

The Political Economy of French Cinema

Attendance and Movie Theaters

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In France, cinema has a special status, manifest in a centrality that seems to persist, and also a kind of sacralization. In accordance with the tradition of the enthusiasts who have contributed to its elevation to the status of the seventh art, it is inseparable from its aura, from film criticism, from the simmering debates that it arouses, from the ceremonies that glorify it, and from the whole media set-up that ensures its promotion to a large audience. In most other countries, cinephilia has not exerted such a powerful influence, and, in most cases, cinema is viewed mainly as a mere entertainment. Such a divergence in assumptions is responsible for the lack of mutual comprehension that has arisen between the different parties involved in international debates concerning the “cultural exception,” with one party referring to an art and culture that is considered distinctive and specific, and the other invoking the rules of the World Trade Organization as needing to be applied to all goods.

Another domain in which France constitutes a unique point of reference comprises its institutional and regulatory arrangements for the support of cinematic activities. Often, however, these policies are reduced to the famous “*avance sur recettes*,” to the corresponding cultural and artistic ambitions, and to the promotion of a distinctive auteur cinema (*cinéma d’auteur*) since the 1960s.¹ Certainly, this system continues to encompass provisions that, beyond automatic grants based on past successes, have put in place selective advances determined according to quality criteria relating to the nature of the work, its inventiveness, its originality, and the degree to which it displays “auteurism,” but it is the set of arrangements in their totality that one needs to consider. They cover, in fact, both cinema and the audiovisual; they involve the organization of the relations between different stages in

the cinematic industry (production, distribution, and exploitation), and also between the closely related sectors comprising the professions that deal with the image and sound.²

Contrary to certain accounts arising from ignorance or malicious intent, policies governing cinema in France cannot be reduced merely to a rationale based on financial assistance. In contrast to the picture painted by those who would love to see the disappearance of the cultural exception, which continues to frustrate the accomplishment of a messianic vision of the “free market,” it is not simply a matter of a system of “protection” – in the habitually pejorative sense associated with this word – nor of a state-imposed system based on taxation. Instead, it is a system of regulation, the aim of which is to try and ensure that long-term collective interests, both sector-based and cross-sector, prevail. It does this by introducing qualitative factors for the sake of constraining the primacy of the short-term interests of economic agents who merely seek to maximize financial profits, particularly the most powerful among them. Another error that is current is the belief that this system pertains only to the national interests of a single country. The systems of support for cinema, just like the Cannes Festival, are French on account of their geographical location and their origin, but they are international in their mission, which is to defend and promote a particular conception of cinema that, by its very nature, does not have any frontiers.³

In many countries looking to develop a policy for supporting cinema, priority is given to the allocation of resources for film production, forgetting, or relegating to a secondary order of importance, the issues of distribution, exploitation, and audiences. Doing this might satisfy certain objectives arising from cultural politics, but in practice risks, above all else, increasing the contradictory tension between the growing abundance of films and the possibility that the majority of them will ever find an existence through encountering an audience. It is seldom acknowledged that one of the greatest virtues of French policy regarding cinema resides in the existence of a system of specified support and regulation involving all aspects of the industry – production, distribution, and exploitation – without forgetting the technical industries and those who are at the end point of the whole system: the audience. Attention is habitually focused on the production and financing of films, which is certainly an important subject, but the question of theaters is generally seldom addressed, even though they play a decisive role in the success of any policy relating to cinema.

France furnishes an exception in the world on account of its pool of theaters, the number of screens per person, a network that reflects an ambition to stimulate the cultural life of the country, an active commitment to promote a diversity of seats in order to make possible the existence of different kinds of films. Resulting, to a large extent, from a committed cinema policy that has been pursued for decades, this situation continues to be marked by a number of uncertainties. One relatively self-congratulatory attitude reflects the risk of supposing that

this situation has been securely acquired, whereas any deterioration could quickly call it into question, especially in the context of a European economic crisis that could potentially lead not only to a loss of purchasing power, but also to a withdrawal of national cultural policies and support from local collectivities. One needs, in particular, to be aware of the dangers resulting from an insidious erosion of the French system, a benchmark model, the health of which depends, to a large extent, on the diversity of its theaters, which is, in turn, a precondition for a lasting diversity of works and their distribution. Experience during the past few decades has shown how quickly dangers can arise when *laissez-faire* principles come to be privileged, from acquiescing to a retreat from the ambitions of France's cultural policy, and also from viewing public institutions as the sole representatives of collective interests. It is all the more necessary to reflect more deeply on these sensitive issues, given that there is no guarantee that conventional wisdom and existing practices will continue to be as effective as they have been in the past. The characteristics that define the cinematic sector, including its ambivalent combination of art and industry, make it constantly necessary to rethink the nature of the balance between the market and public policies, and to keep working towards the perfecting of the regulatory system in a context of very rapid change.

The aim of this chapter is to highlight the issues and perspectives relating to the French cinema industry by focusing discussion on the evolution of attendance at theaters, and on the structures (economic and industrial) of the exploitation sector. The investigation covers essentially the period from 1992 (the low point of attendance at cinemas) to 2012. This period constitutes 20 years characterized by the rebound of French cinema generally, a phenomenon that becomes apparent when one takes into consideration several key economic variables in the sector, as well as the volume of entries relative to investment, the number of films produced, and the renewal of the pool of theaters. In order to analyze such questions of political economy, and to be able to envisage their future, it will be necessary, however, to place them in a longer historical perspective, particularly as illustrated by a number of graphs.⁴

The factors that determined this resurgence need to be discussed, along with an assessment of fluctuations in the "desire for cinema," so often evoked, but so intangible, before one analyzes the part played by the renewal and modernization of the pool of theaters. Given that the analysis cannot rely merely on global figures, and risks being biased by a focus on a limited number of successes that might mask a very different underlying reality, it is also necessary to consider the evolution of a concentration of theater entries (i.e., ticket sales) on a limited number of films, and the extent to which diversity is involved: diversity in the type of theaters, and diversity in the kind of films shown. I will pay particular attention to issues relating to changes in the composition of the pool of theaters, and to challenges they have to meet in the face of intensified competition and rapidly evolving cultural practices.

Changing Patterns of Cinema Attendance

In France, the collapse of attendance at cinemas observed during the 1960s has often been explained by the growing power of television, and the ongoing decline in the 1980s brought about by the proliferating modes through which the audience could gain access to cinema films: an increase in the number of television channels, the development of video, and so on. Discourses at the time were particularly alarmist, and explanations merely partial, but the evolution of cultural practices should be seen as the result of a systemic logic relating to patterns of consumption and lifestyles, rather than as a simple matter of cause and effect. Nevertheless, between 1992 and 2012, despite the proliferation of screens of various types, in France the number of entries into cinema theaters showed a strong rise. Television and video have certainly benefited from a growing audience, but not at the expense of devaluing or marginalizing the collective experience that is involved in watching a cinematic spectacle in a theater. This rebound of attendance has not, however, benefited all types of theater equally. Likewise, in the different countries of Europe, the situations are very different: during the same period, the Italian market collapsed, the German market stagnated, and the Spanish market underwent a new phase of decline, after a short period of recovery. A study of these different situations allows one to understand better the determinants that affect attendance,

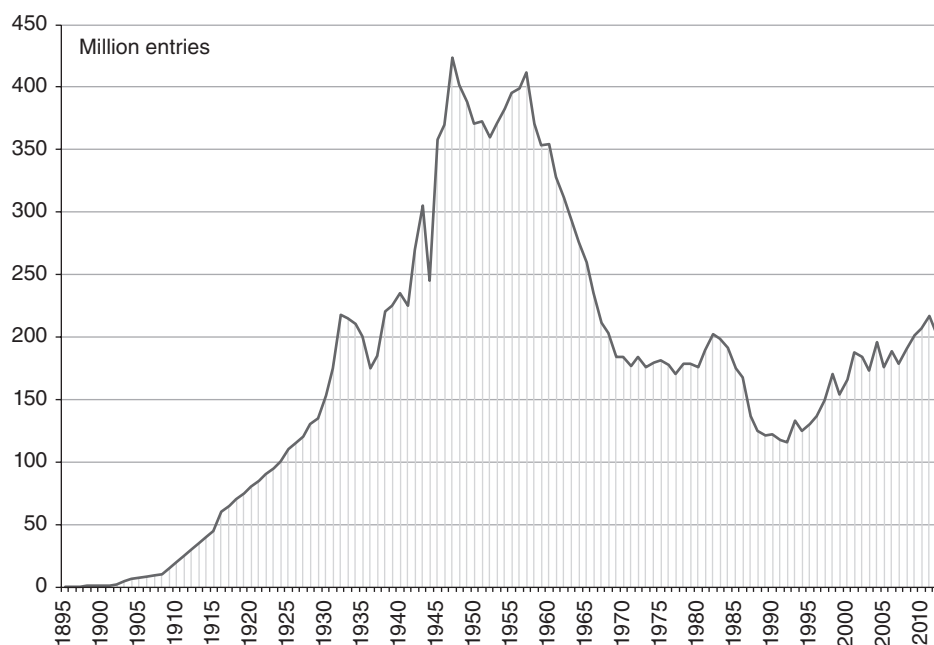


Figure 1.1 Cinema attendance in France, 1896–2012. Statistics from the CNC.

to grasp the importance of the quality of a pool of theaters, of the strategies of distributors, and of the effects of a cultural policy.

French cinema attendance exceeded 400 million entries in the years following 1945. After the high point in 1957 of nearly 412 million, a vertiginous fall reduced the entries to 184 million in 1969, amounting to an enormous drop of 55%, which was profoundly destabilizing for the whole industry. This very severe drop was followed by stagnation during the 1970s, with an average of around 180 million entries, before plunging to the low point of 116 million in 1992. At this time, ritual pronouncements on the impending “death of cinema” seemed about to be confirmed.

In the 1950s and 1960s, most of the theaters were aging, and their owners were rarely inclined to renovate them; their means for doing so were all the more reduced to the extent that the number of entries had declined. This fall was accompanied by an adaptive change in the nature of the pool, with “*salles de quartier*” (local cinemas in the quarter), which used to provide cinema offerings accessible in terms of proximity and price, tending to disappear in favor of “*quartiers de salles*” (quarters with clusters of cinemas). The creation of complexes with a number of theaters, while it enlarged the offering of films, nevertheless did so to the detriment of the size of theaters and screens. Concomitantly, management was streamlined to achieve economies, so that the same team of salaried employees could service a greater number of screens. There was another disturbing phenomenon: confronted by a drop in the number of entries, owners tended to raise the price, which was undoubtedly not the best way of inducing spectators to come back.

Since the low point of 1992, despite the multiplication of screens and the diversification of the modes of access to moving images with sound, French attendance has experienced a spectacular recovery, attaining 170 million in 1998, exceeding 200 million in 2009, to achieve 217 million entries in 2011, a level that had not been attained for 45 years. Notwithstanding a context of increasingly competition, cinematic attendance in France has risen by 87% since its low point in 1992. With 203 million tickets sold in 2012, the drop of 6% in relation to the preceding year reminds us of the chronic instability suffered by the economy of the sector and its dependence on several box office successes.⁵ Coming as it does after four consecutive years of increase, and an exceptionally high level of attendance in cinematic theaters in 2011, this drop is not enough to make one conclude that a reversal of the long-term trend is indicated, but the eventual outcome can only be a matter of conjecture.

Within the European Union, where the overall statistics for cinema attendance have been relatively stable for ten years with an index of attendance at around 1.9, the situation is very different.⁶ Between 1980 and 2012, patterns of evolution vary, with France having experienced a strong increase in its index of attendance, which moved from 2 to 3.3 in 2012.

With an average of 5.4 per person per year from 2003 to 2012, the average number of entries of the cinematic population in France is one of the highest in

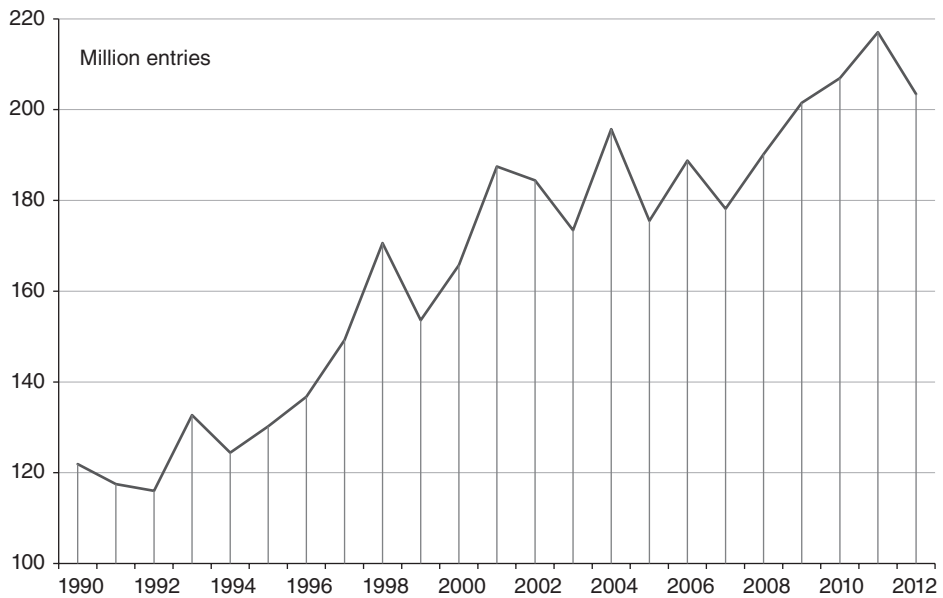


Figure 1.2 Cinema attendance in France, 1990–2012. Statistics from the CNC.

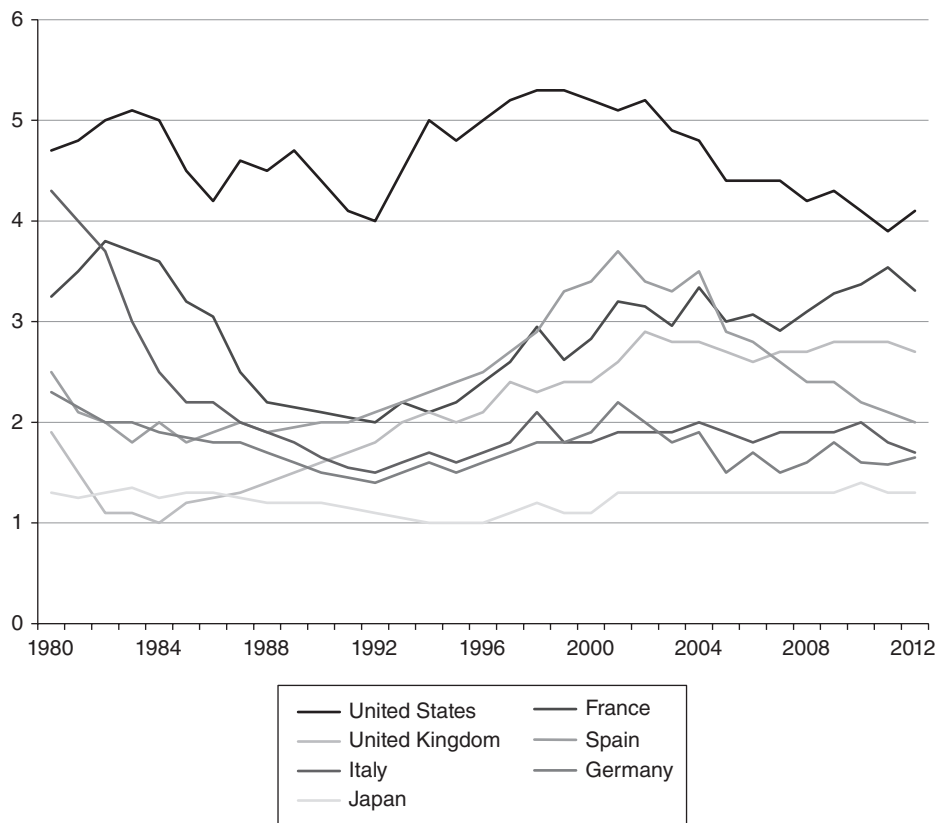


Figure 1.3 Indices of attendance for several industrial countries, 1980–2012. Statistics from the CNC.

Europe.⁷ In 2011, 68.8% of French people aged six years or over went at least once to a cinematic theater, representing a progressive growth since the beginning of the 2000s when it was between 59% and 60%.⁸ In a regular lowering, the category of habitual attendees (*habitués*)⁹ represented 32.3% of the audience and 71.1% of entries in 2012; symmetrically, occasional viewers (*occasionnels*) represented 67.7% of the audience and constituted 28.9% of the entries. Increasingly, this latter group is having a major impact on fluctuations in attendance, given that, in the case of a number of films that achieve very large successes, it is their attendance that contributes greatly to the success of the film. There is another serious trend: since 2006, those over 35 years old represent more than half of the cinematic population and entries (54.6% in 2012, generating 50.3% of entries). In particular, the proportion of those over 50 years of age continues to increase, to the point where, since 2011, it exceeds the number of viewers of less than 25 years old, both in terms of the number of spectators and the number of entries.¹⁰ The growing interest of this age group (of those 50 years and older) in cinematic spectacle viewed in theaters is an asset on which exploitation can rely, especially given changing socio-demographic patterns in Europe. A question remains concerning the level of interest that will be maintained over the longer term by the new generations, particularly as regards films that do not conform to the blockbuster model.

Cinematic Production and Its Outcomes

The resurgence of attendance has been accompanied by a still stronger increase in the number of films produced, and in corresponding levels of investment. Since the trough of 1994, with 115 films approved, French cinematic production has experienced a strong growth, rising to 200 films at the beginning of the 2000s, 240 in 2005, and 279 in 2012.¹¹ Between 1994 and 2002, investments in French cinematic production doubled to reach a level of between 850 and 900 million euros; since 2003, they have crossed the bar of one billion euros to exceed 1.4 billion in 2010, with foreign investments representing around 25% of the total.¹² For more than 20 years, investment in production has shown a growth trend of such magnitude that one cannot explain the difficulties of French cinema – real or imagined – by a lack of financial resources. On the contrary, it is the risk of overheating that one needs to watch out for, along with the perverse effects that result from it.¹³ With 615 new films in general release in 2012, when the top 20 titles at the box office accounted for more than 40% of the entries, a growing tension became apparent between the abundance of offerings and the limited possibility that spectators can apprehend them all.¹⁴

First films represent an increased proportion of the national production. Their number has doubled between the 1980s and the beginning of the 2000s, rising to

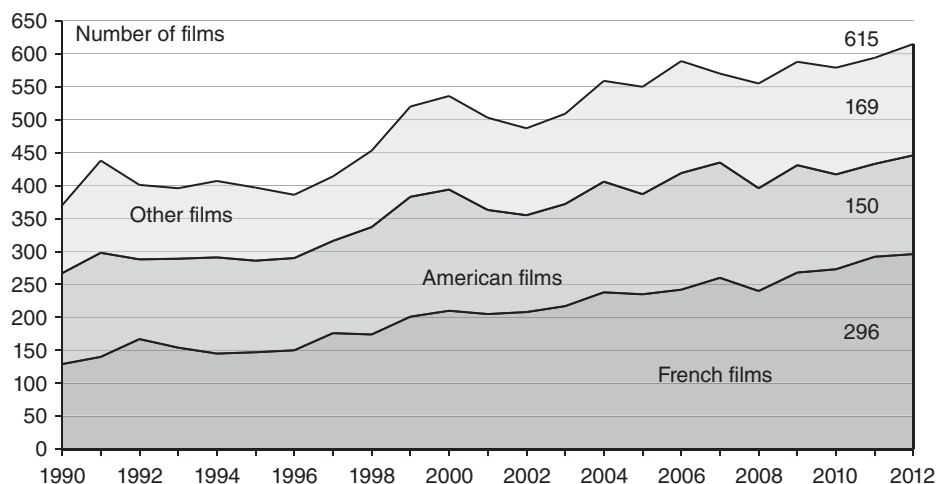


Figure 1.4 The number of films receiving general release in France, 1990–2012. Statistics from the CNC.

about 60, before setting new record highs: 69 first films in 2005, and 77 in 2012 (around 36.8% of films of French initiative); second films numbered 36 (17.2% of films of French initiative). In total, first and second films represent more than half of the production of films of French initiative (54% in 2012): a good level if one considers the potential for renewal that this figure suggests, but one that gives cause for concern when one thinks of the small numbers of filmmakers who get beyond this stage.

In terms of prospects, cinematic production has benefited during the course of the past few decades from a strong expansion of its markets and sources of finance, due mainly to television, and secondarily to video and the new media, which explains the structural ambivalence of its relation to the polarities that have recently become entrenched in the media landscape. Even though cinematic films have seen their audience drop for the past 15 years, and no longer enjoy the place they used to occupy in the programming schedules of the general networks, this reorientation has not changed the dominant trend: cinema has never experienced such widespread distribution as it has during our time, if one considers the whole range of supports for its distribution and promotion. This success in terms of general outcomes, however, does not remove the ongoing issue of the status of cinema, nor that concerning theaters, in the context of a multimedia world that is becoming more and more competitive. Even though release in theaters continues to provide the foundation for the cinematic identity of a film, as it did in the past, today it tends to play an even more essential promotional role when compared with the level of endorsement provided by other formats (television, video, and now mobile telephones, tablets, video on demand, downloading, and streaming via the Internet).

A structural given of the past three decades has been the strong development of audiovisual practices which, while they might coexist with the screening of cinema in theaters, without entirely displacing it, nevertheless, when all is said and done, are resulting in a growing dissociation between film and the cinematic theater. The economy of the cinematic industry has been turned upside down, with its growing dependency on television and video, which have become dominant in terms of turnover and financing. In spite of the strong rebound in cinematic attendance that has taken place since 1992, cinema in theaters accounts for only a modest proportion of audiovisual practices taken as a whole. This disproportion in the allocation of time is reflected in the structure of French household spending on audiovisual programs which, as a whole, has strongly increased, moving from two billion euros in 1985 to eight billion in 2012. Since then, the rate of growth, sustained until 2004, has undergone a more measured rhythm of development, particularly on account of the significant drop in the market for DVDs, for which the emerging market for VOD has not yet been able to compensate. In the middle of the twentieth century, cinema represented the totality of expenses; in 1980, cinema represented no more than one half, the other half being devoted to the public television license fee. In the 2000s, this proportion has markedly declined, ranging between 14% and 17%, a level resulting partly from the way cinema attendance has evolved, but mainly from the growth of household expenditure on video, and, to an even greater extent, on subscriptions to pay channels, which represent more than 40% of household expenditure on audiovisual programs.¹⁵

The Competitiveness of French Cinema and Market Share

In most markets, the domination of American films tends to chase national productions off the big screen, or at least to leave them only a small share of it, even though a revival is apparent, especially during the past decade, in a certain number of countries. The cultural and linguistic dominance that American cinema has been able to impose over a long period in most countries of the world, and the favorable reception that markets accord it, attest to its success and contribute to its perpetuation. Owing to first-rate financial, technological, and commercial resources, and a particular kind of professionalism, Hollywood invests in a spectacular productivity that extends its profitability beyond the domain of cinema in a strict sense into all the activities that create value from movie-making.

The market share of American cinema in Europe at the beginning of the 2000s varied from 46% to 92% according to the country concerned, with an average of 73%, while the share of European cinema in the United States always remained well below 5%, with this figure being inclusive of certain films that would have difficulty in concealing their explicitly Hollywood-style character.¹⁶ In this context, French cinema constitutes an exception because of the position it has succeeded

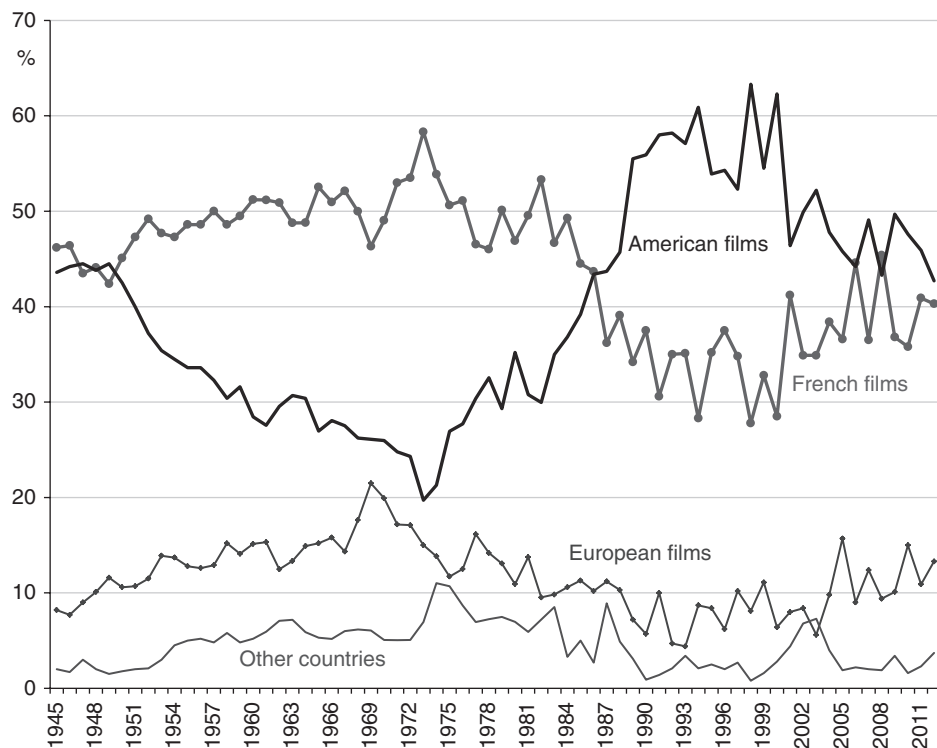


Figure 1.5 Market shares in France according to the nationality of films, 1945–2012. Statistics from the CNC.

in preserving; besides, it would be wrong to assume that American cinema has been dominant in all periods.

When one examines the market share of French films in France over a long period, one major element to consider is its maintenance at around 50% between 1945 and 1982 (an average of 49.2% during this period of 38 years). Between 1945 and 1949, French cinema and American cinema were roughly level-pegging.¹⁷ Starting from 46.2% in 1945, the market share of French cinema declined to its low point of 42.4% in 1949, then it redressed itself by degrees, while American cinema entered into a long phase of decline that led it to only 19.2% of market share in 1973, in complete contradiction to current ideas that assume it was always hegemonic. The market share of American cinema fell sharply and regularly for 24 years, leaving French cinema in a preeminent position that was regularly reinforced (just like European films until 1969). French cinema achieved 49.2% of market share in 1952 and then hovered around 50% until 1970, before a phase of four years of marked increase until its high point in 1973 at 58.3%. This peak of French cinema in its own market corresponds exactly to the accentuated fall of cinema from the other side of the Atlantic, which is linked to the long trend of decline suffered by

European films beginning after their high point in 1969 (they lost almost half their market share in a mere six years).¹⁸

An examination of market shares during this period makes it apparent that the domination of American cinema is both a reality and a myth – a contingent reality (in certain countries and during certain periods, it has been largely dominated by the cinema of the country under consideration),¹⁹ and a myth that has endured over a long span of time, independently of measurable realities. Its supremacy came into force, however, with the uninterrupted strengthening of its position over the course of 25 years, between 1973 and 1998. Conversely, from the mid-1980s, the French market share dropped regularly, falling under that of American cinema after 1986, and dropping to 27.8% in 1998, while its competitor exceeded 63%. This was the year when the film *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997) was released, which attracted 21.7 million entries in France. Despite this reversal, French cinema constitutes an exception in the Western world on account of the resistance it mounts to the domination of Hollywood (often considered irresistible), owing to the French regulatory system, which has become a benchmark for all countries aspiring to set up a viable alternative.

Since then, French cinema has recovered. Its market share has bounced back with an average of 39% between 2001 and 2012, while American cinema has dropped to an average of 47%, which nevertheless allows it to remain in first place (excluding two exceptional years, 2006 and 2008). This fall is explained in part by Hollywood's disappointments, involving a large number of blockbusters that have failed to achieve their commercial objectives by a long margin (even though animated films, together with sequels, have maintained their place at the top of the box office). It is also explained by the regains made by French cinema, which bases its competitiveness on a fairly diversified production – notwithstanding the fact that genre films are not strongly represented in it (action, police, fantasy, children's films, etc.)²⁰ – and, above all, on the commercial success of films springing from the long tradition of comedy in France:²¹ *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis* (2008; 20.4 million entries), *Intouchables* (2011; 19.4 million), *Rien à déclarer* (2011; 8.1 million), and titles that have given rise to sequels, such as *Les Bronzés 3: Amis pour la vie* (2006; 10.2 million), *La Vérité si je mens 2* (2001; 7.4 million), *Camping* (2006, 5.5 million), while numerous *Astérix et Obélix* films have arisen from that franchise.²²

In terms of the number of entries, French cinema exceeded an average of 135 million in the 1960s, 90 million in the 1970s, 75 million in the following decade, to fall to an average of around 45 million in the 1990s. In contrast, American cinema displayed strength by maintaining between 60 and 80 million entries, then by moving from 1998 to a higher threshold consisting of between 80 and 110 million. But French cinema has strongly grown in the course of the 2000s, achieving 89 million entries in 2011. From 1992 to 2000, entries to French films in France were stagnant at an average annual level of 46 million, but from 2001 to 2012 they

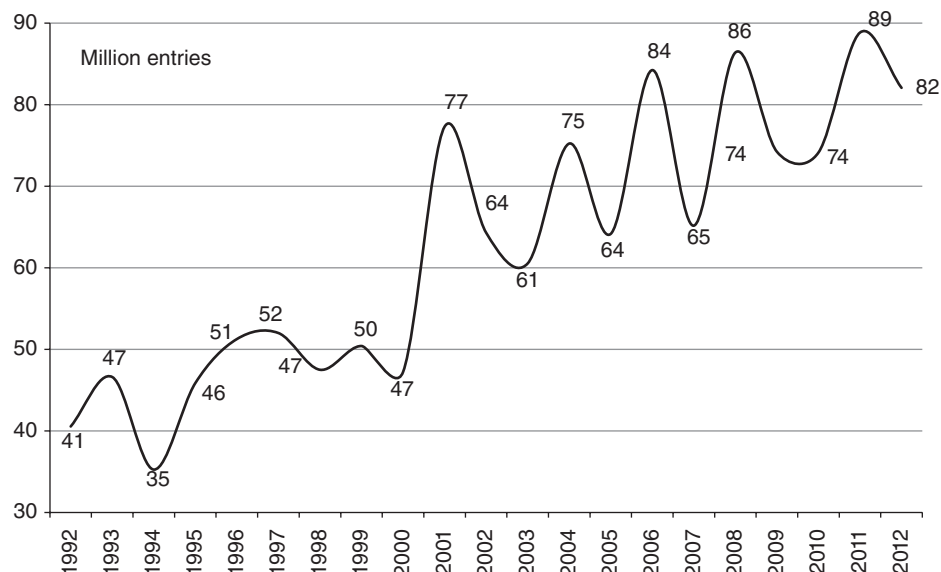


Figure 1.6 Entries to French films in France, 1992–2012. Statistics from the CNC.

were characterized by a growth trend that carried them to an average of 81 million between 2008 and 2012.²³

Analyses focusing on the national market are obviously crucial, but the question of the presence of French films overseas is rarely raised, and is often ignored altogether. We know that a fairly large number of French films are selected for the big festivals, obtain distinctions, are seen in universities, film archives, and art-house cinemas throughout the whole world, but one can also assume that the price to pay for this cinephilic aura is their absence from international markets. It seems that the asymmetry between France and the United States in this area is such that one might end up concluding that French cinema does not export well, or at least that international prospects are only of secondary importance to it. The increase of entries to French films overseas since the end of the 1990s, however, confirms that this assumption is erroneous.

In the 1980s, international receipts for French cinema remained stagnant, with fewer than 40 million tickets sold each year, but strong growth has occurred since the end of the 1990s: the recovery of 1997 can be explained by *The Fifth Element* (33 million entries internationally, of which 14 million were in the United States), which in that year represented by itself more than half of the amount of exports of French cinema, just like *Jeanne d'Arc*, another film by Luc Besson, also shot in the English language, which was responsible for the corresponding peak of 1999. International receipts for French cinema are very dependent on several films that succeed in finding a place in the world market. Even though cycles play a large part, the long-term trend is very marked.²⁴

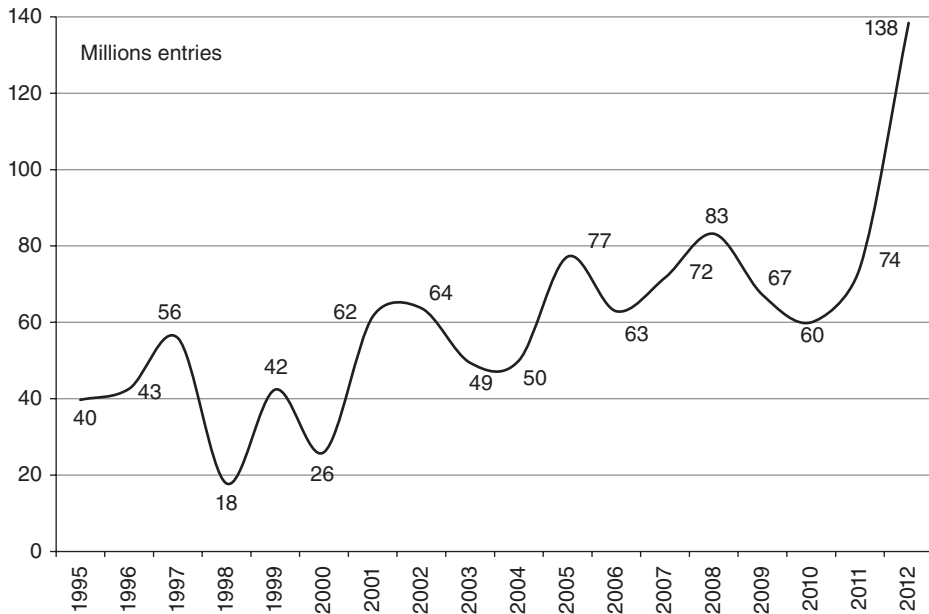


Figure 1.7 Entries to French films overseas, 1995–2012. Statistics from Unifrance.

While French films have found their main market in France (between 69 and 89 million entries per year between 2003 and 2012), it would be a mistake to underestimate the entries achieved overseas, which are growing, representing, on average, 66 million per year between 1995 and 2011 (as against 44 million entries between 1995 and 2002). With 138 million entries, of which 66 million are for films in the French language, the year 2012 was exceptional, such a result being explained chiefly by the great international success of several films: *Intouchables*, which, with 30 million entries, is the biggest international success for any film in the French language, *The Artist*, with its five Oscars, which achieved 12 million entries overseas, and an English-language film produced by Luc Besson, *Taken 2*, which exceeded 47 million entries, constituting the greatest success for a French production outside France. Another factor promoting entries overseas is the fact that the number of French films programmed there has regularly increased (537 titles in 2012 as against 431 in 2010). In contrast, a marked trend is emerging of increasing constraints on the access of French films to the major circuits, particularly because of the growth of the world pool of theaters involving multiplexes.²⁵

Among the French films that have been most successful overseas, in first place are films in the English language; films that do not correspond to the usual conception of a French film, but which are so listed in terms of production criteria, financing, and technical teams. These films are for the most part produced by

Luc Besson, whose strategy, using the EuropaCorp company, is based on a refusal to allow Hollywood to monopolize genre films, which are generally absent from French cinema. We should note that *The Fifth Element* / *Le Cinquième Élément* (Luc Besson, 1997), shot in the United Kingdom with Bruce Willis in the main role, was promoted as having a “French touch” supposed to bring with it an element of differentiation that would appeal to the audience. With *Taken 2*, in contrast, the aim was to disguise the fact that the film was French. Indeed, audiences have regarded it as a Hollywood film, and that seems to have contributed to its success. Another type of film has succeeded in attracting a large audience overseas: animal films (*Le Peuple migrateur* / *Winged Migration* in 2001, and especially *La Marche de l’Empereur* / *March of the Penguins* in 2005).

French films that have been most successful in international markets seem to be those that have succeeded in erasing their origin. One should not lose sight, however, of the fact that a large number of them are appreciated overseas precisely because they are typically French. French-language films that succeed in reaching a very large international audience even correspond, for the most part, to clichéd depictions that are made in France and Paris, for example, *Le Fabuleux Destin d’Amélie Poulain* / *Amélie*, made by Jean-Pierre Jeunet which, with 22 million international entries in 2001 and 2002, has fared exceptionally well. More generally, an examination of the list of films that have attracted the largest audiences reveals a fairly large diversity in the genres represented: *Astérix et Obélix: Mission Cléopâtre*, *8 femmes* / *8 Women*, *Le Peuple migrateur*, *Les Choristes* / *The Chorus*, *Taxi*, *Arthur et les Minimoys* / *Arthur and the Invisibles*, *La Môme* / *La Vie en Rose*, for example. In any case, if one considers the totality of entries into French films, both in France and overseas, one can observe a regular trend of growth that has caused them to double over 20 years.²⁶

Concentration and Diversity

In terms of the cinematic diversity present on screens, France probably has an offering that is unequaled in the world, judging by the number of films as well as the extent of the palette from which one can choose. It is necessary, however, to distinguish the diversity offered from the diversity that is effective, paying attention, adopting the framework proposed by Andy Stirling, to the three dimensions that compose it: *variety*, corresponding to the total number of different products, *disparity*, representing the nature and degree of differentiation between them, and the *balance* displayed in the distribution of consumption between the different offerings.²⁷ The share of the 20 top films at the box office in terms of cinematic attendance provides a pertinent indicator as to the degree of concentration. An examination of this share over the period from 1945 to

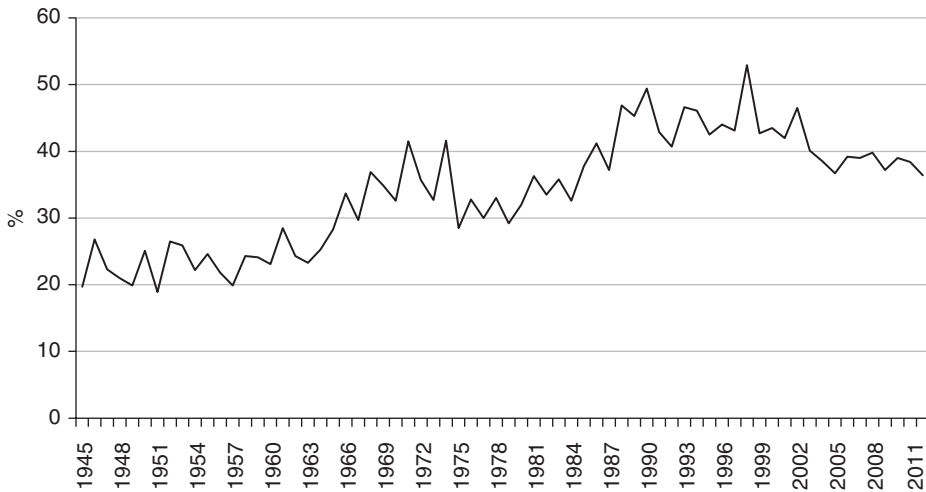


Figure 1.8 Share of the top 20 films at the box office in terms of cinematic attendance in France, 1945–2012. Statistics from the CNC.

2012 reveals a trend of growth and concentration of entries that is relatively surprising, at least with regard to the context in which policies have developed in favor of diversity, and in which the level of education of the population has appreciably progressed.

During the period 1945–1965, the 20 top films comprised between 20% and 30% of entries. In the years between 1965 and 1985, one sees a greater level of concentration, between 30% and 40%. Then the level establishes itself between 40% and 50%, the high point of 52.9% in 1998 having been achieved because of the immense success of the film *Titanic*. Since 1998, one notes instead a counter-tendency which, lasting over a decade, may be significant, but does not call into question the main proposition concerning the increase in the level of concentration over a long period.²⁸ To try and understand this phenomenon, it might be interesting to pay attention to the correspondence that could exist with the concentration of means in the cinematic industry on several big-budget films, in accordance with the configurations of the Hollywood-style blockbuster. By placing the level of concentration of the top 20 films at the box office and the American market share in France in the same graph (Figure 1.9), one does not see any correlation between 1945 and 1975 (which does not, however, allow us to conclude that Hollywood films did not participate in the logic of concentration, including during this period). But from the mid-1970s, concentration and the market share of American cinema both show strong growth, and one observes a high degree of correlation that is confirmed by what follows: they progress together to the highpoint of 1998, then they decline together.

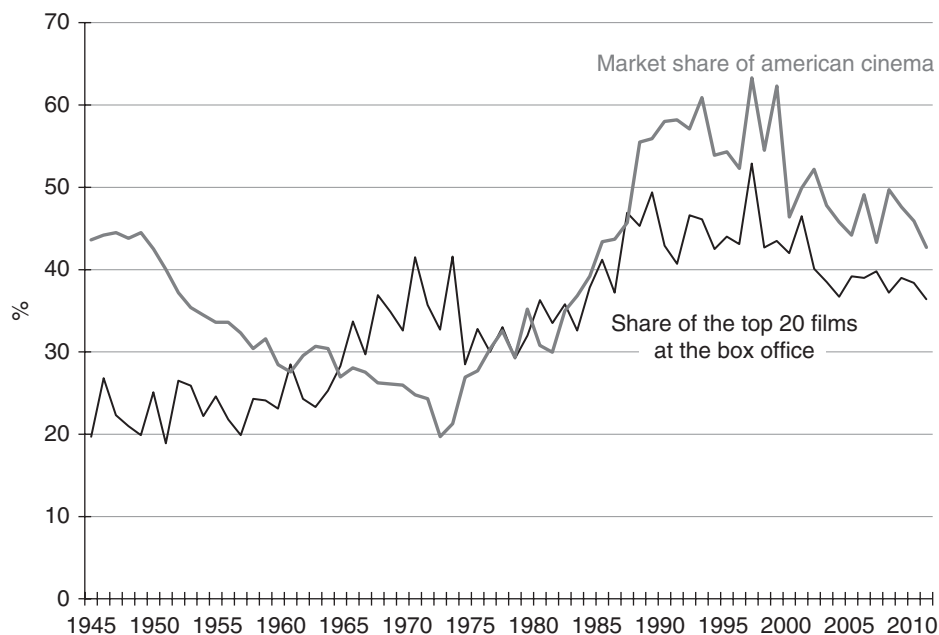


Figure 1.9 Concentration and market share of American cinema in France, 1945–2012. Statistics from the CNC.

The Transformation of the Pool of Theaters

Inevitably, exploitation is highly dependent on the level of attendance, and the severe drop-off during the 1960s was bound to affect it. Many establishments closed, local theaters in the local quarter (*salles de quartier*) disappeared in favor of quarters where theaters were concentrated (*quartiers de salles*), and a new generation of multiplexes saw the light of day. In spite of this restructuring, the number of seats continued to diminish in the 1980s, and it would take until the year 1993 before a turn-around in this trend became apparent. Since the beginning of the 1990s, French cinematic exploitation has undergone a profound modernization, attempting to respond to the challenge provided by the extension of audiovisual practices by reaffirming a strong identity, and by qualitative improvements to sound, the image, and general comfort, as well as services offered to spectators. The number of screens has grown to 5,502 in 2012, with 1,069,000 seats.²⁹

In the context of this general movement towards modernization of cinematic exploitation, a new type of facility has emerged, the multiplex, which has taken into account changing life patterns and the redeployment of customer catchment areas when deciding where to set up its establishments, especially by applying

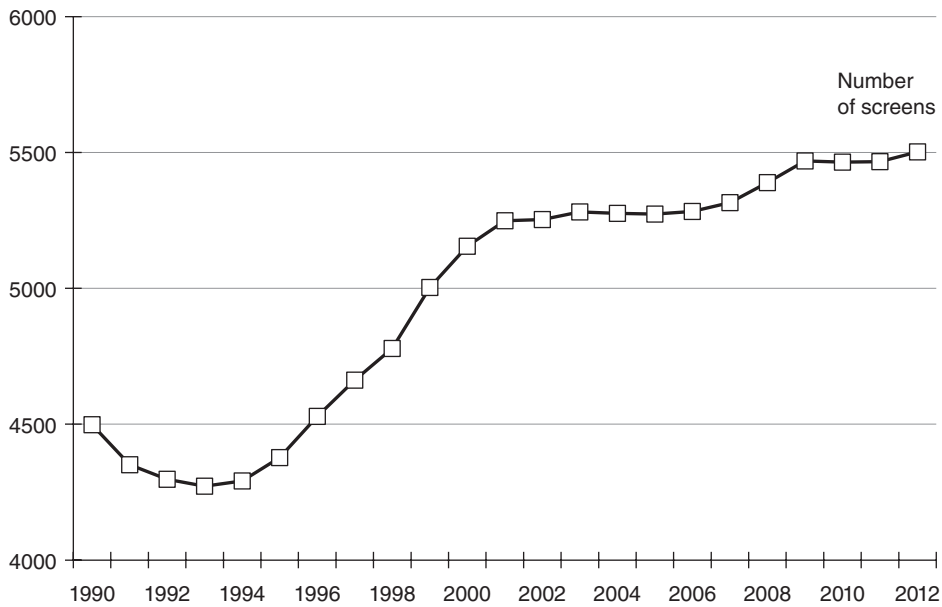


Figure 1.10 The evolution of the pool of theaters in France, 1990–2012. Statistics from the CNC.

tools of geo-marketing. Pathé inaugurated the first multiplex in the French pool in 1993, near Toulon; by 2012, such complexes had increased in number to 181. Being inspired by a concept that had already been implemented in other European countries and the United States, this model has become dominant, with 2,082 screens (representing nearly 38% of the pool), and nearly 60% of the entries in 2012, while other theaters have been obliged to take into account this major phenomenon in order to redefine the way they position themselves.³⁰ After a phase marked by the installation of new facilities in outer suburban areas, since the beginning of the 2000s openings of multiplexes in or near town centers have multiplied, providing new poles of attraction for new malls placed back in the heart of the urban world.

The renovation of the pool of theaters has been a decisive factor in the recovery of attendance that can be observed in many countries during the past two decades. In most of them, multiplexes almost occupy the whole space, leaving practically no place for alternative types of theater. In France, even though the effects of concentration remain a threat to the plurality of the different types of establishment, a relatively diversified pool has been able to be maintained. Owing to their combative strategies, and the strength of their presence throughout the nation, the large theater chains (the major ones being Gaumont, Pathé, and UGC), have succeeded in preventing the implantation of the transnational operators that dominate the world market; their expansion, however, poses a recurring problem

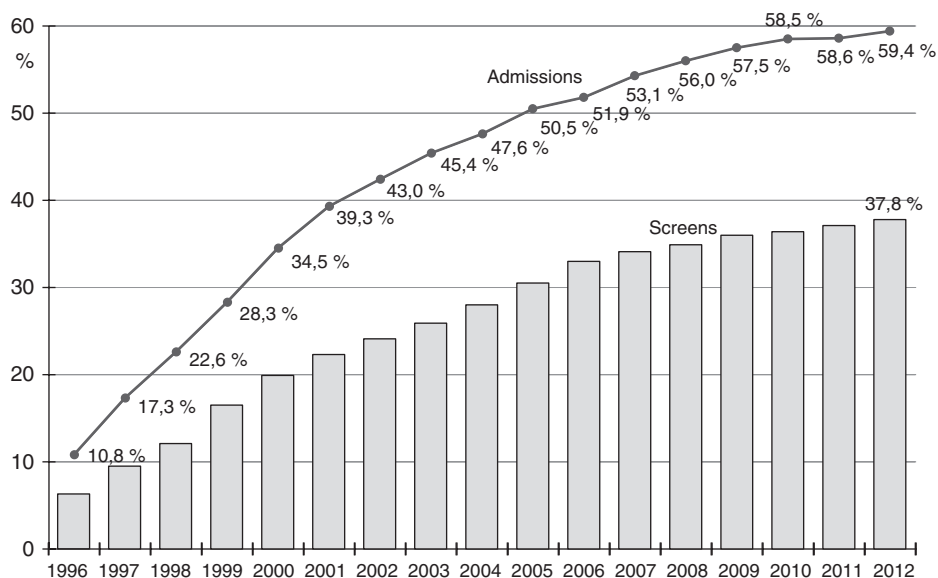


Figure 1.11 The proportion of multiplexes in French cinemas, 1996–2012. Statistics from the CNC.

concerning the regulation of cinematic exploitation in its totality, the issue being that their success should not entail a danger for independent theaters that have already been weakened by the transition to digital projection.

In December 2009, the immense success of *Avatar*, both as a film and as an international marketing phenomenon, contributed significantly to a quick acceleration of the equipping of theaters with digital technology. The super-production made by James Cameron has, in fact, led most establishments to accept the desirability of being capable of programming films in 3D. In France, the share of digital media in the total number of film copies was 10% in the first quarter of 2010; it exceeded 97% at the end of 2012, with 92% of screens being equipped. In three years, the pool of theaters has almost completely accomplished a transition to digital, an extremely rapid movement that has not been without tensions, but which, when all is said and done, has not led to a reduction in the number of screens that certain people were justifiably fearing. The support provided by the CNC and by local authorities has been decisive in bringing about such a good result. The end of the phase of installing digital projectors, however, brings with it the question of the rate of obsolescence of the equipment; after 2K, certain theaters have already equipped themselves with 4K, while others are preparing themselves for it, adding to the overall cost of investment and annual depreciation that needs to be provided for.

The transition to digital has been preceded and accompanied by a wave of promotional rhetoric in which technological innovation is presented as a means of

efficiency, of streamlining costs, of achieving freedom and diversity. The challenges linked to the financing of this replacement of technology and facilities are not minor, given that it does not entail any apparent advantage to the spectator (except in the ultimately rather narrow case of projections in 3D), nor any increase in attendance. Moreover, the fact that the economies achieved over photographic copies and their transportation constitute the main part of the resources that are freed up then poses the question of how they are to be shared out between the different parties involved (distributors, third-party investors, servicing companies, movie theaters). The financial equation remains very tight, placing the theaters in a situation of greater vulnerability in the face of an eventual decline in attendance, and the probability that national and local public authorities will disengage from providing assistance and subventions for theaters. The idea that the transition to digital is a happy event must at least be nuanced, given that further concentration and a threat to a certain number of theaters with small and medium-sized operations has been confirmed in many countries.

The myth that digital enables easier access to films, which has contributed to arguments in its favor, has also been exploded. While it is fashionable to present digital cinema as providing a promise of accessibility and greater diversity, it appears that this technological potential remains subordinate to the economic model of distribution, and to the preexisting structures of the market: the concentration of attendance around a small number of best-sellers has been confirmed, even reinforced, with films at the top of the box office being able to benefit from a still larger number of visits, while a section of the pool of theaters is confronted by an organized scarcity of supply. In addition, contrary to arguments arising from the propaganda that has accompanied the promotion of 3D, the latter has by no means led to a long-term growth in attendance, with the deceptive character of many of these "three-dimensional films,"³¹ with special glasses and higher ticket prices, having rapidly cooled the enthusiasm of those who had been convinced that 3D would constitute the future of cinema.³²

The Future of Cinematic Theaters

The cinema theater certainly no longer enjoys, and has not done for a long time, a monopoly on the diffusion of moving images with sound. It has to confront a proliferating multitude of different types of screens and screening contexts. Among many types of screen, media, and modes of access to films, the theater is no more than one of them, certainly the first in the chronology of media, contributing greatly to the conferring of symbolic value on cinematic films. However, theatrical cinema is subject to the risks of instability in the level of attendance, access to films through downloading, and the fact that the changing chronological rhythms of the various film media are of a nature that lessens an attraction that was partly

based on exclusivity. The increased availability of other entertainment activities such as video games, social networking, and the use of the Internet, also constitutes a threat.

Today, one can certainly see “cinema films” everywhere – on televisions, on computers, on the screens of a tablet or a mobile telephone, at home or while one is in motion – but one is not “at the cinema.” These new experiences do not take place in a cinematic *dispositif* in the proper and usual sense of the word, which, although it presents variants in terms of different periods and countries, has nevertheless remained essentially stable. In spite of contemporary transformations, cinema remains marked by the unique power of taking place in an elsewhere, with an invitation offered to the spectator to adopt another type of gaze. Beyond the typical technical attributes relating to the image, sound, and comfort, a theater is characterized by the ritual of the screening session as an interlude in time and space, within which receptiveness is a given, a special kind of attention being devoted to the film. Cinema in a theater involves a different kind of attention, a different kind of intention, both for the creators and the spectators. There is a different relationship to time. In the expanding audiovisual jumble, what one usually calls “cinema” is distinguished by the concern of the gaze and the temporality, the collective character of the projection in the context of a session that also shares components of a *dispositif* that corresponds to cultural practices.

If the overall situation is taken into consideration, the future of cinematic theaters would seem to depend on the uncertainty resulting from a double set of determinations. On the one hand, the deleterious effects of the profusion and banalization of moving images with sound that are found everywhere, generally without having to satisfy any payment, linked to the intensified, renewed competition of numerous proposed cultural activities, entertainments, and leisure activities. On the other hand, despite the availability, in terms of the increasing number and diversity, of screens and modes of access to films (and to all kinds of programs), there is the vitality that preserves the very old tradition of the arts of spectacle, the collective nature of the projection, the quality of attention, and the maintenance of a distinct temporality, allowing films to base themselves on a marked difference that possibly invests them with a lasting comparative advantage.

Given that in many sub-Saharan African countries cinema theaters have almost disappeared, and attendance in many European countries is once more at half-mast, a question arises as to the reasons for this French exception. Policies concerning cinema and the redistribution of resources at the core of the cinematic industry and between the interconnected sectors have played a decisive role in the renovation and modernization of the pool of theaters, which encompasses not only the creation of multiplexes and new theaters, but also the maintenance of a variety of theaters distributed through the national space within the context of a policy of cultural management of the territory. The recovery of theaters in the

face of the growth of tele-audiovisual practices, a guarantee of a plurality of forms of exploitation and a diversity in programming, are major imperatives that are determining the future of cinema in France, and also, as a consequence, the quality of production.

As far as the balance between the logic of the market and regulation of cinema is concerned, the issue of concentration appears to be a touchstone. In France, diversity is one of the main objectives of cultural policy. However, in spite of declared intentions and proactive initiatives, concentration, even though definitely less than in other countries, remains significant, and even tends to be growing stronger. To allow free-market forces to reign without a sufficient degree of regulation leads almost inevitably to the overwhelming and marginalization of the most vulnerable films and actors in the context of very aggressive economic competition.³³

Art-house theaters share the ambition to protect and promote pluralism in distribution, as with creation. Faced with the accelerated rotation of films on the screen,³⁴ they confront it by aiming to give them sufficient time to exist. They show the importance and usefulness of a work in depth and over a longer time.³⁵ The question of knowing what role art-house theaters might yet have to play in surmounting the multiplicity of contemporary constraints and challenges nevertheless remains an open one. The situation of independent theaters in Paris is a particular matter of concern. Theaters such as Les 7 Parnassiens, Le Nouveau Latina, and Le Saint-André des Arts have been revealing new *auteurs* to young and not so young cinephiles for decades, but their role in this matter is being threatened by a movement towards concentration that is reducing the market share of the independents to an alarming extent.³⁶ None of them seem to be delighted to see that multiplexes in the inner city are programming art-house films, but this is occurring as a form of direct competition with the independent theaters that is intensifying, mainly around films that are currently being called "*films d'Art et Essai porteurs*" (art-house films with the capacity to attract a larger audience). These multiplexes offer a varied program that is calibrated to the market in a capital that is also a big university city. Such a varied program also suits the formula of the *carte illimitée* (a season ticket allowing an unlimited number of entries), which requires that the offering of films be fairly broad, even if it means that the more fragile films are only programmed for a single week.

A questioning of the length of time of windows of exploitation in the chronology of the different film media is also a big preoccupation, with each stage lobbying to have "fresher" products, ever fresher, ever more quickly. One of the effects of any deregulation, whether brutally imposed or progressively introduced, would be that the spectators could find themselves even more lost in what would seem for some to involve an ideal freedom, but corresponds in reality to a whirlwind in which a principle of proliferation is joined with a devaluing of films that are regarded as disposable. What is at stake here is the importance of exercising

responsibility, on the part of both the distributor and the exploiter, of having an editorial line – that is to say, to make choices, to fight against the *anomie* (absence of coherent norms and values) resulting from a proliferation of all kinds of programs on all kinds of platforms.

Conclusion

Beyond the number of entries in cinematic theaters, the exponential growth of the diffusion of films through many platforms, throughout the entire world, might appear to mark the triumph of an original innovation that has since become thoroughly perfected – one that Antoine Lumière would have identified at the end of the nineteenth century as something likely to have no future. However, in the context of a new multichannel economic model, the multiplication of platforms for distribution and exploitation has created problems for the perpetuation of what constitutes the identity of the “seventh art.” In spite of the discourse surrounding the cultural exception and the policies that are associated with it, cinema seems to be engaged, whether it want to be or not, in a process of financial, commercial, and functional integration into the communication industries.

The continually increasing possibilities for seeing films on new platforms, in other spaces, are translating into a growing dissociation between film and the theater. The one-to-one relationship between film and theater that prevailed for many decades in the first half of the twentieth century has progressively disintegrated in favor of a composite system based on an acceptance of the fact that cinema films may be viewed on many different platforms, in the context of a dynamic of competition-cooperation between the primary market of the theater and the combination of the other markets that have largely become predominant, both in terms of time spent by spectators (the economy of attention) and financial turnovers.

The aura and the power of attraction that cinema retains explain the keen interest it excites from the point of view of generating an associated, transposed, market valuation. Theaters, which are downstream of the original cinematic industry, are now upstream of a “media chronology,” consisting of developments that have led to film being valorized successively on a series of “windows” (theaters, video, video on demand (VOD), pay television, television networks, subscription video on demand (SVOD), etc.). From one perspective, one might think that the development of new outlets is merely a matter of the addition of supplementary channels of distribution, markets, and revenues for production, without really posing a threat to the original cinematographic industry. From another perspective, however, these developments could be seen as calling into question, in a fairly fundamental way, the very structure and nature of the cinematographic industry as originally conceived, given that the term “multichannel” indicates a strategy

of distribution of goods and services that makes use, *in an integrated manner*, of multiple platforms for their exploitation. It is possible that cinema could be in a position to retain a relative integrity, owing to its cultural and artistic functions, which have been preserved, especially in France. Culturally and symbolically, it maintains a strong identity, despite the decline in its relative economic power and the exploitation of its aura by other sectors. Faced with the ascendancy of the audiovisual-communication system, the important thing for cinema is to be capable of continually reaffirming its difference, and the fact that it is distinct.

Fundamentally, what is involved is the question of the importance of its place and the defense of its status within the symbolic space of social life, of meeting and sharing. In a context marked by the striking developments of the moment, involving dematerialization and delocalization, in which one can do practically everything without having to leave one's home, the physical place, situated in the city, architecturally defined, lived and experienced, can retain, or rediscover, a great importance as an inscription in public space.

Beyond the scope of the pool of theaters, the insightful might also raise the issue of the quality of different types of cinematic equipment (as found in establishments based on the standards of multiplexes in commercial centers versus other sites where films are shown, such as art-house theaters or cinematic archives), and of the types of films that are shown there. It is at this point that the issue of cultural diversity becomes important, in the context of the syllogism that reduces cinema to the primacy of market demand, whereas, for the most part, it derives from a strategy that determines what is presented, and a context that overdetermines it. The term "political economy," along with its theoretical content, has been marginalized in the course of the twentieth century, to the profit of mere "economics"; an analysis of the cinematic sector contributes to a better understanding of why a term that has been occluded is the most important one – policy.

Translated by Alistair Fox

Notes

- 1 In the government formed in January 1959 under the presidency of General de Gaulle, André Malraux was appointed Minister of State, heading the new Ministry of Cultural Affairs. The decree of February 3 outlining its remits transferred to him responsibility for the Centre National de la Cinématographie (CNC), which until then had been placed in the portfolio of the Minister of Industry and Commerce. With this new ministerial organization, the artistic and cultural dimension of cinema came to have much more prominence than previously.
- 2 The system is characterized by the regulation of relations between the cinematic industry and other interconnected sectors as far as distribution and financing are

concerned: primarily television, secondarily video, and more recently, in a way that is still being formulated, the new digital media.

- 3 Many films by Youssef Chahine, Terry Gilliam, and Ken Loach would not have seen the light of day without the French system of cinema support, which made it possible for them to be accommodated within the framework of co-productions for which arrangements in other European countries provide. As such, this framework constitutes one of the main alternatives in the Western world to the Hollywood system of production.
- 4 The graphs presented in this chapter have been developed from statistics produced by the CNC (Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée, a new appellation replacing the preceding one, Centre National de la Cinématographie, which was in use from the time of its creation in 1946, until 2009). The figures cited also derive from this source. Statistics and numerous studies are freely accessible on the website of the CNC: <http://www.cnc.fr>.
- 5 In 2012, receipts dropped by 5%, which was a little lower than the number of entries, because the average price of seats changed from 6.33 euros in 2011 to 6.42 euros. This average price, however, incorporates discounts obtained mainly through season tickets, whereas the cost of a ticket in a large Parisian cinema is closer to 10 euros.
- 6 The index of attendances is calculated by establishing a relationship between the number of entries and the population overall. This makes possible international comparisons concerning the degree of intensity of cinematic practices.
- 7 The cinematic population is defined as the totality of individuals of six years old and above who have gone to the cinema at least once during the year. In France, this figure rose, in 2011, to 40 million spectators.
- 8 In 2012, the number of French people of six years and over who have gone at least once to a cinema theater fell back to 65.1%, the year 2011 having been exceptional. This level of cinematic attendance is very high in comparison with most other countries.
- 9 The category of habitual cinema attendees (*habitués*) includes "assiduous viewers" (*assidus*) who go to the cinema at least once a week, and "regular viewers" (*réguliers*) who go between one and three times a month. "Occasional viewers" (*occasionnels*) are defined as those who go at least once a year, but less than once a month.
- 10 To continue to believe in the relevance of a focus of cinematic offerings on a target audience of young adults arises from a distorted representation of the actual composition of the cinema audience: analyses show that it would be wrong to give excessive weight to the segment of 20–24-year-olds targeted as desirable who, with 7.8 visits to the cinema each year, certainly engage in more intensive cinema-going than the other age groups, but without the gap being very wide (6.8 for 15–19-year-olds; 6.7 for 25–34-year-olds; 5.8 for those older than 60).
- 11 In 2012, films "of French initiative" (produced and financed wholly, or mostly, by French partners) numbered 209, as against 145 in 2000 and 89 in 1994.
- 12 In 2011 and 2012, there was a drop in investments, which is nothing to be alarmed about after such a peak. To put things into perspective, between 2003 and 2012 investments in films of French initiative rose on average by 2.6% per year.
- 13 This issue relates to the lively polemic triggered by the editorial entitled "Les acteurs français sont trop payés!" (French actors are paid too much) published in *Le Monde* on

- December 28, 2012 by Vincent Maraval, a producer and distributor, who is the founder of the Wild Bunch company. At the end of a year marked by a good number of flops among French films believed to have had big commercial potential, he denounced the films whose budgets were excessively high in relation to their potential to attract spectators, but above all the colossal budgets of several films that were far from being guaranteed the success upon which they were counting (several films exceeded 50 million euros, whereas the average cost of production was 5.4 million euros). Adducing evidence from the scandal of the moment concerning the fiscal exile of Gérard Depardieu, he went on to denounce the excessive salaries of some star actors to whom is attributed – wrongly – the power of guaranteeing entries. His biting eloquence has led to a questioning of the French system of aid to cinema as contributing to an inflationary knock-on effect, causing many officials from the profession to respond, urging people to remain level-headed in the discussion, not to throw the baby out with the bath water, and not to provide ammunition to enemies of the cultural exception, while agreeing with the necessity of continually seeking ways of improving the system, and to find ways of countering certain perverse effects.
- 14 The rise in the number of new films in their first general release is explained mainly by the growth in the offerings of French films, which doubled between 1990 and 2012, constituting around double the number of releases of American films since 2010. Among these releases of French films, many are “technical releases” that allow them to be described as “cinema films,” and many are films that only reach a very limited audience, sharing in a movement whereby cinema is becoming bipolarized (in 2012, in the French market, 54 films exceeded one million entries, of which 22 were French films; at the other end of the spectrum, more than 300 films attracted fewer than 10,000 entries).
 - 15 In 2012, the structure of French household expenses on audiovisual programs was composed thus: 41.4% for subscriptions to pay channels, 25.4% to the license fee paid to finance public audiovisual provisions, 16.2% for cinema tickets, 13.9% for physical video (a strong decline, given that in 2002 it represented 29.5% of expenditure), and 3.1% for VOD, a new form that is emerging.
 - 16 This propensity is fairly marked in a significant part of the market share of British films, but not only, as we will see further on, in developments pertaining to the export of French films.
 - 17 Retrospectively, taking into account market share as a measure, it appears that French cinema was less threatened by American supremacy than fears expressed at the time (especially over the Blum-Byrnes film quota agreements of 1946) led people to suppose. At the Liberation, the mass arrival in France of films coming from the United States, which had been unavailable for four years in cinemas, necessarily had an unfavorable competitive impact on French films, but not to an extent that was as crushing as was feared.
 - 18 At the lowest point of American films in 1973, French and European films represented more than 73% of market share. The following years were characterized by a deep and lasting reversal of this trend. The decline of great magnitude suffered by French cinema was matched by comparable declines experienced by other European cinemas.
 - 19 In India, in 2012, American films represented 8.5% of box office receipts.

- 20 French cinematic production is characterized by a weak presence in genre cinema, in which Hollywood has been able to capture a leading position on an international scale. There are, however, several exceptions, arising from personal choice, especially the films produced (and in certain cases made) by Luc Besson under the aegis of EuropaCorp, with action films such as *Taxi 2* (2000; 10.3 million entries in France) and the animated film *Arthur et le Minimoys* / *Arthur and the Invisibles* (2006; 6.4 million).
- 21 Popular comedies comprise a group of films in which, over a long period, French cinema has achieved its greatest successes in France, such as: *La Grande Vadrouille* (1966; 17.3 million entries), *Les Visiteurs* / *The Visitors* (1993; 13.7 million), *Le Petit Monde de Don Camillo* (1952; 12.8 million), *Le Corniaud* (1965; 11.7 million), *La Vache et le prisonnier* (1959; 8.6 million), *Le Gendarme de Saint-Tropez* (1964; 7.8 million, the first of six comedies in the series *Le Gendarme*). This is much less true overseas, the humor and national idiosyncrasies being often much less appreciated by the audiences of other countries. *Intouchables* has been a notable exception, but this film also arises out of dramatic comedy, tackling the issues of multiculturalism and social fracture, although in a sugar-coated manner. It achieved 8.9 million entries in Germany, which is a record for a French film in this country.
- 22 A franchise with numbers that have been declining from one work to the next: 14.4 million entries for *Astérix et Obélix: Mission Cléopâtre* (2002), 6.8 million entries for *Astérix aux jeux olympiques* (2008), and 3.8 million for *Astérix et Obélix: Au service de sa Majesté* (2012).
- 23 On the small screen, since the 1990s, French cinema has fallen away: leaving aside several high profile films appealing to a mass audience, films recently programmed on the general networks have had a declining audience. In the fiction category, they are losing ground relative to American films, and especially in the face of telefilms and series, the drop of their audience of television viewers reflecting a programming strategy that is less favorable, both in terms of length and time-slot.
- 24 In many countries, French cinema is in third position: at the top, far in front, is American cinema, then the national cinema, and behind, French cinema. One should note, however, that the recovery of national cinemas in their own markets is often directly in competition with the latter, and tends to depress the level of entries to French films.
- 25 In Russia and China, for example, a move is underway to create many theaters, mainly in the form of multiplexes implanted in malls. On these screens, the programming of American blockbusters and their national homologues is uppermost, excluding other types of production, or placing them in a marginal position.
- 26 Between 1992 and 2000, the number of entries for French films in France and overseas had an average of 85 million entries per year; between 2001 and 2011, an annual average of 140 million, and 220 million entries in 2012 because of exceptional international results.
- 27 Andy Stirling, "A General Framework for Analysing Diversity in Science, Technology and Society," *Journal of the Royal Society Interface* 4:15 (2007): 707–719.
- 28 We should recall that this growth trend in concentration concerns entries to cinematic theaters and not the consumption of cinematic films on other screens. As far as diversity is concerned, VOD is sometimes presented as a miraculous solution, because of its ease of access and the magnitude of the proposed offerings. However, when one

considers actual practices, one can observe, right up to the present day, a phenomenon of concentration around the titles that receive greatest coverage in the media. A “long tail” effect is very far from compensating for the “best seller” effect that continues to prevail, and is even becoming stronger.

- 29 In 2012, out of the 5,502 screens, 116 comprise traveling shows, and 5 open-air screens.
- 30 Multiplexes have 60% of the market share, which is much lower than in other countries. Such a level in no way reflects any under-investment in strategies for modernizing the exhibition of French cinema: it expresses the decision to sustain and promote a diverse range of cinematic theaters and great attention to policies of cultural management of this territory.
- 31 Profiting from the global success of the film *Avatar* (2.8 billion dollars of earnings from world receipts, 14.8 million entries in France), certain producers seized the chance to use the label “3D” in the hope of increasing the attraction of their films. The feeble production of some of them, and the re-dimensionalization of 2D films that were not originally made in 3D, soon provoked disillusionment among a segment of the audience, who would no longer accept the constraint of the stereoscopic glasses that were required, and the raised ticket-prices for films that seemed to be mostly inspired by opportunism.
- 32 The deployment of 3D from the beginning of 2010 onward has seemed above all else to confirm and strengthen the domination of the market by oligopolistic structures, and by Hollywood-style genre films, having the same tendency as them to reduce the diversity of the genres presented. Films such as *Pina*, made by Wim Wenders, and released in France in April 2011, remain the exception: this was not basically a film “in 3D” (which is, moreover, a very contestable term), but a cinematic representation of choreography made in stereoscopy. *Pina* attracted 320,000 entries in France.
- 33 In its *Bilan 2012*, published in May 2013, the CNC reiterated the fact that its mission is to sustain “the dynamism of the different sectors of cinema, radio and television, and multimedia with the assistance of a support fund that it is responsible for managing. The public policy that it pursues has two principal aims: to assure a strong French and European presence in our territory and abroad, and to contribute to the diversity and renewal of creation and distribution.” The expenditure of the CNC allocated to the support of cinema, radio and television, and multimedia, rose to 770 million euros in 2012, supplied mainly from a tax on publishers and distributors of television services (77%), secondarily from a special tax (TSA) on income from cinema seats (144 million euros), and finally by a tax on video and VOD. Assistance to cinema rose to 323 million euros, which was around twice as much as receipts from the TSA. Support for cinema exhibition totals 138 million euros: 65 million in the form of automatic aid and 73 million for selective aid, mainly devoted to the funding of work equipment, and modernization and creation of theaters. In 2012, specific assistance for the digitalization of theaters reached 29 million euros. Assistance to art-house activities, designed to encourage diversity of the films offered, rose to 13.7 million euros, shared between 1,106 establishments classified as “Art et Essai” (art house).
- 34 The average length of the life of films in a theater continues to reduce. A film released in 2008 achieved on average 88.2% of all its entries in the course of the first five weeks of its showing; this percentage moved to 90.5% in 2012.

- 35 To put this idea into perspective, 80% of entries to the film *A Separation*, by the filmmaker Asghar Farhadi, took place in art-house theaters. At the outset, however, it was difficult to imagine that an Iranian film would exceed several thousand entries and achieve figures worthy of a buoyant French or American film (it was released in France on 8 June 2011, attracting nearly 950,000 entries).
- 36 The Parisian pool of theaters comprises 85 establishments (of which seven are multiplexes), amounting to 372 screens and 70,600 seats.