

*'THERE IS A HIGH DEMAND FOR FINDING THE
RIGHT PARTNER FOR THE RIGHT PROJECT'*



*Interview With Jo Mühlberger, Project Director of
PRODUCERS ON THE MOVE*

by Iván Villaranea Álvarez

Where do co-productions come from? Where do people-who-knows-people meet? As these processes are difficult to start, the European Film Promotion (EFP) organises every year a meeting at the Cannes International Film Festival in which European film producers can spend time together, exchange ideas and discuss new projects. This program, known as PRODUCERS ON THE MOVE, was at the origins of films such as **Force Majeure** (Ruben Östlund, 2014), this years Un Certain Regard Jury Prize winner in Cannes, or **Every Thing Will Be Fine**, Wim Wender's last work, which is now in post-production. In this interview, the project director, Jo Mühlberger, talks about the previous work behind many international co-productions.

What is the main aim of PRODUCERS ON THE MOVE?

Since 2000, EFP has offered support and guidance to European producers during the Cannes International Film Festival. EFP creates a tightly and focused working environment involving project pitching, 1:1 meetings as well as extensive promotion of the producers via profiles in the international trade papers. The aim of this initiative is to assist European producers in finding partners for their upcoming projects, to strengthen industry networking opportunities and to offer a platform where the producer's potential can be recognised.



Participants at PRODUCERS ON THE MOVE 2014 © Kurt Krieger

What kind of producers take part in this event?

The flexibility and interest of the participants is huge. At the beginning, the focus was given on feature film producers, but we do see a change in the range of films our participants produce: some are also producing documentaries and animations, some are also active in TV production. Anyway, all participants are at a similar stage of their professional career, which mean they are having significant experience in (co-) producing and they are being respected at their home market. They are all ready to take the advantages on continue working international and widening their network beyond the national borders.

What works better for networking: the traditional pitching sessions or the one-on-one speed-dating meetings?

A combination of both. We recognized that the Round Table introduction is of value to get an overview between the participants and their projects. It also helps the individual participant having a self-assessment and to optimise their approach towards the group and later on the individuals. The one-to-one Speed Dating finally brings all producers into personal contact. Even if they spent two days in the same room, they don't automatically talk to each other face to face. They do so during the Speed-Dating and this makes a difference in the onward contact and following discussions.



Round Table introduction (up) and one-to-one Speed Dating (down)

What kind of synergies can be established between participants?

Synergies can be seen concretely in the outcome of European co-productions. This years Un Certain Regard Jury Prize winner in Cannes, ***Force Majeure*** (Ruben Östlund, 2014), is a co-production between Sweden, France, Denmark and Norway among other countries. The main producer Erik Hemmendorf met the Norwegian co-producer Yngve Sæther at PRODUCERS ON THE MOVE in Cannes 2009. But there is a lot more than the concrete measurable outcome summarised as 'networking'. Contrary to a co-production market, the focus of the programme is not the project, but, more global, the overall work of the participating producer. So even if a genre film producer meets and hooks up with a documentary film producer during the programme, both of them can share thoughts and ask for advice if e.g. the genre filmmaker needs some information on companies or contacts from the country of the documentary filmmaker.



Force Majeure presented as Case Study by Swedish producer Erik Hemmnrdorff

Most of the participants of one group usually remain in contact after their intensive days in Cannes, because the most valuable outcome for them is to increase their professional pan-European network. In this sense, the cooperation of participants, the

development of joint projects and the final collaboration on international co-productions are all considered in measuring success and impact. For example, 51 producers who took part in the program between 2011 and 2013 are currently in development of 48 concrete co-productions.

PRODUCERS ON THE MOVE is currently associated with the Cannes Film Festival. Would it be possible to hold it at other film festivals?

In 2000, when we decided to run PRODUCERS ON THE MOVE, there were not too many activities of this kind in Cannes. It could be hosted at another festival too, but we prefer to keep it Cannes. This festival, with the attendance of professionals from the full range of professions, is a perfect environment, because the participants can benefit of other meeting opportunities: a number of our participants are also joining in other programmes for producers in Cannes such as *Producers Network*. This is the reason why festivals are good platforms or even partners for us, inasmuch as they allow us to take advantage of their structures to bring valuable experts to join our dedicated sessions. It would be totally different, if you would create a 'stand alone' event.

Judging by the experience of previous editions, what would the main strengths and weaknesses be in contemporary European film production?

There is a high demand to find the right partner for the right project, as showed by the huge variety of events designed for producers, such as co-production markets or training programmes. As one of the most important ingredients of a successful co-production is the trustful cooperation between the partners, the need to get to know each other personally is high. The financing of a project gets more and more difficult, so international partners can help to bring the budget together. At the same time it helps the film to find distribution beyond the own market.

Are there clear regional differences from one country to another when establishing co-productions?

It seems that producers from smaller countries are more used in co-producing with their neighbouring countries for economical

reasons. And there are also bigger countries who co-produce more often with each other than others. That might have some cultural reasons, but also by professional structures fostering this kind of partnerships.

Is there any common strategy to overcome the current hardships in European film production?

This is a difficult question and hard to answer. There is no solution – it will remain to be difficult. One idea could be having a careful analysis towards the audience and their behaviour. Not in the sense by only producing projects for a majority, more by seeking different channels to reach the different groups of consumers which are interested in European films. The good message is that there is an increasing demand on content for all the different consuming opportunities by a potential audience.