Greek Screen Industries:

From Political Economy to Media Industry Studies

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Abstract:

This introductory article to the special issue on 'Greek Screen Industries' of the *Journal of Greek Media and Culture* offers a critical overview of the recently emerging field of Media Industry Studies and situates existing work on Greek screen industries in its context. It argues that the current fragmentation and lack of dialogue between social sciences and arts and humanities approaches on the topic is particularly marked in the Greek context, a fact that can be explained by institutional and historical reasons. It calls for an expansion of the agendas privileged by political economy approaches to screen media towards the more pluralistic, empirical and culture-orientated perspectives facilitated by Media Industry Studies.

Keywords:

Greek screen industries, political economy, Media Industry Studies, arts, humanities, social sciences, communication

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In the spring and early summer of 2020, as we were preparing this special issue of the *Journal of Greek Media and Culture,* computer screens became more prominent than ever in many people's lives. As the global pandemic led to restrictions in physical contact and mobility, a wide range of screen based digital devices - tablets, smartphones, laptops, games consoles and smart TVs - were used to an unprecedented degree for 'live' interaction, as well as for accessing both user-generated and professionally produced information and/or entertainment. An organisation tracking media consumption in the US has reported that video games have been filling the void created by the absence of live sports, streaming services have continued to expand, cable news channels have enjoyed sharp ratings increases, while even established newspapers like the *New York Times* have experienced record levels of engagement in their digital form (J.P. Morgan 2020). No doubt, similar trends have been noted in all digitally advanced countries, especially as for large periods of time the lockdown has been strict, and opportunities for social interaction and entertainment outside the home have been very limited.

This special issue is dedicated to Greek screen industries. By screen industries we refer to film, television, advertising, games, and any other media and culture industries that can reach audiences through the mediation of a screen. In this sense, print media (books, newspapers, magazines), music and radio can also be conceived as part of screen industries as they are increasingly consumed through display screens. 'Screen' industries are therefore a sub-section of 'media and culture' industries. This special issue prioritises screen industries as a means of narrowing down the broader notion of 'media and culture' and highlighting the ever-increasing prominence of screens in accessing cultural products. It also introduces the recently emerged field of Media Industry Studies into the Greek context by reflecting on its

intellectual origins and trajectory, reviewing existing work and assessing its usefulness for the study of Greek screen industries.

The aim of this special issue is therefore to foreground research questions, approaches and methodologies concerning the production and dissemination of screen media in Greece. The rapidly expanding interdisciplinary research field of Media Industry Studies brings together the study of media products as *cultural* products and processes, while closely examining the economic, social, political and other contextual conditions that inform their production and dissemination. By exploring the value of such a range of approaches for the study of Greek screen industries this special issue aims to whet the appetite for further research on empirically grounded but also theoretically informed questions about the what, how, when, and why Greek screen industries developed as they have, how they operate in the present, and possibly (although not necessarily) how such understandings can help inform future policies and practices.

So, what comprises *Greek* screen industries and what is the benefit of localising this broad research field? By adopting a nationally defined approach whereby the primary object of analysis is screen media produced, circulated and consumed in Greece and/or in diasporic contexts, the aim is to develop a rigorous and empirically grounded understanding of the operation of the relevant industries - whether emerging or established, contemporary or historical - in a way that invites the exploration of similarities or differences with other national or international screen media. In an era of globalisation and transnational exchanges a nation-based approach might sound parochial, and indeed it would be if the Greek case was examined in isolation from developments elsewhere, or if cross border interactions, where available, were ignored. Greece is a small country and a small media market. As such it

shares a number of ‘structural peculiarities’ (Puppis 2009: 10) with other similarly sized countries/markets, that include, among others, limited production resources, restricted commercial potential and a high proportion of imported media (Papadimitriou 2020: 182). While this makes it much harder for its screen and media industries to compete on a global level, rigorous scholarship that offers empirically grounded descriptions of the production and dissemination of Greek screen media, theorises the specificities of the Greek case, and relates it to other – both globally dominant and peripheral – screen industries, can disperse widely held and uncritically reproduced assumptions. It can help explain past practices, identify continuities and changes, and overall illuminate the workings of these industries at both the micro and macro levels. While such screen industries research is not specifically geared to informing policy or regulation, whether at a national, local or company-specific level, the insights it offers may also be used to help build capacity and reach.

Before considering further the fruitfulness of expanding research on Greek screen industries, it is useful to review the academic field of Media Industry Studies as it has developed predominantly in the Anglophone context – but has increasingly placed emphasis on national and geographically varied case studies, including Asian, African and South American media industries. Media Industry studies is an umbrella term, a ‘big tent’ (Herbert et al 2020: 7) that brings together the study of separate industries established at different times in often widely diverse ways, and represents media with their own formal specificities, modes of production, working practices, systems of operation, and so on. While the study of media industries is not in itself new, its articulation into a distinct field of academic study aims to encourage cross-disciplinary exchanges and overcome the unhelpful fragmentation that has dominated until recently.

This does not mean that Media Industry Studies proposes a uniform theoretical or methodological approach. Rather, it embraces plurality and acknowledges that the varying political, social, economic and cultural contexts within which screen and media industries operate invite different research questions and methodologies. Rather than forcing uniformity, the increasingly global perspective of Media Industry Studies has further intensified such a pluralistic and case-by-case approach. It has become evident, for example, that even a global phenomenon like the 2008 financial crisis affected these industries differently in particular contexts, thus raising specific research questions that need bespoke methods to be tackled.

To understand the development of Media Industry Studies as a distinct academic field, it is useful to briefly examine its history. From the 1950s onwards, especially as the Cold War made the political uses of media particularly ripe for academic analysis and as industrially produced media proliferated, a very significant body of research started developing, albeit in a segmented and isolated way. This fragmentation was due to the fact that this research emerged from disciplinary and scholarly contexts that rarely spoke to each other, because of divergent ideological, methodological and other research agendas. For instance, film studies initially developed in the context of literary studies at Universities, and later sought to emancipate itself by developing methodologies tied to the specificity of the medium of film (such as *mise-en-scène* analysis).[1] As film studies thus acquired its own identity and grew as a distinct discipline, it also stayed away from media studies, a field whose origins can be traced more in mass communication and sociological approaches that focus on the relationship between media and society. Given such institutional fragmentation and disciplinary divergence, efforts to investigate industry issues and concerns in areas such as film, television, print media, games, music and others have been undertaken by scholars

working in a variety of academic traditions, trained in different research methods and producing scholarship often in isolation from work in cognate fields.

However, since the 1990s the media world has been experiencing major technological, industrial, cultural and social changes, as part of what Henry Jenkins has labelled 'media convergence.' As he put it in his foundational study *Convergence Culture: When Old and New Media Collide*, convergence entails 'the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation across multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want' (2008: 2). This change in the nature of media suggests that to understand their function, scholarship needs to engage with a number of interrelated issues that until recently might have been dealt with by different disciplines. Jenkins' definition invokes theoretical and methodological traditions and approaches that combine (a) textual and content analysis (to explain how digital technology can turn a media text into content accessible across different platforms); (b) an emphasis on industrial concerns (to illuminate how formerly separate media industries such as the music industry, the IT and telecommunications industries and the film and television industries have come together in unprecedented ways; and to elucidate the legal, business and policy related issues that have arisen from this cooperation); (c) audience studies (to understand engagement with such media by adopting methods ranging from demographic research to online ethnographies); (d) to sociology and psychology (to help explain the audiences' 'migratory behaviour'). The convergence in industrial practices as identified by Jenkins, in other words, requires an interdisciplinary approach in order to be fully understood.

Media Industry Studies has emerged as a response to these issues, and it is not surprising that the first studies using the term were published in 2009, a year after the publication of Jenkins' *Convergence Culture*. Media Industry Studies represents an effort to systematise academic research on such industries by enabling often widely heterogeneous work to 'speak' to other relevant work in the joint aim of developing a nuanced and multifaceted narrative. As one of the first major works in this area put it, this type of research had been taking place in 'film and television studies, communication, law, public policy, business, economics, journalism and sociology departments' (Holt and Perren 2009: 1) for a while prior to the emergence of the term, and had focused on extraordinary range of issues and concerns, including 'texts, markets, economies, artistic traditions, business models, cultural policies, technologies, regulations, and creative expressions' (ibid.). Media Industry Studies offers such research a new way to identify itself and more opportunities to become visible, while opening up new possibilities for fruitful cross-pollination.

Such a self-declared pluralistic field has nonetheless faced some difficulty in convincing for its ability to house widely divergent media-related disciplines. To a large extent, this is because of its often-explicit emphasis on the media industries' *cultural* aspects, as culture has not been a key focal point in mass communication and other media research traditions that emerged from the social sciences. This may partly explain the fact that certain scholars working in disciplines such as sociology or even journalism studies have resisted relating their work to Media Industry Studies. According to Herbert et al (2020: 7), Media Industry Studies offers 'the critical analysis of how individuals, institutions, and industries produce and circulate *cultural* forms in historically and geographically contextualised ways' [added emphasis] and as such it includes 'texts […] routines, norms and infrastructural conditions in which *cultural* dynamics are worked out' [added emphasis]. Herbert et al acknowledge that

such emphasis on the cultural may discourage 'other intellectual traditions […] that aren't driven by concerns about culture' from engaging with media industries. They also note that the emphasis on culture leads to an expansive, and at times fuzzy, conceptualisation of what counts as industry, 'as the increasing availability of the tools of media creation and circulation make it unclear at what point media becomes industrialised' (ibid.). Furthermore, they recognise that while the boundaries of Media Industry Studies are meant to be permeable, they have been rather narrowly drawn so far, as most work under this label has focused on the audiovisual industries – which partly also explains why the focus of this special issue is on Greek screen industries. However, rather than celebrating this narrowness Herbert et al. call for more inclusiveness, stressing that research in Media Industry Studies aims to bridge the perceived gap between understandings of 'information' and 'entertainment', especially when it comes to researching their cultural function as products of industrial processes and practices (Herbert et al 2020: 7–8).

A matter that is of particular interest for this special issue is the fact that, as we noted before, Media Industry Studies has not been in much dialogue with work in sociology and journalism, two fields defined by social science research and approaches to communication and media with a strong grounding to political economy and political science. Paul McDonald has explored this matter in a position paper for *Cinema Journal* (2013). He argued that, being a subfield of cultural, film and media studies, Media Industry Studies has 'definite limits', especially with regard to its lack of interaction with 'hard' sciences' (2013: 145). And even if its researchers and their work circulate firmly within the humanities and partly in the social sciences, Media Industry Studies is 'eclectic' in terms of what it borrows and where it borrows it from. For instance, McDonald argues that even though research on industries by definition requires some attention to economics, Media Industry Studies has rejected

neoclassical economics, i.e. arguments focusing on notions of supply and demand, while embracing – albeit with some caveats – political economic approaches that explore the interrelationship among individuals, governments, and public policy. Media Industry Studies, then, McDonald concludes, 'does not represent all studies of media industries but rather an intellectual subfield which has cherry-picked ideas, concepts, perspectives, and arguments from many – though highly circumscribed – directions' (146).

To highlight what such 'cherry-picking' consists of, we turn to Holt and Perren (2009) who outlined some of the ideas, concepts and perspectives that Media Industry Studies has concerned itself with. In the list of potential topics and approaches that we reproduce in its entirety here, what becomes clear is not only their (relative) heterogeneity, but also, crucially, the wide range of methodologies that they invoke that include political economy, ethnography and autoethnography, policy analysis, labour studies, audience studies, business and management methods, genre and authorship analysis, and ethics critiques, among others.

Holt and Perren identify the following 'themes and concerns' for Media Industry Studies:

- the relative power and autonomy of individual agents to express divergent political perspectives, creative visions, and cultural attitudes, within larger institutional structures;
- the means by which the relationship between industry, government, text, and audience can be contextualized;
- the need for a grounded, empirically based understanding of media industry practices, including the operations, business models, and day-to-day realities of media industries, past and present;

- the aesthetic, cultural, economic, and social values associated with the media industries and their contents;
- the degree of diversity in both the industries themselves and the products they create and distribute;
- the power of the media industries to shape cultural agendas in local, trans/national, regional and/or global contexts;
- the moral and ethical issues that emerge as a result of the activities and operations of the media industries;
- the roles and responsibilities of scholar-citizens in the process of describing and analysing the media industries (2009: 3)

Despite its heterogeneity, the above list points to a privileging of questions of culture and human agency, with more impersonal and deterministic questions of power - central to political economic approaches that dominated media industry research in the 1970s and 1980s - not always at the forefront. Early Media Industry Studies work critiqued what it called the 'jet level plane view' (Havens et al. 2009: 239) of political economy, which was perceived as being interested in 'macrolevel structural issues of regulatory regimes, concentration of media ownership, historical change, and their larger connection to capital interests' (234). Instead, Havens et al. called for a 'helicopter level view' (239) that allows the examination of 'the business *culture* of the media industries; how knowledge about texts, audiences, and the industry form, circulate, and change; and how they influence textual and industrial practices' (237; added emphasis). Havens et al. also took issue with political economy's overwhelming focus on the production of news and the 'general inattention to entertainment programming' as well as its 'incomplete explanation of the role of human agents (other than those at the pinnacle of conglomerate hierarchies) in interpreting, focusing,

and redirecting economic forces that provide for complexity and contradiction within media industries' (236).

However, despite this critique and the overall prioritisation of cultural over political concerns, Havens at al. do not want to dispense with political economic thought and other mass communications traditions. Rather they envisage them as coexisting with other approaches, especially cultural studies, with which they have often been seen as incompatible. As they write,

> rather than envisioning power as a form of economic control over media organizations and laborers, we understand it as 'productive' in the sense that it produces specific ways of conceptualizing audiences, texts, and economics. Also, rather than being exercised through the coercive practices of media moguls, we see power as a form of leadership constructed through discourse that privileges specific ways of understanding the media and their place in people's lives (2009: 237).

Alisa Perren's work on the independent film company Miramax represents one of the first book length studies that utilises the eclectic approach characteristic of Media Industry Studies. Here the author 'balances 'top-down' concerns of political economy with the 'bottom-up' perspective of cultural studies' (2012: 6), the latter being an emphasis on the individuals and specific films and their impact on the parent company Disney and, more broadly, the larger system of Hollywood cinema. A similar approach was taken by Yannis Tzioumakis' (2012) study of the Hollywood studio specialty film divisions (Fox Searchlight, Focus Features and others) in the 1980-2010 period. Although a lot of his emphasis was on political economy concerns in terms of how Hollywood encroaches independent film, he also

complemented these with attention to filmmaking practices, the role of mid-level managers in running these companies and the aesthetics that characterised the films they made.

Despite this openness to multiple methodologies, Media Industry Studies' implicit and sometimes explicit critique of aspects of political economy and mass communications research has helped provide it with an identity and enabled it to define the broad parameters within which it operates. And while political economy approaches may have been more amenable to the eclecticism of Media Industry Studies, the latter's strong critique of mass communication research, which has traditionally focused on the 'deficiencies in news coverage and the continuing expansion of consumer culture' and on how 'media industries add to – or more frequently constrain – democratic discourse' (Holt and Perren 2009: 4–5), has helped shape an agenda for the future of the field. This is because, as Holt and Perren argue, the development of media industry research is moving to directions in which mass communication research may not be important, despite its significant 'historical' contribution to the field (5). This is because, 'mass culture' and 'mass communication' approaches privilege a very specific set of issues that is limited in its focus and approach when compared to Media Industry Studies' expansive cover of the 'routines, norms and infrastructural conditions' (Herbert et al 2020: 7). Furthermore, the often radical and all-encompassing critiques mounted by such approaches may also sit uneasily with Media Industry Studies' pluralist, subtle and negotiated perspectives. In this respect, it may not be surprising that certain approaches to media industries do not want to be included under this 'big tent', despite the permeability of its borders and its invitation for dialogue.

This brief account of Media Industry Studies sets up the scene for the special issue on Greek screen industries and the intervention we seek to make as editors. As already pointed out,

Media Industry Studies' overwhelming focus on the audiovisual industries means that in many ways it has been synonymous with Screen Industry Studies. Indeed, in charting its emergence as a distinct area within the field of cultural, film and media Studies, Herbert et al. highlight work focusing on film and television, such as the early anthropological studies of Hollywood in the 1940s and 1950s, the Marxist-led political economic studies of media globalisation (again focused on film and television and their complicity in cultural imperialism) in the 1960s and 1970s, the cultural studies paradigm with its attendant emphasis on institutions such as the BBC and television more broadly in the 1970s and 1980s, the contributions of Hollywood film historians in the same decades, and the increased focus on the operations of the television industries in recent decades (Herbert et al. 2020: 12-30). Not surprisingly then, Media Industry Studies has attracted primarily (though not exclusively) scholars of screen media, especially ones who identify with the fields of film and television studies. This trend is replicated in this issue with two of its editors identifying predominantly as researchers in film (Papadimitriou, Tzioumakis) and the third in television (Aitaki).

At the same time, and equally significantly for the purposes of this special issue, the complex relationship of Media Industry Studies with political economy and mass communications provides a perfect opportunity to test it – for the first time – with contemporary Greek screen media as a case study, that is, within a very specific historical and geographical context. As we review below, there is already a significant body of work (in Greek and in English) that relates to Greek screen industry concerns, but – for the most part – without any attempt to bridge arts/humanities with social sciences approaches in a way that is implicitly called for by Media Industry Studies. While this fragmentation reflects the broader disciplinary divergences discussed above, the specific institutional landscape in Greece, especially with

regard to the organisation of University departments, has not helped either as it has implicitly reinforced the lack of dialogue across different theoretical and methodological traditions.

It is clear, for example, that media studies (in the context of which television and broadcasting have been researched in Greece so far) and film studies have developed almost exclusively away from each other. Media studies has been 'claimed' primarily by university departments specialising in mass communications (Athens) and journalism (Thessaloniki). Specifically, the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens established the Department of Communication and Media in 1990. Its publicity pages state that research focuses on: 'cultural studies, political science and sociology, law, history, psychology, history of art, linguistics, Modern Greek studies, new technologies and their applications, journalism, advertising, public relations, the theory and practice of mass media.' However, despite the list starting with 'cultural studies', the Department's overall orientation is steeped in social science research with its three key clusters tellingly labelled as 'Social and Political Analysis of Communication', Culture, Environment, Communication Applications and Technology' and 'Psychology of Communication, Communication Practices and Planning'.[2]

Within this context the Department produced significant work in Greek screen industries, led by Stylianos Papathanassopoulos whose research has focused primarily on broadcasting (with an emphasis on news).[3] Spanning 30 years, and including books and articles in communication-focused journals, this work has been strongly characterised by political economic approaches as Papathanassopoulos has been interested in the historic relationship of Greek screen media (predominantly broadcasting) to the country's political parties and Greek politics more broadly. More recently, however, Liza Tsaliki has produced work that fits more strongly within Media Industry Studies. Together with Despina Chronaki they used

a production cultures approach to provide an account of the Greek porn industry from an insider's perspective (2016: 1–13). Featuring interviews with sex professionals as a key methodological tool, Tsaliki and Chronaki's work opens up ways for dialogue especially in relation to adopting a production cultures approach that has been utilised extensively in film and television industry research.

The second oldest media studies department in Greece (founded in 1991) is the School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Part of the Faculty of Economic and Political Sciences, its research on media (and media industries) also emphasises social science perspectives. A number of its researchers adopt political economy approaches in their work, which, like their counterparts in Athens, often deals with media industry-related matters in Greece and abroad. For instance, Sophia Kaitatzi-Whitlock has published widely in journals such as *Informatics and Telematics* and on topics such as the introduction of digital pay television in Greece (1999: 151–76), while George Tsourvakas (2004, 2016, 2020) has published extensively on media management in Greece and internationally - a research field that has a contested relationship with Media Industry Studies, on account of the fact it often lacks the critical perspective that is central to media and cultural studies research. Finally, Gregory Paschalidis' work has occasionally explored industrial perspectives in the study of Greek television, combining sociological approaches with cultural studies. This has translated into an engagement with a historical overview of the development of Greek television, including the legal framework that characterised the function of both the state-owned and the deregulated media landscape, questions of ownership, technological change and the role of advertising (2005).

Although, as will be shown below, some more recently established departments in Greek universities have embedded media studies in institutional contexts that are more open to a Media Industry Studies agenda, it is evident from this very brief overview that, for the most part, industrial concerns pertaining to broadcasting and television have been mostly explored via mass communication and mass media traditions. This has led to an emphasis on analysing news and public affairs programmes with the aim of questioning the relationship of media with national politics, while developing arguments about their impact on democratic processes. The prevalence of political economy approaches in the study of Greek media, may be partly explained by the fact that they – especially the broadcasting sector – have historically enjoyed an intricately linked relation to Greek political parties. Indeed, we can argue that the country's long history of political instability for the best part of the 20th century and the instrumentalization of print and broadcast media for political gain has reasonably reinforced such a research tradition.

It is worth briefly tracing the different histories of cinema and television in Greece, in order to also offer an explanation for the different research traditions predominantly adopted for each. While cinema was, until the last quarter of the 20th century, left to the realm of free – albeit highly censored – enterprise in Greece and prioritising 'harmless entertainment', since its introduction in the country in the late 1960s and for more than 20 years, television was exclusively state-controlled, often serving as more or less direct propaganda. By the mid-1970s, the commercially driven film industry collapsed, largely because of the increasing popularity of television which also expanded its entertainment content, leading cinema to become largely dependent on the state for its survival. However, the films thus produced were predominantly of the 'art-cinema' category, attracting few audiences and inviting research mostly steeped in arts and humanities. The restoration of democracy in 1974 and

Greece's membership of the European Economic Community (later European Union) in 1981 led to significant changes in the formal relationship between state and media, without, however, erasing the clientelist relationships between citizens and government that had dominated since the formation of the modern Greek state in the 19th century and afflicted different aspects of public life – including the media. In the last thirty years, European and global developments following the collapse of the state-controlled economies of the communist bloc, led to the deregulation of Greek broadcast media. The new media landscape, however, was equally ripe for political economy analyses especially as clientelist practices persisted, enabling the new media entrepreneurs to benefit from a political culture based on the exchange of political favours. And while the process of European integration and the gradual adoption of digital technologies have increased processes of technocratic transparency and accountability, especially in the post-crisis years, the legacy of clientelism has not as yet been erased from Greek public life, while the (seemingly contradictory) attitudes of both reliance on and suspicion of the state are, arguably, still present.

All the above can help explain why mass communication and political economy approaches have maintained both explanatory and institutional currency in Greece. (The first two articles of this special issues represent such academic traditions). As this special issue seeks to demonstrate, however, the future of Greek media/screen industry studies necessitates the expansion and reframing of certain questions beyond political economy concerns. This will help illuminate new cultural dynamics in the production and dissemination of Greek media and engage with issues of (political) power in more subtle and refined ways. (The three last articles represent such, more explicitly culture-orientated, screen industries analyses). This represents a dialogue between, and a merging of, social sciences and arts/humanities traditions. In this context, it is worth exploring here briefly the trajectory of film studies in

Greece, which slowly but steadily emerged in arts and humanities departments since the 1980s,[4] while in some instances, it became part of departments that combined communication with digital technologies,[5] or, indeed, social sciences.[6] The establishment of the Film School at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in 2004 (as part of the University's School of Fine Arts) marked a culmination in its recognition as a distinct field of study, especially as it combined the study of theory and practice, thus linking academic study with creative and professional formation.

Given film studies' housing predominantly in art and humanities departments, it may come as no surprise that until recently there has been relatively little research addressing industrial-economic aspects of Greek cinema.[7] Chryssanthi Sotiropoulou's (1989) study of the institutional and economic framework of Greek cinema in the period 1965-75, was foundational in that it publicised data regarding production, distribution and exhibition, offering a focused analysis of these phenomena for the first time. It is illuminating of the difficult conditions for researching such topics (which may also help explain why they have not been more widely embraced), that this study was made possible because its author was then an employee at the Ministry of Culture, a fact that, together with the support of then minister Melina Merkouri, gave her access to otherwise largely inaccessible government archives (8). It may also be worth noting that Sotiropoulou's study was published before film studies had fully entered in Greek universities, and therefore did not help establish a tradition in industry-related research. Over a decade later, Panos Kouanis (2001) published his study of the film market in Greece for the period 1944-99, focusing on the overall distribution and exhibition landscape, placing the circulation of Greek films alongside that of imported films. Unlike Sotiropoulou who offers some cultural analysis too, his approach is more firmly embedded in a social sciences paradigm, with an emphasis on economics.[8] Similarly, Nikos

Kolovos' (2000) exploration the industrial foundations of cinema, represents a sociological and political economic approach of the topic, that includes a section on the 'economic history' of Greek cinema.

While research and teaching on Greek Cinema increased following the institutionalisation of film studies in Greece, industrial questions remained mostly in the background. The special issue of the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* on Greek Film, edited by Stratos E. Constantinidis (2000), points to the gradual growth of the field and its introduction foregrounds some film industry-related notions, as it offers a periodisation of Greek cinema that takes into account modes of production. Three years later, Eirini Sifaki's (2003), also English-language, article on cinema-going practices in Greece and the disruptive effect of advent of the multinational multiplexes offers a welcome introduction to the study of film exhibition in Greece.

Since the 2010s, the number of academic publications on Greek cinema has steadily increased as reflected, among others, in the establishment of a dedicated bi-lingual journal on Greek film studies, *Filmicon*. In this context, film industry related research has also emerged, although predominantly (as also evident by the annual bibliographies in English and Greek published by *Filmicon*) by researchers based outside Greece.[9] It is indicative of both the journal's agenda to promote industry-related studies, and of its transnational and diasporic orientation, that in its first-ever issue *Filmicon* republished (in the original English, and in Greek translation) an article by Deb Verhoeven on the Greek-Australian film distribution network from the 1940s to the 1970s (2007, 2013). Among Greece-based scholars, Maria Chalkou's (2012) exploration of 'tendencies of independence' in Greek cinema of the 2000s touches upon screen industry related issues, while Orsalia Eleni Kassaveti's study of the

Greek videotape (2014), albeit not explicitly industry-focused, places under scrutiny a phenomenon defined by, among others, its distinct mode of production and circulation. A similar approach is adopted in Kassaveti's later study of certain overlooked Greek film genres of the period 1966–1974 (2017). Sofia Gourgoulianni's (2015) article on European co-productions in Greek cinema examines the phenomenon from a purely economic perspective and does not engage with cultural concerns. Finally, Afroditi Nikolaidou (2017) offers an insightful analysis of film marketing and promotion practices in post-1990s Greek cinema, combining interviews with industry observation and some textual analysis in a manner far more explicitly related to Media Industry Studies questions and methods. (Nikolaidou further explores issues related to film promotion in her co-authored article in this special issue).

As the above scholars are gradually becoming integrated in Greek university departments related to film or media, it remains to be seen whether their research will work towards bridging the gaps between humanities and social sciences and encourage cross-disciplinary dialogue. Such work with reference to the Greek context has started emerging among international scholars who have been more integrated in Media Industry Studies. In particular, Lydia Papadimitriou (Liverpool John Moores University), one of the UK-based editors of this issue, has systematically explored a range of distinct but interrelated Greek film industry-related topics, mostly with reference to the last decade. Her work has explored issues of independence in Greek cinema (2014), funding (2017a), co-production (2018a and 2018b) and distribution (2018c). She has analysed the effects of the 2008 financial crisis on the overall ecosystem of film production, circulation and reception (2017b), while her more recent work (2020) has focused on the challenges and opportunities presented by the rapid expansion of digital distribution for the film and television sectors in Greece. A film studies scholar, her approach prioritises cultural concerns, situating them within a Media Industries

framework. She explores the impact of policies and practices on both production and distribution/reception, often combining interviews, data and textual analysis. Together with Tzioumakis (2015), they have examined matters regarding the localisation of film marketing with reference to US Independent films, with particular reference to films depicting Greek (and Greek diasporic) culture. Papadimitriou's work (2016) has also engaged with Film Festival Studies, an area of research that is very firmly grounded within the Media Industry Studies disciplinary 'tent', as evident in her article on the internationalisation of the Thessaloniki International Film Festival.[10]

With regard to television, as already noted, its study has been more organically integrated in media departments, with a stable prioritization of particular topics and approaches[11] and with the study of television as an industry mostly associated with political economy perspectives. The deregulation of the late 1980s is often seen as a defining moment in the operation of national media industries while the introduction of new technologies and the emergence of media convergence are often contextualized within broader changes in Western European media, but especially other Southern European broadcasting environments that are perceived as having similarities with the Greek one (see among others Papathanassopoulos 1997a, 1997b, 2005, 2017). Similar perspectives, including a focus on ownership patterns and business models have been undertaken by Nikos Leandros (2008, 2010), while more recently, the dominance of such macro-perspectives has been interrupted by studies of micro-contexts, such as in Andreas Masouras's (2015) study of television programming under the lens of content diversity as well as Panagopoulos and Panagiotou's (2018) newsroom study.

These types of approaches tend to also be prioritised by Greek media scholars working outside Greece. For instance, well-established researchers in the fields of communication and

media studies such as Katharine Sarikakis (Chair of Media Governance, Organisation and Media Industries, University of Vienna) and Petros Iosifidis (Professor in Media and Communication Policy, City University London) have contributed significant research in the area of media industries (though both have been interested in such work beyond the Greek context), once again privileging political economic and other approaches that seek to explore primarily the relationship between media and citizens.[12]

Within the above approaches and contexts, the study of information is somewhat naturally prioritized while the study of entertainment and its genres – let alone their specific production circumstances – has been somewhat peripheral. A noteworthy contribution specifically aimed at bridging this gap and offering studies that cover a wide spectrum of topics, including industry-related issues, is a collective volume edited by Ioanna Vovou (2010a).[13] Specifically, Nikos Smyrnaios's media economics-informed chapter (2010) delivers an account of the institutional framework and economic concentration of Greek private television and its effect on news, while Vaia Doudaki (2010) presents the results of an ethnographic study in a number of television channels focusing on journalistic practices and routines. The volume also focuses on television as entertainment, including television fiction, offering production perspectives on the content of both public and private channels. Vovou's own chapter (2010b) provides a historical reading of the development of television in Greece with an emphasis on how different production models (associated with political agendas, but also issues of ownership, sponsorship/advertising and technology) translate into specific cultural/ideological dimensions present in a variety of television genres across time. An effort to delineate Greek television's *modus operandi* sensitive to different historical periods and political/ideological influences, is provided in the same volume by Angeliki Koukoutsaki (2010) by means of an extensive (although not always empirically justified) set of

observations regarding the pre- and post-deregulation production context of television fiction, focusing on production patterns and ideological macro-readings. This latter chapter is informed by an earlier production study (2003), where Koukoutsaki combined quantitative and qualitative data in order to clarify the economic principles defining the production of Greek television fiction between 1970 and 1997.

To return to the issue of how and why certain academic fields and objects of study (don't) manage to find their place within established institutional contexts, it is worth noting that recent interventions, coming particularly from the School of Journalism and Mass Communications of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, have shown a strong commitment towards liberating (the study of) television from parochial and untenable biases that have hindered its study in the past.[14] Such biases emerged from long-established and widely-held perceptions that television as a medium is not worthy of scholarly research and examination, whether because Greek state television has been historically subjected to state supervision and intervention, or because Greek private television has embraced a 'for profit' model and therefore has been producing low quality programming. Paschalidis (2018), in particular, has registered and exposed a number of conditions sustained by institutional logics and popular criticism paradigms resulting in undermining television as a medium and thus contributing to a climate of suspicion and indifference in any efforts to approach it critically and seriously. He explained that, specifically for private television, research has been obsessively disdaining its cultural production and value on the basis of theoretical clichés (drawing from Debord, Baudrillard and Foucault) and classic political economic perspectives (focusing on ownership, the power of advertising and the logic of the market), without engaging in grounded empirical research. Similar arguments are made by Vassilis Vamvakas (2018), who attributes the denigration of the study of Greek television to particular ways of

'doing' media studies in Greece, i.e. prioritizing macro (political economy) perspectives, melding ideology with manipulation, and equating the commercial with low quality, ultimately giving entertainment a bad name. It is in accounts such as the above that one can locate the reasons for the significant gap in textual, production and reception studies of Greek television – a gap that Media Industry Studies can help fill in.

As elaborate explanations regarding the low status of television within Greek academia become visible, more industry-related studies reach the surface. These studies combine industrial perspectives and tools with textual analysis of Greek television fiction. Interviews with television professionals appear to be a privileged methodological choice, allowing for several aspects of professional routines, production values and industrial practices to become visible. Betty Kaklamanidou's (2013) study of the Greek adaptation of the Colombian telenovela *Yo soy Betty, la fea,* was concerned with issues of scheduling, casting and localization of foreign formats, while her study on MEGA Channel's *Oi treis charites* ('The three graces') (2017) highlighted the role of specific individuals in producing an iconic television text but also in introducing the genre of sitcom to Greek audiences.

Other characteristic examples of this recent current of research focusing on Greek television fiction include studies conducted by scholars outside Greece. Based in Cyprus, Irene Photiou, Panayiotis Charalambous and Theodora Maniou (2019) have worked with yet another adaptation of a foreign format in a study of the multiple remakes of the originally Quebecois series *Un gars, une fille* illustrating how production perspectives, and especially cultural and linguistic factors, shape creative decisions. On a slightly different note, and in attempt to energize the study of television creators within the Greek context, Aitaki (2020), based in Sweden, zooms into the authorial synergies and production processes characterizing private

television, drawing from the case of the work of director Manousos Manousakis. (Aitaki also contributes to this special issue with a production study of television fiction within the context of private channels in Greece). Finally, Jo Frangou (2019), currently based in the US, delivered an interesting account of production values and practices specifically associated with Greece's first private television channel, MEGA Channel; utilizing her double positionality as television scholar and practitioner, Frangou applied an autoethnographic approach providing access to a 'behind the scenes' view of affective relationships, creative visions and commercial pressures informing a particular channel's production logics.

Greek academia has also recently welcomed studies of media labor, one of the key focal points of Media Industry Studies internationally, reflecting of several aspects of working in the television industry. Angeliki Gazi and Dimitra Dimitrakopoulou (2016) have been concerned with the professional identity of women and gender equality in the context of media organisations (including public and private television channels), while Manos Spyridakis (2017) has addressed the ways that Greek television workers cope with precarious employment conditions.

Finally, this detailed overview of scholarly work in the area of media and screen industries would have been remiss if it had not mentioned, albeit briefly, work that falls under the broader 'creative and culture industries' paradigm that encompasses fields such as visual and performing arts, fashion, design, crafts and other arts alongside the audiovisual sector. Constituted as an extremely broad field to respond to governments' efforts to design cultural policy but also to embed cultural initiatives in urban regeneration and other initiatives, creative and culture industry research has been much more driven by focus on shaping policy rather than by critical perspectives. However, many leading media scholars have bucked the

trend and produced work that critiqued various governments' conceptualisation of culture in neoliberal terms (see for instance Angela McRobbie's (2016) landmark work on working in the creative industries in the UK). On the other hand, a lot of work falling under this label focused in areas other than the audiovisual sector, exactly because film and television tend to be more 'industrialised', organised and regulated than other sectors that have only recently started to become commercialised and business-oriented.

Although Greek academia had an early response to these issues and debates through a collective volume under the title *The Culture Industries: Processes, Services, Goods* (Vernikos et al. 2005), which dedicated substantial attention to the Greek audiovisual sector alongside museum heritage industries as well as technology-driven 'info communication' industries, this kind of work has not achieved widespread currency. A 2014 monograph (Avdikos) focusing on the cultural and creative industries in Greece is much more responsive to the national and international creative and culture industries agenda. It discusses the contribution of these fields to the country's economy, examining the ways in which these industries are placed in the national and international market, how they are connected and clustered, as well as how they support other key national markets, especially Greek tourism. Such an approach, the author openly states, paves the way to understand these fields and help the government design policies that respond to their needs and enhance their place nationally and internationally (2014: 19). This is especially because Greece's cultural policy never had clear targets and was never designed with clear criteria in mind (21), with the volume helping debate on these matters.

Avdikos followed this study with a co-authored EU and government funded report 'Mapping the Cultural and Creative Industries in Greece' (Avdikos et al. 2017), addressed to 'policy-

makers of the (Greek) Ministry of Culture and Sports or other relevant bodies, but also cultural organizations, culture professionals, researchers and any other interested party' (3). Adopting a 'quantitative scale methods of statistical data analysis,' (31) the project provides a welcome overview of the field in Greece with an emphasis on the added value these industries provide to the Greek economy, on the ways in which they provide employment opportunities, on their geographic dispersal and their participation in the international trade of goods and services. In this study, the audiovisual sector attracts some attention but only in terms of its contribution to Greece's economy and as part of a bigger picture that includes many other industries. While such quantitative and policy-driven work can complement the more qualitative and critical work conducted under Media Industry Studies, it is clear that the latter can engage with particular questions that pertain to specific industries with more depth, and can go beyond the economic contributions of any particular field on a country's (or region's) finances. Work on the creative and cultural industries, therefore, is broadly related to Media Industry Studies, but the former has a far more specific agenda concerning policy, and does not tend to differentiate qualitatively between industries, or go into particular depth about any one of them.

To provide a structure within which media industries research can be seen as ranging from long-established political economic perspectives to newer Media Industries Studies approaches but to also open a dialogue between the two and operationalise the 'big-tent' argument that Herbert et al advance, this special issue on the Greek screen industries opens with two articles that assume a strong political economic perspective as they investigate particular aspects of Greek media industries.

Entitled ‘Populist news and the Greek television industry: The case of SYRIZA-ANEL,’ Philemon Bantimaroudis and Theodora Maniou’s article kickstarts the issue offering an overview of the relationship between Greek television channels, the government, and other elites with a view to determining how such relationships impact on the Greek public sphere. The focus is on the years 2015-19, when a coalition between the radical left-wing Party SYRIZA and the small independent (but with key far right-wing political figures) party ANEL was in power. The article seeks to demonstrate how this government impacted the presentation of television news and argues that this impact manifested primarily through the widespread adoption by the television channels of a strong populist rhetoric. Employing a political economy approach and utilising secondary data to examine media ownership patterns, the article highlights both the ways in which television news has adopted a populist outlook and the fact that the origins of such a practice can be traced in 1980s political and media contexts. As a result, the article demonstrates both the long-term interactions between screen media (television) industries and politicians, as well as the usefulness of political economy in explaining macro-structures.

Lambrini Papadopoulou’s ‘Alternative hybrid media in Greece: An analysis through the prism of political economy’ presents an argument about the evolving nature of alternative media in Greece, which, for the author, are in a constant dialectic relationship with mainstream media and therefore should not be examined as binary opposites. Using as a case study the country’s first national cooperative newspaper, *I Efimerida ton syntakton*, which emerged out of a collective of laid-off journalists during the years of the Greek financial crisis, the article argues that alternative media in Greece are better understood as ‘alternative hybrid media’ as, while they borrow people, ideas and practices from mainstream media, they do not compromise their values for the pursuit of profit or political power. In doing so, the

article demonstrates that political economy approaches can go beyond a ‘jet plane level view’ when they ask questions that take into account not only ownership structures, but also production practices and the nature of the content produced, and base the analysis on a combination of sources, including interviews with key personnel. The article also demonstrates the permeability of boundaries between areas traditionally considered as separate, as the notion of ‘alternative hybrid media’ explored here in the context of a political economy approach has clear parallels with research developed in the context of film studies, where explorations of the hybridity of independent film (often referred to as ‘indie’ to account for its murky relationship with mainstream film production) have long preoccupied researchers.

Tracing a movement away from political economy and towards the plurality of perspectives and approaches that this issue aims to showcase, Georgia Aitaki’s ‘Making television fiction in a commercial context: Commercialization, ideology and entertainment in a production study of Greek private television’ focuses on operational aspects of a particular media industry by placing at the centre the views of key professionals that work in it. As a ‘production study’ the article seeks to demonstrate how this particular media sector (private television) is organised and functions, and by doing so complicates facile assumptions about the relationship between commercialization, ideology and entertainment. Through analysing interviews with a number of creators of television fiction (directors and screenwriters) who worked for private television channels when they were first made available in Greece, the article points to the specific conditions that working in a commercial context entailed, while also exploring how this affected the content of the fiction produced. The article updates the (limited) scholarship on Greek television production culture(s), contributes to a recent

research current that focuses specifically on private television in Greece, while demonstrating the validity of approaches that explore the functioning of a particular industry from within.

While private television has long been defined by its relationship to the advertising sector, in their article 'Promotional Greek screen industries: Branded entertainment in the digital age', Afroditi Nikolaidou and Ifigeneia Mylona explore synergies between advertising and screen entertainment as they have developed in the Greek context, especially in the period since the 2009 Greek financial crisis. The authors localize the processes, texts, paratexts and discourses that are involved in the building of branded worlds and communities highlighting that in Greece film industry professionals have dominated promotional screen industries from the start, and continue doing so in spite of the presence of global advertising companies in the country. Offering a historical contextualizing account, they show how screen advertising developed in close proximity to Greek cinema as television was only introduced in Greece in the late 1960s, and branded content only started making its presence felt in the 1970s. Indeed, the authors demonstrate that the promotional screen industries have been influenced by particular production cultures that merge art cinema and television authorship and themes, and that many key professionals migrate from one medium to another. Like Aitaki, Nikolaidou and Mylona have utilized in depth interviews with media professionals who provide a context that helps illuminate the past relationship between cinema and advertising as well as the complex ways they operate within a media convergence environment. Placing emphasis on the cultural and aesthetic dimensions of the branded entertainment, and thus aligning themselves with a media and screen industries approach, they also offer close textual analyses of some campaigns produced by the leading promotional industries company Ogilvy Greece.

The last article in the special issue deals with the video games industry, which in the last two decades has emerged as one of the major media industries globally both in terms of revenue generation, and of social and cultural impact. Under the title 'Caught in the war against gambling: A critical analysis of law history and policy making in video games in Greece', Elina Roinioti examines the development of the Greek games industry against the country's legal framework and how it evolved in the last five decades before placing this development within Greece's current cultural policy and its efforts to support its audiovisual sector. As she argues, the advent of the video game industry brought about new cultural policies in both the national and international levels that involved incentives and flexible funding for the production of video games. However, in Greece, video game policy history followed the developments and legal entanglements of gambling regulation - from the Royal Decree of 1971 that first coded all relevant provisions, to Law 3037/2002 that banned all games in public and private places. It was not until the most recent Law 4487/2017, which established a cash rebate scheme for audiovisual productions in Greece, that the country found itself in alignment with developments in the rest of the world. Utilising methods such as law interpretation, personal testimonies, and use of trade press and other secondary sources, the paper (re)constructs comprehensively Greece's video game policy making. Equally importantly, it also demonstrates the value of a Media Industry Studies approach as it enables research that focuses on policy, legislation and legal and ethical issues more broadly to find a house together with work that deals with other screen industries.

We hope that the readers of the journal enjoy the work we put together. As a final word about the importance of promoting a more inclusive Media Industry Studies (despite its eclecticism and limitations) we would like to point out that there is still a lot of work to be done in the Greek context – with this issue hopefully setting the ground for it. As we are writing this

introduction, leading international publisher Emerald is advertising the publication of the *Emerald Handbook of Digital Media in Greece*. Edited by two UK-based scholars, and with 26 chapters comprising its content, the volume carries the subheading *Journalism and Political Communication in Times of Crisis*, which on the one hand localizes the focus of the collection on the previous decade while on the other equates 'Digital Media in Greece' with 'Journalism and Political Communication'. Not one chapter deals with media such as cinema, video games, television (bar television news), while chapters focusing on the internet, streaming platforms and social media are strictly seeing them as carriers of 'information' rather than 'entertainment'. Perhaps more surprisingly, none of the 26 chapters seems to be dealing with 'industry' issues, with just one referring to political economy, although others may be referring to such questions more implicitly.

We hope that this journal issue goes a long way to show that media industry research is not only done through political economic approaches and that there is a strong need to bridge social science with arts and humanities research. It is also partly in order to foreground the contribution of the latter to the understanding of media industries, that we have labelled this issue 'Greek Screen Industries' alluding to the contribution of screen and film studies traditions into such debates. Speaking specifically about divisions between political economy and cultural studies Douglas Kellner (who is based in UCLA's School of Education and Information rather than its School of Theater, Film and Television and has done world-leading work in both film and media studies)[15] has convincingly argued that such divisions are 'artificial', 'arbitrary,' 'rigid' and 'should be deconstructed' (2009: 103). Such deconstruction has yet to be achieved at an international level and it looks like this is also the case for Greek context. However, unless this work starts to be done soon, media industries

research, both internationally and in Greece, will continue to remain fragmented and lead to only a partial understanding of its object of study.

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Notes

[1] For the history of the establishment of film studies as a discipline in the US and the UK, see Gledhill and Williams (2000), Polan (2007) and Grieveson and Waisson (2008).
[2] The Department's webpages in the English language are available at http://en.media.uoa.gr/.
[3] Besides Papathanassopoulos 1997a and 1997b see also Papathanassopoulos 2000 and 2001 among others.
[4] Such university departments include: the Department of Philology at the University of Crete, the Department of English Language and Literature at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the Department of Fine Arts and Science at the University of Ioannina, the Department of Theatre Studies at the University of Patras and the Department of Audio and Visual Arts at the Ionian University.
[5] See, for instance, the Department of Cultural Technology and Communication in the University of the Aegean.
[6] See, for instance, the Department of Communication, Media and Culture at Panteion University in Athens.
[7] For an overview of Greek film studies until 2009, see Papadimitriou 2009.
[8] Since 2017 Kouanis has been president of EKOME (The National Centre of Audiovisual Media and Communication) which oversees the implementation of Greece's cultural industries policy in the audiovisual

sector (film, television, games), including providing tax rebates for media production in Greece by foreign companies.

[9] See 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017 and 2018 issues for relevant bibliographies, https://filmiconjournal.com/journal/issues.

[10] On Film Festival Studies see indicatively de Valck et al 2016.

[11] For a brief overview of publications on Greek television see Aitaki 2018.

[12] For Sarikakis, see indicatively Sarikakis and Nguyen 2009 and Lodge and Sarikakis, 2013. For Iosifidis, see for instance, Iosifidis 2007 and 2008.

[13] Vovou (2010a) covers topics such as the historical and institutional framework of Greek television, issues of television reception, television's relationship with other media as well as the study of a variety of televisual genres such as newscasts, children's programmes and fiction.

[14] One can locate this paradigm shift as the central discourse of the conference '50 years of Greek Television' that took place in December 2016 in Thessaloniki. The opening keynote, delivered by Gregory Paschalidis, as well as a number of presentations, corroborated the importance of television as an organic part of everyday life, collective experience and history, as well as audiovisual heritage.

[15] See, for instance, Kellner 2011 and 2018.