

# Hope on the Big Screen

## Interview with Michael Zeis, Trianon Filmcenter (Athens, Greece) by Vincent Le Leurch

### Why did you launch this project?

Greece has been a significant entry point for refugees and migrants. We are an arthouse cinema that supports many social causes as part of our social responsibility, and we know very well that films have the power to bring attention to social issues. "Hope on the big screen" is a project that raises awareness about the challenges faced by refugees, including displacement, discrimination, and the pursuit of a better life.

This initiative also promotes cinema activities and the role of the cinema in the community, which has always been to advocate for culture and to raise awareness of sensitive issues.

### Can you describe the project?

The "Hope on the Big Screen" project consists of around 20 screenings in 20 different Reception and Identification Centers, Closed Controlled Access Centers of Islands, and Accommodation Facilities (Domes) that are located in the mainland and offer temporary accommodation to third-country nationals or stateless individuals who have applied for international protection within the territory of Greece. They also host the family members of applicants, minors - whether unaccompanied or not, as well as vulnerable individuals.

The movie we are screening is *Le Chêne (The Heart of Oak)*, a spectacular adventure/documentary film that brings

together an extraordinary cast - squirrels, weevils, jays, ants, field mice - in a vibrant, humming and marvellous little world that seals its destiny around a majestic tree that welcomes, nourishes and protects them from its roots to its treetop. A poetic ode to life where nature expresses itself. Besides the symbolism of the tree of life, that accommodates everything in peace, there is another reason this movie is key for a multicultural and multilingual audience: there is no human dialogue. It is accessible to literally anyone; children and adults of different cultural and lingual backgrounds. It delivers a great environmental message and the screenings transport audiences to another place and time, away from the distractions of the outside world.

### What was the need for it in your country?

Greece, with its extensive coastline and proximity to the Middle East and North Africa, has been a primary entry point for refugees and migrants seeking to enter Europe. The migration crisis began around 2015 and continues. The influx of refugees has, at times, led to tensions and debates within the Greek society. Public opinion varies, with some expressing solidarity and support for refugees, while others raise concerns about the impact on local communities and resources.

A cinematic, film screening project is a completely new approach in social responsibility and has become a necessity.

Wars in Ukraine and Gaza and earthquakes in Turkey and Syria continue to push this need.

### What are your expectations?

It is more a vision than expectations. However, from a social perspective, we expect that "Hope on the Big Screen" could provide a sense of community and belonging to refugees who feel isolated in and disconnected from their new environment. It could also offer a platform for refugees to share their stories and experiences with others, promoting cross-cultural understanding and tolerance. In terms of cultural benefits, this project could expand viewers' understanding and appreciation of different perspectives and ways of life. It could also help to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of refugee communities. In addition, it can also serve as a platform for education and advocacy, promoting positive action and change. Overall, while the return on investment for such a project may not be solely monetary, the potential social, cultural, and economic benefits make it worthwhile.

The chosen film, *Le chêne*, can be a source of inspiration and hope for refugees, particularly those struggling with the challenges of resettlement. Seeing a story of resilience, perseverance, and hope can provide encouragement and motivation. Watching a movie can provide a temporary escape from the stresses and challenges of everyday life, which is especially important for those who have experienced trauma.

# HOPE ON THE BIG SCREEN

Discover the transformative power of art in the movie **"The Heart of Oak."**  
Travel with "Hope on the Big Screen" to twenty refugee shelters, where art becomes our tool  
to unite languages and cultures, infusing strength and hope into every soul.

Ανακαλύψτε τη δύναμη της τέχνης στην ταινία **«Η Δρυς»**.  
Ταξιδέψτε με το «Hope on the Big Screen»  
σε είκοσι δομές υποδοχής μεταναστών, όπου η τέχνη γίνεται το εργαλείο μας για να ενώσουμε  
γλώσσες και πολιτισμούς, εμφυσώντας δύναμη και ελπίδα σε κάθε ψυχή.

Découvrez le pouvoir transformateur de l'art dans le film **« LE CHÊNE e ses habitants.»**  
Voyagez avec "Hope on the Big Screen" dans vingt abris de réfugiés, où l'art devient notre outil pour  
unir les langues et les cultures, insufflant force et espoir dans chaque âme.



In the Temporary Reception Centers and Refugee Camps (Domes) in  
ELEFSINA -SCHISTO - OINOFYTA - CORINTH - PYRGO - RITSONA- THIVA - KOUTSOHERO -  
POLYKASTRO - LAGADIKIA - VAGIOHORI - KAVALA - ALEXANDRIA  
VERIA - AGIA ELENI- KATSIKA

ΜΕ ΤΗ ΣΥΓΧΡΗΜΑΤΟΔΟΤΗΣΗ



ΚΙΝΗ ΔΙΟΝΥΣΙΑ  
ΚΙΝΗ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΑ

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## What might its impact be at a local and national level?

This initiative is the first one that goes directly to migration and asylum centres such as the Identification Centers. Cinema screenings bring people together and promote social cohesion. By creating a shared experience and a sense of community, cinema screenings help foster relationships and can build trust

among refugees from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The participating venues are responsible for these social screenings. They raise awareness for specific causes that concern the whole community. We believe that this kind of project could make the world a better place!

## Partner cinemas:

**Trianon Filmcenter**, Athens  
(Coordinator)  
**Cine Argyroupoli**, Argiroupoli  
**Dionysia**, Kallithea  
**Cine Rex**, Nafpaktos  
**Cine Flery**, Kallithea  
**Alexandra Chalandri**, Halandri