



Department of Business and Management

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The Franco-Italian cinematographic co-production

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You cannot study a single film, nor even a national cinema, without understanding the interdependence of images, entertainment, and people all of which move in increasing regularity around the world.

- Dudley Andrew, 2005.

In the 1950s and 1960s, strong links existed between French and Italian cinemas due to financial agreements they signed. This was “Co-production” with a capital C. We exchanged comedians, directors. All for the best in the best of all worlds.

- Venantino Venantini, 2015.

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Abstract

Italy and France are known worldwide for their cinematographic history, as they both participated to the birth of cinema and developed renown movements, including the Italian neo-realism and the French New Wave, which influenced the international cinema and especially the American one. As a matter of fact, Italian and French cinemas were threatened during World War II and the growing American cinema, they managed to find a way to survive: a collaboration established by a co-production agreement 1946 and followed by multiple later ones. Indeed, cinematographic co-productions played a role in the reconstruction of the war-torn Italian and French film industries and underpinned the concept of a dynamic national cinema, both economically and culturally, as opposed to the hegemony of American cinema. By providing financial resources and exchanging know-how talents, Italy and France co-produced over 2,000 films between 1949 and 2013, many of them considered today as master pieces. These include Federico Fellini's "La dolce vita" (1960), Michelangelo Antonioni's "L'avventura" (1960), Luchino Visconti's "Il gattopardo" (1963), Roberto Rossellini's "Viaggio in Italia", "Don Camillo" by Julien Duvivier (1952), "Le mépris/Il disprezzo" by Jean-Luc Godard (1952) and finally "L'armée des ombres/The Army of Shadows (1969) by Jean-Pierre Melville. From this time, many agreements were put in place, and the Franco-Italian one paved the way for all the agreements that were concluded all around the world. Even though it did not reach all its initial objectives, it plainly originated outstanding projects, inspirated foreign directors and actors, and supported the Italian and French cinematographic industries that could have disappeared without help from governments.

Introduction

Italy and France both share the same status of pioneers of the cinematographic industry. The famous French brothers Lumière were the inventors of the revolutionary machine called the “Cinematograph”, which is the ancestor of modern cinema, and presented it in Paris on the 28th of December 1895. They also introduced it themselves in Italy in 1896, which marked the beginning of the Italian cinema’s history. We can therefore learn that the two countries were already sharing their knowledge and their resources as soon as films were born.

After the first screenings of the Lumière brothers in France in 1895 in La Ciotat and Paris, the first screening in Italy took place in March 1896, before a first cinema theatre, “Il Lumière”, opened in Pisa in 1897. The films were mainly silent documentaries and lasted only a few seconds, recounting contemporary events and characters (kings, emperors, popes).

The Italian film industry was born between 1903 and 1909. In 1910, there were already more than five hundred cinemas in Italy, with around fifty film production companies based in Milan, Rome, Naples, and Palermo. Between 1910 and 1918, the first companies achieved quality production and Italian cinema began to be exported. It should be noted that Italy was a pioneer in Futurism, an artistic movement of the early 20th century that rejected aesthetic tradition and exalted the modern world, particularly machines and speed.

When the fascist regime came to power between 1922 and 1925, the "Istituto Luce" was created in 1924 to revive the film industry, taking over the distribution of films for educational and propaganda purposes. Faced with the decline of silent cinema from the 1930s onwards, Mussolini inaugurated the Cinecittà in 1937 and in 1939 promulgated a law that fundamentally prohibited the import of foreign films, particularly American ones. As a result, the Italian film market was relatively protected, and films based on literary works, historical films, the famous "white telephone" comedies and propaganda films developed.

Looking back to the inter-war period, we observe that cultural and artistic exchanges already occurred between Italy and France, especially concerning the movie industry. For instance, Jean Renoir, a famous French director, was shooting his film “La Tosca” in Italy in 1940 before leaving for France to direct military propaganda films. During World War II, cinema became a privileged propaganda tool, sharing military and political content. At the end of the war, it started being used as an influence tool on the international stage, mainly by the

United States (US) which entered many movie markets, including the European one. Conforming to the US demands, the new Italian Republic opened its frontiers for foreign movies imports in 1945, allowing several hundreds of American movies to be displayed in their theatres, against just a few dozens of transalpine films.

In France, the Blum-Byrnes agreements were signed on the 28th of May 1946, granting a large space to the American cinema amongst French screens after establishing a quota system in counterparty for the US's help brought for the recovery and reconstruction of France.

Nevertheless, to compete against this new entrant, Italy and France became the first European countries to start an official cinematographic co-production, in 1946. The two neighbours built the foundations of a bilateral cooperation system, facilitating the movie industry co-productions. In these years of economic, political, and social reconstruction, the film industry was truly crucial for them. From 1946 onwards, Italy and France showed Europe the way to official film co-production. Indeed, it was from the end of the Second World War that the two countries found a way to collaborate and produce together around 2000 films, including films that have marked the history of cinema: "L'Avventura", "Le Mépris" and many others. Each country developed cinematographic movements that became references. The golden age of Italian neo-realism was the period from 1943 to 1952, characterised by sad and pessimistic films depicting the situation of the underprivileged and their miserable living conditions. The "French New Wave", a direct descendant of Italian neo-realism, lasted from the late 1950s to the late 1960s.

By allowing their industries to work together, they would also be able to limit the influence and power of the Americans over their own national and international movie markets, as well as more generally reinforce the cultural links between them. These agreements were therefore mainly signed to serve the national interests of both Italy and France.

In his memoirs, the Italian actor Venantino Venantini, who notably played a gangster named Pascal in the extremely popular movie called "Les Tontons Flingueurs" in 1963 (co-produced by Italy, France, and the Federal Republic of Germany), wrote about the real close relationship between Italian and French cinema during the 1950s and the 1960s, which existed thanks to the many financial agreements that were signed between the two countries. According to Venantini, this could be considered as a "Big-C Co-production", through which actors, actresses, directors, and screenwriters were being exchanged very easily.

Film co-production is a collaboration in which producers share resources and risks, such as financing, personnel, and equipment, to produce and distribute a film. International co-productions combine risk-sharing with market expansion, allowing partners to contribute to exchange for broadcast rights in their home countries. The principle of co-production is that revenues are shared between the different co-producers. When a producer wants to create a co-production company to make his film, it is obviously because he does not have the funds he would like to obtain in his own country.

Moreover, bilateral treaties have completed this system by defining the criteria for obtaining Italian or French nationality for films produced in collaboration with foreign countries. This allows a small number of co-producers to transfer to other co-producers the economic rights they have over the rest of the work, thus ensuring a minimum contribution to the funding regime.

Co-productions not only provide a good example of the mobility and migratory nature of film capital, personnel, and equipment, but also reveal the influence and attention of national parliaments beyond national borders. Moreover, the co-production agreement between Italy and France demonstrates that state involvement in the film sector is transnational and selective. They openly support quality films and provide public funding and financial incentives on the basis that the co-produced film will be culturally beneficial to both countries. Public subsidies put limits on film production in Italy and France. Governments developed and implemented strategies to attack the transnational market to protect local cultural forms and economies.

In transnational cinema, the nation state is no longer central, as globalisation can operate with economic ease across borders. The intervention of the nation-state determines the parameters and possibilities of national cinema, defining its industrial structure and limiting the nationality of its owners in relation to its production. Transnational cinema, on the other hand, is most often found above and beyond the local film lobby.

The main advantage of international co-productions is that both the producer and the film benefit from new opportunities in financial, artistic, and technical terms. Each co-production with a new partner is different. However, they can be grouped into certain categories and current figures show that certain countries continue to be France's or Italy's preferred partners. This suggests that producers must look for funding outside the Italian or French production funding system.

To study the cinematographic cooperation between Italy and France, we will first look at the period which extended from 1895 to 1970, analysing the origins of Italian and French cinema and the main stages of their development. We will also describe the beginning of the cinematographic relations between the two countries and finally the bilateral co-production agreements and their consequences since 1946.

In the second part, from 1970 to the present day, we will examine the comparative effect of the different co-production agreements of this period, then the different obstacles that these agreements still have to overcome and the role of European aid to the film sector. We will finally evoke the health crisis caused by the coronavirus, which had a very serious impact on the film industry, and the means available to the government after this unprecedented crisis to resume Franco-Italian co-production.

To illustrate our point, we will take the example of Franco-Italian co-productions, which have been of great importance in the history of cinema in Europe and worldwide as well.

Chapter One

1895-1970

I - 1895-1946: The origins of Italian and French cinemas

A) The roots for cinema in France and Italy

In the cinema industry, Italy and France always shared personnel and equipment. The Lumière brothers had sent operators to Italy as early as 1895 to use the Italian landscape to develop their film collection. Soon, Italian filmmakers began hiring actors, directors, and operators from the Pathé and Gaumont companies. They even set up branches in Italy to exploit the Italian market; during the crisis of Italian cinema in the 1920s, directors moved to France and Italian producers had friends in Paris who provided them with French equipment and artistic and technical talent. During the multilingual film boom that followed the advent of sound cinema, French filmmakers travelled to Rome to make Italian versions of their films, but few were co-produced.

B) 1930-1946: the premises of a Franco-Italian co-production

It is noticeable that Italian and French cinema in the 1930s differed considerably in terms of numbers. As a result, French production seems to have been four times more important than Italian production. This trend was reversed in the early 1940s: between 1940 and 1944, the transalpine studios released 380 films and the French studios 250. One of the reasons for the establishment of French cinema in Italy was the decline of the American presence after 1938. Italian support for cinema is very old, so old that in 1938 there was a system of automatic support for film production. Yet, a feeling of inequality that dominated Franco-Italian relations in the 1930s became apparent. Between 1930 and 1945, only 82 Italian films were released on French screens, whereas Italian screens were largely open to foreign films (about 300 per year), with 408 French films released in the same period (details given in Table 1 page 22). The main reason why French cinema grew rapidly in Italy in 1938 was the shrinking of the American cinema worldwide presence.

C) The Italian cinema between 1930 and 1946

As early as 1932, Benito Mussolini himself clearly understood that cinema could be an extremely powerful and useful tool for his propaganda and prestige in the country. A serious

institutional and cultural policy was therefore put in place, with the creation of the General Directorate of Cinema in 1934 and the construction of the immense and worldwide renown Cinecittà film studio in Rome in 1936, the "City of Cinema" in Italian, to compete with Hollywood films and studios, and to produce propaganda films for the glory of the fascist regime. Located in the Don Bosco district on the outskirts of Rome, Cinecittà is truly a "city within a city". The 60-hectare city includes 19 indoor film sets, 75 kilometres of roads, gardens, 16 theatres with luxury boxes, a hotel, restaurants and two large pools for marine photography. Its cost reached around 4 million lire, and the studios became the largest cinema complex in Europe.

More than 4000 films were shot at the Cinecittà, 47 of which received an Oscar. The site received among the most famous directors, including Federico Fellini, Roberto Rossellini, and Martin Scorsese.



Cinecittà inauguration in Rome by Benito Mussolini, 1937

In a sense, it was a Roman version of the Hollywood film studio concept. Their technical capabilities are comparable to those of Californian film studios, and Cinecittà has been dubbed the "Hollywood of the Tiber", the only one able to compete with Hollywood studios. Moreover, unlike the Californian site, this is not just a studio, but a real industrial and urban centre dedicated to the film industry. In addition to film facilities, there will also be public infrastructures such as nurseries, gymnasiums, and film schools, making it a completely self-sufficient place and a magnificent composition typical of Fascist rationalist architecture.

The creation of Cinecittà and its installation in Rome was a highly political choice. The studio was a showcase for the regime and was to contribute to Italy's international influence. It was also chosen as a location for the shooting of propaganda films.

During the 1930s, one of the first and most famous Italian cinematographic movements was the popular « Telefoni Bianchi » (the « white telephones »). This movement typifies a brief Italian film era of euphoria and levity between 1937 and 1941 and refers to the Italian comedies in vogue in the 1930s, when Italy became imperial, and the middle classes enriched and could now access entertainment: the movie theatres were full.

The name of this trend comes from the almost recurrent presence of white telephones in at least one scene of the films, a symbol of wealth and modernity. This very short period, which is named “rinascita” (rebirth) for the Italian cinema, was characterized by a gigantic supply of material and financial means, unknown until then in Italy.



“La casa del peccato”, Max Neufeld (1938)

The theme of these films is most often a romance with plots that unfold over the telephone (“La casa del peccato” in 1938, “Animali Pazzi” in 1939 for example). These comedies were imitating the American comedies from which they were inspired. These films were in line with Fascist ideology as they emphasised family values, respect for authority and portrayed the wealthy and conservative classes. Symbolising prosperity, and harmony, this cinema avoided controversial subjects.

When the country was defeated and devastated at the end of the Second World War, the Cinecittà was partly saved, but the studios were temporarily turned into a refugee centre. It was this sense of stagnation that gave rise to the masterpieces of neorealism between 1945 and 1950. As some of the studios and workshops of Cinecittà were bombed during the war and due to a lack of resources, the directors had to shoot on the streets, using ordinary people as actors.

The post-war neorealist movement reflected the devastation of the times and made films with the resources available. The function of neorealism in mediating various historical moments (for instance fascism, the world war, or the new post-war era) was obvious before 1948, when Italy was still negotiating a peace treaty with the Allies. Thus, the Italian movies as Roberto Rossellini's "Roma città aperta" (1945) and "Paisà" (1946), Aldo Bergano's "Il sole sorge ancora" (1946) and Alessandro Brazetti's "Un giorno nella vita" (1946) show stories of resistance that could reach Italians living outside the areas of resistance activity or who were prisoners of war abroad.

These neo-realist movies used realist modes of representation and depicted the experience of living in restricted moments. The desire to convey the crisis and limitation led Italian directors to turn away from realism when necessary and to use other sort of genres such as the melodrama (stories about the life, time passing and generations) and the "film noir" (pessimistic movies, describing fatalism and cynicism).

Ironically, this major change in the economic organisation of Italian film production ensured the steadiness of the management of the film industry during and after the fascist regime. The Italian film industry was not going well, and the Italians were not willing to sacrifice their talented and experienced personnel. As a result, a very limited number of directors (such as Carmine Garrone and Goffredo Alessandrini) were expelled from the industry for several months. Others, such as Roberto Rossellini, who shot military films during the Second World War, were not concerned. The fall of the late dictatorship left a hole in the Italian cinema growth.

As Cesare Zavattini (an Italian screenwriter and a major figure of the Italian neorealism) said in 1944, the war had given Italians a genuine strength, which they would soon lose again. And it is the director's responsibility to echo this sincerity and make it a characteristic of the new Italian cinema. This collective will to establish a new cinematic language and to express a different social and ethical message is an important element of neorealism as a whole.

Cesare Zavattini, 1944 (translated in English)

“Today, a destroyed house is a destroyed house, the smell of the dead has not disappeared, the echo of the last cannon shots comes from the North, in short, the astonishment and the fear are whole, it is almost possible to study them in vitro. The cinema must try to provide these documents, it has the specific means to move in space and time, to collect, in the eye of the spectator, the multiple and the diverse, provided that it agrees to abandon the usual narrative modes, and that its language adapts to the contents.”

*Cited in “Un cinéma d’après-guerre : le néo-réalisme italien et la transition démocratique »
Article published in « Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales » in 2008.*

Ultimately, after a short period of euphoria, Italy comes out of war without any more means, whether they be financial or human. To pursue their shootings, directors decide to make their movies down the streets, casting people in the streets that never were actors, who correspond to the characters they develop in their realistic stories. Surprisingly, this very new concept will be the foundation of one of the most remarkable cinema movements of all time that would be later influencing directors around the whole world.

D) The French cinema between 1930 and 1946

In 1932, the global economic crisis of 1929, coming from the United States, hit France, affecting the whole film industry. Therefore, in the 1930s, France had to borrow to renovate its theatres and studios with the advent of sound cinema. Nonetheless, with the victory of the Popular Front in 1936, French cinema was flourishing from an artistic viewpoint, films were shot in studios and dialogists became really important figures.

Indeed, this movement called “poetic realism” was initiated by the director Marcel Carné and the very well-known dialogist Jacques Prévert, with their most famous movies “Hôtel du Nord” (Hotel of the North) and “Les enfants du paradis” (Children of paradise) which dominated the French market.



“Hôtel du Nord” film poster, Marcel Carné (1938)

The movies from this movement often took place in urban places, especially Paris, and introduced people from the working and lower classes, such as workmen, soldiers or even prostitutes, whose destiny is usually tragical, so that the audiences can identify themselves. By using new technics, tricks, and superimpositions, incorporating negatives and covers, speeding up and slowing down, he created masterpieces of avant-garde cinema, including “The Tower” (1928), a "visual ballet" dedicated to the Eiffel Tower. His work became a direct representation and tribute to the French capital city.

If the famous director René Clair embodied the intimate and sentimental "poetic realism" of French cinema in the 1930s with Marcel Carné, other directors such as Jean Renoir and Julien Duvivier represented a pessimistic and dramatic trend that focused on the depiction of difficult situations caused by social and life conflicts, a "populist" style of realist cinema that has its roots in the novels of French writer Emile Zola. The novelist was not neglected by the filmmakers, as was the case for Duvivier's "Au bonheur des dames" (1930) and Renoir's "La Bête humaine" (1938). What these films have in common is the tragic fate of their protagonists, the dark circumstances in which they find themselves, their poverty and misfortune, growing around harbours, rivers, and railways as backgrounds. They motivated the development of “avant-garde” cinema, to which France made its most important contribution. The fact that they were essentially short and medium-length films based on visual and editorial means to achieve a "music of images". However, the two French major production companies, Pathé-Natan and Gaumont Film Aubert (GFFA), were in a terrible situation at that time, as they were not even as big in comparison with minor players from the American market. So, between 1933 and

1938, there was a kind of vacuum in film production, with the development of smaller, more independent production companies and the production of lower budget films.

Nevertheless, almost 4,250 cinemas (300 in Paris) were equipped with sound films in 1938. The local cinemas had formed a tight network and people went to the theatres with their families at least once a week. Henri Langlois founded the French Cinematheque to preserve films and organise screenings. The audience grew, even if it remained below the British figures (a typically urban civilisation, in contrary to France where half the population was rural). From 150 million in 1929 and 234 million in 1931, the audience reached 453 million in 1938. In the first half of 1939, a strike blocked the French film industry for months.

During the war, military censorship banned films such as Jean Renoir's "La règle du Jeu", but film production was not disrupted. After the start of the Vichy regime (and the status of the Jews), an important part of the industry left France (Renoir, Duvivier, Gabin, Jouvet...) and censorship was considered important, but production persisted (Guitry, Gance, Pagnol).

René Clair (translated in English)

"Between 1920 and 1928, French cinema was divided into two trends: on the one hand, aestheticism, the avant-garde, the search for new means of expression; on the other, what was called the "commercial" film, which aimed only to apply recipes copied from already established forms. The dangers of the second tendency were all too obvious; but the first had the disadvantage of distancing cinema from the mass of the popular public, without which it cannot live. The merit of Jacques Feyder, at that time, was to have made, without letting himself be influenced by either one or the other, films that were aimed at all classes of the public and that were films of quality."

Tribute addressed to Jacques Feyder, delivered after his death in 1948.

Finally, the French cinema was also struck hard by the Second World War because directors and actors often refused to work for the German occupiers and left France or settled

in the free zone without the means to make films. This did not prevent the collaboration between France and Italy in film production during this dark period, as several films benefited from capital from both countries to be made.

E) Early signs of a coming co-production

Before the co-production treaty was officially signed and put into place, the two neighbour countries shared some similarities in their cinema history and grew complementary. These were the early signs of a co-production that would be the first around the world. Nonetheless, to efficiently study the penetration of French cinema in Italy and its reciprocity during the fascist period, it is first necessary to identify the power relations between Italian and French cinema.

This collaboration adopts many forms: the compilation of quantitative and qualitative data; the analysis of the forms of exchange through cultural events and the usual distribution of films in the commercial cinemas of the two countries; the examination of the volume of exchanges; and eventually the examination of the relationship's health between political and administrative circles (linked to the granting of exploitation visas by the censors), critics, the public and the media.

Thus, one major sign of the health of French cinema in Italy was the fact that many filmmakers worked in transalpine studios: settlement systems were set up and they urged the reinvestment of the capital generated by the exploitation of French films in Italy in co-productions. It encouraged reinvestment in co-productions.

If we consider the Italian film market as a whole, we see the position of French films among the others. The annual publications of the Italian Society of Authors and Editors (S.I.A.E.) from 1937 onwards contain very precise figures on the takings of the films of the various suppliers in all theatres.

In the four years between 1937 and 1940, the evolution of the balance is very clear: until 1939, American films dominated the Italian market (it was only in 1940 that Italian films replaced American films). As for French films, the balance went from low (from 5% to 6%) to high (from 17% to 18%) during the period covered. Back then, relations became excellent between the two countries in relation with the films production.

As the table 1 points out, there are many more French movies distributed in Italy from 1930 to 1945 than the opposite except for the year 1942. While 53 French movies were distributed in Italy in 1939 for example, only 2 from Italy were distributed in France.

Table 1: French movies in Italy and Italian movies in France 1930-1945

Year	French movies distributed in Italy	Italian movies distributed in France
1930	33	2
1931	31	2
1932	17	3
1933	38	7
1934	19	2
1935	12	9
1936	16	3
1937	37	6
1938	30	3
1939	53	2
1940	31	3
1941	26	2
1942	14	18
1943	22	19
1944	24	1
1945	5	0
Total	408	82

*Table from « L'accueil du cinéma français en Italie pendant l'époque fasciste (1930-1945) »
by Jean-A. Gili. Translated to English.*

From the beginning of talking pictures, professional links were established, and mixed French-Italian creative teams were founded. Many Italian directors, such as Augusto Genina, Mario Camerini and Carmine Garrone, went to Paris to make their first talking pictures and worked with Henri Decoin and Henri Janson. In the 1930s, many French directors, writers and scriptwriters came and went in the Italian studios.

Between 1940 and 1943, more than fifteen films were made by Italian and French teams in studios in the cities of Paris, Rome and at the reputed studios of “La Victorine” in Nice. Luchino Visconti, one of the most famous Italian directors, began his career as an assistant to Jean Renoir, whom he admired, and was strongly influenced by him.

The French screenwriter Pierre Benoit participated in the production of “The Lady of the West”, directed by Carl Koch, with French actor Michel Simon and some Italian actors, at the Scalera studios in Rome in 1942. Michel Simon, who had moved to Rome during the war, also wrote the screenplay for the film “Le Roi s'amuse”, based on the work of reputed French author Victor Hugo and shot in Italian by Mario Bonar. Also in 1942, Italian and French stars, under the direction of Robert Vernet and Ferruccio Serio, produced two versions of “The Count of Monte Cristo”, and a few months later the Frenchman Jean de Lemaire directed “Apparizione” at Cinecittà.

French directors often went to Rome and the Tyrrhenian Sea, near Pisa. Jacques Hussein, Pierre Chenal (“The man from nowhere”), Georges Lacombe, Abel Gance (“The woman thief”) and Christian Jacque (“Carmen”) made countless films in Italy. Jean Renoir, too, would have made “La Tosca” in 1940 if the war had not interrupted the project. Alongside directors, great actors (Jules Berry, Pierre Brassard, Jean Marais, Vivienne Romain) started working successfully in Italy.

Filmed during the German occupation in 1945, Marcel Carné's "Les enfants du paradis" is considered by critics to be one of the best French films of the 20th century and is an important example of successful Franco-Italian cooperation. This feature film is one of the few long features that have been shot in France during this period of regulation and was shot in the free zones of southern France. The film was financed by the French company Disina de Paulvais and the Italian company Scarella Brothers, supported by the Fascist government of Benito Mussolini, to avoid French financial regulations.

Until the end of the fascist era in Italy with the fall of Mussolini, the list of French films that encountered difficulties under fascist censorship extended and became very long. Indeed, the fascist censors adopted a contradictory position towards French cinema. On the one hand, they were careful not to shock morally, but on the other hand, they really tried to use foreign productions, especially French ones, to show what they considered the decadence of these societies back then.

After the Second World War, trade barriers between Italy and France were lowered more directly, allowing those who wished to work across borders to do so. With the resumption of active trade cooperation, aimed at cultural exchange and economic recovery, Italy and France became the first European countries to sign a co-production agreement. Co-production was considered from the beginning as a very sensitive issue in the master plan of cultural activities to promote the new diplomatic relations between the two countries.

II - 1946-1952: Early treaties and evolution of the Franco-Italian cinematographic co-production

A cinematographic co-production agreement is a joint venture between two or more companies and producers, or between two or more countries, which will then collaborate by combining all their resources - financial, human, and material - and share the risk of making a film or audio-visual product. The functional producer assumes legal and financial responsibility for the production and owns the intellectual property, while the executive producer is responsible for the production of the product.

There may also be collaborators with mere financial resources who do not own the intellectual property rights of the film produced. Bilateral treaties (45 in France for instance) strongly encourage the use of national subsidy schemes and co-productions, and the Council of Europe's European Convention on Film Co-production sets out the whole co-production scheme.

There are two kinds of co-production, which are distinguished in the following way: if they are based on a system of rules established by some countries, the movies are “official co-productions”. If they do not respect them sufficiently, then they automatically become “unofficial”. In our case, France is connected not only to the European Union but also to Canada or Peru. In addition to this, a bilateral treaty completes this system by defining the criteria for obtaining Italian or French nationality in the event of co-production with a foreign country.

The participation rate of minority co-producers in the Convention is usually 20%. Unfortunately, due to the lack of available funding for minority co-producers, it may be difficult to reach such a percentage. In this case, it is possible for minority co-producers to obtain a minimum contribution to the funding system by transferring to other co-producers the financial rights they hold on to their world production.

A producer longs for a co-production due to the lack of funds, and more rarely to benefit from artistic assistance. Co-productions can be bilateral or multilateral, and they can obviously decide to include non-European partners or not. In general, it states that national idioms, locations, sets, infrastructure, technicians, and a great deal of creative talent must be used in the production of a national film. On the one hand, the financial aspect often dominates as it allows the project to apply for state aid or to be allocated a TV channel in each country. The

transnational nature of the film gives it a legal advantage that can generate direct (financing) and indirect (ticketing) economic benefits. On the other hand, one concept very present in co-production agreements concerning artistic quality refers to films of a high technical standard and includes artistic films that are so artistically ambitious and demanding that they are difficult to finance.

Eventually, a central issue concerning the nationality of a film is always a very sensitive subject and the participating countries rarely share the same opinion.

A) The laborious beginning of co-production between Italy and France

In October 1946, Italy and France negotiated a commercial treaty, and they signed in parallel the very first cooperation agreement on film production, a document that undoubtedly changed the situation of the film industry in these two nations. It was signed in Paris by the Italian and French national representatives in charge of film, on the 29th of October 1946.

This agreement, aimed at facilitating the distribution of films between the two countries, established a temporary partnership through the Franco-Italian film production and distribution. It was to be reviewed and extended after one year. A one-year trial period was set up, starting on the 1st of February 1947 and it was agreed to co-finance a total of 15 feature films, 10 in Italy and 5 in France. It was a sort of experimentation as it never happened before. The general idea was not to set definitive or absolute rules immediately, but to start off by considering the concrete development of this experiment. However, the legal text sets out for the formation of this model. The full text of the treaty was published in the French magazine "Le Film français" ("The French movie") after its signature. Four other co-production treaties were subsequently signed chronologically in 1949, 1953, 1961 and 1966.

The concerning parties were the cinema sector of the Italian Council Presidency, represented by Alfredo Proia, an Italian depute at the time, and the General Management of the French National Centre for Cinema and Animated Pictures (CNC), represented by its director, the first ever, named Michel Fleuret-Colmeray. The agreement specified that co-productions would only be allowed for films approved by both countries. Such a clause clearly indicated that they wanted a treaty that was as comprehensive and balanced as possible for Italy and France.

The French CNC and its first CEO Michel Fourré-Cormeray

On 25 October 1946, the French Assembly adopted the law creating an organisation whose mission was to restore the number of cinemas damaged by the Occupation and the Liberation and to support the creation and the economy of cinematographic works. The film industry support fund was created after the Second World War to rebuild the film industry in France. The Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée (CNC), created in 1946, was in charge of implementing this public policy in favour of cinema. Three fundamental principles guided its action from the start: to promote creation and cultural diversity, to create optimal conditions for the development of the moving image market and to establish transparency in the sector. The CNC can authorise the conditions of access to the market, set the rules for the functioning of the market and to have the power to sanction. In order for public policy to be implemented, the financing of the support fund was original and ingenious.

Michel Fourré-Cormeray was a senior French civil servant and the first director of the CNC in 1945. Appointed in 1946, he held this position for seven years. In addition to creating a system of aid for the cinema, he signed the first co-production agreements, notably with Italy and Germany.

One main link is directly introduced in this 1946's binational agreement. This is the link between Italian French co-production and quality, but also between quality and high costs. The agreement states that "co-production authorizations should only be granted to films that initially present elements that allow one to presume that they will be of quality". But if quality is considered as the most important objective at the beginning, then the criteria are not very clear nor understandable.

Indeed, the ambiguity of this wording may be surprising, but the text of the agreement contains few criteria for determining the quality of future films. In fact, the licensing authorities seem to act on the basis of three main criteria. Namely, the amount of the estimate (considering that the higher the estimate, the higher the quality), the reputation of the director and the main actors and, finally, the quality of the script or the name of the author, the latter being at the heart

of the system. It also provided the participation of each nationality professionals, as described in the Article V which emphasised the bilateral relationship between the two film producing countries.

Article V from the 1946's co-production treaty

“Films co-produced in both France and Italy must always include a French screenwriter and dialogue writer or member of a French professional organization, as well as an Italian screenwriter and dialogue writer.”

Furthermore, it was decided in 1946 that mixed commissions were required to meet at least once or twice a year to adapt and modify the co-production system, considering the evolution of Italian and French legislation in the field of film production and the various feedbacks from experts and administrators. The members of this joint commission were representatives of the State and the film production industry. We have already mentioned that after the Second World War, Italy and France tried to strengthen the traditional European cinema in order to develop their own markets and to be able to compete with the giant Hollywood. Facing this new invasion, they have positioned themselves as guardians of the continent's film culture, without compromising their own production interests.

The fifteen films announced in the 1946's treaty, which were to be co-produced by Italy and France, required at least one scriptwriter and one interlocutor from both countries. The treaty, signed by both parties on the 24th of January 1947, stipulated that for each role related to the film crew (director, production, cinematography, decoration, sound, editing, make-up, costumes, and final interpretation), two thirds of the crew had to be French and one third Italian, and that the producer had to be French.

Nevertheless, a re-examination of this treaty shows that it did not achieve its objectives. Of the fifteen or so films planned for the experimental period mentioned in the 1946's text, only eight were actually made, all by French directors in Italian studios. These were for example Raoul André, Jacques de Baroncelli, Christian-Jaque ("Rocamboles" and "La Chartreuse de Parme"), Pierre Billon and Théophile Pathé. The criteria set by the agreement varied, but none of the films co-produced in 1947 were influenced by the Franco-Italian origins or dual nationality of the team.

Although famous French screenwriters such as Jean Cocteau, Jacques Compan ez and Charles Spaak participated in the first official co-productions, these films by French directors did not have the opportunity to work closely with experienced Italian screenwriters. To solve this issue, two meetings were held in 1949, first in Rome and soon in Paris, where a co-production treaty was signed on the 19th of October. The CNC in France and the Italian Direzione Generale Spettacolo dal Vivo were responsible for integrating these works into the co-production model. The heads of these public bodies, together with French and Italian producers and distributors, form the “Comitato misto cinematografico” (Mixed Cinema Committee), which meets twice a year to reassess the rules and conditions of co-production in the light of the films produced.

The new agreement also provides for the exchange of films, with particular emphasis on high-quality films, as they are generally more expensive and can better cover their costs if shared between different producers. The basic concept of this promotion is clear: films are sold at a reduced price. This is because these films are of sufficient importance to enable French and Italian cinema to be distributed worldwide and could provide high returns later.

Even if it sometimes described as the first Franco-Italian co-production, “Fabiola” (directed by Alessandro Brazzetti, released in 1949) was not really part of the formal cooperation framework defined in the intergovernmental agreement, but it symbolised the internationalisation of the post-war European film industry. The movie outraged the Catholic Church, which in the late 1940s, recognising the power of cinema, wanted to intervene not only in the short-term distribution of films, but also in the production of projects on an "absolutely international scale". The film was produced by Universalialia, a company founded in 1946 which, at least at the time, had close links with the Vatican.

The agreement was to come into force on the 31st of July 1951, but was extended until the 1st of October 1953, when it expired. The economic logic of co-production practice is reflected in these words. Co-produced films enjoy all the rights and advantages provided for by the laws in force or proposed in their respective countries. These advantages are granted according to a proportional system, so that the financial contribution of all partners corresponds to their creative and technical involvement in the respective films.

The concern for film quality and national identity is major for the Joint Committee. The definition of these two concepts is based on Italian and French national film law.

In the end, this first binational treaty created between France and Italy was fundamental because it debuted a closer relationship for their cinema industries which already had been collaborating since the beginning of the 19th century.

B) The growth of twinned movies concepts

To balance co-productions, the concept of "twinned movies" was introduced in 1949: for each film co-produced in Italy, there was also a film co-produced in France. To ensure compliance with this obligation, Italy has adopted a strict measure whereby films produced in France can only benefit from tax incentives and investment aid after the production of their twins and within six months of the release of the French film in Italy. Conversely, if the first film is produced in Italy, the second film can only be distributed in France if it is made within nine months of the first film being authorised for distribution by the government.

As twinning is strictly mandatory, a twinning partner must be found within a certain timeframe for the co-production to be approved. Not only must one film be shot in France and the other in Italy, but "the two films in the twinned co-production will be equivalent. This equivalence is assessed on the basis of an estimated amount" (1949's Agreement: 3). With the renewal of the 1953's agreement, the participation quotas for twin films must themselves be inversely proportional (1953's agreement: 5). Thus, the risk of being refused a co-production gave rise to competition for sister films.

When the quota of minority co-producers reached the minimum level allowed (30%), this sometimes resulted in projects that were not based on a real collaboration or artistic exchange, only to benefit from the support offered to the producers of each country. In this case, the minority partner's contribution to the production of the film may be limited to the inclusion of one or two actors in the cast.

We can observe that this twinned-movies concept was very controlled and strict. For instance, "The Three Musketeers" (1953) is a co-produced movie majorly French (65%) and minorly Italian (35%), released under the terms of the 1949's treaty, even if it just expired at the end of 1953. The twin movie has been identified as "Une fille nommée Madeleine" ("Maddalena"), by Augusto Genina, and was co-produced by the same producers. On this one, the share is the following: 70% Italian and 30% French.

The twinning approach has doubled production in Italy and France, but some see the “twinning partnership” as a simple search for profit and advantage, leading to a purely financial partnership. Of course, without underestimating the artistic and cultural contribution of the actor, it must be recognised that it has often failed to strike a balance with the cultural specificity of cinema.

Furthermore, the numerous renewals of the 1949’s agreement in the 1950s not only confirmed this principle of twinning, but also made the rules of twinning more flexible, increasing the possibilities of derogations and leading to the virtual disappearance of artistic collaborations between French and Italian scriptwriters. However, non-commercial films and old prints can be easily exchanged, including newsreels, cultural, scientific and travel films. The principle of equivalence is at the heart of the co-production system: the films to be matched must be of equal monetary value, including the contributions of creative and technical staff. More, to avoid duplication of small co-productions, minority producers must contribute at least 30% of the film's costs. It seems obvious that profits will be shared according to the level of investment made by each producer.

A lot of obligations must be fulfilled: the credits must indicate that the film is a "Franco-Italian co-production”, and the film must be promoted internationally in this way. On the contrary, in Italy and France, these films are treated as national production and enjoy the benefits of national cinema, including public subsidies, quota exemptions and awards. The exceptions to this rule apply only to co-productions, including capital, actors, crew, equipment, and infrastructure, where the financing is shared equally.

This idea of twinned movie appeared to try and balance the co-productions between the two countries, as the production inequality is the major issue of this process.

C) The expected goals of Italian and French co-production agreement

The agreement was drawn up mainly to revive the film industries of both countries, which had been badly damaged by the Second World War, and to counterbalance the global dominance of Hollywoodian films. There was evidently a desire on the part of the government to promote a culture closer to that of Italy and France, which were both starting to lose their influence at the time.

As a matter of fact, there are huge implications behind this filmmaking collaboration, from a political, economic, and artistic point of view. At the time, the production of Latin cinema was also strongly defended at the Latin Cinema Congress held in Monte Carlo in September 1947, thanks to Marcel Pagnol, a famous French writer. He was a pillar of this Latin collaboration, which aimed at breaking down all the usual barriers between Italian and French cinema. The distribution of the missions provided that the material and films would be supplied by the countries where the films were made, such as Italy and France. As far as technicians were concerned, there was a tendency to employ mainly technicians from the same country. Artistically, joint participation is limited to the script section and there are no rules regarding the nationality of directors or actors. Not only did it concern the pride of the Latin cultural prestige, but it was also the birth and growth of Europe as we know it, while it was going through the Cold War. The continent wanted to express itself and speak out loud through a typical popular and mediatic art, especially during such a dramatic period of reconstruction. By allying, Italy and France doubled their market and the size of their audience too. The public funds received were doubled. It was these advantages that undoubtedly saved the Italian and French film industries and made them independent of the American giant.

These ambitious co-produced films, technically more advanced, now exist thanks to this partnership, and they could compete against the gigantic number of American movies that were overwhelming Europe. Also, the 1946 binding agreement inspired new associations and led other countries to do the same. Soon after Italy and France, very similar treaties have been signed between other parties. The success of the Franco-Italian model has led other countries to emulate it. For example, the United Kingdom has concluded seven treaties with France and six Commonwealth countries, while Germany has concluded 18 co-production agreements.

D) Early critics and limits of the co-production

1. Risk of culture dilution

At the time, however, filmmakers and critics on both sides of the Alps questioned the co-productions, saying that their binational hybrid nature threatened the country's culture with the risk of dilution. Italian technicians and creators argued that this form of production often tended to operate in an arbitrary manner and did not improve the quality of the film. So, De Sica and Clare intended to find a new model that would allow Italy and France to make films

with a truly national character, like the international success of their best films in the past. Firstly, even French newspapers were sceptical about the quality of these Franco-Italian co-productions, and the French Film Union was very critical.

In Italy, film critics and editors were worried about cultural infection. Film historians still wonder why France and Italy were the first countries in Europe to sign a co-production agreement. Because of the level of public support in these countries, production partners from these countries had an advantage over their counterparts in other European countries that mattered. According to German author Anne Jäckel¹, it was due to "cultural affinities, similar industrial and institutional frameworks and incentive systems, and a comparable market that could be claimed until the 1980s". Despite the seemingly perfect agreement and the obvious willingness to cooperate, other problems were often pointed out early.

2. Lack of cooperation and cultural mixing

Some are critical towards the influence of Italian and French cinematographic co-production. They concede that technicians and actors have become closer to each other thanks to it, and that producers have had better access to the European film market, resulting in a flourishing Franco-Italian film industry. However, there is a policy of resistance rather than cooperation between the two nations. French and Italian film companies work according to their own customs, and when they hire foreign actors and crews, they should adapt to local customs and practices.

Others point out that after the war, French audiences went to see French films about three times as often as foreign films. American and Italian films dominated the rest of the foreign films, with the average French film earning less than half the box office. Nonetheless, national stars often went unnoticed or were rejected when they appeared in co-productions that did not conform to local customs or audience expectations.

This risk is related to the fact that the cultural distance may be too high. The co-production could be affected by these cultural barriers if they are too difficult to overcome, so co-operation between countries with similar culture are often recommended, which is the case for Italy and France.

¹ Anne Jäckel – *'European Film Industries'* published by BFI Publishing in 2003.

Regarding the difficulties faced through this early co-production between the two countries, we can identify one issue as the films being related to the same owner. This situation is ironically called either a “Franco French co-production” or an “Italo Italian co-production”. The marriage between these two cinematographic cultures was a bit criticized, even concerning its golden age, between the 1950s and 1970s, because some think that money and jealousy have taken too much space and mentioned some disputes and mistakes that took place during these years. The identified risk is that both parties do not get along: this is a real and great concern, as a co-production agreement can be compared with a wedding. If they create a strong relationship, that threat does not exist, but as soon as there is any conflict, the whole process is in jeopardy. This relation must be managed carefully and checked regularly, to avoid any undesired losses.

3. The movie’s nationality issue

One of the recurring causes of argument opposing the members of the Italian and French delegations is about determining the true nationality of the movies. These conflicts arose especially during the re-negotiation of the treaty or during the mixed commissions meetings that we stated earlier. Indeed, the major goals of cinematographic co-production consist in preventing these movies to face the impediments of exportation, and in providing them the advantages that were priorly dedicated only to national movies (for instance the access to credits and financial helps). In return for these advantages, the camera and production crews were composed by Italian and French workers. Moreover, if these double nationality participations were not joint, a buddy system was used: for each movie financed more by Italy or France, another must be financed more by the other country.

The application of these measures is obviously not seamless and generates criticisms. For example, in November 1951, the Italian director Vittorio de Sica and the French director René Clair consulted the mixed commission in Paris and asked them to organise to switch nationalities from one co-produced movie to another. In other words, they wanted the films to obtain the nationality of the main producer because it would allow a freer choice of the film crew without having to care too much about the nationality of the hired personnel and wasting time, which could have a negative impact over the quality.

The same demand was repeated on the 9th of May 1952, when the French National Entertainment Federation formulated it directly to the French Minister of Industry and Trade,

who himself transmitted it to Michel Fourré-Cormeray, then president of the CNC. Despite his personal accordance (as he said that it would be a great solution to avoid “semi-French and semi-Italian productions resulting in either stateless movies Italy and France would choose to claim or not to claim depending on their quality”), the idea was eventually discarded.

This episode highlights the true influence and implication of cinema professionals in the process of co-production agreements negotiations, confirming that they were not only State’s affairs. On another note, it highlights how the co-produced movies’ nationality is at stake. The lack of a national framework bothers the writers, who perceive it as an obstacle to their freedom of creation; but the French CNC as well, which have an aversion for the blur surrounding the nationality of any movie as it can block, in the case of France, the international French culture’s influence of a film if it is not associated to France. They even believe that it can influence its recognition and its commercial success abroad.

4. Risk of resources’ waste

This issue relates to the management of resources because a co-production brings more resources, especially financial ones. Therefore, they could be more easily wasted. In fact, if they are not controlled efficiently and properly, or if the management is too messy, this might even negatively impact the collaboration. It is important for the producers to trust the delegate producers as they will make all the executive decisions. In return, the delegate producers will have to keep the other producers updated of any choice that have been made and will have deadlines to respect.

As we have seen, film co-productions can be fraught with difficulties and its success depends largely on the motivation of the countries involved and their willingness to play the game without reaping the expected benefits. It is, on another note, important to acknowledge that distribution methods certainly differ from country to country. Films are usually distributed first in the country of the primary producer and then in the country of the secondary producer. In some cases, it may even happen two years later.

In addition to this, the conditions for authorizing films differ between Italy and France, which may have different censorship restrictions on sex and violence, and it can delay the distribution time, as for the movie “Madame du Barry, a Franco-Italian co-production from 1954, by French director Christian-Jaque.

E) The advantages and opportunities expected by this co-production

Thus, the new official framework, while imposing restrictions and rules, greatly facilitates the exchange and distribution of materials, professionals, and artists. Above all, for the first time in the history of cinema, official dual nationality films enjoyed economic benefits and national protection. It was only when the European film industry was trying to recover in the aftermath of the war that the advantages of this mode of production became immediately apparent. The desire to use and play with the system was immediate, and the practice began to take on an almost legal form. As early as 1949, a joint commission is convened every six months to ensure the proper functioning and respect of the agreement (1949's Agreement: 5), but the system put in place is sometimes unable to contain the speculation behind these productions.

1. Budget increase

To sum up the opportunities offered by a cinematographic co-production, we can firstly say that it can increase the budget for the production. Indeed, there are several ways to finance a movie but, most of the time, they are likely not sufficient to cover all costs. Therefore, as a contract of co-production allows co-producers to gather all resources, including financial ones, we can easily identify this benefit. When a co-production is established, directors and producers can work on a project which might not have been possible without this agreement.

A good example is Visconti's "Le Guépard/Il Gattopardo", which won the Palme d'Or in Cannes and the David Donatello Prize in 1963. The producers were so decided to make it an international success, especially in the United States, that they allocated three billion lire to shoot it in seven months. A total of 150 set designers (and almost as many make-up artists and hairdressers) and 50 florists were needed for Luchino Visconti's film. A lot of money was spent on buying centuries-old furniture, renting buildings, and restoring some of them. This seemed to be very successful as the movie is now nicknamed the Italian "Gone with the Wind".

2. Mixed know-how

The second concerns the benefits obtained from mixed know-how. By blending all the resources, producers ally their forces and those of collaborators. This offers a broader viewpoint of the project, completing the one from the initiator of the idea. Indeed, this diversity of opinions and capacities can result in better productions. This mixed know-how is especially a great advantage for Italy and France which are used to working together in film production due to

their cultural and geographical proximity. The exchange of actors, directors, studios and cross-financing between Italy and France is reinforced by co-production agreements that formalise long-standing relationships. This is particularly true in the case of Italy and France, which, due to their cultural and geographical proximity, have developed a cooperative relationship in film production. The exchange and cross-financing of actors, directors and studios between Italy and France has been strengthened by co-production agreements that formalise long-term relationships.

3. Mixed infrastructures

Thirdly, it can help to access and enjoy new infrastructures as well as new sets. Apart from the knowhow and the financial means, material resources are being shared during the project thanks to the alliance. Thus, as we have seen, the co-produced films benefited from the infrastructures of both countries and, in particular, the studios.

4. Limiting losses

Fourthly, a co-production can limit losses. As we studied, regrouping the means of production goes with an increase of the total budget compared to the initial one. Reciprocally, the various stakeholders limit the financial risks, because they will contribute of up to a certain percentage that they would have determined priorly, within the co-production contract. In the example of the film "Le Guépard/Il Gattopardo", given the enormous amount of funding it required, the producers took a long time to pay back their investments, especially as the film was boosted by its victory at the Cannes Film Festival. It is clear that a single investor could have gone bankrupt if he had incurred the expenses of producing the film alone.

5. Finding an associate

Finding an associate can facilitate the process of film production. As the risks are lower, a collaboration would be much easier to establish because the partners could be more convinced to participate thanks to this additional guarantee. These partnerships could also be converted into long-term ones if the movie finally becomes a success and creates profits.

6. International network

Then, a cinematographic co-production can ensure the development of a professional network internationally. For example, France signed no less than 50 co-production agreements

with other countries. These permit to get a double, perhaps triple nationality to a film. Not only does it help access new markets, but it can also, in some cases, serve diplomatic interests. Co-productions access preferential distribution channels in the country of production. The film "Le Guépard" illustrates this advantage. By casting Burt Lancaster in the main role and by bringing Italian and French producers on board, Luchino Visconti was able to benefit from the financial support of the American production company Fox and from wide distribution in the US.

7. Reducing the export’s expenses

Another advantage is that it allows exporting the films abroad but also reduce the expenses of exporting. A co-production between countries sharing the same language can also avoid the costs of dubbing the cast voices.

8. Finding additional helps

Finally, the last benefit when a country signs a film co-production agreement with another is the availability of additional helps for the feature. Indeed, it is true that these alliances can aspire to obtain helps and tax credits for the country from which the producer comes.

Table 2: Advantages and limits of co-production

Advantages of a co-production	Limits of a co-production
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Budget increase</i> - <i>Mixed know-how</i> - <i>Mixed infrastructures</i> - <i>Limiting losses</i> - <i>Finding an associate</i> - <i>International network</i> - <i>Reducing the export’s expenses</i> - <i>Finding additional helps</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Risk of culture dilution</i> - <i>Lack of cooperation and cultural mixing</i> - <i>The movie’s nationality issue</i> - <i>Risk of resources’ waste</i>

As highlighted by the Table 2, it appears that there are more advantages to a movie co-production than there are limits, but sceptical people back then were doubtful and claimed that

the Franco-Italian co-production could have more negative effects. In reality, some empirical issues demonstrated that this list is indeed theoretical and that the co-productions are more mitigated. Yet, despite these problems that arose with the signing of treaties, cinematographic instances and governments concluded that the positive impact outran the bad one, and so the co-production between Italy and France pursued.

III - 1953-1970: The golden age of the Franco-Italian film co-production despite a cinema crisis by the end of the 1950s

In the 1950s and 1960s, Italian and French cinemas were competing, cohabiting, but also collaborating. They were both undeniable leaders, on the main stage of European production. Back then, there were nearly a hundred Franco-Italian movies co-produced per year, in average, which inspired new generations and directors and are considered nowadays as true classics. Among them, “Le Petit Monde de Don Camillo” by the French director Julien Duvivier in 1952, with the French actor Fernandel accompanied by the Italian actor Gino Cervi; “La Dolce Vita”, the extremely popular film directed by Federico Fellini in 1960, with the important participation of the French cinematographic company Pathé.

From the signing of the Franco-Italian film agreement in October 1946, up until the beginning of the 1960s, film cooperation between the two countries became more dynamic. From a few dozen films per year in the early years, the number of co-productions exceeded one hundred in the early 1960s, representing 75% of Italian and French national productions. More than their economic success, co-productions allowed and facilitated multiple artistic collaborations between Italian and French professionals, resulting in some of the most emblematic works in the history of cinema.

A) The multiple renewals of the co-production treaty

The new treaties signed in Venice on the 6th of September 1953 and in Paris on the 15th of March 1955 (the latter no longer covers the exchange of films) are favourable to the quality of films and national identity, but even if there is a clear opposition to the co-production system, filmmakers and national governments have not lost the technical and artistic advantages of co-production. Because of the technical, artistic, and moral value of co-productions, which contribute to "the dissemination of the national culture and civilisation of which both countries are so proud", only films that guarantee the cultural prestige of Italy and France can benefit from the co-production model. Co-productions have always been considered as national films, but subjects of international importance are considered more favourable for the film to be better exported, as we have already seen. Furthermore, to guarantee financial security, only competent producers, recognised by national film authorities as being of high artistic quality, can co-produce a film. However, the conditions set are strong: a director can apply only after having

produced at least two internationally released films priorly, and after having achieved critical and box-office success, or having been selected for an officially recognised international film festival in Italy or in France.

Besides, national creators and technicians living in the other country cannot participate in the co-production as nationals of the other country, and international stars cannot normally appear in Italian or French co-productions, even if their country has concluded a co-production agreement with one of them. In 1953, a so-called "special" category of films was introduced, exempt from the matching requirement. This category would have included relatively high-budget films in which a minority co-producer only participated by providing financing or certain services.

As a result, the number of co-productions increased by then: six productions per year were approved in 1953, twenty in 1955, forty in 1957, and the participation of a small number of co-producers could be reduced to 20%. While investment between the two countries should always be equal, it can have a negative impact because official agreements increasingly leave room for combinations that ignore creative cooperation and solely focus on financial speculation. This is certainly an unorthodox approach, but one that favours both sides and is tacitly accepted, even encouraged, by the official authorities. Once again, productive alliances should appear as a cover for national egoisms, hiding one or more incongruities.

1. The Venice's renewal in 1953

The first updated contract includes the obligation to provide guarantees. It is a joint deposit between the French CNC and the Italian Direzione Generale Spettacolo Dal Vivo of a "simple plan for the making of two films before the first one is made" (1953's Agreement: 5). Since the 1st of October 1953, the production of sister films must of course begin within a maximum of four months "after the issue of the censorship visa for the first film in the country with the least amount of funds" (1953's Agreement: 5) but counting "after the issue of the censorship visa for the first film in the country with the most amount of funds" (1953's Agreement: 5). As the tendency is to release films in majority countries first, this rule effectively extends the period, but if the two periods are interpreted alternately, the release of the first film of a pair in a minority country may be delayed by several months. The new text reaffirms the synergies of co-production and seems to recognise and relax the inability of producers to respect this rule.

2. The Paris' renewal in 1955

The next agreement, in 1955, extended this period from four to six months for the production of sister films, but provided that "this period shall not exceed one year after the issue of the visa for the use of the first film in the country where the economic majority is held" (1955's Agreement: 6). The 1955's Agreement specified the sharing of production costs and financing. Moreover, it adds some new rules: a co-produced film must have two negatives or one negative and one copy as well, which may be retained by each producer. The film may be either in French, in Italian, or French and Italian at the same time. Concerning close-ups, they must be reproductions and recordings must be made on location.

The policy on twin films remains the same, except that the director may employ an assistant director of another nationality and that the shooting of twin films must begin within six months before the theatrical release of the first film in the minority producer's country, and within one full year prior to its release within the majority producer's country. The technical and creative contribution has to be shared equally between the two countries and it is supposed to include at least one assistant director, one adaptor or scriptwriter, one lead actor and also one supporting actor of the producer's minority nationality.

These balanced films are produced partly in Italy and partly in France. In their case, the production share for each party is 50%, with similar figures for distribution and crew. Special co-productions, which are films of particular artistic interest, require a 70/30% participation, and no more than 10 such films may be produced per year in each country. In all co-productions, profits are made by the producers of the respective and associated countries, with profits from the rest of the world being shared in proportion to the production share. As new co-productions are intended to reach a much wider international market, the 1955 agreement provided for a distribution of box-office receipts according to the different currencies involved and of export rights outside Italy and France.

For import restrictions to countries other than Italy and France, the nationality of the film must correspond to the one of the majority of the directors or, if the production ratio is the same, to the country with the greatest export potential. Co-productions must declare their Italian and French nationality for all public screenings, except for balanced co-productions, where only the nationality of the director is allowed. Due to disagreements between producers, only the films of the majority will be recognised at international festivals.

All sister films will be distributed on favourable terms to the national films of countries with which Italy and France have a free trade agreement, but co-productions of high-quality films with all countries with which they have a similar agreement are encouraged. To apply for the co-production formula, a file including the following information is requested: the details of the treatment, proof of copyright licence for the film adaptation, production contributions approved by the relevant government agency, revenue and market breakdown, total cost of the film, list of cast and crew and shooting schedule, including locations, must be submitted within the following deadlines documents, in French and Italian.

Films for young people cannot be distributed in minority countries if they have not been screened prior to completion. On the same day that the 1955's agreement was approved, a letter was exchanged between the CNC and the Direzione Generale Spettacolo Dal Vivo allowing the co-production in each country of up to eight short films of exceptional artistic and technical merit. As the number of films in this category was high, the investment was monitored for eight months. This equivalence rule does not apply to exceptional works that are well balanced, but these works are also excluded from the principle of equivalence in terms of work.

Films made for the intellectual and moral development of young people, with a positive, social, and humane view of things, are also excluded from the matching system and the contribution of technical and creative staff. Thus, 10% of the total cost of films made for young people must be borne by minority film producers and distributors, but in 1955 they were only allowed to make ten films.

3. The renewal in 1957

The subsequent year, special films were reviewed and defined as films of high artistic quality and international value, the number of special films per country was increased to 20 and the evaluation period was reduced to six months. At the beginning of 1957, several other changes were made: twin films were abolished and replaced by regular co-productions, and a strict reciprocity principle was applied.

In the case of regular co-productions, the balance between leading and supporting roles was determined after having carefully considered all of the categories, and the balance between funding and technical and creative personnel was reviewed by the joint committee every six months.

The definition of exceptional films was also changed. A maximum of twelve films aimed at young audiences may be screened in each country within a given year. There is nothing said about the intellectual or moral purpose of these films, but a longer section states that “if a film intended for young audiences cannot obtain its co-production status, it will be seen as a normal co-production”.

On the 8th of November 1957, all revisions and amendments were incorporated into the new agreement, which abrogated the 1955 agreement and remained in force until the 31st of October 1958. The new agreement differs from the previous one for several points. New production companies could apply for co-productions if they had already produced high quality films in their own country. Also, a particular film had to be artistically or technically superior or of economic importance. Foreign actors and technicians are paid in their national currency and their remuneration is distributed to producers according to their percentage of investment.

At its next meeting, the Joint Committee decided to extend the 1957 Convention and its amendments until the 31st of December 1960. However, important changes were made to the categories of films to be co-produced. First, the financial exposure of few producers could amount to 20% of the cost of a normal co-production, making it a special film. Secondly, since the 1st of November 1958, co-productions exceeding the annual quota in all categories of films are only allowed when there is a well-documented balance between investment and work.

In any case, these additional films had to be released before the 30th of June 1959. In other words, to benefit from the concessions offered by the Italian government, they had to be released before the adoption of the new Italian film law. In August 1959, the joint commission again raised the participation quota for minority producers of normal films to 30%, while the minority participation shares for exceptional co-productions remained at 20% if the minority producer contributed at least thirty million francs. Moreover, the category of films for young people was removed and most references to money transfers were deleted.

The renewal of the contract in 1957 was an opportunity for both contracting parties to acknowledge the failure of the management attempt. The clause was therefore deleted and "the general balance of the financial, artistic and technical participation of the two countries" (1957's Agreement: 2069) was to be managed by a joint commission every six months. In addition, the term "sister films" was replaced by "general co-productions", a category which was simply deleted when the agreement was renewed in 1966. The balance of the capital contribution was

to be paid directly by each producer, who could only co-produce a film as a minority partner "if he had produced a national film or a co-production with a majority shareholding during the previous two years" (1966's Agreement: 8909).

The simplification of the management regime and the relaxation of the ratio requirement, which of course comes at a time when the golden age of Franco-Italian co-productions is coming to an end, wants to solve all the difficulties, violations and controversies that have surrounded twin films throughout their history. However, the will of the two nations to foster the movie co-production is highlighted by the multiple treaties that were signed and established in this period.

B) The end of the 1950s: a difficult period for cinema

By the end of the 1950s, cinema attendance was falling across Europe, and Italy and France were no exception. Additionally, European films were not exporting well, and the spread of television in the 1960s put pressure on an already difficult industry. This last factor, combined with "changing lifestyles", deprived cinema of its "entertainment monopoly" and, because of the low cost of installing television, made it a direct competitor. From that time on, cinemas went through a difficult phase. As Pervenche Beurier² points out, "the drop in income inevitably led to a restriction of production", which in turn led to a loss of creativity. Thus, the composition and development of the big American studios was an essential element in the difficulties encountered by the European film industry, and France is no stranger to this.

There is a nostalgia for the great movements of the 20th century which, in this perhaps less glorious period of the film world, were able to renew the industry and open new horizons. It was only in the second post-war period that several groups of directors succeeded one after another, or even appeared simultaneously in different countries, changing cinema, and bringing to the screen new ways of making cinema, using new languages and new images.

In the second half of the 20th century, Italian directors, as well as the non-Italian French New Wave, the Brazilian New Cinema, the Polish Nova Falla and the Czech Nova Vía, claimed the influence of neorealism. Their aim was not to imitate Rossellini or Visconti, or to do better, but to establish their own way of filming. Italian neo-realism became the fundamental reference

² Pervenche Beurier – *'The European politics to support cinema'* published by L'Harmattan in 2004.

for cinema in the second half of the 20th century. The whole system of film production and distribution in the immediate post-war period was clearly abandoned, in a state of crisis and based on improvisation.

As we have seen, the Italians who remained to run the film were stripped of their facilities at Cinecittà and the Luce Institute. Cinecittà was turned into a refugee camp after the end of Second World War, between 1945 and 1947, and Salò studios were looted by the Germans, leaving the Italian film industry without a large studio and equipment. In addition, the Allied occupation forces provided minimal assistance to the Italians. By side-lining the film industry that had been so beneficial to European audiences during the war, it paved the way for the profitability of American films on the continent.

However, for Italian and French cinema, this period marked a major turning point in the history of cinema with the arrival of a new generation of directors who embraced the evolution of society and revolutionised the cinema. There was a clear generational gap in the conception of “cinema for the fathers” of young French directors, which presupposed the search for new styles and modes of expression in other cinematic experiences.

The authors of the French New Wave, such as the most famous ones Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut, were looking for a spiritual father in a director who had a solid cinematic culture and who knew how to interpret their characters in an innovative way. Their reference was Roberto Rossellini, whose war had led to the emergence of a "clear-sighted cinema, which is no longer a cinema of action", characterised by "purely optical situations", which detach time and space from the development of the film's narrative and do not fit into the logic of events. These "purely visual situations" were almost non-existent in the first neo-realist films, and it was during the New Wave period that they matured.

C) A new boom during the 1960s

By 1960, however, the co-production survived. The Italian and French film industries were growing, and films were being exported widely: in the early 1950s, Italy and France were co-producing about ten films a year, but by mid 50s they were booming, producing up to thirty films a year. This momentum was justified by the fact that Franco-Italian co-productions had not been well received by the public, but little by little, the co-produced films reappeared in the box offices of both countries.

1. Toughening constraints: Rome's agreement in 1961

In 1960, the Joint Committee made even more stringent demands on producers. They had to have a solid base and irrefutable proof of their economic credibility. A minority of producers, who contributed 20% of the film's production costs, were only eligible for co-production rights if they had recently produced a national film in their own country and had a majority in a Franco-Italian co-production.

For ten regular films co-produced in both countries and costing more than FRF 1.75 million each, the 30% limit on production quotas will be reduced to 20%. However, minority producers are also expected to contribute to the workforce. The same minority ratio will apply to exceptional films costing more than FRF 2 million each, but these will be reduced to 10 films on each side. The joint commission again warned of the need to balance the financing and distribution of films of all genres: in 1961, all references to the international combinations of a small number of producers were removed from the text of the convention. To be eligible for co-production, a producer must be active only at the national level. The limit of a 20% minority shareholding in a regular co-production has been lowered to 1.5 million French francs, and the limit for special films has been changed to allow both countries to produce 10 films each in the first half of the year, with the national film authorities providing a further 10 films for both countries if Italy or France meets a six-month deadline. The Italian and French film authorities will provide an additional 10 films for both countries if they meet the six-month deadline. A provisional co-production licence could be obtained simply by submitting a script, but both countries would have the right to reject it if, after completion, it was deemed unsuitable for co-production. Since then, the 1957's agreement has been amended several times and a new treaty was signed in Rome in 1961.

In the 1961's agreement on film relations between Italy and France, there was a notable change in wording. It confused film exchange with co-production, removed quota restrictions on original or dubbed versions of domestically produced shorts and features, which means French or Italian films produced entirely in French or Italian capital, and reduced the use of the word international. A short section in which both countries officially welcome cooperation with other countries with which they have signed co-production agreements. As there is too little mention of international value, the most important precondition for co-production is the demonstration of national self-awareness. Therefore, actors of a third nationality are no longer defined as international, but as actors who do not have the nationality of any country.

In contrast to the 1957's agreement and its amendments, the usual and special minority shares in co-productions have been reduced, thus emphasising the financial responsibility of minority producers. Indeed, if minority producers do not fulfil their obligations to the majority, the film authorities of the majority producer's country can ask the partner countries to stop providing financial incentives to minority producers. The producer could apply for and obtain a provisional co-production licence by submitting a film outline and a co-production agreement rather than a script. For a normal co-production, there is no limit to the number of films that can be produced with a 20% minority production share.

The joint committee must gather every six months to check the balance of investment between the two parties and to possibly lift the ceiling for exceptional productions. Applications for co-production are accepted 12 days before shooting and must be accompanied by a formal agreement in which the co-producer undertakes to pay an increased production cost according to the initial investment, but in no case more than 30% of the cost of the film.

2. The 1966's treaty

On the 1st of August 1966, a new treaty on co-production was signed, which remained in force for the next 30 years. The word used to describe the quality of films produced jointly by Italy and France was "spectacle", replacing "morality", but the technical and artistic values inherited from the previous agreement were of paramount importance. The requirements for producers' portfolios have increased in this new treaty. Most producers can apply for the co-production rights if they have produced at least three fully domestic films in the last three years or if they have most of the of co-productions.

However, the requirement for minority producers is lightened: having produced one full national film or one majority co-production in the last two years is enough. For bilateral co-production, the minority must provide the technical and creative personnel. Exceptions to these rules may apply for works of undeniable artistic value or for spectacular co-productions. Nonetheless, the new convention does not distinguish between Italian or French actors and countries with which they have a cooperation agreement, but it presents a criterion allowing filming in a third country only if necessary. Additionally, co-productions are no more classified but are defined by their value.

In this treaty, the quota for minorities appears to be more flexible. Indeed, it is set at 30% but can be reduced to 20% in the case of spectacular productions with a certain level of

production costs, but the minority producer's share cannot be less than 20% of the total cost of the film. If their contribution does not exceed this percentage, they are not required to provide personnel or equipment anymore. The section on profits and exchanges was replaced by a more concise statement: the conditions for distribution of revenues and agreements between producers must be approved by competent authorities of both countries. All co-producers could apply for co-production rights one month before shooting, and minority producers had to hand over their share to the majority partner within 60 days of the date of dispatch of the film to the minority country. This period is the golden age of Franco-Italian co-productions. In 1964, out of 294 films produced in Italy, 126 were co-productions with France.

By the way, according to Tim Bergfelder³, the Franco-Italian co-productions succeeded in finding films that emerged during the 1960s. These movies correspond to universal formulas, like action and adventure films, international chases, detective films, or horror films also, that were appropriate for large audiences; he calls this "the era of generic excess in European co-production". Nonetheless, the downside is that legislation endorsed the grandiose and very expensive films, but there was little support for young producers, because the 1961's agreement removed the initial incentives for new production companies.

Consequently, these quota productions and the cost-oriented treaty conditions for films create growing co-production practices that took little account of national characteristics or the legitimate flow of capital. The flaws in the co-production became apparent when the financial community found ways to avoid the principles of co-production, financing a single film with huge profits in a short period of time, and then abandoning film production just as quickly.

D) The Franco-Italian co-production often went through a European one

The first countries which institutionalised co-production in 1946 were Italy and France. Soon after, in November 1950, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was the second country to sign a co-production treaty with France. In the same year, Italy also signed a treaty with the Federal Republic of Germany. These treaties were regularly updated and opened the way to a true co-production through a whole European Community.

³ Tim Bergfelder – 'National, transnational or supranational cinema? Rethinking European film studies' published in *Media, Culture and Society* in 2005.

1. European aids for co-productions

In Europe, there is a long tradition of film co-productions. From the Franco-Italian co-productions of the 1960s to the German-American-British co-productions of the 2000s, many of the relationships forged between European producers have formed a dense network of film cooperation. Due to the fragmentation of the European film market, producers use the national market for most of their films (language, culture...), and the size of the market favours the economics of production. Thus, in 2012, France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom were the largest producing countries.

To analyse the European co-productions, we must have a look at the wide variety of partnerships that have been set up. In France, for example, among the 279 films produced in 2012, 129 were co-productions (with 37 different countries), 70 of which had foreign actors in the lead roles. Proximity and language proximity play a role, but they are not necessarily discriminatory criteria. Since 1988, Europe established a support funds for European cinema: Eurimages. It gathers 39 countries and participates to the promotion of independent cinema by allowing a financial support to fiction movies, animated ones, and documentaries as well.

Italian and German co-production contract, 9/3/1963

“Since its creation in 1988, EURIMAGES has supported 1,560 European co-productions for a total amount of approximately 474 million Euros. Eight films have won the Oscar. Eurimages is the Cultural Fund of the Council of Europe. Operational since 1989, it now includes 36 of the 47 member states of this Strasbourg-based organization. Eurimages participates in the promotion of the European audiovisual industry by granting financial support to fiction, animation and documentary films produced in Europe. In this way, it encourages cooperation between professionals from different European countries.”

2. Case study : In famiglia si spara / Les tontons flingueurs

The movie "In Famiglia Si Spara" ("Les Tontons Flingueurs" in French, and "Mein Onkel der Gangster" in German) was co-produced under the Franco-Italian treaty of the 7th of October 1961 and the Italian-German treaty of the 1st of June 1962. The film was released in

November 1963. It is a remarkable example of European filmmaking methods of the 1960s, thanks to the official collaboration of producers, technicians, and artists from three different countries. Indeed, the production is 60% French, 20% Italian and 20% German.

For French people though, the fact that this film is not fully French but instead a co-produced one, is not known, and the nationality of the film is therefore never questioned at all. Ironically, it is still even considered one of the most "Frenchie" films ever made by the population and one of its most mythical.

Italian and German co-production contract, 9/3/1963

“The three groups decided to co-produce, under the corresponding Franco-foreign agreements, a long-feature called “Les Tontons Flingueurs”. This movie will be majorly French.”



French film poster



Italian film poster



German film poster

According to the co-production rules, both countries have the right to request changes to certain scenes for censorship reasons. The film will also feature three German actors (one male, one female and one minor role) and two Italian actors, whose names have not yet been revealed. On the 12th of March 1963, the Gaumont Association (the leading French film

company) confirmed the casting of the main actors. Lino Ventura remains the only one with a contract. Gaumont has decided to give 20% of the rights to a German group, which will invest the same amount. Gaumont has committed to casting Horst Frank, the German star famous in France for his role as Major von Horwitz in the 1960's film "La chatte sort ses griffes".

However, the actor wanted to add his role to the film and said he would only be accepted if he got more screen time. The problem was how to add a character's appearance to an already written script without changing the story. On the 19th of March 1963, Gaumont asked the French CNC for permission to start shooting, but Horst Frank had to appear in a scene that had not been included in the original plan. This was a temporary request, as many of the documents that were to be included in the application had been omitted. Thus, shooting began on the 8th of April 1963 and the film, eventually released seven months later at the end of November, was enthusiastically received as an outstanding comedy. Today, the film has become legendary and is subject to numerous French articles, conferences and even books.

Chapter Two

1970-2021

I - 1970-2013: Decline of the Franco-Italian movie co-production

A) A critical situation for both countries

The Franco-Italian relationship in the field of cinema, although still very close and long-standing has declined over time due to the lack of appropriate structural support. The glorious era of Franco-Italian co-productions, when famous Italian and French directors such as Fellini, Visconti and Godard worked together as producers, is coming to an end.

The Italian cinema economy has long been flourishing, but it endured very hard times. This decline could be explained by two main factors. On the one hand, many great Italian film directors died during the 1970s: Vittorio de Sica in 1974, Luchino Visconti in 1976 and Roberto Rossellini in 1977, which stopped the process of cinematographic creation because few people followed up. On the other hand, the advent of television has largely contributed to this failure with its rapid growth due to the launch of major TV channels, as we have seen priorly.

Marin Karmitz (a French producer)

“The catastrophic influence of private television destroyed Italian cinema.”

Statement from the first Franco-Italian forum for cinema, in 1995

Unfortunately, Italian television channels did not contribute a lot to movies financing, as they were not committed to do so, in contrary to France. Even when they did, they would turn to mainstream production, neglecting author movies that could be exploitable in festivals or abroad. There is a weak support by the Italian distributors in their country, with a permanent lack of guaranteed minimum which contributed to the slowdown of the Italian independent cinema too. It is certainly because of this lack of support that today, many Italian directors look for a co-production with France to complete their budget.

This tough period was also explained by a more general ideological and cultural crisis that cinema encountered in Italy, with a huge decrease from 513 million spectators in 1975, to 195 million in 1982. Between 1955 and 1985, all major Italian films were co-produced with France. The greatest Italian actors, including Marcello Mastroianni and Claudia Cardinale, were as famous in France as in Italy back then. However, the big French film companies, like

Gaumont, invested in co-productions with Italy ("Padre padrone", "L'arbre aux sabots", which won the Palme d'or at the Cannes Film Festival) and unfortunately suffered heavy losses.

In 1987, many Italian and French producers were worried about the future of Italian cinema. The movie production in Italy was reduced, but the country did not intend to let its cinema fade away.

B) An attempted revival with the agreements of 1971 and 1994

In 1971, an important issue concerning Franco-Italian co-productions was the imbalance in co-productions that seemed to affect Italy. To safeguard its co-production policy, the French government authorized, for a limited period, “that films produced entirely with Italian capital be distributed in France in place of those recently co-produced that had not yet been granted co-production benefits” (Repubblica Italiana 1973: 21). Furthermore, in 1973, the mixed co-production committee decided that “any producer could qualify who had the necessary financial means to co-produce a film” (Repubblica Italiana 1975). Restrictions on creative talent have changed: “foreign filmmakers who lived and worked in France and Italy could be exceptionally

1971's Agreement, source French CNC

The co-produced film now cost at least 900,000 francs (100 million lire), without considering the salary of writers, leading actors, and filmmaker. For art films no demand was made regarding production costs, whereas to be defined spectacular, a film had to cost at least 1,800,000 francs (200 million lire), excluding the salary of writers, leading actors and filmmaker. The mixed committee also made clear that for all co-productions the minority producer could not just contribute money to the film, but also a technician and a leading actor or alternatively two supporting actors of his or her own nationality, and that the only authority deciding on the exceptional value of spectacular and art films was that of the majority partner country. International co-productions with partners who had signed treaties with France and Italy cost at least 2,250,000 francs (250 million lire) after payment of creative talent. Henceforth, the mixed committee would meet every six months and asked the French and Italian film authorities to share the list of the films applying for co-production every two months. No imbalance exceeding ten films in favor of one of the two sides would be permitted.

employed for co-production and third-country actors both residents and non-residents of Italy or France, could also be exceptionally hired, provided that they were not more numerous than Italian and French cast members to play roles that were equally important”.

In 1972, a decision of the Italian Court of Auditors stipulated films co-produced by Italy as a minority party must be endowed with creative and technical talent; from the legislator's point of view, the concept of co-production is not possible without a human contribution. This decision comes from the concern that Italian artistic creation could benefit from this agreement. Consequently, Italian government withdrew licenses granted to minority Italian co-producers who had invested in French majority film projects without providing labor (Senato della Repubblica 1984). In 1976, the 1966 Convention was amended to require all Italian minority producers to pay 30% of the total film cost in “advance” (Repubblica Italiana 1982: 2107).

Indeed, Italian film legislation does not recognize as national films those produced with less than 30% Italian capital and labor, even if they are artistically and technically outstanding. There are no exceptions, and many constraints are reinforced, as the costs (bilateral co-productions must cost a minimum of 2.5 million francs, 4 million francs if the French minority participation is less than 30%), with one third of the minority's investment to be used in its own country, unless the artistic value of the film requires it.

The mixed committee also exerted considerable pressure on the Italian Government when the Constitutional Court of Italy was asked to rule on the constitutional legality of financial co-productions (Consulta 1984). The lack of conformity between the terms of co-production agreements and national law is indicative of the crisis of the co-production model. However, the co-production movement does not seem to have strengthened much, regardless of the judicial problems in Italy. In 1973, co-productions reached a high level, with 220 national films or most of them co-produced in Italy alone, but after 1975, Franco-Italian co-productions decreased again due to the decrease in audiences and revenues in cinemas. One of the reasons for this was that co-productions had difficulty in respecting the principle of reciprocity within the rigid framework of the production balance established by the laws of 1971 and 1973.

The CNC and the Direzione Generale Spettacolo Dal Vivo by setting up stricter rules did not improve the situation, but when the market contraction intensified and co-productions decreased again, the principle of work symmetry was condemned for its rigidity. The restrictive and constraining environment of bureaucratic and technical obligations seems to have contributed to the decline of co-produced films. With an investment of 1.04 billion euros in

2004, French cinema maintained a 39% market share in theatres (with a total of 194.8 million admissions) and Italian cinema 19% (with a total of 96.3 million admissions), producing 138 films in the peninsula, with an investment of 285 million euros.

Nevertheless, this relationship between Italy and France always was a major pillar of the European film industry, and various circles and government bodies were looking for effective measures to stop the sharp decline in the exchange of technical and artistic funds between the two countries. To this end, they decided not only to renew the co-production agreement between the two countries, but they also recently established a development fund to accompany it.

Relations have also been frozen due to differences of opinion between the two countries. Italian producers and distributors have pointed out that the French market is closed to Italian films, while French experts have criticised the decline and provincialism of Italian cinema. Apart from a few films (“Our Best Years” by Italian director Marco Tullio Giordana in France, and “The Fabulous Destiny of Amélie Poulin” by French director Jean-Pierre Jeunet and “Eight Women” by François Ozon both in Italy), no films crossed the Alps in any direction.

In 1974, Italian audiences were twice as large as those of France; in 2015, Italian audiences were half those of France. Filmmakers have turned to the EEC (European Economic Community) for help. Eitel Monaco⁴, former president of the Italian film agency ANICA, argued in 1974 that member states had to harmonise their aid laws and change bilateral co-production agreements, which he says are deteriorating. He believed that these agreements were weighed down by bureaucracy and overly restrictive subsistence clauses and calls for them to be replaced by a flexible multilateral co-production system open to all Member States. Even if the participation of national producers is limited in terms of investment and risk, these films should be counted as European films and therefore eligible for support, provided they are produced in Europe by European companies.

C) Florence’s agreements in 1985

The 1980s saw a decline in the number of Franco-Italian co-productions, and in 1986 the number of Italian French co-productions reached its lowest level with only as few as six

⁴ Eitel Monaco – ‘The financing of film production in Europe’ published in *Cinema Journal* in 1974.

films. This decline is partly due to the collapse of public subsidies and partly to differences in the film industry. In France, more than 200 films are released each year, while in Italy, the control barely reached 20% of the domestic film market.

To try and solve this issue, Italy and France signed a new deal in the city of Florence about Italian and French film co-productions on the 13th of June 1985.

Florence's 1985 agreement, source Direzione Generale Spettacolo Dal Vivo

Ten bilaterally co-produced films whose value was either artistic or spectacular, yet of interest to the rest of Europe could be made in each country within the year". If these ten films were made before the annual expiration of the treaty, the mixed committee would authorize more co-productions; otherwise, the two government agencies would revert to the twinning policy: for each French film made there had to be one Italian film. Film costs could be higher than those indicated in 1966 and, as a reflection of the legislative controversy a few years prior, the 20% minority participation could be financial only. Actors who shared the same nationality with the majority producer could play supporting roles, but not necessarily leading ones. The law in force in the majority producer's country sufficed to confer on the co-produced film the nationality of each of the partners. A balance between majority films had to be achieved on both sides; if not, the mixed committee would prevent the favored country from making any other majority films. France and Italy pledged to meet the EEC member countries with which they had subscribed co-production accords to encourage them to join the French and Italian co-production system.

In addition to this bilateral agreement in Florence, in the mid-1980s, Italy and France resumed their legislative activities in both countries and several complementary initiatives were developed to promote relations between Italian and French cinema in terms of conservation, restoration and subtitling. These included events and exhibitions related to them organized in both countries, but also the creation of the Rossellini Award at the Cannes Film Festival, and new conferences and retrospectives that were held at the International Film Festival, the French Cinematheque and in the Cinecittà.

Nevertheless, all the measures did not have the expected returns and Italian cinema was still weakened. Many producers from Italy and France, like for instance Marin Karmitz (founder of the company MK2), deplored the catastrophic influence of private television on the Italian cinema. Due to the lack of investments from TV channels, producers and distributors, the poor access to authors' works and distributor support has meant that many Franco-Italian co-productions in recent years have become Italian co-productions that rely on France to make ends meet.

D) MIBACT's aids since the 1994's reform

In reaction, new measures have been implemented in 1994 like the urgent intervention in favour of cinema to keep Italian cinema in its own territory and remain an attractive country in terms of co-production. As a matter of fact, the 1994 decree modified the Italian support system as it really was one of the most important issues. A bank guarantee fund was created, managed by the Banco Nazionale del Lavoro, which is today one of the main instruments to support Italian cinema. The aid from MIBACT (Ministero dei beni e delle attivita' culturali e del turismo), the equivalent of the French ministry of culture, has been reorganized.

Since then, MIBACT has been providing carefully selected production support through the fund for production, distribution, exhibition, and technical industries (Fondo). This system is well developed and allows films to receive a substantial part of their budget. The maximum amount of funding for first and second films is €1.35 million, but it can reach €2.5 million. This funding must not exceed 50% of the total budget, although there are exceptions (expanding the threshold to 90% for first and second movies). The budget for 2012 is €25.8 million, supporting an average of €300,000 per film and an average of 80 films per year. It is quite close to the preliminary plan set by the CNC, but it should be remembered that the Italian support system is much more limited than the French support system, which has increased its production aid (development aid, writing aid, automatic aid fund, selective aid, etc.) over time.

The main problem is that in Italy, more than in France, the funds allocated to films are intrinsically linked to the budget of the Ministry of Culture. This fund is very unpredictable from one year to the next, as it depends on a finance law that is voted on every year, so the future is very uncertain for directors who have difficulty in making projects. In this regard, we recall that at the end of 2010, the Minister of Economy, Giulio Tremonti, declared that "Con la

cultura non si mangia" ("We do not feed on culture"), casting a worrying shadow over the sustainability of the system. Nicola Borelli (head of the cinema at MIBACT) announced in 2013 that there would be a cinema and audio-visual summit to take place during the Venice Film Festival the same year, confirming the words of the Minister of Culture Massimo Bray. This conference reassured the Italian film industry by announcing the reopening of the programme with 90 million euros of funding over two years. In addition, Italy seems determined to strengthen and improve its support system for the film industry, as evidenced by the tax incentives introduced by the 2008 finance law.

This proposal for tax incentives ensures a policy of support for national cinemas in order to promote the production and distribution of national films. To this end, it provides for tax incentives to be granted to companies that reinvest their profits in the production and distribution of Italian films, whether they belong or not to the film industry. This new form of support applies to Italian and foreign films, as well as to co-productions with Italy.

All types of films, including documentaries, fiction, animation, short films, and feature films, will be eligible for Italian tax incentives. However, there are categories of concessions. These are difficult films (documentaries, premieres, conditional films, and features) and films with a small budget (less than 1.5 million). The system also differentiates Italian films, foreign films, and co-productions. To stimulate the Italian film industry, it is foreseen that tax credits will be available for films produced abroad and for films co-produced with Italy.

However, the tax credit for foreign films will be granted to Italian executive producers. It is calculated on the basis of expenditure incurred in Italy at a rate of 25% (10% higher than the rate for domestic films). The tax credit cannot exceed 60% of the film's production costs but is in any case limited to a maximum of 5 million euros. This measure will make Italy a more attractive country. The filming of Woody Allen's "To Rome with love" (2012) and the visit to Italy of films such as "Belle du seigneur" (2012) are proof of this.

Notwithstanding the success of the film tax credit, it is still under debate. In 2010, the renewal of the film tax credit scheme for three years was already proving difficult. During this period of economic crisis, the government tended to tighten the budget, but the film industry, led by ANICA, argued that the tax credit was the only chance of survival for Italian cinema. The tax credit has been extended for three years and has just been extended for an additional year (until the 31st of December 2014).

As far as co-productions are concerned, the Italian system is not as complete as it could be. Only the Italian part of the film can benefit from tax credits and only a part of the rights belonging to the Italian production is accounted for. The 15% tax rate for Italian films applies to the cost of the Italian co-producer's share of the rights. This has allowed Italian producers to make international co-productions without benefiting from tax credits, what constitutes a negative effect. For example, the producers of “Salvo” (2013), due to the movie’s situation, decided to complete the financing with French partners (notably Films Distribution and Cité Films), providing them with one third of the film's budget.

Despite these significant accompanying measures, Franco-Italian co-productions continued to decline and collapsed in the 1980s and 1990s, as evidenced, for example, by the withdrawal of the Gaumont Italy subsidiary.

E) Venice’s 1997 agreement

Prior to the signing of the 1997 agreement, the French Minister of Culture at the time, Catherine Trautmann, expressed concern about the decline in joint film production. Indeed, 21 films were produced in France and Italy in 1995, down to 16 in 1996, and only 12 in 1997. The agreement signed on the 28th of August 1997 at the Venice Film Festival (Repubblica Italiana 1998) aims to further simplify the co-production process and to make censorship quicker and more efficient. For films costing more than 20 million francs (6 billion lire), the minority's share of the production is reduced to 10% and it does not have to provide personnel or equipment. However, if there is an imbalance between films produced jointly by two countries, minority producers may only contribute 10% of the production costs for films with a production cost of less than 20 million francs. If the disadvantage persists two years after the ratification of the new agreement, Italy and France must distribute the entire national cinema of the disadvantaged country instead of co-productions. This distribution is however guaranteed by a minimum pre-sale contract, with a 5% contribution from the exhibition. This procedure will be renewed every two years.

A new government-funded joint committee has been set up, and it should meet annually to evaluate the latest co-production schemes. When France ratified the agreement, a statement was issued to the effect that Italian television participation (whether public or private) would finance co-productions and that a balanced exchange of films should be based not only on the

number of films co-produced, but also on an advance payment, which was not in the Italian legal text. As a result of this policy change, the Italian and French film industries have tried to catch up with the distributors of both nation states (French Government Secretariat General 1998). This is explained by the rapid development of the film market.

Overall, the results were convincing, as Roberto Benigni obtained three Academy Awards for his movie “La Vita è Bella” (Life is Beautiful) during the Oscar ceremony in 1999, among which the “Best foreign picture” award.

F) Diverse regional aids enhancing Italy-located shootings

Like the regional support funds in France, bodies have been created in each Italian region to encourage filmmaking. It can be highlighted that the Italian Film Industry Support Commissions participate in an association called "IFC". This association gathers 17 production and investor support committees and articulates a regional support network in Italy. The IFC improves cooperation and information exchange in order to develop the Italian film industry. For example, since 2007, the region of Puglia, located in south-eastern Italy, has been providing various forms of support through the Puglia Film Foundation, with the aim of stimulating film production in the region.

The support offered is conditioned by the location of the expenditure and the location of the shooting (usually three weeks on location). The national fund and the host country fund both have a budget of one million euros per year. The host country fund is in fact the largest, supporting the co-production of 38 majority Italian films per year. Geographically, Rome is also well suited to the development of the film industry. The annual budget of the Lazio Regional Film Fund is very large: 15 million euros. It must be underlined that the fund makes no distinction between national and international films, it can help every type of movie. For this, it can finance up to 15% of a project, or up to 20% in the case of films made in collaboration with Italians. The amount of support can be very high: up to 500,000 euros for a film and up to 750,000 euros for an audio-visual work. This support is guaranteed and sufficient to meet the cultural criterion. However, there is a rule to respect: 40% of the production budget must be spent in the region (can be reduced to 20% if budget exceeds €2 million). In 2011, 114 films and audio-visual productions were supported by this regional fund, including Woody Allen's famous “To Rome with love”.

A support fund has also been set up for the South Tyrol region back in 2009. The annual budget of the Fund is around 5 million euros, with an average support to films of 230,000 euros and a maximum of 1.5 million euros, not exceeding 50% of the budget, and 80% for first and second films, or for films with a budget below 1.5 million euros. The Fund is also open to co-productions; in which case the amount will be calculated solely based on the percentage of Italian co-productions. This aid is automatic if the cultural criterion is met, but it is accompanied by a rather heavy expenditure obligation. Indeed, 150% of the aid must be spent in South Tyrol. Exceptions can be made if the theme or setting of the project is highly relevant to the region.

The Foundation's support is therefore mainly aimed at transferring funds to the region and its development. For instance, a co-production relationship with Germany has been established and two movies were co-produced with the region's help: "Peak" by Hannes Lang and "The Station" by Marvin Kren, presented at the Toronto Festival in 2013. It is consequently normal that French producers are particularly interested in this support with a high ceiling.

In Italy, national and regional support schemes are much more extensive, which should be considered in case of co-production or shooting on location. Italy has been and will remain a major partner of the French film industry. Italian regions are increasingly participating in film co-productions to encourage their development by spreading a positive image. The results achieved by these programs can yet be criticized, even if there is a return to collaboration within nation states: the rising incidence of more natural business cooperation in Europe, especially at the inter-regional level, provides some indication that different segments of the industry in major centers of cinematic production like Paris, London, and Rome could be induced to seek for a hypothetically more competitive movie industry.

G) 2000: A new Franco-Italian co-production treaty

Notwithstanding the efforts made to revitalize it, Italian and French co-production kept lagging to such an extent that soon another new formal agreement was necessary. Moreover, contrary to the expectations expressed by the signatories of the first agreement in 1946, the co-production system has not given rise to new cinematographic practices inspired by the methods specific to each country. A new agreement was signed in Paris on the 6th of November 2000 and abrogated the 1966 treaty and its amendments. The new Franco-Italian co-production pact, introduced in 2003, has drastically altered the rules related to co-production relations between

the two countries. Undeniably, a framework for French-Italian co-productions already existed in 1966, and the little changes made to the original text are not sufficient to bring it into force now.

As this relationship between Italy and France is major within European cinema, and as the dynamics of technical and artistic financial exchanges between the two countries were weakening, the authorities and government agencies were looking for this effective response. Thus, they recently created a development fund, accompanied with a new co-production agreement signed in 2003, changing the rules that applied to the co-production relationship between the two countries.

Thanks to this new framework, Franco-Italian co-productions are flourishing, and the flexibility of the new agreement seems to be paying off. However, even if the Franco-Italian co-production agreement seems to work, it is mainly because of the financial aspect. Indeed, many of the most prominent figures in Italian and French cinema do not seem to think that the co-production system is advantageous for creativity.

It is still in force today and represents the peak of over fifty years of Franco-Italian co-production. It familiarized with important key concepts, such as the principle of not distinguishing between traditional and financial co-productions, the replacement of the reciprocity system by a general analysis of the films exchanged between the two countries (which also includes distribution and broadcasting), the reduction of the minimum share of some producers and the redefinition of the benefits of co-production. Essentially, this new agreement sets very accommodating conditions for producers, financially and for shooting. In legal terms, a film is any cinematographic work produced for distribution in cinemas, regardless of its genre (fiction, animation, documentary) or duration. In this text, quality is no longer a differentiating factor, and the word country is not used. However, these two common concepts reappear in the annexes dealing with the economic benefits offered by the co-production model, which has been updated in line with the film legislation adopted in France and Italy.

However, the rejection of a co-production project must be discussed with the film authorities of both countries. The producer's professional experience must be verified at national level and he or she must be a citizen or resident of France, Italy, an EU member state, a country participating in the Television without Frontiers Directive or any other country with which the EU has concluded an audiovisual agreement. Producers who are not citizens, but

residents of the EU will be treated in the same way as French or Italian nationals. Studio shoots should preferably take place in France or Italy but may also take place on location in other EU countries if essential for the project.

The Joint Committee should come together every two years to evaluate the balance between traditional and financial co-productions. If there is no balance, the participants shall return to the most fundamental principle of reciprocity: "a film for a film". Multilateral co-productions are recommended with countries that have signed the treaties with Italy and France. These two countries should also invest in expertise, film schools and projects.

Producers wishing to apply for co-production rights must present a co-production agreement, a copyright registration form for the project, a detailed plot summary, a full cast and crew list, and a detailed shooting schedule and budget. However, the film agencies of some countries cannot make a final decision on a co-production before the film project has been assessed by the film authorities of most countries.

The agreement provides that the contribution of each of the co-producers or national co-producers to the co-production of a cinematographic work may vary between 10% and 90% of the final cost of the cinematographic work. Thus, this provision is helpful for the growth of Franco-Italian co-productions, as the slightest threshold chosen is low compared to the usual ones. In other European countries, we can observe that the German and Spanish minimums are higher: the minority co-producer must contribute at least 20% of the film's budget. This 20% threshold appeared before the new treaty establishment. More, the agreement states that outside shootings in a country that is not a party to the convention is allowed in pertinent cases.

It can happen that a film which could benefit from a Franco-Italian agreement gets co-produced with another country which has concluded a film co-production agreement with either France or Italy. This agreement is very flexible because the co-producer can work with different parties without any risk on the benefits of the co-production agreement and most importantly, the Franco-Italian co-production agreement has no constraint regarding the nationality. It is very rare that technicians are not distinguished in this way: co-production agreements usually require the employment of technicians to have the nationality of one of the two partner countries.

As a matter of fact, this commitment may have to be appreciated, reliant on the support requested by each producer and the conditions under which it is received. Also, the Franco-

Italian treaty accepts financial co-productions, which is not common. Normally, a real artistic collaboration is needed between the producers. Thanks to this framework, Franco-Italian co-productions enlarge, and this new and more adaptable agreement seems to have an effect.

However, despite his apparent success and flexibility, it has main financial implications that should not be ignored. In this regard, it should be noted that since the implementation of the new co-production agreement in 2003, an average of 20 films per year have been co-produced by French and Italian partners.

And notwithstanding the signing of a bilateral agreement in 2000 (which implemented in June 2003), Franco-Italian co-productions are falling. From 2000 to 2004 the market share of American films in Italian cinemas reaches 62 % when Franco-Italian co-productions films represent only 3.5%.

In any case, American movies really seem to dominate the market and answer to Italian audience tastes far better than French or European movies at that time. Despite the efforts and support of the government, the supply of American films has, little by little, generally been tailored to Italian and European publics. This brings up the question of whether the films meet the needs of the audience. Obviously, the question of audience preference is highly important, but other factors are involved.

Meanwhile the French CNC achieved promising results in its 2002 annual activity report: “While a number of indicators attest to a return to good health after a decade of uncertainty marked by a decline in cinema admissions and the domination of Hollywood films, French production is experiencing a new dynamic, which seems to be bearing fruit in terms of reconciling audiences and French films in cinemas.”

II - From 2013 to our days: a potential rebirth of the Franco-Italian cinematographic co-production?

A) A fund to support the development of Franco-Italian cinematographic works created in 2013

Facing the contrasting results of every binational co-production agreement made between Italy and France, both agreed, in addition to co-production agreements, to create a new fund that would support the expansion of their film productions.

On the 21st of May 2013, with the support of the Ministry of Culture from both countries, the French CNC President Eric Garando and his Italian counterpart Nicola Borelli signed a bilateral agreement in Cannes to create a fund to support the development of feature films. The fund's budget was set to 500,000 euros and was created to promote the growth of "artistic" co-productions.

It is true that co-productions are often chosen for economic reasons, but it is just as important to ponder the cultural enhancement they can create. The CNC specifies that the fund aims to support collaborations between co-writers and co-producers from both countries, to encourage artistic development and to deepen the crossroads of culture and the creativity. This agreement highlights the cultural aspects of the cooperation rather than only financing issues. By supporting Franco-Italian projects at the development stage, the production may be enriched not through a financial package, but by building on the strengths of both creative areas.

This fund supports producers in the development phase of feature film projects, whether fiction, documentary, or animation. In practice, only costs incurred before shooting and after submission of a grant application are covered. This includes the remuneration of scriptwriters, location scouting and research costs, personnel costs, social security costs and legal costs.

The institutions will select up to ten film projects per year, each of which will receive a grant of around €50,000. In fact, it is less flexible than the treaty of November 2000, as the producer's contribution are between 20% to 80%. Financial co-productions (those which do not involve any technical or artistic participation proportional to the financial contribution) cannot benefit from fund grants. Likewise, the fund provides selective assistance, allocated annually by the Franco-Italian Development Aid Commission (three members elected by the CNC and

three members elected by the MIBACT). The relationship between Italy and France in the field of cinema had been restored.

In parallel, Massimo Bray, the former Italian Minister of Culture, announced a stronger policy towards cinema, with Italian channels being required to invest in and screen films from the country. Indeed, as we have seen, Italian film production is not supported by television groups. When the channels invest, they favour the production of content for a wider, more profitable audience. If the Minister's intentions occur, the Italian film industry will have a new source of funding, which will allow it to become an interesting partner for future collaborations.

B) Case study: “La grande bellezza”



"La grande bellezza" (2013) is an Italian comedy-drama co-written and directed by Paolo Sorrentino, produced by Indigo Film, and distributed by Pathé Distribution. The story is about Jep Gambardella, a socialite writer who attends all the parties in Rome.

“La grande bellezza” is a major example of a successful co-produced movie by Italy and France. The list of producers includes several from both countries: Indigo Film (Italy), Babe Films (France), Medusa Film (Italy), and finally France 2 (France). The distributor is Pathé Distribution, a French company, and this co-production was supported by Eurimages, the fund for co-production in the European Council. The total cost of “La grande bellezza” reached 9.2 million euros.

The movie is a comedy-drama released in 2013, directed by the Italian Paolo Sorrentino. The story follows the story of Jep Gambardella, a popular man about town, who has existential doubts and takes a critical look over the moral decadence occurring to some part of Italy.

The film was named best European film of the year at the 26th European Film Awards ceremony in Berlin and won the Oscar for best foreign language film in Hollywood, fifteen years after “La vita è bella” by Roberto Benigni. When the reward was announced, Gabriella Battaini Dragoni, general assistant secretary of the European Council, highlighted the strength of international cooperation in European cinema, which proved again the importance of movie co-productions, especially the Franco-Italian one.



Paolo Sorrentino in Berlin, December 2013

C) Case study: “La famosa invasione degli orsi in Sicilia”

"La famosa invasione degli orsi in Sicilia" is an animated feature directed by Lorenzo Matotti and released in 2019. It is resulting from the efforts of Italian Prima Linea Productions, French France 3 Cinéma, French Pathé and Italian Indigo Film. Thanks to the financial support

of the institutions and partners, the budget was completed in about three years. The final budget for the film was around 12 million euros.

The story was written by the Italian writer Dino Buzzati in 1945 and published in the magazine *Corriere dei Piccoli*. After two years, when the whole story was compiled in a book, the second part was added. The animated movie is halfway between an ecological fairy tale and a wonderful story. It is an adaptation from the novel, scripted by Jean-Luc Fromental and Thomas Bidegain. Its excellent visual quality (it was tested in 3D before finally being produced entirely in 2D) and complexity makes it an example of a very successful co-production. Lorenzo Matotti is best known for his cover designs for *The New Yorker* magazine, but this is his first film as a director.



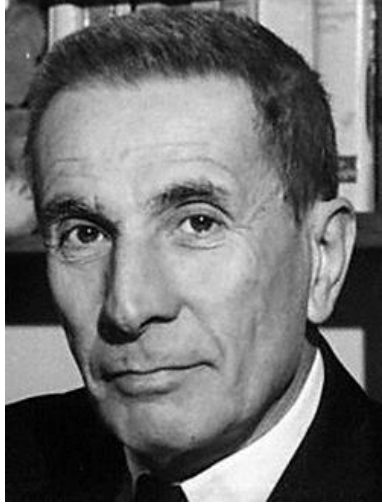
French film poster



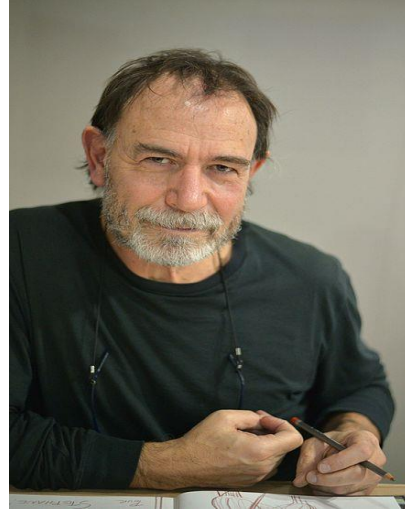
Italian film poster

Valérie Schermann, producer at Prima Linéa Productions and producer for the film, has underlined its complex editing process and its very high quality. She stated in 2010 that there are more and more animated movies projects in France, but they have to be directed with fewer and fewer money and time. She added that the country reached a point where the studios are forced to cooperate with other countries to create movies.

During the production process, the CNC supported the development with many aids, like the Franco-Italian development aid, but also support for new technologies, advances, and grants as well. Without the French CNC, this movie would probably have never existed.



Dino Buzatti



Lorenzo Matotti

The first images of the film adaptation were screened at the Annecy International Animation Film Festival in June 2018, where they were highly appreciated by critics and audiences. In October of the same year, the film won the Best Director Award at the 14th Rome Film Festival.

It was also nominated for the “Cigogne d’or” Award for Best Animation at the European Fantastic Film Festival 2019 in Strasbourg. The feature film has also been officially selected for the 2019 Cannes Film Festival. In total, it won an award and was nominated at 13 film festivals.

D) Evolution of the health of the co-production

The classification of co-productions is not perfect without an analysis of the legislative texts that nourish this method. A study of the legal framework defining a particular film industry reflects a formal or external approach that is useful for critical purposes and can help to better understand issues of cultural and national identity. Looking at the co-production laws passed in Italy and France after the Second World War, it seems that state intervention was particularly favorable to films of high quality and national interest, even if it sought to regulate transnational

distribution. Co-production remains a particular area of nation-state intervention, with the focus being the regulation and allocation of resources organized by national film institutions. In order to maximize international film production and distribution, national laws apply and cannot be ignored.

Co-productions are officially identified as national products. Indeed, it is assumed that hybrid productions will not be recognized by a national audience. For this, field recordings and double versions of scenes and close-ups were made until the last co-production agreement between France and Italy, signed in 2000. According to French and Italian national legislation, co-productions were intended for films with high artistic potential.

Although co-production activities offer opportunities for low-budget films, the higher production costs and the quality of the film as determined by international actors and filmmakers have always been considered in co-production agreements as two major issues. State deals do not sponsor young creative talent, else it is almost impossible to take off, unless their abilities are recognized by the state. Similarly, experienced producers with well-known domestic productions are encouraged to apply for co-productions.

An analysis of interstate law in the field of co-productions in Italy and France obscures the relationship between national and transnational cinema. Indeed, the fundamental concern of co-production treaties is to bring co-productions into the national culture under the direct supervision of the nation state. Since a co-production is first and foremost a national film, the nation-state exercises the power to define and supervise cultural production according to national film standards. Bilateral agreements, on the other hand, extend the protection and subsidies set by national governments to promote national culture. The co-production agreements between Italy and France were signed to protect national cultural expressions and support national cultural industries. In co-produced films, the cultural values of the technicians and creators may have faded over time and there may be no common creative element in the planning and execution.

However, even if co-productions are not able to measure cultural belonging across borders, treaties measure cultural specificity across borders and set boundaries that distinguish between products of national and non-national cultural expression. These conventions institutionalize a normative and static conception of national culture in the process of international cooperation. Considering the analysis of the legal framework of Italian and French

co-production, the question raised in the first page of this article concerning the use of inter-governmental cooperation to assert cultural hegemony seems particularly relevant. The emphasis on national identity and cultural prestige points out that co-production as a hybrid venture is hegemonically constructed in the interest of dominant sectors of society. The political elite intent upon preserving its hegemonic interests in the nation state must find a way of maintaining cultural differences. As state subsidies are given out based on a governmental body's assessment of artistic and technical merits, quality films in the Italian and French cultures keep their distinctiveness.

Spectacular films can also increase their share of the world market by minimizing cultural elements unfamiliar to foreign audiences and by presenting a competitive image of a domestic film industry with high production values and technological sophistication. Co-production agreements have been signed for the domestic film market, illustrating the concept of transnational cinema, and presenting nationality as an imaginary community.

E) Still some heavy issues to overcome

In 2013, the authorities from Italy and France were once again motivated to relaunch the co-productions, as proved by the creation of a helping fund for the development of Franco-Italian co-productions. This bilateral agreement for feature films, with a minimum contribution of 20% for each participant, must invite technical and creative participation.

The fund will provide €500,000 per year to cover 70% of the financial costs of films selected for co-production, but not more than €50,000 per film. This funding will be used to cover the costs of film adaptation and development rights, pre-production set and location visits, and so on. The fund supports films of cultural and artistic excellence, but not the films produced by financial institutions. If a co-production has not started after 24 months, or if the funds are used for a film that does not respect the Franco-Italian co-production agreement or the European Film Convention, the support fund must be returned.

The co-production documentation must be complete and furnish as many details as possible. The documents required include every aspect (including studies, experiences...) about producers, scriptwriters and directors, precise budgets, production plans, shooting schedules, synopsis of the film including the screenplay, co-production agreements signed by all scriptwriters and film music composers, and copyright licences.

All these measures are supposed to ensure the best conditions for the production in the cinematographic industry, and this initiative resulted in the production of 13 films in 2013 and 15 in 2014. More, over the last five years, three French movies exceeded 1,000,000 spectators in the Italian theatres: “Le Petit Prince” in 2015 (1,510,664), “Belle et Sébastien” in 2017 (1,176,536) and “Demain Tout Commence” in 2016 (1,106,377). In 2018, Italy was even the country with the biggest number of spectators for French movies in the world, ahead of Canada and the United States. It encompassed seventy-five movies, four million entries and 555.4 million Euros of proceeds.

Nevertheless, the movies "La grande bellezza" and "Youth" yet did not manage to give back all its glory to the Italian cinema. In the annual report on the film industry for 2014, it is said that Italian cinema continues to suffer from a paradoxical situation: too many films are being produced while the number of viewers is falling, despite the average budget. It is a paradoxical situation that continues to weigh on the country. Indeed, Italy produced 201 films in 2014, however, this is a deceptive result if one considers the drop in average budgets, the fall in total investments (-3.4%) and the drop in international co-productions.

Alongside the government, new initiatives have also been launched, such as the film festival "From Rome to Paris" (13th edition in June 2021), which aims to promote exchanges between Italy and France. “From Rome to Paris”, despite being an even for film lovers, is also an important professional meeting in favour of cooperation between the French and Italian film industries, and is arranged in three key modules:

- 1) a round table on the differences between the national situations and audio-visual policies of the two countries.
- 2) a co-production forum in which ten Italian producers will present their projects to potential French partners.
- 3) a session on current projects in which French distributors will be able to learn about the 10 current projects planned for 2020.

The festival has also confirmed its collaboration with two organisations that play an important role in the French film industry: the CNC and UNIFRANCE (institution in charge of promoting the French cinema worldwide, created in 1949).

F) The Franco-Italian co-production through the Covid-19 crisis

The coronavirus crisis has hit the world's film industries hard, and co-productions between Italy and France are no exception. Indeed, since geographical travel was banned and is still restricted today, co-productions are the most affected by the health measures, in particular the restrictions on travel abroad. The first wave has led to the brutal interruption of the content supply chain (filming, post-production, etc.) and has therefore caused a clear slowdown in the arrival of new productions, while new projects have been stopped.

The outbreak of the contamination led to the shutdown of theatres and studios in both countries, as well as the delay of filming. From the 23rd of February to the 1st of March 2020, box-office receipts dropped by 23 million euros compared to the results recorded during the same period the previous year in Italy. This very substantial drop has obviously affected producers, who either for lack of means or for fear of the future, are not encouraged to launch new film projects. Hit hard by the health crisis, an entire ecosystem of film professionals has been weakened and sometimes even made insecure by the restrictions and confinement.

To limit the consequences of the disaster as much as possible, the Italian government introduced the "Cura Italia", a decree signed on the 16th of March 2021 allowing the members of the Italian General Entertainment Association to benefit from financial aid. Italy announced in May 2021 the restoration of the compulsory theatrical release of publicly funded Italian films, which will then have to wait thirty days before being released on a private streaming platform or on television. "In this recovery phase, it is essential to support cinemas and at the same time to rebalance the rules to avoid Italian cinema being penalised in relation to international cinema," recently declared the Italian Culture Minister Dario Franceschini.

In Italy, despite the reopening of cinemas on the 30th of June 2021, the need to obtain health cards led to a 50-60% drop in cinema admissions since the 21st of July, and projectionists fear a further decline in attendance; this situation does not encourage the implementation of new film projects.

A total of 239 films were produced in France in 2020 (190 from France and 49 from abroad), the lowest number in the last 10 years and 62 fewer than the previous year. The restrictions imposed on foreign visitors also had a strong influence on international co-productions, which resulted in a 24% drop in the number of co-productions, the lowest level ever reached since 2006.

By 2020, investment in French film production has also fallen by almost 30%. It is obvious that big budget films will be the most affected by this measure, as they are the riskiest for producers who invest large amounts of money. Low-budget films, documentaries and animated films are less affected by the crisis. Investment in television channels has also fallen by around 20% across all channels (pay, free and digital).

In response to the health crisis, the French CNC and the government are putting in place several generous measures to support the sector. First, the creation of a compensation and guarantee fund provided at the end of the first lockdown period, to facilitate the resumption of filming, which is approximately equal to 100 million euros, co-financed by the State and the private insurers. It allows for the coverage of a part of the pandemic risk caused by the interruption of filming with Covid-19. In total, 24 million euros are being injected in favour of French film production. These various plans have limited the drop in public funding in 2020 (automatic support, selective support from the CNC, regional aid).

However, there are 350-400 French films and European co-productions waiting to be shown or completed. The pandemic disrupted the "media chronology" processes (arrival of films in cinemas, on digital platforms, on television), which is worrying the film community. In April 2020, the CNC renewed its authorisation for new films to be released first on streaming or VOD (Videos On Demand), as it had done a year earlier when the health crisis broke out. The measure, which is valid until one month after the effective date of reopening of cinemas, should be re-examined with the relaxation of measures for the world of culture.

With the lockdown, all film shoots in Italy, France, and around the world have been halted from one day to the next. Consequently, these non-finished films are a big financing problem, especially as no one knows when they will be completed. Indeed, the payment of most financing contracts mobilised within the framework of credits (subsidies, aid, payments from channels, distributors, platforms, international sales agents), is only made subject to the film's completion and theatrical release.

Contracts always contain an insurance policy that allows producers to be indemnified, but most insurance contracts unfortunately exclude the risk of a pandemic. Several films that were released just before the lockdown and had started well had their careers cut short. Others were due to be released in 2020 the week after the lockdown, such as the Franco-Italian co-production "Pinocchio" by Matteo Garrone.

These unreleased films have created an unprecedented situation for producers and distributors. For the feature film producer, the theatrical release conditions the qualification of "feature film", access to the support fund and triggers the payment of the main financing: the minimum guarantee given by the distributor, the pre-purchases from television channels and international sales that reimburse our credits. As a result, if the film is not released, the producer suffers significant financial costs.

For distributors, the situation is perhaps even worse because they incur publishing costs (between 500,000 and more than one million euros) for the release of films, in addition to the minimum amounts guaranteed to producers, for 8 to 15 films per year, and have been unable to release the films and have no income. The same problem applies to international sellers, as all the film festivals were cancelled.

To limit losses on films in the process of being released, some distributors chose to sell films to streaming platforms such as Netflix or Amazon Prime Video. For instance, the film "Forte" by Katia Lewkowicz has been sold to Amazon Prime video for a high price so that it could be released in April 2020. Also, the film co-produced by France and Italy called "Gli indifferenti", directed by Leonardo Guerra Seràgnoli had to be broadcast on Netflix in 2020 upon its release.

Indeed, films that are released on a platform are no longer considered as feature films, and the producer must therefore repay the grants he has received and renounce all regulated financing. The purchase price by the platform must be high enough to compensate for other losses of financing, or even to pay compensation to those who initially bought the film. Not all films sell at a price that covers all these funding losses and, in this case, distributors have been waiting for the reopening of cinemas and re-releasing their films. The end of the lockdown allowed French distributors who took the risk of releasing their films to do relatively well compared to what they feared.

With the lockdown, streaming sites, which naturally include Netflix, Disney+ and Amazon Prime Video, have obviously been the winners from the shutdown of cinemas. Some accuse them of accelerating the deterioration of "cinema culture" and many directors and distributors denounce their practices. The impact of the crisis on the profitability of the various companies is still unclear. Television and animated films were less affected, but for cinema, the health crisis accelerated developments that were already underway. It led to questions about

whether the public will lose the habit of going to the cinema, or if the platforms fit into the cinema investment system.

For example, Massimo My (a renowned producer and documentary director in Italy) presented in 2020 during the online edition of the “Sunny Side of the Doc” the documentary “La baie de Naples: la colère des volcans” (“the bay of Naples: the rage of volcanos”) by Lawrence Tilliat. The film was co-produced by Italy and France, with the support of Global Doc, by Production Artline Films (France), MyMax Edutainment and RAI Documentari (Italy), TV France, Ushuaïa TV, and the CNC (France), and eventually the Regio Campania and MIBACT (Italy).

Some joint proposals to promote Franco-Italian co-productions are beginning to emerge, such as the "Alpine Film Lab", which has been created in 2021 by two institutions from Turin in Italy and Annecy in France. This new film instruction programme for Italian and French professionals and students looks forward to promoting transnational cinema by increasing the competitiveness of transalpine co-productions on the international market.

All these initiatives highlight the strong motivation to reinforce the co-production process between Italy and France despite the coronavirus pandemic. It shows the diversity of programs that are engaged. Cinema must integrate and adapt to the evolutions related to the emergence of streaming platforms in the video industry. The sanitary crisis has significantly accelerated these evolutions, but the new ways of financing movies must benefit to Italian and French co-productions.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, we can say that the co-production treaties between Italy and France have certainly allowed these countries to maintain a great cinematographic industry, even if the results appear to be a bit disappointing during certain periods of time. Italy and France were pioneers and major players of cinema, since its invention and development at the end of the 19th century, and they have always shared similarities and supported each other through History. As we know, the cinema starting to spread and to develop mainly at the beginning of the 20th century, and the first signs of a Franco-italian cinematographic collaboration date back to the 1930's, when the movie industry was still growing.

They developed crucial cinematographic movements before and after the Second World War ("Telefoni Bianchi" for Italy, "poetic realism" for France) which influenced directors all around the world. They shared their equipment, their talents (Luchino Visconti and his admiration towards Jean Renoir) and also their knowhow long before the signing of the first co-production treaty in 1946.

Thus, during the first edition of the French Cannes Festival, between the 20th of September 1946 and the 5th of October 1946, the official selection already underlined and honoured the Italian cinema, as it included the mythic film "Roma città aperta" by Roberto Rossellini (which obtained an award and initiated the neo-realist Italian movement, linking it to the festival). Due to the historical proximity existing between the two industries, the presence of French movies in Italy always remained high too.

Indeed, the two neighbours were the first to ever sign a treaty of film co-production as soon as 1946 to encourage the cinema in these two countries destroyed by the war, which led the way for many other treaties of that sort around the world in later years. Not only did they need to recover from the Second World War, but they also brought together their forces to compete against the giant Hollywood Studios, as the American cinema started to spread everywhere and to dominate national cinemas. Besides, the co-productions allowed the survival of the culture and international reputation of these two countries in cinema, by proposing an alternative to the over-represented American one.

This cinematographic co-production helped them bringing to life huge monuments for cinema which influenced the whole world. From the Italian neo-realism to the French New

Wave, the films from that period had an undeniable impact over the cinema that we know as of today: “Children of Paradise” by Marcel Carné in 1945, “Il Gattopardo” by Luchino Visconti... Even through the difficult periods that it has known, such as at the end of the 1950s, this collaboration remained strong and still produced jewels that will certainly not be soon forgotten. It seemed like Italy and France became inseparable in the field of cinema, as a huge number of movies were co-produced by the two.

However, the great decline that it went through starting in 1970 could have ended it all. Yet, both governments and film industries did not give up and signed new treaties, made new decisions, as their priority was to save the co-production. In 2000, the last agreement was signed and is still active today. Despite all these troubles, it has never been halted, and in 2013, a potential rebirth was activated, as we have developed through the thesis. Meetings occurred, new regulations, all of those to hope for a return of the golden age that the collaboration had known back in the 1960s.

Another great proof of this cooperation can be observed during Cannes Festival. Indeed, when you look closely at the 73 previous editions, year by year, you can easily perceive how the festival and the Franco-Italian cinemas are inseparable. What is striking is the fact that there was not a year where not at least an element, one moment, an aspect or only a touch was associated with Italy, a country which always has been present in the festival, to a greater or lesser degree, to the point that it became a constant.

The proximity between Italy and France in the field of cinema remains powerful, as Italy is today the country in which French movies attract the largest audiences, even more than Canada, and the co-production treaties are starting to pay off, though a long road still has to be travelled. Some great successes were released (for instance “La grande bellezza” in 2013 which obtained an Oscar) but it is not yet sufficient. More recently, in 2020, new institutions to promote this Franco-Italian cinematographic co-production have been announced, as well as joint proposals to save it and ensure its health.

Indeed, we observe that the filmmaking industry is tightly bound to the culture and economy of a country, but it is also influenced by international evolutions. The cinema industry was also part of the globalisation process, as it has become more international through the co-production of films. Yet, this instrument has turned out to be a discriminative measure, as there is a growing interest in the use of regionalism, especially in European countries facing the domination of American cinema.

Nonetheless, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 on the cinema industry has been harsh, and its exact consequences are still a bit unclear. The question might not be the survival of the Franco-Italian co-production agreement, but more the survival of cinema itself. However, the lockdown had one positive effect, as it reminded us that cinema is a pillar of our cultural activities. We may hope that governmental helps from the European recovery plan could be beneficial for cinema and would help the Franco-Italian cinema to get off this reinforced sanitary crisis.

Public subsidies have been used extensively to reinforce the system and have been welcomed in Europe and elsewhere. In this political context, both aspects of co-production need to be well understood if the scheme is to support the film industry. That is why it is important to understand how co-productions work and, more importantly, how they impact the film industry.

Furthermore, it is obvious that subsidies to co-productions create new distortions and encourage creativity. If governments truly want to contribute to the development of the domestic film industry and cultural diversity in a globalised world, they should definitely seek to do so through the movie co-productions, as it is an effective tool to support the local film industry and the national economy, as well as the wider objective of cultural development and the promotion of cultural diversity.

We can now question ourselves about the future of the filmmaking industry relationships between Italy and France. A great element that can give us an idea is included in the new funds that have been launched within the last two years. These new co-development and co-production funds now finally create opportunities for TV series. This is quite amusing because, as we have studied earlier, television is an old enemy of the Italian cinema and was a real threat in the 1970s.

This turning point discloses that this cinematographic co-production existing between Italy and France, and every agreement resulting from it, can follow the movie industry evolution as a whole. More specifically, they now allow to invest new film areas such as series, which have a huge success nowadays. This shows that the treaties are flexible enough to adapt to the modern innovations which are drastically modifying the cinematographic and video landscape, transforming the traditional means of productions into rising streaming platforms like Netflix or Amazon Prime Video, which are themselves producing their own successful movies, series, as well as developing partnerships. One sure thing is that streaming platforms are enhanced and

that they will represent a new way to finance movies in the coming years, and why not co-productions.

Still, a legitimate question we can ask ourselves is that, even though the treaties appear to be quite flexible, how will both countries manage to transition in the most effective way to this new model? Will it require new treaties and new collaborations in the online streaming industry? If yes, to what extent could this work out?

All these questions will undoubtedly be answered in the years to come, but one thing is sure, Italy and France are not about to end their collaboration in the field of cinema and will certainly work together to find their way out.

To end on a personal note, I have to say that I was struck when I discovered that most of the French movies and the Italian movies that I had watched and loved were in fact the result of this Franco-Italian cinematographic co-production (example). When I started writing this essay, I was certainly unconscious of its largeness. I also believe that it is impressive to think that it survived all the harsh times mentioned in this paper, and that still today both countries try to preserve it and make sure that it lasts thanks to new signings and the release of popular movies. It is still endangered to this day, especially with the burst of Covid-19, but efforts are being made. This is to me great proof of an amazing relationship between Italy and France that they hold dear, and I think that it is a good thing that they do not want to let it fade out. Indeed, when the first agreement was signed in 1946, they had already been related in the cinema industry for quite some time and had developed collaborations. Nowadays, this long-lasting relationship has become a pillar in the proximity of Italy and France and helps them stay connected in a globalized world. Therefore, I am convinced that it is especially today more important than ever, because if we remember that one of the reasons this cinematographic co-production was first created was to counter the growth of American cinema on the world scene, we understand that this process is occurring again with the streaming platforms and the huge growth of cinema in Asia, and that Italy and France must pursue this collaboration to remain competitive. The question of how to become most performant is of course not easy to solve, but I am convinced that the two neighbours will be working side by side.

Summary

Pioneers of the cinematographic industry, since his invention by the Lumière Brothers in 1895, Italy and France have always had a strong relationship during more than a century, sharing knowledge, resources, and ambitions. This is the long-lasting partnership between the two countries that we will try to analyse during this final thesis. As we will see, this journey was paved by reinforcement and decline, but moreover this common history has been the mirror of the political, sociological, economic, cultural, artistic, and even military, evolutions of the two leaders of the film production in the 19th century.

1. Italy and French cinema at early stage

Before the signing of the first treaty, in 1946, the Italian Cinematography, at the age of Mussolini, was marked by the popular movement so-called « Telefoni Bianchi » (the « white telephones »), referring to the Italian comedies in the 1930s, when Italy became a wealthy empire, and the movie theatres were always full. Seen by Benito Mussolini as a powerful instrument of propaganda for the fascist regime, he founded in 1937 the famous studios of Cinecittà. Not just a filming studio, as Hollywood (its major competitor and the biggest studios at the time) was, the site was a real industry.

There was a strong disproportion in the beginning of the 1930s between the Italian market and the French one, four times bigger, giving Italian films little access to French screens but with a largely open Italian market regarding foreign productions. The creation of the Italian Studio helped eventually to reverse the situation in the early 40s. Thus “City of Cinema”, in the Italian sense, even survived to the defeat of the Second World War.

During the same period in France, despite some poetic realism inspiration, the major movements were more coloured by social conflicts, echoing of the popular front, with pessimistic and dramatic roots preparing the war coming. Despite the rural balance of France at that time, the audience grew strongly, quite tripling between 1929 and 1938. Despite the military censorship during the war, film production was not interrupted being as well a tool of propaganda for the Nazis. As a matter of fact, "Les enfants du paradis" (Children of paradise) by Marcel Carné (1945) is considered to be one of the best French films of the 20th century and was shot during the German occupation.

Before the co-production treaty, the two neighbours shared some complementarity that enhance the lust for such a partnership, one of a kind. Since 1932, the French film is present at the Venice Mostra, Luchino Visconti, one of the most famous Italian directors, began his career as an assistant to Jean Renoir and was strongly influenced by him, and the outstanding success of Carné's film was already a Franco-Italian cooperation. From the inter-war period, artistic exchanges between Italy and France were a reality in the film industry. In the aftermath of the war, the cinema through the neorealism aimed to express this longing for a new social message. The period from 1943 to 1952 was the golden age of Italian neorealism, with films describing the sadness of the afterwar period in Italy, giving birth in France with the reference movement of the "French New Wave", from late 50s to late 60s.

As in transnational cinema, with globalisation, the national governments are no longer central, hence they created strategies to attack this transnational market to defend their cultures and economies. Cooperation between countries through cultural exchanges occurred, especially after the signing in May 1946 of the Blum-Byrnes agreements granting the American cinema quotas in France, in compensation of the efforts brought by US for the French reconstruction.

2. The need, after the war, of a more structured relation between the two neighbours

The film industry being truly crucial for both in terms of national interest, economic and politic-wise, it pushes Italy and France to launch the first official cinematographic co-production, building a bilateral system aiming this cooperation, limiting American influence across the board, and strengthening the cultural links between the two.

To go along new political relations, France and Italy were the first European countries signing a film co-production agreement in October 1946, later producing together around 2,000 films. This period definitely was a pivot moment for the cinema industry. The 25th, the French assembly voted the creation of the "Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image animée" (CNC) in charge to rebuild the French Cinematographic Industry. The 29th, the first post-war film cooperation agreement between France and Italy was signed in Paris, that is the obvious game changer for the film industry, not only for the two countries. And, at the same time, they negotiated a commercial treaty.

The ambition is to have a high quality and high-cost co-production. According to French and Italian national legislation, co-productions were intended for films with high artistic

potential, they do not sponsor young creative talent, but experienced producers with well-known domestic productions. Hence, as the ambition of these treaties in terms of number of films were not reached, new treaties tried to improve this: the Venice's renewal in 1953, the one from Paris in 1955, and so on. As behind this artistic collaboration, there was in fact huge political, economic, and cultural stakes. It was basically the concept of Europe. During the reconstruction and the Cold War, the old continent wanted to exist in this popular art having a critical impact on their people.

By allying, Italy and France doubled both their market, the size of their audience and public funds received. This clearly saved the Italian and French film industries and made them independent of the American giant.

3. The concept of co-production

A cinematographic co-production is a joint venture between companies and producers combining all their financial, human, and material resources, and sharing the risks of making and distributing a film or audio-visual product. The functional producer is legally and financially responsible and owns the intellectual property while the executive producer is responsible for the production. The principle of co-production is that revenues are shared between the different co-producers, combining risk-sharing and market expansion.

The concept of "twinned movies", introduced in 1949 was aimed to balance co-productions: for each film co-produced in Italy, one film should be co-produced in France. To ensure compliancy with this obligation, Italy has adopted a strict measure. This has sometimes resulted in projects that only benefit from the support offered to producers in each country, but which are not based on real collaboration or artistic exchange. This twinning approach has doubled production in France and Italy.

4. A strong framework

However, for a co-production to become official, it should mandatory follow strict rules established and be approved by each country. The licensing authorities defined three main criteria: amount of the estimate cost, reputation of the director and main actors, and quality of the script or name of the author. A lot of obligations have to be fulfilled, including a balance

between the two nationalities, film quality and national identity, but, as a matter of fact, the outmost important aspect of the co-production between France and Italy, at the centre of each of the treaties, is the balanced composition of the film crew.

The Article V of the treaty specify that co-produced films must always include both French and Italian screenwriters and dialogue writers. Moreover, the treaty of January 1947, stipulated that for each role two thirds of the crew had to be French and one third Italian, and that the producer had to be French.

Moreover, the principle of equivalence is at the heart of the co-production system: the films to be matched must be of equal monetary value, including the contributions of creative and technical staff. Minority producers must contribute at least 30% of the film's costs. Eventually profits will be shared according to the level of investment made by each producer. In fact, an analysis of the legislative texts will help the classification of co-productions, as the legal framework defines a particular film industry.

The co-production laws passed in France and Italy after the Second World War, show that state intervention was favorable to films of high quality and national interest, even if it sought to regulate transnational distribution. Co-production remains a particular area of nation-state intervention.

The co-production agreement between Italy and France was signed in the first place to protect both national cultural expressions and to support national cultural industries from each country. Hence co-productions are officially identified as real national products, with a strong focus being made on the regulation and allocation of all the resources organized by national film institutions. These conventions institutionalize a normative and static conception of national culture in the process of international cooperation. Co-production agreements have been signed for the domestic film market, illustrating the concept of transnational cinema, and presenting nationality as an imaginary community.

This inter-governmental cooperation clearly aims to assert cultural hegemony, imitating American's, with the emphasis on national identity and cultural prestige constructed in the interest of dominant sectors of the society. As state subsidies are given out based on a governmental body's assessment of artistic and technical merits, the political elite intent to find a way of maintaining cultural differences.

5. The weaknesses

Obviously, these co-productions induce some risks that must be considered carefully. On a general basis, listing the main risks to a cinematographic co-production, we would be able to identify three different types.

The first one is the high risk of divorce as a co-production agreement can be compared with a wedding. With strong relationship, that risk does not exist, but as conflicts arise, the whole process will be jeopardized.

The second risk concerns the management of resources. As the transnational nature of a film gives a legal advantage that generates direct (financing) and indirect (ticketing) economic benefits, it may then attract producers lacking funds rather than artistically preeminent, as it allows the project to apply for state aid or to be allocated a TV channel in each country. And because co-production brings more resources, especially financial ones, if they are not controlled efficiently, they could be more easily wasted by a messy management, impacting the quality of the film.

The third relates to a too high cultural distance. The co-production could be affected by these cultural barriers if they are too difficult to overcome, so co-operation between countries with similar culture are often recommended. Conversely, because of its binational hybrid nature, the co-production could threaten or dilute the country's culture.

Italian technicians and creators argued that this form of production, operating often in an arbitrary manner, did not improve the quality of the film. De Sica and Clare, for example, tried to define a new model allowing Italy and France to make films with a truly national character, similar to the international success of their best films in the past.

6. The upsides

Of course, besides the risks that have to be taken into consideration, these film co-productions between France and Italy can be extremely beneficial for the directors and engender great opportunities.

First it increases the budget for the production. It is a way to gather all resources, especially financial ones, that is normally very difficult to find to cover all costs. When a co-

production is established, directors and producers can work on a project which might not have been possible without co-production.

Second, blending all resources and mixing the knowhow, the producers bring together their forces but also those of their teams. Due to public support and strong intimacy between French and Italian technicians and actors, production from there had a huge lead compared to the other European partners and hence the Franco-Italian film industry flourished.

Third, it gives access to new infrastructures, that can be shared during the project thanks to the alliance. Indeed, the directors now have the opportunity to shoot either in France or in Italy, which means that they have more choices and capabilities for their movies, with an easy access from one to another.

Fourth, a co-production agreement can have multiple massification effects. It limits the losses by regrouping the means of production and limits the financial risks by sharing it amongst various stakeholders. Moreover, it can facilitate the process of finding an associate as, with a lower risk, the new partners could be more convinced to participate thanks to this additional guarantee. These partnerships could also be converted into long-term ones if the movie finally becomes a success and creates profits. A cinematographic co-production can therefore ensure the development of an international professional network. Exporting the films abroad also reduce by sharing the expenses on different markets.

The last benefit is the availability of additional helps and tax credits for the country from which the producer comes. Indeed, not only can the directors obtain aids from the institutions coming from their own countries, but they are also able to ask support from those in the neighbour country.

Clearly, the co-production system created strong links between French and Italian cinemas. French and Italian cinema were competing, cohabiting, but also collaborating. They were both undeniable leaders, on the field of European production. Nearly a hundred Franco-Italian movies were co-produced per year, which inspired new generations and directors and are considered nowadays as true classics.

From the signing of the Franco-Italian film agreement in October 1946, up until the beginning of the 1960s, film cooperation went through a golden age. From a few dozen films per year in the early years, to more than one hundred in the early 1960s, representing 75% of

French and Italian national productions. Farther than their economic success, it allowed multiple artistic collaborations resulting in some of the most emblematic works in the history of cinema.

7. The slowdown by the end of the 1950s and the rebirth in the 1960s

At the turn of the 1960s, cinema attendance collapsed across Europe, and France and Italy were no exception. European films were not exporting well and reversely overwhelmed by the wealthy American studios.

The rise of the TV industry in the 1960s, facilitated by a low-cost installation and lifestyles transformation, dispossessed cinema of its entertainment monopoly, stroking an industry already in difficulty.

In a state of crisis, Italian neo-realism became the fundamental reference for cinema in the second half of the 20th century. The whole system of film production and distribution in the immediate post-war period was abandoned. In 1960, the Joint Committee strengthen demands on producers to have irrefutable proof of their economic credibility. On the 1st of August 1966, a new treaty on co-production was signed, which last until the 2000s. All co-producers could apply for co-production rights one month before shooting, and minority producers had to hand over their share to the majority partner within 60 days of the date of dispatch of the film to the minority country.

Despite all this, co-production had survived. In 1964, out of 294 films produced in Italy, 126 were co-productions with France. This cooperation gave emergence of universal formulas, such as action and adventure films, international chases, detective films and horror films, that were acceptable to a wide range of audiences. Franco-italian model inspired many other throughout Europe.

8. The end of the golden age

The glorious 1949-1970 era of Franco-Italian co-productions, with prominent directors such as Federico Fellini, Luchino Visconti, Jean-Luc Godard or François Truffaut, when great Italian actors were as famous in France as in Italy (such as Marcello Mastroianni), is coming to an end. This tough period was also explained by a more general ideological and cultural crisis

that the cinema encountered in Italy, from 513 million spectators in 1975, to 195 million in 1982. There are two main factors to this decline: many great Italian film directors died during the 1970s (Vittorio de Sica in 1974, Luchino Visconti in 1976 and Roberto Rossellini in 1977), with no one able to follow up; and the growing grip, especially in Italy at the time, on audience of television with the launch of many TV channels.

In fact, Italian television channels did not finance movies, despite their commitment to do so, in contrary to France where their support was big. The weak backing by Italian distributors also contributed a lot to the slowdown of the Italian independent cinema. As to why, many Italian directors were looking for a co-production with France to complete their budget, which they could not do by themselves in Italy.

After 1975, Franco-Italian co-productions decreased. First because co-productions had difficulty in respecting the principle of reciprocity within the rigid bureaucratic framework of the production balance established by the laws of 1971 and 1973. Second because of degraded relationships between the two, Italian professionals pointed out that the French market is closed to Italian films, while French have criticised the provincialism of Italian cinema. With exception of a few films, no films crossed the Alps in any direction.

The 1980s saw a decline in the number of Franco-Italian co-productions, and in 1986 the number of Italian French co-productions reached its lowest level with only as few as six films. This decline is partly due to the collapse of public subsidies and partly to differences in the film industry. In France, more than 200 films are released each year, while in Italy, the control barely reached 20% of the domestic film market. To try and solve this issue, Italy and France signed a new deal in the city of Florence about Italian and French film co-productions on the 13th of June 1985. Nevertheless, all the measures did not have the expected returns and Italian cinema was still weakened.

Hence, as relationship between Italy and France is a major pillar of European film industry, the two countries not only renewed co-production agreement but also, because the Italian support system was a blocker, Italy create a development fund, the MIBACT, in 1994, counterpart of the French CNC. However, the main problem remains as MIBACT's fund is very unpredictable, linked to the budget of the Ministry of Culture, hence depending on a finance law voted year by year, and with a weak support from the government ("We do not feed on culture").

Still, in 1990, a 90 million euros of funding has been voted over two years and Italy seemed determined to strengthen and improve its support system for the film industry, as evidenced by the tax incentives introduced by the 2008 finance law. Despite these accompanying measures, the French and Italian co-productions continued to decline and collapsed in the 1980s and 1990s.

The agreement signed on the 28th of August of 1997 at the Venice Film Festival aims to further simplify the co-production process and to make censorship even quicker and more efficient than it previously was.

The treaty from 2000, which is still in place today, represents the peak of over fifty years of Franco-Italian co-production. It is based on the most important key concepts, such as the principle of not distinguishing between traditional and financial co-productions, the replacement of the reciprocity system by a general analysis of the films exchanged between the two countries (which therefore also includes distribution and broadcasting), the reducing of the minimum share of some producers and the redefinition of the benefits of co-production. Essentially, this new agreement sets very accommodating conditions for the producers, on a financial aspect and for their shootings.

In strictly legal terms, a film is any cinematographic work produced for distribution in cinemas, regardless of its genre (whether it be fiction, animation, or a documentary) or duration. In this text, quality is no longer a differentiating factor, and the word “country” is not used. And while the signing of a bilateral agreement took place in 2000, Franco-Italian co-productions are falling. From 2000 to 2004 the market share of American films in Italian cinemas reaches 62 % when French and Italian co-productions films represent only 3.5%.

As this relationship is major within European cinema, and as the dynamics of technical and artistic financial exchanges between the two countries were weakening, the authorities and government agencies were looking for an effective response. To this end, they created a development fund, accompanied with a new co-production agreement signed in 2003, which changed the rules that applied to the co-production relationship between the two countries.

In 2013, a strong acceleration has been given, by creating a new fund to support the development of Franco-Italian cinematographic works, with Italian channels being required to invest in and to screen films. The authorities from France and Italy try to fix the situation with the creation of a helping fund for the development of Franco-Italian co-productions. This is a

bilateral agreement for feature films, with a minimum contribution of 20% for each participant, which must invite technical and creative participation. The fund is supposed to provide €500,000 per year.

Thanks to this new framework, Franco-Italian co-productions are flourishing, and the flexibility of the new agreement seems to be paying off. However, even if the Franco-Italian co-production agreement seems to work, it is mainly because of the financial aspect. Many of the most prominent figures in French and Italian cinema do not seem to think that the co-production system is advantageous for creativity.

Moreover, contrary to the expectations expressed by the signatories of the first agreement in 1946, the co-production system has not given rise to new cinematographic practices inspired by the methods specific to each country.

And in 2014, Italian cinema continues to suffer: too many films are being produced while the number of viewers is falling, despite the average budget. Italy produced 201 films in 2014, however, this is a disappointing result if one considers the drop in average budgets, the fall in total investments (-3.4%) and the drop in international co-productions.

Since 2020, a new challenge is threatening the Franco-Italian co-production, and the cinema industry as a whole: the pandemic of Covid-19. The virus forced theatres and studios in both countries to shut, and all filming planned was delayed. To answer this, the "Cura Italia" was put into place in Italy on the 16th of March 2021 and gave access to financial aids for members of the Italian General Entertainment Association. France as well put in place helps to support the sector, coming from the state and the CNC. The consequences are not clear as of today, but it seems that the co-production is protected by both countries, and their alliance is especially important in this crucial moment. Indeed, the coronavirus and the lockdowns also led to the ever-bigger growth of the new streaming platforms. The American multimedia industry is dominating the world again and this co-production has to find a solution to remain competitive, and this is why we may wonder if they will create more projects together as they nearly always did.

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