

# Constructing value for culture: Patterns of actor-institutions interaction for the governability of local systems of support to audiovisual industries

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to delve into the processes whereby cultural, economic and political (in terms of social capital and governability of the system) value is ‘extracted from culture’ and constructed by actors. By drawing evidence from a field project on the movie and audiovisual sector in North-East Italy, I explore the actual practices and micro-dynamics of local audiovisual policies formation, examining how they emerge from a continuous and complex interaction between (purposive) cultural actors and (interactive) institutions through time. The results from a comparative case study analysis show how different patterns of interaction lead to different outcomes in terms of the effective functioning of the local cultural industry sector, and how this relationship – albeit a complex, multifaceted one – is mediated by the internal networking capability and proactivity of cultural actors. In the two patterns found, in fact, local actors were differently capable to influence institutions and by consequence to act upon the local audiovisual and movie sectors.

**KEYWORDS:** cultural industries, cultural policy, film and audiovisual industry, governance, institutional entrepreneurship

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural industries policies, governance models, and the practices resulting from the actual adoption of those models (e.g. Hesmondhalgh & Pratt 2005) are the result of the complex and contested interaction between cultural actors and institutions. *Cultural actors* are those who actually produce culture<sup>1</sup>: they try to influence cultural industries’ policies guided by their interests and motivations (as individual professionals and organizations and as inter-organizational groups, associations, etc.) and characterized by their structural configurations (in terms of network structures, relational patterns, social capital etc.). On the other side, there are *policymakers*, who act following their interests and duties (strategic

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, the notion of culture refers primarily to the cultural industries’ products (Hesmondhalgh 2007).

issues and priorities across sectors; values, beliefs and ideologies; etc.), and shape the cultural industries' configuration through devising institutional frameworks (laws, regulations, governance models etc.) (e.g. Pratt 2005).

While the claim of most cultural policy literature has been, intuitively, that policymakers have to develop 'bottom-up' policies, taking into account the demands and expectations of local cultural actors (e.g. Brown, O'Connor & Cohen 2000; Power & Scott 2004; for a review see Montanari 2011), the focus has almost exclusively been on the policymaker side of the coin, evaluating the success or failure of policies based on how they were passively 'received' (e.g. embraced or rejected) by cultural actors. Studies of *cultural industries governance* (Pratt 2005) formation, taking into account the active and purposive role of cultural actors in search for legitimacy and influence, have been comparatively rare.

The purpose of this paper is to draw on preliminary evidence from the movie and audiovisual sector in North-East Italy, to point out the importance of considering the interaction between cultural actors and institutions, and the effect of different patterns of interaction on the final outcomes, in terms of cultural actors' ability to influence and shape cultural industries policies and governance models; and of the effective functioning of the local cultural industry sector.

The paper draws on a one-year financed project on the movie and audiovisual industry in the North-East of Italy<sup>2</sup>. The project aimed to analyze a territorialized cultural industry, namely, the cinematic and audiovisual production, distribution, marketing and exhibition sectors in North-East of Italy (the region of Veneto, the autonomous Region Friuli-Venezia Giulia and the two autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bozen)<sup>3</sup>.

In such a setting, following recent tendencies in cultural industries' territorial policies (e.g. Morawetz et al. 2007), each regional authority approved specific laws and regulations, and created new agencies such as the Film Commissions (institutions aimed at attracting external productions for shooting in location) and Film Funds (assigning financial resources to film projects within a competition bid framework, aiming at the development of the local industry). Each of these (e.g., Friuli-Venezia Giulia Film Fund; Regione Veneto Film Commission; BLS-Film Location Südtirol) was characterised by different institutional frameworks,

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<sup>2</sup> The research project is still being carried out at the time of writing.

<sup>3</sup> The initial themes of relevance regarded the generation of economic value and employment by the audiovisual industry and local economic development; the local public policies supporting the sector; the relationships and possible synergies between cultural industry operators and actors from other cultural industries/artistic scenes or non-cultural organizations; and the new competences required to compete in the local movie and audiovisual industry.

governance structures, and financial endowments. Moreover, there were important regional differences in both the design of governance models and policies, and the outcomes resulting from their implementation, in terms of number and prestige of productions attracted and effects on the local movie and audiovisual industry. The suitability of the empirical context for the purpose seemed evident since the very first stages of research, since considerable changes in the local institutional frameworks regarding the audiovisual industry happened.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 explores in detail how the research problem was identified, starting from a literature review on the dynamics of relationships between cultural actors (professionals and practitioners), and between these latter and institutional actors. Definitional and methodological issues will be also dealt with in section 2. Section 3 presents the two cases identified and describes the industrial and institutional history of audiovisual sectors in two regions – Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Veneto, with a focus on recent developments. Section 4 analyses the implications in terms of research on local cultural industries and policy. Section 5 concludes.

## **2. LITERATURE OF REFERENCE AND RESEARCH ORIENTATION**

### **2.1. THE AUDIOVISUAL AND FILM LOCAL DISTRICTS**

It is instructive to briefly review the substantive literature on local audiovisual production systems<sup>4</sup>, focusing on those that highlight the institutional features of the systems, and particularly the interaction between cultural actors and institutional actors in the shaping of the system.

Some studies point to the difficulties of establishing a local institutional framework in these sectors. For example, Turok (2003) states that it cannot be said that the Scottish film industry is a successful one, despite the presence of some important creative talent and the significant institutional efforts that were made to sustain the industry by the national and local authorities. This is so because the film industry is too much dependent on global dynamics to be

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<sup>4</sup> They have been usually defined as ‘districts’ and ‘clusters’; however, there are conceptual (i.e., taking for granted the existence of a ‘district’ at work; confusing the notion of ‘cultural district’ with that of ‘cultural system of production’) and substantive (i.e., lack of empirical support of an organizational ‘advantage’ of local film production systems) problems in applying the vague ‘cultural district’ concept to the film and audiovisual industry.

significantly impacted by the initiatives, albeit well-constructed, under control of local authorities and cultural actors. Kong (2005) points to a difficult relationship between the political willingness exhibited by the Hong Kong competent authorities to sustain the local film production network and the actual results achieved. She highlights how cultural actors' networks are made of social relations and 'social assets' such as trust, that cannot be induced by 'political decree': rather, they must develop spontaneously, and in their absence it is not possible that the typical advantages of cultural districts arise. This literature fundamentally highlights the difficulty for local audiovisual systems to succeed in a market dominated by a handful of Hollywood major production companies competing fiercely on a global basis (see also Vang & Chaminade 2007 and Cole 2008). However, there are studies that highlight those features of the systems that make them able to survive and prosper.

A successful example is provided by the analysis of the Munich film industry given by Kaiser & Liecke (2007). They highlight how a combination of historical endowments in the film industry, a coordinated institutional action at multiple levels and a successful internal coordination, leading to the specialization in niche products, resulted in the Munich cluster being as one of the most important and productive ones in Europe. A fundamental condition of this success was to be able to tap into the 'global pipelines' that connect the local system with the globalized film industry, and that are deemed necessary for every local production system to globalize and survive in the modern economy (e.g. Bathelt, Malmberg & Maskell 2004). An intriguing research program is that brought about by Coe (2000; 2001) that specifies how, in the Vancouver district, the links between the local production system and the global pipelines are realized. Despite the relative marginality of Vancouver in the national cultural industries policies, which traditionally favored Canada's North-East large cities such as Montreal and Toronto, a few Vancouver producers exhibiting a high degree of embeddedness at the local, national and international scales were able to maintain vital the local district, by assuring a constant flow of projects commissioned and financial resources. Although Coe's study describes the institutional features of the cluster, it does not consider the relationships between the existing institutional setting and the field of cultural actors, which seem endowed with personal contacts developed 'by chance'. A more comprehensive account of the interesting Vancouver case would gain much from an explicit investigation into the interaction processes between cultural actors and institutions.

Finally, an interesting study is the one carried out by Sydow and Staber (2002) on the

comparison between the Cologne/Düsseldorf and the Berlin/Babelsberg German television districts. They refer to the concept of ‘institutional embeddedness’ of project networks (i.e., webs of interconnected cultural actors) in supportive institutional frameworks to show how a higher institutional embeddedness was key in explaining the successful outcomes of the Cologne district as opposed to the modest results of the Berlin one. By ‘institutional embeddedness’, the authors mean an intense, bidirectional interaction process between local cultural actors (TV producers, professionals, etc.) and the institutions that dealt with the development of the TV industry in the two contexts. For example, in Cologne, there was an important network broker (Filmstiftung NRW), supported by regional politicians and private investors with critical resources and political legitimacy, which was absent in Berlin. Higher levels of cooperation among the political actors at the municipal and state level in the region and a cooperative attitude of policymakers with industry representatives also differentiated Cologne from Berlin, and resulted in a strong support for a regional institutional platform aimed to facilitate the founding of new enterprises and funding opportunities in the TV sector, which again was not present in Berlin. The authors conclude that “the comparatively higher level of institutional thickness<sup>5</sup> in the Cologne/Düsseldorf region is reflected in the close interaction and collaboration among the key actors” (Sydow & Staber 2002: 223-224), pointing to a critical role of the interaction patterns between cultural and institutional actors in the development of local audiovisual districts.

All in all, it seems that the literature on local audiovisual production systems did consider the institutional feature of the latter, but leaves unexplored the patterns of interaction between cultural and institutional actors, and on the co-evolution of the governance models that constitute the regulation mechanisms underlying such an interaction.

## 2.2. INSTITUTIONAL EMBEDDEDNESS AND INSTITUTIONAL THICKNESS

Sydow and Staber (2002) referred to ‘institutional embeddedness’ of project networks in the television industry to highlight – drawing on Amin & Thrift’s (1994) concept of ‘institutional thickness’ – the project networks’ dependence on supportive institutions in the surrounding

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<sup>5</sup> The authors start from the concept of ‘institutional embeddedness’ of project networks into institutions, but borrow from the outset Amin and Thrift’s (1994) notion of ‘institutional thickness’ to describe how a system is characterized by highly embedded and cooperative actors.

organizational field. Those institutions provide the regulative and normative resources necessary to make sense of cultural and organizational practices.

While an examination of the multi-faceted concept of ‘embeddedness’ is out of the scope of the present paper (see Hess 2004 for a review; and Cole 2008), it is interesting to note how the neo-institutional literature widely employed in management studies has used it to frame a problem that has much to deal with the orientation of the present paper. The possibility that agents actively and purposively influence the same institutional apparatus from which they are shaped has been labelled as ‘the paradox of embedded agency’ (Greenwood & Suddaby 2006). The focus of the present paper is precisely the complex interactions, overlap and exchanges between the various actors – mainly, those part of the local cultural production system and those part of the local political and administrative system – involved in the formation of cultural policies and related governance models.

The concept of ‘institutional thickness’ has also received wide attention in urban studies and cultural policy research (e.g., Amin & Thrift 1994; Cole 2008; Raco 1998; Sydow & Staber 2002). Coulson and Ferrario (2007) adopt it to analyse the peculiar institutional infrastructure that made Birmingham one of the most vibrant and dynamic areas in the UK and in Europe, thanks to the coordinated action of a considerable number of bodies and organizations that contributed to the urban development of the British ex-industrial center. Drawing on the dimensions originally proposed by Amin and Thrift, a strong institutional presence, a high level of interaction between local organizations, the mutual awareness of being involved in a common enterprise, and structures of domination and/or patterns of coalition<sup>6</sup> are the factors that are deemed to contribute the most to a well-functioning local institutional system. The authors develop, for each of these dimensions, a series of indicators that can be applied to operationalize the concept and to measure the various components of the institutional thickness of a place.

Thus, the literature linking institutional features to local systems of production suggests interesting concepts, constituting a useful basis for the development of the present study. However, the purpose of the present study is to contribute to a better understanding of *how* is it possible that a territory actually develops a setting that is ‘institutionally thicker’, and specifically how, in so doing, cultural actors interact with pre-existing institutions – or lobby

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<sup>6</sup> These patterns are deemed to “‘minimize sectionalism’, ... help the ‘socialization of costs and the control of rogue behavior’..., and bring coordination” (Amin and Thrift 1994: 593).

for (or create) new ones. Thus, the present study points to a more dynamic, qualitative and fine-grained comprehension of the actual processes whereby actors of different nature and status, within the local institutional and economic system, can actually mobilize resources to shape the context by which they are influenced.

### 2.3. RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHODOLOGY

The potential theoretical contributions of the present work basically deal with two problems: first, the exploration of the conditions that influence the realization of different patterns of interaction in cultural policy formation; and second, the exploration of the consequences of such different patterns in terms of the actual functioning and outcomes of the local audiovisual system.

As far as the first issue is concerned, it is likely that local networks of cultural actors that are internally disconnected lead to difficulties in developing a common vision or ‘policy strategy’, resulting in less effective influence efforts on policymakers, and thus that settings exhibiting such networks will either adapt to directive, top-down policies built by policymakers deciding in an independent way, or they will display a situation in which one or few of the actors influence, in a more or less self-interested (competitive instead of cooperative) way, the whole sector. On the contrary, well-connected and cohesive networks of cultural actors will more likely discuss and debate issues and possible solutions to be proposed to policymakers, and the final result will depend on how much they (or prominent nodes of the network) are embedded into the wider institutional setting. Moreover, historical conditions could also exert a relevant role on the development of peculiar institutional settings. For example, Mizzau and Montanari (2008), in studying the successful efforts in sustaining and promoting the electronic music scene in Turin and Piedmont, Italy, noted how the history of the places mattered, in the sense that cultural and institutional factors, tracing back to the industrial and political history of Piedmont, paved the way for the development of what they named ‘cultural germs’ deemed responsible for the recent vitality of the local music scene and the collaborative attitude between cultural and institutional actors.

The consequences of different interaction patterns could be explored, even though exploratively given the limited time-span of analysis (approximately 10 years), in terms of the

development of the local industry (e.g. number and quality of external productions attracted, number of local operators affected by the programs promoted by the local institutions, etc.). It is likely that those results are influenced by the peculiar institutional setting at work in an area, since evidence tells that film industry actors are ‘highly mobile’ and sensitive to local incentives and organizational conditions of production (e.g. Morawetz et al. 2007).

With this research, I intend to contribute to the theoretical refinement and extension of the literature on cultural industries policy formation and governance. The methodological approach chosen for such a purpose was that of a qualitative research that could uncover processes and practices in a complex setting such as that represented by the interaction between (very diverse) cultural and institutional actors and organizations. Therefore, the main methodological point of reference for this study is the comparative case-based methodology described in Eisenhardt (1989), Yin (2009) and Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007), complemented with insights from qualitative methodologies for the analysis of organizations and institutions developed by Miles and Huberman (1994). My epistemological stance is a processual, action- and practice-oriented one, based on the premise that actors continually act upon and shape the environment from which they are also conditioned (Giddens 1984; Daft & Weick 1984).

As a first step to develop an awareness of the consistency of the cultural ‘scene’ or field in the territory, a first list of key informants, mainly professionals, institutional actors and scholars dealing with the movie industry, has been prepared<sup>7</sup>. A first set of semi-structured interviews has been conducted with these informants, to gather information and beliefs on the following themes: the informants’ personal career path, the description of informants’ and organizations’ activities or initiatives (sub-sectors, financing, outcomes/impact, etc.), professional and personal networks (with whom one works/exchanges information most frequently, which are the occasions of encounter, spatially and temporally), and the relationship with institutional actors<sup>8</sup>.

A total number of 16 interviews was conducted to date (table 1). Examples of key informants

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<sup>7</sup> A first contact with informants was aimed to validate and integrate the informants list itself.

<sup>8</sup> The interviews lasted 45 to 90 minutes and contained also questions about the external and internal awareness of the scene; the value of the scene (professionalism, artistic and/or professional strengths of the local industry); the level of identification with the local scene (‘sense of belonging’); personal, organizational and industrial needs and areas of improvement; the relationships the audiovisual industry with other cultural scenes and non-cultural organizations/firms; the level of the local training institutions; training needs; the key competences required to thrive in the industry for the future.

included in the list are: managing directors of film/audiovisual production firms; producers; entrepreneurs in the field of movie (technical) services; organizers of festivals and cinematic initiatives located in the territory; directors of regional and provincial film commissions, local authorities and policy makers dealing with the industry; movie exhibitors and ‘Cineclub’ founders and directors.

--- INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE ---

Archival data available on public sources such as websites, and data provided by contacts, regarding the internal functioning of organizations were collected and analyzed. Besides, I participated to local conventions and meetings, among which panels organized within the 69<sup>th</sup> Venice Film Festival held in Venice from August 29<sup>th</sup> to September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012 and visited some of the organizations’ premises and facilities (the interviews were mainly conducted at each organization’s headquarter).

Data collected from interviews and other sources were organized, coded, and analyzed<sup>9</sup> according to categories and themes pertaining to the research problem above defined, which was developed after a first awareness of the field was built.

### **3. THE CONTEXT: THE INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY OF THE MOVIE AND AUDIOVISUAL SECTOR IN NORTH-EAST ITALY**

#### **3.1. FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA**

*Cultural actors: Historical development of the industry and main actors*

Friuli-Venezia Giulia, despite its relatively small dimension and probably because of its historical marginality with respect to the geography of Italy, exhibits a peculiar historical development in the field of the cinematic and audiovisual production.

An interesting feature of the location is that the demand for cinema ticket admissions has traditionally been very high, as indicates an average number of per-capita tickets of 1.97 per

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<sup>9</sup> Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim within 15 days from recording.

year and a total number of tickets of about 2.4 million in 2011<sup>10</sup>. The total expense for cinema activities in the region amounted to €13.4 million in the same year (SIAE 2011).

As far as concerns the supply and demand of movie and audiovisual content services, the region did not, historically, benefit of the closeness of important media centres such as those present in Milan, Rome, or larger cities in Italy such as Turin and Bologna<sup>11</sup>.

From the point of view of cultural production in the audiovisual sector, the region Friuli-Venezia Giulia was able to develop over time some cultural ‘germs’ particularly in the downstream sector of ‘cineclubs’ and exhibition circles and outlets (Libro Bianco sul Cinema in Friuli-Venezia Giulia 2008).

To begin with, Centro Espressioni Cinematografiche (CEC) is an association located in Udine with 40 years of experience developed in the management of ‘d’essai’<sup>12</sup> screens of the city (i.e., auteur cinema and related events). It gained stable local legitimacy managing for decades the screen of the ‘Dopolavoro Ferroviario’ (the recreational and cultural circle of railway employees) next to the Udine railway station. In relatively recent times, it was able to exploit its competences in taking over the restoration and management of one the last screens remained in the city centre, the Cinema Centrale (2 screens for 310 seats altogether). Udine in fact – as it has been common all over Europe and the world – did not escape to the concentration trend in cinema exhibition which led to the closure of small screens within the historical centers of towns in favor of large cinema complexes located in the suburbs (Martel 2011). Following the restoration of a public space at the margins of the historical city center, previously under competence of the Province of Udine, CEC established there its main exhibition center (with 3 screens totaling about 400 seats), along with a caffè and some spaces where occasional events are organized. Besides, the location, named ‘Visionario Centro per le Arti Visive’, hosts, since 2006, the offices of Fondo Audiovisivo FVG (see below).

The most important development of CEC is the creation and launch in 1998 of the Far East Film Festival (FEFF), one of the most important film festivals in Europe specializing in South-East Asia, South Korea and Japan. The festival is now an internationally recognized outlet for the encounter between cinematic production from South-East Asia, Korea and Japan, and European and other international experts, producers, and exhibitors. The FEFF is

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<sup>10</sup> To allow for a comparison: Veneto: 1.65; Trentino-A.A. 1.15; Emilia-Romagna (the highest in Italy): 2.54 (elaboration on SIAE 2011).

<sup>11</sup> This holds even though Trieste has been seat of a peripheral branch of RAI which led to the formation of a small community of TV community technicians and professionals.

<sup>12</sup> ‘D’essai’ corresponds to the English expression of avant-garde or ‘art’ cinema.

developed with public support by the Region (ca. €700k a year), the Municipality of Udine and some private partners, and in partnership with some local sponsors and other entities external to the local territory (interestingly, among those we find European and Asian film council and offices, but not Italian ones). The event is also rendered possible thanks to the convention with the local universities (Udine and Trieste) and the work of about 100 volunteers, adding to the 20 internal employees that CEC is able to mobilize during the event. The results for the 2012 edition show a strong participation, with 50,000 admissions and over 1,200 industry professionals registered to the event (personal interview).

*Cultural institutions: The film and audiovisual industry support<sup>13</sup>*

In Friuli-Venezia Giulia, a major point in the recent history of the support to the film and audiovisual industry is the foundation in 1999 of the association ‘Film Commission Friuli-Venezia Giulia’ by a group of industry actors (filmmakers, movie enthusiasts and audiovisual industry associations’ founders) located in Trieste. The group was composed by a few young people and captained by Federico Poillucci, a law graduate and movie passionate who still is the president of the regional Film Commission. He explained in an interview how the original project of constituting an office dedicated to facilitate bureaucratic obligations for production teams aiming to shoot in Trieste was submitted to the Municipality of Trieste, which decided, together with the Regional Authorities, to extend the competence of the office at the regional level, following a diffusing international tendency to consider this kind of activities at a broader, regional level. Thus, the group – which had previously been registered as an independent ‘cultural association’ – albeit maintaining its original formal status, was acknowledged by the Regional Council as the organization in charge of supporting productions shooting in the regional territory since then. The Friuli-Venezia Giulia was the fourth local authority in Italy to establish a Film Commission within its territory, after the ones of Genova-Liguria, Emilia-Romagna, and Torino-Piemonte, and concurrently with the one of Veneto (see below).

In 2003, the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Regional Authorities and the Film Commission were the first in Italy to launch a Film Fund (ANICA 2010; Cucco & Richeri 2011; Versace et al. 2008) based on an economic development (versus ‘cultural value’) logic. Such a fund had the aim of creating a financial incentive to shoot in the regional territory, by financing up to a certain

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<sup>13</sup> For the sake of brevity, training institutions will not be considered.

percentage of the total production expenses depending on the days of shooting and the amount of expenses. A grant was accorded to productions based on the rationale that a ‘territorial effect’ will come into place: that is, productions coming to shoot in the territory demand services, stimulating the local economy in the cinematic industries (e.g., requesting qualified personnel such as technicians, cameramen); in related services (e.g., transportation, machinery rent etc.) and in ‘induced’ services (e.g. restaurants and hotels for the troupes). Moreover, the presence of productions *in loco* is deemed to generate knowledge spillovers and the development of a competence base by learning effects among the professionals in the local industry. Applicants for the grant had to respect some criteria, the most prominent of which was that a certain amount of expenses must be spent in the territory. The financial coverage for the fund was introduced in the regional financial law with an endowment of €900k in three years. The regional (or local) Film Funds are now a diffused practice among regional and municipal authorities in Italy (ANICA 2010: 6).

In November 2006, the Regional Council of the Autonomous Region released the so-called ‘Law on Cinema’. The law had the aim of rationalizing the measures regarding the sector, and, importantly, distinguished between, on the one hand, socially and culturally relevant features; and on the other, production and organization of economic activities in the sector. Versace et al. (2008) highlight this aspect when they state that the launch of the FVG Film Fund – which was ratified through the 2006 Cinema Law – represented an innovation in Italy (resembling instead some European experiences) because it did not request any “cultural value” of the productions, aiming exclusively at the mobilization of *economic* resources and the stimulation of tourism in the region. The allocation of the fund was, consistently with such a logic, within the Productive Activities Assessorship (the former Tourism Assessorship). This kind of institutional arrangement impacted also on the type of criteria for obtaining the contributions: where Italian local funds has historically excluded the commercial audiovisual formats, such as the TV fiction series, the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Film Fund on the contrary did encourage productions with the highest possible commercial appeal.

Along with the ratification of the regional Film Fund, the 2006 Cinema Law formally assigned the responsibility to manage the Fund to the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Film Commission association, conferring it the ‘public service’ mandate and thus extending the range of activities the association was in charge of to the examination of the applications for the Film Fund and subsequent support to granted productions.

The law<sup>14</sup> concurrently introduced another territorial body with competence on the movie and audiovisual sector, named Fondo Audiovisivo FVG. Such an introduction followed a debate within policymakers and local industry actors, in which it emerged that, the notable results in terms of attractions of movie productions notwithstanding (see table 2), the local industry sector was still suffering by the typical shortcomings of a region that was geographically peripheral, dimensionally small, and historically not endowed with a peculiar tradition in terms of audiovisual production (Libro Bianco sul Cinema in Friuli-Venezia Giulia 2008).

--- INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE ---

The Fondo Audiovisivo FVG aimed thus to finance the training of individuals and the development of audiovisual, non-commercial projects presented by local organizations (or co-productions with at least one organization located within the region), in two different stages: development (i.e., analysis of the idea and ‘greenlighting’ of the project), and distribution/promotion, i.e. supporting the marketing and down-stream activities of projects already financed for the productive part. The Fondo Audiovisivo FVG, as the name tells it, was endowed with a separate fund, amounting in the average to about €200k/year, and, as a concrete organization, was located in Udine, within the Visionario cinematic complex (see section 3.1). Director nominated was Paolo Vidali, a Friulan-born movie professional who expatriated in Rome in the Seventies and who had extensive experience in the areas of film production and dubbing direction. The director, who was also one of the prominent personalities consulted for the making of the Cinema Law since 2004, continued to live prevalently in Rome, with a commitment to follow the activities of Fondo Audiovisivo on a part-time basis.

### 3.2. VENETO

#### *Cultural actors: Historical development of the industry and main actors*

When approaching the historical development of the audiovisual industry in Veneto, it is

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<sup>14</sup> For the sake of brevity, in this paper I will not delve into the law provisions related to “cinema as a cultural activity”, which were nonetheless considerable, covering topics such as the support to screens located in historical centers, mountain and other marginal areas; festivals; minority language media support and so on.

important to mention the foundation of the Cinema Section at the Biennale art exhibition in Venice, in 1943. Due in part to the importance of Italian films in the worldwide cinematic production between the Fifties and the Seventies<sup>15</sup>, the Venice Film Festival (VFF) gained increasing importance, and it is currently considered among the four most important ones in Europe (along with Cannes, Berlin, and Locarno) and recognized as an important outlet worldwide as well.

In a sense, the very fact that the VFF exhibited an international orientation since its outset, makes it an interesting albeit problematic object of discussion when it comes to the matter of relationships with the territory. In particular, it has been highlighted (Calcagno, Panozzo & Pierantoni 2012) the nature of a pure display for films produced elsewhere, its sometimes troubled relationship with the local hospitality system (e.g. Moretti & Zirpoli 2012) and, more generally, the difficult connection between the Biennale Foundation and other cultural actors in the city (personal interviews from this study).

However, the constant, annual presence of the VFF in the city represents an occasion of encounter and exchange for the actors belonging to the field of cinema from the region. For example, during the 2012 edition, Regione del Veneto rented a convention space at the Lido island – the part of the city where the festival takes place – in which cultural actors, policymakers and audiences discussed about the current state of the industry in Veneto and the problems it faced.

From the point of view of production and production services, it is worth to briefly delve into two experiences, that of Mestiere Cinema, a production services and executive production company based in the historical center of Venice, and that of Jole Film, a film and audiovisual production company recently founded in Padua.

Mestiere Cinema was founded in 1984 by Guido Cerasuolo and a co-founder. Cerasuolo, a graduate from an at the time pioneering university course in Bologna, called ‘DAMS’ (humanities disciplines for theater, music and cinema), started his career as an assistant director in Rome, and also gained a solid on-the-job experience as a lights designer for theater sets. The company initially drew on the competences and relationships developed by Cerasuolo, and specialized in the making of ‘industrial’ products, i.e. audiovisual products – some of which with length comparable to that of feature films – commissioned by large

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<sup>15</sup> In the Seventies, Italy was the second largest producer of feature films after the USA (personal interviews; see also Lee & Waterman 2006).

companies for communication reasons, or by producers with an interest in investigating industrial landscapes and social dynamics.

Recently, the company evolved into a multidivisional structure, with basically three branches: one dedicated to the aspects of executive production<sup>16</sup>, one to production services (transportation, rent of machinery etc.) and one specializing in the organization of sets and events. The company has 15 full-time or equivalent employees and about €5 million of turnaround<sup>17</sup>. It is important to point out that the company has a geographical scope that extends well beyond Venice and Veneto, with prominent productions such as one of the last 'James Bond' (007 – Quantum of Solace, 2008), with a 1-year shooting in Siena, Tuscany; and other Italian and non-Italian locations. In Venice, Mestiere Cinema was the executive production company for a large Disney production, Casanova (2004).

The role exerted by the company in the sector of executive production – in other terms in the organizational and practical aspects of shooting on location – in Venice was to move the local sector to a 'professionalization' of a range of services that before were provided on an irregular basis. It is important to highlight how several interviewees for the present research have recognized Mestiere Cinema as a fundamental 'competence factory' for those who did their apprenticeships in these activities not only in Venice, but in North-East of Italy as a whole. The company also generated some spin-offs<sup>18</sup>.

It is interesting to explore the peculiarities of the relationship between the organization and the territory. Cerasuolo has been widely cited by the interviewees of the present study as a prominent personality of the world of cinema and audiovisual production in the region. He has been the President of the National Association of Executive Producers (APE) for many years, before due to health problems he decided to resign from that position, remaining however very active within the national network as the event organized within the 69<sup>th</sup> VFF (cited above) demonstrates. He was also one of the promoters of the initiative of CinemaVenetoPRO, a spontaneous regional network of local industry professionals

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<sup>16</sup> Executive production firms carry out activities such as: the choice of the most suitable organizational form for a film project (founding of an ad-hoc enterprise etc.); the research of production partners; the retrieval of suppliers and cast; fiscal and human resources arrangements, etc. These activities are different from the ones carried out by film production firms, which deal with the selection of creative projects and fundraising, along with downstream activities such as marketing and distribution.

<sup>17</sup> It is interesting to add that, due to the project-based nature of film production, the movies of a certain importance can involve up to about 1,000 different individual contributors (personal interview with Guido Cerasuolo).

<sup>18</sup> Some of which have been included in the interviewees list.

constituted in 2003 and disbanded in 2006. Other participants to the initiative were the Responsible of the regional Film Commission and other industry professionals<sup>19</sup>.

Another prominent actor in the local industry scene, as cited by the key informants interviewed, is Francesco Bonsembiante, co-founder of Jole Film together with Marco Paolini, an actor-playwright who received notable national recognition in the theater sector during the Nineties. Bonsembiante, a graduate in cinema studies at the University of Padua, has been a successful small and medium company manager in Italy, France and Spain for 30 years, in business unrelated to cinema, before he decided to settle back in Padua and ‘go back to his roots’. He always maintained and cultivated the friendship – motivated by the shared passion for cinema and theater – with his old university mates, some of whom have become renown in Italy, such as the movie director Carlo Mazzacurati and the playwright and actor Marco Paolini.

Recently, as an extension of the company that managed the organization and media exploitation of Paolini’s theater shows, he decided to co-found and direct a film and audiovisual production company, named Jole Film, which could capitalize on Paolini’s stage experience and recognized narrative talent and on Mazzacurati’s (and others) experience, and could serve as a sort of incubator of young, local cinema graduates. The idea was to enable young screenwriters coming from the Veneto territory to tell stories with a strong local anchorage, but that at the same time could be interesting for a national and international audience: in other terms, authentic stories accurately crafted as audiovisual products with a more-than-local artistic appeal. While such an idea was certainly, as Bonsembiante revealed in the interview released for the present study, prompted by the success and national recognition of Paolini theater shows, the distinctive competence that Bonsembiante could bring were those related to the business aspects and organization of film projects, i.e. fund-raising and financial skills combined with the social capital in terms of contacts with the local artistic scene and the local economic actors as well. A story of success was the feature film ‘Io sono Li’ by Andrea Segre, which received three awards<sup>20</sup> at the 2011 VFF and the prestigious ‘Premio Lux’ at the 2012 VFF, and was characterized by a catchy story about the integration of a female Chinese immigrant into the small insular community of Chioggia, responding to the characteristic of being at the same time a ‘local’ (from both a visual, as it was mainly shot

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.cinemainvisibile.it/news%20invisibili/venetocinemapro.htm>, accessed December 01, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Precisely, the Italian Movie Critics Award (FEDIC), the Lanterna Magica Prize and the Lina Mangiacapre Award ([www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com), accessed December 17, 2012), all conferred to Segre for his direction and co-screenwriting.

in Chioggia, and a narrative point of view), and a ‘global’ story, dealing with the contemporary theme of the difficulty of integration and reciprocal understanding between people with very different cultural roots. But probably the most innovative aspect of the film was how the project was arranged in organizational and financial terms, with a mixture of public and private funds of different nature<sup>21</sup>.

### *Cultural institutions: The film and audiovisual industry support*<sup>22</sup>

As anticipated, the Veneto region has a long history in the downstream activities of film festivals, thanks to the long-standing presence of the Venice Film Festival.

More recent is the involvement of the public authorities into the support of cinematic production. As anticipated, Regione Veneto established a Film Commission relatively early with respect to the national context, in 2000. The Film Commission was created within the pre-existent regional offices of the Direction for Cultural and Entertainment Activities and two employees were assigned the task to follow the issues of productions shooting in Veneto. Besides the regional Film Commission, Veneto is characterized by a diffusion of film commissions at the municipal level, responding to the need of a close presence in resolution of practical problems such as permissions, etc.<sup>23</sup> (personal interview with the director of the regional film commission). A critical one, because of the logistic complexities related to shoot in the Venice islands, is the Venice Film Commission, founded in 2002 and directed by the Director of the Department of Cultural Activities of the Municipality of Venice.

The Regione Veneto has firstly introduced a Film Fund, managed by the offices of the regional Film Commission, in 2009, following the promulgation of the regional Cinema Law. Another important resource for the financing of film and audiovisual productions has been presented in September 2012 during the 69<sup>th</sup> VFF and is called ‘Venice Film Fund’. It is funded by the a special agency of the Venice Chamber of Commerce (Venezia Opportunità) and it was endowed, for the first year, with €100k. A pilot experiment for the fund took place in 2011, when an external production<sup>24</sup> applied to the Chamber of Commerce for a financial

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<sup>21</sup> It is not possible, for the sake of brevity, to delve into these aspects here.

<sup>22</sup> For the sake of brevity, training institutions will not be considered.

<sup>23</sup> The region has in total 9 offices dedicated to film commission activities (see table 4), mainly created within the Municipalities (in some cases by the Provinces), with employees who take care of permissions and assistance to external productions, in some cases in charge also of other tasks, more or less related with tourism and cultural activities.

<sup>24</sup> The film is called ‘Effie’ is produced by the UK company Sovereign Films II (producer Andreas Roald) and should be released in May 2013 in the UK.

support for a film of cultural interest which benefited also from the national MiBAC tax credit system. The establishment and amount of the fund are the result of a long ‘institutional entrepreneurship’ battle mainly carried out by Guido Cerasuolo of Mestiere Cinema, on which I shall return later (see 4.2).

Among the institutional initiatives launched by the regional authorities in the recent past, a promising one was the Metadistretto DigitalMediale Veneto (MDM) an initiative promoted by the VEGA Scientific and Technologic Park of Venice which consisted of a platform meant to sustain the entrepreneurship in the realm of digital media sectors<sup>25</sup>. On paper, the MDM initiative could constitute an important extension of the VEGA Park in the digital technologies sector, with potential ramifications into the audiovisual sectors, given the current convergence scenario and the international experiences where film and TV production are complemented by a related offer of digital media services, particularly useful for the audiovisual stages of post-production and special effects, digital storage and retrieval, etc. To be sure, the institution was able to deliver some services to associates relating to participation to EU-funded projects and partner search in Europe and USA. However, as it turns out in November 2012, the MDM is not even online with a website and the only interviewees who mentioned it did so to highlight the substantial failure of the project.

#### **4. CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS: TWO PATTERNS OF INTERACTION BETWEEN ACTORS AND INSTITUTIONS**

##### **4.1. CULTURAL ACTORS’ ‘INSTITUTIONALIZATION’: THE CASE OF FILM COMMISSION FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA AND FONDO AUDIOVISIVO FVG**

A first interesting model of governance formation can be drawn from the history of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Film Commission (see table 3).

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<sup>25</sup> “...with the aim of experimenting new business models in the realm of digital technologies, facilitate the technology transfer, increasing the interaction between firms and the networking capacity” (from the “Patto per lo sviluppo del MDM-Metadistretto digitalmediale del Veneto”, Triennio 2007-2010, in Cirrincione et al. 2010).

As anticipated, the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Film Commission was one of the first to be established in Italy. Most importantly, it has been the first to manage a Film Fund for the financial support of productions in an ‘European sense’, i.e. based on the interpretation of cinema and audiovisual activities as economic sectors, which also contribute to the local economy through a film’s ‘territorial effect’. From the perspective of this paper, the question is whether such a favorable position relative to the Italian context can be related to how local cultural actors interacted with institutional ones, and, if this was the case, how the process unfolded.

The institutional history of the very organization (i.e., the group of individuals that manage the Film Commission) and the political and administrative authorities of the Municipalities of Trieste and the Autonomous Region Friuli-Venezia Giulia is instructive in this sense. What would have become the regional film commission had been already established as an informal group of local cultural actors, in the form of a private cultural association, and it had developed a project for the establishment of the office that was presented to the Municipality of Trieste. This latter extended the project to the regional authorities which positively received the proposal and gave mandate to the independent cultural association to establish the office and start to carry out bureaucratic and facilitating services for incoming productions. These facts happened in a period in which, as it can be reconstructed from interviews and documents, the issue of rationalization and organization of cultural activities and resources at the regional level was ‘in the air’ and had gained increasing attention by politicians and citizens. The then Regional Assessor for Culture had presented a specific program aimed to valorize the local excellences in the cultural field – mainly theater and cinema – taking into account the important specificities characterizing the frontier region (the presence of ‘minority languages’ worth to be protected was being ratified in those years at the national level with a law that recognized Friuli-Venezia Giulia as home of four of them, namely Friulan, German, Ladin and Slovenian). The law on culture that followed was widely recognized, by politicians and citizens crossing political parties, as an important accomplishment in this sense.

Thus, the launch of the Film Fund in 2003 and the following recognition of ‘Associazione Culturale Film Commission FVG’ as a ‘public service’ organization came for several reasons: the capacity, at the cultural actors level, of giving unity of purpose and package a project to be presented to the local authorities; the favorable political conjuncture, in which the

Municipality of Trieste and the regional authorities found an agreement setting apart the traditional divisional issues between Trieste and the rest of the region; and the results delivered over the years by the group of cultural actors, which are summarized in table 2.

In the case of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, it is likely that the availability of public funding and the public authorities' interest on the audiovisual and cinematic industry for identity reasons favored the development of an institutional infrastructure that permitted the achievement of notable results; however, it is safe to say that without the purposive efforts of a connected group of local actors and people 'embedded' in the local audiovisual field it would not have been possible to build such an infrastructure. Specifically, what the components of the cultural association that then became acknowledged as the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Film Commission were able to do was to mobilize both local (internal) and external actors, thanks to their favorable network position at the local, national and international levels as well, so as to let people in the cinematic field know about the opportunities of shooting in the region. Besides, they were able to lobby the regional authorities to launch the first Film Fund in Italy, a milestone that was promptly followed by other film commissions or analogous regional authorities in the nation. Thus, the 'good disposition' of authorities, relating in part to the reached political consensus about a repositioning of the image of the region as a touristic, 'warm and cozy' place for visitors, was certainly a factor; studies (e.g. Mizzau & Montanari 2008) demonstrate that the deployment of harmonious cultural policy programs in coordination between the local cultural scene and policymakers is strongly related to the possibility to find a common ground or 'overlapping area' between the needs of cultural actors and a 'strategic vision' developed by policymakers. However, the internal networking capacity and strategic unity (as well as determinacy) of local actors was determinant for the achievement of the above presented results.

Thus, it is possible to refer to a peculiar 'institutionalization' process that characterized the establishment and progressive extension of the scope of activities and degree of influence by the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Film Commission association. In fact, a group of actors, previously embedded into the local cultural scene, but formally independent from the actors themselves – i.e., they were connected to managers of local audiovisual associations and firms, but they were not directly involved in those activities – was first listened to, then gradually recognized as part of the institutional infrastructure, at least contributing to – if not setting the rules of the game – administrating and managing the institutional processes of public support (i.e.,

pre-selection of candidate projects, consultative advice in the final evaluation stage). How this process is subject to its own limitations is object of the next section (5).

#### 4.2. 'INSTITUTIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP': LOCAL NETWORK FAILURE AND THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL ACTORS IN VENETO

As we have seen, Veneto was characterized by a different institutional setting as far as audiovisual support activities are concerned.

While the Venice Film Commission was established mainly to rationalize, regulate and unify the administrative actions regarding the complexities of shooting in a such a peculiar landscape as that of the Venice historical city, the regional Film Commission consisted in practice in the appointment of two employees at the regional Direction for Cultural and Entertainment Activities, who were appointed for the coordination the administrative practices and promotion of the regional locations. The Veneto Film Commission also administered the Film Fund, which was established relatively late (the first competition bid was launched in 2010) if compared with the diffusion of such an instrument in Italy and Europe.

As local interviewees revealed, the office was generally deemed to be a fairly efficient one in managing administrative activities and constituting a sort of 'hub' for those operating in the sector. However, they complained about the very organizational framework in which it was placed by local authorities: issues raised were the fact that the people appointed were "not actors of the industry" (i.e., they were bureaucrats instead of expert cinema professionals); that the structure was not "flexible enough" to accomplish external promotion and "entrepreneurial", creative activities regarding for example the capacity of connect producers with financiers or launch special projects; and that for such an activity in a relatively large region "it would have been necessary to follow the approach of the Torino-Piemonte Film Commission, which appointed a tremendously marketing-skilled, 'great salesman'" (interview with Cerasuolo).

But which chain of events led to the choice of such an institutional infrastructure for the regional support to cinema and audiovisual sectors? Interviewees were very clear (and critical) about one point: the general lack of political will to invest – in a meaningful way – in such an

industry at the local level. However, despite the Veneto Region was certainly not at the forefront of institutional interventions in these matters, the history of the internal relationships between local cultural actors and those between them and the local authorities is more instructive in this sense.

The regional film and audiovisual companies and organizations formed an association called CinemaVenetoPRO in 2003. The aims of the association were to constitute a platform where to discuss common issues for the industry actors, achieve coordination among initiatives that could share resources instead of compete with each other, and act as an interface to the public authorities for the resolution of institutional problems. CinemaVenetoPRO had a website and, as explained above (section 3.2), Guido Cerasuolo of Mestiere Cinema was elected as the head of the association. The regional Film Commission responsible participated to the association's meetings from the outset. However, after a few years (in 2006) the association disbanded. Participants lamented the difficulty to reach a strategic vision, the internal differences in the initiatives participating (i.e., from low-budget, local festivals that lasted ten days a year to established and busy market-driven organizations), the difficulty to communicate with prominent institutions in the sector (particularly the Biennale Cinema), the lack of support and vagueness of politicians and policymakers when it came to discuss institutional initiatives.

In the perspective of purposive, interested actors, we could think of CinemaVenetoPRO as an example of “network failure” (Schrank & Whitford 2011), namely an initiative whose aims and usefulness were clear to the actors involved, but where the difficulty of practical realization led to the abandonment of the enterprise. Again, since the platform was intended to involve institutional actors as well, such as the regional Film Commission, their role in the failure of the initiative cannot be downplayed; but my interviews reveal also a general problem with the internal network capability on the cultural actors' side: the failure of the initiative seems attributable to the fact that the actors involved were not able to reach a common vision about how the issues above mentioned could be resolved.

In Veneto, the main developments in the field of public support to the audiovisual industry and the main achievements from the point of view of positive cultural actors-institutions interaction, is represented by the role exerted by some *individual* actors, particularly experienced and endowed with the necessary knowledge industry and reputation so as to be able to influence and convince the seemingly ‘insensitive’ representatives of the local

institutions. Borrowing the definition from neo-institutional sociology, we can name these individuals ‘institutional entrepreneurs’ (Greenwood & Suddaby 2006).

A successful example of ‘institutional entrepreneurship’ is represented by the recent launch of the Venice Film Fund by the special agency of the Chamber of Commerce of Venice. As the interview with Guido Cerasuolo revealed, this was the result of a prolonged effort to convince policymakers and local agencies of the significance of the initiative of launching a Film Fund complementary to that provided by the Regione Veneto (see table 4). The entity of the fund has been, not surprisingly, a matter of debate between the local actors – and particularly Cerasuolo – and the responsible of the agency at the Chamber of Commerce. The main issue<sup>26</sup> relates to the fact that it is important to reach a minimum threshold when making available film funds: in fact, film funds of this kind are usually approached in order to ‘reach closure’ of a project which is already financed by other sources, but since the average budget for European feature film productions is between €3 and 5 million (KEA 2008), it is difficult to consider attractive a fund that could cover, in its entirety, less than the 3% of the total budget of one single project.

--- INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE ---

Nonetheless, Cerasuolo recognized it as an important achievement to have convinced a key institutional actor – the responsible of a special agency dedicated to innovative activities – of the relevance of film public support. Such an achievement is intended as a first step to be followed by further efforts to ‘raise the stakes’, i.e. enlarging the fund and making it thus far more attractive than it is now. Accordingly, Cerasuolo declared that “we greet this achievement as an important result in ‘educating’ the institutional actors we have to deal with about the importance of the audiovisual industry in the current economy... hoping that in the future it will be become 1 million, 10 million and so on” (personal interview).

This seems to be an interesting example of ‘institutional entrepreneurship’: an (individual) embedded actor, recognized as a very important part of the local industry, and thus well-reputed also among policymakers, was able to negotiate and build such an important institutional arrangement as a new film fund for the region. The self-interest of this

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<sup>26</sup> It is obvious that local actors request amounts of funding that are as much large as possible. By ‘main issue’ here I refer to an argument different from “asking the largest possible amount of money”.

institutional entrepreneur is evident: Cerasuolo is the founder and managing director of Mestiere Cinema, a company that would greatly benefit from productions coming to shoot in Veneto thanks to its dominant position in the local executive production and cinema services<sup>27</sup>; however, the recent institutional history of the Veneto region demonstrates how it is those powerful, ‘elite’ (Greenwood & Suddaby 2006) actors which are typically endowed with the mobilizing capability, reputation and determinacy to influence – via negotiation with policymakers and competent authorities – the institutional framework. That ‘institutional thickness’ is partly reached thanks to power and dominance relationship is a fact recognized by economic geographers that have studied such a phenomenon (see Coulson & Ferrario 2007). This seems to hold all the more in presence of ‘network failure’ and coordination difficulties exhibited by the local cultural actors.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

An immediate research implication is that it is interesting to closely look at the interaction between cultural actors and institutions when examining local cultural industries production systems. This is because different patterns in this interaction seem to be associated with very different results, both in terms of ‘influence’ of actors on institutions, and of functioning and outcomes of the system (e.g. films produced, external productions attracted, economic sustainability, etc.).

For example, the case of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Film Commission demonstrates that motivated and coordinated actors can matter to film cultural policy, to the point of being ‘institutionalized’ into the policy system, albeit with a residual, inevitable degree of accountability to, and dependence on, the administrators and political decisions. This case seems to point to the fact that internally cohesive cultural actors may ‘account more’ for the institutional framework adopted and realized, because of their unity of action and strategic vision. Moreover, the credit they were able to gain in the eyes of policymakers enacted them to a further extension of their range of action (administration of the Film Fund, 5-year convention with the Region), because they had the possibility to demonstrate measurable

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<sup>27</sup> These are services that need, by their very nature, to be localized in the places where the producing companies have planned to shoot in.

results (number of production attracted and of local employees and economic turnover mobilized). Importantly, after the positive experience of the Associazione Friuli-Venezia Giulia Film Commission, the Fondo Audiovisivo FVG was created based on the same governance mode of the Film Commission, thus replicating a model that has so far demonstrated to be successful and sustainable in terms both of actors-institutions interaction and outcomes.

Conversely, in Veneto, the incapacity of local cultural actors in devising a common agenda to be submitted to and negotiated with policymakers was a major factor in the development of a delayed and less effective institutional framework developed for the sector. Moreover, the creation of the Film Commission within a pre-existing regional office did not help in improving the institutional arrangements, nor in overcoming the practical difficulties of the cinema-related support activities; besides, the claims of cultural actors could not be effectively promoted through such an institutional structure. While such an institutional framework is not the only condition that led to differences in results between the two regions (a less favorable attitude of politicians towards cultural industries and representational issues, as well as disproportionately lower financial endowments were also key<sup>28</sup>), recent improvements in public support to the industry (e.g., the launch of the Venice Film & Media Fund) point, again, to the peculiar role that one of the actors exerted as an ‘institutional entrepreneur’.

--- INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE ---

From an organizational and governance point of view, it is important to examine the advantages and shortcomings of the two patterns (table 5). The Friuli-Venezia Giulia one refers to a ‘buffered’ governance model, where two private, independent actors (the ‘Associazione Friuli-Venezia Giulia Film Commission’ and the ‘Associazione Fondo Audiovisivo FVG’) are given mandate by the regional authorities to manage the most important processes in matter of public support to the film and audiovisual industry. The advantages are those related to higher organizational flexibility, a close sensitivity to local

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<sup>28</sup> Moreover, personal interviews highlighted the fact that the presence of institutions such as the Biennale Cinema foundation – involved with national- and international-level cinematic activities and thus not preoccupied with the development of the local industry – did not facilitate the formation of an internal platform for local cultural actors.

actors' demands, and the possibility of composing interest conflicts internal to the local actors' field, thanks to the fact that those organizations *come from the field*, but *do not coincide with* one or more of the actors that could potentially benefit of the advantages (grants, etc.). The most important disadvantage is the degree and mode of dependence of cultural actors from policymakers, authorities and politicians as well, who could withdraw or reduce the trust and delegated power given to the organizations, whenever they do not conform to their value systems or parameters. Recent developments in the relationships between the political system and the Associazione Friuli Venezia Giulia Film Commission may testify such potential difficulties<sup>29</sup>.

On the other side, more 'institutionally integrated' systems such as that at work in Veneto have the advantage of allowing for a total separation, in principle, between the actors (the potential beneficiaries) and the institutions (those who grant the benefits), thus avoiding potential conflicts of interest. The most notable disadvantage – and one of the most visible evidences emerged from this study – is a reduced capacity, by less powerful actors, to influence (and be considered by) policymakers, even though the former may carry out valuable claims for the development of the sector. Moreover, the lower flexibility of the internal governance mode of Film Commission Veneto and the lower competence and commitment of people in charge of it, were also evident in my interviewees' view on the functioning of the audiovisual support system in the region.

Another potential problem deals with the fact that the actors capable of influencing the institutional framework via institutional entrepreneurship are those most established and endowed with more power, and that this could lead to institutional arrangements reflecting the self-serving interests of these powerful actors. In fact, in the institutional entrepreneurship model (e.g. Greenwood & Suddaby 2006), it is predicted that the actors able to be granted attention are those that are more acknowledged as experienced, that coincide with an elite group. Coe (2000) highlighted the critical role played by personal networks in sustaining the performance of the Vancouver film industry. The case of Veneto makes no exception: it is the most powerful actors that are able to more likely influence the local institutional framework, thanks to a higher level of embeddedness at the local level (i.e. connection with other cultural

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<sup>29</sup> In particular, the funding granted to the film project "La bella addormentata", directed by the renown Italian director Marco Bellocchio, generated a hot political debate based on local politicians' strenuous ideological opposition to the themes treated in the film (i.e., living will). It followed a discussion on the organizational future of the Film Commission that could impact on the governance model here described. Events are still in progress at the time of writing and deserve close attention.

actors) and reputation (at both the local and trans-local levels). However, while benefiting from the new institutional arrangements, they importantly contribute to the growth of the whole local system of actors, and they may carry out those ‘institutional entrepreneurship’ efforts with no direct incentive, precisely since they are the ones that are better able to compete in the local and trans-local arena even if they are not sustained by appropriate (local) institutional mechanisms<sup>30</sup>. As the major institutional entrepreneur revealed me in an interview, he could have also avoided to embark in the project of VenetoCinemaPRO association, or the one of lobbying for the Venice Film & Media Fund<sup>31</sup>, since if he could decide it, he “prefers not to shoot in Venice” due to the higher organizational complexity if compared to other locations in Veneto or even Italy. He pursued such efforts motivated by a cooperative mindset that, he perceived, was “lacking in the region” and by a strong will to “change the mentality of local policymakers”. Thus, this evidence points again to the argument that actors use purposively their power and can decide how to use it (Giddens 1984), and how they use it can have very different consequences on the ‘configuration of the system’, which in this case is constituted by the local institutional setting in the field of film and audiovisual production.

Finally, it is possible to comment on the argument that “history matters”, which has been developed quite differently depending on the various research traditions that dealt with industrial and cultural districts or local systems of productions. In the two cases examined, it was true that history mattered: if Veneto, despite a recent institutional framework that was not very supportive, was able to develop some local excellences, was certainly due to the ‘cultural germs’ historically present in the region. However, it was also evident that a difficult interaction between cultural actors and institutions and misplaced cultural policies risk to undermine those historical endowments. Conversely, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, which could not count on a comparable relevant tradition in the film and audiovisual sectors except for some historical ‘cineclubs’, was able to build, in a few years, a local system that achieved important results in terms of local entrepreneurship and development of competences. This, again, was made possible – or at least strongly favored – by a committed group of local actors that was able to ‘intercept’ the local political ‘hot issues’ and intertwine them with the interests of the

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<sup>30</sup> This is consistent with the counter-argument, in recent neo-institutional theory, that it is less-established, marginal actors that are more interested to pursue institutional change (e.g. Leblebici et al. 1991; Kraatz & Moore 2002).

<sup>31</sup> It is worth to recall that the VF&MF grant is conditional on the obligation to shoot within the administrative borders of the Province of Venice.

local industry development.

This study has some limitations, pointing to possible future directions of development of the present research.

Firstly, it would be interesting to investigate why some powerful actors operating on a trans-local scale do not ‘emigrate’, in search of better institutional frameworks, and instead decide to remain in the place where they come from, embarking themselves into difficult efforts of institutional entrepreneurship and change to survive and to improve the whole system. Drawing on the cases of Jole Film, Mestiere Cinema and other Venetian entities (not reported in this paper), one could speculate that personal and affective reasons, as well as – perhaps more interestingly – reasons related to the sourcing of local cultural themes (e.g., Power & Scott 2004) are key in those decisions. It is probably this kind of reasons that gives some actors the commitment to influence local institutions. How external actors, expatriates and actors sharing multiple identities (e.g. people who relocated elsewhere but who feel tied to their places of origin) matter in mobilizing this commitment is left for a future development of the present study.

Moreover, it was not possible to delve into the conditions that impede internal cohesiveness, networking or coordination capability on the side of cultural actors. Future studies may try to investigate what kind of factors (spatial, cognitive, cultural and/or social) are likely to prevent cultural actors to develop an internal ‘networking capability’ or cohesiveness.

Finally, it would also be fruitful to allow for comparisons between the two systems analyzed here and other cases of film production institutional frameworks. For example, evidence (e.g. Versace et al. 2008) has identified the Piedmont system as an internationally-renown best practice; it would be instructive to compare the seemingly directive, ‘top-down’ – albeit successful – Piedmont system to the cases examined here, to refine theoretical insights on institutional influence, patterns of interaction, and their relationships with outcomes. Also, other cases in Europe are suitable for a comparative analysis that can further aid in the understanding of the reciprocal dynamics of cultural industries’ actors and institutions.

Table 1 – Key informants interviewed

<b>ID</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Province/Area</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Organization / Institution Name</b>	<b>Organizational form</b>	<b>Type of activity</b>
1	FVG	Trieste	Executive	La Cappella Underground (Science+Fiction Festival)	Private association	Festival / Media library
2	FVG	Udine	Founder; Executive	CEC / Centro Espressioni Cinematografiche	Private association	Exhibition / Festival / Production <sup>32</sup>
3	FVG	Udine	Founder; Executive	CEC / Centro Espressioni Cinematografiche	Private association	Exhibition / Festival / Production <sup>32</sup>
4	FVG	Trieste	President	Associazione Film Commission Friuli-Venezia Giulia	Private association	Institutional / Provision of services
5	FVG	Udine	Managing Director	Associazione Fondo Audiovisivo FVG	Private association	Institutional
6	FVG	Pordenone	Founder; Executive	Cinemazero	Private association	Exhibition / Festival / Production <sup>32</sup>
7	FVG	Udine	Assistant professor of Management	University of Udine	Public university	Research
8	TN/BZ	Bolzano	Provincial Councillor for the Arts & Culture	Autonomous Province of Bozen, Italian Partition	Public body	Institutional
9	TN/BZ	Bolzano	Managing Director	Media Library of Bozen (Italian Language)	Public body	Media library

<sup>32</sup> The production stage is covered by a limited responsibility enterprise named Tucker Film, recently founded through a partnership between CEC and Cinemazero.

10	Veneto	Venezia	Director	Municipality of Venice, Department of Cultural Activities	Public body	Institutional
11	Veneto	Venezia	Executive	Region of Veneto, Direction for Cultural and Entertainment Activities, Film Commission Office	Public body	Institutional / Provision of services
12	Veneto	Padova	Founder; Managing Director	Jole Film	Limited responsibility enterprise	Production
13	Veneto	Treviso	Founder; Managing Director	Lago FilmFest	Private association	Festival
14	Veneto	Venezia	Founder; Managing Director	Mestiere Cinema; APE (National Association of Executive Producers)	Limited responsibility enterprise	Executive production
15	Veneto	Treviso	Founder; Managing Director	Big Rock	Limited responsibility enterprise	Specialized training
16	Veneto	Treviso	Founder; Managing Director	Big Rock	Limited responsibility enterprise	Specialized training

Table 2 – Friuli-Venezia Giulia Film Commission: Results achieved in terms of incoming productions attracted and assisted (Source: Associazione Friuli-Venezia Giulia Film Commission, internal document)

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of productions</b>	<b>No. of work days</b>	<b>Local professionals employed</b>	<b>Local actors<sup>33</sup> employed</b>	<b>Amount spent in FVG<sup>34</sup> (€ x 1000)</b>
2003	20	473	174	103	4,406
2004	18	399	162	102	4,136
2005	24	520	163	120	5,675
2006	20	506	146	107	4,446
2007	22	569	185	96	7,747
2008	26	643	230	88	7,511
2009	24	631	222	96	7,060
2010	25	611	213	97	7,312
2011	22	588	241	128	7,441

<sup>33</sup> In this case, the term “actors” refer to the profession of acting.

<sup>34</sup> By the producers that received a contribution from the Film Fund. The calculation here is certain (i.e., not based on estimation), based on the invoices that the beneficiaries of the Film Fund had to present once the production was complete.

Table 3 – Institutional history of the film & audiovisual public support in Friuli-Venezia Giulia

Relevant cultural actors and institutions	Institutional frameworks	Institutional aims and Governance models	Laws & Regulations	Economic endowments (last tenders)
<p>Cultural actors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Associazione 'FVG FC'</li> <li>- Associazione Fondo Audiovisivo FVG</li> </ul> <p>Institutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Municipality of Trieste</li> <li>- Regional Parliament</li> <li>- Regional</li> </ul>	<p>- Associazione 'FVG FC' is a private cultural association born and located in Trieste which received mandate from the Regional Council to manage the administrative activities related to film shooting in FVG since 2000.</p> <p>From 2003 onwards its activities extended to the management of activities related to the Film Fund (see below) by an year-by-year convention with the Regional executive council.</p>	<p>- FVG Film Fund's aims were exclusively economic: to take film industry production companies to shoot in the region, stimulating the local demand for specialized and related services and "stimulating tourism"<sup>35</sup>. It finances as wide a range of audiovisual products as possible (including advertisements and commercials, videoclips, etc.).</p> <p>The projects evaluation committee is formed by executives of the Assessorships for Productive Activities; the president of the FVG FC may – but need not – be consulted.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1984 Cultural activities law</li> <li>- 2006 'Cinema Law'</li> <li>- Internal regulations of the two Funds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FVG Film Fund: avg. €300k/year</li> <li>- Fondo Audiovisivo FVG Fund: avg. €200k/year</li> </ul>

<sup>35</sup> FVG laws and regulations do not explicitly articulate the connection between shooting films in one place and increases in tourism demand of that place (the so-called 'cinetourism' phenomenon, although some interviewees did).

<p>executive council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regional Assessorship for Productive Activities</li> <li>- FVG Film Fund</li> <li>- Fondo Audiovisivo FVG Fund</li> </ul>	<p>From 2006 the convention was with Regional Assessorship for Productive Activities on a 5-years basis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FVG Film Fund was established in 2003, depending on the Regional Assessorship for Productive Activities, and was aimed to</li> <li>- Associazione 'Fondo Audiovisivo FVG' is a private cultural association constituted at the moment of the creation of Fondo Audiovisivo FVG, and</li> <li>- Fondo Audiovisivo FVG Fund was established in 2006 as an outgrowth of the 'Cinema Law'. It is located in Udine and operates on a 5-years convention with the Regional Assessorship for Productive Activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fondo Audiovisivo FVG Fund was conceived as complementary to FVG Film Fund, and it aimed to develop the local audiovisual industry with separate financial grants dedicated to Development, Marketing/Distribution and Training. It does not finance commissioned products such as advertisements and commercials. The fund manages all the activities of pre-selection and consultancy to candidates. The evaluation committee is nominated by regional executives depending on the Department for Tourism and Productive Activities; the president of the Fondo Audiovisivo FVG Fund is part of the committee, along with four audiovisual experts a one member nominated by a financing contributor to the Fund.</li> </ul>		
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Table 4 - Institutional history of the film & audiovisual public support in Veneto

Relevant cultural actors and institutions	Institutional frameworks	Institutional aims and Governance models	Laws & Regulations	Economic endowments (last tenders)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Region of Veneto</li> <li>- Municipality of Venice</li> <li>- Other Municipalities</li> <li>- Venezia Opportunità (Chamber of Commerce of Venice)</li> <li>- Veneto FC</li> <li>- Venice FC</li> <li>- Vicenza FC</li> <li>- Padova FC</li> <li>- Polesine FC</li> <li>- Verona FC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Veneto FC was established in 2000 as an office within the Direction for Cultural Activities and Entertainment of the Region of Veneto.</li> <li>Since 2009 it administrates the applications for the Veneto Film Fund.</li> <li>- Venezia Opportunità is a special provincial development agency with the aim of aiding the development in innovative sectors</li> <li>- Venice FC is an office established within the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Veneto Film Fund is aimed to the development of the local industry and the related induced economic effects on the region.</li> <li>The evaluation committee is formed by a group of experts nominated by the - Regional executive council among cultural activities executives into regional bodies, university professors in cinema and economics matters, and cinema critics. The regional employees in charge of Veneto FC participate to the evaluation meetings but do not have right of vote.</li> <li>- Venice Film &amp; Media Fund was officially launched in September 2012, following a pilot experiment (€30k financing for the feature film Effie in 2010/2011).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2009 'Cinema Law'</li> <li>- Internal regulations of the two funds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Veneto Film Fund: avg. €300k + €40k (reserved to producers with seat in Veneto)</li> <li>Venice Film &amp; Media Fund (1st year): €100k</li> </ul>

<p>- Marca Treviso FC</p> <p>- Veneto Film Fund</p> <p>- Venice Film &amp; Media Fund</p>	<p>Direction for Cultural Activities and Productions of the Municipality of Venice</p> <p>- Veneto Film Fund was created in 2009 after the release of the 'Cinema Law'</p>	<p>It is aimed to attract cinema and television productions to the Province of Venice, which can “develop the local economy, employment, promotion and enhancement of the area, as well as create jobs for students from local universities and vocational retraining of workers from other industries”<sup>36</sup>.</p> <p>It finances as wide a range of audiovisual products as possible (including advertisements and commercials, videoclips, etc.).</p> <p>The financial grants are paid directly by the Chamber of Commerce to suppliers, and thus not need to be anticipated by producers.</p> <p>The evaluation committee is formed by executives nominated by Venezia Opportunità, the Venice Chamber of Commerce, and the Municipality of Venice.</p>		
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<sup>36</sup> Quoted from the brochure of the Venice Film & Media Fund, p.2.

Table 5 – Summary of conclusions

Patterns	Advantages	Disadvantages or threats
<b>Institutionalisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of support activities is carried out by actors closer to the field</li> <li>• Flexibility</li> <li>• Entrepreneurial attitude (proactivity and initiative)</li> <li>• Possibility to change the power distribution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential subjection of delegated actors by powerful institutions</li> <li>• Withdrawal of delegation in case of in compliant behavior</li> <li>• Non-institutionalised actors may be excluded</li> </ul>
<b>Institutional entrepreneurship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear distinction between cultural actors and institutional actors</li> <li>• Possibility to use established actors' power to improve the institutional framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low influence capacity</li> <li>• Lower flexibility</li> <li>• (Most powerful) institutional entrepreneurs may act by self-interest</li> </ul>

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