



Monopolization in Turkish Cinema and its Consequences: Transformation of Cinematic Space and Genre Diversity Problem

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Abstract

Street cinemas in Turkey have been disappearing rapidly, especially in the last twenty years. The transition to the liberal economic model that was inaugurated in the 1980s turned to the import substitution economy model, and this transformation has caused consumption habits in the direction of the United States of America (USA). This situation, especially in the 2000s, ended up with the transformation of the cinematic space from street cinemas to shopping malls and affected the audience in terms of perceiving cinema as a by-product of fast consumption. In this article, the cinematic space, which has been transformed since the mid-1990s, will be discussed based on the effects of economic liberalization and urbanization policies in parallel to the economic metamorphosis beginning with the 1980s. Then, it will theoretically and statistically focus on the role of the adoption of the US culture and the monopolization of movie theater ownership and film distribution within the reconfiguration of cinematic spaces and concentrated film consumption in the direction of low-quality films in Turkey.

Keywords: local movie theater; monopolization in Turkish cinema; distribution, screening; cinematic space

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Introduction

The extinction of street cinemas has been a continuing phenomenon since the late 1980s. With Turgut Özal and his neo-liberal policies beginning in the 1980s, the public spaces were redesigned due to the liberalization process. Small street cinemas also faced this state of transformation [1]. This study will analyse the reasons and results of the disappearance of street movie theatres. In order to attain its goal, it is organized by breaking down into five main sections: The initial part will examine the collapse of the percentage (pursantaj) system and the commencing of the video period ended up with the transformation of cinema consumption as a home-based activity. Furthermore, it will focus on monopolization and economic transformation as the first result of this collapse. Then the problems in the transition to the neo-liberal economy and the import substitution industrialization model emerged, which resulted in the reconfiguration of public spaces and rentier capitalism. This is followed by spreading shopping mall construction as a consequence of this economic

model. Between 1995 and 2005, the infrastructure of the cinema economy in Turkey and the advancing hegemony in distribution and screening will be demonstrated by means of economic and statistical data. Throughout the part that summarizes the situation between 2005 and 2015, the structure of Turkey's cinema economy and the unprecedented monopolization, which is an outcome of the legally permitted domination of Mars Group, in this period, will be propounded as the reason for locating cinematic space into shopping malls. In the last part, the problem of screening independent cinema and shrinking production diversity will be emphasized in line with the monopolization in cinema economy and cinematic space [2].

Transforming Political and Economic Climate: The Neo-liberalization Process Beginning with the 1980s

The deficit of consumption goods and foreign exchange, which emerged as a result of statist economic practices before 1980,

were tried to be solved by substituting a new economic model with the instruction given by the Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel to State Planning Organization Undersecretary Turgut Özal. The Decisions of January 24, 1980, implemented in this direction, appear as the turning point of the progress from statist economy to neo-liberal capitalism for Turkey. Özal can be regarded as the leading actor of this transformation, since he became Prime Minister in 1983 and accelerated economic reforms [3].

Keynesian social state policies transformed into neo-liberal economic model after the economic crisis in the 1970s (Palley, 2005). The New Right, known as Reaganism in the USA, Thatcherism in the UK, and Özalism in Turkey, became the symbol of a rapid transition to neo-liberal capitalism; however, due to insufficient production in Turkey, the market economy has transformed and evolved into the import substitution economic model. Throughout this period, film production in Yeşilçam almost halted. With the beginning of the 1990s, the economic structure of cinema, as well as the period of import substitution industrialization, has led to an economic and cultural portrait in which Hollywood cinema dominated the Turkish market. In addition, the novel economy policies paved the way for the emergence of consumer culture. Before examining this period, the explanation of the percentage (pursantaj) system, a regional production style unique to Turkey, is significant in terms of understanding what kind of economic grounds Hollywood-like film production, distribution, and screening have in Turkey [4].

Percentage System, the Economic Model of Turkish Cinema that Laid behind the Yeşilçam Mode of Filmmaking

The period between 1960 and 1970, the culture of Yeşilçam cinema grounded upon a fast and populist production style, entitled by Yeşilçam Street in İstanbul Beyoğlu, which became the unofficial title of Turkish cinema with the highest box office numbers. The elemental economic model of this production style was the percentage system, which stemmed from regional operating. Accordingly, Turkey was divided into six regions, and each region had its own companies producing films in accordance with local demand. Also, this system is a production model similar to the Stardom System in Hollywood grounded upon the actors who had fans in their regions. According to this system, the production companies made one-year contracts with the movie theatres in advance; and then produced their films [5].

The production companies met with a couple of legal obstacles different from the advantages provided to distributors during this period. Throughout the 1970s, 25% tax was demanded from domestic distributors, whereas this rate was 70% for international companies as a consequence even large companies remained under the control of distributors. The producers merely took about 40% to 60% of the revenue in this production and screening model; however, the films that generated higher box office numbers than expected were given additional shares. The producers could not make long-term investments due to the one-year contracting system, which was central for Yeşilçam's collapsing process. Although all these applications seemed to be disadvantageous for the producers, the screening of small-

budget films was assured thanks to the guarantees given to the movie theaters. Even though the exact box office figures are not known, Yeşilçam's economically most prosperous years were the 1970s.

Despite the relative success of the percentage system, the regional production prevented the accumulation of capital as well as some other problems that occurred due to this unique system. The money earned from the cinema was invested by the producers in different industries but not in the cinema. This situation precluded the establishment of the cinema infrastructure, and except for the independent, small-budget productions, filmmaking, which remained under the tastes of monopolies determined by masses, inhibited the development of new genres in Turkish cinema. The producers were not provided with benefits such as tax reductions, and this situation restricted new investments of production companies to the industry in Turkish cinema. The abovementioned reasons led to the collapse of the production system in the 1970s, the withdrawal of the main actors from the cinema, and their replacement by small companies' low-budget productions, including sex and video films [6-8].

1980s Families Withdrawal from Halls: The Spread of Video Film and/or Low-Quality Production

By the agency of the 1980 Coup in Turkey and the repressive environment that emerged before the coup and economic problems, various independent filmmakers and important producers left the cinema to small companies and their poor-quality productions. Moreover, televisions and video players that become widespread in homes, the state television TRT 1's enlargement of its broadcast area after the trial broadcasts that commenced in 1968, and the effect of the right-left political conflict that turned into the street fights since the beginning of the 1970s, resulted in the cinema audience and especially the families to stay at their homes. This situation paved the way for sex cinema and video film production. As of the mid-1980s, although Turkish cinema began to solve the problem of film stock and technical equipment, the devaluation experienced in the country increased the price of film production seriously, and the production of a film once a year by even large producers began to be considered as a success after all economic problems emerged after the end of percentage system. The domestic distributors, for whom the producers' profits cover around 40%, were also adversely affected by this situation and faced severe economic difficulties with the effect of video film distribution suitable for home consumption [9].

Consequently, in the 1980s, Turkish cinema came to the forefront by the production of video, sex, and arabesque singer films. With the collapse of Yeşilçam, the bankruptcy of this system, and the output of mainstream cinema's coming to an end; video film producers also put their weight on the distribution sector. Sex movies almost prevailed over the industry. Despite the oppressive environment of the 1980 Coup, these films were freed from censorship and continued to appear in Turkish cinemas. After the censorship of the singers of the arabesque music genre on TRT 1, arabesque films, which were a sort of video clips of these singers,

became part of low-quality filmmaking with the sex movies. This cinematic style, which emerged instead of Yeşilçam films targeting families, caused the withdrawal of this target audience from the cinema, leaving its place to a new younger generation audience. Although independent cinema brought prestigious awards from international festivals to Turkey, it could not find a chance to be screened in movie theatres. The movies, produced in a week or two on a small budget and starring adult-themed or arabesque singers, have reigned the mainstream cinema. In addition to the family's leaving, the movie theaters were closed due to the spread of video players, since the movie theaters are replaced by unauthorized screenings in hotels, pubs, and parks. As a result, the movie theaters either went bankrupt or turned into theaters that screened sex movies. Concordantly, families approximately left the theaters. The 1980s low-quality production system appeared as the second blow to movie theaters after the collapse of the Yeşilçam system [10].

1990s: American Cinema's Takeover of the Turkish Market with the Government Incentive

With Özal's initiative, "the country's economy opened its doors to foreign capital", and the power of the foreign capital also put pressure on the Turkish cinema economy and consumption culture. As a result of the import substitution model, with the amendment made in the Foreign Capital Law in 1987, the American distribution giants were granted the right to enter the Turkish market without an intermediary company. In addition to this legal change, it was not difficult for the American monopolies to seize the distribution and display market in a short time in the face of poor-quality films, in consonance with video film production. Thanks to the diffusion of neoliberal policies and the escalation in the consumption of USA origin films, the consumer culture in society has kept its flourishing acceleration. The first shopping mall, Galleria, which Özal also attended, was opened on October 1, 1980, and became a symbol of cultural change that beguiled the 1990s.

Paramount and Touchstone Pictures' distributors, UIP and Warner Bros. entered Turkey and changed the structure of distribution in the country market in the direction of Americanization. Concordantly, the distributor firms importing European films are driven into bankruptcy by American firms; the domestic productions and European films inaugurated to be screened in the weeks leftover from Hollywood films (Kutlar, 1994, p.20). Except for Özen Film, the domestic film distributors were almost completely wiped out from the market. The American influence in Turkish cinema is further enhanced by the fact that Hollywood distributors have made special contracts with screening chains inclusive of AFM, Avşar Film, and Prestige, all of which were just emerging. In the 1990s, AFM appeared as the most powerful chain of the screening market, and by advancing the multiplex hall tradition that began with Beyoğlu FİTAŞ in 1965, this company became the first example of megaplexes operating in a shopping mall.

Between 1989 and 1996, the dominance of Hollywood films prevented the release of 329 of the 407 printed domestic films, and the precluding of European and Turkish films negatively affected small-scale, local cinemas that did not make special

agreements with American distribution giants. The American influence reshaped the cinema consumption habits of the society, and as a result, the movie theaters with single or a few screens were replaced with their places to multiplexes or megaplexes located in shopping malls. Concomitantly, in line with the government policies and the demand in the society, the number of shopping malls expanded to 12 in 1995 in this period as well.

Although various political stances were tried against Hollywood hegemony, this was not turned into a state policy. For example, the law proposal, which includes granting the right to screen at least 25% of domestic films and investing at least 40% of the profits of foreign companies, proposed by Kırşehir deputy Gökhan Maraş, was not accepted under the pressure of the United States Film Marketing Association (USFMA) (Çetin Erus, 2007, p. 121). While the FIYAP report, which was prepared with the participation of 5600 cinema authorities of the era, suggested some regulations, inclusive of prohibition or taxation of public screenings in cafes and bars, the abolition of the old cinema law, the movie purchases made in cooperation with TRT as well as the ban of sex movies screening in big cities such as Istanbul and Ankara. Thanks to this reaction generated in the cinema circles, some regulations protecting Turkish cinema were implemented; however, the expected transformation in film production and distribution could not be realized.

The number of productions, which averaged 70 films in Turkey, declined to 10 films in the 1990s, as demonstrated in detail by means of Table 1, and two-thirds of these films could not be screened; consequently, whereas the share of domestic films in the cake was 84% in 1984, it decreased to 16% in 1994. The cinema complexes consisted of 3-5 halls with pocket theaters, which replaced giant halls with a capacity of 1000 people, growingly proliferated in this period. This situation and the shrinking box office numbers diminished the number of cinema complexes/halls in Turkey from 3000 to 400. Street fights poor quality production, video players, and governmental policies, as well as the spread of televisions, brought film production in Turkish cinema to an end. Therefore, throughout the 1990s, Turkish cinema suffered from serious losses in terms of both the number of the audience and the number of theaters. (Table 1)

From 1995 to 2005: The Renaissance of Turkish Cinema and the Increasing Shift of Cinema Consumption to Shopping Malls

By the mid-1990s, Turkish cinema commenced regaining its audience. The revival that started with Şerif Gören's Amerikalı in

Table 1: The Number of Produced and Screened Domestic Films between 1989 and 1994 [2].

Year	Number of Films	Films Screened
1989	99	12
1990	74	12
1991	33	17
1992	82	11
1993	82	16
1994	37	10

1993, and was accelerated by blockbuster hits, such as İstanbul Beneath My Wings (1996) directed by Mustafa Altıoklar and Yavuz Turgul's The Bandit (1996). In this respect, noticeably proliferating film production and the share of domestic films in total revenue, which is illustrated in Graph1, gives a clear idea for the Renaissance of Turkish cinema. That is to say, Turkish cinema had commenced attracting its audience to the theaters again. In addition to the box office revenues, with the implementation of American-style marketing strategies, serious revenues began to be obtained with the sales of movie music CDs, t-shirts, and TV broadcasts (Donmez-Colin, 2010, p. 211). Concomitantly, this period was the years of the rise of the independent cinema, which initialized with Reha Erdem's film A Ay (1988) and became more evident with Derviş Zaim's film Somersault in a Coffin, released in 1996. This respected approach, which would later be called 'The New Independent Turkish Cinema', returned with awards from prestigious film festivals in Europe and became comparable to the Iranian New Wave.

In the same period, social and political change and crises continue to occur in Turkey. Due to the death of Özal, the Homeland Party lost its political impact, and this one-party period was followed by coalitions. The banking and finance sector gained importance, and with the proliferation of the neo-liberal policies across the society, collectivism began to be replaced by individualism. However, this transformation, the permission of private TV channels' broadcast, and the 1994, 1998, and 2001 crises did not severely affect the cinema industry. The cinema consumption gradually shifted to shopping malls, and although the acceleration in production stopped during the crisis periods, its increase continued in general.

The developing domestic productions followed a stable course in 2004, and the share of distribution actors reshaped according to growing domestic production. In particular, Özen Film, which had focused on domestic film distribution, had utilized the rise of Turkish cinema. UIP, which did not distribute Turkish films, lost half of its market share by abate from 40% to 20%, and Warner Bros. took the leadership of the distribution market. Although the 2001 economic crisis reduced the market share of domestic productions, the percentage of Turkish cinema in the cake has broadened since 2003, and these films have become the top of the list of blockbuster films.

The top three largest companies had managed almost the entire market between 1995 and 2005. During this period, Warner Bros. dominated 30% of the domestic film distribution revenue. The big three companies, Warner Bros., UIP, and Özen Film, earned between 70% and 80% of the total box office receipts by the early 2000s, as displayed in Chart 2 (Turkish Films Comparison of the First 51 Weeks of the Year, n.d., para. 1). As Özen Film realized the potential of domestic films and focused on them, its share in the distribution of these films increased every year and reached 72% in 2005. In the same year, the box office revenue of Turkish films was 40%, and since 2007, solely in 2012, the share of foreign films was more than domestic films at the box office numbers. Contrary to the Turkish market, in EU countries, the share of national cinemas in the total box office numbers remained at 16% in 2015. This statistic reveals the momentum of Turkish cinema obviously. Consequently, the number of domestic films released, which was 29 in 2005, reached 147 in 2017.

On the one hand, the number of domestic cinema production and the total share stepped up, whereas the number of shopping malls in the country was also escalating rapidly. The number of shopping malls across the country, which was 12 in 1995, expanded to 106 in 2006, as demonstrated in Table 4. Meanwhile, between 1994 and 1998, "while 209 movie theaters were closed, only 4 new movie theaters met their audience. The halls that are most preferred by the audience were taken over by the chain screening companies located in the shopping malls (Figure 1).

From 2005 to 2015: The Delivery of Small-Scale Cinema Businesses to Chain Screening Companies and Its Economic and Social Reasons

Justice and Development Party (JDP) government took over ruling power on November 3, 2002, Turkey entered the period of rentier capitalism. Rentier policies targeting the development of the construction sector expedited, since this mode of economic model provided large and easy profit margins. Hence, this government attached special importance to the construction industry. The policies that emphasized the city rent supported the construction of shopping malls in the valuable territories of the city.

In the period between 2006 and 2018, the number of shopping had malls ascended from 117 to 447; as a consequence, the

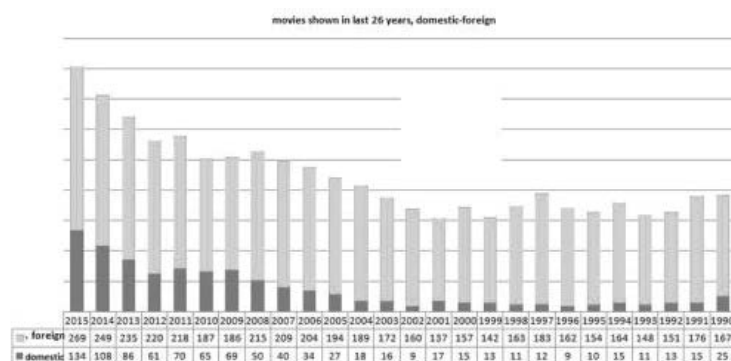


Figure 1 Number of Films Released in the Last 26 Years by Comparing Domestic and Foreign Films (Yavuz, 2015).

number of movie theaters located in malls followed this curve (Alışveriş Merkezleri Altın Çağına Henüz Ulaşmadı [Shopping Centers Haven't Reached Their Golden Age Yet], 2017, para. 11). Turkey appeared as Europe's leader in shopping mall construction in the context of the allocated land and budget along with Russia (Aslanhan, July 2017). With the growth of chain companies, the ratio of movie theaters located in shopping malls escalated to 74.1%, as illustrated in Table 2 (Tamer et al., 2016, p.49). With the spread of shopping mall culture among consumers, the cinema halls with wide screens comprised of single or few screens were replaced with multiplex or megaplexes (Table 2).

The monopolization transformed the distribution network. By the mid-2000s, it is possible to talk about a monopolized structure in the distribution market of the cinema sector in terms of total revenues and audience share. UIP ranked in the top three, Warner Bros. and Tiglon companies were approximately 75% between 2005 and 2015, and this share reached 90% between 2009 and 2013 (Tamer et al., 2016, p.57).

Depending on the success of several blockbuster films provided by domestic or foreign film distributors, the top three distribution companies had changed from year to year, but by 2015 UIP, Warner Bros., and Tiglon prevailed. After Tiglon withdrew from the market in 2015 due to financial difficulties, UIP and Warner Bros. became prominent in the market. Besides, Tiglon would later be replaced by Mars Entertainment.

Even though the number of actors ascended in terms of domestic film distribution in comparison with the 1990s, it is a fact that the hegemony of big companies was also remaining their power. In the 2010s, Pinema and Mars Distribution emerge as the most prominent actors besides UIP. By distributing approximately 43% of the new domestic films released in 2015, Pinema, Mars Entertainment, and UIP accounted for approximately 80% of the total revenue from domestic films in the same year (Tamer et al., 2016, p. 14). Mars Entertainment, which had just entered the market and was also flourishing in the movie theater ownership, had become the second-largest player in domestic film distribution in a short time, with a 27% share in domestic

films, which had far exceeded that of Hollywood films (Figure 2).

Monopolization in Distribution and Screening Rising in the 2010s

Mars Group: Hegemony in Distribution and Display

The structures of the movie theater management and distribution were entirely transformed during the 2010s through the emergence of Mars Group and, later, its merger with AFM. By 2006, chain companies had 354 halls with a ratio of 29.8%; the remaining 705 halls were in the hands of small and medium-sized enterprises. AFM managed 140 theaters, and it was the largest in the industry with a ratio of 11.8. Cinematic space was shifting towards shopping malls in parallel with this transformation. Established in 2001, Mars Group operated both in the distribution and screening markets. This group's acquisition of Tepe Cinemaxx Group is a springboard. Cinemars & Tepe Cinemaxx (the group's name in the screening industry) appeared as an expanding actor suddenly turned into the second-largest chain. This group was owning 67 halls with a ratio of 5.6% in general in the beginning (Çetin Erus, 2007, p. 12). With the financial support of the corporate it was affiliated with Mars Group ranked the top of the sector in just two years. However, the turning point in the display market was experienced with the merger between Mars Group and its follower AFM. After the merger, Mars Group had become the owner of 432 theaters by means of 183 theaters belonging to AFM across Turkey and attained a 44.5% dominance of cinema hall management (Tamer et al., 2016, p. 19) (Figure 3).

Mars Group also operates in the distribution sector. The Group's share of distribution hovered between 7% and 20% in the early 2000s and was third in the industry behind UIP and Warner Bros. (Tamer et al., 2016, p. 37). In the distribution of local productions, the company ranked first after Özen Film's downsizing. In 2017, Mars Group moved up to the second rank overall in distribution. First time in the Turkish cinema industry, a single group took possession of such a dominance—in both distribution and screening, namely in two of the three basic economic combinations of cinema together with production. Mars Group continued its way by strengthening its hegemony in the industry.

The monopoly generated by the merger of the two giants of the movie theater business due to the inadequacy of legal practices has always attracted attention in terms of the revenue Mars Group held and its impact on the market. An attorney, Erkan Ankara's lawsuit to the Council of State to stop the execution of the merger decision has also increased the complexity of the process (İrfan Demirkol, personal interview, April 21, 2017). While the Council of State overturned the Competition Authority's

Table 2: The Number of Cinema Halls in the Shopping Malls or Not Located in Shopping Malls (Tamer et al., 2016, p.49).

Cities	Movie Theaters Located in Shopping Malls (%)	Movie Theaters not Located in Shopping Malls (%)
İstanbul	80,4	19,6
Ankara	85,4	14,6
İzmir	80,4	19,6
Diğer Şehirler	63,5	36,5
Türkiye	71,4	28,6

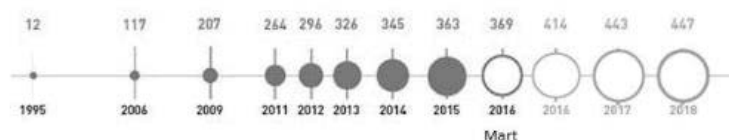


Figure 2 Number of shopping malls in Turkey between 1996 and 2008 (1995-2018) (Shopping Centers Haven't Experienced Their Golden Age Yet, 2017, para. 11).

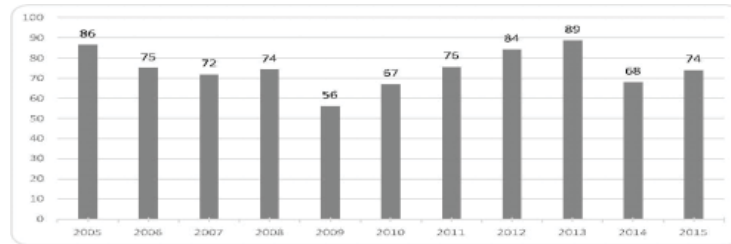


Figure 3 Total share of the three big distributors in the sector (Tamer, et al., 2016, p. 10).

decision, this plaintiff withdrew the case in December 2012. On the other hand, the Council of State stood behind its decision order to implement the 'public interest principle' in a situation that displayed the possibility of monopolization. The Competition Authority, on the other hand, did not impose any sanctions. AFM, which was traded on the stock exchange, was suspended from through decision but did not report this with a material event disclosure; therefore, Capital Markets Board fined this company 675 thousand Turkish Liras (Tamer et al., 2016, p. 41). However, the lack of execution of the law is evident in the case of AFM-Mars when anti-competitiveness is taken into account.

As stated in the 'Paramount Decision' of the US Supreme Court in 1948, it was forbidden for the same company to operate vertically in two economic components of the cinema. For example, a company that owns a movie theater is not able to take part in distribution or production. This decision sets a standard for various national cinema economies. According to the Competition Authority report, since 2014, Mars Group has made a vertical integration that includes distribution and screening (Tamer et al., 2016, p.24). This merger still maintains its dubious position on the grounds that it violates the Turkish Competition Law.

Mars Group continued to develop and became a monopoly in distribution and movie theater management and confined movie theater consumption to shopping malls. In addition to its domination in movie theater management and distribution, Mars Group has established a great hegemony through sub-groups in the stages of advertising and production. For instance, thanks to its dominance over movie theater ownership, this group also earned the total profit of advertisements, screened in its movie theater chain (Cinemaximum), which played a considerable role in the bankruptcy of FIDA Film (İrfan Demirkol, personal interview, April 21, 2017). Parallel to this situation, as shown in Table 3, the ratio of small-scale street cinemas to the total number of theaters was 70.2% in 2006; however, multiplexes or megaplexes, which were located in shopping malls and owned by monopolies continued to flourish uncontrollably and reversed this ratio (Table 3).

The market dominance of the Mars Group continued to ascend, and by 2015, this group separately owned 52% of the revenue as a result of its 54.1% share of hall management across Turkey. The halls owned by this company consisted of multiplexes or megaplexes, generally located in shopping malls following the trend across the world and Turkey. As a result of the group's

Table 3: Number of Halls Owned by Chain Cinemas and Small-Scale Businesses (2006) [9].

6 Largest Companies Owning Movie Theaters	The Numbers of Movie Theaters These Companies Owned	Their Shares (%)
	354	29,8
AFM	140	11,8
Cinemars & Tepe Cinemax	67	5,6
Tüze Grubu	66	5,5
Cinmall	28	2,4
Özen Film	28	2,4
Cinecity	25	2,1
Independent Theaters	835	70,2

industrial dominance, the ratio of movie theaters in the shopping malls had reached 70%. In the light of this information, Mars Group, which previously dominated movie theater ownership, has undoubtedly converted into a monopoly.

The Digital Transformation Process: A New Burden for the Small-Scale Cinemas

The digitization in Turkish halls began in 2005 and appeared as a huge economic problem for small-scale movie theaters. Initially, this new technology was expensive and generated a burden of around US\$ 200,000 per screen for cinema operators. While the rate of digitalization in Europe increased to 52% in 2011, this rate remained around 13% in Turkey (Tamer et al., 2016, p.40). The digitization rate extended in Turkish cinemas in 2011, and as illustrated in Table 5, this rate approached the European average in 2015 and reached 77%. In 2015, none of the local films were released in 35 mm copies. In addition to the economic burden of digitalization, since the digital copies are cheaper than 35 mm copies, the small-scale companies that had not completed this process became disadvantaged due to the demand of the audience to this novel technology. The 2016 report of the Competition Authority also underlined that the digitalization process might lead to the elimination of small-scale cinemas (Table 4).

As illustrated in Graph 3, the chain companies that owned multiplex or megaplex halls in the screening industry concluded the digital transformation expeditiously. As underlined in Table 6, the digitized multi-screen cinema complexes are chiefly located in shopping malls. On the other hand, based on the data in 2014, the small-scale enterprises were able to achieve only 50% of digital transformation. As deduced from the audience preferences

presented in Table 7, the visual and auditory quality of the digital halls has been a fundamental reason for the preference for the audience. The transformation created by global capitalism in consumption habits has made the hall's location in the shopping mall the second choice for the audience. In other words, the consumption of cinema has spatially converted itself with the impact of technological opportunities and become a part of the shopping culture in shopping malls. This implies that cinematic consumption has adapted to 'fast food' consumerism (Figure 4).

The governmental policies, which did not protect small-scale enterprises, also projected its disadvantageous effect through taxation. The tax for virtual copy price (VPF) for 35 mm printing generated another burden for small-scale theaters that could not accomplish their digital transformation (İ. Demirkol, personal interview, April 7, 2018). In such an asymmetrical financial situation, the closure of small-scale businesses or their acquisition by the giants of the industry was a natural consequence. The shopping mall cinema industry had entirely changed the cinematic space as the number of street cinemas has almost extinct in this challenging situation. These circumstances

Table 4: Digital conversion rates of curtains in some European countries (% , 2014).

Country	Numbers of Digitized Theaters (%)
Turkey	77
Germany	98
France	100
Russia	96
United Kingdom	100
Italy	76
European Union	93

Table 5: Digital conversion rates of curtains in some European countries (% , 2014).

Country	Numbers of Digitized Theaters (%)
Turkey	77
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Italy	76
European Union	93

had transformed both the reception of film into a by-product and the cinematic space due to the individual's changing position in theaters and shopping malls (Tables 6 and 7).

The Effects on Reconfiguration of Cinematic Consumption

Free-market economy is characterized by encouraging the society towards consumption and displays its influence in thematic and spatial transformation. With the establishment of such a social structure and the collapse of Yeşilçam, the new value system formed in the society, and it ended up with the conversion of cinematic space and production in consonance with new themes and genres. By the agency of the developing cultural impact of the USA, Hollywood-like romantic comedies and action movies commenced being produced in the mid-2000s. In other words, although Turkish cinema has regained its audience, the production of action films under the impact of Hollywood and low-quality comedies have growingly accelerated. Following a direction opposite to this trend, the New Turkish Independent Cinema could solely be screened for a few weeks or could not be screened at all, despite the awards received from the reputable film festivals. The novel trends in the terrain of screening

Table 6: The number and rate (%) of digitized halls in the shopping mall or not.

Titles	Total Number Theaters	Number of Digitized Screens	Percentage of Digitalization (%)
In Shopping Malls	1563	1375	88
Not In Shopping Malls	625	317	51
Total	2188	1692	77

Table 7: The factors that play a role in the audience's movie theater preference.

Ranking	The Reason for Decision	Average
1	Technical Quality of Theater	4,44
2	Theater's Positioning in Shopping Malls	4,40
3	Cost of Ticket	3,96
4	Campaigns	3,80
5	Costs of Snacks	3,72
6	Longevity of Advertisements	3,68

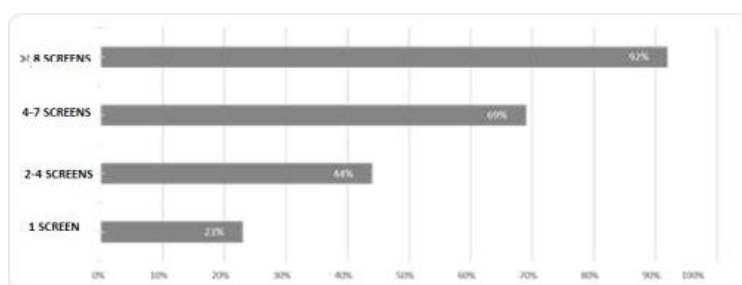


Figure 4 Digitization rate of cinema enterprises by the number of screens (1 screen, 2-3 screens, 4-7 screens, more than 8 screens from bottom to top respectively) (2014) (Tamer et al., 2016, p. 41).

prioritized the luxury multiplex halls located in the shopping mall, and they demanded blockbusters in line with economic expectations.

Cinema complexes are classified as A, B, C and D group halls according to the number of theaters they contain, and this also determines the socio-cultural profile of these theatres' consumers. The high-tech A and B group cinemas (2,287 screens), which must have regular new screenings every two weeks, generally consisted of multiplex halls with an average of 5 screens, most of which are located in shopping malls. The target consumer group of multiplexes and megaplexes is middle and upper-middle class, whereas the small-scale theaters that did not prefer independent films and display adult films, in general, have become more appealing to lower classes.

From the Hegelian view of civil society, the redesign of public spaces is prominently observed in cinematic spatiality, and these spaces prominently address the upper-middle class. In other words, the reconstruction and reconfiguration of public spaces in accordance with global capitalism were built in the direction of the new elite created by this economy. In other words, the new elites that support the consumption of American-style cinema led 85% of the audience, who preferred multiplex theaters. The new upper classes of Turkey, who are the second generation, raised under the power of the neoliberal transformation in Turkey, were directed to the similar consumption practices or directly had a role in the construction of it.

Despite escalating visual and auditory qualities of movie theaters located in the shopping malls, due to the expanding number of screens, the seating capacity of the halls has narrowed down in line with the individualist culture of capitalism. According to Jurgen Habermas, social life in modern societies manifests itself at the point where the mass communication apparatus connects with the public sphere. Reducing the number of spectators by downsizing the halls has transformed the cinema from a viewing experience in which the public space is shared collectively to a consumption area where a group of spectators is separated individually. In particular, the widespread use of 3D films and Imax technologies, where glasses are mandatory, has strengthened this argument about the individualized share experience of space. Pursuant to the capitalist atomization of society, film consumption has turned into a solo practice similar to what the audience does on Video-on-Demand platforms, just like looking at a computer screen.

The bankruptcy of street cinemas in Turkey has drawn an inclined curve than in Europe. Although there are no shopping malls in 21 cities across Turkey, as stated above, the ratio of movie theaters located in shopping malls reached 80% among approximately 2400 halls in 2015. As indicated in Table 8, the same rate hovered around 50% across Europe in 2011. In Ankara 27 street cinemas

had to be closed between 1985 and 2005, and there is no street cinema in Beyoğlu, which also includes Yeşilçam Street. This symbolic situation apparently discloses the despair of the issue (Table 8).

The Shrinkage in Independent Cinema's Screening Opportunities and Cinema Production Diversity correlated with the Disappearance of Small-Scale Cinemas

The Turkish screening market has been operating on a model dominated by a small number of local and Hollywood-based blockbusters in the essentially last ten years. As shown in Chart 5, the top ten big local movie importers have preferred to buy the rights of movies originating from the USA, which proves the advancing influence of Hollywood cinema in Turkey despite the rising local production. The import of European films, which heralded a more independent mode of production, has been on rather a small scale. Such a clustered distribution and screening market has caused Turkey's domestic film production to focus on similar types of films, thus reducing the variety of scale and genre. In other words, due to the reorganization of the cinematic space and structural economic problems, Turkey's cinema has lost its artistic function to a large extent.

Another reason behind this problem is that award-winning independent films have experienced difficulties in finding screening opportunities more ponderously than before. The abate in the variety of movies released has led to a hegemonic power at the box office for the chain screening companies across Turkey, which have essentially screened blockbusters by dint of their contracts with major distributors.

As displayed in Graph 4, the share of art cinema in Europe is around 15-20%, and this rate has reached 40% in France in 2012 (Wutz & Perez, 2014, p. 112); however, in Turkey, the share of art cinema in distribution is only 2-3%. As abovementioned, the art films either have not had the opportunity to be screened at all, or they have found the chance to stay on screens for 2-3 weeks in divided screenings (İrfan Demirkol, personal interview, April 21, 2017). For example, Emin Alper's *Blockade*, which won the Special Jury Award from the Venice Film Festival, was released in December 2015 screened in only 25 theaters, while only 2 films were played in 1700 theaters across Turkey in the same period. The screening market in Turkey has focused on a few films, which created a problem not seen in Western countries. For example, the blockbuster movie *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015), released in the USA, could only be screened in 10% of the theatres in this country (Aydemir et al., 2016). The reflection of the monopolized economic structure on the box office led to a concentrated cinema atmosphere, in which 13 thousand viewers watched Zeki Demirkubuz's *Ember*, which won the Golden Orange

Table 8: The ratio of multiplex halls to the total number of halls (%), 1998-2011.

Country/Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Spain	29,8	37,7	47,6	53,4	59,7	64,2	67,3	71,7	73,1	74,8	65,4	67,5	68,1	-
France	17,3	21,5	41,2	45,5	47,3	49,7	51,6	53,6	53,6	54,4	55,9	57,5	58,6	59,4
Italy	4,32	7,48	13,3	17	24,9	32,2	35,1	39,5	42,6	44,9	47,7	49,3	50	-
Germany	29,4	37,7	37,5	39,7	39,6	41	41,9	43,4	42,8	44,2	44,7	44,9	47,6	-

Award of Antalya International Film Festival in 2016, while Recep İvedik 5 sold 7.4 million tickets at the same year. According to the box office numbers, Nuri Bilge Ceylan has become the most well-known independent cinema director in Turkey thanks to the awards he received from the Cannes Film Festival; however, his Golden Palm-awarded film *Winter Sleep* (2014) could only reach 300 thousand audiences, whereas, Cumali Ceber: Allah Seni Alsın (2017), a thematic copy of the Recep İvedik series and would be classified as B or C class film in the USA, sold around 500 thousand tickets (Figures 5 and 6).

With the change in cinema consumption habits, the audience is condemned to choose among similar films or prefers such productions. As a result of all these, Turkish cinema has come under the domination of blockbusters, sharing the same genres and themes, even though the "auteur" directors have returned from prestigious festivals with prestigious awards. In other words, the Turkish audience revolves around a limited number of blockbusters and reduces the diversity in productions, and this is directly related to the economic structure of the screening and distribution in Turkish cinema. The monopoly screening chains

that cooperate with distributors take advantage of this situation. The Turkish courts, which did not preclude vertical organization in the cinema market, have a serious responsibility in this problematic mode of organization because the giant monopolies and particularly Mars Group, established vertical hegemony in distribution and movie theater management. The films bought and distributed by this group, and other large companies have transformed the cinematic space and narrowed the angle of its mode of production

Conclusion

In sum, the disappearance of small-scale cinema enterprises is a phenomenon in the Turkish cinema market. Although the cinematic production became low-quality in the 1980s and families withdrew the halls by consuming cinema at their homes, today's circumstances are incomparably adverse because of the monopolization in distribution and cinema hall ownership. The primary sources of the problem are the failure to execute the Competition Law as envisaged in the law in accordance with the vulture capitalism that has been experienced since the

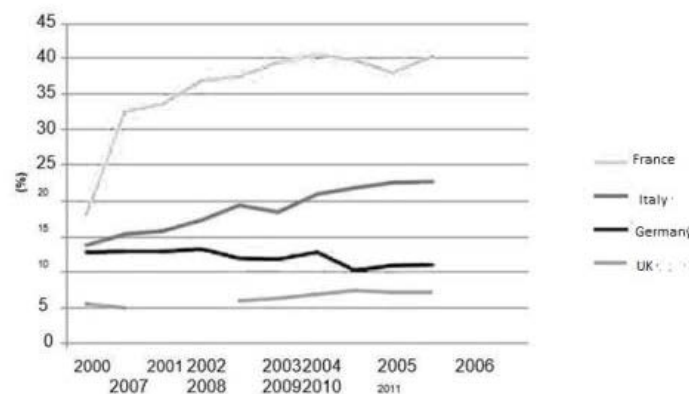


Figure 5 The share of art cinema in general revenue in some European countries, 2000-2011 (Wutz & Perez, 2014, p. 118).

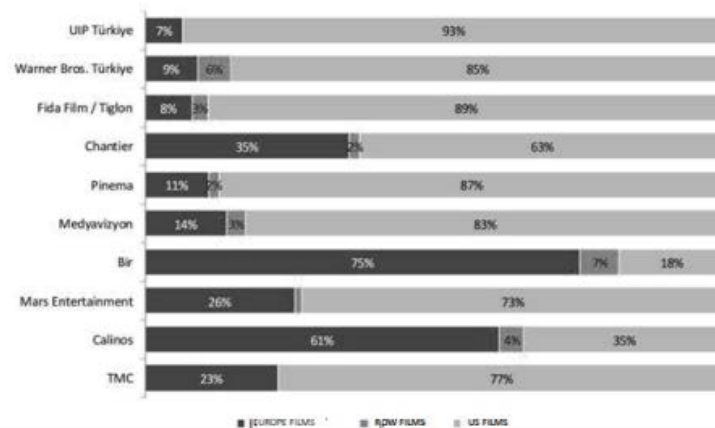


Figure 6 Distribution of the top 10 film importers in Turkey according to the general portfolios of the regions from which they import films.

1980s. The disappearance of small and medium-sized cinema enterprises and the monopolized cinema industry shrank the diversity of films in mainstream cinema and the terrain of independent cinema by reducing the screening opportunities available to award-winning independent films. In addition, this situation shapes the audience choice, and the cinema spectator

has been progressively consuming poor-quality and Hollywood-like movies. In this case, the prevention of horizontal and vertical monopolization shows itself as the first and main precaution for the solution of the abovementioned problems. Besides, the rights to be granted to small enterprises and producers in the face of monopolies have priority in alleviating the complications.

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