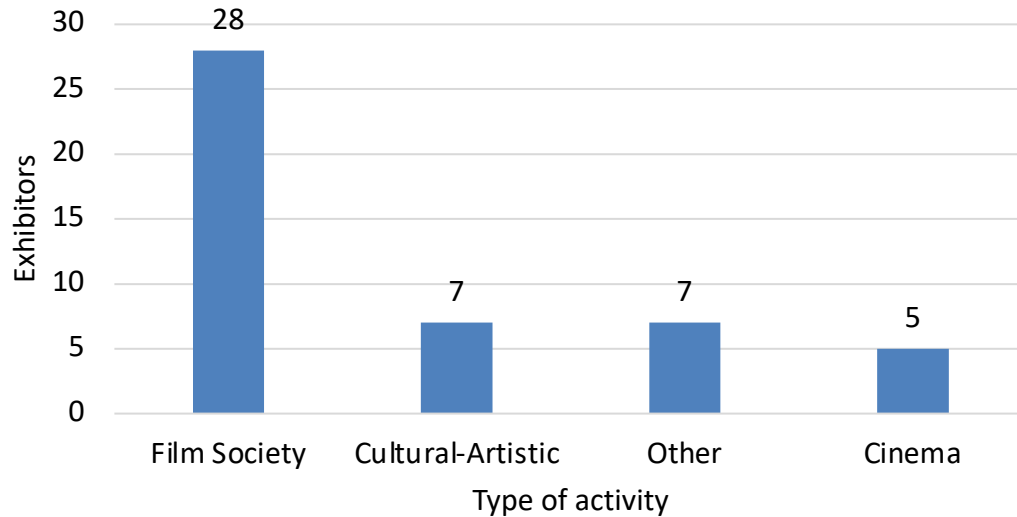
399
Multiple or thematic
sessions

- Film sessions + exhibitors registers incomplete
- Digital ticketing system by all entities

Why?

- **Film exhibition is often an intermediary activity for these exhibitors**
- **Informality, volunteer work and small size**

Number of exhibitors according to type of activity (N=47)



Film Society = Film exhibition

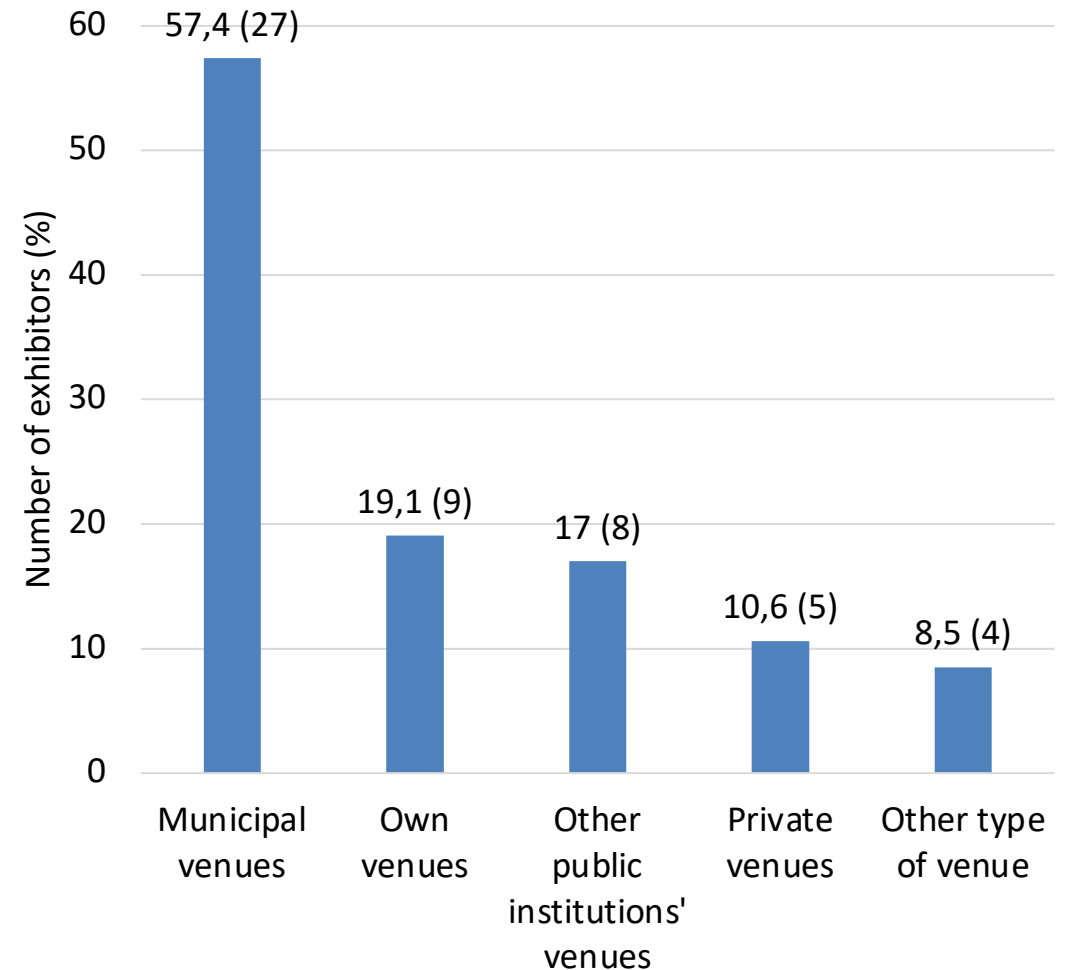
Cinema = Other cinema-related activities besides film exhibition

Cultural-Artistic = Multidisciplinary role, other cultural events

Other = Local development, social initiatives, municipal activities, sports

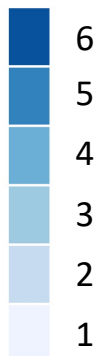
- High vulnerability
- High dependency on other institutions, local governments (municipalities) in the first place, BUT film exhibition is not a priority in cultural municipal agendas

Type of venue* (N=47)

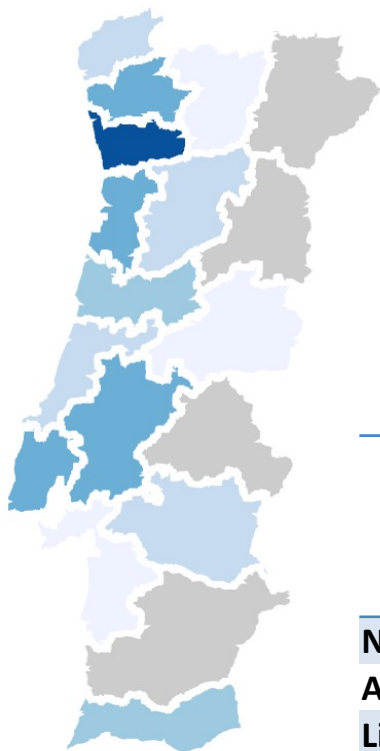


*total > 100% as the exhibitors tend to use more than one place of exhibition

Number of exhibitors



No data



- High territorial asymmetry
- Concentration in littoral + urban areas (cities)

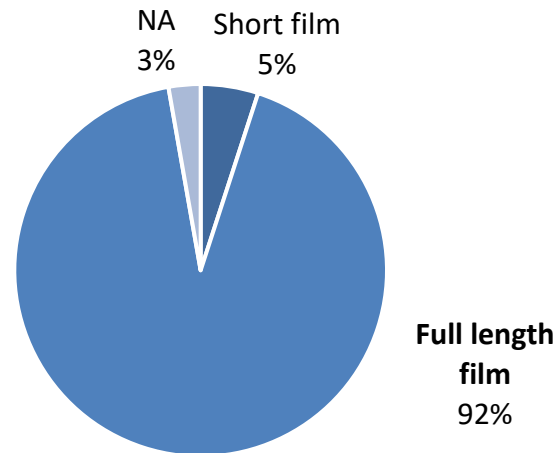
Region	Nº of exhibitors	Exhibitors (%)	Nº of sessions	Sessions (%)	Nº of spectators	Spectators (%)	Average number of spectators per session
North (excl. PMA)	9	19	2048	13,9	168991	24,7	83
Azores	6	13	562	3,8	38318	5,6	68
Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA)	5	11	1104	7,5	66436	9,7	60
Porto Metropolitan Area (PMA)	8	17	2363	16	128242	18,7	54
Alentejo	2	4	1217	8,3	58716	8,6	48
Algarve	3	6	1771	12	67801	9,9	38
Center	14	30	5677	38,5	156293	22,8	28
Total	47	100	14742	100	684797	100	46

Films (1)

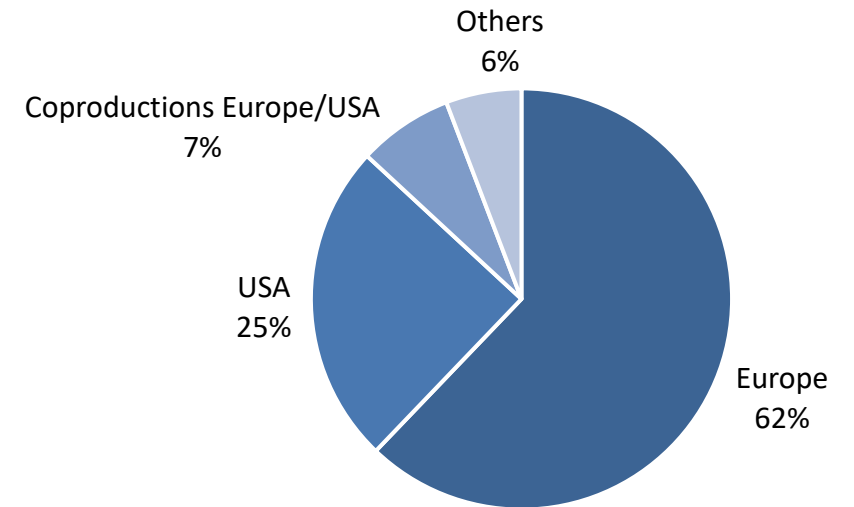


Kali, O Pequeno Vampiro, Regina Pessoa (2012), FR, CA, PT & CA: 9'20".

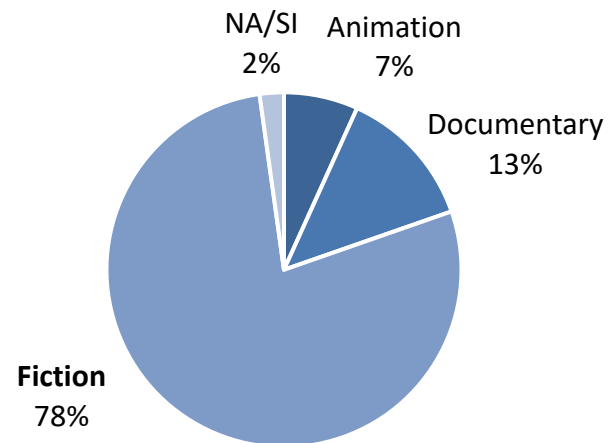
Length
(% per total number of sessions, N=14742)



Origin of the films - Regions (ICA)
(% per total number of movies, N=3753)



Type of film
(% per total number of sessions, N=14742)

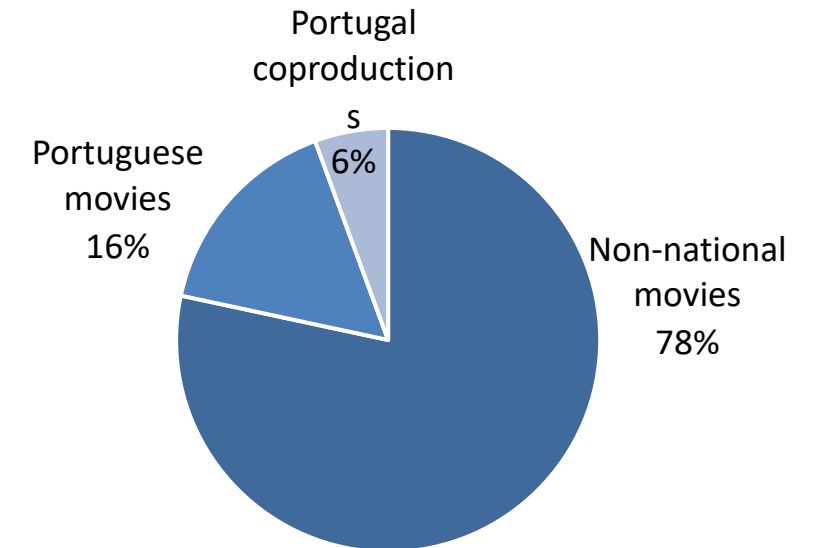


- Outside the commercial segment short films are programmed exceptionally, so a higher percentage was expected. (Shorts include most of animation as authorial films)
- European films are dominant

Films (2)

- Portuguese Films – 22%
- Residual presence (even though many are often awarded at international film festivals)
- Co-productions are mostly established with European countries and Portuguese speaking countries
- Portugal established several co-productions as main producing country but never as co-producer

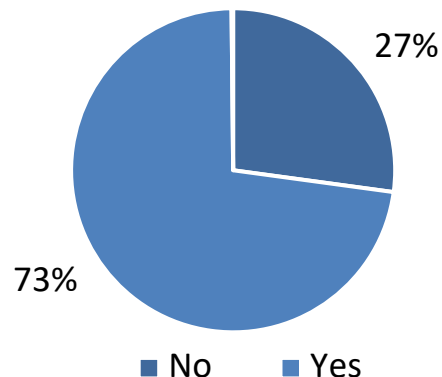
Portuguese movies
(% per total number of movies, N=4753)



Vitalina Varela, Pedro Costa (2019), PT: 2h 07'

Films (3)

**Commercial premiere in Portugal
(% total number of films, N=3753)**



**Number of films that premiered in Portugal
(aggregated by year)**

Year (aggregated)	N	%
1981-2000	238	6,3
Until 1980 (1914-1980)	262	7,0
2001-2007	441	11,8
2008-2012	868	23,1
After 2012	920	24,5
NA (e.g. thematic session; did not premiere in Portugal)	1024	27,3
Total	3753	100,0

47,6%

There seems to be an attempt to exhibit contemporary films, most likely to attract a wider audience (young people in some cities):

- NCE is often seen as distant from the commercial one, but these results show the exact opposite
- Almost 50% of the titles premiered after 2007 (66% when removing NA)

Time counts... and free entrance (apparently) too

Only 9 exhibitors with regular activity between 2007 and 2017, of which:

- 7 film societies
- 1 cultural association dedicated to cinema activities (including 1 film festival)
- 1 association dedicated to local development

6 exhibitors did not charge ticket fees, of which:

- 4 film societies
- 1 cultural association dedicated to cinema activities (including 1 film festival)
- 1 cultural-artistic association

Seniority of the entities (year of foundation)

Period	N	%
2005-2017	12	26
1995-2004	10	21
1975-1994	8	17
1950-1974	10	21
Until the end of WWII	4	9
NA	3	6
Total	47	100

Preliminary econometric estimation

General model:

$$spectators_{it} = \beta_1 + \beta_2 ticket_{price_{it}} + \beta_3 portug_{it} + \beta_4 anim_{it} + \beta_5 fict_{it} + \beta_6 full_{it} + \beta_7 funding_{it} + \mu_{it} \quad (1)$$

Variables	
Spectators	total number of spectators per exhibitor and year of exhibition
Ticket_price_{it}	ratio between total revenue and number of spectators, in euros, obtained by exhibitor i during year t
Anim _{it}	percentage of animation films exhibited by exhibitor i during year t
Docum _{it}	percentage of documentary films exhibited by exhibitor i during year t
Fict _{it}	percentage of fiction films exhibited by exhibitor i during year t
Short _{it}	percentage of short films exhibited by exhibitor i during year t
Full _{it}	percentage of full-length films exhibited by exhibitor i during year t
Portug_{it}	percentage of Portuguese movies exhibited by exhibitor i during year t
Funding_{it}	assumes the value “1” if exhibitor i received public funding during year t, and “0” otherwise

Main results:

- **Characteristics of the films and of the exhibitors** influence demand for cinema in NCE circuits
- Variables concerning **ticket price and Portuguese films** were found to be statistically significant: **spectators are price sensitive and Portuguese films seem to deter audiences**
- Variable **funding** was found to be statistically significant with a **positive impact on the number of spectators.**

Final remarks (1)

**Non-commercial
exhibition segment**

Promotes cultural diversity and contributes to cultural democracy and democratisation

- Despite urban concentration, delivers cinema to isolated areas
- Sometimes NCExhibitors are the only local cultural supply
- Important weight of European films (and universal minor filmographies)
- Portuguese films get (some) visibility

*1/3 of the
population
does not have
access to any
type of film
exhibition*

Final remarks (2)



Arabian Nights, vol. 1-3, Miguel Gomes, 2015, PT, DE, FR & CH.

1. Need to develop the research
2. COMPARISON WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

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