



**TRANSNATIONAL DYNAMICS OF TURKISH FILM  
FESTIVALS IN GERMANY AND THE UNITED STATES**

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Master's Thesis

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# ABSTRACT

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Film festivals, which emerged in the second quarter of the 1900s, play an important role in the distribution of films along with film theaters. Film festivals also have an important place in the production and evaluation of films. However, almost every film festival has different dynamics in terms of organization, funding and sponsorships, content, audience, and continuity. These different dynamics form the identities of film festivals. In this thesis, a framework has been drawn for the film festivals organized by the Turkish diaspora, based on the concept of transnationalism. The dynamics of two transnational Turkish film festivals from the Federal Republic of Germany and one from the United States of America were analyzed. In this context, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with the directors of three transnational Turkish film festivals, subsidiary sources such as archives, articles, and websites of the festivals were used, and the findings were compared with other transnational Turkish film festivals held to date. With these findings, the study aims to determine how and to what extent the transnational dynamics of Turkish film festivals affect the festivals. In this thesis, it has been revealed that the transnational dynamics of Turkish film

festivals are an inseparable whole and that economic and administrative factors affect the screening programs and contents of the festivals or vice versa. This research aims to contribute to the literature on film festival studies and transnational studies in cinema.

**Keywords:** Transnationalism, film festivals, Turkish diaspora, online film festivals



# ÖZET

## ALMANYA VE AMERİKA BİRLEŞİK DEVLETLERİ'NDEKİ TÜRK FİLM FESTİVALLERİNİN ULUSÖTESİ DİNAMİKLERİ

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1900lü yılların ikinci çeyreğinde ortaya çıkan film festivalleri, sinema salonları ile birlikte filmlerin dağıtımında önemli bir rol üstlenmektedir. Film festivalleri, aynı zamanda filmlerin üretimi ve değerlendirilmesi açısından da önemli bir yere sahiptir. Fakat neredeyse her film festivalinin yönetim, finansman, sponsorluk, içerik, seyirci kitlesi ve devamlılık bağlamlarında farklı dinamikleri vardır. Bu farklı dinamikler film festivallerinin kimliklerini oluşturmaktadır. Bu tezde, Türk diasporasının düzenlediği film festivalleri için ulusötesilik kavramı üzerinden bir çerçeve çizilmiş, Almanya Federal Cumhuriyeti'nden iki, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nden bir ulusötesi Türk film festivalinin dinamikleri araştırılmıştır. Bu bağlamda, üç ulusötesi Türk film festivalinin direktörleri ile yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşmeler yapılmış, arşivler, gazete haberleri, festivallerin internet siteleri gibi ikincil kaynaklar kullanılmış ve elde edilen bulgular bugüne kadar düzenlenen diğer ulusötesi Türk film festivalleri ile karşılaştırılmıştır. Bu bulgular ile ulusötesi Türk film festivallerinin dinamiklerinin festivalleri nasıl ve ne derecede etkilediklerini saptamak

hedeflenmiştir. Bu tez ile, ulusötesi Türk film festivallerinin dinamiklerinin birbirinden ayrılmaz bir bütün olduğu, ekonomik ve yönetsel etmenlerin festivallerin gösterim programlarını ve içeriklerini etkilediği veya tam tersinin gerçekleştiği ortaya koyulmuştur. Bu araştırma ile film festivali çalışmaları ve sinemada ulusötesilik çalışmalarında literatüre katkı sağlanması amaçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Ulusötesilik, film festivalleri, Türk diasporası, çevrim içi film festivalleri



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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

STFF: The Seattle Turkish Film Festival

MTFD : The Munich Turkish Film Days

FTFF: The Frankfurt Turkish Film Festival

CFF: The Cannes Film Festival

sf.: Short fiction film

sd.: Short documentary film

sa.: Short animation film

se.: Short experimental film

mf.: Medium-length fiction film

md.: Medium-length documentary film

ff.: Feature fiction film

fd.: Feature documentary film

## **A NOTE ON INTERVIEWS**

In this thesis, interviews were held with the directors of the Seattle Turkish Film Festival, the Munich Turkish Film Days, and the Frankfurt Turkish Film Festival in order to obtain findings about transnational Turkish film festivals. These interviews were conducted in Turkish. Therefore, every part quoted from the festival directors is translated from Turkish to English by myself. Before the interviews, the information about the research was shared with the festival directors in writing and verbally. The approval of the festival directors was received that the information they shared during the interviews could be used in this thesis and in the academic studies that can be put forward in connection with this thesis. Besides, they have been informed that they could withdraw from the research whenever they wanted. Anonymity of the names of the festival directors was considered, but the names were not anonymized since these festivals have become public knowledge and the names of the festival directors are easily accessible. Ethics Committee Approval can be found on page 80.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Film festivals are one of the substantial organizations, along with commercial film theatres, for the distribution and publication of the films. Film festivals, which primarily appeared after the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, do not only carry out the production, exhibition, and distribution of films but also mirror a cultural and political perspective through both the films chosen and their audience. Within this context, film festivals still have differences in terms of their administrative, cultural, or economic structures and these variabilities affect the formation of festivals in several stages. As a result of international migration waves and globalization, the concept of *transnationalism*, which deals with the economical, political, and cultural processes of communities and individuals from different nations living in nation-states, has emerged and research has been conducted on this subject in different disciplines.

Despite having long-running film festivals that are organized by individuals, communities, or organizations who have migrated abroad from Turkey, there are limited resources or research about these festivals. Some of these film festivals follow the current global conditions and incidents in the cinema industry on an international scale and adapt to new developments. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, online screening methods are among the current approaches adopted by these festivals. The main objective of the present study is to reveal the dynamics of the transnational Turkish film festivals as well as to identify which film festivals are transnational and why they are categorized as transnational, as these are substantial topics to understand the transnational Turkish film festivals. In order to reveal the dynamics of these festivals, the organizational and administrative structures, funding and sponsorship relations, contents (screenings, events, and panels), guests, continuity, audiences, and transition to online platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic of the festivals were examined in this thesis. In-depth interviews are conducted with one executive involved in the management of a total of three festivals among the transnational Turkish film festivals in the United States of America and the Federal Republic of Germany. The findings obtained as a result of these interviews were analyzed within the framework of the literature on transnationalism in cinema.



### ***1.1. Subject of the Research***

“Cinema is considered a powerful medium in terms of re-presenting reality”  
(Ulusay, 2013, p.6),

and this is why films have been used for years as an appropriate method of conveying messages. The distribution of films is carried out in different ways, and film festivals are one of these methods, along with film theatres. Film festivals establish a connection between the films and the audience through public screenings, and additional events such as Q&A sessions and panels. Eventually, they are the home bases for the progress of film knowledge and film practices which shape the structures of what films will be seen by audiences and scholars, what films are respected or disregarded and how cinematic works will be read (Wong, 2011, p.1). When the background of film festivals is examined, it is seen that the first film festivals were established as a result of political reasons and conflicts. Accordingly, studying film festivals is one of the ways to understand how the film industry is structured from past to present within the dynamics of economics and politics.

“In recent years, film festival studies, as a sub-field within cinema and media studies, constitute a wide range of literature from festival economy to national cinema relationship, from the global market to support policies, from scheduling to audience experiences” (Erkılıç, 2021, p.9).

Therefore, at first, I aimed to research the dynamics of film festivals within the framework of film festival studies by creating a sample group of essential film festivals in Turkey, such as Antalya, Adana, Istanbul, and Ankara. Later, as I continued to review the literature and research on film festivals, I took a new route through the concept of transnationalism. Primarily, I started to investigate the festivals organized by the Turkish diaspora, and then the film festivals under the name of the *Turkish Film Festival*. In this context, which film festivals can be considered as Turkish film festivals with transnational dynamics and why these festivals fit the definition of transnational have become the main topics of the research. In current research on the transnational film festivals, *Anatomy of a Transnational Film Festival: London Turkish Film Festival*, London Turkish Film Festival is defined as a transnational film

festival<sup>1</sup>. Thus, I used the concept of transnationalism to draw a general framework and considered the film festivals organized under the name of Turkish film festivals outside of Turkey as transnational Turkish film festivals. These festivals have commonly been organized by the Turkish diaspora to promote Turkish cinema and bring together the Turkish communities where these festivals are held. Although most of these festivals are organized by the Turkish diaspora, they have different layers in terms of organization, funding, content, guests, and screenings. Moreover, there are also festivals that are not organized by the Turkish diaspora but are held under the title of Turkish film festival, and due to this diversity, all festivals have been gathered under the concept of transnationalism. Accordingly, the most remarkable transnational dynamics in abroad Turkish film festivals are:

- Diversity in the political economy and administration (Funded, sponsored and organized either by the diaspora or by the governments, institutions, and NGOs where they are held)
- Audience and target audience range
- Bringing Turkish communities together with the aim of preserving Turkish culture and Turkish belonging
- Promoting Turkish cinema

### ***1.2. Aims, Objectives, and Research Questions***

Although the existence of some transnational Turkish film festivals is known in Turkey or the country where they are held, there are many unknown transnational Turkish film festivals. Since the recognition level of these festivals is few, it is difficult to reach them without doing detailed research. Therefore, examining the organizational and administrative structures, funding and sponsorship relations, contents, guests, continuity, and audience of transnational Turkish film festivals that have emerged and continued in many different ways constitute an important place in terms of film festival studies. In addition to these, in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced many festivals to change structurally, with them being postponed or canceled one after another. During the pandemic, which has interrupted face-to-face interaction for a very long time, film festivals have steered to the online method of organizing festivals, which

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<sup>1</sup> In this research, it was stated that the Turkish-speaking society was disintegrated, that the London Turkish Film Festival was held to bring this scattered community together, promote Turkish cinema and prevent assimilation; therefore, the festival gained a transnational dimension.

emerged at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and has increased rapidly in recent years. While the festivals are trying to adapt themselves to online platforms, whether face-to-face film festivals can keep up with this new online process is a relevant issue that needs to be studied. If the purpose is to conduct research on the transnational dynamics of Turkish film festivals, then, it is necessary to have information about the processes of transition to online and the continuity of the circumstance because the organization, economy, content, and audience of the festivals have undergone a great change. However, online screenings of face-to-face film festivals and online film festivals should not be confused. In order to clarify this, online film festivals and the transition of film festivals to online platforms have also been examined in this context.

The aim of this thesis is to reveal the influence of administrative, economic, and political processes on the organization, funding, sponsorship relations, content, audience, and screening programs of transnational Turkish film festivals. Based on these, the following questions are chosen to focus on the continuing process in ongoing transnational film festivals related to Turkey:

- What are the main forms of transnational Turkish film festivals?
- What are the transnational dynamics of Turkish film festivals and how do these dynamics affect the festivals?
- How do the organizational structure, management, financing and sponsorship relations of transnational Turkish film festivals shape these festivals?
- According to which criteria do transnational Turkish film festivals select and screen films?
- How do the content, audience, and continuity come into prominence and become the characteristics of transnational Turkish film festivals?
- What have been the reaction and attitude of transnational Turkish film festivals during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected transnational Turkish film festivals in terms of organization, administration, funding, continuity, content, and audience?

### ***1.3. Methodology and Limitations***

As the main objective of this research is to reveal the influence of administrative, economic, and political processes on the organization, funding, sponsorship relations, content, audience, and program of transnational Turkish film festivals, qualitative methods were chosen over quantitative research methods, and semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with the festival directors from the festival sample of the study. The history and organization, audience, content, funding, sponsorships of the festivals, online and hybrid festival methods, Turkish diaspora, and migration were discussed with the directors of the selected transnational Turkish film festivals. In addition, current websites of these festivals, their social media accounts, archives, and articles about the festivals were examined, and some of the findings discussed throughout the thesis were based on these data. Once a list of transnational film festivals related to Turkey was made, the criteria for sample selection included the supporters of the festivals and sponsorship relations, festival continuity, and the way they were organized during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the initial difficulties encountered throughout the research was the lack of continuity of transnational Turkish film festivals. Transnational film festivals, organized by immigrants from Turkey or official institutions of Turkey, are not regularly held due to organizational and economic inadequacies. The number of festivals held in countries with Turkish immigrants is low, and there is no continuity. Therefore, the sample was selected as Germany and the United States, where these festivals are most frequently. The second difficulty encountered was the difficulty in communication with festival organizers.

Five criteria came to the forefront while determining the festival sample group: longevity, continuity, content, the type of financial support, and the festival's reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on these criteria, a total of three festivals, two from Germany and one from the United States, were chosen and contact with their organizers was attempted. First contact was made with the Seattle Turkish Film Festival (STFF), which has been held since 2012 but postponed the festival during the COVID-19 pandemic for a few months, and later organized it online. An interview was held with the director of the STFF, Şirin Aysan, via Zoom, a cloud-based video conferencing service. In addition to the predetermined common questions for all festivals, additional questions were asked about the specificity of the festival. The second contact was made with the Munich Turkish Film Days (MTFD), which has been organized since 1989. An online interview was held with the festival director

Ayşe Gülcemal Sarılı. The second interview of the Germany sample was completed via an online interview with Hüseyin Sıtkı, the director of the Frankfurt Turkish Film Festival (FTFF), which has been held since 2000. Meanwhile, attempts were made to contact the Boston Turkish Film Festival, which was organized as an online festival in 2020, and the New York Turkish Film Festival, which has a long-term continuity, but no response was received via e-mail or social media. Other transnational Turkish film festivals held in the United States do not have continuity and had not been organized during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Germany, Nuremberg Film Festival Turkey – Germany was also held during the pandemic. However, in order to create a contrast with the independently funded festival sample and reveal the differences in dynamics between these festivals; due to its content, the type of financial support, festival program, target audience, and reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, the FTFF was chosen to be interviewed. Except for the FTFF, the other two festivals in the sample group are the film festivals that have organized festivals online during the COVID-19 pandemic. These two festivals still use the hybrid festival method, and some of the screenings are made online after the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions eased. The FTFF, on the other hand, first postponed the festival, then canceled it, and did not make the festival online ever. In this context, due to the diversity of the two festivals' content, the type of financial support, and the reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, Germany formed one of the samples. Although it was requested to meet with festival directors from the United States, no response was received except from the STFF. Apart from the Boston Turkish Film Festival and the New York Turkish Film Festival, other transnational Turkish film festivals held in the United States were not included in the sample group because they did not have longevity and continuity. Fifteen predetermined questions for the three festival directors interviewed are as follows:

- Can you briefly introduce yourself?
- Which institutions and people led the establishment of the festival?
- Do you receive any support for the festival from governmental agencies or non-governmental organizations in Turkey?
- Do government institutions, local governments, and organizations in the country where the festival is held contribute financially to the festival?
- Do you receive financial support from independent sources other than these sources?

- How do you select the films to be screened in the program?
- How do you choose the guests and panel speakers?
- How do your participants contribute to the festival?
- Who is your festival audience and what social groups does it consist of?
- What kind of reactions do you get to the films and guests from Turkey or from the country where you organize the festival?
- What have been the prominent topics and films of the festival in the recent years?
- How did you decide to postpone or cancel the festival after the COVID-19 pandemic started?
- What do you think about organizing festivals on online platforms?
- How did the audience react to your decision to organize or cancel the festival?
- With the online platforms, film festivals have been made accessible to audiences in different places. In the future, whether the pandemic continues or not, would you consider organizing the festival online? Why?

Also, questions were asked to the festival directors about whether they received any negative reactions from their supporters or funders, what they did to increase their recognition level, what the aims of the festival are, and how the migration from Turkey to the country where they live occurred.

In chapter II, the theoretical framework of the research is drawn through the concept of transnationalism, the history of film festivals, the history of migration to the United States and Germany, online film festivals, and the correlation between transnationalism and film festivals. In chapter III, the dynamics of the transnational Turkish film festivals are analyzed under the topics of ownership, funding, content, audience, and continuity. The festival programs that have been created since the beginning of the three transnational Turkish film festivals were analyzed, the archives were scanned, and the findings obtained from the interviews and the news published about the festivals were discussed. Although the entire duration of these festivals were reviewed, only the screenings, content, and audiences of the year 2020 and later were analyzed because all three festivals have created screening programs, invited guests, and organized events in similar ways since their establishment. In the screening

programs of the festivals, films under 25 minutes are considered short films, films between 25 – 60 minutes are considered medium-length films, and those over 60 minutes are considered feature films. In addition, the festivals in each sub-chapter are not listed in a single sequence, but according to the connections and relations of the dynamics of the festivals with each other. Therefore, the sequence in the sub-chapters changes from time to time. Chapter IV focuses on the responses of the transnational Turkish film festivals during the COVID-19 pandemic and the future forms of the festivals.



## CHAPTER 2: TRANSNATIONALISM AND FILM FESTIVALS

### 2.1. *Transnationalism*

It is no longer the state that expresses itself in the historical process; something else brings itself to the front as the object of the historical narrative. The name of this thing is the nation. Concepts such as nationality, race, and class will produce themselves around this concept of the nation (Foucault, 2004, p.152, cited by Aydın, 2018, p.232). The ground of the nation-state, which is one of the outputs of the modern period, was formed by the socio-cultural incidents that happened before the French Revolution. Moreover, the French Revolution was the period when the nation-state reaped the fruits of victory. Another important process that facilitates the emergence of the nation-state in the historical process is the four revolutions that determine the transition to modernity. These are the scientific, political, cultural, and industrial revolutions (Ibid. p.234). With the modernization and emergence of the nation-state, many lasting traditions in the states changed, the borders between states have become more apparent, and exceeding these borders has begun to mean different things with the advancement of technology. After the 20<sup>th</sup> century, new job opportunities as a result of industrialization in the Western countries, economic inadequacies, epidemics, and population problems because of great wars led to major migration waves, borders between states were crossed, and caused cultures to become intertwined as many times before. However, in time, these borders were not crossed only physically; economic, political, and cultural cross-border movements occurred as well. With the advent of globalization, available goods and services, or social and cultural influences have gradually become similar all over the world<sup>2</sup>. As a concept, *transnationalism* refers to economic, political, and cultural processes that transcend the borders of nation-states (Huff, 2014), and

*“enhanced transnational connections between social groups represent a key manifestation of globalization”* (Vertovec, 2009, p.2).

Transnationalism, which is a process that transcends national borders, could also be used to describe social areas that emerge through immigrants' daily life

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<sup>2</sup> Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) *globalization*, (Accessed: June 23, 2022).



activities and their social, economic, and political relations (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, 1995, p.22).

Transnationalism is often used interchangeably with *international*, *multinational*, *global*, and *diasporic* but it is a conceptual contradiction and overuse (Vertovec, 2003, p.17). Therefore, it may be helpful to explain two other terms briefly: *international* and *global*. Knight (2004) describes these three terms shortly as;

*“The term international emphasizes the notion of nation and refers to the relationship between and among different nations and countries. Transnational is used in the sense of across nations and does not specifically address the notion of relationships. Transnational is often used interchangeably and in the same way as cross-border. Global, on the other hand, refers to worldwide in scope and substance and does not highlight the concept of nation”* (p.8).

Basically, the term internationalization

*“has been used for centuries in political science and governmental relations”* (Ibid., p.9),

*“globalization, on the other hand, denotes the processes through which sovereign national states are criss-crossed and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects of power, orientations, identities, and networks”* (Beck, 2018, p.11).

While, internationalization represents the link of states between borders, globalization reveals the disappearance of these borders. Thus,

*“in most general sense, globalization is a matter of increasing long-distance interconnectedness, at least across national boundaries, preferably between continents as well”* (Hannerz, 2003, p.17).

Besides, diasporic connections have become increasingly important in light of the growing global connections of non-state actors and the loss of importance of national borders (Karim, 1998, p.1). With a remarkable number of international migrations in

the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the propagation of individuals, thus cultures; beyond the borders of states and beyond the international relations of these states, transnationalism emerged as a new phenomenon linked to globalization. As a result, individuals have experienced cultural changes in the places where they migrated, on the other hand, kept their communication with ancestral homelands. As Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina Blanc-Szanton (1995) state:

*“By living their lives across borders, transmigrants find themselves confronted with and engaged in the nation-building processes of two or more nation-states. Their identities and practices are configured by hegemonic categories, such as race and ethnicity, that are deeply embedded in the nation-building processes of these nation-states”* (p.22).

These connections have different forms for societies in different places.

*“Communication has always been critical to the establishment and maintenance of power over distance”* (Thussu, 2018, p.2),

yet, borders between countries are still protected by states. Although these borders have been removed in favor of some developments such as new communication methods, the distances have also remained valid. As an example;

*"the relative proximity of Turkey to western Europe, the availability of cheap and frequent flights, and the recent proliferation of new media services and communications links, are developments that are now making it possible for Turks living in Europe to achieve a new mobility across cultural spaces"* (Aksoy and Robins, 2008, p.2).

These communicative and cultural ties have also created new identities. In relation to the concept of new identities, the contemporary individual has become an actor of global and local at the same time (Kaya, 2002, p.43). Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt (1999) clarify the situation as

*“a growing number of persons... live dual lives: speaking two languages, having*

*homes in two countries, and making a living through continuous regular contact across national borders” (p.217).*

Film festivals that incorporate economic, cultural, artistic, and communicative elements were chosen to examine the concept of transnationalism in this thesis because,

*“the more cross-border activities and orientations that the migrants had, the stronger the intercultural and integration-related practices they maintained towards their respective resident states” (Sert, 2012, p.86),*

and film festivals may be accepted as one of the main intercultural and integration-related practices.

## **2.2. Brief History of Migration to Germany and the United States from Turkey**

People

*“have always immigrated seeking more, be it natural resources—including animals to hunt, fodder for herds, better farmland, or mineral wealth—or to improve our social, cultural, or economic condition” (Fisher, 2014, p.124).*

These migrations, which have been going on for centuries, are changing the demographics of the world as they always have.

*“Wars, ethnic tensions, and other conflicts still create millions of new refugees annually” (Ibid., p.124).*

After the 1940s, the need for labor resulting from war losses, the ease of travel between countries, new communication technologies, and industrial economic developments have led to an increase in migrations. A significant part of these migrations has been to Western states for reasons such as the abundance of job opportunities and a high level of welfare.

*“Currently, the UN estimates 214 million people live outside of the country of*

*their birth*” (Ibid., p.112).

After the Second World War, Germany's need for labor increased during the restructuring process of the country. The start date of the migration from Turkey to Germany is considered to be the *31 October 1961 Labor Agreement*, but it is a fact that the migration to Germany had started before this date. The arrival of the first workers that are mentioned constitutes the first stage (Genel, 2014, p.306).

*“In subsequent years, although Turkey has signed similar agreements with such countries as Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Sweden, and Australia, in terms of scope and volume, emigration to Germany has been the hallmark of contemporary Turkish immigration in contemporary Europe, and it has constituted the backbone of the ‘Euro-Turk ‘phenomenon’ (Toktaş, 2012, p.5).*

Until 1973, 599,000 Turkish citizens immigrated to Germany (The Federal Statistical Office of Germany, 2003, p.108 cited by Şahin, 2012, p.2). The return rate of Turkish citizens who immigrated to Germany was low, so both the immigration and migrant population from Turkey to Germany continued to increase.

*“In the plans of the German and Turkish governments, labor migration, which includes a temporary working period, has turned into a continuous phenomenon by differentiating from the foreseen ones over time” (Çelik, 2008, p.1).*

According to the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services of the Republic of Turkey 2018 Annual Report (2019), as of 31 December 2018, a total of 1,476,410 Turkish citizens live in Germany. Again, as of the same date, the total number of Turkish citizens who acquired German citizenship is 980,153 and the total number of people of Turkish origin who live in Germany is 2,466,563 (p.9).

Table 1. Number of Turkish Citizens Coming to and Leaving Germany between 2012 to 2017 (Source: YİH 2018 Annual Report, 2019, p.12)

Year	Comer	Deporter
2017	33.655	21.350
2016	28.639	24.678
2015	27.952	23.790
2014	22.058	25.520
2013	23.230	27.896
2012	26.150	27.725



Figure 1. An announcement of hiring in Germany; “We are sending labor to Germany” (Source: Hürriyet Pazar, 2021)

The history of migration from Anatolia to the United States dates back to the Ottoman Empire period. As Kaya (2006) declares:

*“The first wave of immigration continued for approximately one hundred years, starting in 1820 and ending with the end of the First World War. According to the data of the American immigration office, around 300,000 people immigrated to the United States from the Ottoman Empire during this period” (p.3).*

The main reason for the emigration of Turks in the first wave was economic and the places where the Turks immigrated to were the states where the industry was dominant, such as New York, Massachusetts, Michigan, Illinois, and Pennsylvania, where the United States industry needed workers (Ibid. p.3). After the First World War,

*“with the establishment of the Republic, some of the Turks who left returned, and*

*with the effect of the great economic depression that followed, the number of those who returned increased” (Avci, 2006, p.23).*

Despite these repatriations, the United States is the country with the highest Turkish population density outside of Europe, with 222,593 Turkish citizens (US Census Bureau 2017 data, cited by YİH 2018 Annual Report, 2019, p.35). The number of Turkish immigrants living in the United States has remained incomparably smaller than other ethnic groups; however, the total immigrant population is high and the rate of immigration from Turkey to the United States continues to increase (YİH 2018 Annual Report, 2019, p.38). Although the history of immigration from Turkey to the United States dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after the immigration wave that took place after 1980, a new type of Turkish society has emerged, represented by foundations. These foundations, which are generally managed by fluent English-speaking and educated people, have started to gather Turkish immigrants under their roof by offering different services from both English and Turkish language courses to talks on various subjects (Şan & Akyiğit, 2021, p.143). These foundations and associations also organize cultural events and work to promote Turkish culture.

Table 2. Native, Foreign, and Turkish Population in the United States (Source: YİH 2018 Annual Report, 2019, p.35)

	Overall	Native	Foreigner (USA Citizen)	Foreigner (Non USA Citizen)	Turkish
Men	158.426.000	136.338.000	10.097.000	11.991.000	114.858
Women	164.730.000	141.410.000	11.757.000	11.563.000	107.735
<b>Total</b>	<b>323.156.000</b>	<b>277.748.000</b>	<b>21.854.000</b>	<b>23.554.000</b>	<b>222.593</b>

Turkish citizens went not only to Germany or to the United States, but also to European countries and to other countries around the world to work. Frequently, as with immigrants in different parts of the world, Turkish immigrants could not avoid experiencing cultural differences and difficulties in the places they migrated. The adaptation process of the Turkish immigrants who do not speak English, German, French or any foreign language, who speak only Turkish and who are culturally closed, has been long and painful. Members of the Euro-Turkish community have been

integrated and accepted to varying degrees in the countries they migrated to, due to their many differences such as ethnicity, language, and belief (Toktaş, 2012, p.6). Even today, there are many immigrants who are exposed to discrimination and have not been able to adapt even though have been living where they migrated for a long time. Besides, the process of non-adaptation of immigrants is not limited to language, culture, and belief discrepancies. The migrant workers, who mostly work as blue collars in factories, have had difficulties in the adaptation process due to the intensity of working life and financial inadequacies. For example, it is stated that unqualified or semi-qualified Turks who went to the United States illegally with the third wave of immigration, have low English levels and live a ghetto life apart from the American society (Kaya, 2006, p.9). Based on this, immigrants, who experienced economic inadequacies and could not adapt to language and culture due to the intensity of their working life, tried to keep the culture of their ancestral homeland alive and tried to live a life connected to their ancestral homeland in the countries where they migrated. At the same time,

*“migration is a process that inevitably involves an act of separation, a leaving behind of one’s home, loved ones, familiar surroundings and everyday routines”* (Karanfil, 2009, p. 890).

Therefore,

*“this migratory loss is what provokes the migrant to establish and reproduce the well-known ‘frozen image’ of the homeland”* (Ibid, p. 890).

In addition to all these, throughout history, migration has not only been experienced for economic reasons, but also for political reasons. For instance, political exiles to Germany and various European countries during the late Ottoman period took place<sup>3</sup>. One of the biggest political migrations related to Turkey is the population exchange between Turkey and Greece that started in 1923 and caused 1.5 million people to emigrate (Hirschon, 2008, p.3). Those who were exiled for political reasons also experienced cultural adaptation and financial problems, and tried to integrate into

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<sup>3</sup> Erken, İ. (2021). *Osmanlı Devleti’nde Bir Ceza Yöntemi Olarak Sürgün: Yanya Vilayeti Örneği (1867-1913)*. Atatürk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi, Vol. 0(72): 287-313.

the communities in the countries they went to, just like the worker immigrants did.

### ***2.3. Film Festivals in a Historical Perspective***

Film festivals primarily emerged as the result of political reasons and conflicts in the early 1930s in Europe. Industrial and cultural developments in the Western states dramatically increased after the wounds of the First World War were healed. Furthermore, in some Western countries, nationalist, tyrannizer, warlike and unflinching regimes had come to the forefront, and cinema was one of the specific mass control tools that they used. Festivals were used as marketing and propaganda tools to aggrandize the politics of ideologies and ongoing political powers. They were in an important position while distributing and promoting the propaganda films with the cinema's manipulative and promotional aspects in Europe. Although the emergence of the festivals depended on these incidents, the film festivals in those years were greatly interrupted by the wars. Elsaesser (2005) describes the history of film festivals as:

*“The annual international film festival is a very European institution. It was invented in Europe just before the Second World War, but it came to cultural fruition, economic stature, and political maturity in the 1940s and 1950s. Since then, the names of Venice, Cannes, Berlin, Rotterdam, Locarno, Karlovy Vary, Oberhausen and San Sebastian have spelled the roll call of regular watering holes for the world's film lovers, critics and journalists, as well as being the market places for producers, directors, distributors, television acquisition heads, and studio bosses” (p.84).*





Figure 2. Poster of *Esposizione d'Arte Cinematografica* held between 6 – 21 August 1932, (Source: The Venice Film Festival, n.d.)

Before a decade of the Second World War, in Europe, the political balances changed, new regimes emerged, and one of the most prominent of these regimes was Mussolini's leader-oriented, ultranationalist *Italian Fascism*.

*“Benito Mussolini cared about reaching large masses from different tendencies in the power struggle of the Fascist Party, and gained the support of liberal sections on this path”* (Çelikçi and Kakışım, 2013, p.89)

and in 1931, Mussolini announced his decision to move toward the people in order to reach large masses (Stone, 1999, p.189). Mussolini wanted to use the power of cinema to become integrated with the public. On the other hand, he was trying to reduce cinema from a sacred place to a level that the public could understand, contrary to the classical understanding of high art. In the early 1900s, The Venice Biennale of International Art was the most prestigious art exhibition in Italy, as it is now, and it was being maintained by Venetian elites. However, in the late 1920s, Fascist-authorized officials replaced Venetian elites and changed the European elite culture (Ibid., pp.185-186). Following these incidents, The Venice Film Festival, the first

international film festival, was established in Venice in 1932 under the name of *Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte Cinematografica* as a part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale (Venice Film Festival, History 1895-2021, n.d.).

*“The Film Festival screened two films each night for twenty nights, with the projections held outdoors on the seaside terrace of the Excelsior Hotel”* (Stone, 1999, p.191).

Although there were supporters of the festival in Italy under the authority of Mussolini or in other states that have fascist tendencies, there were those who opposed the festival at the international level. After the first emergence of the European-based international film festival under the control of the fascist regime, *free world* countries took action to create their own festivals. The major opposition to the Venice Film Festival was the Cannes Film Festival, which is one of the most well-known festivals today by all filmmakers, producers, audiences, and everyone who is interested in cinema. In 1938, in the sixth edition of the Venice Film Festival, France was represented with a series of films, and on the jury with the diplomat Philippe Erlanger and the journalist René Jeanne (Cannes Film Festival (CFF), n.d.). While all the political turbulence was going on in Europe, the reflections of these cases were seen in the film festival. According to the Cannes Film Festival Website; an American film was the unanimous favorite; however, on the last day of the festival, the jury changed the award winners under the pressure of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. The Nazi propaganda documentary *Olympia* (Leni Riefenstahl, 1938) and Italian film *Luciano Serra* (Goffredo Alessandrini, 1938) featured as the best films, win the Best Film award: Mussolini Cup (CFF, n.d.). Thus, the Cannes Film Festival has appeared in 1939, seven years after the Venice Film Festival was established. In the meantime, when the history of the Cannes Film Festival is examined, it becomes obvious that France, the United Kingdom, and the United States combined forces against the fascist domination of the film festival in Venice and that the festival was collectively organized by these states (de Valck, 2007, p.15), self-described as *free world* countries. Thus, it has been decided to hold the 1<sup>st</sup> Cannes Film Festival on the September 1. However, in 1939, because Germany invaded Poland, the festival was postponed for ten days. Afterwards, the war was declared on the September 3, and the 1<sup>st</sup> International Cannes Film Festival was held in 1946.

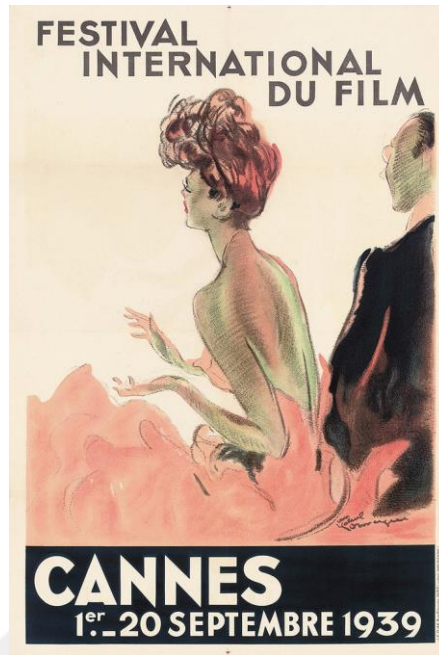


Figure 3. Official poster of the 1<sup>st</sup> International Cannes Film Festival settled to be held between 1 – 20 September 1939. (The Cannes Film Festival, n.d.)

After the Second World War, the number of film festivals started to increase, and the *Berlin International Film Festival* joined the rivalry in 1951. When Colonel Marty of the United States Army occupation in Berlin decided to establish the *Berlinale*, which effectively opened in 1951, a section of the program was devoted to the rebirth of the German film industry (Segal, 2010, p.1). There is one thing that should not be forgotten, often missed out by political conflicts or because of things shown as such. One of the hidden sides of the conflicts between film festivals at the beginning was also an economical conflict between *Victorine Studio* in Nice and the *Cinecittà Studio* in Rome, founded in 1937 (Ibid., p.1). In other words, the festivals had witnessed economic conflicts as well as political ones. Therefore, the increase in festivals continued due to not only political environments but also economic incidents.

#### ***2.4. Transnational Film Festivals***

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the industrialized Western countries, it has become difficult to find a labor force within the state due to the loss of the young population as the result of the great wars, the increasing life expectancy, and the fact that the

population could not provide the required number of laborers for the factories. Accordingly, labor migration from underdeveloped and developing countries to industrialized countries, as well as from Turkey to Germany and the United States started. Heinz Fassmann and Rainer Munz (1992) declare;

*“In 1950 approximately 5.1 million foreigners lived in Western Europe; the estimates for 1982 and 1990 are 15.0 and 16.6 million, respectively. This trend clearly suggests the ongoing internationalization of labor markets. In the most important host countries (Germany, France, Great Britain, Switzerland, Netherlands, Belgium, and Sweden) the shares of foreign populations have more than doubled”* (p.459).

At that time, people who emigrated were called *migrant workers* or *guest workers*, but over time these people have become permanent residents. These emigrants are no longer referred to as migrant workers or guest workers by Western European countries, they are seen simply as *foreigners* (Ibid., p.457).

Depending on the rising migration trend and the increasing number of emigrants, the number of migrant workers increased mostly in the industrialized Western countries such as Germany, the United States, France or England, and these emigrants have tried to adapt to the cultures and lifestyles of the countries where they migrated. However, emigrants have tended to preserve their own culture while integrating with the culture, lifestyle, and language of the new environment. A new system was formed in which common beliefs and thoughts, nationality and religion, lifestyle, and music were combined and shaped by mutual interaction. Even today, despite widespread unemployment in many European countries, the share of foreign workers is very high and the share of foreigners in the total population is still increasing (Ibid., p.457). Therefore, as the social, cultural, and economic interactions of these communities increased, many new concepts suitable for the transnational phenomenon have emerged. Today, film trade and cultural exchanges have become globalized, because relations between borders no longer only bilateral. In this way, the art cinema and the independent sector rapidly expanded beyond national borders in the cycle of film festivals (Elsaesser, 2005, p.18). According to Sara Ahmed (1999),

*“migration involves not only a spatial dislocation, but also a temporal*

*dislocation: 'the past' becomes associated with a home that it is impossible to inhabit, and be inhabited by, in the present" (p.343).*

In other words, transmigrants experience not only spatial but also cultural and spiritual ruptures from the place where they migrated. In addition, based on what Sara Ahmed declares, Aksoy and Robins (2003) clarify that there are ways to create new communities in lieu of the lost ones and to overcome alienation (p.4). Hence, transnational film festivals emerged as a concept to prevent the alienation or cultural separation from the ancestral homeland of transmigrants. In other words,

*"in a globalized context, it is the film festivals' inherent transnationalism that counterbalances nationalist tendencies, thus facilitating exchanges in production and circulation" (Iordanova, 2015, p.7).*

With the emergence of the first film festival, the rise of international and national film festivals after the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and globalization, transmigrants have created their film festivals with both international and global phenomena, which are attached to their homeland but organized in the place of their emigration. As De Valck (2007) suggests;

*"here is a world no longer divided into a mosaic of cultural-territorial segments but conjoined by a complex flow of people, goods, money, and information, including even the most isolated areas in a cosmopolitan framework of interaction" (p.18).*

In this context, in addition to international, national and regional festivals, *transnational film festivals* have emerged, which combine many elements that De Valck has referenced. Today, transnational film festivals have become one of the most common and substantial types of film festivals along with national, international, and regional film festivals. Unlike in the past, transnational film festivals are now held in not only Western industrialized countries, but also many other places all over the world. Nevertheless, the number of transnational film festivals in developed countries is much higher than in many other countries, as migration from underdeveloped and developing countries to developed countries is more considerable. Therefore, the

number of festivals in developed countries opens a wider path to study these types of festivals. It is possible to encounter transnational film festivals in many Western countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Australia, Canada, and Germany. Greek Film Festivals, Jewish Film Festivals, or Turkish Film Festivals in Western states can be considered as examples of film festivals that fit the description of the transnational film festival. These are some of the nations with many citizens outside of their homeland. Generally, although there are film festivals of developing countries, it is also possible to observe festivals in which developed countries are represented. Italian Film Festivals and Japanese Film Festivals are examples of such film festivals of developed countries in developed countries. There are film festivals that have been held for 30 – 35 years, as well as those that have just started to be organized and comply with the definition of the transnational film festival. In other words, this trend, which was prominent at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, is still on the rise today.



Figure 4. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Greek Film Festival in Berlin, (Source: Greek Film Festival in Berlin, n.d.)

**Come Celebrate the 30th Toronto Jewish Film Festival With Us!**  
**June 9 to 15 (In-Theatre)**  
**June 16 to 26 (Online)**

STAY TUNED! THE FULL LINE-UP WILL BE ANNOUNCED ON MAY 9, 2022. START YOUR OWN COUNTDOWN OR CHECK OUT OURS!



Figure 5. Countdown of the 30<sup>th</sup> Toronto Jewish Film Festival, planned to be held both in-theatre and online on June 9 - 26, 2022. (Source: The Toronto Jewish Film Festival, n.d.)

Depending on the countries where they are organized and the promoters, the economic, cultural, and administrative structures of transnational film festivals vary. These differences among these festivals are noticeable even at first glance. Although transnational film festivals reflect the general point of view of certain communities, the dynamic structure of politics and the economy also greatly affect these festivals. In addition, these festivals do not always reflect a national point of view, but they are also diverse in content. The most important element that stand out are the administration of the festivals, and accordingly, the sponsorship relationships and the financial structures they have developed. Screening programs are also an important indicator for transnational film festivals. Because, according to the sponsorship relations of the festivals, screenings can attract positive or negative reactions and expose festivals to sanctions. Some of the festival sponsorships consist of festivals that receive funding from independent organizations and sponsors. These independent funders and sponsors could be either from the country where the festival is held or from their homeland. Another kind of sponsorship that supports film festivals are governments/local governments of the countries where the festivals are held. Although these two kinds of sponsorship relationships are different, both financial structures could be seen together in many transnational film festivals. Another one is the support of transnational film festivals by official institutions and organizations of their

ancestral homeland. In the following chapters, after examining the structure of online film festivals, the structural scheme of the transnational film festivals will be explained and exemplified through the transnational film festivals related to Turkey.

## **2.5. Online Film Festivals**

Primarily, the online film festival concept appeared at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the widespread use of the internet, and recently their number has increased rapidly. *The Fluxus Festival*, created in 2000 by Brazil's Zeta Filmes, and *the Jameson Notodofilmfest* launched by the collective La Fábrica in Spain in 2001 were the first successful attempts at online film festivals (Taillibert, 2018, p.33-34).

*“The success of these early attempts at online film festivals has prompted sector players across the world to consider this type of event as a new strategy. Indeed, the online film festival concept really gained momentum around 2007-2008, with a multitude of events, of various levels of durability, launched around the globe”* (Ibid., p.34).

Today, although the film festivals that maintain the face-to-face organization method still constitute the majority, many film festivals have started accepting online submissions, and some festivals have started to be organized as online or hybrid. Online submission platforms, such as FilmFreeway, Withoutabox, and Clickforfestivals have facilitated access to all kinds of festivals whether face-to-face or online. One of the biggest submission platforms *FilmFreeway* describes itself as *Trusted by the World's Leading Festivals* and adds:

*“over 10,000 of the world's best film festivals and contests, including 183 Academy Award / BAFTA Award accredited festivals, use FilmFreeway to reach over one million filmmakers worldwide”<sup>4</sup>.*

These submission platforms provided a great opportunity for the dissemination of the festivals and contributed to the digitalization of the festivals. Beyond accepting online submissions, some of the major film festivals have also made screenings through

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<sup>4</sup> FilmFreeway Website, How It Works, Date Accessed: March 29, 2022 <https://filmfreeway.com/pages/how-it-works>



online platforms, or have moved into the hybrid and virtual festival method. For instance,

*“with 18,518 industry guests from 132 countries attending in 2020, as well as 3,447 journalists from 82 countries, and with admissions totaling 479,365”* (Keslassy and Barraclough, 2020),

one of the biggest film festivals *The Berlinale* decided to make film screenings in its 71<sup>st</sup> edition virtual between 1 to 5 March 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, there are festivals that have been held online since their establishments such as *Direct Monthly Online Film Festival* and *Lift-Off Global Network*. Accordingly, online film festivals can be considered under two headings; festivals held online from the very beginning through online platforms and festivals that switched to online platforms with the pandemic but were previously held in person.



Figure 6. “At the set of one of the Berlinale Talents digital talks in the HAU Hebbel am Ufer” (Source: Berlinale, 2021)

In conjunction with the pandemic, at the present time, platforms such as Netflix, and Amazon Prime Video have also led to transformation in the practice of watching films and visual contents. While films were used to be mostly watched in theatres,

today, they have become easily watched at home and have even started to be released on online platforms without being screened in film theatres or film festivals. One of the most recent examples is Martin Scorsese's latest film *The Irishman* (2019). The rights of the film were purchased by Netflix, Inc. (Pulver, 2017), and in 2019, it was broadcasted on Netflix online streaming platform for the first time. Even though we were seeing these examples before the COVID-19 pandemic, such examples are increasing ever more rapidly today. The rate of watching online content and usage of online platforms by people has been increasing, especially since the beginning the COVID-19 pandemic. In short, not only the number of online platforms has increased, but also people's watching habits have changed because of the time spent at home has increased. In addition, the interactive experience in environments such as film festivals has been shelved for some time due to the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged in the last months of 2019, has seriously affected the world economy and face-to-face interaction, and it was impossible for the cinema industry to avoid this impact. According to Abbot in Raindance (2021):

*”Box office revenue in 2019 was higher than in previous years. Still, revenue sharply decreased in 2020 when movie theatres either temporarily closed or permanently shut down. The number of movies being released in theatres declined 66% in 2020. Movie theatre attendance hit a low of 240 million compared to past years, which were well over 1 billion for decades”.*

During this period, many films that were shot and waiting to be released could not be screened. Thus, festival managements, including those of major film festivals, have resorted to organizing their events online as did the 71<sup>st</sup> Berlinale instead of postponing the festival. Contrary to this, some festivals declined to organize an online festival. For instance, the 73<sup>rd</sup> Cannes Film Festival, which was planned to be held in 2020, had to be canceled and the announcement from the festival's Twitter page (2020) appeared as follows:

*“Due to the health crisis and the development of the French and international situation, the Festival de Cannes will no longer be able to take place on the dates*

*planned, from May 12 to 23*<sup>5</sup>.

Afterwards, the festival chose 56 films with the hashtag *#cannes2020* to be screened in film festivals such as Venice, Toronto, New York, and San Sebastian, which were planned to be held in autumn<sup>6</sup>.

To avoid negations of the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the easiest methods was to organize the festival online and move it to new platforms. If not all, most film festivals continued to be organized, films were watched at houses with new interfaces, interviews and events were held online via platforms such as Zoom and Skype, which became popular during the COVID-19 pandemic curfews. The long quarantine processes fueled the interest in these online watching habits and the festivals continued to be followed. Therefore, it is a topic related to this thesis whether the festivals will be held face-to-face, online or in a hybrid method will be followed in the future. Because during the COVID-19 pandemic, transnational film festivals also moved to online platforms. Although the online festivals or online screenings provide convenience, it weakens the spatial bonds of the festivals. For example, when the MTFD, which organized an online festival in 2020, decided to make screenings through online platforms, it became open to audiences from all over Germany<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, what it means to actually attend and follow a festival is also being transformed.

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<sup>5</sup> The Cannes Film Festival Official Twitter Page (19 March 2022)

<sup>6</sup> Chapter 4.1.

<sup>7</sup> Chapter 4.2.

## CHAPTER 3: TRANSNATIONAL DYNAMICS OF TURKISH FILM FESTIVALS

When the list of transnational Turkish film festivals is made organized by associations, official institutions, and individuals, it becomes apparent that dozens of film festivals are still being held, or they have ended all over the world. Among the countries with the highest number of transnational Turkish film festivals are Germany with nearly two and a half million population of Turkish origin, which has the highest number of immigrants from Turkey (YİH 2018 Annual Report, 2019), and the United States, which has the highest population of Turkish origin outside of Europe, with more than two hundred thousand immigrants from Turkey (YİH 2018 Annual Report, 2019). There are roughly three basic approaches to financing of these festivals. While two approaches are frequently seen in the festivals that have continuity, the third approach is generally seen in the non-continuous festivals. Some of the transnational Turkish film festivals consist of festivals financed by independent organizations and sponsors. Another financing form is the festivals supported by the governments or local governments of the countries in which they are held. These are the two different festival financing structures that are seen together occasionally. Another financing form is the festivals supported by the official institutions and organizations of the Republic of Turkey. The number of film festivals that are supported by the official institutions and organizations of the Republic of Turkey is high, but their continuity is interrupted, and also these festivals have not adapted to the online platforms. Dozens of film festivals have been organized all over the world such as the *Los Angeles Turkish Film Festival*, the *Barcelona Turkish Film Festival*, the *Australian Turkish Film Festival*, and the *Hong Kong Turkish Film Festival*, which have been supported by official institutions, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture and Arts, and Consulates, in the Republic of Turkey. On the contrary, independently funded transnational Turkish film festivals continued to be organized and have become long-termed festivals over time. In addition, the audiences and content of transnational Turkish film festivals also show major changes according to their organizers, funders, and sponsorship relations.

### ***3.1. Ownership, Administration, Funding, and Sponsorships***

The MTFD, the FTFF, and the STFF are the festivals which have been held for at least ten years, and these were selected as samples and with planned interviews to explain the transnational dynamics of Turkish film festivals. Although the ownership, administration, funding, and sponsorships of these three festivals do not resemble each other at first glance, the findings obtained as a result of the interviews with the festival directors reveal that these festivals have certain similar points.

The STFF has been organized by *Turkish American Cultural Association of Washington* (TACAWA) since 2012. TACAWA, an active non-profit organization based in Washington, holds several Turkey-related festivals such as *TurkFest* and the *International Children's Friendship Festival*. Since 2019, TV producer and filmmaker Şirin Aysan has been the director of the festival, and the entire festival team works on a voluntary basis. The director of the STFF changes every few years. It is explained by the festival director that the change brings new blood to the festival (Aysan, 2021). The official institutions of Turkey and the United States do not support the STFF financially; almost all financial supporters of the festival are independent sponsors. These sponsors include many Turkey-related independent financial supporters in Seattle, such as real estate offices or markets, cafes or casting agencies. Aysan (2021) says the following on the sponsorships of the festival:

*“We try to get financial contributions from Turkish business owners and individual supporters in Seattle every year. We want them to support us, and they support us”.*

In addition, she expresses their efforts to remain financially independent as:

*“We don't have a constant ideology, but we want to show good films. Multivocality is important to us. Therefore, when you receive support from anywhere, it may come with strings attached, and we do not want to face such a situation”* (Aysan, 2021).

In addition to the independent sponsors, *Seattle Office & Arts Culture* is the only government agency to have funded the festival in 2020. Aysan (2021) discusses the lack of support from official institutions in the Republic of Turkey as:

“We do not have any support for the festival from public institutions and non-governmental organizations in Turkey. A few years ago, we had a small connection with Turkish Airlines. Because we want to invite guests from Turkey to our festival. Every year we try to bring the director, producer or one of the actors of the opening film. This creates a great cost for us. Besides that, we try to invite the winner of the short film competition. It is a long way for these guests to come to Seattle from Turkey and they stay here for 4-5 days. It is important for us to cover the costs of these guests. We used to cooperate with Turkish Airlines, but we do not now. But if they want to support us, of course, we won't say no.”



Figure 7. Sponsors and Partners of the 9<sup>th</sup> STFF, which is held as an online festival (Source: The STFF, n.d.)

The MFTD, which has common points with the STFF in terms of ownership, administration, and funding, has been organized by *SinemaTürk Filmzentrum e.V.*<sup>8</sup> since 1989 to

“present high-quality films about Turkey to the public” (Munich Turkish Film Days Website (MFTD), n.d.).

Apart from the founder association, it can be said that the festival is organized by

<sup>8</sup> SinemaTürk Film Centre Association

SinemaTürk Filmzentrum e.V., *Müncher Stadtbibliothek*<sup>9</sup>, and *Filmstadt München*<sup>10</sup> based on the phrase

*"Turkish Film Days are organized by three strong partners"* (MTFD, n.d.)

on the festival's website. The festival director has been Ayşe Gülcemal Sarılı since 2018. Sarılı has also been the president of the SinemaTürk Filmzentrum e.V. Association since 2019. The current board members are Ayşe Gülcemal Sarılı, Nigâr Mat Ağyel and Margit Lindner (MTFD, n.d.), and there is a volunteer team working under the board of directors. Sarılı (2021) uses the following statements regarding the emergence of the festival and the founder members:

*"There are too many Turkish immigrants in Munich and almost none of them have adapted culturally. Neither the Germans know the Turks nor the Turks know the Germans, and the first aim is to achieve this adaptation through culture. There is a lot of immigration here from countries such as Greece, Italy or Spain, but on the one hand, there are cultural events where these immigrants are represented. After observing this situation in the late 1980s, Thomas Balkenholl and Erman Okay, the founders of the festival say that; 'we need something to be representing Turkey here; we need to bring the locals and immigrants here somehow, cinema is what we have right now, then we can do it through the cinema'. The founding committee is very various, there are Turks living in Munich, there are Turkish-speaking Germans; like Thomas, like Margit".*

In addition, the festival director states that the MTFD, which has adopted the motto of *free, independent, oppositional and good film*, does not want to be affiliated with any official institutions or sponsors from Turkey. The festival board acts with the idea that showing oppositional films is only possible with economic independence, so they get their support only from local sources in Germany. For these reasons, the MTFD is similar to the STFF in terms of organization and perspective. However, the festival has

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<sup>9</sup> Munich City Library

<sup>10</sup> An umbrella organization that receives a budget from the City Of Munich Cultural Department (*Landeshauptstadt München Kulturreferat*) and organizes festivals in Munich (Sarılı, 2021).

no independent sponsors, the Munich City Library, and the City of Munich Cultural Department cover all financial expenses. Regarding the supporters related to Turkey, the director of the MTFD states that they have not received direct support from the Turkish Consulate General in Munich so far, but in the first years of the festival, 35mm film copies were sent through the Turkish Consulate General in Munich in order to avoid customs costs. According to the festival's director, they wanted to screen the film *Diyarbakır: Hukukçuluğumdan Utaniyorum* (Karaman Yavuz, 1995, fd.) at 1995 festival, but the Turkish Consulate General in Munich said they did not want the film to be screened the day before the screening. Since the screenings were made with 35mm film copies at that time, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Turkey was sending the films to the Turkish Consulate General in Munich and the MTFD management was receiving the films from the Turkish Consulate General in Munich. When Turkish Ministry of Culture requested that the film not be screened, the Turkish Consulate General in Munich confiscated the films, but the festival's management informed the Turkish Consulate General in Munich that they would not step back and wanted to show the film. After the Turkish Consulate General of Munich did not deliver the film copies to the festival, the film was shown through VHS tapes. This situation was explained to the audience as: "We wanted to show the movie from 35mm film copies, and you were going to watch this movie in a film theater. The reason for the low image quality is that 35mm copies were not delivered to us", and the screening was made (Sarılı, 2021). After this incident, there were consular officials who came to the opening or to visit the festival from time to time. However, the festival director states that neither the festival nor any official institution of Turkey wants to oppose each other. Although they receive support from official institutions and organizations in Germany, this support does not prevent them from remaining independent (Sarılı, 2021). The festival board looks for independent sponsors only if large sums of money are needed to organize a special event or invite guests. The reason for this is that the existing budget is insufficient to bring directors, producers, or actors from Turkey to Munich. In addition to all these, there is a section for making donations on the festival website. However, this donation section has been opened for people who are passive members of the association, who do not work actively, but who want to support the festival in some way (Sarılı, 2021).





Figure 8. Organizers and Sponsors of the Munich Turkish Film Days (Source: The MTFD, n.d.)

The supporters of the FTFF, organized in Frankfurt, Germany's fifth-largest city located in the state of Hessen, stand out as official institutions from Turkey and Germany, such as *Hessisches Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst*<sup>11</sup>, *Kulturamt Stadt Frankfurt am Main*<sup>12</sup>, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey, and Turkish Consulate General in Frankfurt. The festival also has independent sponsors and supporters. The festival director is Hüseyin Sıtkı, who served as the Chairman of The KAV<sup>13</sup> (*Kommunale Ausländervertretung*) and is currently a councilor of the Frankfurt City Council. Working as a student advisor at the Goethe University for international students, Sıtkı voluntarily undertakes the presidency of the festival. He states the following about the establishment of the festival:

*“I felt that I should devote more time to promoting Turkish society and the Turkish people. Because I thought that it was our responsibility to defend the rights of the first and second-generation Turkish workers coming from Turkey, I intensified my work in this direction. In this context, we established an association with my German friend Dr. Monika Carbe<sup>14</sup>, an association for intercultural communication. Monika was translating Turkish literature. Together, we tried to promote Turkish literature in different cities of Germany for many years. In 1999, I thought that we should do something different. Because I realized that we could not go too far in promoting the country and society we came from, with classical association works. Based on this, I established the Frankfurt Turkish Film Festival in 2000 and we have been*

<sup>11</sup> The Hessian Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and the Arts

<sup>12</sup> Cultural Office of the City of Frankfurt

<sup>13</sup> Foreigners Advisory Council for the City of Frankfurt am Main

<sup>14</sup> Woman of letters, translator and educator

*continuing for 21 years” (Sıtkı, 2022).*

According to the information on the festival's website, there are 21 people on the festival team, including the president (Frankfurt Turkish Film Festival Website (FTFF), n.d.). Therefore, the FTFF differs from the MTFD and the STFF in terms of organization and team. In addition, the FTFF, unlike the other two festivals, is the only festival that receives consistent support from official institutions. Since the establishment of the festival, the Cultural Office of the City of Frankfurt has supported the festival, and beginning from the third year of the festival, the support by other official institutions in the State of Hessen, such as The Hessian Ministry of Higher Education, Research and the Arts, *Deutsches Filmmuseum*<sup>15</sup> ve *HessenFilm & Medien*<sup>16</sup>, has increased. Meanwhile, the official institutions of Turkey stepped in, and the Turkish Ministry of Culture and TRT (Turkish Radio and Television) has contributed financially to the festival (Sıtkı, 2022). Although there have been changes based on political incidents occasionally, the interest and support of the Turkish Ministry of Culture for the festival have continued to increase over the years. In addition, the interest by artists and producers from Turkey in the festival has also increased; associations and NGOs in Turkey have begun to support the festival. Besides, the FTFF has been in contact with well-established festivals in Turkey, such as Istanbul International Film Festival, Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival, Adana Golden Boll Film Festival, and it has developed projects to cooperate. As an example of developments related to the collaborations and political incidents, Sıtkı states:

*“We started a collaboration with the Adana Golden Boll Film Festival, but when the mayor at that time was not elected and left his office, most of the projects were interrupted. I think we can establish that communication again now” (Sıtkı, 2022).*

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<sup>15</sup> German Film Museum

<sup>16</sup> Film and media funding institution in the state of Hessen



Figure 9. Supporters, Collaborators and Sponsors of the Frankfurt Turkish Film Festival (The FTFF, n.d.)

Although they received negative feedback from time to time from the official institutions and authorities of Turkey that supported the festival, these have not had an impact on the festival. During the interview, the festival director gave a few examples concerning the situation. The following incident demonstrates the conflict of support between independent sponsors and official institutions:

*“Our sponsor was Yeni Raki for a while. They gave serious financial support in comparison to our budget and contributed to the festival with a serious team. There was no official sanction or statement from our supporters. However, unofficially, from financial supporters in Turkey it was said about the Yeni Raki relationship, ‘Mr. Sıtkı, the alcoholic beverage brand sponsored the festival,*

*such a thing shouldn't be done'. But I said that I drink alcohol, and I also love raki. I do not support the advertising of alcoholic beverages at the festival. I don't smoke, I don't support it either. I said, if you can give that budget, let's not establish a sponsorship relationship with Yeni Raki. But as I said, these were not incidents that caused the disruption of the festival or the festival program in any way” (Sıtkı, 2022).*

Even though the financial support from the official institutions of Turkey decreased in some years, there was no sanction and the support continued to the FTFF, which is a festival that already received most of its financial support from official institutions in Germany.

### **3.2. Content and Audience**

When the archive and festival program of the MTFD is analyzed, mostly independent feature films and short films have been included in the screening program since the establishment of the festival, regardless of the year of production of the films. The 31<sup>st</sup> MTFD, which was planned to be held on 20 - 29 March 2020, was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and was held online between 15 April – 2 May 2021 in Germany under the name of the 32<sup>nd</sup> MTFD<sup>17</sup>. Throughout nineteen days, six feature films, six documentaries, and fifteen short films were screened (MTFD, n.d.). The short films were grouped under the titles "The Story of the Women" and "Queer Panorama". The following statements appear on the festival website, regarding the content of the films:

*“Politics, love, sacred trees, cities that will fall under dams, an impressive communist mayor, and Istanbul from a completely different perspective... An artist with locked-in syndrome and three people with down syndrome make themselves visible are told in two striking documentaries. Two short film selections in the program; The Story of the Women, and Queer Panorama focus on the people and the social groups who fight for their rights and equality” (MTFD, n.d.).*

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<sup>17</sup> Chapter 4.1.

In the program of the 32<sup>nd</sup> MTFD, where Turkey-produced films were in the majority, there were also films co-produced with Turkey – Germany, Turkey – Germany – France, and Turkey – Germany – USA. Feature films, documentaries and short films screened online in the 32<sup>nd</sup> MTFD were as follows:

- *Anons* (Mahmut Fazıl Coşkun, 2018, ff.)
- *Aşk, Büyü, vs.* (Ümit Ünal, 2019, ff.)
- *Bozkır* (Ali Özel, 2019, ff.)
- *Görölmüştür* (Serhat Karaaslan, 2019, ff.)
- *Küçük Şeyler* (Kıvanç Sezer, 2019, ff.)
- *Nuh Tepesi* (Cenk Ertürk, 2019, ff.)
- *Ah Gözel İstanbul* (Zeynep Dadak, 2020, fd.)
- *Kromozom Kardeşler* (Hasan Kalender, 2019, fd.)
- *Ovacık* (Ayşegül Selenga Taşkent, 2019, fd.)
- *Oyuncakçı Saklı Yadigarlar* (Yağmur Kartal, 2020, md.)
- *Wenn The Seele Friert...* (Stella Sema Yeşiltaç, 2020, fd.)
- *Yangın Yerinde Orkideler* (Selin Şenköken, 2020, md.)
- *Nedret Bugün Kaybolur* (Berrak Çolak, 2017, sf.)
- *Anı* (Demet Erden, 2019, sf.)
- *İğne* (Ceylan Beyoğlu, 2020, sa.)
- *Ev Sahibi* (Olca Seda Özaltan, 2020, sf.)
- *İnce Bir Çizgi* (Mirjam Orthen, 2019, sf.)
- *Mamaville* (Irmak Karasu, 2020, sf.)
- *13+* (Ceylan Özgün Özçelik, 2019, sf.)
- *Ablam* (Burcu Aykar, 2018, sf.)
- *İris* (Volkan Güteryüz, 2019, sd.)
- *Örtünün Altı* (Kardelen Eren, 2019, sf.)
- *Misafir\*Hane* (Ömer Tefik Erten, 2019, sd.)
- *2740 Nolu Oda* (Harun Güler, 2018, sd.)
- *Öteki* (Kübra Bekmez, 2019, sd.)
- *Free Fun* (Fehmi Öztürk, 2019, sf.)
- *Hayalimdeki Sahneler* (Metin Akdemir, 2020, md.).

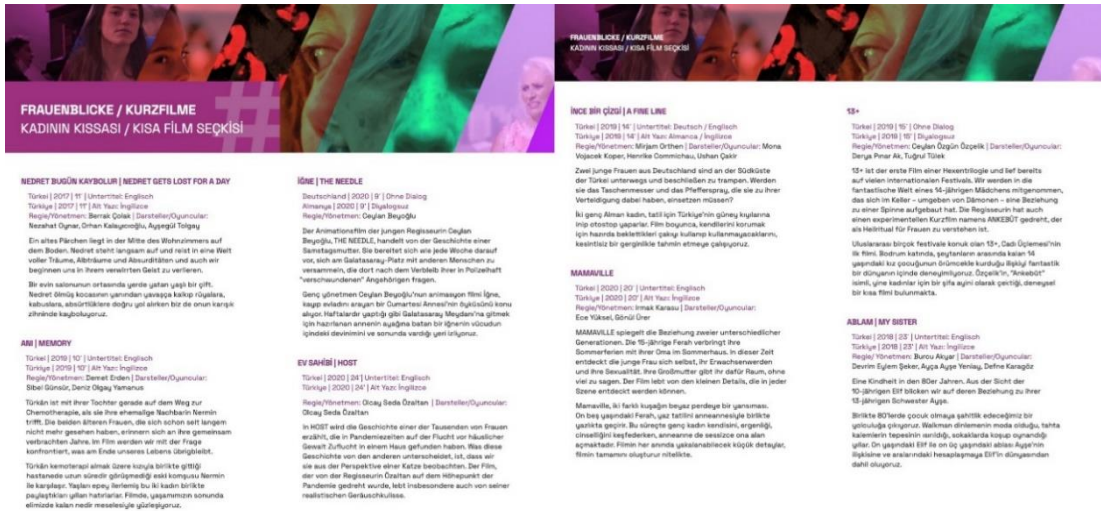


Figure 10. *Kadının KISSASI* (The Story of the Women) short film selections of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Munich Turkish Film Days (Source: The MTFD, n.d.)



Figure 11. *Queer Panorama* short film selections of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Munich Turkish Film Days (Source: The MTFD, n.d.)

The 33<sup>rd</sup> MTFD was held as a hybrid festival between March 24 and April 10, 2022. A total of 23 films, including nine feature films, eight documentaries and six short films, were screened (MTFD, n.d.). The screening program of the 33<sup>rd</sup> MTFD is as follows:

- *Sen Ben Lenin* (Tufan Taştan, 2021, ff.)
- *Hayaletler* (Azra Deniz Okyay, 2020, ff.)
- *Cemil Şov* (Barış Sarhan, 2021, ff.)
- *Nosema* (Etna Özbek, 2020, md.)
- *Heskîf* (Elif Yiğit, 2021, md.)

- *Zîn ve Ali'nin Hikâyesi* (Mehmet Ali Konar, 2021, ff.)
- *Okul Tıraşı* (Ferit Karahan, 2021, ff.)
- *Yaramaz Çocuklar* (Ahmet Necdet Çupur, 2021, fd.)
- *İki Şafak Arasında* (Selman Nacar, 2021, ff.)
- *Çatlak* (Fikret Reyhan, 2020, ff.)
- *Kafes* (Cemil Ağacıkoğlu, 2021, ff.)
- *Bitmemiş Cümleler* (Adar Bozbay, 2021, fd.)
- *Koridor* (Erkan Tahhuşoğlu, 2021, ff.)
- *Hafıza Yetersiz* (Ümit Kıvanç, 2022, fd.)
- *Ölümüne Boşanmak* (Chloe Fairweather, 2020, fd.)
- *Patrida* (Ayça Damgacı, Tümay Göktepe, 2021, fd.)
- *Merhaba Canım* (Ulaş Tosun, 2021, md.)
- *Ah Asuman!* (Ümit Kıvanç, 2019, sf.)
- *Ankebût* (Ceylan Özgün Özçelik, 2020, sd.)
- *Bayrak* (Pınar Göktaş, 2021, sf.)
- *Bir Annenin Sonatı* (Fehmi Öztürk, 2020, sf.)
- *Stiletto* (Can Merdan Doğan, 2021, sf.)
- *Suçlular* (Serhat Karaaslan, 2021, sf.)

The festival director states that a film pool is created, the jury that selects the films consists of the board of directors, founding members, and volunteers working at the festival, and that the films are selected by voting. However, after these selections, the festival director examines the directors and producers of the selected films on a number of points ranging from the awards they received to the newspaper articles and tweets (Sarılı, 2021). The festival director explains the selection of the screening program as follows:

*“We have to somehow serve the films in Turkey. If those films are being silenced in Turkey, we have to be their voice here. This is how *Queer Panorama* and *Story of the Women* emerged. For the last three years, I've been fighting here to be the voice of something. As a matter of fact, we avoid meddling. But, if we have such a festival, then we must use it to gain prestige for the director and the laborers of the film, and also for the film itself. If we have a festival that has existed for 32 years and it is free; then the films have to benefit from this festival, we have to provide it to them” (Sarılı, 2021).*

In the MTFD, it is observed that the audience ratio between Germans and Turks is almost half and that at least 40% of the audience are elderly Germans (Sarılı, 2021). The directors of the films are invited to the panels and interviews because the audience mostly prefers to meet with the directors. After the screenings, Q&A sessions with German and Turkish participants are held. The films that draw the most attention and watched most at the festival are the ones that focus on the Kurdish problems. The film theaters where these films are screened are definitely full (Sarılı, 2021). The festival director states about the Q&A sessions and guest selections in the MTFD:

*“In the Q&A sessions, the audience challenges the directors, and situations that need to be managed may arise. Both Germans and Turks approach the films from different perspectives. We want to be sure that the people we invited are the guests who can handle the questions. In recent years, we have not seen female directors making feature films. Therefore, if there is a female director, she gets priority as a guest. We have such a criterion, but other than that, we try to call names that will arouse interest in the audience”* (Sarılı, 2021).

In the 8<sup>th</sup> STFF, which was postponed to December 5 – December 12, 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>18</sup>, four feature films and documentaries, and ten short films were screened online for eight days (STFF 2020, n.d.). Regarding the criteria by which the films were selected for the screening program, the STFF director stated that the festival committee included which films they believed were good and selected the films that could represent everybody. She also added that, in 2020, they created a different program compared to other film festivals and that this was done to create a multivocality in accordance with the vision and mission of the festival (Aysan, 2021). The STFF, as the MTFD, has included independent feature films and short films regardless of the year of production in the screening program since the establishment of the festival. The main difference between the STFF and the MTFD is that the STFF has built its screening program on short films. In the STFF, films that were produced in Turkey constituted the majority, but also there were films co-produced with Turkey – Germany, or produced in Germany and France. The feature films and short films that were screened in the 8<sup>th</sup> STFF are as follows:

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<sup>18</sup> Chapter 4.1



- *Kronoloji* (Ali Aydın, 2019, ff.)
- *Aşk, Büyü vs.* (Ümit Ünal, 2019, ff.)
- *Ovacık* (Ayşegül Selenga Taşkent, 2019, fd.)
- *Kraliçe Lear* (Pelin Esmer, 2019, fd.)
- *Free Fun* (Fehmi Öztürk, 2019, sf.)
- *Krampon* (Abdullah Şahin, 2018, sf.)
- *En İyi Kadın Oyuncu* (Umut Alaz Kökçü, 2020, mf.)
- *Mahallenin Bazı Kedileri* (Emre Sefer, 2019, sf.)
- *Aylin* (Ozan Yoleri, 2019, sf.)
- *Toz Olmak* (Hüseyin Aydın Gürsoy, 2020, sf.)
- *Yağmur, Şnorkel & Taze Fasülye* (Yavuz Akyıldız, 2020, sf.)
- *Ahtapot* (Engin Erden, 2020, sf.)
- *Paydos* (Öykü Orhan, 2020, sf.)
- *Alf Leila Wa Leila* (Mahsum Taşkın, 2020, sf.).

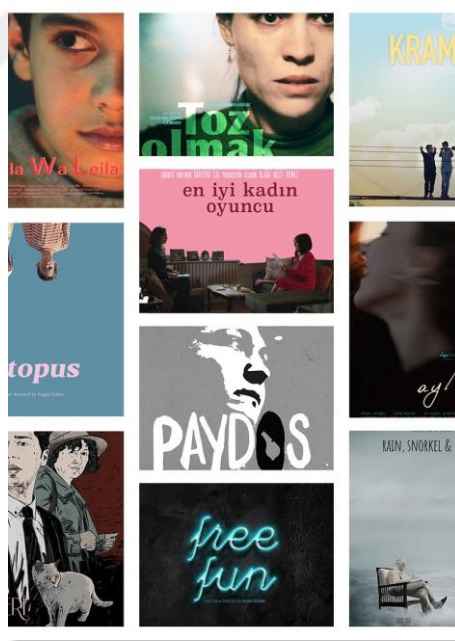


Figure 12. Short film selections of the 8<sup>th</sup> Seattle Turkish Film Festival (The STFF, n.d.)

The 9<sup>th</sup> STFF was held between 4 December and 12 December 2021 as a hybrid festival; both face-to-face and online screenings were made. The festival program included eight feature films and ten short films (STFF 2021, n.d.). The films in the

screening program of the 9<sup>th</sup> STFF, which premiered with *İnsanlar İkiye Ayrılır* (Tunç Şahin, 2020), are as follows:

- *Okul Tıraşı* (Ferit Karahan, 2021, ff.)
- *9,75 Santimetre Kare* (Uluç Bayraktar, 2020, ff.)
- *Bir Nefes Daha* (Nisan Dağ, 2020, ff.)
- *Kumbara* (Ferit Karol, 2020, ff.)
- *Çatlak* (Fikret Reyhan, 2020, ff.)
- *Dirlik Düzenlik* (Nesîmi Yetik, 2020, ff.)
- *Omar ve Biz* (Maryna Er Gorbach & Mehmet Bahadır Er, 2019, ff.)
- *Güzel Havalarda* (Okan Akgün, 2021, sf.)
- *Brigitte Bardot* (Çağıl Bocut, 2020, sf.)
- *Her Şey Olması Gerektiği Gibi* (Onat Esenman, 2019, sf.)
- *Kısmet* (Emre Sert, Gözde Yetişkin, 2020, sf.)
- *Leylak* (Scott Aharoni, Dennis Latos, 2021, sf.)
- *Aynı Gecenin Laciverti* (Nuri Cihan Özdoğan, 2021, sf.)
- *Madun* (Ali Cabbar, 2020, sf.)
- *Susam* (Sami Morhayim, 2021, sf.)
- *Suçlular* (Serhat Karaaslan, 2020, sf.)
- *Büyük İstanbul Depresyonu* (Zeynep Dilan Süren, 2020, sf.).

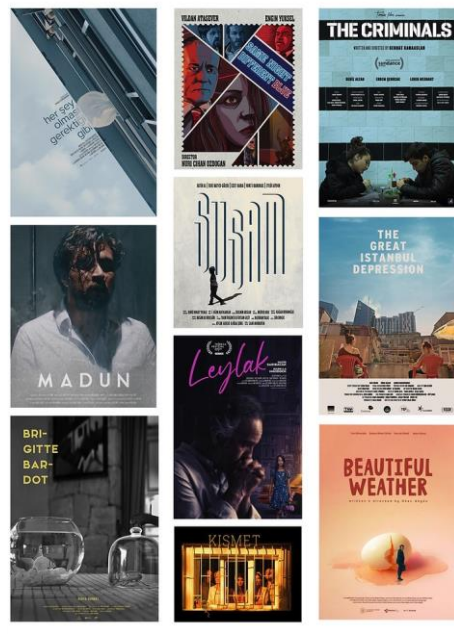


Figure 13. Short Film Selections of the 9<sup>th</sup> Seattle Turkish Film Festival (The STFF, n.d.)

Among the films that were screened, there were not only co-productions by different countries but also films that were not produced in Turkey and shot by directors who are not of Turkish origin. Nevertheless, these films also have a connection with Turkey in terms of their screenplays or actors. For example, the film *Leylak* (Scott Aharoni and Dennis Latos, 2021) tells the story of a Turkish gravedigger living in Queens, New York, the screenplay was written by Mustafa Kaymak and shot by Scott Aharoni and Dennis Latos, directors from the United States. Although it is usual to see films that are not produced in Turkey in transnational Turkish film festivals, it is uncommon for the directors of a film to have no official connection with Turkey.

The 10<sup>th</sup> STFF will be held between 1 December and 4 December 2022. Applications for the short film competition are open until 1 August 2022. There is no application section for the feature film selection of the festival and the films are expected to be chosen by the festival management as in previous years. Regarding the film selections, the following statement are made by the STFF director:

*“We start to review the films to be screened at the festival in March. Firstly, we pay attention that the films were produced in the same year as the festival. For the opening film, we choose a film that appeals to a wider audience. After deciding on the opening film, if we have a theme within the festival, we try to choose the other films in accordance with that theme. But when we show ten films, it is not possible to find a film that is both suitable for the theme and made in that year. We follow other festivals as well. After all, films that won awards at festivals like Berlin and Cannes are important to us. Yes, we want to appeal to a wide audience, but I think it is necessary for us to show arthouse films. We are not financially up to anywhere and are not accountable to anyone. Therefore, these 5 or 6 people choose whatever they like and believe” (Aysan, 2021).*

During the festival, other than the screenings, panels, events, and talks are held. According to Aysan (2021), the festival organizes panels on several themes every year. The panels in 2019 were based on migration and the Turkish cinema from the 1960s to the 2000s, and these themes were explicated through the documentaries screened. Academicians doing research under the title of Ottoman Studies at the University of

Washington also participated in the panels. Identity, ancestral homeland, and adaptation topics were discussed with academicians, immigrants, and native people. About the events and panels, the festival director states that:

*“We're trying to make eye-opening panels. When the actors or director of the opening film come, these are entertaining events anyway. There are a lot of people who come to see those people. Of course, that's a good thing. But after we've finished with that part, we're trying to organize different, eye-opening, and informative panels”* (Aysan, 2021).

Since the festival is organized under the name of the Turkish Film Festival, the audience of the STFF consists of mostly Turkish, but the participation by non-Turkish people has increased over the last three years. Based on the observation by the festival director, the festival audience consists of 80% Turkish<sup>19</sup> and 20% US citizens or non-Turkish (Aysan, 2021).

The 20<sup>th</sup> FTFF, which was planned to be held between November 1 and November 6, 2020, was first postponed to the spring of 2021 and then canceled<sup>20</sup>. At the 21<sup>st</sup> FTFF held between 25 October – 30 October 2021, awards were given in the categories of Lifetime Achievement Award, Posthumous Award, Best Film, Best Director, Best Actress, Best Actor, Jury's Special Award, Best Cinematography, Best Screenplay, Best Music, Best Documentary, Documentary Jury's Special Award, Best Short Film Competition - Turkey and Best Short Film Competition - Germany. In this regard, the variety of awards in the FTFF differs from the MTFD and the STFF. The 25 feature films and documentaries, and 14 short films screened at the 21<sup>st</sup> FTFF (FTFF, n.d.) are as follows:

- *Ceviz Ağacı* (Faysal Soysal, 2020, ff.)
- *Kronoloji* (Ali Aydın, 2019, ff.)
- *Aden* (Barış Atay, 2018, ff.)
- *Misafir* (Mehmet Eryılmaz, 2015, ff.)
- *Bozkır* (Ali Özel, 2019, ff.)
- *Es gilt das gesprochene Wort* (İlker Çatak, 2019, ff.)

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<sup>19</sup> Immigrants who emigrated from Turkey to the United States and later became US citizens are considered as Turkish.

<sup>20</sup> Chapter 4.1

- *Dilsiz* (Murat Pay, 2019, ff.)
- *Aşk Tesadüfleri Sever 2* (Ömer F. Sorak, İpek Sorak, 2020, ff.)
- *Bilmemek* (Leyla Yılmaz, 2019, ff.)
- *Kız Kardeşler* (Emin Alper, 2019, ff.)
- *Nuh Tepesi* (Cenk Ertürk, 2019, ff.)
- *Les Misérables* (Ladj Ly, 2019, ff.)
- *Bir Düş Gördüm* (Murat Çeri, 2020, ff.)
- *Suluk* (Özkan Yılmaz, 2019, ff.)
- *Die Wächterin* (Martina Priessner, 2020, fd.)
- *Sadece Farklı* (Ahmet Sönmez, 2020, ff.)
- *Kar Kırmızı* (Atalay Taşdiken, 2020, ff.)
- *Uzak Ülke* (Erkan Yazıcı, 2020, ff.)
- *Misafir* (Andaç Haznedaroğlu, 2017, ff.)
- *Tanrı Göçmen Çocukları Sever mi Anne?* (Rena Lusin Bitmez, 2018, fd.)
- *Ölü Ekmeği* (Reis Çelik, 2020, ff.)
- *Karınca* (Nazif Tunç, 2019, ff.)
- *9,75 Santimetrekare* (Uluç Bayraktar, 2019, ff.)
- *Gölgeler İçinde* (Erdem Tepegöz, 2019, ff.)
- *Mavzer* (Fatih Özcan, 2020, ff.)
- *Hundeleben* (Cem Sultan Ungan, 2021, sf.)
- *Ohne ein Wort, auf Wiedersehen mein Schatz* (Solmaz Gholam)<sup>21</sup>
- *Bessere Zeiten* (Julian Gerchow, 2019, sf.)
- *Beste Ware* (Frederik Hochheimer, Andreas Schück, 2020, sf.)
- *Majid'den Sevgilerle* (Yiğit Armutoğlu, 2020, sf.)
- *Sürgünde Bir Yıl* (Malaz Usta, 2020, sd.)
- *Vaveyla* (Birhat Temel, 2020, sf.)
- *Seval* (Ahmet Keçili, 2020, sd.)
- *Perdeler* (Fırat Onar, 2020, sf.)
- *Dur Bak Dinle Geç* (Muhammed Günaydın, 2020, sf.)
- *Fermuar Ucu* (Abdullah Çeper, 2020, sf.)
- *Anı* (Elif Turan, 2020)

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<sup>21</sup> The name and the director of the film were listed as such on the FTFF's website, but a search of the name and director of the film yielded no information about the film.

- *İnşattaki* (Doğan Belge, 2020)
- *Sarı Kız* (Batuhan Çelik, 2020, sf.)
- *Yaylacı* (Fatih Ertekin, 2019, sd.)
- *Fraktal: Munchies* (Zahid Çetinkaya, 2019, sf.)
- *Vortex* (Cüneyt Işık, 2019, se.)
- *Erk* (Halil Ergin, 2020, sf.)
- *Son Akşam Yemeği* (Selinay Güneş, 2020, sf.)
- *Kanalı Beklerken* (Yasin Serindere, 2020, md.)
- *Sallakh* (Rasoul İranzad Aghamirlou, 2020, sf.)
- *Tayf* (Ali Kavas, 2020, sf.)
- *Eskisi Kadar Yakın Olamayız* (Şemi Umut Karataş, 2020, sd.)
- *Aah!* (Gökçe Demirgüç, 2020, sf.).

At the 21<sup>st</sup> FTFF, 39 films were screened. Therefore, the FTFF also differs from the MTFD and the STFF in terms of film variety and quantity. The number of feature films screened in the FTFF is much higher compared to the other two transnational Turkish film festivals. When the archives and screening programs of the FTFF are examined, although there are same films with the other two festivals, there are also mainstream films or films not related to Turkey. The screening program of the FTFF consists of three parts. The first one is feature films, documentaries, and short films produced in Turkey. The second is Germany or Germany – Turkey co-produced feature films, documentaries, and short films. However, these films are required to be films produced by filmmakers or starring actors of Turkish origin. The third is the *European Film Forum*. In this forum, films related to the theme of the festival are selected, one or two panels related to the topic are organized and guests are invited (Sıtkı, 2022). Also, the FTFF describes itself as an *international* festival.



Figure 14. An event where the FTFF audience and guests come together (The FTFF, n.d.)

The 22<sup>nd</sup> FTFF is planned to be held face-to-face between June 26 and July 01, 2022. Feature films, documentaries, and short films from Turkey, Germany, and Europe are included in the screening program. About the selection of films that were screened and awarded at the festival, festival director Sitk1 (2022) states that:

*“We have a pre-jury consisting of filmmakers, producers, journalists, and academicians, approximately 6 or 7 people. For instance, Serdar Akar and Ömer Faruk Sorak were in the jury in 2021. We also have a German committee. The pre-jury makes the selections and the films selected there are also re-evaluated by the German committee”.*

Panelists and guests are determined each year according to the main theme of the festival. The directors, actors, or producers of the films are invited as guests, and Q&A sessions are held before and after the screened film. Some of the current topics include immigrant cinema, conflicts of generations, racism, and women's rights. Apart from festival days, other events are organized within the festival. Events against racism and alienation are organized under the name of *Festival in Prison* and *Festival in Schools*.

At the *Festival in Prison* events, films made in Turkey or in Germany, shot by Turkish directors or starring Turkish actors, are screened in prisons in Frankfurt, with the support of the Hessen Ministry of Justice and the Frankfurt Municipality. Information about the target audience of the festival can be obtained more specifically compared to the other two festivals by browsing the festival's website and the interview with the festival director. The FTFF

*“has been designed to appeal to different target audiences and a wide audience. Currently, the Turkish-German community in and around Frankfurt is at the forefront as the target audience”* (FTFF, n.d.).

In addition, the festival

*“provides the opportunity to introduce Turkish cinema to the second and third generations of Turkish people who grew up in Germany and to establish a bond with the country they come from”* (FTFF, n.d.).

The festival audience is mostly between the ages of 20 and 50, based on the festival director's observation. The audience between the ages of 30 and 40 is more interested and this age range is seen more within the festival. In recent years, the number of German audiences and participants has increased. The FTFF audience consists of 70% Turkish and 30% German citizens or people of different ethnicities living in Frankfurt (Sitki, 2022).

To summarize, when the archives and screening programs of the MFTF, the FTFF, and the STFF are examined, although it might be seen as they are concerned about attracting the audience, all three festivals commonly include films that focus on the common problems of Anatolian geography and focus on events related to these problems. All three festivals include independent films in their programs, and the festival directors state that this is due to the fact that the festivals are financially independent. Although the screening programs are similar, the festivals in Germany and the United States differ in terms of audience profile. While participants of German citizens or other ethnicities are more interested in the FTFF and the MTFD, participants of the United States citizens or other ethnicities are less interested in the STFF. Accordingly, although more detailed research is necessary, this observation



suggests that the society in Germany is more familiar than the United States society with the existence of the Turkish diaspora. Transnational Turkish film festivals and their Turkey-related participants may be more visible in Germany, but they are more invisible in the United States.

### ***3.3. Relationship between Continuity, Appearance in Media, and Funding***

Since institutions, associations, or individuals who are the organizers of transnational Turkish film festivals have the authority to decide on the economic structures of the festivals, the three basic approaches in the financing and sponsorship relations of the festivals are directly related to the continuity, recognition level, and appearance in media of the festivals. The directors of the STFF, the MTFD, and the FTFF define the festivals they organize as economically independent, so these festivals are independent in content. Also, the directors of all three festivals enunciate their desire to be independent in the interviews. Organized by Turkish associations, the STFF and the MTFD do not receive financial support from the official institutions of the Republic of Turkey, and Turkey-related funding sources are limited due to festivals' freedom concerns or previous incidents in the past<sup>22</sup>. The STFF, which will be held for the 10<sup>th</sup> time in 2022, was not held in 2013 and has always been held in November until 2020. The festival was not interrupted in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic; it was postponed to December and maintained its continuity as it was held in the same year (STFF, n.d.). The MTFD, which will be held for the 33<sup>rd</sup> time in 2022, has been traditionally held in March – April since 1992. According to the data obtained from the festival archive, the festival was not held in 1999. In 2020, the festival was interrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>23</sup>, and it was held again in April 2021 and maintained its continuity (MTFD, n.d.). The FTFF, which was founded by Hüseyin Sıtkı in 2000, the director of the festival since then, can be exemplified as a festival that is not organized by independent associations and where one or more people are the festival manager and decision-maker. The FTFF receives financial support from the official institutions of Turkey, although not every year, and has independent supporters related to Turkey (Sıtkı, 2022). There are transnational Turkish film festivals that are long-termed, continuous, and held in 2021 or 2022 except for sampled transnational Turkish film festivals. When the funding and sponsorship relations of

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<sup>22</sup> Chapter 3.1

<sup>23</sup> Chapter 4.1

these long-termed festivals are examined, the minority of official institutions related to Turkey stands out. For instance, the 26<sup>th</sup> Nuremberg Film Festival Turkey – Germany has been organized by the official institutions of Germany, the 19<sup>th</sup> Paris Turkish Film Festival has been organized by the ACORT (*Citizens Assembly from Turkey*), and the 8<sup>th</sup> Vancouver Turkish Film Festival has been organized by the *Turkish Canadian Society*. The minority of supporters from Turkey is significant in the transnational Turkish film festivals, which are long-termed, continuous, and organized by the Turkish associations, whether their directors have been interviewed or not. Among these festivals, only the FTFF is consistently supported by the official institutions of Turkey, but maintains its continuity and independence according to the statement made by the festival director (Sıtkı, 2022). On the other hand, Nuremberg Film Festival Turkey – Germany is unlike either of these two structures in terms of economics and is funded by the institutions of Germany. This situation does not adversely affect the continuity of the festival.

Apart from the transnational Turkish film festivals organized by the Turkish diaspora, there are festivals organized and financed by the official institutions of Turkey, which have sponsorship or cooperation relations, are not affiliated with individuals, and manage the funding sources under the auspices of these official institutions. Some examples to such transnational Turkish film festivals include The *Los Angeles Turkish Film Festival*, organized by the main sponsorship of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey (Sabah, 2012), the *Rome Turkish Film Festival*, organized and funded by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey, the Promotion Fund of the Turkish Prime Ministry, and the Embassy of Turkey in Rome (AA, 2016), the *Mannheim Turkish Film Festival*, supported by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey, the Promotion Fund of the Turkish Prime Ministry, the Turkish Consulate General in Karlsruhe, General Directorate of Cinema of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey, and official institutions of Germany (Mannheim Turkish Film Festival (MTFF), n.d.), the *Hollywood Turkish Film Festival*,

*“organized with the support of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey, and in cooperation with the International Bosphorus Cinema Association”* (BKSV, Archive, n.d.),

the *Barcelona Turkish Film Festival*, hosted by the Filmoteca de Catalunya, and with the contributions of the Turkish Consulate General in Barcelona (Cumhuriyet, 2018). The continuity of transnational Turkish film festivals with such funding and sponsorship relationships is interrupted. For example, the Los Angeles Turkish Film Festival, which premiered on March 1, 2012, was held five times, the last one being in 2017, and was not held thereafter. Many well-known filmmakers from Turkey were among the participants during the five years the festival was held. Turkish mainstream media reported this as follows:

*“The Los Angeles Turkish Film Festival, which was held under the leadership of young and talented Turkish filmmakers in Hollywood, the heart of American cinema, managed to attract the attention of Americans, despite being held for the first time”* (Sabah, 2012).

The article also stated that the festival attracted audiences:

*“The festival, sponsored by Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism opened with a feature-length film screening of Zaim's ‘Shadows and Faces’. The film attracted great interest from American film lovers and Turks living in Los Angeles”* (Sabah, 2012).

This *attractive* festival, which hosted many Turkish films and guests in the United States of America even in its first year has not been held since 2017.



Figure 15. The entrance hall of the Los Angeles Turkish Film Festival (Source: Flickr LATFFavourites, 2013)

The 5<sup>th</sup> and the last Rome Turkish Film Festival, another impermanent festival supported by the official institutions of Turkey, was held in 2016. The speech given by Turkey's Ambassador to Rome, Aydın Adnan Sezgin was featured in the Turkish media. The Ambassador stated that the festival had become a tradition and had a very important place in cultural relations between Turkey and Italy (AA, 2016). The festival motto of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Rome Turkish Film Festival, of which Ferzan Özpetek was the honorary president, was

*“Whoops! Mommy, the Turks are coming. They are coming with their films!”.*

The Rome Turkish Film Festival, with its ironic slogan

*“Whoops! Mommy, the Turks are coming, but with their films!’ in other words 'Mamma li Turchi', emerged during the Ottoman Empire's expedition to the city of Otranto in the southeast of Italy in 1480” (Yeni Şafak, 2013),*

could not maintain its continuity like other transnational Turkish film festivals funded

by the official institutions of the Republic of Turkey and has not been held since 2016.



Figure 16. “Whoops! Mommy, the Turks are coming.” “They are coming with their films.” Poster of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Rome Turkish Film Festival (Source: Yeni Şafak, 2013)

The Mannheim Turkish Film Festival, one of the oldest Turkish film festivals in Germany, was last held between October 18 and October 22, 2017. The *Schirmherren*<sup>24</sup> of the festival were Mayor of Mannheim, Dr. Peter Kurz and Mannheim Turkish Consul General Cem Örnekol. The following words were used in the article titled "The magnificent opening of the 25<sup>th</sup> Mannheim Turkish Film Festival" by Yılmaz in the *Post Aktüel* (2017), which can be accessed from the *Presse/Basin* section of the festival's website:

*“The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the festival, which has been organized since 1987, started with the opening gala at the intercultural museum called Mannheim Reismuseum. The program started with the attendance of the General Consultant of Karlsruhe Cem Örnekol, Consul Adnan Hayal, Vice Consul Cumhuriyet Akgün, Deputy Labour and Education Attaché Muhammet Kıran, Religious Official Ali Derin, representing Mayor of Mannheim Peter Kurz, municipal committee Dr. Nazan Kapan, the main sponsor of the festival, Baktat Chairman of the Board, Mustafa Baklan, and many guests”.*

<sup>24</sup> “Patron” in Cambridge Dictionary (2018)

The festival was said to strengthen the relationship between the two cultures and that this would continue in the future, by the main sponsor of the Mannheim Turkish Film Festival, Baktat Group of Companies Chairman of the Board, Mustafa Baklan. Furthermore, he explained the place of Germany for Turks in Germany and the festival with the following words:

*“Germans use the word 'Vaterland'<sup>25</sup> for Germany, and Turks use the word 'Mutterland'<sup>26</sup> for Turkey. Also for us, Germany is Vaterland, that is, the fatherland. We have built very strong connections between these two countries. We are happy because of that”.*

The festival, which undertakes the mission of

*“attracting the attention of both German and Turkish audiences to the high-profile Turkish cinema culture”* (MTFF, n.d.),

has a long history, but its continuity has been interrupted and is no longer held. There is no information found on whether the festival will be held again.

There are many abroad Turkish film festivals, supported by the official institutions of the Republic of Turkey that have no continuity and have media appearances, such as the Los Angeles Turkish Film Festival, the Rome Turkish Film Festival, and the Mannheim Turkish Film Festival. Contrary to these festivals, the STFF and the MTFD included in the sample group did not find media appearances often. Very few articles were written by news agencies, such as GazeteduvaR, T24, and DHA, about the STFF in 2019 and 2020. After 2020, there has been no news about the festival in the Turkish mainstream media. The STFF director said that since 2019, a press release has been prepared and sent to local, national and international news agencies, and the festival has recently appeared in several newspapers in Turkey, but because of the films they showed or the audience they appealed to, news agencies such as Anadolu Agency did not include the festival on their columns (Aysan, 2021). News agencies, such as Hürriyet, OdaTV, and Aydınlık, published news articles about the 33<sup>rd</sup> MTFD. In the *Presse/Basın* section on the festival's website, articles in German

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<sup>25</sup> Fatherland

<sup>26</sup> Motherland

come to the forefront. However, the festival director, who draws attention to the bad aspects of these articles as well as the bright ones, stated the following about the articles that appeared in the past years:

*“After the Istanbul Convention was repealed by Turkey, they used it as a trump against Turkey. For example, the article about the festival of 2021 in the Süddeutsche Zeitung really gave me a nervous breakdown. There is an article about us, but there is also Erdogan and a sexual harassment case in Ankara in the article. We try to reveal what we want to say with the films we choose, but they spit venom on us as 'Erdogan is hopeless, but there is hope here'. These are provocative, it is seen that there is no good intention. Women and queer topics are already popular in Germany, so it's good to see articles on them. On the other hand, they have trumps that they can use against Turkey, and these agencies use this. People make films to tell their nuisances and we screen them, but both sides, use them for their own benefit. The Germans use these to humiliate the Turks, and the Turks to demonize us. Wherever we are, we become the other; we become incompatible both here and there” (Sarılı, 2021).*

To summarize, among the common points of the transnational Turkish film festivals, which continued for a long time but do not continue presently and are announced through many media organizations formerly, it stands out that the issuing authorities, supporters, or collaborators of the institutions and organizations are from the Republic of Turkey. The STFF, and the MTFD, which are long-running festivals with independent supporters, are reported by a couple of media organizations compared to these festivals, and they maintain their continuity. In this context, the FTFF is a festival between these two approaches. The FTFF is a festival that has been organized for a long time, has supporters related to Turkey, has continuity, and has been published in the media through channels such as TRT Haber, Anadolu Agency, CNNTürk, Hürriyet, and Aydınlık. Although the festival has supporters related to Turkey, it is mostly funded and supported by institutions in Germany, even though the funding sources related to Turkey are occasionally cut, these deficiencies are overcome. The fact that the festival has been held for 22 years is also of great importance in this context. The reasons why the FTFF maintains its continuity while it has supporters related to Turkey, while remaining independent in terms of content,

can be shown by the fact that the festival is held under the leadership of Hüseyin Sıtkı, who is not affiliated with any institution, organization, or association. Organizing the festival's financial supporters in a balanced way, Sıtkı's connections in Germany and efforts to make the festival independent have not been interrupted for 22 years, so FTFF has been shaped by different dynamics compared to all other transnational Turkish film festivals. The FTFF is the only festival that was started, organized and directed by the same person for many years among the festivals analyzed.





## CHAPTER 4: TRANSNATIONAL TURKISH FILM FESTIVALS AND COVID-19 PANDEMIC

### *4.1. Reactions and Attitudes of the Transnational Turkish Film Festivals during the COVID-19 Pandemic*

Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), commonly known as COVID-19, emerged in Wuhan, China in December 2019. It spread all over the world over a short period of time and caused thousands of deaths which then resulted in the World Health Organization (WHO) declaring a pandemic<sup>27</sup> on 12 March 2020 (Ciotti, Ciccozzi, Terrinoni, Jiang, Wang, & Bernardini, 2020, p. 365). Considering the risk posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of public health and public order, social isolation was implemented in almost all countries, and mask use and social distance rules were mandated. In order to keep the spread of the disease under control, curfews have been declared in many countries since the day the WHO announced COVID-19 as a pandemic; education was suspended, the home office system was adopted, domestic and international travel was prohibited, shopping malls, restaurants, entertainment venues, and even outdoor parks have been closed, concerts and festivals have been postponed or canceled. In this period of restrictions, when the society locked themselves in their homes for days and weeks, the lifestyle of the whole world changed and people became familiar with online concepts. The STFF, the MTFD, and the FTFF, various transnational Turkish film festivals that were normally organized face-to-face, were also affected by these restrictions, and reacted to the situation differently. In this context, there have been changes in the dynamics of the festivals. The MTFD and the FTFF, which were planned to be held in the first quarter of 2020, decided to cancel the festivals. The STFF, which was planned to be held in the last months of 2020, decided to postpone the festival.

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<sup>27</sup> "A disease that spreads over a whole country or the whole world" in Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2022).



Figure 17. Cancellation Announcement of STFF Documentary Shorts: *Humans of Anatolia – Identity* (Source: Instagram, 2020)

The STFF was held in the first days of November from 2012 to 2019. In addition, extra events were organized within the scope of the STFF, apart from the film festival. One of the additional events of the STFF's Documentary Shorts Program *Humans of Anatolia – Identity*, scheduled to be held on March 11, 2020, was postponed due to the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in the Seattle area threatening public safety. The announcement on the festival's Instagram page said some options were investigated to reschedule the event, and the new date would later be announced. The event was held online on September 11, 2020. After postponing the first event of 2020 in March, the festival management presented the film *Zana* (Antoneta Kastrati, 2019), in collaboration with the NWFF and Romanian Film Festival Seattle, and the film *Sibel* (Çağla Zencirci, Guillaume Giovanetti, 2018), in collaboration with the NWFF, online to the festival audience between 27 May and 9 June 2020. On June 1, 2020, the festival announced that short film competition applications were opened, and shared the news that the festival will be held face-to-face or online, depending on the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. On September 14, 2020, the selected films were announced, and the festival, which has been traditionally held in November since 2012, was held online between December 5 and December 12, 2020, with a one-month delay.

*“As festival management, we never thought of canceling the festival. We did not*

*know how long the pandemic would last and what would be affected. Yes, we did not cancel the festival, but we decided not to make an announcement and started to follow other festivals. We are a small organization. We investigated what major festivals were doing and what problems they encountered. For instance, the film festivals in New York that we follow quickly went online. We started to talk to NWFF about what we can do and collaborated to hold the festival online” (Aysan, 2021).*



Figure 18. Poster of the 8<sup>th</sup> STFF, which was arranged as an online festival (Source: Instagram, 2020)

Presenting all the films in the screening program to its audience through an online platform in 2020, the STFF also held its panels and workshops online. Regarding the online festival, the festival director states that the continuity of the festival is essential; therefore, they chose such a way. The duration of the festival, which was held for four days before the COVID-19 pandemic, was extended to eight days. During the festival, films were made available not only to the Seattle audience, but to all festivalgoers in the United States. The festival management, as a result of their observations and investigations about organizing an online festival, concluded that holding the festival in a longer period would be effective in reaching a larger audience, thereby increasing the awareness of the festival (Aysan, 2021). Relatedly,

the festival director conveyed the considerations of the audience as follows:

*“People liked that we made an effort to have continuity of the festival in such a period. We said, ‘We tried something during the pandemic, we tried to adapt’ instead of saying, ‘We couldn't do the festival this year, we couldn't handle it’. This situation was also a positive aspect in terms of the awareness of the festival.”* (Aysan, 2021).

Compared to the previous years, the number of films decreased, and it aimed to reach a wider audience, even though there were fewer films. Based on the observation of the festival director, the number of the festival audience nearly doubled. However, this increment did not make a similar contribution to the festival in terms of income as the revenues from the opening night or events are also important for the financial structure of the festival. However, these revenues could not be obtained due to the cancellation of these events during the pandemic. In addition, some financial expenses also decreased or disappeared as the festival was organized online. In the past years, the directors, producers, actors of the films screened or speakers were invited to the festival to take part in the discussion panels, where their travel and accommodation expenses were covered by the sponsors. Expenses for screenings, panels, and workshops were transferred to the new expenses that emerged as a result of the transition to an online platform. The travel and accommodation expenses decreased, and income stayed stable. Therefore, although the festival was organized online, the revenue and expense ratio did not change.

After the 8<sup>th</sup> STFF was held online, the 9<sup>th</sup> STFF was held as hybrid in 2021 and met with its audience from December 4 to December 12, 2021, with both face-to-face and online screenings. As in 2020, the duration of the festival was kept long, unlike in the pre-pandemic period. In the 10<sup>th</sup> STFF, planned to be held in the last months of 2022, it is planned to leave the online and hybrid methods<sup>28</sup>, and to hold the festival face-to-face.

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<sup>28</sup> Chapter 4.2



Figure 19. Cancellation announcement of the 31<sup>st</sup> MTFD (Source: Instagram, 2020)

The screening program of the 31<sup>st</sup> MTFD, was planned normally to be held between 20 March – 29 March 2020, the invited guests were decided and the event calendar was created<sup>29</sup>. Although the 31<sup>st</sup> MTFD was completed in terms of workload, due to the increase in COVID-19 cases in Germany and Munich, the festival was canceled ten days before the beginning, and the tickets that were sold were refunded. The festival director states that all festival preparations were finished, and they were just waiting for the day of the festival to come (Sarılı, 2021). After the cancellation announcement for the 31<sup>st</sup> MTFD, the first event held within the festival was face-to-face, and the film *Peri: Ağzı Olmayan Kız* (Can Evrenol, 2019) was screened in an open-air cinema on August 12, 2020. After this event, the MTFD announced on its website and social media accounts that the festival will be held online throughout Germany, under the name of 32<sup>nd</sup> MTFD, from April 15 to May 2, 2021. Both the STFF and the MTFD directors emphasized the importance of the continuity of the festival and stated the fact that the films should meet with their audience, albeit online. Although the MTFD director and the festival management were not happy with the online festival, they agreed that they would not cancel it this year, as they did in 2020. It was thought that if the festival was canceled again, it would be a problem as the festival would not be held for two consecutive years. The festival director has emphasized the importance of the continuity of the festival, as follows:

<sup>29</sup> Festival Program of the 31<sup>st</sup> MTFD, <https://tuerkischefilmtage.de/tr/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/20200221-broschuere-FINAL-2.pdf>

*“The important thing here is that maybe because it was a very rare situation, we thought that the films had to continue meeting with the audience, even if it was only for once or twice. This was not a process that we enjoyed. In 2021, every thing we tried at the online festival was experimental for us. We didn't do anything we were familiar with, we just did what we guessed and thought would be better.” (Sarılı, 2021).*



Figure 20. Announcement of the 32<sup>nd</sup> MTFD held online throughout Germany (Source: Instagram, 2021)

The MTFD, which made a nine-day festival program in 2020, extended the festival program to seventeen days in 2021. It turns out that the number of audiences did not increase in the 32<sup>nd</sup> MTFD, but the skeleton audience of the festival clearly showed their interest in the festival, despite the one-year suspension. Half of the tickets were sold even before the festival started (Sarılı, 2021). The festival director stated that people were bored with online events in time and that if the festival in 2020 could be organized and the films transferred to the online platform immediately at the beginning of the lockdowns instead of canceling the festival, more attention would have been attracted; thus, they would have reached higher numbers of audience. She also said that when restrictions had just begun, people were excitedly looking for new platforms and new events. She explained that concerts and theaters were watched online, festivals were followed online, and almost everyone was satisfied with such events in a short time, which can be a reason for the number of the festival audience

staying constant. The 32<sup>nd</sup> MTFD was held from April 15 to May 2, 2020, approximately four and a half months after the 8<sup>th</sup> STFF. The stability in the number of audiences at the MTFD and the increase in the number of audiences at the STFF can be also explained as a result of this.

The 20<sup>th</sup> FTFF was planned to be held between June 1 – June 6, 2020; invitations were printed, the theater rents were paid, and the hotel reservations for the guests were already made. However, the festival was postponed firstly from November 1 to November 6, 2020, and then to the spring of 2021. However, due to the increase in COVID-19 cases, it became impossible to organize the festival face-to-face, and the festivals in 2020 and 2021 were combined and organized under the name of 21<sup>st</sup> FTFF between October 25 and October 30, 2021. Before the cancellation decision in 2020, it was decided to show the feature films as part of the festival in cinemas. Later, it was announced that the festival awards would be given at the festival in 2021. Short films and documentaries planned to be shown online on the festival's website were also screened face-to-face at the 21st FTFF (FTFF, n.d.). The festival director states the reason for not organizing an online festival, as follows:

*“I am a person who loves to interact with people face-to-face and I think that mass events should be like that. I've never been too keen on online screenings. We received offers on infrastructure and costs. Maybe we could reach a wider audience, but at the present time, I think we are left alone with everything. When we take the bus, when we take the train, and when we walk, we always interact with our cell phones. Activities that bring people together, such as festivals, concerts, and theaters should not disappear” (Sitki, 2022).*

As people stayed away from social environments due to the restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, the 21<sup>st</sup> FTFF held in 2021 attracted great attention, nearly a thousand people came to the 700-seat movie theater where the festival was opened, an incident occurred and the police had to keep the crowd under control (Sitki, 2022). In this context, the FTFF, similar to the STFF, increased the number of audiences in the first festival organized during the pandemic, and similar to the MTFD, the festival's skeleton audience showed great interest in the festival.



Figure 21. Poster of the 21<sup>st</sup> FTFF, including the 20<sup>st</sup> FTFF Program (Source: Instagram, 2021)

#### 4.2. Aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Future Forms of the Transnational Turkish Film Festivals

Many film festivals have tried to adapt to online screening platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic; however, the face-to-face festivals have replaced online events as of the summer of 2022, when the restrictions were lifted in most countries. Some festivals, on the other hand, completely opposed the online festivals and emphasized the necessity of the face-to-face festivals. For instance, the 73<sup>rd</sup> Cannes Film Festival was planned to take place from 12 to 23 May 2020. However, due to the increasing cases and death rates of COVID-19, the festival management announced that the festival could not be held in its *original form*<sup>30</sup>. The size of the Cannes Film Festival made it impossible for all events to be held online, and the festival management avoided organizing the festival online in order to preserve the original texture of the festival. In September 2020, a new announcement was made and an open-air festival planned to be held between 27 October – 29 October 2020 (Variety, Ravindran, 2020).

<sup>30</sup> Pulver, A. (2020). *Cannes film festival says 2020 edition cannot go ahead 'in original form*





Figure 22. Spéciale Cannes 2020 red carpet, with few participants and medical masks (Source: Archyde, 2020)

All three transnational Turkish film festival directors think that hybrid film screenings and interviews during the COVID-19 process are reasonable, but festivals are events that require face-to-face interaction. They also think that the online platforms disrupt the cultural texture of film festivals. The STFF and the MTFD directors, who decided to organize an online/hybrid festival in 2020 and 2021, are of the same mind in agreement that they would not organize an online-only festival again, even though there is an advantage for the audience to follow the festival. The MTFD director Sarılı (2021) states her opinion that festivals should not be organized online, as follows:

*“Festivals are completely different places where people come together and interact face-to-face, there are different parameters in it. When we organize an online festival, we are no different than Netflix, Amazon Prime, or MUBI. When we create an online platform as part of the festival, I think we are no longer a festival. We only make a certain film catalog available to people”.*

In addition, organizing a hybrid festival is like organizing two festivals at the same time, and reaching people in both ways is costly, involving a longer process. Therefore,

if the number of cases and deaths due to the COVID-19 pandemic does not increase or a similar pandemic does not occur, the MTFD management will not consider the path to organizing a hybrid festival in the future (Sarılı, 2021). In the 32<sup>nd</sup> MTFD, even though it was online, it was observed that the festival audience was pleased and satisfied to follow the festival because they could not reach the films in 2020. However, the festival director states the following about the audience's wish for the festival to take place face-to-face;

*“If we had said that we were watching films in the open-air theatre or going to do the festival face-to-face, I know that everyone would have come with great eagerness”* (Sarılı, 2021).

The STFF director states that they do not have a plan to adapt the festival online; however, they can organize the festival in two ways by making some screenings or festival events online. Since no opening night or face-to-face events were held at the STFF in 2020, the festival could not generate any income from these events. However, ticket sales for the online festival increased and the revenue similar to previous years was generated (Aysan, 2021). The hybrid festival stands out as a preferable method for the STFF in terms of generating income, increasing the number of the audience, and enhancing the awareness of the festival. Despite the pandemic restrictions in 2020, the festival audience was satisfied with the online festival and participated considerably in the 8<sup>th</sup> STFF. However, there is no data on whether the festival audience would prefer to follow the film screenings, interviews, and workshops face-to-face or online.

Although they did not hold an online festival in 2020 and 2021, the FTFF director thinks that the festival can be made hybrid in order to increase the awareness of the short films and documentaries in the screening program of the festival in the future and to bring these films to wider audiences, whether the pandemic continues or not. However, as the festival management, he said that there is no such work being undertaken at the moment, and he thinks that the festival should be always held face-to-face. He states that digitalization brings loneliness, and emphasizes that organizing the festival online is out of question unless they have to (Sıtkı, 2022).

To summarize, the remarks of transnational Turkish film festival directors on the online film festival method are explicit. They state that the festivals they organize are

places that bring people together to interact and exchange cultures. That's why even though they held festivals online due to COVID-19, they do not wish to organize the festivals online only again. Although the online festival organization method is not preferred, as a result of the change in people's watching habits after the COVID-19 pandemic, the hybrid festival method may be indispensable for all festivals. Thus, the transition of film festivals to a hybrid method might be an inevitable ending, and it may be an appropriate way for transnational Turkish film festivals to reach larger audience and increase their income.



## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I aimed to reveal the transnational dynamics of Turkish film festivals and the transnational conceptual framework of these festivals. Throughout the thesis, I discussed various aspects of transnational Turkish film festivals through the theoretical framework of transnationalism and the dynamics of film festivals. I tried to find out the similarities and differences in organization, funding and sponsorships, content, audience, continuity, and media appearance between the transnational Turkish film festivals and how these factors affect one another. For this thesis, interviews were conducted with the directors of three transnational Turkish film festivals. The findings and analyses put forward in this thesis are mainly based on the semi-structured in-depth interviews with the directors of the Seattle Turkish Film Festival, the Munich Turkish Film Days, and the Frankfurt Turkish Film Festival. Besides, the findings obtained from subsidiary sources such as archives, articles, websites and social media accounts of these festivals, and other subsidiary sources related to other transnational Turkish film festivals apart from these three main festivals are used to clarify the concepts put forward throughout the thesis and to compare the transnational dynamics of Turkish film festivals.

When the administrative dynamics of Turkish film festivals such as funding, sponsorship and ownership change, social dynamics such as the content, audience and continuity of the festivals are affected and vice versa. In other words, these dynamics are an inseparable whole in transnational Turkish film festivals. Although the dynamics of every transnational Turkish film festival vary, in all transnational Turkish film festivals, ongoing or not, there are roughly three basic approaches within the context of financial forms. Transnational Turkish film festivals, which receive funding and sponsorship from the official institutions of the Republic of Turkey or institutions/individuals that have relations with such institutions, have common grounds. In order to draw attention to the differences and the effects in funding and sponsorship relations, festivals that received support from different sources were selected for the interviews. However, although they often or occasionally receive financial support for their festivals from Turkey-related sources, all three interviewed festival directors believe that economic independence liberalizes the content and screening programs of the festivals. The films included in the screening programs of

the three festivals are similar to each other. However, the number of films, the awards, and the ratio of feature films to short films vary. The films shown at the festivals are mostly produced in Turkey or co-produced with Turkey. In addition, although the names of these festivals are "Turkish Film Festival" or "Turkish Film Days", it is seen that the festival committees do not have a nationalist perspective neither politically nor ideologically, and they prefer to screen films that represent almost all social and ethnic groups living in Turkey. All three festivals also differ in terms of audience and target audience; local people in Germany attend Turkish film festivals at a higher rate, but the participation of local people in Turkish film festivals in the United States is low and Turkish nationals or people of Turkish origin attend more. A continuity and longevity deficiency exists in the festivals funded and supported by only Turkey-related institutions and organizations. Festivals from all over the world, such as the Los Angeles Turkish Film Festival, Barcelona Turkish Film Festival, Rome Turkish Film Festival, where the supporters of Turkey bear the financial and administrative burden of the festival, have been organized for a short time and have not been able to provide continuity. The FTFF, which has supporters from both Germany and Turkey, but also receives support from independent organizations, does not fit these two economic approaches, it has been organized for a long time, remains independent in terms of content, and the number of its audience increases.

Contrary to festivals that have continuity and which can be described as independent, festivals with supporters related to Turkey are more apparent in the mainstream Turkish media. The STFF and the MTFD find appearances in the local media but are struggling to find a place in the mainstream media; therefore, the awareness and growth of the festivals are therefore slowing down. In addition, it is understood that the more organic, independently organized and financed festivals had a higher ability to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic and that these festivals are able to maintain their continuity under new conditions, whereas the festivals supported by official institutions of the Republic of Turkey have failed to maintain their continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic and transition to online platforms. This thesis aimed to draw a general framework to discuss the transnational dynamics of Turkish film festivals as well as to increase awareness and contribute to the literature on film festival studies and transnational cinema studies.

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## ETHICAL BOARD APPROVAL

SAYI : B.30.2.İEÜ.0.05.05-020-121

28.04.2021

KONU : Etik Kurul Kararı hk.

**Sayın Tuncer Mert Aydın,**

"Turkey, Transnationalism and Online Film Festivals" başlıklı projenizin etik uygunluğu konusundaki başvurunuz sonuçlanmıştır.

Etik Kurulumuz 19.04.2021 tarihinde sizin başvurunuzun da içinde bulunduğu bir gündemle toplanmış ve projenin incelenmesi için bir alt komisyon oluşturmuştur. Projenizin detayları alt komisyon üyelerine gönderilerek görüş istenmiştir. Üyelerden gelen raporlar doğrultusunda Etik Kurul 28.04.2021 tarihinde tekrar toplanmış ve raporları gözden geçirmiştir.

Sonuçta 28.04.2021 tarih ve 120 numaralı "Turkey, Transnationalism and Online Film Festivals" konulu projenizin etik açıdan uygun olduğuna oy birliği ile karar verilmiştir. Bununla birlikte çalışma için gerekli verilerin toplanma, saklanma, imha etme koşullarıyla ilgili veri ve örneklemin anonimleştirilmesi konusunda teminat verilmesi, mülakatçıların rızaları dahi olsa kimliklerinin saklanması ve anonimleştirilmesi konularının gözden geçirilmesi tavsiye edilmiştir.

Gereği için bilgilerinize sunarım.

Saygılarımla,

**Prof. Dr. Murat Bengisu**

**Etik Kurul Başkanı**