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# Documenting Post-Communism: Romanian non-fiction film industry (1989 – 2004)

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## Abstract

My thesis analyzes the Romanian non-fiction film industry from 1989 to 2004 by engaging with Bourdieu's theories regarding the different types of capital and the field of cultural production. Equally important, the concept of 'trajectory adjustment' proposed by Eyal, Szélenyi and Townsley enables to understand the relations between the post-communist institutions and the agents from the social space present in the non-fiction film industry. The main purpose of the study is to reveal the factors which determined the success of a particular group of filmmakers at the European festivals in 2004 and to explain the reasons behind the failure of the state-owned institutions.

The interviews that I have conducted with Alexandru Solomon, Laurențiu Damian and Nicolae Mărgineanu, important filmmakers from this period offered an important insight of the documentary film industry, by stressing relevant details concerning the production, distribution and exhibition of the films. On the other hand, the research in the *Sahia* Studio's Archive provided me useful information about the Studio during the first decade after the fall of communism.

The conclusion of the study will reveal the significance of the cultural capital in post-communist societies. On the one hand, the *Sahia* Studio failed to impose itself on the national and European level because it could not take advantage on the long run of its economic and social capital. This determined the exodus of the talented young filmmakers, hence, of the cultural capital. On the other hand, the cultural capital gained by the young generation of filmmakers by collaborating with the European programs and television companies enabled them to impose a new hierarchy in the industry.

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## Introduction

On the night of 22-23 December 1989, generals Iulian Vlad (the Chief of the *Securitate*) and Stefan Gușă (the Chief of the Army) assumed the power simultaneously with other groups in the attempt to prevent the chaos after the flight of Ceaușescu. In the headquarter of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the two generals commanded their units, announced the Soviet Embassy that their military support was not needed and tried to limit the effect of the news from the television. The ‘Night of the Generals,’ as it was later named, was not broadcasted live as the events from the National Television, but the moment is symbolic for our study: the communist system lived its last days and will die together with its last leader in a few days, while in the building which represented one of its centers, a new type of system was about to be born, marked by the attempt of copying the Western Institutions and to implement capitalism. The evidence of these events would have been probably covered in oblivion and confusion as many other moments of the Revolution, had not been for the footage captured by the operator Adrian Sârbu from *Alexandru Sahia Studio*.<sup>1</sup> The tape of the events and the proximity of the new political figures propelled Adrian Sârbu among the most influential media actors in post-communist Romania. In a sense, the moment brings along the elements that will be recurrent during the study of the documentary film industry in Romania after 1989, namely the change of the political system, the apparition of new figures that benefited from their prestige to find a better place in the social space, the importance of film footage in documenting the events and the significance of the context in which the footage is produced.

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<sup>1</sup> Footage from the night at the Central Committee available online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I83Cl75Bwco&feature=relmfu>

My thesis analyzes the Romanian documentary film industry in the first 15 years after the fall of communism. In tracing the evolution from a state dependent industry to a European success story marked by the official selection at the International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam 2004, I will go one step back and concentrate on the context that determined the change in production, funding, distribution and exhibition of documentaries. On the one hand, the only specialized institution in documentary production before 1989, *Alexandru Sahia Studio*, almost collapsed at the end of the nineties, once the state incentives were cut-off, while the second, *Video Publishing House* was “identified [by the young filmmakers] as the epitome of irrelevant documentary, unable to attend the pressing social and political issues raised by Romania’s present.”<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the young directors started collaborating with the new independent companies such as AGERFILM<sup>3</sup> or *Fundația Arte Vizuale*<sup>4</sup> and, towards the end of the first decade, established their own companies. Moreover, they understood that the collaboration with the European programs and televisions companies would represent not just a challenge, but also a decisive factor for their careers. This evolution towards a consumption-oriented system affected the documentary film industry which had to face new problems.

Focusing only on the documentary film industry, the study completes the previous works dedicated to the subject, but neglected the background of the film industry. The film critics tend to concentrate on the subject of the film, rather than on the conditions that determined the release of the documentaries. However, it would be unfair to omit the significant studies from this realm, such as Brădeanu’s article that concentrates precisely on collapse of the *Sahia Studio*, the weekly

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<sup>2</sup> Adina Brădeanu, “Death and Documentary: Memory and Film Practice in Post-communist Romania”, *KinoKultura*, 6 (2007), available online at <http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/6/romanian.shtml>, accessed May, 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Founded by director Nicolae Mărgineanu in 1993; the website is available at <http://www.agerfilm.ro/>, accessed May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> *Fundația Arte Vizuale* [Visual Art Foundation], company of filmmakers Vivi Drăgan Vasile and Velvet Moraru was established in 1992; for more details, visit <http://www.fav.ro/en.html>, accessed May, 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

columns published by film critic Valerian Sava in *Observator Cultural*<sup>5</sup> or Mihai Fulger's interviews and articles.<sup>6</sup>

I will argue that the strategy followed by the *Sahia Studio* led to an institutional collapse, thus to a limited recognition at national or European level and the success of the young generation of filmmakers from 2004 was determined by a re-consideration of the role of documentaries and by the collaboration with the European funding Programs and television companies.

In order to demonstrate the relevance of the argument, a series of questions need to be asked: can the transition from state-dependent industry to market-oriented business be understood beyond the film industry level and what is the relevance of this approach? How did the dynamics of national and European film industries affect the documentary filmmakers? To what extent can we differentiate between the types of documentaries proposed by the producers and filmmakers and how does a choice influence the production, distribution and the relationship with the audience. Or is it rather the other way round? The second series of questions intend to explain the reasons of the state-institutions' decline and the motives for the success of the young filmmakers: how did the legislation and the political changes influenced the industry; why did the directors founded their independent companies and what were the results?

For the purpose of answering the questions, I have conducted a series of interviews with director and producer Nicolae Mărgineanu (December 2011, Bucharest), Laurențiu Damian (director, professor at "The National University of Drama and Cinema", manager of the Video Publishing House) and Alexandru Solomon (director and producer). Of particular importance

<sup>5</sup> Valerian, Sava, *Observator Cultural*, 2000 – 2004, available online at [http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Proiect-Simpozionul-National-pentru-Refondarea-Cinematografiei\\*authorID\\_15-pageID\\_26-authors\\_details.html](http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Proiect-Simpozionul-National-pentru-Refondarea-Cinematografiei*authorID_15-pageID_26-authors_details.html)

<sup>6</sup> Mihai Fulger's blog <http://mihaifulger.wordpress.com/author/mihaifulger/> and „*Noul val*” în cinematografia românească, [“The New Wave” in the Romanian Cinema], Bucharest: Grup Editorial ART, 2006

was the research at the *Sahiafilm* Archive, were I had the opportunity to watch the documentaries produced by the Studio in the first years after the Revolution, which I analyze in the second chapter.

For the theoretical overview of post-communism, I engaged with the ‘trajectory adjustment’ theory introduced by the Eyal, Szélenyi and Townsley<sup>7</sup> and investigate to what extent this can be helpful in explaining the transition from the state-dependent industry to a market-oriented system. Combining the evolutionary and the involutory theories regarding the transition, the ‘trajectory adjustment’ will enable to understand the documentary film industry in the context that marked its evolution and explain the milieu that determined the success of a particular group of filmmakers and the failure of the state-owned companies.

The reference to Bourdieu’s concepts of ‘cultural, economic or politic capital’ is relevant for explaining the success of a particular category of social actors. Decreasing the scale or rather changing the lens and coming near to the ‘field of the cultural production’, namely the film industry, I suggest an accurate identification of the institutions involved in production, distribution and exhibition with the concepts of used by Eyal&all. Accordingly, the studies of Jäckel<sup>8</sup> and Finney<sup>9</sup> regarding the film industry and the meaningful studies regarding film festivals belonging to Dina Iordanova will reveal the significance of these places of exhibition in the film industry. Adjusting the scale to the realm of documentaries, in order to explain the variety of modes of representation and the different techniques used by the filmmakers to represent the view of reality, I will refer mostly to Stella Bruzzi<sup>10</sup> and Bill Nichols<sup>11</sup> as main

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<sup>7</sup> Gil Eyal, Iván Szélenyi and Eleanor Townsley, *Making capitalism without capitalists: class formation and elite struggles in post-communist Central Europe*, (London: Verso, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> Anne Jäckel, *European film industries*, (London: British Film Institute, 2003).

<sup>9</sup> Angus Finney, *The international film business: a market guide beyond Hollywood* (London, New York: Routledge, 2010), 222.

<sup>10</sup> Stella Bruzzi, *New documentary*, (London, New York: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Bill Nichols, *Representing reality: issues and concepts in documentary*, (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1991)

theoreticians of the genre and to Laurențiu Damian<sup>12</sup> in order to map the Romanian documentary film industry.

However, the approaches cannot extensively cover such a topic: the lack of sources regarding the history of *Sahiafilm* after 1989 from an institutional perspective together with the absence of magazines dedicated to documentaries makes difficult to reconstruct. In addition, the inevitable disputes between the filmmakers and film critics, not to mention the permanent accusation of imposture and incompetence addressed to the top managers of the public institutions lead to prudence when dealing with this topic, especially when addressed by an outsider in the film industry. Hence, there is a certain complication in drawing risky conclusions or making assumptions difficult to prove.

The first research chapter investigates, on the one hand, the decline of the state-owned studio, *Sahiafilm* by analyzing the legislation, the influence of the political factors and the strategies followed by the managers as means of adapting to the new requirements. Equally important, besides the interview with Damian, I will examine a couple films produced by Sahia which reveal one of the strategies adopted after 1989, namely the recovery of the alternative histories and memories hidden before 1989, such as *Să nu ne răzbunați/Do not revenge us*, (Mihai Constantinescu, 1995), *Timișoara 89*, (Ovidiu Bose Paștină, 1990) or *Panc* (Sabina Pop, 1990).

The second research chapter compares five movies produced by independent filmmakers: Alexandru Solomon *Marele Jaf communist/The Great Communist Bank Robbery* (2004), Florin Iepan *Născuți la comandă: Decreșii/Children of the Decree* (2004), Dumitru Budrală *Blestemul ariciului/The Curse of the Hedgehog* (2004), Ileana Stănculescu *Podul/The Bridge* (2004), and

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<sup>12</sup> Laurențiu Damian, *Despre documentar...si inca ceva in plus*, [About documentaries...and something more], (Bucharest: Editura Tehnică, 2003).

Thomas Ciulei *Asta e/Europolis* (2001) in terms of intention, production, distribution and audience. The comparisios will reveal the reasons for funding the companies and the impact of the collaboration with the European programs and television companies.

Examining the history of the Romanian cinema from 1897 to 2000,”<sup>13</sup> film critic Călin Căliman offers a useful insight of the film industry (including the first ten years of post-communism), by examining the documentaries that were produced in this timeframe, the directors and the producers. In the chapter dedicated to documentaries, Căliman reviews the films a series of documentaries either released by *Sahiafilm*, or produced by private companies. Among the limitations of his analysis, one can enlist the lack of references regarding the audience as well as the role of the state institutions that assured the financial support or the distribution of the films. The other synthesis of the history of Romanian film, written by Valerian Sava<sup>14</sup> has as an ending point the year 1989, but provides valuable information regarding the *Alexandru Sahia Studio* during communism.

Previously, I mentioned the absence of magazines dedicated to the documentaries. Between 1990 and 2004 there were a couple of attempts to found cinema magazines, such as “ECRAN” Magazine (1991-1992) edited by the *Department of Cinema Halls Network and the Distribution of Film in Romania* and *Noul Cinema/The New Cinema* (1990-1998), or *ProCinema*, but regrettably for my topic, they were more concerned with fiction films rather with documentaries. After 2000, the weekly *Observator Cultural* [Cultural Observatory] has a special column dedicated to film, where important issues regarding legislation or the support for the ‘New Wave’ were discussed by Valerian Sava, Mihai Chirilov or Laurențiu Damian

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<sup>13</sup> Călin Căliman, *Istoria filmului românesc 1897 -2000*, [*The history of the Romanian film 1897-2000*], (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> Valerian Sava, *Istoria critică a filmului românesc contemporan*, [*The critic history of the Romanian contemporary film*], (Bucharest: Editura Meridiane, 1999).

Following the success of Romanian New Wave marked by the triumphs of directors such as Cristi Puiu or Cristian Mungiu at Cannes in 2004 and 2007, the international media turned their attention to the Romanian Cinema, simultaneous with the release of the new documentaries of Solomon or Iepan. Therefore, the issue eight of *Moveast*,<sup>15</sup> a scholarly journal published by the Hungarian National Film Archive included relevant articles signed by Valerian Sava and Alexandru Solomon, and to the *Kinokultura* online journal (volume 6/2007)<sup>16</sup>, dedicated one special issue to the Romanian Cinema. In *Kinokultura*, Adina Brădeanu's<sup>17</sup> crucial article opens a new perspective on the evolution of the documentaries and announces a captivating insight of the post-communist dynamics of *Sahia Studio*. Although the article offers little insight on the audience and distribution, it convincingly argues against the announced death of the documentary film industry, drawing a consistent line between the collapse of the state-driven institutions and the new producers that do not depend on their financial support. Brădeanu concludes that if the "death" was valid, this regarded only the state institutions. These extensive studies, collaborated with the reviews of the Romanian critics (such as the special issues of *Cultura*<sup>18</sup> or *Dilema Veche*<sup>19</sup> dedicated to documentaries) enable us to understand not just the documentaries, but also the context which determined their production.

My interviews with the directors of documentaries prove to be one of the few reliable methods of accessing the information. From the interview conducted with Alexandru Solomon important issues regarding production were discussed, while the interviews with Florin Iepan or

<sup>15</sup> *Moveast*, International Film Periodical, 8 (2002).

<sup>16</sup> KinoKultura, Special Issues 6: Romanian Cinema, May 2007, available online at <http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/6/romanian.shtml>, accessed May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Adina Brădeanu, "Death and Documentary: Memory and Film Practice in Post-communist Romania", *KinoKultura*, 6 (2007), available online at <http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/6/romanian.shtml>, accessed May, 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Mihai Fulger, Mihai Sturza, "Documentarul românesc: între Sahia și Discovery", ["Romanian Documentary: between Sahia and Discovery"], *Cultura*, 48 (2006), available online at <http://www.romaniaculturala.ro/articol.php?cod=7029>.

<sup>19</sup> *Dilema Veche*, 188 (2007).

Thomas Ciulei are relevant in terms of intentions and meaning of the film, concentrating on the decision to collaborate with the European Programs and Televisions. On the other hand, the interview with Laurențiu Damian, one of the most important directors of documentaries before 1989 at Sahia and manager of the *Video Publishing House* offered important insights regarding the Sahia Studio.

The reviews gathered by [liternet.ro](http://www.liternet.ro)<sup>20</sup> cover mostly the documentaries produced by independent filmmakers: from this perspective, my subject is balanced in favor of the movies that received the most attention such as Solomon's *The Great Communist Bank Robbery* or Iepan's *The Children of the Decree*. The rest of the resources that I have used during the research will appear during the study.

The thesis title can be read twofold: on the one hand, the movies analyzed involved with topics about the Romanian post-communism such as dealing with the socialist traumas (the abortion and the hidden crimes, propaganda, Jewish question), with the difficulties to adapt to the transition or with the question regarding the minorities and the relation with the neighboring countries. Hence, the stress lays on the topic of the documentaries. On the other hand, the way in which the films were produced represent themselves evidence of the Romanian post-communist film industry. Changing the type of production, dealing with the decline of the state control in the economy and migrating towards Europe's model was not a process characteristic only to the documentary film industry, but it can be considered representative to the Romanian society. Therefore, the production companies can be perceived as models of adapting to post-communism.

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<sup>20</sup> Liternet Publishing House, available online at <http://www.liternet.ro/>.

# Chapter 1: Three approaches to the post-communist non-fiction film industry

## ***Social theories: from a state-owned system towards a market oriented business***

The first level of my study will enable to understand the macro level of the topic, namely the changes from a state-owned system in 1989 to the market oriented business, dominated by independent producers and the infusion of European capital, without a total separation from the state incentives. Therefore, within the framework of post-communism,<sup>1</sup> I will engage with a series of concepts regarding the social change that affected the Central European societies, generalizing the characteristics of the transition and particularizing on the realm of documentary film industry.

The socialist states were characterized by the Party's control in the cultural domain, including film industry where it administrated production, distribution and exhibition of the films. Although not in the same intensity during the period, Faraday argues that the cultural production was characterized by state monopoly, bureaucratic control and aesthetic-ideological orthodoxy.<sup>2</sup> While the monopoly meant that the 'creative workers' were allowed to work "only in corporate institutions established by the state,"<sup>3</sup> the bureaucratic control manifested in the supervision of the managers who ruled the institutions; the latter feature refer to the fact that "all

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<sup>1</sup> Why "post-communism" and not "post-socialism"? Although the thesis address to the social realm, the studies consulted refer mainly to the topic of "post-communism": (Gil Eyal, Ivan Szelenyi and Elanor Townsley, *Making capitalism without capitalists: class formation and elite struggles in post-communist Central Europe*, (London: Verso, 1998), Richard Sakwa, *Post-communism*, (Philadelphia, Penn: Open University Press, 1999), Alexandru Matei, *Mormântul comunismului românesc*, [*The grave of the Romanian communism*], (Bucharest: IBU Publishing, 2011), Adrian T. Sârbu, Alexandru Polgar, *Genealogii ale post-comunismului*, [*Genealogies of the post-communism*], (Cluj: Idea Publishing House, 2010). Therefore, I will prefer this term for not creating confusion between the concept used by the authors and the different way I would be using it.

<sup>2</sup> George Faraday, *Revolt of the filmmakers* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 52-53.

<sup>3</sup> Faraday, *Revolt...*, 52.

authorized cultural producers were expected to conform to a single system of aesthetic and ideological norms established by the Party leadership.”<sup>4</sup>

In Romania, the Romanian Workers’ Party<sup>5</sup> assured their dominance over the film industry first in 1948 by nationalization the cinema halls and the studios and second, by the foundation in 1950 of the *Alexandru Sahia Studio*<sup>6</sup> in order to control the production, distribution and exhibition of the newsreel in the cinema halls. This led to a competition between the filmmakers in order to assure the symbolic and material resources offered by the centralized state.<sup>7</sup> By 1989 the company had more than 300 employees and produced over 300 films commanded by the state such as the newsreel, films documenting the official visits of the President outside the country, films commanded by the plants (mostly ‘safe-work instructions’) or regarding the various events.<sup>8</sup> It would be an overstatement to consider Sahia only an instrument of propaganda of the regime. Although it assumed this position and did not negate it, the Studio produced films that remain important source for documenting everyday life during 1950-1989. The production of documentary was under censorship, especially in the period 1982-1989 which banned important initiatives of the documentarists in their attempt to show images and stories in contradiction with the official discourse. One of these moments happened in 1988,

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<sup>4</sup> Faraday, *Revolt...*, 53.

<sup>5</sup> The official name of The Romanian Communist Party between 1948 and 1964

<sup>6</sup> In the memory of Alexandru Sahia, Romanian publicist in the interwar period (1908 – 1937), member of the Communist Party and admirer of the U.S.S.R

<sup>7</sup> For an extensive analysis of the cultural policy in Romania during state socialism see Katherine Verdery, *National ideology under socialism: identity and cultural politics in Ceaușescu’s Romania*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> In this sense, among the most valuable materials were dedicated to the heavy snowfalls from 1953-1954: *In luptă cu nămeții/Marele Viscol/Fighting the Snow – The Great Snow Blast*, 1954) available online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhezZGfFNDs>, or the flooding of the island *Ada-kaleh* in 1968 for the construction of the Iron Gates Plant (*Ultima Primavară la Ada-Kaleh/The last Spring at Ada-Kaleh* (1968), available online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmqEHsd-eT8>], both accessed May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

when, due to the fact that allowed the production of the documentary *Cota zero/Elevation zero* by Laurențiu Damian, the manager of Sahia, Aristide Moldovan was fired.<sup>9</sup>

In order to analyze the effects of the political changes from 1989 regarding the Central European countries, two theories emerged: the ‘evolutionary’ theory which argued that the societies adapt to capitalism<sup>10</sup> by destroying the state-socialism institutions and copying the functional institutions from the West in order to reach the same results and the involutory theory or ‘path-dependence’, a concept advanced by David Stark<sup>11</sup> which assumes that the social actors still use the same patterns from the old regime in order to adapt to capitalism, going back to what they know and experienced that far. A combined result of these two theories, namely ‘trajectory adjustment’ was proposed by Eyal, Szelényi and Townsley<sup>12</sup> who do not neglect the role of the new institutions as shaping the individuals “so that individual behavior will conform to institutional constraints and imperatives,”<sup>13</sup> but acknowledge the probability that the agents continue the set of practices that they were already accustomed with. The result is an “interaction between agents and structure: agents matter as well as institutions,”<sup>14</sup> which manifested both in the legislation issued by the Romanian authorities as well as in the relationship between the filmmakers and the institutions with which they cooperated. Using only an evolutionary or

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<sup>9</sup> David Reu, *Secvente din istoria tarii [Fragments from the history of the country]*, (Bucharest: Editura Reu, 2009). Although he did not mention this moment in the interview that I have conducted with him, Laurențiu Damian considers Moldovan “the savior of the Romanian documentary industry” in his book *Despre documentar... și încă ceva în plus* [“Something extra about documentary”], (Bucharest: Editura Tehnică, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Capitalism should not be regarded as a definite aim or concept. Szelényi &...argue that “capitalism will always be a generic term describing a diverse set of social actors and institutions. For this reasons, we contrast different types of capitalism to explore the range of possible actors and institutions that can sustain a functioning capitalism system”, in Eyal&all, *Making capitalism...*, 3.

<sup>11</sup> David Stark, *Path Dependence and Privatization Strategies in East Central Europe* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies, 1991).

<sup>12</sup> Gil Eyal, Ivan Szelényi and Elanor Townsley, *Making capitalism without capitalists: class formation and elite struggles in post-communist Central Europe*, (London: Verso, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> Eyal&all, *Making Capitalism...*, 9.

<sup>14</sup> Eyal&all, *Making Capitalism...*, 40.

involutionary (path-dependence) theory would oversimplify the issue and neglect the connections between individual filmmakers and the context in which they developed

An example of the evolutionary model of adaptation was founding of the *Centrul Național al Cinematografiei/National Center of Cinematography - CNC* in 1990 for regulating the film industry following the French model. Moreover, the new political change from 1995 adopted a new legislation regarding film industry and in 1997, inspired from the French legislation. In addition, the name of the institution was changed to *Oficiul Național al Cinematografiei/The National Office of Cinematography* in order to recall the institution from the interwar period and thus, to negate the communist period. Once again, in 1999, the legislation was changed, and followed a German model, while in 2002, the name of CNC was re-established by the new Government and other substantial changes were adopted. The ‘path dependence’ could be traced in this example by the fact that the management from 2000 to 2004 was assured by ex-members of the Communist Party who influenced the result of the contests organized by CNC in favor of their ‘protégé’.

As Eyal& all suggest, in the way to capitalism that characterizes the post-communist societies, the social actors and the institutions adapt by taking advantage of the different types of capital (economic, social and cultural) and those who are able to combine them (thus gaining ‘symbolic capital’) are the winners. The terminology used by Bourdieu<sup>15</sup> needs clarification and identification with the social actors and institutions discussed. ‘Cultural capital’ can be understood as ‘accumulated labor’ in a particular field (in our case the documentary film industry), acquired in the process of education or training (‘institutionalized state’), as a form of cultural good such as pictures, book, in our case films (‘objectified state’) and as ‘cultivation’ or ‘Bildung’ achieved in a certain period of time (‘embodied state’).

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<sup>15</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The field of cultural production: essays on art and literature* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993).

Furthermore, the ‘social capital’ refers to the “aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to...membership in a group,”<sup>16</sup> in our case identified with the group of social actors involved in the documentary film industry such as producers and distributors. In support of this affirmation, I quote Nichols<sup>17</sup> who argues that “what characterizes the documentary filmmaking generally is its status as institutional formation,”<sup>18</sup> before referring to documentary as ‘a corpus of texts’ or as ‘a constituency of viewers’. Hence, the importance of the social capital is vital in understanding the bonds between the ‘communities of practitioners’, such as the Sahia Studio, the National Television, the National Center of Cinematography and the independent filmmakers.

Ultimately, the economic capital is “directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the forms of property rights.”<sup>19</sup> This type of capital can be acquired from state incentives (direct or by contest), selling the property, winning important awards which do not involve only symbolic gratification, but sometimes significant amounts of money.

These types of capital are not independent in the social space, but determine each other and help assuring the social actors and the institution the instruments for staying on the ‘trajectory’. This is what Eyal and his colleagues argue, namely, that the importance of shifting between different types of capital is determinant in assuring a position in the social space and that “cultural capital is dominant in post-communism,”<sup>20</sup> because the social (political) capital is no longer relevant when competing with the foreign industries, while the economic capital,

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<sup>16</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The forms of capital*, first published in J. Richardson (Ed.) Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education (New York, Greenwood), 241-258, available online at <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm>, accessed May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 14-31.

<sup>18</sup> Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 14.

<sup>19</sup> Bourdieu, *The forms of Capital*, <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm>.

<sup>20</sup> Eyal&all, *Making Capitalism...*, 7.

though important, cannot replace the *know-how* needed for developing sustainable projects.” Particularizing this theory to the (documentary) film industry, I will investigate in the research chapters how significant was the ‘cultural capital’ for both Sahia and for the independent filmmakers. I will analyze the relevance of the statement argued by authors of *Making capitalism...* according to which social actors

[Who] were at the top of social hierarchy under state socialism can stay there only if they are capable of ‘trajectory adjustment’, which at the current juncture means if they are well endowed with cultural capital. By contrast, those who relied exclusively on now devalued political capital from the communist era are not able to convert this capital into anything valuable...are likely to be downwardly mobile.<sup>21</sup>

Is this available both for individuals and for institutions? The synthesis between the two theories place “the actors at the center of our analysis,”<sup>22</sup> therefore, the emphasis lies on the individuals. However, due to the acceptance of the fact that “we conceptualize individual and collective actors such as members of classes or elites, as actors whose behavior is affected by the nature of the institutions they used to operate in under communism,”<sup>23</sup> the affirmation might serve as a relevant tool for both categories.

Particular important is to engage with Bourdieu notion of field of cultural production,<sup>24</sup> as it emphasizes the importance of understanding the work of art in reference to the milieu that produced it and on the process behind the final product. The *relationality* between the agents and the structures such as academies, journals, magazines influences the position of the agents in the social spaces. The creator from the cultural field defines it together with the critics, the audience and the producers or distributors:

The space of literary or artistic position-takings, i.e. the structured set of the manifestations of the social agents involved in the field...is inseparable from the space of or artistic positions defined by possession of a determinate quantity of specific capital (recognition)

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<sup>21</sup> Eyal&all, *Making Capitalism...*, 6.

<sup>22</sup> Eyal&all, *Making Capitalism...*, 39.

<sup>23</sup> Eyal&all, *Making Capitalism...*, 39.

<sup>24</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The field of cultural production: essays on art and literature* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993).

and, at the same time, by occupation of a determinate position in the structure of the distribution of this specific capital. The literary or artistic field is a field of forces, but it is also a field of struggles tending to transform or conserve this field of forces.<sup>25</sup>

In conclusion, the documentary film industry changed from a state-dominated system towards a capitalist system, marked by the import of institutions and legislation from the European Union (especially from France). However, in this adaptation, it had to adjust both by changing the laws and institutions or by changing the actors who govern the institutions, most of the time due to political reasons. As the only specialized studio before 1989, dependent on the state incentives, Sahia had new challenges to face and a new system to adapt. This meant a negotiation of the types of capital it owned: social and political as one of the most powerful brands of socialism), cultural (by the large number of experienced filmmakers connected to the studio) or economic (both equipment and real estate).

### ***The documentary film industry: production, distribution, exhibition***

The second part is dedicated to the differences between the Western and Romanian systems of production, distribution and exhibition. Notions such as producer/production need not just a definition, but identification with the concepts used so far and differentiation between what the state socialism understood by production, what the post-socialist filmmakers and institutions changed at that system and what the challenges for a European production company were. For the latter, I will refer to production as “the stage of filmmaking when the film begins to be shot and for which most of the elements of the film have been budgeted for,”<sup>26</sup> while the producer “is the manager of creating a film... [He or she] initiates, co-ordinates, supervises and controls matters such as fund-raising, hiring key personnel and arranging for distributors. The producer is

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<sup>25</sup> Bourdieu, *The field*, 30.

<sup>26</sup> Angus Finney, *The international film business: a market guide beyond Hollywood* (London, New York: Routledge, 2010), 222.

involved throughout all phases of the filmmaking process from development to completion of a project.”<sup>27</sup> Due to the importance of the television companies and European funding programs in the Romanian industry, I will limit my research only to them, deliberately neglecting the role of the state or the independent producers.

As I mentioned previously, in state socialism the production of documentaries was characterized by state monopoly, bureaucratic control and the aesthetic-ideological orthodoxy. The single investor both in the production and distribution was the state, either by direct or indirect command. The aim was not directed in the acquirement of economic capital, hence the distribution had not the role of gaining profit, but in gaining capital in order control more efficient the resources. Laurențiu Damian showed how the Sahia Studio functioned before 1989:

[It] had a section of protocol, thus it paid the independence with something in change, namely there were propaganda movies and the state spent a lot...The second section was the movies, being a studio very competitive a lot of latent partners who ordered movies, (presentation movies or labor protection), and there was a section of scientific and artistic documentary where the censorship was not so harsh.<sup>28</sup>

As for exhibition, the documentaries were mostly shown at the beginning of films in cinema halls, with specific aim of propaganda and rarely at the television, where the television company had its own studio specialized mostly in reportage. However, characterizing the Soviet film industry, Faraday argues that, at the ‘protection’ of the state financial support, the filmmakers “were insulated from the pressures of audience demand,”<sup>29</sup> therefore having a more secure position compared with their correspondents in Western systems.

1989 brought a change in the meaning of producer and production. Although the state continued to support the production in the first years, more as a reflex until privatizing the Studio the films were no longer shown at the beginning of a feature film and the demand in

<sup>27</sup> Finney, *The international...* 222.

<sup>28</sup> Laurențiu Damian interviewed by the author, Bucharest, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012

<sup>29</sup> Faraday, *Revolt...*, 2.

documentaries decreased. As a consequence, the managers of Sahia redefined their position and emphasized the need to continue the production of documentaries by finding another sources of financing. On the other hand, 1989 announced the beginning of a parallel industry, whose first pioneers were the filmmakers who founded their own production companies, either specialized in feature films or in documentaries. The differences between the European industries and Romanian film industry were still evident: I will mention only a few, which were addressed by the filmmakers from IDFA in their letter sent to the Minister of Culture in December 2004.<sup>30</sup>

Blaming the Romanian Minister of Culture for the lack of support for the independent companies and for the concern to the collapse of Sahia, the four filmmakers stressed the absence of any official from the National Television, the CNC or from the Association of Film Critics at IDFA and for the absence from their structures of “commissioning editors”, a significant public office. Second, the ‘community’ of filmmakers and critics perceive the documentary as a minor genre and as a stage of the director’s career on their way to feature films. Third, although not mentioned in the letter, but present in numerous other interviews<sup>31</sup>, the importance of trainings or ‘pitching sessions’ as vital in the Western film industry is something that is not present in the Romanian documentary film industry. Moreover, according to the law from 2002, the documentary film supposed to have maximum 20 minutes, stipulation harshly contested by Solomon or Iepan.<sup>32</sup>

But probably one of the important changes and a separation from the socialist perception of the documentary was the role that it had to fulfill in the society. I have argued that, while

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<sup>30</sup> Alexandru Solomon, Ileana Stănculescu, Dumitru Budrală, Florin Iepan, *Scrisoare după IDFA* [Letter after IDFA], published in *Observator Cultural*, No 251/December 2004, available online at [http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Scrisoare-dupa-IDFA\\*articleID\\_12418-articles\\_details.html](http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Scrisoare-dupa-IDFA*articleID_12418-articles_details.html), accessed May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Solomon, available online at <http://atelier.liternet.ro/articol.php?art=2801>, accessed May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012

<sup>32</sup> Alexandru Solomon ironically recalls the protest against the article from the law in the interview conducted in Bucharest, April 27<sup>th</sup> 2012.

before 1989, the documentaries were produced to inform and had a clear narration and structure, the documentaries produced by the independent filmmakers are perceived by themselves as “a spectacular instrument of knowing the history, a creative form a social critique and inter-cultural communication. In a country as Romania where the amnesia is the attitude of the majority regards to history, and the society is paralyzed by civic apathy, the documentary becomes a necessity, not a privilege.”<sup>33</sup> From this perspective, they preferred to engage with other kinds of mode of representation and inclined the balance in favor of ‘creative’ documentaries: either using reflexive strategies or interactive mode of representation, the documentary proposed by the filmmakers after 1989 differed from the ‘Sahia type’.

As collaborating with Sahia or with other the state institutions proved impossible or difficult to realize, the independent filmmakers searched for new patrons and realized that, in order to advance in the career they had to access the European Programs and to collaborate with the foreign television companies in the form of co-production. As the agency is Western, I will refer to co-production as “a film that involves more than one party in the production process through co-operation as a joint venture or partnership, or as a part of an officially sanctioned co-production treaty.”<sup>34</sup> Following co-production leads to one of the main supporter of the independent Romanian documentary films, EURIMAGES, a pan-European fund dedicated to co-productions, established in 1989 by the Council of Europe in order to balance the American (Hollywood) expansion in Europe. The initiative belonged to the French filmmakers<sup>35</sup> and consisted in supporting the co-productions in Europe in order to create a competitive market. Analyzing the report of the European Audiovisual Observatory, Finney concluded that the co-

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<sup>33</sup> *Letter after IDFA*, available online at [http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Scrisoare-dupa-IDFA\\*articleID\\_12418-articles\\_details.html](http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Scrisoare-dupa-IDFA*articleID_12418-articles_details.html), accessed May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012

<sup>34</sup> Finney, *The International*... 217.

<sup>35</sup> Anne Jäckel, *European film industries*, (London: British Film Institute, 2003).

productions “travel better than their 100 per cent national counterparts”, and they “attract on average 2.7 times as many admissions as their national peers.”<sup>36</sup> The second program, MEDIA was established by the European Commission in 1991 “to support the audiovisual industries in Europe. It covers training, development, promotion, distribution and the support of film festivals.”<sup>37</sup> The program played an essential role especially in the organization of ASTRA Film Festival, one of the top documentary festivals in Romania who was organized due to the absence of a documentary film festival organized by the authorities. Two important aspects need to be mentioned: first, the United Kingdom was not a member of this fund, and second, the documentaries need to have at least 70 min. to be supported. The contradiction between the length of the movies according to the Romanian Law which limited the documentary to 20 minutes and the European Stipulation emphasized the opposite ways in which the documentaries were perceived in 2002.

Besides EUIMAGES and MEDIA Program, the foreign television companies proved to be successful (co) producers for the Romanian independent filmmakers. A short overview of the way in which BBC works is offered by Stella Bruzzi, who comments about the type of documentary BBC promoted from the very beginning under the management of John Reith,<sup>38</sup> the General Manager of BBC from 1927 to 1938:

“John Reith’s dictum that factual broadcasting in this country should both educate and entertain came from an elitist conception of the role of the media, that the BBC had a sense of moral obligation to its audience to impart worthwhile information. This is the “filmmakers as teachers and audience as willing pupil” model of documentary.”<sup>39</sup>

Following this pattern, Bruzzi argues that “the current vogue (2000s) is for reconstruction to be used often alongside more traditional documentary methods, such as archive and

<sup>36</sup> Finney, *The international...*78.

<sup>37</sup> Finney, *The international...*220.

<sup>38</sup> John Reith was the General Manager of the BBC for two decades (1927-1938); more details on [http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith/reith\\_history.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith/reith_history.shtml), accessed May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>39</sup> Bruzzi, *New Documentary*, (Routledge, Great Britain, 2006), 51.

interviews, and despite Janice Hadlow (then Channel 4 Commissioning Editor for History, currently Head of the BBC Four) warning [...] in 2003 that filmmakers venture into reconstruction at their peril, documentaries have become obsessed with it.<sup>40</sup> Although Bruzzi refers mainly to the reconstruction of the events using actors, her argument is relevant when mentioning that 2003 is the year in which both Solomon and Iepan directed their documentaries co-produced by BBC. Furthermore, she presents over helpful insights of the documentary-making at BBC: referring to the use of archival sources, she claims that: “the purpose of its retrieved archive being to demonstrate what has already been or is in the process of being signaled by other information sources such as the voice-over or the words of the interviewees...within this hierarchy, words guide the audience’s responses to archival image.”<sup>41</sup> Moreover, between 2000 and 2006 a shift occurred in the practice of documentary making, namely “the rise of dramatic reconstruction as a supplement to or even replacement for archival material.”<sup>42</sup>

How did BBC decide to co-produce, for example, *The Great Communist Bank Robbery*? The film directed by Solomon proposed to investigate the robbery of the National Bank in 1959 by a group of Jewish Communists. It also intended to deconstruct the propaganda documentary made to reconstruct the event produced by the Sahia and Minister of Internal Affairs which was shown to the Party members in order to prove them that the Party is capable to punish any deviation. By interviews with the witnesses, victims and members of the Party and the *Securitate*, Solomon proposed to go beyond the layers of propaganda and show the motivation of the *gangsters* and to impose on the public debate the importance of the past and the way in which the past still persists in the present.

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<sup>40</sup> Bruzzi, *New Documentary*, 51.

<sup>41</sup> Bruzzi, *New Documentary*, 37.

<sup>42</sup> Bruzzi, *New Documentary*, 43.

In the interview that I have conducted, Solomon recalls the importance of the Documentary Campus Masterschool, “a Europe-wide development program offering filmmakers a unique opportunity to access the international non-fiction market,”<sup>43</sup> where he participated in 2001:

There were more weeks of training over the year...[the] filmmakers proposed topics, the topics were selected; afterwards you met with series of tutors who held their courses, keep in touch with them while you develop the topic; the organizers being specialized tutors in production, distribution and two of them were the tutors from BBC and from Arte.<sup>44</sup> At the end of the training, there is a kind of presentation session (my note-“pitching session”) where everybody presents their project not just in front of the tutors, but also in front of other guests from television companies and financing funds with the aim to assure the filmmakers an actual support. After this presentation, BBC first and Arte, afterwards decided [to co-produce the film].<sup>45</sup>

How can we interpret this in the theoretical framework that we have developed so far? First, the training session provided the filmmakers both with ‘cultural capital’ which was transformed in economic capital by the choice of the BBC/Arte of supporting the films and relocated the ‘social capital’ of the filmmakers from Romania to abroad. As I will mention more detailed in the last chapter, it was also the case with Ileana Stănculescu and Thomas Ciulei, both of them completing their studies in Germany and gaining access on the European networks by the same time. The production meant also a change of attitude towards the role of the documentary and the ‘modes of representation’ followed by the directors, explained later on.

Not only the production changed, but also the distribution. In Western industries, the distributor, can be regarded either as a “facilitator of product flow between producers and exhibitors”<sup>46</sup>, who and deals with the selling of the film after he got the rights to do so.” Moreover, the distributor can be “a company that buys the license of exploitation of a film in

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<sup>43</sup> *What is Documentary Campus Masterschool*, available online at <http://www.documentary-campus.com/v2/page/masterschool/masterschool/>, accessed May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>44</sup> According to the official site, the tutor from BBC in 2001 was Nick Fraser (Commissioning Editor) and from Arte Olaf Grunert, (Director Development and Events), [http://www.documentary-campus.com/v2/page/masterschool/masterschool\\_tutors/1/](http://www.documentary-campus.com/v2/page/masterschool/masterschool_tutors/1/), accessed May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>45</sup> Alexandru Solomon, interviewed by the author, Bucharest, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>46</sup> Finney, *The international...*, 217.

order to be able to exploit the title in the theatrical and/or subsidiary markets.”<sup>47</sup> In the socialist film industry, apparently, the distribution did not had the logic of making profit, but rather to assure visibility to a large category of public, while documentaries occupied a privileged position by being exhibited before the feature films. 1989 brought the first major change in the industry, by slowly stopping this practice and obliging the directors to find other modalities of making their movies available to the audience. Private companies such as *Independența* were founded after 1989, but none specialized in documentaries, but rather in importing Hollywood films.

Therefore, the main distributors of the film were the television companies, but they were not interested in distributing and broadcasting documentaries, because, as Damian argued, the Television had its own documentary department and chose to involve in the production and exhibition of its own movies.<sup>48</sup> However, the National Television has the merit of broadcasting the documentaries of the independent filmmakers, in the case of Iepan’s *The Children of the Decree*, along with a debate concerning the topic addressed by the director. As for European industries, EURIMAGES participated not only in the production, but also in the distribution of movies, although one of the criticism addressed to the program was that it focused too much on (co-) production and less on distribution. In my study cases, the distribution was taken by the television companies (besides the producers) from various countries and the films were also exhibited at film festivals.

Theorized by Dina Iordanova and Regan Rhyne<sup>49</sup> among others, the film festival circuit(s) represents a key-element for this study, as one of the criteria for analyzing successful films was represented by the official selection at IDFA and the awards gained at other festivals.

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<sup>47</sup> Finney, *The international...*, 217.

<sup>48</sup> Laurențiu Damian interviewed by the author, Bucharest, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012.

<sup>49</sup> Dina Iordanova, Rhyna Regan, *Film Festival. Yearbook 1 – The Festival Circuit*, (St. Andrew Film Studies, Great Britain, 2009).

The film festivals could be approached from various perspectives, such as an alternative to Hollywood distribution or as a marketing project dedicated to tourists by the city authorities. Nevertheless, most critics appreciate their role as essential feature of the distribution with effects in the authorship, production and the prestige of the author. Two main advantages result from the studies regarding film festivals: first “[the festivals] play an essential role in the discovery and launching of independent films”<sup>50</sup> and the second, it compensates for the poor system of film distribution in Europe, creating “an alternative distribution network that opens doors to ‘real’ distribution.”<sup>51</sup> Why?

“Sending a film to a festival, especially to a competitive one, is often thought of as a support mechanism that a film needs in order to get to its ‘real’ life and reach out to audiences beyond festival screenings in a red-carpet setting. Entering a film at a festival is seen as a way of opening doors to what lies beyond, to a string of showings at other festivals and, later on, to proper distribution via theatrical and DVD deals for a wide range of territories.”<sup>52</sup>

Iordanova’s vision might look optimistic, but I consider it valid for my case for one reason, namely the ‘cultural capital’ gained by the filmmakers after being exhibited at IDFA. The cultural capital justified the initiative of the filmmakers to send the authorities the letter that I have mentioned earlier but also the acquirement of economic capital by the winner of one of the awards. Why did IDFA play such an important role? Because it is the most acclaimed documentary film festival in Europe (comparable with *Cannes* for feature films) or *Sundance* (at an American level) and being in the official selection at the festival represents a sign of appreciation from the community of European filmmakers. Besides IDFA, important festivals such as *The Documentary Festival* from Thessaloniki, *Visions du Réel* from Nyon, *Sheffield Doc/Fest* or the *Edindocs* (Edinburgh) fight for a place in the hierarchy of the top documentary festivals. In Romania, the most acclaimed documentary film festival was on the seashore of

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<sup>50</sup> Finney, *The international...*,55

<sup>51</sup> Iordanova, *Film Festival*, 23

<sup>52</sup> Iordanova, *Film Festival*, p.24

Black Sea at Costinești, but soon after the Revolution, the festival was not organized anymore, as neither was the other important festival from Târgoviște.<sup>53</sup> In conclusion, the documentarists lost at national level one of the few opportunities where they could present their films. This disadvantage was balanced by the organization of Astra Film Festival starting 1993 at Sibiu.

Before moving the theory regarding the documentaries, a short conclusion needs to be drawn. The direct result of entering the European networks changed the production, distribution and exhibition and imposed a new hierarchy where the recognition from the abroad was important. Thus, the independent filmmakers became *intermediaries* between the European networks and Romanian cinematography. Using their cultural and social capital, they have successfully protested against the rejection of funding by the CNC in 2003, determining the members of CNC to support a part of the budget needed for their movies. On the other hand, following most of the time the same practices as before 1989, in the context in which the distribution and exhibition did no longer continue, Sahia could not transform their social capital into economic capital which could have helped them to avoid the collapse and weren't able to produce after 1996 significant documentaries. The causes will be analyzed more detailed in the following chapter.

### ***Non-fiction films: modes of representation***

From a macro perspective, the documentary film industry does not differ substantially from the feature film, at least in the Romanian legislation. During the study a couple of documentaries will be examined, documentaries which are distinct not only in terms of production or distribution, but also in terms of modes of representation and topics addressed.

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<sup>53</sup> According to Laurențiu Damian, interviewed by the author, April 21<sup>st</sup> 2012; He also stated that the Association of critics and filmmakers organized small festivals, with no impact on the audience

One of my hypotheses claimed that the young filmmakers did not take into consideration collaborating with the *Video Publishing House* or *Sahia* because they rejected the ‘type’ of documentaries they would have been asked to direct. Therefore, a closer look at the theory of documentaries is necessary at this point of the analysis.

As I mentioned earlier, the documentaries before 1989 preferred adopting what Nichols would call an ‘expository’ mode of representation, using a voice-over narration, while the images support the text as illustration. Nichols states, when discussing about the ‘expository’ mode, that “the rhetoric of the commentator’s argument serves as the textual dominant, moving the text forward in service of its persuasive needs.”<sup>54</sup> In addition, the mode hides the viewer the process of reaching the result-argument. There is no mystery or suspense about the topic of the documentary, but rather a narrative addressed directly to the audience working in a solution-resolving end. This type of documentary, attentively controlled by the authorities supposed to have the effect of convincing the audience about the correctness of the decisions of the authorities and informing about the changes from the country without presenting a counter-point of view. The other modes of representation (such as ‘direct cinema’, the ‘reflexive’ and ‘interactive’) were rarely adopted by the filmmakers from *Sahia*.

The ‘direct cinema’ (adopted by Budrală) proposed not an investigation of the past, but an insight of a contemporary Roma community, an anthropological reflection of the life conditions. As Nichols argues ‘observational cinema’ (his definition of ‘direct cinema’) allows the viewer to have a direct contact with the life of the characters, “to gain some sense of the distinct rhythms of everyday life, to see the colors, shapes, and spatial relationship among people and their possessions etc.”<sup>55</sup> emphasizing the anthropological dimension of this mode of

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<sup>54</sup> Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 35

<sup>55</sup> Nichols, *Representing...*, 42.

representation. On the other hand, Bruzzi portrays the direct cinema as “an attempt to keep authorial intervention to minimum by adopting a more causal, observational style that had as its premise the desire to follow action rather than dictate it, to see and record what happened to evolve in front of the cameras.”<sup>56</sup> In respect to the method of filming, Mamber emphasizes the importance of the “hand held camera and live, synchronous sound...the essential element of cinema-verite is the use of real people in undirected situations.”<sup>57</sup> However, Bruzzi adopts a critical point of view when referring to it: “the direct cinema is a ‘problem’ because its exponents believed that, with the advent of portable equipment and with the movement’s more informal style, they could indeed show things as they are and thus collapse the boundaries between subject and representation.”<sup>58</sup> However the interpretations would be, the direct cinema remains one of the favorite methods of approaching anthropology.

Another mode of representation often used by the Romanian independent filmmakers, especially Iepan and Solomon was the ‘interactive’ mode, characterized by the ‘talking heads’ and the participation of the director in the interviews with the characters from the documentary. Although not present in the footage, the director’s presence is relevant for decreasing the degree of certainty of the arguments expressed: the director ‘learns’ the details regarding the topic ‘together’ with his audience. It is true that the post-production the director makes his subjective choices for selecting one line from an interview or another, but he can present two opposite points of view without being obliged to validate one of them.

Probably the most complex type of documentary uses a ‘reflexive’ mode of representation, investigating not the topic addressed, but how does the filmmaker approach the topic. It has a transparent structure and “gives emphasis to the encounter between the filmmaker

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<sup>56</sup> Bruzzi, *New Documentary*, 74.

<sup>57</sup> Stephen Mamber, *Cinema-verite in America, Screen: 13/2* (Summer), 79-107 in Bruzzi, *New Documentary* p.75

<sup>58</sup> Bruzzi, *New Documentary*, 74.

and the viewer rather than the filmmaker and the subject,”<sup>59</sup> most of the times in an ironic way. Impossible to adopt before 1989, the mode was used by Solomon in order to deconstruct the type of documentaries produced by Sahia, namely *Reconstituirea/The Reconstruction*.<sup>60</sup>

In conclusion, the support of the European funds and the television companies materialized not only in the production or distribution, but also in the decision to adopt different modes of representation for dealing with a certain topic. While these modes cannot be fully separated (for example, Solomon uses both a narrative addressed directly to the viewer, an interactive mode and reflexive strategies), they represent all together a different type of documentary than the majority of the films produced by Sahia before 1989. One of the explanations for the change in mode of representation is that the European industries supports and acknowledges the value of a certain type of documentary and creates a certain hierarchy whose values were acquired by the young directors and transformed in cultural capital. However, the contact with the European networks stimulated the creation of a certain type of ‘creative’ documentary, but this implied a series of adaptation with the receipts proposed by the producers.

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<sup>59</sup> Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 60.

<sup>60</sup> The film was also translated as *The Reenactment*.

## **Chapter 2: From *Alexandru Sahia Studio* to *Sahiafilm***

This chapter analyzes the evolution of the state-owned studio, Alexandru Sahia, by examining the legislation, the influence of the political changes and the strategies adopted by the Studio in order to adjust to the changes in the film industry. While in the first chapter I have argued that the agents and institutions who depend on the political capital during socialism are prone to lose their privileges if they cannot transform it into cultural or social capital, in this chapter I will analyze the causes that determined the failure of Sahia Studio to produce successful documentaries. My argument asserts that, although Sahia tried to stay on ‘trajectory’ by taking advantage of its economic and social capital, it failed to continue its dominance due to the exodus of filmmakers to other institutions.

My initial hypothesis was that Sahia Studio failed because it could not adjust its trajectory, but at least two factors challenged this hypothesis. First, from a legislative perspective, Sahia changed its status and gained legal independence; despite the end of the financial support, Sahia started benefiting from its economic capital, by renting its real estate. Second, the Studio recovered its prestige by producing a series of films dedicated to the revolution, hence proving to be not just a tool of communist propaganda, but a useful element of democracy. However, the studio collapsed by 2000 for at least two reasons: first because the rent for the real estate was not paid and second, because of the departure of the important directors.

### ***Legislation and political background***

After manager Aristide Moldovan was fired in 1988, the management of the Sahia studio was assumed by filmmaker Decebal Mitulescu (who will become the president of CNC in 2000),

and from 1990, by the young filmmaker Copel Moscu. In an interview from November the same year, he stated that:

The studio is one of the largest from in the world, with 360 employees, of which 70 are filmmakers. It has a rather old, but experienced team. Now, when the rationale under which this studio was founded in 1950,(the communist propaganda) disappeared, but when we still base on the finance from the last years, because we are no longer founded (*my emphasis*) in any way, one addresses the problem of surviving. Sahia lived very well from the commissioned movies: commercial, presentation, touristic. Financially, we could resist and even flourish on this formula, only with reorganization on creation departments, so that each team would be directly responsible of the quality and benefit. The audience does not know (perceive) us as producers of advertising, although we have the means and the human capital for this type of production. But our aim is not only the survival of the studio, but the survival of the genre as cultural act. The documentary film can not die, as some voices foresee. On contrary, I think it will be reborn, because the expectation for real documentary is huge. The change of our studio is to make documentaries which would show what is going on nowadays in Romania.”<sup>1</sup>

When claiming that the studio is no longer funded, he referred to the Decree 80/February 1990 regarding the organization of the cinematographic activities which was issued by the Council of National Salvation Front. This decree separated the Studios from the state, responding to the pressures from the filmmakers willing to take the control of the studios. The decree proclaimed that “the state guarantees the freedom of the cinema creation, supports and protects the production and the distribution of Romanian films,”<sup>2</sup> mentioned the formation of the National Center of Cinematography and offered the economic and legal liberty of the Studios.<sup>3</sup>

“RomâniaFilm”, the main state company involved in the production, distribution and financing the movies was reorganized as *The Department of the Cinema Network and the Distribution of Movies*, and became an economic and legal entity. As for Sahia, the decree

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Copel Moscu in *România liberă* [*Free Romania*] November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1990, available online at <http://www.jurnalul.ro/jurnalul-national/marele-ecran-in-1990-filme-putine-debuturi-intarziate-558155.htm>, accessed May 24<sup>th</sup> 2012.

<sup>2</sup> *Decretul 80/1990* [“Decree 80/1990”], available online at <http://www.legex.ro/Decretul-lege-80-1990-1175.aspx>, accessed May 2012.

<sup>3</sup> *Decretul 80/1990* [“Decree 80/1990”]. The first major legislative change after 1989 was the privatization of the five film studios, given by the Minister of Culture, Andrei Pleșu in the hands of the filmmakers from the Generation 70: Dinu Tănase, Dan Pița, Mircea Veroiu, Sergiu Nicolaescu and Mircea Daneliuc. Pleșu founded two studios dependent from the Minister of Culture: one led by Lucian Pintilie and the other (specialized in documentaries) led by the film critic Bujor T. Râpeanu, *Video Publishing House*.

mentions that the Studio “produces documentaries, scientific and didactic movies, newsreel and advertising ordered by the *Department of the cinema network and the distribution of movies* and other customers from the country.”<sup>4</sup> According to the law, the Department was not obliged to fund this studio, but remained the main commissioner. Therefore, Moscu’s position of readjusting towards advertising on one hand, but also maintaining the profile of the company seemed viable.

In regards to the Sahia Studio, the Law 486/1991 stipulated that *Alexandru Sahia Studio* changed its name to Sahia Film and became private company, by gaining its legal and economical liberty.<sup>5</sup> Article 2 brought an innovation, stipulating that besides producing for and being financed by *the department of cinema network and the distribution of movies*, the Studio “produces documentaries, newsreels etc for the Department of Information of the Government.”<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the Administration Council of the Studio was appointed by the order of the state secretary, who was the chief of the Department of Information from the Romanian Government.”<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the state afforded the Studio with judicial and financial independence, but it maintained it under its influence. Was this a means of the new regime to assure its propaganda or a welcomed reform for the safeguard of the studio? The first results materialized in the production of important films dedicated to the Revolution, which will be analyzed further on.

After the management of Copel Moscu (1990-1991) and Mircea Moldovan (1991-1993), the new manager Luiza Ciolac (1993-1995) brought into discussion the exhibition of the

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<sup>4</sup> *Hotararea de Urgență 486/1991* [“Law 486/1991”], available online at [http://www.cautalege.ro/hotarare-486-1991-infiintarea-regiei-autonome-studioul-cinematografic-sahia-film-\(7F357A93859B8E45\).jsp](http://www.cautalege.ro/hotarare-486-1991-infiintarea-regiei-autonome-studioul-cinematografic-sahia-film-(7F357A93859B8E45).jsp), accessed May 24<sup>th</sup> 2012.

<sup>5</sup> I could not establish if the new law 486/1991 was adopted at the proposal of the new manager, Mircea Moldovan, or due to the law, the former manager had to resign.

<sup>6</sup> *Hotararea de Urgenta 486/1991* [“Law 486/1991”].

<sup>7</sup> *Hotararea de Urgenta 486/1991* [“Law 486/1991”].

documentaries in the cinema hall, as Laurențiu Damian recalls: “Immediately after 90, in 94-95, Luiza Ciolac tried and succeeded to make documentaries...and to assure a distribution in cinema halls also as a addition for the feature films.”<sup>8</sup> However, it is not clear if she succeeded or not and for how long. The last manager who worked on the basis of the law from 1991 was Mircea Hamza (May 1995 - May 1997), with no special successes mentioned in the literature I have examined. Nevertheless, in these years important documentaries were produced, such as *Destinul Mareșalului/The Destiny of Marshall Antonescu* (Felicia Cernăianu, 1994) and *Să nu ne răzbunați/Do not revenge us* (Mihai Constantinescu, 1995) the only notable exceptions. In conclusion, by 1995 there was already a decline of the Studio, which from 360 employees remained with about 100<sup>9</sup> and, although independent on paper it involved in the election campaign, supporting the Government (1996).<sup>10</sup> It is still to be researched if the decision of the studio to become involved in the election directly prompted some of the directors to leave.

The political change from December 1996 could not overlook the film industry. Director Radu Gabrea was appointment chief of the *Oficiul Național al Cinematografiei* which replaced the *Centrul Național al Cinematografiei* and a new law was adopted (67/1997). At Sahia Studio, the new Government appointed director Mihai Constantinescu, member of the National Peasant Party as manager of the institution (May 1997). During his management, Sahia signed a contract (1998) with *MediaPro Pictures*, a powerful private company managed by Adrian Sârbu (one of the former employees of Sahia until the beginning of the nineties) in order to assure a financial basis. According to the agreement, *MediaPro Pictures* rented one of the buildings belonging to

<sup>8</sup> Laurențiu Damian, interviewed by the author, Bucharest, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Information provided by one of the employees of Sahia in the discussions during the exhibition of the movies

<sup>10</sup> Valerian Sava accused Luiza Ciolac in 2001 that she had participated at the electoral campaign of the Social Democrat Party from Romania and by the fact that she was appointed in the structures of the Minister of Culture after 2000 when the Social Democrats formed the Government in “Nu. Decalog inspirat de un consilier al ministrului Culturii”, [“No. The Decalogue inspired by a counselor of the Minister of Culture”], *Observator Cultural*, Nr. 126 (2002).

the Studio and was supposed to pay a monthly rent of 10,000 euro. This amount assured for a while the financial support for the Studio. However, *MediaPro Pictures* stopped paying the rents, but the contract was re-signed.<sup>11</sup> The result was that, without any financial support, the production of documentaries was zero at the end of year 2000.

The new Government from 2000<sup>12</sup> imposed a new hierarchy in the Romanian cinematography. Sergiu Nicolaescu became president of the Consultative Association of Cinematography (a new-formed institution) and Decebal Mitulescu, the former manager of the Studio became the president of the National Center of Cinematography. A new law was adopted in 2002,<sup>13</sup> which, among other stipulations, limited the documentary at a maximum length of 20 minutes. Grigore Florescu (2000-2002) and Ioan Cărmăzan (2003 – 2004)<sup>14</sup> the managers of Sahia appointed by the new political leaders could not recover the amounts from the rents owned by *MediaPro Pictures* and did not have the financial possibilities to work on new productions. Moreover, the debt acquired by the Studio reached incredible amounts<sup>15</sup> and, at the end of 2004, Cărmăzan was released after another suspect business with another real estate, and a new manager, Marcel Iurașcu, was appointed.

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<sup>11</sup> “Ioan Cărmăzan isi face film in contul datoriei Media Pro Pictures”, “Ioan Cărmăzan produce a film with the Media Pro Pictures’ debt to Sahia”, <http://www.eghid.ro/Monden/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=1016>, accessed May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012

<sup>12</sup> More about the change in Valerian Sava, “Razvan Theodorescu, Sergiu Nicolaescu, Decebal Mitulescu si compania – not guilty,” *Observator Cultural*, 73 (2001).

<sup>13</sup> Valerian Sava, “Tablele legii si S. Nicolaescu in pustiu CNC-ONC-CNC”, “The Laws and S. Nicolaescu in the desert CNC-ONC-CNC”, *Observator Cultural* 111 (2002), the Law is available at [http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis\\_pck.htp\\_act\\_text?id=39124](http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htp_act_text?id=39124), accessed May 29<sup>th</sup> 2012

<sup>14</sup> “Sahia, o mireasa urata, dar cu zestre la care ravnesc petitorii ministrului Iorgulescu”, “Sahia, an ugly bride, by with a dowry wanted by the suitors of the Minister of Culture Iorgulescu, available online at <http://www.infonews.ro/node/71311>, accessed May 29<sup>th</sup> 2012

<sup>15</sup> The amount was 14 billion lei, (300,000 euro), <http://www.infonews.ro/node/71311>, accessed May 29<sup>th</sup> 2012

Meanwhile, important filmmakers decided to continue their careers on their own or at other institutions. Stefan Gladin chose to move abroad, Copel Moscu and Ovidiu Bose Paștină<sup>16</sup> moved to the National Television, Florin Iepan worked for a while at the private television company ProTV, while Laurențiu Damian was appointed manager of the new established institution controlled by the Ministry of Culture, Video Publishing House. Nevertheless, almost all of them directed one or more documentaries immediately after the Revolution: Gladin directed *Sa facem totul/Let's do everything*, a documentary about the contrast between the official communist propaganda and the images from Bucharest, Copel Moscu investigated the life of the Romanians that emigrated in Germany in *Am ales libertatea/We chose freedom*, while Paștină was among the first to analyze the events from December in *Timisoara 89*, in a series of interviews with the witnesses. Damian exhibited his documentaries censored before the Revolution and directed his first feature film *Drumul cainilor/The Road of the Dogs* and *Ramanerea/ The Abidance* in 1992-1992, while Iepan, a generation younger, directed for Sahia *Zece minute cu clasa muncitoare/Ten minutes with the working class* in 1995.

In conclusion, each political change brought a new management to the Studio, which may have affected the filmmakers who did not want to pursue this path. The strategies were changed according to the political interests, while the managers were appointed according to the ideological and political affiliations. These changes affected the cohesion of the Studio and were one of the explanations for the incoming failure. Second, by using its economic and social capital, Sahia survived for a while, but the measures taken seemed to depend more on external factors rather than on a planned strategy. Nevertheless, after 1995, the Studio failed to produce any documentaries to be selected at Film Festivals and decreased its number of employees from

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<sup>16</sup> An useful interview was conducted with Paștină by Adina Brădeanu: “Toate filmele mele au fost exerciții pentru acel lungmetraj care trebuia să vină” [“All my films were exercises for the feature film that was supposed to come” *Observator cultural*, 319 (2006)]

almost 400 to only 2 employees in 2001. It would not be an overstatement to conclude that the changes from 1990, 1996 and 2000 rather than stopping the descendant trajectory of the Studio, it affected negatively the destiny of the Studio.

### ***Documentaries about the Revolution***

Analyzing the Soviet film industry, Faraday asserts that “all forms of cultural production are influenced by the immediate social context within which creative workers operate [which] influences the artistic goals of creative workers, through the operation of formal or informal system of selection, evaluation and distribution.”<sup>17</sup> This is also relevant for the Romanian documentary industry immediately after 1989. One of the strategies followed by the Sahia Studio to adjust to the market was the production of films dedicated to the Revolution or to alternatives histories from Communism. The Revolution caught the filmmakers in the middle of the events: probably the most important of them, the discussion between the Iulian Vlad (the chief of the *Securitate*) and Stefan Gușă (the Commander of the Military Forces) from December 22<sup>nd</sup> 1989, recorded by Adrian Sârbu was already mentioned earlier. Sârbu quickly realized that he could benefit from his participation at the events and broke away from Sahia, the studio not being able to secure a stable future.

The first documentaries exhibited after the Revolution were the so-called *arrested* movies produced before 1989. As Damian recalls

“For the while, the films that were exhibited were the censored films of my generation which were stopped in the years 1987-1990....For two-three years the Film Festivals at Krakow<sup>18</sup>, Oberhausen<sup>19</sup>, and Leipzig<sup>20</sup> received these films as ‘arrested’ films which presented a social

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<sup>17</sup> Faraday, *Revolt...*, 12.

<sup>18</sup> *Krakow Film Festival*, official website <http://www.krakowfilmfestival.pl/en/>, accessed May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012

<sup>19</sup> *International Short Film Festival Oberhausen*, more about the festival at <http://www.kurzfilmtage.de/nc/en/59th-international-short-film-festival-oberhausen-02-07052013.html>, accessed May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012

<sup>20</sup> *Dok Leipzig Festival* official website: <http://www.dok-leipzig.de/home/?lang=en>, accessed May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012

reality absolutely intolerable in Romania between 1982 and 1989; actually the hardest moments were 1986-1989, when the censorship became absolutely apocalyptic.”<sup>21</sup>

Among them I would recall *Cota zero/Elevation zero*, *Actiunea 7000/Action 7000*, *Maria Tănase*<sup>22</sup>, by Laurențiu Damian, *Intr-o zi ca oricare alta/Just another day* by Copel Moscu, *Eu trebuia sa joc Hamlet/I was supposed to play Hamlet* by Ovidiu Bose Paștină and many others. From his category I will refer to one of the most acclaimed ‘arrested’ documentary, *Panc* by Sabina Pop, awarded by the festivals at Oberhausen and Bordeaux (1990, 1991).<sup>23</sup> The film follows the story of a theatre band from the village Panc (Transylvania). Between two harvests, the members find time to prepare theatre plays and go in tournaments around the country. Apparently not offensive for the Communist ideology, the censors decided to ban the movie because the village was in the plan of ‘systematization’ and any memory of its past was not welcomed. Basing only on the interviews with the peasants (who are trying to follow their dream and become actors, although they barely can read or write) and no voice-over, Sabina Pop goes beyond the type of propaganda documentaries attached to Sahia.

Besides the ‘arrested’ films, the filmmakers purchased in the recording<sup>24</sup> and the reconstruction of the Revolution, taking advantage of the fact that Sahia was among the few owners of technical equipment for recording (video or ‘thin film’). Therefore documentaries such as *De Crăciun ne-am luat rația de libertate/On Christmas Day we got our ratio of freedom* by Cătălina Fernoagă and Cornel Mihalache, *Ziua cea mai scurtă/The shortest day* by Ștefan Gladin, *Procesul/The Trial* by Mircea Moldovan etc.<sup>25</sup> were the first to be produced and

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<sup>21</sup> Laurențiu Damian, interviewed by the author, Bucharest, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012

<sup>22</sup> *Maria Tănase – Povestea cenzurata/Maria Tănase – The censored story*, available online at <http://www.trilululu.ro/video-film/maria-tanase-povestea-cenzurata-documentar>, accessed May 24<sup>th</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Sabina Pop, [http://www.cncinema.abt.ro/Personalitati-Detalii.aspx?prn\\_ID=prn-305](http://www.cncinema.abt.ro/Personalitati-Detalii.aspx?prn_ID=prn-305), accessed May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012

<sup>24</sup> More details about the participation of Sahia at the Revolution see Mitulescu, Decebal; Chesu, Doru; Popescu, Mircea D. *Filmele revolutiei : [interviu] / cu Decebal Mitulescu, Doru Chesu, Mircea D. Popescu, realizat de Georgeta Rauta. - Convorbire cu 3 regizori de la studioul "Sahia"*, *Democratia*. - Anul 1, nr. 2, 29 ian. 1990. - p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> An exhaustive list of these films in Călin Căliman, *The history...*, 400.

exhibited in the cinema halls. I will analyze two of productions from 1990: *Timisoara 89* by Ovidiu Bose Paștină and *Jurnalul liber/The free newsreel* with footage recorded by almost all the documentarists of the studio.

The former, dedicated to the memory of the Revolutionists from Timisoara, presents the witness' testimony of the events from Timisoara and it is marked by the intention to know the truth about the murderers during the army intervention. Either by a juxtaposition between the filmed and the sound, but most of the time by a complete separation between the testimonies and the photos shown, with no voice-over and using slow-motion, Paștină's movie has, as film critic Eugenia Vodă noticed, "the will of style,"<sup>26</sup> and differentiates significantly from the propaganda documentaries, marked by a different approach to the mode of representation and to documentary's aim.

Damian mentions that the film "was awarded at Neubrandenburg and won the Award of the Union of the Filmmakers in 1992, plus [my note-"the Great Award from the Documentary Film Festival from"] Costinești. The documentary was selected at the Grand Gala from Tokyo, where the best documentaries of 1992 were invited."<sup>27</sup> However, the movie was screened in the cinema halls in 1993, 3 years after of its production. Film critic Eugenia Vodă recalls this moment, in the context in which the culprits from the massacres from Timisoara were judged and considered not guilty.

"What does it mean to have an uninspired screening, or just apathy, which deals with a film – a special documentary, more precious than the others- as just another movie... Unfortunately, the empty cinema hall says a lot about a certain state of mind of the audience, about the orientation of the interest towards other subject than Timisoara-December '89. This lack of interest signals the moral disaster. If the movie had appeared on screens in 90, when it was made, definitely the cinema hall would have been full. If it

<sup>26</sup> Eugenia Vodă in Laurențiu Damian, *Despre documentar...si inca ceva in plus* ["Something extra on documentary"], (Bucharest: Editura Tehnică, 2003), 203.

<sup>27</sup> Damian, *Despre...* 203.

had appeared in 91, when the people still hoped, it would have been something else. But it appeared in 1993, in a context of skepticism and reluctance.”<sup>28</sup>

I could not find out the reasons behind the delay, but the critic mentioned one of the most important features of the documentary, namely to deal with issues that can change the public opinion.

The second documentary was actually a collective work of the operators and filmmakers in order to show aspects from the Revolution to the foreign audience: narrated in English, the film is set at the border between newsreel, TV reportage and documentary.

*The Free Newsreel*, namely The Romanian Revolution from 1989 represented for Sahia Studio the “Beginning of the End.” Awaited at the Festival from Berlin from 1990 by a full cinema hall had a spectacular press conference. It was not a masterpiece of the documentary film. It did not have aesthetic values. But it had life and drama and was made by some individuals “released from the nightmare” and who took after so many years “the ratio of liberty”. The hall breathed at the same time with the movie, flinched at the clatter of the machineguns and watched helpless at the burning museums.<sup>29</sup>

From the footage that this 30 minute documentary was produced, director Șerban Comănescu made an extended version *Desprinderea/Breaking away* that was shown at the end of 1990. The footage presents the destruction of churches in Bucharest, images of Ceausescu’s villa and its ‘capturing’ by the revolutionaries, interviews with the victims of the shooting, while the leit-motif of the movie is an astronaut who represents the opening quote from Nietzsche “No matter how far away would go, one will never reach somewhere else than its own self.”

After the initial moment of enthusiasm, the production and distribution did not keep up with the challenges, such as the competition with the televisions companies, the diffusion of video tapes. As film critic Călin Căliman remarked in 2000:

“Sahia produced, in the first year after the Revolution, 65 films. That very few were shown, that is another problem. But the documentary film remained connected during 1990 to the

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<sup>28</sup> Eugenia Vodă in Damian *Despre...*, 203. In the same article she mentions that, for the screening of the movie, in the cinema hall minum 15 persons were obliged to enter. As there were only 2, she was obliged to buy 14 tickets so that she can see the movies.

<sup>29</sup> Damian, *Despre...*, 199.

“hot reality”, and maybe one year or two afterwards. But then? Paraphrasing the title of the documentary “On Christmas we got our ratio of liberty”, the Romanian documentary, at the level of its single specialized studio got its ‘ratio of liberty’ and kept silenced.”<sup>30</sup>

However, these evaluations should be qualified. First, the Sahia Studio should not be underestimated and judged only as the propaganda studio of the Communist Party. Besides the propaganda documentaries which were never contested by the managers Aristide Moldovan, Virgil Calotescu and Pantelie Tuțuleasa<sup>31</sup>, the quick reaction in the first days of Revolution and afterwards shows the tensions between a new generation of filmmakers who are ready to experiment (as in the case of Damian or Paștină) and an old one who searches for a strategy of staying in the trajectory. Second, the split between institutions and individuals is necessary again at this point. Indeed, there is no doubt that the institution was politicized before (and even after 1989), but this could not be said about all the filmmakers from the structures of the Studio. Therefore, it is hard to determine if the documentaries produced after 1989 about the Revolution represented an individual or an institutional intention.

Analyzing the cause of the collapse of the Sahia Studio, Adina Brădeanu focuses first on the macro-economic factors, mainly on the “withdrawal of the state monopoly from the film production and distribution,”<sup>32</sup> but also on the negative memory of Sahia in post-communism:

Once 1989 was over, the memory of Sahia, of its attached community, and, by extension, of documentary practice itself, became negatively charged...ultimately, Sahia had to ‘die’ on a discursive and symbolic level in order to allow the film community to separate from the past and to move forward in the hope of a better and allegedly clearer (political) identity.<sup>33</sup>

However, it is not sure who ‘prepared’ that death of the Studio. Damian offered another explanation of the failure naming three factors that led to the collapse from 2000: the exodus of

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<sup>30</sup> Căliman, *Istoria...*, 400

<sup>31</sup> Pantelie Tuțuleasa, *In slujba Președintelui* [“Serving the President”], available online at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/46143440/In-Slujba-Președintelui>, accessed May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Brădeanu, “Death” and documentary: Memory and Film Practice in Post-communist Romania”, June 2007, available online at <http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/6/bradeanu.shtml>, accessed Feb 17<sup>th</sup> 2012.

<sup>33</sup> Brădeanu, “Death” and documentary....

filmmakers (due to the lack of a coherent strategy) and to the fact that the Studio became a “depository of the political events.”<sup>34</sup> Mentioning this last point, Damian recalls the years 1996-1998 as reference moments when the Studio involve in the political life and determined the filmmakers to draw back. The third explanation belongs to Decebal Mitulescu (a former manager of Sahia in 1990 and president of CNC 2000-2004) who considered that, in the case of Sahia ‘the state proved to be an incompetent manager compared to the private investors.’<sup>35</sup>

Finally, director Florin Iepan (an employee at Sahia until 1996) brings into discussion another cause of the collapse of the Studio which can be explained by the technological changes such as the V.C.R and the ‘recording camera which became more and more used. Iepan claims that, after 1989, “a sort of caritas<sup>36</sup> of the documentary movie was created: any amateur who got a camera ‘directed’ a documentary. In a few years, the Romanian documentary was compromised.<sup>37</sup> Iepan addresses one issue that was also mentioned by Solomon<sup>38</sup>, namely that Sahia did not change its technology, preferring the thin film which slowed down the production in comparison with the televisions which were more opened to use the video. Solomon explained that his first choice after graduation from the University of Drama and Cinema was the Visual Art Foundation both for the people who worked there and for its technical equipment.<sup>39</sup> As a direct consequence, his first film *Strigăt in timpan*<sup>40</sup> (1993) and *Cronica de la Zurich* [“The Chronicles from Zurich”] (1996) were experimental video documentaries. The authorities

<sup>34</sup> Damian, interview by the author, Bucharest, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012.

<sup>35</sup> *Actorii lor și caii nostri* [Their actors and our horses-About co-productions], available online at <http://www.eghid.ro/Actualitatea/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=551>, 2005, accessed May 29<sup>th</sup> 2012.

<sup>36</sup> Reference to the *Caritas* institution in Romania which promised high profit with little investment.

<sup>37</sup> Florin Iepan, “Documentarul romanesc nu a murit, dar a plecat in exil,” [“The Romanian documentary is not dead, but gone in exile”], *Formula As*, Nr 670 (2005), available online at <http://www.formula-as.ro/2005/670/lumea-romaneasca-24/florin-iepan-6060>, accessed May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012. Iepan raises an important, but less research issue, concerning the distribution of films by video tapes and its impact on the Romanian market. Unfortunately, I did not encounter any study in this direction to challenge Iepan’s perspective.

<sup>38</sup> Alexandru Solomon, interviewed by the author, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>39</sup> Alexandru Solomon, interviewed by the author, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>40</sup> Alexandru Solomon, Radu Igaszag, *Strigat in timpan/Scream in ear drum*, produced by *Fundatia Arte Vizuale*, available online <http://docuart.ro/documentare/strigat-in-timpan>, accessed May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012.

transferred the competences and the practice of using video to the Video Publishing House (with which Solomon collaborated at his first film), while Sahia continued using the thin film.

Interpreted within the theoretical approach discussed so far, in the long run, Sahia failed to take advantage of its economic capital, due to the problems in receiving the rent from *MediaPro Pictures*. In addition, it could not screen its films in the cinema halls in order to assure another type of income. Neither did with the social capital (transformed in political capital by the participation and the election campaign). Instead of securing a financial basis, it aggravated the exodus of cultural capital: the filmmakers continued their careers outside Sahiafilm. The studio could not adjust its trajectory to capitalism due to the impossibility of transferring its capital in successful documentaries for guarantee its continuation and prevent its ‘symbolic death’ and changing its ‘negative memory’ as propaganda machine for the political power.

### ***Distribution and audience***

As I mention earlier, the problem of distribution was in the hands of *Romaniafilm*, renamed in 1990 *the department of the cinema network and the distribution of movies*, which continued in 1990-1991 to screen documentaries in the cinema halls. However, this practice came to an end in 1995. The responsibility of exhibiting the films belonged now to the television companies because of the lack of interest from the audience and from the distributors much more inclined to show Hollywood movies rather than documentaries for economic reasons. As the television companies had their specialized departments in the production of reportage, the documentaries produced outside the television studios were neglected and were not supported. In connection with the different understandings of the documentaries, the producers from the National Television took the documentaries for reportage which could have been produced with less financial support.

In an article from 2007, Viorica Bucur analyzed the reasons the distributors failed to ‘exploit’ the genre, asserting that the length of the film (short and medium) does not encourage the exhibition in cinema halls. On the other hand, the television companies used the documentaries to fill the empty program slots and “broadcasted at totally inappropriate hours for their possible audience.”<sup>41</sup> During the nineties, the documentaries could not even be exhibited at the film festivals in Romania: “the festivals that we had before 1990 did not function any more. Costinești was over. There were other festivals as well of ranked B, C category. I can hardly say that the documentary benefited from an organized distribution in Romania.”<sup>42</sup>

In strong connection with the distribution and exhibition, the same critic examined the Romanian audience of documentaries, and divided it in three major categories. First there a “majority who – *ab initio* – dismisses the documentary - for them, movie means just an escape from daily life, an adventure and entertainment,”<sup>43</sup> second, there is an audience that watches the documentaries in the cinema halls before 1989, who considered the genre as propaganda and avoids the genre and third, a young audience who seek the films at festivals. On the other hand, referring to the audience of *The Great Communist Bank Robbery*, Solomon mentioned that the film was shown at the National Television and hand a rating of 7.2%, situating on the third place at a national level way ahead of soap operas of other TV serials. He contends that there was a

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<sup>41</sup> Viorica Bucur, “Nevăzut, Necunoscut!” [“Unseen, unknown”], *Dilema Veche*, 188 (2007), available online at <http://arhiva.dilemaveche.ro/index.php?nr=188&cmd=articol&id=6577>, accessed May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Laurențiu Damian, interview by the author, Bucharest April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012.

<sup>43</sup> Viorica Bucur, “Nevăzut, Necunoscut!” [“Unseen, unknown”], *Dilema Veche*, 188 (2007) More detailed: “For the first category, movie means just an escape from daily life, an adventure and entertainment. It wants to cry, to laugh or raise his adrenaline. It is the audience of soap opera, comedies and adventure movies. There is an audience something more educated, but still refractory to documentary: it was formed from elder persons, most of the times intellectuals, still intoxicated by documentaries (most of them propaganda movies) that, during communism, were screened in cinema halls [...] or invaded the TV. As a consequence, now it avoids documentaries [...] And, finally, we speak about another kind of public, a minor public, cinephil (mainly youth, pupils, students) who love and especially appreciate the values of documentaries as genre and seek it at the gale de film or special screening (organized in cinema halls of cultural institutes...) or at festivals (some of them specialized – as the one from Sfântul Gheorghe – Covasna, or the anthropologic from Sibiu). As I said, this audience seeks documentary film. But it must be informed where they could find it.

public interested in documentaries which provides good audience for channels such as Discovery and National Geographic which can be attracted by good documentaries, “not as the pathetic ones from the eighties”<sup>44</sup> If we agree with Solomon that there was (at least in 2004) an audience of documentaries but which is connected to the television, we can explain the collapse of Sahia as a failure to collaborate successfully with the television companies.

In conclusion, the of ‘circle’ production – distribution – audience has hardly worked after 1989 due both to the lack of interest of the audience in a genre considered propaganda, but also to the lack of strategy in distribution. Combined with the decline of the state-owned company who was responsible with the exhibition of the films, the documentaries had little room to be seen and appreciated.

### **Conclusions**

Evolving from a state-owned studio to a independent company, but highly dependent on the Department of Public Information, Sahia Studio decreased its production of documentaries and did not succeeded on the national market, not to mention the European Festivals. Although in the first years after 1989, the Studio succeeded in presenting the audience films about the Revolution, thus adapting to a certain ‘demand’ of the public, the strategy couldn’t be followed in the following years. Contrary to my expectations, the Studio demonstrated that it did not adjust to the changes in a ‘path-dependent’ way and proved that the documentaries can respond to a certain interest from the public and the can follow an evolutionary model dominated by mobility of directors and the variety of funding sources. However, the attempt from 1998 to adjust by to the conditions of capitalism through renting its locations to the newly formed

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<sup>44</sup> Alexandru Solomon, “Reflexul capitalismului salbatic”, [“The reflex of savage capitalism”] *Dilema Veche*, 188 (2007), online at <http://www.romaniaculturala.ro/articol.php?cod=5043>, accessed May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012.

*MediaPro Pictures* Company proved to be a failure on the long-run, as the rents have not been fully paid, not even in 2004. Sahia Studio failed to produce films that would really become competitive in the European documentary milieu. Probably the most important cause was determined by the departure of skilful directors in their search for autonomy, marking the impossibility of transferring its social (political) and economic capital in cultural capital. The memory of the institution was still connected with the Communist propaganda.

## Chapter 3: Independent companies and filmmakers

### Background

The present chapter investigates the post-socialist trajectory followed by the documentary filmmakers who succeeded in the European scene in 2004, triumphs marked by the official selections at numerous international festivals and the winning of important awards. I chose as a representative moment the “International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam” (IDFA)<sup>1</sup> from 2004. The official selection of documentaries directed by the Romanian filmmakers received international acclaims and announced a fresh breath in the Romanian documentary industry. The documentaries *Marele Jaf Comunist/The Great Communist Bank Robbery* (Alexandru Solomon),<sup>2</sup> *Nascuți la comandă: Decreșii/Children of the Decree* (Florin Iepan),<sup>3</sup> *Blestemul ariciului/The Curse of the Hedgehog* (Dumitru Budrală),<sup>4</sup> and *Podul/The Bridge* (Ileana Stănculescu)<sup>5</sup> herald a new turnaround in the Romanian cinema. Moreover, the latter won the *First Appearance Award*, for the best debut, one of the four awards offered by the jury. To this subjective selection of filmmakers at least one important name can be added, namely the film director and producer Thomas Ciulei<sup>6</sup>, whose documentary from 2001 *Asta e/Europolis* shares the same features as the other documentaries in terms of production, distribution and financial support.

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<sup>1</sup> IDFA is often named as “Cannes of the Documentaries”, representing the most prestigious documentary film festival in Europe. More details about the festival at <http://www.idfa.nl/industry.aspx>, accessed May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> *The Great Communist Bank Robbery*, available online at <http://www.cultureunplugged.com/play/3163/Marele-Jaf-Comunist--The-Great-Communist-Bank-Robbery->, accessed on May, 7<sup>th</sup> 2012.

<sup>3</sup> *The Children of the Decree*, available online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3w9p7ck3lbY>, accessed May, 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> *The Curse of Hedgehog*, available at the Open Society Archives film archive <http://fa.osaarchivum.org/filmlibrary/browse/director?starting=B&val=80379>, accessed May, 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> *The Bridge*, available online at <http://www.idfa.nl/industry/tags/project.aspx?id=d33c482b-fe4f-4c82-9a25-71c3a06732ca>, accessed May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> *Europolis*, available online at <http://www.trilulilu.ro/video-cultura/asta-e-documentar>, accessed May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

I will argue in this chapter that the success of these films was determined by the directors' refusal to engage with the state-financed documentary studios and by their choice to start private companies in order to fulfill their aims. The reasons behind the rejection are twofold: on the one hand, the directors did not engage with the type of documentaries promoted by the state institutions (in the case of Iepan or Solomon), and aspired for the autonomy of dealing in different mode with what they understood practicing documentary work consisted of.

On the other hand, they gradually understood that, in order to do so, they needed more than a cultural autonomy and embarked upon the adaptation to the new requirements of the post-socialist realities. For example, Solomon continued to work at feature films in order to have a financial basis, but simultaneously developed individual projects supported by Visual Arts Foundation. He explains the reasons of not collaborating with Sahia or Video Publishing House:

I considered Sahia as something belonging to the past and couldn't go on anymore. A state-owned structure to produce after a plan seemed to be something out of date...I didn't want to hire as employee at Sahia or at Buftea;<sup>7</sup> In addition, the Video Publishing House tried to borrow from Sahia's experience with an organized plan... documentaries can not be directed between 9.00 and 18.00.<sup>8</sup>

This adaptation materialized in the founding of private companies and in the appeal to the growing interest of the European institutions in the Romanian documentary industry. However, the cooperation with the Romanian institutions seemed inevitable and, therefore, a complete separation from them would have been impossible. How essential was the impact of the socioeconomic changes at a European and national level in the development of a parallel industry will remain a recurrent question during the course of the analysis.

Following the logic of the previous chapter, where I analyzed the changes that marked the state funded institutions, I will present how the documentary filmmakers developed their

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<sup>7</sup> Buftea was the town nearby Bucharest where all the feature film Studios were located main (feature) film Studio. After 1998 was acquired by *MediaPro Pictures*.

<sup>8</sup> Alexandru Solomon, interviewed by the author, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

projects and what was relation between them and the state-owned companies and later, to the European programs and television companies. I will conclude that their success from 2004 was determined by an accumulation of cultural capital after they received the education credentials from the European institutions such as the *Discovery Campus Master School* (Iepan, Solomon) or by studying at German Universities (Ciulei and Stănculescu). The cultural capital played a decisive role in questioning the hierarchy of the film industry, and forced the institutions that dominated it (CNC) to finance their productions.

However, there is also a series of disadvantages: both Iepan and Solomon signaled a problem, namely, a certain framework in which they had to direct their movies. Iepan emphasizes that “the documentary is mainly dependent on the television and this happens because of financial support. The extensive number of televisions [...] imposes certain film recipes that restrict the liberty of expression and the originality of the directors.”<sup>9</sup> In addition he added that “the film that I loved the most was “Hotel Cișmigiu,” (his project during his studies) because “at that time I was free. Everything that followed until nowadays was a compromise.”<sup>10</sup> Solomon added at the end of the interview (without me asking any kind of explanation) that: “Due to production reasons and to the fact that the financial supporters of my films are important foreign televisions, I had a reflex to make a show out of documentaries. This makes it far from the *Cinéma vérité* practiced by these great names.”<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, the contact with the European Programs could not have been possible without a change in legislation. Although there no specific stipulation about the documentary,

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<sup>9</sup> Florin Iepan, dialogue with Mihai Fulger, in “Cultura”, 48 (2006), available online at <http://www.romaniaculturala.ro/articol.php?cod=7029>, accessed May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Florin Iepan, interview for *Fishington Post*, March 2012, available online at <http://www.fishingtonpost.ro/2012/03/13012-invitatul-saptamanii-florin-iepan/#.T8ZdQtWiPmI>, accessed May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Solomon, interviewed by the author, Bucharest, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

the law from 1997 established the conditions under which the Romanian producers can participate at co-productions and mentioned for the first time the importance of connecting to the EURIMAGES Program. Thus, article 28 (c) stipulated that “as for co-productions, the Romanian side has to participate with at least 51% from the budget of the film, without including the costs for script, music, staging, producers and main characters, with the exception of the productions made in the programs established by the Council of Europe, European Commission and the institutions dependent on them”<sup>12</sup>, while the (last) article stipulated that “with the aim of European integration, ONC together with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finance will act in 90 days...to the affiliation of Romania to the specialized programs of the European Union – EURIMAGES, as well as to other international institutions and programs.”<sup>13</sup> The law 67/1997 was issued on the background of the political change from 1996, and it was elaborated by filmmaker Radu Gabrea, manager of the *The National Office of Cinematography*.

The political change in 2000 announced a new management: the ONC was reorganized and renamed by CNC and Sergiu Nicolaescu (the new head of the CNC) issued a new law which re-organized the cinema (Law 630/2002). Alexandru Solomon mentioned he produced his film *Painea exilului/The Bread of Exile*, (2002) with the partial funding of the CNC and had to make two versions: a shorter version (because the law stipulated that the documentaries should not last more than 20min) and longer one for the film festivals. Moreover, Tudor Giugiu, one of the co-producers of *The Great Communist Bank Robbery* mentioned that “we are lucky that we gone over the period the law of cinema of Nicolaescu who assimilated this genre with the films that should not last more than 20 min.”<sup>14</sup> However, the law had some positive aspects, mentioned by

<sup>12</sup> Law 67/October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1997, available online at <http://www.jurisprudenta.com/lege/ordonanta-urgenta-67-1997-gezvm/>, accessed May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Law 67/October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1997.

<sup>14</sup> Tudor Giurgiu, “Prin Oglinda” [“Through the mirror”], *Dilema Veche*, 188 (2007).

Ada Solomon (Solomon's wife and producer of the film): "our great luck that we had in financing this movie – which has from CNC only 120 000 Euros from 400.000 – was the enactment of the new law of cinema which allows you to access a series of alternative sources in the moment when you won the CNC contest."<sup>15</sup>

It is legitimate to ask at this point what was the trajectory followed by the first private companies. Reacting to the social changes, the first companies developed after 1989 were mainly interested in feature films rather than documentaries. The few exceptions were AGERFILM; the company of film director Nicolae Mărgineanu (set in 1991) which produced both feature and documentary movies and the "Visual Art Foundation" (set in 1992), the only company specialized in documentaries and animation film, led by Vivi Drăgan Vasile and Velvet Moraru.<sup>16</sup> But they could not satisfy the demand of the directors eager to start new projects. This led the way, by the end of the first post-communist decade, to the directors' choice to found their own companies: Florin Iepan established *Subcultura* in 1997, Thomas Ciulei founded *Europolis* in 1999, while Solomon (who produced his films as Visual Arts Foundation) grounded HI-FILM Production<sup>17</sup> in the early 2000s, specialized not only in documentaries but also advertising or feature films. Besides these companies, a special mention regards the ASTRA FILM FESTIVAL (AFF) SIBIU<sup>18</sup>, a film festival organized from 1993 dedicated to anthropological film from Central and Eastern Europe. Moreover, the *Visual Anthropology Foundation* produced Budrală's documentary. An important support came from European funds, especially from the MEDIA Desk program, but it would (later) be financially supported by the authorities. All these initiatives have in common the disappointment with the state programs or institutions, such as

<sup>15</sup> Ada Solomon, "Intre timp facem servicii" ["Meanwhile, we produce services"], *Dilema Veche*, 320 (2010).

<sup>16</sup> They have also produced "The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu", directed by Andrei Ujica in 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Official website <http://www.hifilm.ro/>.

<sup>18</sup> More details on <http://www.astrafilm.ro/despre-aff.aspx>.

the law that limited the length on the documentary, the transformation of Sahia into a governmental institution or the difficulty in accessing the funding. Nonetheless, we can not speak about a complete separation from the state institutions. Some of the directors worked in parallel at feature movies or at the national television and applied for grants at the CNC even before the protests from 2002-2004.

### ***Screening for Amsterdam: The directors and their films***

The documentaries taken into consideration for analysis can not be easily separated from the directors' previous films. Solomon started his career in documentaries in 1991 with by collaborating with the Video Publishing House for producing an experimental film and dedicated a couple of movies to the Romanian avant-garde: *Strigat in timpan/Shout in the ear drum* (1993), *Duo pentru Paoloncel si Petronom/Duo for Paoloncel and Petronom* (1994), *Cronica de la Zurich/The Chronicle from Zurich* (1996) and to a Romanian Jewish photographer Josif Bergman, *Omul cu o mie de ochi/The man with one thousand eyes* most of them produced by the *Fundatia Arte Vizuale*. In 2002, while working at *The Great Communist Bank Robbery*, he received support from ONC and produced *The Bread of Exile* about Romanian playwright Caragiale (self-exiled in Berlin in 1906).

Florin Iepan started his career at Sahia, moved to the private television *MediaPro Pictures* in 1996 and worked at the National Television. Meanwhile he founded *SubCultura*, and directed before 2004 *The One, the Only, the Real Tarzan*, a documentary about Johnny Weissmuller, the world class swimmer and the actor who played Tarzan. *The Children of the Decree* was produced by WESTEND FILM & TV PRODUKTION in co production with ZDF, AVRO, in association with ARTE, YLE, ORF and the National Television, supported by Media

Plus and Hessen Invest Film.<sup>19</sup> He participated at Discovery Campus Master School in 2001 with the project *The children of the decree*.

As for Thomas Ciulei, he completed his studies in Germany (Munich) and New York where his father, Liviu Ciulei (renowned director and film critic, awarded at Cannes 1965) emigrated in 1988. Before *Europolis*, Thomas Ciulei directed *Gratian* (1995), a documentary about a ‘werewolf’ from Transylvania and one about a Romanian actress Lena Constante (1997). Similar, completing her studies in Germany, Ileana Stănculescu established strong connection with the documentary networks from Europe and managed to find finance her first film. The only exception from this group was Dumitru Budrală did not gain its educational credentials abroad and produced his previous documentary *La drum* (On the road, 1997) in conditions similar to *The Curse of the Hedgehog*. Therefore, the “Amsterdam moment” could be understood as a symbolic event rather than a surprising rupture in the career of the directors.

### ***Intentions and Production***

With the intention of finding a beginning of the “Amsterdam moment” a reference to Thomas Ciulei is inevitable, especially due to chronological reasons. Released in 2001, *Europolis* represents one of the first materialized projects of the private companies. The initial intentions of the movie were “to analyze the new social classes that appeared after 1989: the unemployed, the capitalist, the liberal.”<sup>20</sup> But the intentions of the movie were quickly shifted, due to the changes in the social structures: “I found characters for these figures, but, when I went

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<sup>19</sup> More details about the film at <http://www.westendtv.com/42.0.html?&L=1>.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Ciulei, *Mihai Fulger's blog*, (2005) <http://mihaifulger.wordpress.com/2011/07/01/thomas-ciulei-documentarul-ca-autoportret/>, accessed May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

to film them, the unemployed got a job, the capitalist went bankrupt.”<sup>21</sup> In this case, the idea moved to the concept of generation<sup>22</sup>, depicting three generations of inhabitants of the Danube Delta.

The film was co-produced by Ciulei’s own company (*Europolis*), together with ZDF and the National Office of Cinematography<sup>23</sup>. In an interview with film critic Mihai Fulger, Ciulei explained the reason for doing so. His answer represents a matter-of-fact condition of the Romanian documentary film producer:

“I created my own production company in 1999, mainly to produce my own movies. I don’t know if *Europolis* will ever produce anything more than my movies and of other few director, because if I dedicate to the production, I can’t make my own films. Even so, by not having a producer, I spend a lot of time with production problems. This is an everlasting problem. in Romania there are no producers, in general, and no producers of documentary films, in particular; actually this is a problem that a worldwide level. That is why the directors make their own production companies: to access funding and working a film alone. Producers like me are named in German „rucksack –producers” (*Rucksackproduzenten*), because they carry a laptop in their backpack which represents all their office. This is not my job, but I am forced to do it.”<sup>24</sup>

In addition, Ciulei mentions that “the salaries are very low”, the crew from televisions (in case of a co-production) “tend to work eight hours/per day”, and “there are no camera operators and sound technicians specialized in documentaries.”<sup>25</sup>

Solomon’s *The Great Communist Bank Robbery* represents one of the best examples of the cooperation between the European programs and televisions companies, the (partial) financial support of the CNC and the private companies of distribution. Solomon’s intended to

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with Ciulei, *Mihai Fulger’s blog*, (2005) <http://mihaiifulger.wordpress.com/2011/07/01/thomas-ciulei-documentarul-ca-autoportret/>, accessed May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> The title of the movie refers to one of the last lines of the main character, a mixture of surviving according to the laws of nature and conciliation with the tough destiny, but also a reference to the “real” image of the Danube Delta. As for the poster of the film, the connection between nature and human is made by a young proud man holding a huge bird, a metaphor which symbolizes the stressing of the “reality” of the connection and the function of image as representative for the life in the Delta.

<sup>23</sup> Established in 1997, the ONC changed its name in CNC in 2001.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Ciulei, *Mihai Fulger’s blog*, (2005) <http://mihaiifulger.wordpress.com/2011/07/01/thomas-ciulei-documentarul-ca-autoportret/>, accessed May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Ciulei, *Mihai Fulger’s blog*, (2005) <http://mihaiifulger.wordpress.com/2011/07/01/thomas-ciulei-documentarul-ca-autoportret/>, accessed May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

bring into public discussion one un-known event happened in 1959, namely the robbery of National Bank and confront the witnesses and the characters who participated at the events with each other, in the attempt of finding the robbers' motivation such an action. On the other, the documentary tries to deconstruct another documentary<sup>26</sup> produced immediately after the robbery, a product of the Communist propaganda. This led Solomon to the discourse about the role of documentary and the acknowledgement that, despite the claim for objectivity, every documentary depends on the perspective and the sources which are used.

Produced in almost four years, Solomon's film was considered "one of the most intelligent movies (documentaries and feature films) ever made in Romania; an investigation of History, made with the "weapons" of the film – a sort of "image against image".<sup>27</sup> The project of "*The Robbery...*" started to materialize in august 2000, when a first synopsis was ready, but the major step was represented by the participation at a workshop in 2001<sup>28</sup> at "Discovery Campus Master School."<sup>29</sup> Solomon underlined the importance of the training, especially because of the pitching session at the end where one could sell the project. Following this, two major televisions, Arte and BBC, showed their interest in producing the film, as well as "Les Films D'ici", (a French company) and France 2. The film was not considered worthy of financing by the Romanian Producers: the televisions did not engage with it, only the private producer Tudor Giurgiu (from Libra Film) sustained the project. Initially, the Centre for National Cinema rejected the project of funding it, but after the lobby of the foreign producers, the decision was

<sup>26</sup> *The Reenactment*, (Virgil Calotescu, Sahia Studio, 1959).

<sup>27</sup> Alex Leo Șerban, "RPR face ordine – Marele Jaf communist", [RPR makes order – The Great Communist Robbery"] *Atelier Liternet*, (October 2005), available online at <http://agenda.liternet.ro/articol/2123/Alex-Leo-Serban/RPR-face-ordine-Marele-jaf-comunist.html>, accessed May 11<sup>th</sup> 2012.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.alexandrusolomon.ro/>, accessed on Feb 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> According to its official site, "The Masterschool is a Europe-wide development program offering filmmakers a unique opportunity to access the international non-fiction market. It is a tailored program in which 15 European producer/director teams develop their documentaries at 4 workshops across Europe over an intensive nine-month period before pitching their ideas to commissioners", <http://www.documentary-campus.com/v2/page/masterschool/>.

modified, and the film received the funding. Concerning the budget of the film, Solomon mentioned the amount of 400,000 euro, a significant amount for a documentary. Although Solomon did not involve as a producer in this film, his career will start with the subsequent documentary, “Cold waves”.

Closely related with Solomon’s *Robbery...*, in terms of intentions and production, *The Children of the Decree*, directed by Florin Iepan had the support of the National Television as well. The documentary investigates the effects of the Decree 770 issued by the Romanian authorities on October 1<sup>st</sup> 1967 regarding birth control by conducting a series of interviews with the doctors, mothers or midwives who took part in the illegal abortions practices despite the decree. With a technique of “talking-heads” in a staged set-up and a female voice over, the narration of the film assures a coherent explanation of the causes, a dramatic reconstruction of the condition of the women who wanted to have an abortion and the measures they took in order to avoid the abortion. In an interview with Iulia Blaga, Iepan confessed that this is a “mainstream documentary, stylistically completely different from what I did so far”<sup>30</sup>, insisting on the fact that his intentions were to “provoke a great public debate. I want the name of the movie to be on T-shirts, music, bands and pencils. I actually want the film to move something in the Romanian conscience”<sup>31</sup>, thus placing his movie in the category of the interactive documentaries explained earlier. Besides Subcultura and the Romanian National Television, the film was also supported by televisions ZDF and ARTE and by other European institutions such as Westend Film& TV Produktion GmbH or Jan Wrijman Fund.

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with Iepan. *Liternet*, (December 2003), available online at <http://agenda.liternet.ro/articol/663/Iulia-Blaga-Florin-Iepan/Decreteii-e-un-film-despre-generatia-mea.html>, accessed May 11<sup>th</sup> 2012.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Iepan. *Liternet*, (December 2003).

The Fund is closely connected with IDFA with its own aim of financing the films from the countries with low-budget<sup>32</sup>, co-producing Ileana Stănculescu's debut documentary *The Bridge across Tisza*. The other co-producer of her film was the company established by Stănculescu herself "Art-doc", located in Bucharest. The perspective proposed by Stănculescu offers an insight into the life on the border between Romania and Ukraine. Disconnected for almost 60 years by the lack of a bridge across Tisza, the neighboring communities on the banks of the river try to communicate and connect with each other, despite their different ethnic background and the technological limitations. Stănculescu presents the attempts to construct a bridge using European Funds, which finally comes to a successful end in 2004. The "absurdity of the political reasoning"<sup>33</sup> is revealed by the constant reference of the history of the relations between Austrians and Hungarians (who built the bridge), the Germans (who destroyed it in their retreat in 1944), the Russians (who were not interested in reconstructing it), the Ukrainians who live on the right bank and the Romanians from the left bank of the river. Therefore, the movie represents a metaphor on the cultural relationships between these nationalities.

Last, but not the least, the anthropological movie earned its ratio of success through the presence of Dumitru Budrală's *The Curse of the Hedgehog*<sup>34</sup> in the official selection. Produced by the Foundation of Visual Anthropology with the support of Roma culture Initiative and the Royal Embassy of Netherlands the documentary follows a community of Roma near the

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<sup>32</sup> About Jan Vrijman Fund, available online at <http://www.idfa.nl/industry/markets-funding/vrijman-fund/about.aspx>, accessed May 12<sup>th</sup>

<sup>33</sup> From the official synopsis of the film at <http://www.idfa.nl/industry/tags/project.aspx?id=d33c482b-fe4f-4c82-9a25-71c3a06732ca>

<sup>34</sup> The title refers to one of the last lines in the documentary, which reminds the belief of the inhabitants of the village in the curse sent upon them to always find themselves on the road, never being able to work the land. Shot with a permanent moving camera, which shifts between close-up and a continuous reference at the landscape, the documentary intends to contradict the stereotypes concerning the Roma minority, by following their rituals (marriage or the burning of the non-sold merchandise with the aim of avoiding the bad-luck), their personal dramas (the fire that destroys a house, killing the children of the mother, the death of the donkey, poisoned) and their aspirations towards becoming businessman and get rid of the poverty.

Romanian city of Sibiu over a whole year. The intentions of the filmmaker was to contradict the stereotypes concerning the Roma minority, by following their rituals (marriage or the burning of the non-sold merchandise with the aim of avoiding the bad-luck), their personal dramas (the fire that destroys a house, killing the children of the mother, the death of the donkey) and their aspirations towards becoming businessmen and get rid of the poverty.

In conclusion, the five documentaries analyzed in terms of intention and production share common features in terms of the European funding either by the involvement of television companies (ZDF, ARTE, BBC), special funds (Jan Wrijman) or European Programs (EURIMAGES and MEDIA) and are co-produced by the newly established private companies and the foreign producers. Basing on the cultural capital that they have gained by being accepted on the European level, the filmmakers were able to assure the support of Romanian producers (the National Television and CNC) and gain economic capital in order to finish their movies.

### ***Distribution***

As I mentioned previously, the documentaries were no longer screened in the cinema hall in Romania after 1995. Solomon's explanation for the absence stands in the false image of the documentary, both in the eyes of the public and in the eyes of the producers: "in Romania the documentary for cinema, as a genre, does not exist", he argues, mainly because "before 1989 the documentary was generally a short-movie that supplemented the feature film in the cinema hall and consisted of propaganda." What Solomon tried to do was to conciliate the public with a new type of documentary, reflexive and captivating and to demonstrate that documentary does not mean only expository narrative and communist propaganda. Solomon's *Great Robbery...* was distributed in Romania by the private companies *Independenta Film* and *Libra Film*, starting, Sept 30<sup>th</sup>, 2005 and represented the second documentary screened in cinema halls after Ciulei's

*Europolis* although did not last more than a couple of weeks. The other documentaries did not manage to enter the cinema halls.

The second type of distribution was the broadcasting on the televisions: in general, the televisions involved in the production (BBC, Arte, ZDF or France 2) showed the documentaries and organized debates in the studios before or after the broadcasting, as in the case of *The Children...* or *Europolis*, while (although not involved in the production), Duna TV (Hungary) and the Romanian National Television broadcasted *The Curse...* and YLE (Finland) and FOX International showed “The Bridge”.<sup>35</sup>

However, the film festivals represented probably the main focus of the filmmakers: according to the official presentation, Budrală’s *The Curse* was in the official selection at more than thirty festivals<sup>36</sup>, while the success of *Europolis* materialized in the official competition at numerous festivals<sup>37</sup> and a couple of awards. This last term, “success” creates a rather subjective appreciation of the film, (as in the case of all the other filmmakers), based on the votes of a jury. This mechanism is itself questioned by the filmmaker: “the juries interest me less, because there are only a few people who say that a film is better than the other: the awards are highly dependent on luck.”<sup>38</sup>

Referring to the question of success, probably the “luckiest” movie is Ileana Stănculescu’s *The Bridge across Tisza*, a project that received the *First Appearance Award* at

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<sup>35</sup> *Your online Documentary Cinema*, <http://dafilms.com/director/7962-ileana-stanculescu/>, accessed May, 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012.

<sup>36</sup> It also won a series of awards such as “Best Documentary Award” (Docupolis, Barcelona, 2005), “Grand Prize” at Film.doc (Romania, 2005), “Special Acknowledgment” International Ethnographic Film Festival (Belgrade, 2005) and “Dialektus International Film Festival”, (Budapest 2007), but also requested for didactic and research purposed at different institutions [http://www.astrafilm.ro/old/documente/curse\\_hedgehog\\_presentation.pdf](http://www.astrafilm.ro/old/documente/curse_hedgehog_presentation.pdf), accessed May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>37</sup> It won “Grand Prix du Jury Documentaire” (Belfort 2001), “Golden Olive” (Kalamata International Documentary Festival 2001), “Best Documentary” (Cinema dei Popoli, Firenze 2002).

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Ciulei, *Mihai Fulger’s blog*, (2005) <http://mihaiifulger.wordpress.com/2011/07/01/thomas-ciulei-documentarul-ca-autoportret/>, accessed May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

IDFA 2004, the award given to the debut section. To stress the importance of the award, I will recall that jury selected from 2000 movies only 200 in the official competition, and offered only four awards for different categories.<sup>39</sup> Both of them received important prizes<sup>40</sup> while Iepan got his share of success with *The Children...* at Zagreb, and was screened at more than 15 festivals.<sup>41</sup>

The success gained at the festivals contributed as well to its transformation in economic and social capital in order to change the hierarchy in the autochthon film industry, but also raised the prestige of the filmmakers in Europe. As a direct consequence, Solomon was asked to direct *Clara B.* by producers Arte, France3 and Centre National de Cinematography (France), while Iepan continued to work on a documentary about Bela Lugosi produced by AVRO, Arte and others.

### ***Audience and Reception***

In close connection with the appearance at different festivals, the reception by the audience and film critics plays an important role in the analysis of the documentaries. It is probably the most subjective from them all, because of the impossibility to investigate the effects of the documentaries on the audience that watched the movie either at the film festivals (where the audience supposes to be more critical), televisions (where the audience is higher) or in the cinema hall (where only a limited number of persons pay the ticket to watch the movie). In

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<sup>39</sup> For more details about this film festival, visit the official website <http://www.idfa.nl/industry.aspx> (accessed May, 9, 2012).

<sup>40</sup> Solomon's *Great Robbery* was officially selected in festivals from Romania (TIFF), Italy (Trieste), Bosnia (Sarajevo), the USA (Minneapolis) and Israel (Jerusalem), it received awards in France (Pessac), Hungary (Grand Prix, Mediawave/ Gyor), Spain (Documenta/Madrid)

<sup>41</sup> MasterSchool Film 2008, available online at [http://www.documentary-campus.com/v2/page/masterschool/dcm\\_films/](http://www.documentary-campus.com/v2/page/masterschool/dcm_films/), accessed May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012

respect to the reception of the documentaries by the mass media, the film critics were, in general, favorable to the movies and supported them as members of juries at different competitions.<sup>42</sup>

The exception is Ciulei's *Europolis*, which received negative critics in early the 2000s, being accused of presenting a negative image of the country. Some of the critics argued that "the main explanation of the insistence upon the real images and upon the disgusting, enormous, grotesque aspects, real but marginal, the main explanation of the one-sided perspective lies in the interfusion of imbecility and dishonesty",<sup>43</sup> while the journalist Emil Hurezeanu wrote that "the directors manipulate more than the secret police."<sup>44</sup> These two comments refer to the director's choice to present to the public an image of the Danube Delta in contrast with touristic clichés, filmed during the winter when everything is frozen and the inhabitants of the Delta try to resist the harsh conditions. The film correspondent of *Cultural Observatory* at the Berlin Film Festival where the documentary was first screened mentioned that "almost all the Romanian critics who have seen his movie in Berlin blamed Ciulei for a lack of objectivity, considering it as forced generalization and a false reflection of the reality. They have also invoked that he had controlled the characters, suggesting them some gestures and vulgar dialogues, dotted with atypical swearing for the population of Romania"<sup>45</sup> In a later dialog with film critic Mihai Fulger, Thomas Ciulei stated:

In my movies, and in the most recent movies *Europolis* more as in the others, the characters play themselves. They are always conscious that they have in front of their eyes a camera and that I want to tell a story. They even say: "You can narrate everything you want, we'll help you". In this case, if I realized what people can do, I

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<sup>42</sup> It is the case, for example, of Andrei Gorzo, member of the jury of the National Center of Cinematography who accepted the financial support for the movie after the initial refusal.

<sup>43</sup> M. Iorgulescu, in Richard Wagner, "Europolis, un film de Thomas Ciulei", ["Europolis, a film by Thomas Ciulei"], *Observator Cultural*, 107 (2002).

<sup>44</sup> Hurezeanu in Richard Wagner, "Europolis, un film de Thomas Ciulei", ["Europolis, a film by Thomas Ciulei"], *Observator Cultural*, 107 (2002).

<sup>45</sup> William Totok, "Debusolare, criza si saturatie. Insemnari de la Berlinala 2001", [Disorientarion, crisis and saturation. Annotations from Berlin 2001"], *Observator Cultural*, 53 (2001), accessed May, 9<sup>th</sup> 2012

am not afraid of using these things, even giving another perception in my movies than they have in their reality.<sup>46</sup>

Apparently, the Romanian documentary film critics did not adapt with the same rapidity to the new standards to which the filmmakers did and still considered documentary in the lines imposed by the traditional one, as an objective claim of reality, ignoring the various modes of representation. One of the explanations of a consistent community of critics specialized in documentaries was the absence of a journal dedicated to documentaries which could have connected the Romanian criticism with the European one, an absence that still persists.

On the other hand, Solomon's *Robbery* received the attention of the film critics and the well-deserved congratulations: For example, Laura Popescu considers the film "a spectacle, a film with rare cinematographic qualities that one must see at the cinema hall. A movie within a movie...One sees with own eyes the interfusion between terror and irony in which some of us spent their life".<sup>47</sup> Alex Leo Șerban mentions that

Solomon brings one near another the victims and the perpetrators to watch those images. The young director hopes to provoke a psychodrama, re-making the scene from Hamlet in which the actors reconstitute the killing of the father and provokes a crisis de conscience to the murderer-Brother. But the scene does not have the expected result, the waking of the conscience does not happen – the communist monsters have no conscience – they have justifications.<sup>48</sup>

However, Andrei Gorzo has some doubts about the irony and the *mise-en-scene* .:

I am not sure that his discrete irony is helpful in this context. Maybe it was better to have a more direct humor. And I am even less convinced concerning the effect of the purification rituals which he conducts, bringing together the survivors to see the movie

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<sup>46</sup> Interview with Ciulei, *Mihai Fulger's blog*, (2005) <http://mihaifulger.wordpress.com/2011/07/01/thomas-ciulei-documentarul-ca-autoportret/>, accessed May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Alexandru Solomon, *HBO Magazine*, (November 2005), available online at <http://agenda.liternet.ro/cronici/marelejafcomunism.html>, accessed May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012

<sup>48</sup> Alex Leo Șerban, "RPR face ordine – Marele Jaf communist", [RPR makes order – The Great Communist Robbery"] *Atelier Liternet*, (October 2005), available online at <http://agenda.liternet.ro/articol/2123/Alex-Leo-Serban/RPR-face-ordine-Marele-jaf-comunist.html>, accessed May 11<sup>th</sup> 2012.

from 1959 or bringing the cameramen to the filming places and letting him film once again.<sup>49</sup>

Solomon was also among the few that realized that once that, due to the changes in the production and distribution, the film addresses now a European audience, underlying the similarities between the post-totalitarian Romanian context and, for example Spain.

It is amazing how easily a foreign audience can understand things which are, at the first glance, familiar only to us. I have experienced this communication in Spain, a country which knew Franco's dictatorship. The association between stupidity and barbarity, between lie and terror is known to them, as it is for us. In the same time, I consoled myself observing that they did not speak about this for a long time - about the responsibility for what had happened.<sup>50</sup>

Iepan's *Children...* had probably the largest impact due to the interest in the subject of the movie and the fact that was broadcasted by the National Television. While film critic Valerian Sava attacked the movie considering it too close to the model promoted by Discovery<sup>51</sup>, other critics realize the impact that the film had (or can have) to the generation born after 1967 and the fact that Iepan "succeeds in identifying a universal conclusion."<sup>52</sup> As for *The Curse...* and *The Bridge* the impact is even more difficult to measure, as they did not have the solid distributors (such as television companies) behind the other documentaries. The reviews of *The Curse* concentrated more on the originality of the characters and their actions<sup>53</sup>, while *The Bridge* was hardly noticed by the Romanian critics.

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<sup>49</sup> Andrei Gorzo, "Reconstituirii – Marele Jaf Comunist", ["Reconstruction – The Great Communist Bank Robbery"] *Dilema Veche*, Sept 2005, available online at <http://agenda.liternet.ro/cronici/marelejafcomunism.html>, accessed May 11<sup>th</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Alexandru Solomon, *HBO Magazine*, (November 2005), available online at <http://agenda.liternet.ro/cronici/marelejafcomunism.html>, accessed May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012

<sup>51</sup> Valerian Sava, 2006: "The National Television does not represent a stimulant agency...but rather an enemy...on the scheme of talk-shows or of the reformed propaganda, with the supreme model the Discovery channel (see Iepan's "children of the Decree" in "We have to forget about Sahia Studio's tradition", *Cultura*, 48 (2006), available online at <http://www.romaniaculturala.ro/articol.php?cod=7029>, accessed, May 13<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> Laura Popescu, "Ne place documentarul", [We like documentary"], *Observator Cultural*, 289 (2005)

<sup>53</sup> *The Curse of the Hedgehog*, [http://www.astrafilm.ro/old/documente/curse\\_hedgehog\\_presentation.pdf](http://www.astrafilm.ro/old/documente/curse_hedgehog_presentation.pdf), accessed May 13<sup>th</sup>

To conclude, the relationship with the audience differs from one film to another in terms of institutional practice, but they all have in common the intention of changing the attitude of the audience. Either confronting with the Communist past as in case of Solomon or Iepan, or arguing against the stereotypes concerning the Roma (Budrală), and exploring the life in tradition communities beyond the clichés (Ciulei and Stănculescu), the first audience of the movies are the characters themselves, aware of their role as witnesses and narrators of the reality. The positive reviews that were addressed by the film critics invoke both the mode of representation chosen by the filmmakers, but also the role of the documentary as a voice in the public debate.

### ***Conclusions***

In conclusion, the success of the movies was due both to the social changes in the national background and the possibility to find an autonomous alternative to the state-funding institutions, as well as to a couple of reforms at the European level, manifested in the creation of special funds for the co-production of the movies. All five movies analyzed in this chapter were produced or distributed by European institutions. The economic factor was not only one determinant to the evolution of the documentary industry, but also the cultural capital that the filmmakers gained after winning the international awards. Based on it, the filmmakers could convince the national institutions to support their projects, as the co-habilitation with the state-funded institution couldn't be permanently interrupted. The price paid by the directors was a certain limitation in the mode of representation and the adaptation of the techniques of the TV documentaries encouraged by the foreign televisions.

The choice of founding private companies in order to ease their communication with the European markets proved to be the winning card for the young directors, whose trajectory transformed them from directors to producers and distributors. Succeeding on European level

meant the accumulation of a symbolic capital which materialized in other projects, this time with the support from the public institutions.

## Final Conclusions

Engaging with the Bourdieu's theories regarding the field of cultural production and the types of capital represents one the keys in understanding the documentary film industry in post-communist Romania. In strong connection to these theories, the concept of 'trajectory adjustment' proposed by Eyal, Szélenyi and Townsley enabled us to look at the transition from state socialism to capitalism paying attention to the role of institutions in implementing capitalism without neglecting the role of the agents from these institutions. At a national level, the production, distribution and exhibition did no longer survive in the terms before 1989: the new laws adopted by political power regulated and imposed another models and approached the Romanian legislation with the European industry.

In the light of the 'trajectory adjustment' theory, my initial hypothesis according to which the state-dependent companies followed an 'involutionary' transition proved inexact. First, Sahia was not just a simple propaganda machine of the Communist Party, but also the depository of talented filmmakers who produced valuable films even in the harsh condition of censorship. After 1989, their Studio and its filmmakers engaged with the production of films concerning the Revolution, adapting its type of capitals to the political changes that followed.

However, on the long run, the social (political) capital proved to play against its own interest, when the involvement in the political campaign determined important filmmakers to leave the Studio by 1996. As a direct consequence, Sahia remained with the valuable 'cultural capital' and the production of documentaries to reach the national or European market stopped. In front of the new challenges, Sahia Studio tried to take advantage of its economic capital, but it failed to do so, betrayed by the rules of capitalism. Finally, the political changes affected the Studio and could not save it: by 2000, Sahia had only one employee.

On the other hand, the ‘trajectory adjustment’ concept allows understanding the career of the filmmakers as a mobile positioning between the Romanian institutions on the one side and the European programs and television companies on the other. Disappointed with the ‘type’ of documentaries produced by Sahia (Solomon), or the absence of a significant festival dedicated to documentaries (Budrală), the young filmmakers searched for new patrons in order to continue their careers. Working in parallel at the state companies or at different projects to sustain themselves, they founded their private companies which eased their contact with the producers from the West.

The direct collaboration with the European programs and television companies materialized in the accumulation of cultural, economic and social capital. At a national level, they imposed a new hierarchy where the independent filmmakers became *intermediaries* between the European networks and Romanian cinematography. Using their cultural and social capital, they have successfully protested against the rejection of the distribution of resources by determining the members of the established elite to change the laws and to financially support their productions.

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## **Legislation**

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