

**Global Media and Cultural Policy: The European Union and Audiovisual Industries in the Global South**

by

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Culture, Media, and Development .....	7
Development and Instrumental Media: From Modernization to Participation.....	9
Towards a Fuzzy Metrics of Culture: UNESCO and the NWICO.....	10
Positioning ACPCultures+ as Audiovisual Assistance .....	13
Today’s Network of Cultural and Audiovisual Assistance .....	15
Where is Global Audiovisual Policy Located? .....	18
Critical Approaches.....	20
Chapter Outline .....	23
Chapter 1: Brussels as the Bureaucratic Capital of a Media Policy Empire .....	24
Chapter 2: Co-Production in the Global Film Funding Regime.....	25
Chapter 3: Formal Distribution on the Peripheries and the Case of Africa’s First VOD Platform .....	28
Chapter 4: Audiovisual Training Programs and Maisha Screenwriting Lab: Developing Scripts .....	30
<b>CHAPTER 1: Brussels as the Bureaucratic Capital of a Media Policy Empire .....</b>	<b>32</b>
Introduction: “No Future Without Culture” .....	32
Thinking through Brussels .....	38
A Bureaucratic Capital .....	38
Diversity, Nationality, and the European Quarter .....	41
A Media Policy Capital .....	47
Brussels’ Policy Documents and ACPCultures+ .....	51

The Emergence of the ACP Group of States.....	57
ACPCultures+ .....	60
The Application Form .....	63
Conclusion.....	70
<b>CHAPTER 2: Co-productions in the Global Film Funding Regime .....</b>	<b>72</b>
Introduction: European Funding for African Students at an American Film School .....	72
European Co-productions.....	76
The Beginnings of Treaty Co-Productions .....	78
Europudding: Co-productions and Blandness .....	82
Co-productions Funded by ACPCultures+ .....	85
Situating the Texts of ACPCultures+ Co-productions.....	93
The New Landscape of the Globalized Art House.....	97
Conclusion.....	101
<b>CHAPTER 3: Formal Distribution on the Peripheries and the Case of Africa’s First VOD</b>	
<b>Platform .....</b>	<b>103</b>
Introduction: Cinema Le Normandie .....	103
Cultural Exchange and Distribution Policies in the EU .....	107
Distribution Projects Funded by ACPCultures+ .....	112
Film Festivals and Distribution .....	114
Entering Regional and Global Markets .....	116
Digital Projects .....	118
AfricaFilms.TV and MobiCINE+ .....	120
AfricaFilms.TV and the Scramble for VOD .....	122
MobiCINE+: Mobile Distribution Between Cinema and NGOs.....	127
Conclusion: VOD After AfricaFilms.TV .....	130
<b>CHAPTER 4: Audiovisual Training Programs and Maisha Screenwriting Lab: Developing</b>	
<b>Scripts.....</b>	<b>134</b>
Introduction: Moderately Altruistic Non-Governmental Organizations.....	134
European Film Education.....	139
National Film Education: From Ideology, to Auteurs, to Industry .....	140

Internationalizing Film Education .....	142
Audiovisual Training Programs Funded by ACPCultures+.....	145
Situating Maisha Film Lab.....	148
Appealing to Foreign Donors .....	154
In What Sense Can Writers Be Trained?.....	158
Formally Evaluating Scripts .....	169
Conclusion.....	171
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>182</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: ACPCultures+ Newsletter .....	35
Figure 2: ACPCultures+ Sticker .....	36
Figure 3: Catalogue of projects of the ACPFilms Programme .....	54
Figure 4: European Development Fund, 1956-1961.....	55
Figure 5: European Development Fund, 1956-1961: Mauritania.....	56
Figure 6: <i>Jethro x Jethro</i> .....	135
Figure 7: Maisha Screenwriting Lab.....	163

## ABSTRACT

Recent initiatives by international organizations, NGOs, and national governments in the Global North have attempted to mitigate inequities in North-South media flows by funding film, TV, and new media production in the Global South and its circulation in global media markets. In positioning their activities as part of global economic development and social justice efforts, these initiatives take a critical stance towards both modernization notions of development and Northern-produced media for development and take up concerns such as Hollywood's global dominance. At the same time, however, through their funding priorities and organizational arrangements these "audiovisual assistance" programs shape local industries in ways that privilege Northern audiovisual textual norms and industrial practices, leading to criticism of paternalism and even neocolonialism.

This dissertation explores audiovisual assistance programs through an examination of the largest such program: the EU's ACPCultures+, which since 2008 has awarded over 50 million Euros to nearly 60 audiovisual training programs, distribution initiatives, and production projects in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean. Using textual and policy analyses, in-depth interviews, and both digital ethnography and multi-sited ethnographic research in Brussels, Addis Ababa, and Nairobi, I analyze three case studies of projects funded by ACPCultures+ – a screenwriting course in Kenya, a pan-African video-on-demand platform, and the first Ethiopian film to screen at Cannes film festival – while tracing the circulation of the program's aims and policies from its



headquarters in Brussels to audiovisual professionals in Africa and the Caribbean. These cases show how, as ACPCultures+ grapples with media diversity in an era of globalization, it builds on postwar histories of both international development and EU cultural and audiovisual policies in ways that simultaneously enable and constrain media industries in the Global South. Ultimately, this research demonstrates how audiovisual assistance programs are an underexamined piece of the global media landscape in which Northern policies and Southern practices together can reframe debates about media and cultural hegemony and suggest new ways of conceptualizing the geographies of audiovisual industries and policy.

## INTRODUCTION

In an era of globalization, governments' policies toward culture can have a profound impact outside their national borders. It has been well researched how the United States' laissez-faire approach – which treats media much like other globally-tradable commodities, and which provides minimal public funding for domestic public service media while simultaneously easing regulations on U.S. media companies – has helped transform the media companies of Hollywood into large, multinational conglomerates that dominate global media markets. (Holt & Perren, 2009; Miller, Govil, McMurria, Maxwell, & Wang, 2005) Less studied, however, is the global impact of the main rival – or more accurately, frenemy – of laissez-faire systems: the Western European dirigiste model, in which governments intervene more directly in culture for reasons beyond securing economic benefit.

In the audiovisual sector, dirigisme originally took the form of national “cultural policies” in which European governments intervened in the production and circulation of media within their borders, with the aims of protecting domestic media industries from foreign – primarily American – competition, promoting or constructing national culture, and serving the national public good. These policies are grounded in assumed divisions between national and foreign culture, and between artistic and market cultural production – in each case favoring the former. (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt, 2006, p. 7) Authentic, worthwhile forms of culture – rooted in

notions of national heritage and high art – have been seen as needing protection through strategies including screen quotas, public funding for certain kinds of films, and national film training institutes from what was understood as the hollow entertainment produced by profit-driven, globally homogenizing industries like Hollywood.

Yet since the late 1980s, Europe’s constellation of national cultural policies has increasingly operated alongside the cultural policies of the European Union – and in the process, national conceptions of both the borders between cultures and those between art and commerce have been reconfigured. EU cultural policies dealing with audiovisual industries intervene in the relationships between nations within Europe as they attempt to create a common European cultural space and single market capable of competing with US media industries. Through initiatives like the Television Without Frontiers Directive and the MEDIA program, the EU limits protectionism between EU member states while fostering European-wide protectionism to limit the influence of Hollywood. At the same time, in this reconfiguring of the relationship between national sovereignty and cultural policy in the audiovisual field, EU policy adds elements of deregulation and privatization – or *désétatisation* – to national cultural policy’s protectionism and concern for social development, (Beale A. , 1999; Schlesinger P. , 1997) resulting in the global expansion of European audiovisual industries and increasing entanglement with big-budget, international co-productions with Hollywood.

More recently, the EU has deployed dirigisme outside of Europe itself, aiming at cultural industries in Latin America, the MENA region, the Caribbean, and sub-Saharan Africa, reconfiguring the original national aims of dirigisme even further. These programs constitute a kind of de facto global cultural policy by the EU: “global” insofar as they aim to alter the global audiovisual landscape by integrating regions and countries that do not have strong domestic

audiovisual industries into dirigiste systems connected to Europe, with the aim of combatting the global dominance of laissez-faire production (particularly, but not only, Hollywood) and ameliorating the economic and representational divides between the Global North and the Global South.

The awkwardly named subject of this dissertation, ACPCultures+, is the largest of these initiatives. The program is open to collaborative initiatives between partners in the 79 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Islands that make up the ACP Group of States, an organization that since 1975 has negotiated trade and development aid with the European Union. It does so through an open call for applications for cultural projects and programs, which are then selected for awards of up to \$400,000 by an anonymous jury of professionals in the cultural sectors of both European and ACP countries. Since 2008, ACPCultures+ has awarded over 50 million Euros to a range of cultural productions – from visual arts to dance – but I focus on its activities in the audiovisual sector, where it has provided funding for nearly 60 projects in three areas: production, distribution, and training.

This project is interested in thinking about cultural and audiovisual policy outside of the nation state. Most cultural policy is produced and implemented by state political systems and operates within national confines, but as Schlesinger argues, although “the state can be a useful analytical framework, it has its limitations” when confronted with global flows, transnational governance, multiculturalism, and the misalignment of states and cultures. (Schlesinger P. , 2009, p. 9) Despite the transnational scope of dirigisme and the impact of programs like ACPCultures+ on global audiovisual industries, scholarship has understood cultural policy and its effects as occurring primarily within the confines of the nation-state or similar organizations like the EU. Furthermore, in contrast to the extensive research that has been conducted on the

impact of Northern media deregulation on the Global South, scholars have not yet interrogated the relationship between the North's cultural policies and the Global South. This dissertation aims to help fill these lacunae by considering how cultural policy is deployed outside of national frameworks and by attempting to develop appropriate methods to research global cultural policy. At the same time, in their focus on the Europe's interventions in audiovisual industries in countries in the ACP Group of States, the following chapters will help illuminate one important node in an emerging network of programs and policies that shape audiovisual production in the Global South and its global circulation.

The political structure of the European Union means that ACPCultures+ it is a particularly fruitful case study for thinking about dirigiste audiovisual policy outside of the nation-state. In the EU external and internal cultural and audiovisual policies are highly interconnected; member states' cultural *external* relations with each other have also become part of the EU's *internal* cultural policy. Throughout this dissertation, I will show how ACPCultures+ can be understood as an expansion of EU cultural policy beyond the Union's borders that incorporates new areas into the EU's extant systems of cultural production, circulation, and policy, while simultaneously marking difference in those newly incorporate audiovisual domains (particularly through the program's development aims). Like the EU's MEDIA program, for instance, which funds co-productions between countries within the EU, ACPCultures+ requires its projects to secure outside funding from partners in multiple countries in Europe and ACP countries, institutionalizing patterns of local cultural production in less developed countries that are shaped, in part, by the demands of European and international sources of funding and audiovisual and cultural norms. The film *Rafiki* (2018), for instance, which depicts a same sex relationship in modern day Kenya, was produced by one South African and two French

companies and directed by Kenyan first-time filmmaker Wanuri Kahiu. In addition to creating these kinds of industry connections, ACPCultures+ can also impact audiovisual professionals' techniques and even shape the texts themselves, for example, as a result of training programs funded by ACPCultures+. *L'Afrique en série*, employs French audiovisual professionals to teach TV production to technicians in Ghana, Cameroon, Niger, and Burkina Faso, in order to increase African TV's international distribution by helping it to meet "global audiovisual norms." (CFI, n.d.) As we will see, these policies do not develop domestic audiovisual industries from the ground up in the 79 countries in which they operate; rather, they integrate those countries into Europe's already-global dirigiste network of producers, distributors, and institutions, serving as a kind of EU global cultural policy. In the process, the values and the industrial practices of European dirigisme are at once reproduced and reconfigured.

Besides expanding Europe's dirigiste policies to countries on the peripheries of global audiovisual industries, ACPCultures+ is also an international development program financed by the European Union's Development Fund that "aims to contribute to the fight against poverty through the development and consolidation of viable and sustainable cultural industries in [African, Caribbean, and Pacific] countries." (European Commission, 2011, p. 6) In practice, what such "development of sustainable cultural industries" entails is often contradictory (Isar, 2017), and is here shaped by both entanglement with and opposition to Hollywood, European film industry interests, EU audiovisual policies, and the logics of international development. While the program aims to spur economic and social development, correct inequities in global media flows, and increase media diversity, it is also grounded in legacies – and organizational structures – of colonialism and developmentalism and continues the project of upholding Northern ways of doing things as a universal standard to which everyone should aspire.

ACPCultures+, then, speaks to the tensions inherent in the expansion of European notions of, and policy for, an audiovisual good beyond Europe's cultural and regulatory edges. As Oliver Bennett argues, European cultural policy has traditionally involved "judgments of value, which [bring] some forms of activity within the domain of the cultural, and exclude[...] others." Within the policy milieu, what counts as "culture" has been "defined as those activities deemed worthy of support by public authorities." (Bennett, 1997, p. 68) While these activities have shifted over the years, they have consistently revolved around notions of instrumentalism (producing "demonstrable social benefits"), moral improvement, economic benefits, and national identity and prestige. (Bennett, 1997) But what happens when the public authorities who determine what constitutes culture no longer preside over their own national publics, but rather those of distant others?

This dissertation interrogates the process by which ACPCultures+ translates European cultural policies, textual forms, and media business practices – and the ideologies behind them – from national and regional European contexts to developing countries in the Global South. Using textual and policy analyses, in-depth interviews, and multi-sited fieldwork in Brussels, Addis Ababa, and Nairobi, I analyze three case studies of projects funded by ACPCultures+ – a screenwriting course in Kenya, a pan-African video-on-demand platform, and the first Ethiopian film to screen at Cannes film festival – while tracing the circulation of the program's aims and policies from its headquarters in Brussels to audiovisual professionals in Africa and the Caribbean. How does ACPCultures+ attempt to shape audiovisual industries in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific, and position them in relation to global flows of culture and commerce? How are these aims contested, negotiated, and reconfigured as the program's policies circulate between European policymakers and funding recipients in African, Caribbean, and

Pacific countries? What does ACPCultures+ tell us about dirigisme vis-à-vis cultural diversity in an era of globalized media? And how do industry professionals in the Global South navigate this system?

In addressing these questions, this dissertation shows how as policies and funds circulate – from the European Union headquarters in Brussels to projects in the Global South – they also acquire new meanings and are acted out in unexpected ways. Over the course of the next four chapters, this dissertation illustrates how European audiovisual policies and African industry practices together reframe debates about media and cultural hegemony and suggest new ways of conceptualizing the geographies of audiovisual industries and policy.

### **Culture, Media, and Development**

While the chapters that follow will each link ACPCultures+ to different aspects European audiovisual policy, the program’s developmental aims are an important recurring consideration – one that, as we will see, in European imaginaries often marks the texts, audiovisual professionals, and audiences in ACP countries as different, in need of improvement, or backwards. In this section, I position ACPCultures+ in relation to the history of international development, paying special attention to the role that media has played in the field.

Columbian anthropologist Arturo Escobar argues that the postwar “discovery of poverty” that prompted the creation of development organizations after World War II involved a new conceptualization of economic and cultural relations between industrialized countries in Europe and North America and the Global South, in which 3/4ths of the world was defined as poor and backwards compared to the universal, aspirational standard exemplified by industrialized



societies. (Escobar, 1995) This new concept of the global emerged alongside new ways of conceptualizing problems at home. In the 19th and 20th centuries, “the social” increasingly came under the domain of the welfare state, as not only poverty itself but also “health, education, hygiene, employment, and the poor quality of life in towns and cities” became understood as social problems that required “extensive knowledge about the population and appropriate modes of social planning.” (Escobar, 1995, p. 30) Within the new global division between haves and have-nots, poverty was understood not simply as a lack of wealth, but also as an absence of the social and cultural practices, institutions, and values that characterized the more prosperous North. The poverty, then, in the newly-imagined “third world” was a problem to be solved through the distribution of not only (or even primarily) Northern resources to the South, but more importantly the distribution of the social and economic policies, technical knowledge, institutions, and social and cultural practices to which policymakers and development practitioners attributed the North’s success. Indeed, one of the most influential models to shape early attempts to alleviate distant poverty used the history of Western nation-states as a universal model for overcoming poverty: W.W. Rostow’s 1960 *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Rostow, 1990), which outlines the conditions necessary for a “traditional society” to advance to the “Age of High mass consumption” of Western industrialized countries. In Rostow’s model, global flows of people, goods, money, information, culture and services exert only a minor impact on economic development. Instead, relatively self-contained nation-states develop on their own, irrespective of what happens to be going on outside their borders. When a “traditional society” did face “intrusion of a more advanced power,” it was an opportunity for learning, in which the more advanced invaders taught modernization to a sluggish traditional economy.

The postwar rise of development coincides with “the expansion of cultural policies by the state and other public authorities” that came to be known as cultural policy in Europe. (Bennett, 1997, p. 68) The initiatives of ACPCultures+, then, can be understood as part of development’s lineage, distributing Northern cultural and audiovisual policy to the Global South with the aims of not only generating economic development, but also of extending European policies, systems, and practices to areas that lacks them in the name of social and cultural development. At the same time, the program departs from development’s usual deployment of media in critical ways and attempts to account for critiques of development’s paternalism that became widespread in the decades after World War II.

### **Development and Instrumental Media: From Modernization to Participation**

Media has played a critical, evolving role in this developmental system of distribution from North to South. Early modernization theorists saw media as a way to enlighten those in the South in the service of social advancement and economic prosperity. Daniel Lerner’s *The Passing of Traditional Society* (Lerner, 1958), for instance, grouped individuals into three psychological profiles: modern, transitional, and traditional, and argued that mass media provided by Western development aid could help hasten the transformation of the latter into the former. Likewise, Willbur Schramm’s *Mass Media and National Development: the role of information in developing countries* (Schramm, 1964), a study commissioned by UNESCO, advocated for development to harness the power of Western models (and control) of mass media in developing countries in order to influence citizens’ behavior, thereby promoting social and economic development. These theories supported the widespread practice of media for development, which saw media content as a way to deliver messages related to development

goals, such as educational entertainment programs that highlight sanitation issues or disease prevention.

Under the modernization paradigm, media for development projects were top down, with little or no consultation from their intended audiences: they were conceived of and created by Northern development practitioners and distributed to audiences in the South. Beginning in the 1970s, however, criticisms about the paternalism of these top down approaches helped to bring about what Linje Manyozo calls “postcolonial discourse and practice that aimed to rescue non-Western epistemologies and theories in global development discourses.” (Manyozo, 2012, p. 11) Media for development projects began to consider their audiences and involve those in receptor countries in their production and distribution under the participatory paradigm that had become dominant by the mid-1980s. (MacAnany, 2012, p. 87) Meanwhile, media development focused on other efforts in development concerned themselves with creating local media systems in developing countries and positioning them into global circuits of distribution in a more equitable way. More attention was directed toward media development – the creation or strengthening of media systems, such as ensuring an independent press for human rights aims or improving access to the internet access or other “useful” or information media. However, with these changes, media’s role in the development milieu continued to be understood as a tool to achieve development and human rights aims, while ignoring the less measurably productive uses of media for entertainment, pleasure, and play that in large part defined its place in everyday life for those living in the Global North. (Chirumamilla & Pal, 2013; Liang, 2010; Pearson, 2014)

### **Towards a Fuzzy Metrics of Culture: UNESCO and the NWICO**

In contrast, concern within the development milieu for non-instrumental media production and flows became prominent within international institutions in the 1970s. In 1974,

UNESCO created the International Fund for the Promotion of Culture (IFPC), a program that awards financial and technical assistance to both states and individuals for the creation of artistic works and the bolstering of cultural industries. At the time of its creation, the project was a significant departure from UNESCO's previous international interventions in culture, which focused on the preservation of historical sites – primarily ones in Europe. In a 1973 speech announcing the Fund at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, Richard Hoggart – who was then Assistant Director General for Social Sciences, Humanities, and Culture – argued that the funding of artistic creation involved problems that are “vastly more complex than those posed by the preservation of cultural heritage, inasmuch as they touch on essentially subjective elements and raise the question of creative liberty.” (Hoggart, 1973) The IFPC dealt explicitly with the economic divide between the global North and South that many of the major postwar international organizations attempted to solve; yet, as Hoggart argued, it embodied a new way of thinking about development that was more concerned more with the fuzzy metrics of culture and quality of life than with the more concrete economic indicators of traditional development.

“...The traditional concept of development, limited only to economic aspects, is being more and more replaced by the idea of development broadened to embrace social and cultural aspects which can respond to many needs, possibilities, and aspirations of individuals and communities. Thus it is that, for twenty five years, the central point in the concept of development has moved away from the economic towards the social aspect, emerging today onto the cultural aspect. The generalized movement taking shape in favour of ‘the quality of life’ is significant in this respect. And the quality of life is not divisible.” (Hoggart, 1973)

Hoggart's assertion that development had already begun to move away from the economic toward the cultural was perhaps premature, but nevertheless reflected growing dissatisfaction with the postwar Bretton Woods framework of international trade relations and development aid. At the time the IFPC was introduced, UNESCO was in the midst of what would come to be known as the New World Information and Communication Order – debates

stemming primarily from developing countries that critiqued the uneven production and flows of media and information from North to South. (International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, 1980) Roughly coinciding with the entry of American television content, like Hollywood films before it, into international markets and TV sets in developing countries, these debates posited that such cultural imperialism threatened to both supplant diverse, traditional cultures in the South with Hollywood's homogeneity, as well as to thwart the ability of newly decolonized countries to achieve meaningful independence. Ending Northern media imperialism through more equitable global media distribution was understood as not only a means of economic growth for developing countries, but also as an opportunity for "rethinking the relations of periphery to central powers, the fomenting of international trade in media content, [...] and the increasing centrality of media in people's everyday lives throughout the world." (MacAnany, 2012, p. 90)

Hoggart was sympathetically ambivalent towards the NWICO: while he questioned claims that Northern cultural imperialism threatened to erase "traditional cultures and inhibit the emergence of authentic cultural changes," he also perceived "clear remnants of former colonial links in the shape and flow of communication channels" that might shape culture in developing countries. (Bailey, n.d.) As the first initiative aimed at mitigating global imbalances in cultural production and circulation, the IFPC likewise opted for modest grants for cultural production in developing countries while leaving unchanged the underlying structural issues that the New World Information and Communication Order and critics of media imperialism had sought to address. Soon after, the NWICO's momentum was derailed by the withdrawal of the United States and the United Kingdom from UNESCO and in the following decades, development aid institutions incorporated free-market conditionality into their assistance, such as encouraging

developing countries to privatize public services – including broadcast television – in order to appeal to global private investment. (MacAnany, 2012, p. 90) Since then, development aid has become increasingly privatized, reliant on public-private partnerships that aim for harmony with, not resistance to, neoliberalism. (Wilkins & Enghel, 2013)

### **Positioning ACPCultures+ as Audiovisual Assistance**

ACPCultures+ points to the contradictions and tensions involved in attempting to alter lopsided global media production and distribution in today's era of media privatization, transnational media conglomeration, and increasingly privatized development aid. On the one hand, the program can be broadly understood as creating media systems through the now-dominant participatory development paradigm. The ACP Group of States, for instance, emerged after former European colonies in sub-Saharan Africa gained independence as an attempt to circumvent the paternalism and exploitation of national postcolonial trade and aid relationships. Today, the Group of States negotiates with the EU to set development priorities, which are then funded by the European Development Fund. (Chapter 1 will outline the history of ACP-EU cooperation in more detail) Likewise, ACPCultures+ was conceived of, and is run by, both Europeans and people from the countries in which it funds projects. For instance, ACPCultures+'s selection process involves an open call for applications, with winning projects chosen by an independent committee composed of 3 voting members of the ACP Secretariat plus a non-voting committee secretary and president. This selection committee also receives input by the European Commission employees responsible for ACPCultures+ and from specialists in relevant fields. This selection process, thus, draws on standard practices for peer media and arts assessment while ensuring participation and negotiation between ACP and EU participants.

At the same time, ACPCultures+ differs from dominant pairings of media and development in its understanding of media as a non-instrumental public good. European Commission employees I talked to echoed the NWICO's aims, such as improving access to diverse media content for audiences in developing countries by reducing the reach of Hollywood and increasing the global reach and local popularity of industries in ACP countries. (Richert, 2013) Yet ACPCultures+ also prioritizes the adaptation of European industry and policy norms for new social and economic landscapes in the Global South in a way that is legible and friendly to transnational private investment, while at times excluding locally popular textual forms, industrial practices, and audience preferences. For instance, Nigeria's successful video film industry Nollywood, which will serve as a counterpoint to ACPCultures+'s activities throughout this dissertation, was seen as outside the scope of ACPCultures+'s mandate because of its perceived industrial and textual dissimilarities from European audiovisual productions. (Richert, 2013) Nollywood's idiosyncratic industry model strategically uses informality to resist outside investment and integration into formal global circuits of distribution, (Miller J. , 2016) making it anathema to ACPCultures+'s emphasis on transnational funding structures. Furthermore, the exclusion of an industry popular with local audiences suggests how even participatory initiatives to reshape global audiovisual flows can be susceptible to paternalism through the decisions they make about which kinds of audiovisual texts and practices constitute the public good. After all, cultural policy necessarily values certain practices over others on the basis of their perceived ability to foster social economic benefits and moral improvement. (Bennett, 1997) How these valuations of cultural worth intersect with audiovisual production, circulation, and training in developing countries is a central question in this dissertation.

## **Today's Network of Cultural and Audiovisual Assistance**

For two decades, the IFPC operated as a relative island, in its rhetoric if not its activities. Private NGOs and state cultural institutes like the Institut Français and the British Council had long funded cultural productions abroad as part of their of national cultural diplomacy efforts (Paschalidis, 2009), while the French government provided pre-production aid and favorable arrangements for distribution in France for African cinema after decolonization. (Armes, 2006)

As Chapter 1 of this dissertation will show, within Europe, these interventions by European nations in cultural production in their former colonies gradually adopted the language and structures of multilateral development aid with the rise of the European Union. While it is beyond the scope of this project to trace the trajectories of all aid programs to Southern audiovisual industries, over the course of the next four chapters it becomes clear that ACPCultures+ is far from an anomaly. Today, a diverse range of programs run by nonprofits, state agencies, and international organizations intervene in the production and distribution of culture in less developed countries in the Global South while describing their actions through the language of development and humanitarianism. Like the IFPC, these programs are overwhelmingly based in and funded by the global North – and Western Europe in particular – even if they are often supported by institutions, like the Paris-based UNESCO, that aspire to some sort of globalness. To name a few: The non-profit organization FilmAid – founded in 1999 during the Balkan Crisis, with offices in New York and London, and partnered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – organizes film festivals and teaches filmmaking in refugee camps on three different continents. The Center for Culture and Development (CKV), part of Denmark's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, runs visual art, theater, and film programs in the Middle East, Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa with the intent of fostering economic development.



UNESCO has also created programs similar to the IFPC, like the International Fund for Cultural Diversity, which aims to “promote sustainable development and poverty reduction” (UNESCO “What is the International Fund?”). Numerous others are run by the European Union, NGOs, and European national governments. Meanwhile, UNESCO addressed some of the concerns of the NWICO through the more modest 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, (Smith, 2007) which ensures nations’ rights to favor domestic cultural goods in order to protect against cultural homogenization from Hollywood’s global reach. (BBC News, 2005)

Despite these programs’ shared aims, rhetoric, and geographies, they have no common, universally-recognized label and have not received much scholarly attention. I call them “cultural assistance” programs, and the subcategory that deals with entertainment film and TV “audiovisual assistance.” Audiovisual assistance programs adopt the language of development aid and humanitarianism, but their focus on supporting TV dramas, feature films, and other kinds of entertainment and artistic media genres departs from longstanding conceptions of the role of media in development as a way to transmit useful messages through news or educational programs to the poor and supposedly uninformed. Instead, these programs, like the IFPC, take up the NWICO’s concerns about global media inequality and the dominance of Hollywood through modest funding for audiovisual production in the Global South and its distribution throughout the world. These activities are in line with cultural policy’s interest, at the nation-state level, in promoting cultural production that serves the national public good, yet the boundaries of the public are here less clearly defined. At the same time, audiovisual assistance programs attempt to integrate audiovisual industries in less developed countries into global capitalist media markets by, for instance, requiring co-productions, rewarding content that appeals to transnational

audiences, and funding projects that have demonstrated their economic sustainability. When considered alongside the budgets of more traditional development programs, cultural assistance programs are modest. However, the conditions attached to these funds structures cultural industries in less developed countries – and between these countries and Northern audiovisual industries – in significant ways.

The space in which cultural assistance programs operate is difficult to pin down. Instead of clearly defined institutional or industrial boundaries, they operate within a loose, decentralized network that crisscrosses numerous milieus, including creative industries, media companies, cultural centers, development organizations, museums, think tanks, and civil society. The “work” of audiovisual assistance programs is likewise decentralized, as aims, policies, funding, and implementation circulate through multiple international and local organizations. ACPCultures+, for instance, might award the implementation of an assistance program to a French governmental organization, which could in turn enlist the help of Canal Plus to aid a project in several West African countries run by a local NGO that also receives funding from UNESCO. Although I approach ACPCultures+ as a European policy initiative and focus primarily on how it deploys European notions of dirigisme to developing countries, it is also an important piece of this network of cultural assistance/audiovisual assistance and protectionism. As this dissertation will show, ACPCultures+ collaborates and co-funds projects with like-minded organizations, creating a complex network of policy and funding that – despite the relatively low budgets of any single initiative – shapes the audiovisual landscape in the Global South in significant ways. Additional goals of this dissertation, then, are to use ACPCultures+ as an illustrative entry point into that network and to make a preliminary attempt to sketch the field of audiovisual assistance.

## **Where is Global Audiovisual Policy Located?**

This complicated arrangement of funding and resources poses some challenges to the study of cultural assistance programs, particularly regarding the “site” of study. My interest in this project began with my discovery of an object (ACPCultures+) in which many of my research interests (the EU, audiovisual policy, development, globalization) coalesced. Initially, I was simply curious about what ACPCultures+ was, exactly. So, in the summer of 2013 I traveled to Brussels to two weeks to interview European Commission and ACP Group of States employees who worked at programs that intervene in audiovisual production and distribution worldwide: Euromed Audiovisual in South Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia); Media Mundus (now part of the EU’s MEDIA Program) in middle- and high-income countries; and, of course, ACPCultures+. While informative, I soon realized that there were limits to what I could learn about these programs from this method of research. Interviewees understood how the programs they managed operated, but they were neither the creators who understood the deeper impetus nor were they directly involved with implementing programs that had been awarded funding in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. I considered trying to spend a longer period of time in the European Commission in order to get a more ethnographic understanding of how their offices worked, but even if that had been feasible, it would likely have been awkward for Commission employees to have a PhD student observing and questioning them for weeks as they read and composed emails, analyzed budgets, and performed other office tasks. More importantly, it would likely shed light more on European bureaucracy than it would on its impact on the global audiovisual landscape.

Instead, I wanted to take into account the relationship between the histories and logics of these policies and what happens to them once they leave offices in Brussels: how do they circulate, through what contexts, and to what end? While I use the term “de facto global cultural policy,” I also understand that these policies do not operate within a unified regulatory apparatus – nor an even playing field – as they cross transnational boundaries defined, in this case, primarily by economic inequalities. Nor, conversely, do they flow unimpeded from centers of power – in this case, European Union offices in Brussels – to the “peripheries.” Their circulation is characterized by tension, asymmetry, and disjointedness: the European Union’s aims may not be the same as those of funding recipients in D.R. Congo or Barbados. In this respect, this dissertation is concerned with what anthropologist Anna Tsing calls “friction,” which she proposes as a corrective of sorts to the metaphor of unimpeded global flows that has become ubiquitous in scholarship on globalization. As it concerns “awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference,” (Tsing, 2005, p. 4) friction prioritizes dynamic instances of interaction and negotiation. In doing so, Tsing proposes, it allows us to avoid both “the idea that new forms of empire spring fully formed and armed from the heads of Euro-American fathers” as well as “too eager a celebration of a southern cultural autonomy capable of absorbing and transforming every imperial mandate.” (Tsing, 2005, p. 5) Friction, then, is useful here for approaching global policy from perspectives that neither condemns ACPCulture+’s activities as neocolonialist or an expansion of European empire, nor lionizes Southern resistance – two approaches that are already well-represented in research on both media globalization and development.

To observe such interconnections across difference, this dissertation positions the work of policymakers in Brussels alongside the filmmakers, producers, and educators who receive

funding in the Global South, and combines data on ACPCultures+ policies with the perspectives of those who have received its funding.<sup>1</sup> This includes interviews with recipients of ACPCultures+ funding and multi-sited fieldwork in two sites: 1) in Addis Ababa with filmmaker Yared Zeleke, whose film *Lamb* received ACPCultures+ funding, and 2) in Nairobi, Kenya at Maisha screenwriting lab, which has received funding from ACPCultures+. My time in Brussels, Nairobi, and Addis Ababa was short; this dissertation is not a work of anthropology or ethnography. Still, these brief research trips helped me understand the connections and interactions between Brussels and countries in the ACP Group of States that in this case constitutes the site of global audiovisual policy.

### **Critical Approaches**

The fieldwork and interviews I conducted also provided a mid-level, humanistic perspective that at times complicated, contradicted, or at least did not resemble much research on audiovisual policy, uneven global media flows, and media and development. Research on audiovisual policy, for instance, is usually concerned with the political, economic, and social effects of policy, and does not often include the kind of thick description of architecture in Brussels or the dynamics of a Nairobi screenwriting workshop that appears here. Meanwhile, political economists of media have usually critiqued uneven flows of media between the North and South from a macro-level perspective that foregrounds legacies of colonialism and continuing imperialism, but at the expense of both the agency of Southern audiences and

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<sup>1</sup> Friction also aligns well with John Caldwell's "integrated cultural-industrial method of analysis," which analyzes "multiple registers or modes of analysis" in "critical tension or dialogue" with one another in order to put a check on the polished spin of professionals' self-representation. (Caldwell, 2008)

industry professionals, and of the possibility for more fluid, contingent, and multi-directional kinds of media flows. Finally, research on development and communication, as we have seen, focuses on instrumental media effects, while critics of development (“development studies”) like Arturo Escobar and James Ferguson dwell on the negative impact of the development field through its embrace of neoliberalism and framing of its subjects as in need of improvement.

These approaches are valuable: so much so, that they in large part inspired cultural assistance programs like ACPCultures+ that attempt to serve as their praxis. But their emphasis on macro-level analysis and normative critiques has resulted in their having turned a blind eye towards critical, empirical analyses of the global corrective policies like ACPCultures+ that they have helped to inspire, as well as of the impact that such audiovisual assistance programs have had on Southern texts and industries. Instead of the normative stance on ACPCultures+ that these perspectives would provide, I aim to understand how the relationship between European audiovisual policies and Southern practices reframes such debates.

To understand the relationship between policy and industry without resorting to normative analyses, I take up Toby Miller’s call for a “renewed critical cultural policy studies.” (Miller T. , 2009) Miller sees the application of “critical cultural policy studies to the media industries” as offering “the social movement dynamism of cultural studies and the industrial acuity of political economy.” (194) At the same time, this dissertation is informed by critical media industries studies’ “mid-level fieldwork in industry analyses” to account for the “complex interactions among cultural and economic forces.” (Havens, Lotz, & Serra, 2009, p. 237) After all, as Manthia Diawara proclaimed in 1994, “African cinema exists in exile,” with funding structures, circuits of distribution, and valuations for quality that are in large part located in Europe, and with ambivalent outcomes for African industries. (Diawara, 1994, p. 386) Two

decades later, it remains difficult to extricate some media industries on the peripheries from the Northern blend of cultural policies and development aid that help sustain and structure them.

Toby Miller lists some “core elements” for critical cultural policy research, such as documents from public bureaucracies and businesses, debates, budgets, laws, history (“what came before and what is new”), and people (“who is included and who is excluded from cultural policy and the media”). (192) Similarly, Caldwell describes a “cultural-industrial” method that uses data from four registers: “textual analysis of trade and worker artifacts; interviews with film/television workers; ethnographic field observation of production spaces and professional gatherings; and economic/industrial analysis.” (Caldwell, 2008, p. 345) This research loosely follows these approaches, bringing together information from EU policy documents, PR materials, trade press, laws and treaties, historical sources, and interviews conducted from 2013 to 2017 with employees at the European Commission and ACP Secretariat, as well as Skype, email, and in person interviews and fieldwork with recipients of ACPCultures+ funding. I also include textual analyses of films and TV shows funded directly by ACPCultures+ and indirectly by projects supported by ACPCultures+ that fund textual production such as Maisha Film Lab.

Respondents in Brussels during summer of 2013 include: Denise Richert and Cesaltina Bastos (program managers for ACPCultures+ at the European Commission); Astrid Audibert (manager of ACPCultures+ in the ACP Secretariat office); Chrystelle Lucas (program manager for the South Mediterranean and Middle East-focused audiovisual aid program Euromed Audiovisual); and Irina Orssich (MEDIA Mundus). During summer of 2016, I conducted several days of interviews in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with Yared Zeleke (as well as previous email and phone interviews). The same summer, I attended a screenwriting workshop run by Maisha Film Lab in Nairobi, Kenya; these respondents will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4. While in

Nairobi, I also conducted interviews to get a sense of the local industry at VOD start-up MyChoice.TV with co-founders Mike Strano and Trushna Buddhdev-Patel (Content Director) and Angela Mwandanda (Business Development Manager); with Martin Munyua, founder of the VOD start-up RongaTV; Timothy Owase, Development Manager for Festivals and Funds at the Kenya Film Commission; Peter Mudamba, Project Director of the non-profit documentary fund Docubox; and with Brian Munene, Creative and Production Director at production studio Lightbox Limited. Finally, I conducted Skype, email, and phone interviews with recipients of ACPCultures+ funding, including Emilie Upczak of Caribbean Film Mart, Elise Mignot of the Île Courts-Festival International Film Festival, Enrico Chiesa of AfricaFilms.TV, and Dr. Kim Johnson (director) and Jean Michel Gilbert (producer) of the film *Re-Percussions PAN! Our African Odyssey*.

### **Chapter Outline**

This dissertation's structure loosely illustrates the trajectory of the circulation of ACPCultures+'s policies. The first chapter begins in Brussels, outlining ACPCultures+'s history in relation to EU audiovisual policy, notions of cultural diversity, and engagement with sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean. The following three chapters are each dedicated to one of the three kinds of audiovisual projects that ACPCultures+ funds: distribution, production, and training. Each provides an overview of the projects that ACPCultures+ has funded in that area and one detailed case study, positioned in relation to a relevant strand of EU policy. Chapters 2 and 3, which focus on production and distribution, are largely transnational in scope. Chapter 4, which focuses on training, is more firmly grounded in East Africa – specifically, a screenwriting workshop in Nairobi, Kenya. Thus, while this project starts from the vantage point of Brussels, it



concludes from that of Nairobi in order to show how policy is navigated in audiovisual professionals' everyday life. In part, this shift in perspective is due to the more extensive fieldwork I was able to conduct for this chapter. At the same time, this trajectory is also a small attempt to take up the call by scholars such as Wendy Willems Marwan Kraidy to “relocate debates in the field of media and communication studies from the center to the periphery” (Willems, 2014) – at least, as much as possible for a project on European audiovisual policy – by emphasizing the perspectives of those in the Global South.

### **Chapter 1: Brussels as the Bureaucratic Capital of a Media Policy Empire**

I begin in Brussels, the unofficial capital of the European Union, making the case that the city constitutes a unique example of Michael Curtin's notion of media capitals: one that is at the center of a multilevel network of bureaucracy that promotes European notions of audiovisual production rather than media texts themselves through its harmonization and circulation of policy throughout the EU, countries in the ACP group of states, and the wider world. Rather than national audiovisual policies attempting to bolster national industries and cultures, Brussels' audiovisual policies promote collaboration, exchange, and circulation and emphasize cultural diversity. While this notion of cultural diversity is bounded, prioritizing European texts and industry practices, it also forms a part of Europe's engagement with the wider world. Drawing on anthropologist Matthew Hull's work on the materiality of bureaucracy, I argue that the creation and circulation of policy-related documents does not simply accomplish the EU's policy aims, but also serves to constitute the EU's identity and establish control over its territory.

Through an account of the haphazard path that led to most EU institutions' location in Brussels, I trace the EU's gradual and incomplete transition from a supranational economic integration project to a political entity with citizenship, voting rights, and a sense of identity and

belonging that differs from national models. According to sociologists Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande, the European Union is fundamentally different than the nation-state, constituting “cosmopolitan empire” that is defined by and dependent upon difference, permeable borders, and varying stages of belonging and membership. When viewed as part of such an empire, ACPCultures+ can be understood as an expansion of EU cultural policy beyond the Union’s borders that both incorporates new areas into the EU’s extant systems of cultural production, circulation, and policy, while simultaneously marking difference in those newly incorporate audiovisual domains, particularly in the case of the developing countries in the ACP Group of States. These policies do not develop domestic audiovisual industries from the ground up in the 79 countries in which they operate; rather, they attempt to integrate those countries into Europe’s already-global media empire of producers, distributors, and institutions, serving as a kind of EU global cultural policy.

Within Europe’s cosmopolitan empire, documents for ACPCultures+ form an important part of Europe’s engagement with the Global South that define how different people, texts, and objects can understood in relation to classifications such as artistic value, belonging, Europeanness, and audiovisual professionals. After a history of the creation and evolution of the ACP Group of States and its relationship with the EU, I turn to a detailed analysis of the ACPCultures+ application form to illustrate how the program includes and excludes different audiovisual professionals, texts, and industrial practices through its language and requirements. In other words, how it defines what constitutes the audiovisual good in ACP countries.

## **Chapter 2: Co-Production in the Global Film Funding Regime**

This chapter turns to the films and TV shows that have received production funding from the program in order to explore the relationship between ACPCultures+’s funding requirements,

the work of Southern audiovisual professionals, textual outcomes, and global networks of funding. I link ACPCultures+ policies to the aesthetic and narrative characteristics of films it funds and show how the program fosters globally diverse perspectives in film while simultaneously reinforcing European aesthetic and narrative norms. One of the most important of these policies are the coproduction requirements for ACPCultures+ funding, which create linkages between countries in the Global South and between those countries and European producers. Films funded by ACPCultures+ can be produced primarily by European companies, and many are, so long as they have a greater number of producers in the Global South. This complicates the idea of audiovisual development in ACP countries, as well as the idea of what, exactly, constitutes “ACP cinema.” In contrast, directors must hail from countries belonging to the ACP Group of States. The kind of global audiovisual diversity that ACPCultures+ imagines, then, values diversity of perspectives that circulate globally over diversity of ownership.

I briefly position ACPCultures+ in relation to the history of European co-production agreements linked to public funding, beginning with the emergence of the first bilateral treaties in the 1940s and continuing through multilateral co-production initiatives such as Eurimages and MEDIA. While European co-production arrangements began as a strategy to preserve and promote European cultural heritage and create economies of scale to enable local industries to compete against Hollywood imports, the transition from national to multinational protectionism has had important implications for the relationship between cultural policy, cultural specificity and diversity, and the economics of audiovisual industries. This international network of public co-production funding and the textual outcomes it has produced have faced numerous criticisms. By the 1990s, intra-European co-productions linked to public sources of funding were seen as having a bland lack of cultural specificity in order to appeal to wider audiences and sources of

funding, resulting in the derisive label of “Europudding.” Likewise, Toby Miller, John McMurria et al in *Global Hollywood 2* argue that the EU’s audiovisual policy for co-productions reinforces an imagined pan-European heritage “high- cultural, white colonial Christianity” (178) that is exclusionary and that produces texts that lack local cultural and aesthetic specificity.

Meanwhile, scholars have also critiqued the system and texts of what Tamara Falicov calls the “global film funding regime” (Falicov T. , 2013) – the complex, Brussels-centered global network of co-production funding from cultural agencies, film festivals, and development initiatives that supports international art house cinema outside of Europe. These films rarely screen for audiences in their home countries and are dependent for financial success on audiences at international film festivals and the judgments of Northern co-production funds aimed at filmmakers in the Global South. Accordingly, this system privileges films that are legible to European audiences, with textual outcomes that conform to what Tamara Falicov calls the “globalized art-house aesthetic.” (Falicov T. , 2013) Others have framed these co-production funds as paternalistic and even neocolonialist, reinforcing Northern imaginaries of Southern poverty and marginalization and constraining the creative possibilities of Southern filmmakers.

Given ACPCultures+’s coproduction requirements, where does the program and the texts it produces fit in relation to these critiques? Employing textual analysis of films funded by ACPCultures+, press interviews with film directors, and in-person interviews with director Yared Zeleke, I argue that the productions funded by ACPCultures+, in contrast, are marked by cultural specificity on the one hand and by an adherence to aesthetic and narrative norms that are legible to Northern audiences on the other. Through a detailed account of the pre-production funding process for director Yared Zeleke’s 2015 film *Lamb*, I show how ACPCultures+ connects audiovisual production in ACP countries to the transnational web of grant supported

co-production agreements that attempts to shape European industries and protect them from US competition. In doing so, I argue that the program increases the diversity of cultural, economic, and racial representations and viewpoints within dirigisme, while simultaneously valuing European filmic and industrial traditions over others and imposing developmental requirements onto filmmakers in the South. In the process, the “European art film” no longer corresponds only to notions of white Christendom heritage, but at the same time, the audiovisual productions outside of Europe that are deemed worthy of funding often align, like *Lamb*, with the aesthetic sensibilities, industrial practices, and circuits of distribution that have helped to define “European art films.”

### **Chapter 3: Formal Distribution on the Peripheries and the Case of Africa’s First VOD Platform**

This chapter deals with the fourteen distribution projects that ACPCultures+ has funded, interrogating how ACPCultures+ seeks to solve the “problem” of formal audiovisual distribution in countries in the ACP Group of States by adapting distribution policies that are legible to Northern funders. These distribution projects involve collaboration and cooperation between European funding mechanisms, Southern audiovisual professionals, and private sources of funding, and attempt to protect Southern industries from Hollywood’s reach while simultaneously integrating them into global systems of formal distribution. At the same time, ACPCultures+’s developmental aims structure such efforts in ways that are at odds with the local industries and audience expectations. I focus in detail on one illustrative case study: an ultimately unsuccessful project that attempted to create Africa’s first online, subscription-based Video-on-Demand (VOD) platform called AfricaFilms.TV and a complementary fleet of VOD-based mobile exhibition scooters called MobiCINE.

Unlike the EU's policies on audiovisual training and production, discussed elsewhere in this dissertation, European interventions in distribution involve not only funding to encourage transnational collaborative projects but also a strong regulatory element in the form of the 1989 Television Without Frontiers Directive and the 2007 Audiovisual Media Services Directive. However, extra-European distribution initiatives avoid intervening in regulation, and in fact eschew satellite, broadcast, and cable almost entirely. Instead, they loosely follow the example of the MEDIA Program, encouraging regional distribution initiatives that construct both transnational human and digital networks to bypass disparate national regulatory environments in order to better compete against Hollywood.

Through an overview of the distribution projects funded by ACPCultures+, I argue that these projects not only attempt to utilize European strategies to integrate media from ACPCultures+ into global circuits of formal distribution: they also attempt to replicate European "cultures of circulation." (Lee & LiPuma, 2002) As Lee and LiPuma argue, "circulation and exchange have been seen as processes that transmit meanings, rather than as constitutive acts themselves." But circulation necessarily "presupposes the existence of [...] interpretive communities." (Lee & LiPuma, 2002, p. 193) The case of AfricaFilms.TV/MobiCINE, in particular, illustrates how European imaginaries of distant interpretive communities can shape transnational distribution projects. I show how this attempt at the creation of the first "African VOD" platform reveals competing and overlapping Northern imaginaries of African audiences: as subjects of the development sector's largesse, as would-be cinephiles held back by lack of access, as diasporas eager to reconnect with familiar media from home, and as consumers to be linked into formal distribution economies. These imaginaries ultimately failed to connect with African audiences while ACPCultures+'s developmental mandate constrained AfricaFilms.TV's

ability to compete in an increasingly crowded distribution landscape. Nevertheless, this chapter shows how the platform posed important questions about formal distribution and global audiences that are still being navigated by new African VOD ventures.

#### **Chapter 4: Audiovisual Training Programs and Maisha Screenwriting Lab: Developing Scripts**

The final chapter covers the fifteen training projects funded by ACPCultures+ and explores how ACPCultures+ and other sources of Northern funding understand audiovisual value, knowledge, and expertise, how that influences training programs, and how administrators and aspiring filmmakers work within these dynamics. I focus in detail on Maisha Screenwriting Lab, which run by the Maisha Foundation, a nonprofit based in Kampala, Uganda founded by filmmaker Mira Nair. Maisha runs ten day-long screenwriting courses in four East African countries annually. I attended Maisha's screenwriting course in Nairobi, Kenya in the summer of 2017, where I observed lessons, talked with students and instructors during meal and coffee breaks, and saw scripts develop. Successful applicants to the program hone their screenplays with input from their peers and instructors from local and international film industries, and at the end of each course the author of what is judged to be the best script receives \$5000 to produce a 10-minute film. Thus, Maisha and other Northern-funded training programs like it act as gatekeepers for funding, resources, and credibility for aspiring film and TV professionals.

This chapter positions Maisha and other ACPCultures+ funded training programs in relation to the trajectory of European government supported audiovisual education. The first audiovisual education initiatives in Europe were nationalist enterprises, with close ties to national governments and industries that reflected specific, albeit shifting, national ideas about what cinema should be. I show how within Western Europe, film instruction eventually adopted

a stance that balanced individualist artistic expression with concerns about the ability of filmmakers to be successful within changing industries. I argue that this curricular orientation provided a means for European film instruction to define itself outside of national frameworks, to uphold opposition to big budget Hollywood filmmaking even as it collaborated with American film schools, and to encourage the exportation of its model of filmic instruction outside of Europe. As part of this transition from national to international education, the EU funds international short courses that aim to foster “exchange of ideas and expertise” (Stoneman, 2013, p. 63) instead of the inculcation of European ideas about textual value and industrial practices.

An examination of Maisha Film Lab, however, shows that power and authority nevertheless shape such temporary exchanges, particularly in how the organization negotiates its own priorities alongside its appeals to the shifting priorities of donors in the North. These donors often value developmental and humanitarian aims, which can be at odds with audiovisual organizations’ missions to train filmmakers in their craft and industry. Through a discussion of scripts produced in Maisha’s sessions, I show how these developmental mandates can shape textual production and filmmakers’ positioning of their work in East Africa. At the same time, an account of Maisha’s lab in Nairobi shows how instructors and students creatively and pragmatically navigate Northern funding systems and accompanying expectations from abroad to carve out a space for local textual production that speaks to the possibilities of East African audiovisual industries.



## **CHAPTER 1:**

### **Brussels as the Bureaucratic Capital of a Media Policy Empire**

#### **Introduction: “No Future Without Culture”**

On December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012 hundreds of delegates representing international organizations and countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, and islands in the Pacific Ocean met at the Conference Center of Sipopo in Equatorial Guinea’s capital, Malabo, for the 7<sup>th</sup> Summit of Heads of State and Government of the ACP Group. Among those in attendance were numerous heads of state from the 79 countries that comprise the ACP Group of States, including the President of Cameroon Paul Biya, the President of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe, the President of the Republic of Congo Denis Sassou Nguesso, the President of Comoros Dr. Ikililou Dhoine, the President of the Republic of Togo Faure Essozima Gnassingbe, the President of Suriname Desiré Delano Bouterse, and the President of Guyana Donald Rabindranath. Several heads of regional and international bodies were also present: the President of the African Union Commission Nkosazana Dlamini-Suma, the President of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Dr. Kenny D. Anthony, the Chairman of the African Union Dr. Boni Yayi, the Director-General of the United Nations Organization for Food and Agriculture Jose Graziano da Silva, and the Development Commissioner of the European Union Andris Piebalgs. (Blasco, 2012)

As Prime Minister of the Cook Islands and President of the Forum of the Pacific Islands Henry Puna said during his remarks, the meeting brought together the largest group of developing countries in the world. The ACP Group of States was created in 1975 in order to negotiate development aid and trade arrangements with the European Union, and during their first heads of state meeting since 2008 much of their focus was understandably on ameliorating the damage that the recent global economic and financial crises had caused to their economies. In the resolution that the meeting drafted, for instance, the ACP Group urged the European Union to maintain their economic support for international development and expresses their anxiety that recent European discourse on “South-South cooperation” might lessen North-South aid. (ACP Group of States, 2012, p. 4) The resolution also addresses sustainable development, climate change, food security, women’s rights, terrorism, and other issues that international organizations are expected to address. Its 57<sup>th</sup> article, however, is unexpected: “**We underscore the importance of culture in sustainable development because there is ‘No Future without Culture’.**” [bold from the original] (p 12) The article continues, first to acknowledge the “richness and the diversity of the various cultures and traditions of the people in ACP States,” before stating the importance of cultural exchanges for “peace, harmony, and stability” and urging that “cultural industries [...] be an essential component of national and regional development strategies.” (p. 12)

I first encountered the slogan “No Future without Culture” in the summer of 2013, when I traveled to Brussels to interview the staff of European Union programs that at that time provided economic support for audiovisual industries abroad: Euromed Audiovisual in South Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia); ACP-Films (now ACPCultures+) in countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and

the Pacific; and Media Mundus (now part of the EU's MEDIA Program) in middle- and high-income countries. All three programs were housed in towering glass office buildings in the European Quarter of Brussels, a district that houses the majority of the EU's institutions that coordinate economic, cultural, and social policies in its 28 EU member states, and that craft trade policies, development assistance, and cultural diplomacy with the wider world. My interviews were conducted wholly inside of these offices. While interviewees occasionally talked candidly about their views on issues such as Hollywood or piracy, I was also often simply referred to official websites or promotional materials, including the first newsletter for ACPCultures+, dated October 2012 – two months before the ACP Group of States summit in Malabo. On the newsletter's cover, the motto runs down the left-hand side in an all caps, modern sans-serif font, first in French and then in English, with syllabic line breaks emphasizing the internal rhyme that links “future” and “culture” in both languages: “*PAS/DE/FU/TUR/SAN/CULT/URE,*  
*NO/FU/TURE/WITH/OUT/CULT/URE.*”

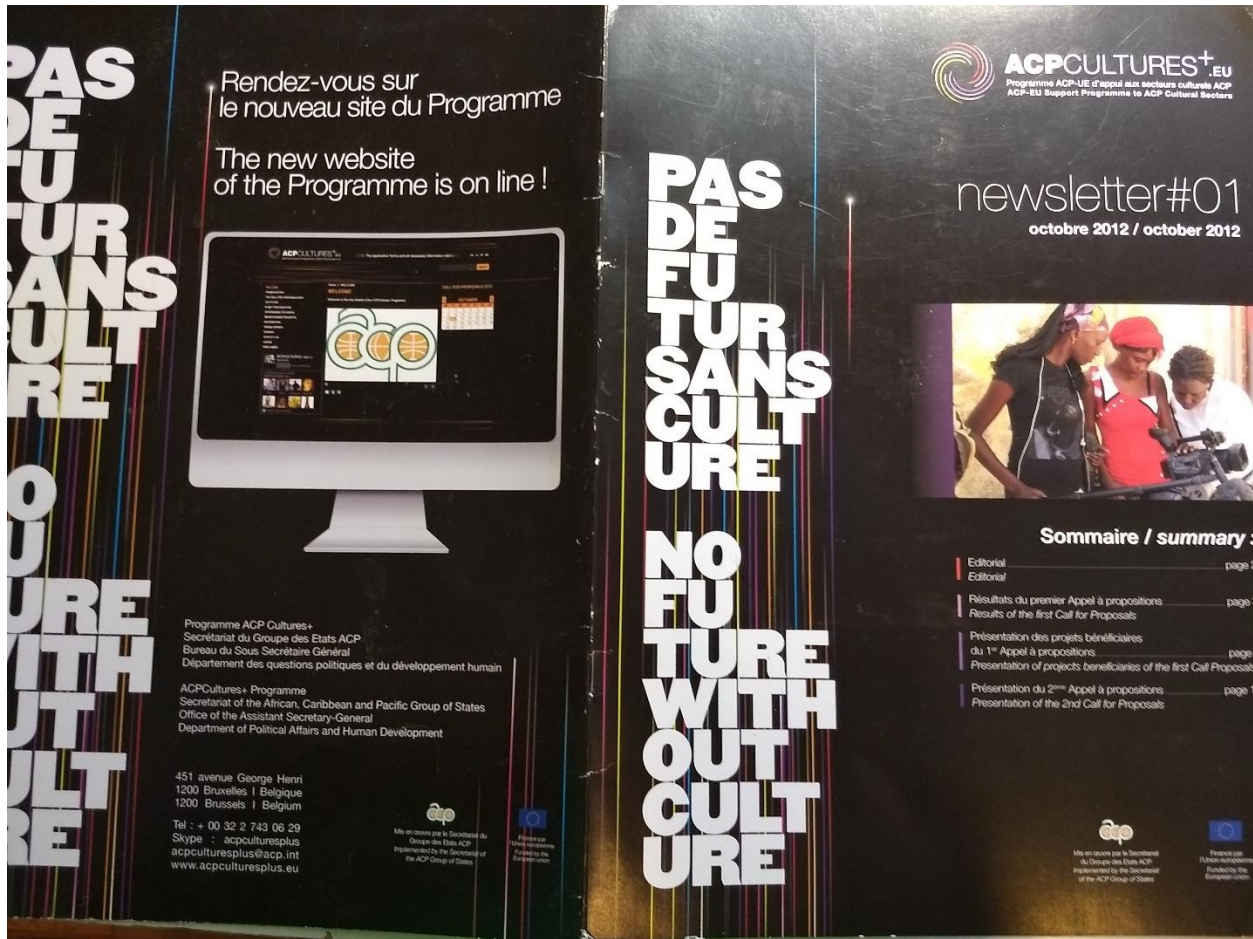


Figure 1: ACPCultures+ Newsletter

Initially, I was discouraged by referrals to official materials. I wondered how I could understand the real aims and motivations behind EU aid to film and TV industries abroad without being able to see behind the manila curtain of bureaucracy. I was pointed to the “No future without culture” slogan during interviews in response to several questions about the motivations of ACPCultures+. Once I returned, I put a sticker I was given with the phrase on my laptop, but I still did not know what to make of this apocalyptic phrase. No future for whom? What kind of culture?



Figure 2: ACPCultures+ Sticker

During further research on the European Union for this dissertation, I came to understand the importance of bureaucracy for the construction of the European Union, and the ways in which it both engages and does not engage with the wider world. Structurally, the Union has tended to vest power in the European Commission, the bureaucratic-executive branch located in the European Quarter which both writes and enforces EU laws, not in parliaments or judiciaries. This has led sociologists/political scientists Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande to pronounce, “Europeanization means bureaucratization.” (Beck & Grande, 2007, p. 153) At the same time, they argue that EU bureaucracy can be distinguished from the national variety “through the pronounced networking of national and supranational bureaucracy” – in other words,

“bureaucratization of Europe does not take place in Brussels but all over Europe, right down to the level of municipalities.” (Beck & Grande, 2007, p. 154) But the trajectory of the “No future without culture” slogan from a newsletter published by the ACP Secretariat’s office in Brussels to the ACP Group of States summit in Malabo to the European Commission office where I first encountered it suggests how bureaucratization can also occur in the opposite direction, linking the European Union with entities outside of its borders. In this respect, the promotional materials the logo appears on speak to how, as Matthew Hull argues in his exploration of bureaucracy and documents in Islamabad, *Government of Paper*, “graphic artifacts are not simply the instruments of already existing social organizations” but rather “precipitate the formation of shifting networks and groups of official and nonofficial people and things.” (Hull, 2012a, p. 21) Rather than obscuring the “real” ACPCultures+, then, the official materials I was referred to can be understood as themselves constructing or comprising social relations between Brussels, ACP heads of states, and audiovisual professionals in ACP countries.

This chapter explores Brussels in relation to such transnational bureaucratization, focusing on the city’s production of cultural and audiovisual policies in the European Quarter that engage with industries and governments throughout Europe and in the Global South. Drawing on Michael Curtin’s notion of media capitals, I argue that Brussels can be conceived of as an important but unique capital that promotes European notions of audiovisual production – rather than media texts themselves – through its harmonization and circulation of policy. Rather than national audiovisual policies attempting to bolster national industries and cultures, Brussels’ audiovisual policies promote collaboration, exchange, and circulation and emphasize cultural diversity. While this notion of cultural diversity is bounded, prioritizing European texts and industry practices, it also forms a part of Europe’s engagement with the wider world.

ACPCultures+ is an important node in this network of bureaucratic engagement, producing policy documents, PR materials, and application forms for film and TV funding that circulate throughout the EU and nearly 80 countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. I connect the program to the multiple histories that intersect in Brussels: European economic and political integration that began after World War II, the development of overlapping regional and transnational public funding mechanisms for audiovisual industries, the process of decolonization. Hull describes how in the South Asian contexts, while bureaucratic documents may have “aimed to create a boundary between the corporation and its servants, the government and its subjects, the public and the private” such documents often became “mediators that incorporate aspects of the people, things, and processes they were designed to control from a distance.” (21) Likewise, ACPCultures+’s bureaucratic documents organize a complex set of relations between Europe and countries in the ACP Group of States. Through an analysis of the application form for ACPCultures+ funding, I show how the program is a site of interaction and negotiation between European notions of cultural production and audiovisual professionals in the Global South.

## **Thinking through Brussels**

### **A Bureaucratic Capital**

In his conception of media capitals, Curtin advocates for “historically informed cultural geographies,” inviting us to ask, “What does the history of a particular media capital tell us about processes of globalization?” (Curtin, 2003, p. 206) In the case of Brussels, its status as a media capital is dependent on its status as the EU capital and not on media industries located there. There was no concrete plan to establish Brussels as the capital of the EU; rather, it happened due

to a combination of chance, compromise, and the gradual expansion of the size and scope of the EU. While the City of Brussels has long been the capital of and the most populous metropolitan area in Belgium, the process that ended it in becoming the center of EU cultural and audiovisual policy and regulation began in the aftermath of World War II as part of a trend of postwar international organizations meant to foster peace. Unique in their supranational mode of governance,<sup>2</sup> the organizations that eventually became the EU began as experiments in economic integration meant to entangle European economies to the extent that another war between neighbors would be impossible. Over time, European integration became more than an economic endeavor, and Brussels became an important center for cultural and audiovisual policy.

Much like the ever-evolving EU and its precursor organizations, Brussels' status as the seat of the European supranational governance has been in a near-constant state of change since the 1951 Treaty of Paris which created the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) between Belgium, Luxembourg, West Germany, the Netherlands, France, and Italy. (European Parliament, 2018) The ECSC was intended to integrate the coal and steel industries in its member countries to lessen the tensions produced by competition over resources and adopted a unique supranational form of governance to do so with four different branches or institutions. Many cities had hopes to host these institutions. While Brussels initially had support from several other members, the Belgian government initially opposed their own capital, preferring instead Liège, the heart of the country's steel industry. Unable to agree on a single location, the ECSC's institutions were spread across two cities: the City of Luxembourg eventually became

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<sup>2</sup> Most postwar international organizations were intergovernmental, like the United Nations.



the provisional home to some of the ECSC's institutions, while Strasbourg in France housed its assembly. (Demey, 2007, pp. 175-6)

With the 1957 Treaty of Rome, the union grew, creating the European Atomic Energy Community and the European Economic Community (EEC), which focused on integration beyond coal and steel. The treaty also created the European Commission, set out areas for expanding regulation, and created the European Development Fund, which provides aid to the countries in the ACP Group of States. (European Commission, 2018) With this expansion, coordinating institutions between multiple cities became difficult, and a search began for a central location. Belgium decided this time to propose Brussels instead of Liège, and to secure its bid began a rapid transformation of the area around the residential Leopold Quarter into office space. While the six governments initially agreed to have some meetings in Brussels and favored the city's location and infrastructure, pressure from France and Luxembourg to retain their own new institutions delayed any official decision indefinitely. (Demey, 2007) Brussels continued to be the workplace for most of the employees of the growing organization. When in 1965 the Merger Treaty combined the three organizations into a single structure, Brussels became home to the EEC's Commission and became home to the Council except in April, June, and October, when it met in Luxembourg. That city also maintained the Court of Justice, while Strasbourg kept the Parliament.

With no official status as a capital, Brussels continued to independently – and haphazardly – develop office space in the European Quarter in hopes of becoming a true European capital. Meanwhile, the ECC expanded its membership and the scope of its activities. It added new member countries: Denmark, Ireland, and the UK in 1973; Greece in 1981; and Portugal and Spain in 1983. In 1979, the first elections were held for the European Parliament,

creating an opportunity for democratic participation in an organization otherwise made up of national appointees and heads of state. The Treaty of Maastricht created the European Union in 1993, which absorbed the three existing European supranational organizations. This Treaty greatly expanded the scope of the previous organizations and created European citizenship. Today – excluding the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, the European Central Bank in Frankfurt, and the European Parliament’s part-time home in Strasbourg – Brussels is home to all of the institutions that comprise the EU.<sup>3</sup> Since its beginnings as the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Union’s areas of activity have expanded greatly, from creating a common currency used by 19 of its member states to establishing cultural policies and broadcasting regulations. What had originally been an organization whose activities were distant from citizens’ everyday lives had become an entity to which one could belong and in which one could participate in democratically. Yet as I argue in the next section, the EU’s supranational bureaucracy has a complex relationship with belonging.

### **Diversity, Nationality, and the European Quarter**

The built environment of today’s European Quarter can be seen as both a metaphor for and a product of the unique status of the EU as the world’s largest experiment in supranational governance, particularly when viewed in contrast to the Belgian national capital located elsewhere in the city. Brussels today is one of the most diverse cities in the world, with 63% of its population born outside of the country. (Boyle, 2015) This diversity is due to many factors, such as Belgium’s location as a bridge between Romantic and Germanic regions of Europe, its history of colonization and exploitation in the Congo, recent migrants from Turkey, as well as

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<sup>3</sup> Even outside of EU institutions, the city is a hub of transnational political activity, housing the NATO headquarters, the Council of Europe, and over 200 embassies and consulates. (Brussels.info, n.d.)

the 25,000 employees from across the EU's 28 member states who work there. Yet when viewed in terms of race and ethnicity (information, it should be noted, the EU does not collect, unlike its staff's nationality, age, and gender) the staff of the European Commission is out of sync with the diverse cityscape, with only an estimated 1 percent racial and ethnic minorities employed there. (Heath, 2017; Politico, 2017) The European Quarter feels both homogenous and placeless in its architecture, language, and culture – one that attests to a white professional class and little else. The buildings that house its institutions, while large, are often criticized for exhibiting little of the symbolism or monumentality characteristic of capitol architecture; their plain glass facades might just as easily contain shopping centers or tech companies as bureaucrats and parliaments. Relatively isolated from the rest of the city and almost wholly comprised of EU institutions and the businesses that cater to them, the Quarter has been criticized as a poorly planned “white collar ghetto.” (Bocart, 2010)

In contrast to the European Quarter's lack of diversity and cultural specificity, the Belgian national capital evokes the country's unique national history while being – architecturally, at least – open to the city's changing community.<sup>4</sup> Government institutions like the Belgian Federal Parliament and the Royal Palace border the popular gathering spot Brussels Park, functioning not only as workplaces for government officials, but also as public spaces with symbolic importance.<sup>5</sup> Near the city's 13<sup>th</sup> century Grand Place, a UNESCO World Heritage site, the iconic guild halls are bordered by Congolese grocery shops – reminders of Belgium's

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted, though, that the Belgian government has hardly acknowledged the harm caused by their exploitation of Congo.

<sup>5</sup> The regional governments of the French Community and the Dutch-speaking Flemish Community have their seats in the city, too.

disastrous exploitation of the Congo – while in neighborhoods like Anderlecht, it is common to hear Berber, Turkish, Arabic spoken alongside the official languages of French and Dutch.

While the EU began as successive supranational organizations concerned with economic integration, it has gradually shifted to an entity with citizenship and voting rights, and has attempted to instill feelings of belonging in its population through adoption of symbols such as an anthem (Ode to Joy in 1985) and a motto: “United in diversity” (adopted in 2000). Nevertheless, Euroscepticism has remained among many EU citizens, bubbling up dramatically in instances such as the rejection of the European Constitution (Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe) by French and Dutch voters in 2005, the 2007 Greek debt crisis, and the UK’s 2016 Brexit referendum. Since 2010, only the most recent Eurobarometer survey has shown a majority in each of the 28 member states report that they feel they are citizens of the EU. (European Commission , 2018) Underlying much of this skepticism is a combination of both feelings of cultural difference and mistrust of the European Commission’s bureaucracy, where unelected “Eurocrats” are portrayed by Eurosceptic as inefficient, overpaid, and immensely powerful.

The capital can be read in relation to these anxieties. In a European Commission report on the status of the EU capital and its future, Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas succinctly describes some of the European Quarter’s architectural shortcomings: “Brussels today is a European capital by default, a curious aesthetic landscape, sometimes generic and sometimes of such a scale that you can only talk about megalomania. In this condition it is unable to articulate any idea about Europe.” (Saraceno, 2001, p. 13) As previously described, the architecture and layout of the EU’s unofficial capital was not built according to a grand master plan to represent the entity symbolically; rather, it is the result of a history of bureaucratic compromise and shifting

priorities for the institutions that would eventually become today's Union. Still, the state of the Quarter poses questions about the nature of the European Union and its relationship to culture, diversity, and bureaucratic governance. What should the capital of 28 distinct countries represent? What kind of culture(s) and values should it embody? Who is the capital for?

Koolhaas, for his part, recommends making the EU capital more like a that of a nation, upgrading and replacing existing buildings and modifying their engagement with the wider cityscape to create a "hard capital" that "does justice not only to bureaucratic needs but also to aesthetic quality, openness, political representation and improves the links with the rest of the city." (Saraceno, 2001, p. 14) In contrast, in the same report Italian novelist and critic Umberto Eco offers a vision for the capital that eschews fixed meaning-making through the permanence of buildings and monuments. He imagines Brussels as a network server, connecting but not controlling its vast system. This network server has an inverse relationship to the definitive character of national capitals. "Brussels should become the center where diversities are not eliminated, but rather exalted and harmonized." (Saraceno, 2001, p. 11) Among his proposals to accomplish this are forums on "all the most important issues about the acceptance of diversity," congresses on comparative literature, a multilingual open university, and a European book fair "where European publishers and readers would meet to discuss the European state of art." (Saraceno, 2001, p. 11) He proposes a similar event for film and television. The aim, he writes, is for the capital of the EU to "become a 'foyer culturel,' a center for the confrontation of diversities." (Saraceno, 2001, p. 12)<sup>6</sup> For Eco, rather than Brussels defining what Europe is, and by extension what Europe is not, the capital should be a site of negotiation and engagement with

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<sup>6</sup> It is ironic that Eco's vision of Brussels as a European capital is defined by cultural diversity, when the project that became the European Union – and which shaped the European Quarter – was for most of its years one of simply economic integration.

difference and difference. At the same time, these diversities are bounded. They are those of other European nationalities: Brussels should be the “capital of European culture,” the place where “Europeans learn what it means to be a European citizen.” (Saraceno, 2001) Like the nationally diverse but racially homogenous European Quarter, Eco’s metaphor of network server does not grant equal access to all, privileging European culture over others.

Embedded in Eco’s proposal is both the critique that the bureaucratic European Quarter today is not place where European citizens come to engage with and understand each other’s cultures, and the hope that if it were, it would better represent Europe to its citizens. Yet unlike the Quarter’s built environment, the policies that emanate from the Quarter today align more closely with Eco’s vision of the capital as a network server connecting multiple national and regional cultures. Article 167 of the 2007 Lisbon Treaty outlines the EU’s bifurcated – if not contradictory – policy aims in the realm of culture: to “contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore.” On the one hand, there are policies that attempt to construct a coherent pan-European identity: the EU’s Creative Europe program, for instance, has invested billions of dollars in audiovisual and cultural industries in Europe, particularly in projects that are transnational or that highlight a common European heritage. On the other, conversely, are those that attempt to safeguard national cultures and promote their circulation throughout Europe. National public broadcasters, for instance, are exempt from the EU’s limitations on government subsidies because their social and cultural benefits are seen as outweighing those of an even economic playing field across the 28 countries. (Audiovisual and

media, 2018)<sup>7</sup> In the EU, then, external and internal cultural policies are highly interconnected; member states' cultural external relations with each other have also become part of the EU's internal cultural policy.

Both Eco's vision of a capital defined by cultural diversity and the nature of EU cultural policy align with sociologists Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande's concept of Europe as a "cosmopolitan empire" – a political structure defined by, and dependent upon, difference. Unlike nations, which have rigid boundaries between internal and external and citizen and non-citizen, Beck and Grande characterize empires by the diversity of their subjects and the "asymmetrical forms and rights of memberships among their various territories" (Beck & Grande, 2007, p. 58) which permit them to more effectively maintain control over their extended space of authority. Rather than the clear distinctions that the nation state's borders delineate, the empire's political authority is based on the idea of "permanent expansion and transcendence of borders" which naturally implies "universality" (though not necessarily "equality") as opposed to the exclusion or particularism of the state. (57) This expansion and transcendence of borders, they argue, can be seen in the European Union externally in the addition of new member states, as well as the varying degrees of formal association that countries outside of the EU maintain with the organization, such as the ACP Group of States with which the EU coordinates the ACPCultures+ program.

Beck and Grande use the term "cosmopolitan empire" to analyze contemporary Europe and do not dwell on the EU's external relations or Europe's longer engagement with the wider

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<sup>7</sup> These cultural policies can also sit at odds with the Union's economic aims. (Erickson & Dewey, 2011) "Cultural diversity is an asset for the EU," a brochure explaining the EU's cultural policies reads, "but linguistic and cultural differences lead to market fragmentation." (The EU explained: Cultural and audiovisual, 2014)

world. Still, “empire” has inescapable connotations for a region with so many nations with histories of colonization. The creation of the organizations that served as precursors to the EU roughly coincided with the beginnings of the dual postwar processes of decolonization and economic liberalization that ushered in a new set of global North-South relations. Along with newly created multilateral development institutions like the IMF, the World Bank, and the UN’s development agencies, the EU’s aid organization and treaties with African countries formed a part of a new “international architecture” of North-South relations. (Brown, 2002, p. 32) At the same time, as Anikó Imre observes, histories of imperialism continue to shape media texts and industries not only in European nations’ former colonies, but within Europe itself. (Imre, 2017) I want to connect Beck and Grande’s notion of a cosmopolitan empire to these histories and continuing effects of European empire without discounting the productive potential of Eco’s foyer culturel. When viewed as part of such an empire, ACPCultures+ can be understood as an expansion of EU cultural policy beyond the Union’s borders that both incorporates new areas into the EU’s extant systems of cultural production, circulation, and policy, while simultaneously marking difference in those newly incorporate audiovisual domains. These policies do not develop domestic audiovisual industries from the ground up in the 79 countries in which they operate; rather, they attempt to integrate those countries into Europe’s already-global media empire of producers, distributors, and institutions, serving as a kind of EU global audiovisual policy. As we will see in the next section, Brussels is at the center of this global empire, making it a unique media capital.

### **A Media Policy Capital**

Housing the headquarters of NATO, more embassies and consulates than any other city, and many of the institutions that control the largest economy and trading block in the world,



Brussels's diplomatic and economic influence today extends well beyond the EU's 500 million citizens. Yet in terms of media, Brussels is not immediately recognizable as a major global or even regional center. Nationally, Belgium has a modest domestic industry, producing a few dozen films each year. The country fares better as a destination for international co-productions due to a combination of tax shelters and national and regional funding policies. (Wise, 2017) Indeed, between 2007-16, the country was one of two EU members (along with Luxembourg) that produced more films as majority co-producer than as national productions. (Film production booming in Europe - up by 47% - over the last 10 years, 2018) Its nation-wide tax shelter scheme, which requires the participation of a local producer, financed 566 works totaling 154 million Euros in 2017. (Film Financing, n.d.) Meanwhile, regional economic and film funds promote productions in and co-productions with the country's three primary regions. The capital city region is a small but growing destination for foreign productions thanks in part to its generous economic fund Screen.Brussels while the rest of the country is served by two economic funds that follow its political, linguistic, and cultural divisions: Screen Flanders for the Dutch-speaking and more economically prosperous Flanders region, and Wallimages for French-speaking Wallonia. Additionally, the Flanders Audiovisual Fund supports films made in the Flanders region, while the *Centre du Cinéma et de l'Audiovisuel* supports French-language Belgian works.

Belgium's layered sources of public funding combined with tax incentives is typical of the complex system of public funding that has become common throughout Europe. Public intervention in audiovisual industries in the form of subsidies began after the end of WWI as a way for Europe's national industries to compete economically with Hollywood in international and local film markets, and to help preserve and construct national and sub-national cultures.

These programs have grown in number and complexity since. According to a 2011 report by the European Audiovisual Observatory, in 2009 there were 280 public funding bodies for audiovisual works within the EU – an increase of 72 since 2004. These programs fund activities related to film and TV ranging from script and project development, production, distribution, exhibition, training, festivals, and exhibition. (Newman-Baudais, 2011) At the national level, there were 67 different funds in 2009 (more than double the number of countries in the EU). At the sub-national level, there were 195 funds promoting regional and community industries. There are also seven international funds. Some of these take the form joint agreements between countries with cultural or linguistic proximity, such as the Nordisk Film and TV Fond (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) and Ibermedia (Spain, Portugal, and Latin America). The rest are initiatives by Europe’s two primary supranational organizations that began in the 1980s with the acceleration of European integration: the Council of Europe’s Eurimages and the EU’s MEDIA Program. Finally, at least eleven funds based in Europe fund projects that are primarily in third countries, such as Germany’s World Cinema Fund, the Netherland’s Hubert Bals Fonds, and France’s Fonds Sud Cinéma.<sup>8</sup>

Taken together, these public support programs form a complex and decentralized network that shapes the European audiovisual landscape. National governments, cities, sub-national regions, and alliances between like-minded neighbors (like Scandinavia or the Balkans) are all important parts of this network, but as the unofficial capital of the EU, Brussels is the most influential node for three reasons. First, its supranational level programs – which include the MEDIA Program for intra-European projects and ACPCultures+ and Euromed Audiovisual for

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<sup>8</sup> The report leaves out funds run by UNESCO based in Europe, as well as national development programs that fund audiovisual industries such as Stichting DOEN in the Netherlands and the Center for Culture and Development (CKU) in Denmark.

projects outside of Europe – have budgets that are larger than any single program, and larger than all other supranational funding programs combined. Second, Brussels is also home to a bureaucracy that drafts not only these audiovisual funding programs, but also the rest of the EU’s cultural and audiovisual policies. In addition to funding mechanisms like the MEDIA Program, the film and TV policies that have been crafted in the European Quarter harmonize the regulatory landscape in the Union’s 28 member states to create a massive single market, while also providing financial incentives for industries abroad to conform to the EU’s notions of audiovisual texts and industries. Finally, taken together, the cultural and audiovisual policies stemming from Brussels modify the core logics and operations of national cultural policies. While national and regional audiovisual policies promote specific national industries and cultures, initiatives like MEDIA Program provide incentives for multi-country training programs, distribution initiatives, and co-productions that work to increase the proximity between industries and identities in EU member states.

Brussels exemplifies Michael Curtin’s notion of a media capital, a “a nexus or switching point, rather than a container” enmeshed in a complex “web of relations that exist at the local, regional and global levels.” (Curtin, 2003, p. 204) Curtin proposes the concept of media capital as a means to think about global media outside of the nation-state paradigm and the media imperialism approach; as the unofficial capital of the largest non-national structure of governance, Brussels is certainly a productive site in which to do so. Rather than zero-sum competition between capitals defined by large production economies – such as Curtin’s example of Chicago and Hollywood – Brussels’ measure of success is measured by its ability to influence new territories to participate in its network of dirigisme.

## **Brussels' Policy Documents and ACP Cultures+**

Brussels' qualifications to be considered a media capital are unique, then, insofar as the media industry located around it is not one of them. The city's most influential media texts are the policies and documents that circulate throughout more obvious capitals like Paris, London, and Berlin, shaping cultural industries in each. While subsequent chapters will discuss how ACP Cultures+ circulates dirigiste policies in countries in the ACP Group of States, it is important to note that ACP Cultures+'s policy documents, promotional materials, and other artifacts do not simply have a cause and effect relationship on their targets. Instead, they organize relationships between Europe and ACP Countries in a variety of ways. In a review of anthropological research on bureaucratic documents, Matthew Hull writes:

The fundamental insight of this literature is that documents are not simply instruments of bureaucratic organizations, but rather are constitutive of bureaucratic rules, ideologies, knowledge, practices, subjectivities, objects, outcomes, and even the organizations themselves. (Hull, 2012b, p. 253)

In the case of ACP Cultures+, documents serve as instruments of both power and of negotiation, as indices of audiovisual knowledge and practices, and construct the transnational set of relations that makes up the organization. The body of work Hull surveys does not view documents as simply "instruments of 'representation'" (254) or as indexical signs of the organizations that created them. Neither are they simply straightforward or literal representations of these organizations' aims or beliefs. Documents can "promote control within organizations and beyond not only through their links to the entities they document, but through the coordination of perspectives and activities" and serve as "tools in the construction of fixed and shared meaning."

(257) This can be accomplished not only through the literal meaning of the documents, but also through their verbal and visual aesthetics.<sup>9</sup>

In the case of “No future without culture,” such insights into the materiality of bureaucratic documents provide a way out of trying to figure out the phrase’s actual meaning. Its repetition on various materials – from conference proceedings in Equatorial Guinea to a 2016 promotional Youtube video presenting a selection of funded projects opens with a series of brief clips of unidentified men and women saying the phrase in either English or French – helps to turn funds, employees, funding recipients, projects and other aspects into a coherent entity. For instance, program managers at the European Commission’s references to the slogan during interviews with me created agreement and harmonization with the ACP Secretariat a few miles away, where the newsletter was designed.

The design scheme in which the slogan is placed also helps to define what kind of project ACPCultures+ is. Irregularly placed colored lines run vertically behind the phrase, helping it stand out against the newsletter’s black background; their colors repeat on tabs that match items in the table of contents to their text inside: red for editorial, pink for Results of the First Call for Proposals, dark purple for Presentation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Call for Proposals. A circle with three similar lines fanning out of it – red, blue, and yellow – is placed by the name ACPCultures+ – creating a graphic rhyme with the EU logo’s globe of stars and the three globes within the interior space of each of the letters in ACP’s logo.

These lines and color coding against black backgrounds form a theme for many ACPCultures+ materials: their website – which is advertised on the back of the newsletter

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<sup>9</sup> Negotiators at a UN conference, for instance, “measured success not by getting the document to convey what they wanted or even any sort of ‘transparent meaning,’ but by satisfying the “aesthetics and logic of language.” (255)

(“*Rendez-vous sur le nouveau site du Programme*”/”The new website of the Programme is on line!”) displayed on an image of an unbranded iMac – and publications like the *Catalogue of projects of the ACPFILMS Programme*. On the latter’s cover, the vertical colored lines are joined by outlines of all 79 countries in the ACP Group of States: an Africa shorn of its northernmost countries but up against the Caribbean and some Pacific Islands, each country dark except for a star-like glow to mark its capital city. The effect suggests a constellation or a network – albeit one linked by graphic design as much as electricity. Through a design language paired to an imaginary of a connected South, cultural itself appears dependent upon technological development, managerial expertise, and transnational mobility. Instead of the future’s reliance on culture, it seems as if there could be no culture without all the trappings of the future.

This design language, then, engages with a discourse around development that aligns well with the current themes in the relationship between media and development that were discussed in this dissertation’s introduction, such as the participatory paradigm and integration into the global economy. When looked at alongside public materials from the European Development Fund from the 1960s, the contrast in how development is represented is striking. The 1961 publication’s cover has a background with outlines of a white and a non-white figure holding hands, each occupying different sides of the globe. Meanwhile, inside, maps for each individual country receiving EU aid identify the locations of modernization projects. In the case of Mauritania, for instance, icons of figures riding camels mark the 29 schools the EU has funded in the north of the country, illustrating the modernization paradigm’s emphasis on stages of self-contained national development.

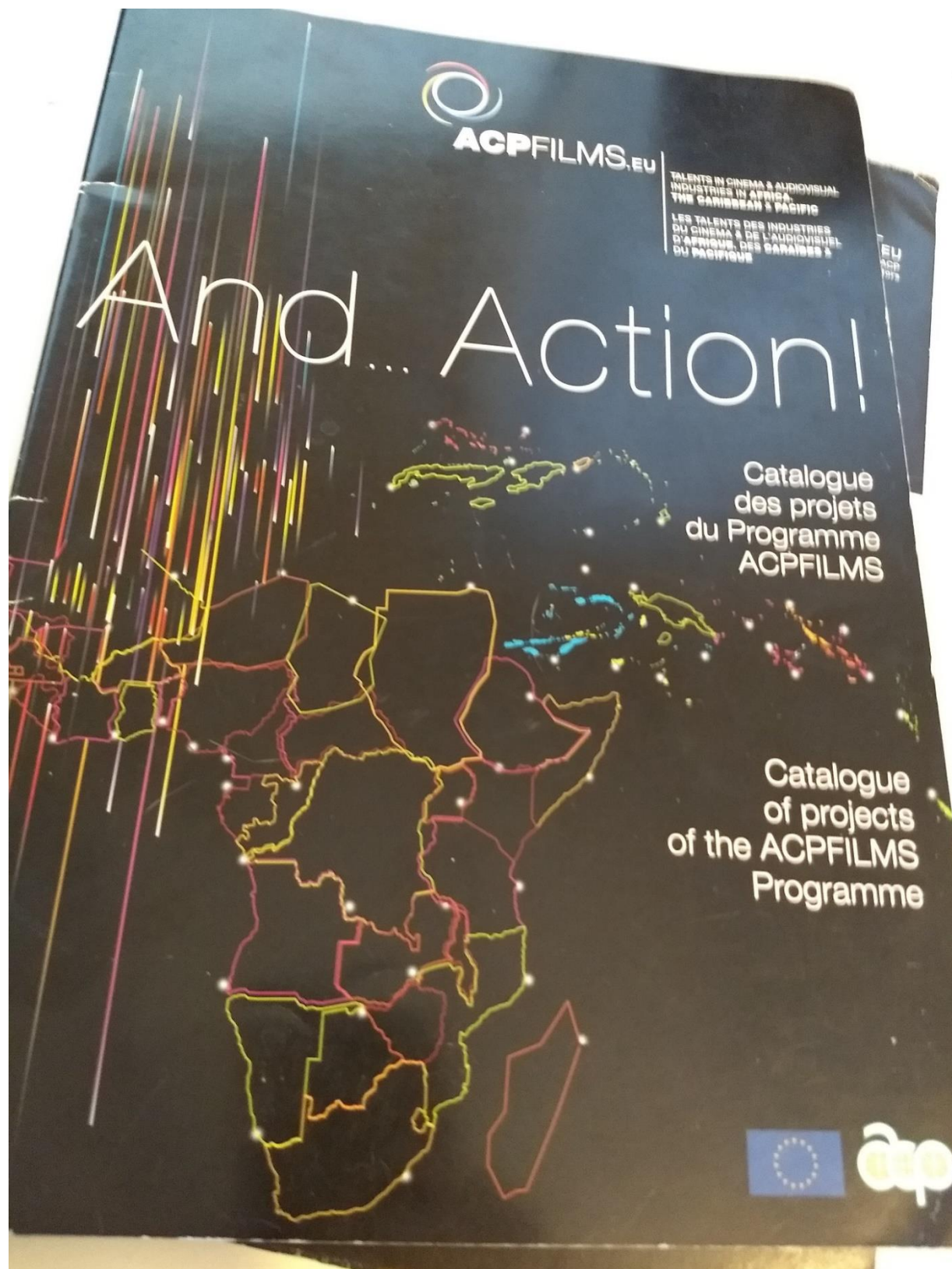
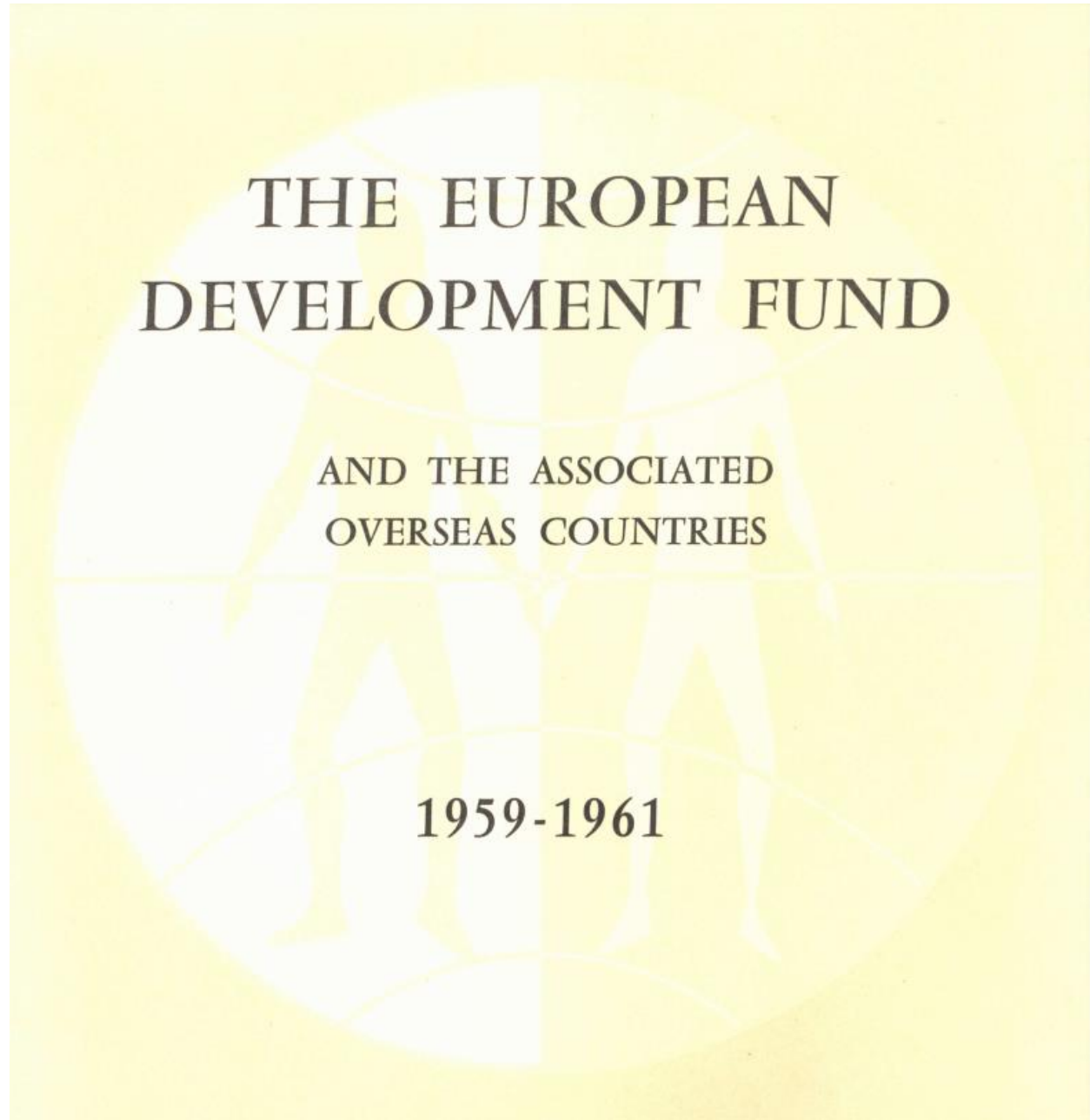


Figure 3: Catalogue of projects of the ACPFilms Programme



*Figure 4: European Development Fund, 1959-1961*



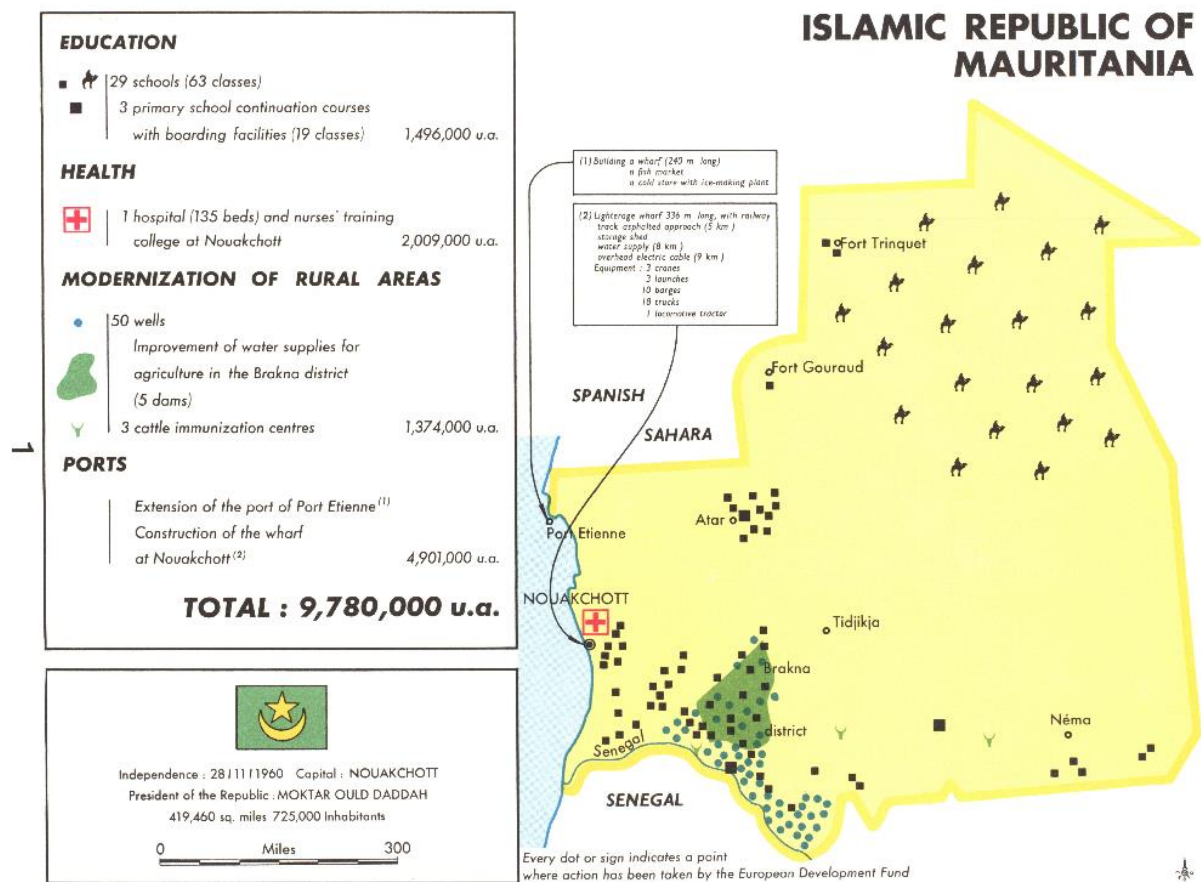


Figure 5: European Development Fund, 1956-1961: Mauritania

These documents provide a useful segue into the history of the ACP Group of States, as in some ways they show its trajectory from the continuation of colonial relations in the 1960s to the more collaborative relationship of today that will be discussed in the next sections. As we will see, the ACP Group of States and its relationship with the EU has increasingly understood development outside of the nation-state and has emphasized technocratic strategies for development that frame themselves as bypassing the self-serving national interests of postcolonial bilateral aid. At the same time, while these documents represent and contribute to changes in discourses around development and EU-African relations over time, the final section of this chapter will deal with what Hull calls documents' "generative capacity" – their ability to

play a role in “the construction of subjects and forms of sociality.” (259) While this capacity is identical to that of discourse, Hull argues that documents have the additional capacity to mediate between classification systems and the actual people and objects they act upon.

Discursive logics, concepts, norms, and social relationships can account for classification schemes, the criteria for bureaucratic determinations of what sort of person or thing fits within them. But documents are what mediate between these schemes of classification and particular people, places, and things, constructing this person as a victim or this house as an encroachment. (259)

In the case of the EU’s network of audiovisual policy, documents mediate between schemes of classification and particular people, texts, and places to construct certain things as part of European heritage, as cultural objects, as films or TV shows, and more. This is true for documents such as policy documents and the promotional materials discussed above, but the ubiquitous application forms that are required to secure European public funding are especially interesting sites of mediation. An analysis of the ACP Cultures+ application form will show how the applications serve to mediate between the program’s actual applicants and classifications of artistic value, belonging, Europeanness, and audiovisual professionals.

### **The Emergence of the ACP Group of States**

Like the EU and its precursors, the ACP Group of States and its forerunners began as organizations with primarily economic missions shaped by competing national interests and the creep of European integration but have expanded in membership and areas of cooperation. The relationship between the precursors to the ACP Group of States and the EU began as an attempt to mitigate national anxieties (primarily France’s) about the potential of nascent postwar European integration to lessen the power of national colonial ties. What began as a continuation of national empire, however, became a complex network of negotiation between representatives

from 79 African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries that negotiate with the EU to guide the Union's development aid. Today, the ACP Group of States is the EU's primary recipient of development aid and a beneficiary of preferential trade agreements with the EU. At the same time, I argue that it forms a part of Europe's "cosmopolitan empire," targeted by policies that both incorporate ACP Countries into European networks of industry and culture and mark them as different. As I will show, this is evident in the cultural policies of ACPCultures+, which expand EU cultural policies to ACP countries while simultaneously applying developmental aims.

From its earliest years, members of the European Coal and Steel Community were concerned with the relationship between their emergent common market in Europe and their shifting colonial ties. (Cosgrove, 1969) France worried that the common market would weaken its colonial links and advocated for preferential treatment for goods imported from its African territories (non-reciprocal trade preferences) and sharing the burden of development assistance between ECSC members. While the Netherlands and Germany disagreed with the plan, Belgium and Italy believed it would benefit their colonies and supported France. Thus, the Treaty of Rome created an association between the EEC and its members' 18 overseas territories with four main features:

the gradual establishment of a free trade area between the Common Market and the associated territories; the progressive creation of a free trade area between the associates themselves; the inauguration of a Community preference system with the first steps to align tariffs towards the common external tariff; and joint economic and social investment of \$581 million in the associated territories. (Cosgrove, 1969, p. 77)

This involved the creation of a new collective funding mechanism for development: the European Development Fund (EDF), which remains the EU's primary fund for international development assistance. Administered by the EEC Commission in Brussels, the Fund's massive

budget was supplementary to extant national aid programs. While on the one hand the EDF can be understood as a kind of “collective colonialism,” it was also free of national aid programs’ reliance on states’ political whims and the “colonialist connotations” of many European nations. (Cosgrove, 1969, p. 79) The Commission’s technocratic approach to the fund focused on infrastructural investments that were more “likely to have a much more pervasive impact on local living standards than the larger sums spent by individual governments on major industrial or prestige schemes,” gaining the Commission “respect in the associated territories, especially among the African elite groups.” (Cosgrove, 1969, p. 79)

Beginning with the Yaoundé Convention in 1964, agreements on EU trade and development aid with former colonies have attempted to avoid accusations of neocolonialism by negotiating multilaterally with the newly independent countries, which themselves formed collective associations: the Associated African States and Madagascar (AASM) in 1963 and the African States, Madagascar, and Mauritius (ASMM) in 1969. Successive agreements have reflected shifting European and African priorities. Newly independent English-speaking countries in Africa and the Caribbean, for instance, criticized Yaoundé as overly focused on preserving France’s colonial links, disadvantaging anglophone economies. (Goutier, 2008) The make up of the ASMM changed to include more non-francophone countries in 1975 with the Lomé Convention. With the expanded EEC that now counted the UK among its members, new countries were added to the Convention from the Commonwealth of Nations. The ASMM expanded to 45 countries and became the African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States. In a pattern that continues to this day, the Lomé Convention and its numerous revisions were created through a process of negotiation between representatives from ACP countries and the EU in which both sides arrive at mutually agreeable priorities for development. The European

Commission, in turn, is charged with allocating money, providing technical assistance, and ensuring programs follow EU regulations.

In 2000, the eight-year-old EU and the ACP Group of States negotiated the Cotonou Agreement. This agreement expanded areas of cooperation, reflecting both changing international priorities on development and trade, as well as the EU's own expanded areas of governance. Among its many new elements, Cotonou added conditionality to aid, requiring recipients to adhere to respect for human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. It focused on increased regional integration between ACP countries, created avenues for the participation of civil society and the private sectors of ACP Countries in development projects, emphasized support for youth and women, and outlined cooperation in the fights against terrorism and climate change. It also set in plan an end for the non-reciprocal trade preference with the EU that had benefitted ACP countries, in order to align with new WTO rules on international trade.

### **ACPCultures+**

The integration of cultural concerns into development cooperation between the EU and the ACP Group of States began shortly after the EEC became the European Union with the 1995 Lomé IVa Convention, which listed three areas for cultural cooperation: Recognition and promotion of cultural identities, protection and development of cultural heritage, and access to the marketplace for cultural productions. (Artico, 2001) In these early years of aid to audiovisual industries, EU support primarily took the form of funding for films by directors from ACP countries through the umbrella of nationally and regionally focused aid programs. Around 100 films received partial funding through these funds, their directors hailing primarily from francophone Africa, reflecting France's continued influence in the EU's postcolonial relations

with Africa. (Amiens Film Festival, n.d.) (Artico, 2001) With the signing of the Cotonou Agreement, culture became an even more prominent focus of cooperation between the EU and ACP Group of States, with an entire article (Article 27) devoted to outlining aims for cultural cooperation.<sup>10</sup> Yet whereas Lomé's brief coverage of cultural cooperation recalled the focus on cultural diversity and cultural heritage that constitutes the EU's own Article 167 of the 2007 Lisbon Treaty, the Cotonou Agreement's Article 27 on "culture and development" frames culture more explicitly as a key to alleviating human rights and economic problems in ACP Countries, adding aims such as promoting culture in education and youth programs, and promoting intercultural dialogue.

Nevertheless, because of the greater attention paid to culture in the Cotonou Agreement, the EU's more discrete funding for audiovisual industries through regional and national support programs became a separate program open to all ACP countries, the ACP Cinema Support Program. Operating through an open call for applications, from 2000-06 this program awarded 4.6 million Euros to 47 films by directors from ACP countries, funded 8 distribution and promotion projects, and also spent over half a million Euros in partnership with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* on Africa Cinemas, which provided support for film distributors in sub-Saharan Africa. (Amiens Film Festival, n.d.) The program also supported Africa-themed film festivals and events in Europe and Africa: FESPACO in Ouagadougou, Abidjan's Short Film Festival, the African Film Festival in Milan, and Africa sections of the Francophone Film Festival in Namur and the Commonwealth Film Festival.

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<sup>10</sup> This was followed by additional ACP and EU agreements, such as the 2003 Dakar Declaration on the Promotion of ACP Cultures and Cultural Industries.

After the ACP Cinema Support Program ended in 2006, the program ACP-Films continued its activities while the ACP Cultures program added support for non-audiovisual cultural industries; these programs were combined in 2010 as ACPCultures+. Today, ACPCultures+'s operations are split between two offices in Brussels. The European Quarter houses two Commission employees – one for film and TV and one for its other initiatives – who are responsible for ensuring that ACPCultures+ follows EU policies. Down the street, the program is administered by a fuller staff at the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) Group of States offices. Like its predecessor, ACPCultures+ operates through an open call for applications every few years. Winning projects are chosen an independent committee composed of 3 voting members of the ACP Secretariat plus a non-voting committee secretary and president. This selection committee also receives input by the European Commission employees responsible for ACPCultures+ and from specialists in relevant fields. How projects are selected during this application process, then, is a process of negotiation and cooperation much like the larger ACP-EU relationship.

ACPCultures+ awards up to 400,000 Euros per project, which is a far greater amount than most other film funds, particularly those aimed at the Global South. Understandably, competition is fierce: during the most recent round, ACPCultures+ received over 500 applications and only 30 were selected. Compared to early EU funding programs for audiovisual industries in ACP countries, ACPCultures+ focuses more on non-filmic production projects, and includes guidelines for applications for training projects and distribution projects. Still, funding for film production makes up the majority of its awards. As later chapters will explore in more detail, the projects that have received funding from are diverse, ranging from the first feature film ever made in Mauritius to a 3D animation course in Senegal. What do these projects have in

common? Why were they selected for funding? My interviewees in Brussels understandably would not reveal who made up the jury or what went on during the selection process.

Anonymous selection committees are standard practice for most of the applications for funding that together make up Europe's vast network of public funding for audiovisual industries. Yet an analysis of the application itself and interviews with successful applicants provides insight into the selection process, showing how the EU's audiovisual policies and notions of audiovisual value are intertwined with developmental aims in the ACPCultures+ program. In doing so, it suggests how the EU simultaneously attempts to incorporate audiovisual industries in ACP countries into its empire while also marking them as different, and how the application form serves much like Hull's understanding of South Asian bureaucratic documents to "create a boundary" between sources of power and its subjects while also incorporating "aspects of the people, things, and processes they were designed to control from a distance." (21)

### **The Application Form**

The application form for ACPCultures+ funding is challenging, to say the least. In addition to many tables that must be filled in throughout the form's 35 pages or 8531 words, applicants must submit a 10 page "concept note" describing the proposed project that addresses 17 different items, a 14 page "description of the action," a 6 page description of the project's methodology, a duration and action plan, a 3 page description of sustainability, and a detailed budget. ACPCultures+ publishes lengthy guidelines for each round of applications, as well as other explanatory materials like PDF slideshows explaining the application and its concepts. Several applicants also received in-person training in the completion of the application from



ACPCultures+ staff as they traveled to film festivals and other events such as the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival and the Île Courts Short Film Festival in Mauritius.

Applicants I talked to had substantial experience applying for grants, awards, and residencies from other public and private sources, but claimed that this application was the most difficult they had completed. First-time director Yared Zeleke, who worked alone with the film's also-novice producer, had applied to numerous awards from film festivals and other organizations with relative success. He said the ACPCultures+ application took several months of work between the two of them and joked that one really needed a PhD to complete all the questions. He even inquired about paying me a consulting fee to assist with any future ACPCultures+ applications because of my perceived expertise from this research project.<sup>11</sup> (Zeleke, 2017) Elise Mignot, who worked on the ACPCultures+-funded Festival Île Courts in Mauritius, had previously applied to grants such as UNESCO's International Fund for Cultural Diversity, the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam's Bertha Fund, and the Dutch humanitarian organization HIVOS's Arts Collaboratory fund. Nevertheless, she found the ACPCultures+ application to be "difficult to write," and spent a month working on it along with her team. (Mignot, 2017)

Another applicant, who had over 10 years of arts fundraising experience, said that this was the most difficult application yet. It was not only "painful" in its difficulty, but also "totally ridiculous": the purpose and meaning of questions was difficult to decipher, it seemed as if it were based off of a template for a scientific or medical grant, and its English version seemed to be badly translated from French. Indeed, a note at the beginning of the Guidelines for Applicants reads: "In case of conflict, the French version of the Guidelines and Annexes prevail."

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<sup>11</sup> I declined.

(Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, p. 2) These superficial difficulties speak, in part, to the involvement of the European Commission in the application's creation, an institution that has unique linguistic sensibilities to accompany its unique supranational governance style. As a result of the numerous nationalities working together in the European Quarter, the European Commission has developed a form of English in which many words have taken on meanings that are incorrect in any other context. (Okrent, 2017) These words are part of the bureaucratic language of the Commission and its documents, and the ACPCultures+ application form uses this language rather than the vocabulary native or non-native English speakers not familiar with the EU would understand. A 2016 report by the European Court of Auditors compiled a list of misused English words in EU publications, including "action(s)": "In EU texts, the word 'action' is used [...] with a meaning akin to 'scheme,' 'measure' or 'project.'" (Gardner, 2016, p. 7) The ACPCultures+ application uses the word in this way 157 times.

Understandably, then, some successful applicants benefitted from having familiarity with the idiosyncrasies of European Union's bureaucracy in general, and its audiovisual funding schemes more specifically. For instance, Enrico Chiesa, who received funding to create Africa's first Video on Demand platform, had worked as the director of a non-profit network of 3,000 independent cinemas in Europe which received funding from the EU's MEDIA program. Because of this experience, Chiesa was familiar with unique language and priorities of the EU's audiovisual bureaucracy. He credits this knowledge in part with his application's success. Understandably, for applicants who had more financial resources, production agencies, lawyers, or business consultants were hired to complete the application. Thus, simply by its difficulty,

ACPCultures+'s call for proposals limits potential recipients to those possessing a relatively high degree of educational or financial resources.

In addition to these textual difficulties, applicants noted that part of the application's difficulty was that it focused on different things than most arts and culture funding applications: for instance, while monitoring and evaluations costs had to be built into budget proposals, there were few requirements or guidelines about the creative or aesthetic side of proposals. Applicants for production funding are asked to describe some textual elements of their proposed film or TV show in the 14 page "Description of the Action": the "main characters as well as their evolution over the course of the story" for fiction films, the "subject tackled, the main themes, the type of documentary and the length" for documentaries, and "the subject, the main themes, the genre, the total number of episodes, the running length, and explanations on the number of episodes" for TV series. (ACPCultures+ Grant Application Form, 2011, p. 10) Yet these descriptions must share space in the "Description of the Action" with descriptions of how the film or TV will "ameliorate the situation of the target groups and final beneficiaries as well as the technical and managerial capacities of the target groups and/or local partners." (ACPCultures+ Grant Application Form, 2011, p. 10) The application's supplemental materials provide some guidelines as to what kinds of audiovisual productions are eligible to receive funding, but these are broad requirements relating to length and format.

Much of the application's difficulty comes from ACPCultures+'s complex linkage of culture and development. According to its website, the program exists in order to,

contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development through the promotion of an enabling environment for creativity, cooperation and exchanges, independence and viability of the cultural sector in the ACP States, as well as the safeguarding of cultural diversity and fundamental cultural values. (ACPCultures+, 2013)

While these aims are primarily concerned with economic development, the cultural sector here is also expected to do more than simply produce employment, such as “safeguarding cultural diversity and fundamental cultural values” and fulfilling the expectations that have become standard in the international development milieu. In Yared Zeleke’s words, “Everything boils down to how does your project help develop your country? How does it stand to benefit the population?” For instance, in addition to demonstrating the economic feasibility of producing a project that will benefit a country or region’s audiovisual industry in general, applicants have the burden of showing how their project will contribute to the betterment of the marginalized groups that are typically targeted by development organizations. These “target group(s)” are 23 categories of generally underprivileged groups, including urban slum dwellers, women, victims of conflicts/catastrophes, drug consumers, disabled, illness affected people (malaria tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS), child soldiers, indigenous peoples, elderly people, refugees and displaced, and migrants. (ACPCultures+ Grant Application Form, 2011, p. 19) Applicants are asked to indicate which of these groups their project will target, and to explain in detail how it will benefit them. During the application process, Zeleke benefitted from his graduate work in international development, as well as his work in the international development field editing documentaries for the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). Indeed, Zeleke understands his film as making at least some contribution to development: for instance, he employed Ethiopians for his film, thus contributing to the country’s economy. He also noted that his film has subtle messages about climate change and women’s empowerment, which are important issues to contemporary development organizations. As we will see in later chapters, these developmental aims can often work counter to a project’s economic success (Distribution

Chapter), pose additional burdens for applicants (Training), and impact productions at the textual level (Production).

Applicants, then, benefit from having multiple fluencies: in the culture of their home countries, in European and international institutions and development discourse, and in the European Union. This means many applicants have lived, worked, and received education internationally. Out of the successful directors, for instance, ten were educated in France, four in the USA, while others attended schools in the UK, Spain, Germany, Portugal, Cuba, Belgium, the Netherlands. Many are expats living in Europe, and most received training at the most prestigious film schools in North American and Europe. In some respects, the international trajectories of many ACPCultures+ applicants follow the paths of the transnational web of funding that the program itself helps to create through its emphasis on international co-financing. ACPCultures+ awards up to 80% of the costs for training and distribution projects, and up to 40% of the costs for production projects, ensuring that applicants secure other sources of funding. It also requires applicants to have multiple partners, with specific geographic distributions.

This creates complex arrangements of funding between professionals in ACP countries and their counterparts in Europe, as well as other public sources of funding. The primary applicant to ACPCultures+ must be an NGO or a private sector body such as a production company; as well as a national of an ACP country or an EU member country, EU applicant country, or member of the European Economic Community. Every proposal must also have two or more partners, two of which must have their offices in different ACP countries. Following the Cotonou Agreement's emphasis on regional integration, if both partners are located in Africa, they must be from different regions (East, West, Central, Southern). The same goes for multiple

European partners: their main offices must be in at least two different countries. Finally, the number of ACP partners must always be greater than European partners. This means that the audiovisual productions funded by ACPCultures+ can be headed by EU-based private organizations, so long as they have sufficient partners in ACP countries. As we will see in subsequent chapters, this is often the case. This means that EU-based companies can profit from the aid provided by ACPCultures+, but that the films and services funded by ACPCultures+ may also benefit from increased access to European markets, continuing the preferential trading relationship that accompanied early EU aid.

How, if their producers can be European, are ACP productions defined? The application considers “as ACP cinema and audiovisual works” those productions that are “written, directed and produced by professionals from the ACP zone.” This definition of “ACP cinema” in the application does not address the content of the films/TV shows themselves. However, when I interviewed ACPCultures+ program administrators working for the European Commission Brussels, they emphasized that – outside of economic development – one of the most important aims of the program was for people living in countries in the ACP group of states to see “their own images.” Indeed, all of the films that received funding were set in and shot in ACP countries, and featured primary cast from ACP countries. “ACP cinema,” then, is bounded not by business arrangement or ownership, but by the assumed authenticity of primary artistic creators “from” the ACP zone (a zone, ironically, defined by economics rather than cultural affinity). The vagueness of this “from” grants primacy to one’s origins *from* a less developed country, while also accounting for the international/transnational trajectories of audiovisual professionals who leave these countries. At the same time, it facilitates the incorporation of

ACPCultures+'s projects into the global economy, rather than encouraging resistance to or separation from it.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that, considered together, Beck and Grande's concept of Europe as a bureaucratic, cosmopolitan empire and Hull's work on the mediating role of documents suggests how bureaucratic documents are central to Europe's construction of both itself and of others, as well as serving as sites that mediate interaction between discourse and particular people, places, and things. More prosaically, as a multi-state political institution with a dubious cultural identity and which lacks its own repressive state apparatus to enforce its laws, the EU is particularly reliant on the capacity of bureaucratic documents to coordinate, control, and construct a European meta-state. Similarly, for EU programs like ACPCultures+ that operate between Europe and the wider world, documents serve an important role in mediating between European and other.

The creation and circulation of "no future without culture" between the ACP Group of States and the European Commission suggests both the power of the EU's bureaucracy to coordinate and create meaning, as well as a porousness that is arguably unique to its non-nation-state structure. That is, while created originally by the ACP Group of States, the slogan also came to construct the European Commission's own understanding of its interventions in cultural production in the Global South. On the other hand, however, is the ACPCultures+ application. The relatively narrow range of the texts, audiovisual professionals, and practices that fit into its complex classification of ACP audiovisual industries are those who are fluent in the EU's policies and even language, in international development, in foreign educational systems, and in the kinds of cinema that is valued by the art house and international film festivals. As we will see

in the following chapters, the application's linking of Southern audiovisual industries to developmental logics, in particular, can be a constraint to funding recipients. At the same time, however, they will show how far from having a fixed meaning or effect, ACPCultures+'s documents and requirements take on new forms as they circulate through different contexts, as Southern audiovisual professionals navigate them in creative and strategic ways.



## CHAPTER 2:

### Co-productions in the Global Film Funding Regime

#### Introduction: European Funding for African Students at an American Film School

Ethiopian filmmaker Yared Zeleke wrote the first draft of the script for his debut film *Lamb* (2015) while he was a graduate student in the film program at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. The film's eventual creation might have happened very differently if, like many graduate students including myself, Zeleke hadn't procrastinated on his coursework. To turn in a late assignment, he visited a professor who was working as art director on the set of director Darren Aronofsky's Academy Award nominated *Black Swan* (2010). In the elevator, Zeleke was surprised to find another person who he recognized as being – to use his term – “from the continent”: Ama Ampadu, a Ghanaian/Nigerian who was an intern in the film's art department. The two quickly realized they had similar aspirations for African filmmaking and discussed how they both wanted to create African films “of a higher caliber” that avoided the ubiquitous tropes of victimhood. Together, they founded Slum Kids Films, a production company with an address in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and attempted to secure funding for the film. It was no easy task.

*Lamb* follows Ephraïm (Rediat Amare), a nine-year-old Ethiopian boy – and the titular beloved sheep, Chuni, who belonged to Ephraïm’s deceased mother – as he is sent away from his drought-stricken village by his widower father to live with relatives in a distant region of the country until his father can save enough money from working in the city to join him. Ephraïm’s journey parallels Zeleke’s own, who himself was forced to leave his home in Ethiopia for the US when he was ten. In an interview with me, Zeleke joked that the film was a difficult pitch because it violates two important rules of Hollywood: 1) Never work with animals, and 2) Never work with children. The punchline, he revealed after a beat, is to never make a film in an “unheard of country” in a non-European language. While the several US-based producers Zeleke approached had much praise for *Lamb*’s script, they invariably turned him down because they deemed a film set in and starring Africans to be unappealing to US audiences and therefore unprofitable.

Instead, Zeleke and Ampadu turned to the arduous process of securing grants, the majority of them funded by European governments. These public funds operate under different logics than the laissez-faire industries that turned down *Lamb*, taking into account diverse national, regional, and international policy aims – the public good, economic protectionism, supporting high culture – in their funding decisions. Their first breakthrough came from Amiens International Film Festival’s Screenplay Development Fund, which awards 10,000 Euros each year to several promising feature length scripts from the Global South. The rigorous selection process involved a live conceptual defense of the proposed film in front of a jury of a dozen; even discounting the stage fright, Zeleke counts this application as the most difficult he has completed after ACPCultures+. Other awards soon followed: The Norwegian Film Institute’s SØRFOND, which awards production funding for co-productions from the Global South;

Medienboard, a regional film fund for the German states of Berlin and Brandenburg; *Agence Livre Cinéma & Audiovisuel en Nouvelle-Aquitaine*, a fund for France's Nouvelle-Aquitaine region; the Doha Film Fund; the German Federal Film Board's (FFA) Minitraité, a fund for German-French co-productions; Switzerland's Visions Sud Est, a development fund for films from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. Eventually, *Lamb* received 150,000 Euros from *Aide aux cinémas du monde*, a fund for French international co-productions that was created by France's Ministry for Culture and Communication and Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and which is jointly managed by the country's *Centre National de Cinéma* (CNC) and the Institut Français. This award attracted producers including France's Gloria Films Production, Norway's Film Farm, and Germany's Heimatfilm.

Armed with this fairly significant vote of confidence, Zeleke and Ampadu spent six difficult months working on the application for ACPCultures+. It paid off, and they were awarded half a million dollars. Shooting in Ethiopia proved challenging. The mountainous region had dangerous paths and roads, and caused altitude sickness for some crew. Fog came in unpredictably, causing continuity problems. The byzantine permit system of Ethiopian central and regional bureaucracy was unforgivingly complex. Zeleke told me in an interview that without this fund in particular, his film might not have been made: "Never say never. But it would be really difficult." However, as an accomplished graduate of a prestigious film school, his career options might have been improved if he had ignored the fund: "I can use my efforts on an American story," he told me, "and it would be so much easier."

Yet while not an American story, *Lamb*'s Ethiopian tale is not necessarily for Ethiopian audiences and would not likely be funded in that country, either. Despite being shot on location with a local cast and many local crewmembers, *Lamb* was not screened in Ethiopia. And despite

the country having its own film industry that produces hundreds of low-budget films each year, *Lamb* received no support from any Ethiopia-based producer aside from Zeleke's own Slum Kids Films. Zeleke, who has academic training and work experience in international development, sees his film as contributing to economic development in Ethiopia, but his understanding of who its representation of the country benefits is much more geographically expansive. "We benefit from having stories from different parts of the world," he told me. For *Lamb*, this "we" included international circuits of exhibition and distribution like European and North America international film festivals, streaming services like Amazon Prime, and in European cinemas (the film had no theatrical release in the US).

*Lamb*, then, is the grant-supported analog to the global Hollywood blockbuster: a product of complex international funding intended to be viewed by global audiences – albeit not necessarily the same ones as *Transformers: Age of Extinction* (2014). Supported by what Tamara Falicov calls the "global film funding regime," (Falicov, 2013, p. 266) *Lamb* suggests how both audiences and funding structures can be constructed not simply as local (Ethiopian) or global (Hollywood), but as international networks of taste, affinity, and belonging.

This chapter focuses on the audiovisual texts like *Lamb* that have received funding from ACPCultures+, positioning them within this Brussels-centered system of grant-enabled international co-production. I argue that ACPCultures+ promotes European notions of art house filmic aesthetics and industrial practices in the Global South while simultaneously encoding developmental imaginaries into its funding requirements. In the process, it privileges texts and industrial practices that package stories of local specificity in ways that are easily consumed by global audiences. At the same time, the program provides opportunities for stories like *Lamb* that would not be supported under global or local commercial industries. I draw on close readings of

the films and TV shows produced with ACPCultures+ funding, interviews with ACPCultures+ staff, and interviews with filmmakers and producers who have received funding from the program, in particular Yared Zeleke.

### **European Co-productions**

ACPCultures+ requires the projects it funds to have partners in multiple countries and funding from multiple sources. For the audiovisual productions it supports, these requirements are particularly important since ACPCultures+ will only supply up to only 40% of the total cost (as opposed to 80% for training and distribution). This means that all films funded by ACPCultures+ are international co-productions: always between two or more ACP countries and usually with at least one European partner.

Before focusing on ACPCultures+'s requirements and the co-production arrangements of the films it has supported in more detail, I want to briefly position the program in relation to the history of European co-productions and their relationship with notions of cultural specificity, cinematic quality, and the global. While commercial co-productions are free to follow the same economic logics as other forms of neoliberal global business, co-productions that take advantage of bilateral and multilateral treaties tied to public funding must fulfill complex sets of requirements for each co-production country or supranational entity. These often involve demonstrating various kinds of national or regional belonging and questions of textual aesthetic value and can incentivize the production of films and TV shows that adopt specific genres, subject matter, and transnational orientations.

Because European multilateral co-production agreements attempt to preserve and promote “European cultural heritage,” they pose particularly interesting questions about the relationship between European identity and cultural policy. In *Global Hollywood 2*, Miller et al argue that pan-European initiatives divide audiovisual productions into two categories: 1) works with cultural value, and 2) works of popular entertainment. While the former – which they link to an exclusionary, pan-European cultural heritage in which “whiteness” substitutes for the supposed specificity of national culture – is deserving of supranational government protection through initiatives like multilateral co-production agreements, the latter is left subject to free market competition.

The dominant regime of value that has animated *dirigiste* EU media policy is the conceit of a common pan-European cultural heritage: to fortify a regional economic trading block – as we shall see, this conceit is largely derived from a high-cultural, white colonial Christianity. Meanwhile, the popular is assigned to *laissez-faire* market forces, which have seen European industry up its investments in Hollywood as the gold standard for pleasure. In traversing the rise in international co-productions, we ask how pan-Europeanism excludes or enables diversity, and how values of art and commerce negotiate pan-European popular pleasures.” (Miller, Govil, McMurria, Maxwell, & Wang, 2005, p. 178)

Indeed, as we will see, pan-European co-productions demonstrate how the EU’s cultural and economic aim are often contradictory. Yet (as the authors themselves acknowledge elsewhere) *dirigiste* and *laissez-faire* industries are intertwined, as are the categories of texts each has been associated with. Furthermore, this critique fails to account for the EU’s deployment of cultural policies – ACPCultures+, Euromed Audiovisual, and others – that connect non-European regions into its *dirigiste* network. These globally-oriented funding programs provide an answer, of sorts, to Miller et al’s related query: “How might media pluralism based on diversity and difference rather than a spurious notion of heritage inform audiovisual policy?” (Miller, Govil, McMurria, Maxwell, & Wang, 2005, p. 206)

I argue that expanding this dirigiste system to audiovisual industries abroad through programs like ACPCultures+ both challenges and reinforces the “European heritage” that guides intra-EU cultural policy. ACPCultures+ integrates ACP countries into the transnational web of grant supported co-production agreements that attempts to shape European industries and protect them from US competition. In doing so, the program increases the diversity of cultural, economic, and racial representations and viewpoints within dirigisme while simultaneously valuing European filmic and industrial traditions over others and imposing developmental requirements onto filmmakers in the South. In the process, the “European art film” no longer corresponds only to notions of white Christendom heritage, but at the same time, audiovisual productions outside of Europe that are deemed worthy of funding often align, like *Lamb*, with the aesthetic sensibilities, industrial practices, and circuits of distribution that have helped to define “European art films.”

### **The Beginnings of Treaty Co-Productions**

Treaty co-productions in Europe emerged out of and modified protectionist national audiovisual policies that attempted to guard against Hollywood’s economic and cultural influence after World War II. The first bilateral agreement was signed between the director of the French Film Center and the Chairman of the Italian Film Organization in 1946, allowing for the co-production of 10 films in Italy and 5 in France. At least some of the films produced under this agreement showed both the budgetary heft, international cast and crew, and historical focus that would come characterize many European co-productions: Italian director’s *Fabiola*, which starred a mix of French and Italian actors in its historical melodrama about the persecution of Christians in Rome, was one of the most expensive films shot in Europe at that time. (Jačkel, 2010, p. 231) France and Italy were countries with linguistic and cultural affinity whose film

industries had fallen into decline during World War II, and this initial co-production agreement led to a more robust one in 1949 which used a range of strategies to foster the production of “quality films” and slow unfettered American imports:

pooling resources together, opening the domestic markets of both countries to co-productions, determining the eligibility of co-productions for national subsidies and other benefits such as screen quotas, and, encouraging the production of prestigious films to appeal to both domestic and international audiences. (Jačkel, 2010, p. 232)

This treaty proved successful in numerous ways, particularly in creating a market for Italian films in France and vice versa. A half decade after the treaty was signed, for instance, “French stars had very nearly as much appeal in Italy as Italian ones and the names of Italian actors and actresses and Italian film directors had become household names with French audiences.”

(Jačkel, 2010, p. 234) Because of its success, the French-Italian treaty’s mix of protectionism, opening up of national markets, and advocacy for transnational “quality film” as a way to combat Hollywood provided a model for future bilateral treaties that soon crisscrossed Europe. At the same time, the most salient criticisms of European co-productions can also be traced back to the kinds of texts the French-Italian treaty supported: critically unpopular historical melodramas and comedies that had broad audiences appeal, and films that came to resemble the very kinds of Hollywood productions the treaty sought to combat. (Jačkel, 2010, p. 235)

The transition from national protectionism to bilateral protectionism had important implications for the relationship between cultural policy, cultural specificity and diversity, and the economics of audiovisual industries. As Miller et al argue, such treaties “measure cultural specificity by way of national borders, a demarcation that necessitates folding intra-national cultural diversity under an exclusionary sign of unity, failing to gauge supra-national cultural affiliations across borders.” (Miller, Govil, McMurria, Maxwell, & Wang, 2005, p. 184) As governments craft policies to determine what exactly constitutes a sufficiently national work that



qualifies for public funding under international co-production agreements, the dynamism and complexity of national cultural specificity and diversity is subject to reductive bureaucratic systems of evaluation. Bilateral international co-production treaties, then, “institutionalise normative and static conceptions of national culture in the very process of international collaboration.” (Miller, Govil, McMurria, Maxwell, & Wang, 2005, p. 184) Today, for instance, the British cultural test for film uses a point-based system, under which films must score 18 out of a possible 35 points in order to qualify as British. Categories include the film’s setting, language, nationality of lead characters, and nationalities of above-the-line crew. (BFI, n.d.)

If national cultural diversity is calcified into a unitary national culture in bilateral co-production treaties, national culture itself is subsumed under the vague notion of regional belonging or Europeanness under multilateral co-production agreements. The earliest attempt at creating a multilateral co-production agreement dates back almost as far as the first bilateral treaty. In 1947, French writer and director Marcel Pagnol advocated for an International Congress of Latin Cinema that would “set up a common material and moral defense against the quantitative and qualitative assault of American cinema.” (Jačkel, 2010, p. 231) Pagnol’s ultimately unrealized vision was for a co-production agreement between the romance language block of France, Italy, and Spain that would produce work that reflected the countries’ shared cultural affinities, not a cinema that “speaks Italian (or French, or Spanish) but thinks American.” (Jačkel, 2010, p. 231)

When multilateral co-production agreements were finally established forty years later, they expanded Pagnol’s attempt to create economic blocks based on cultural affinity from Latinate countries to the entirety of Europe in order, of course, to compete aesthetically and economically with Hollywood. These multilateral agreements also attempt to simplify and

harmonize Europe's web of bilateral treaties, create a common European audiovisual market, and highlight or create a pan-European identity. The first such agreement was created in 1989 by the Council of Europe, an intergovernmental organization with 47 member states. Signatories to the agreement, the European Convention on Cinematographic Co-Production, are eligible to receive funding from the associated co-production fund Eurimages. Although it funds distribution and training initiatives, Eurimages directs most of its funding towards co-productions between two or more member countries. Since its creation, the program has contributed to 1,962 European co-productions, spending a total of 574 million Euros. (Council of Europe, 2018)

Part of the Council of Europe's stated mission is "safeguarding and realizing the ideals and principles which are [Europe's] common heritage." Accordingly, in contrast to the more economically-focused MEDIA program (which will be discussed in the next section) Eurimages is generally understood to be a culturally-oriented program that supports European "art house" films. Much like the British cultural test, a point-based system determines which projects are sufficiently European to qualify for funding based on the nationalities of the director, scriptwriter, actors, and crewmembers including the camera operator, sound recorder, editor, and art director, as well as the studio, shooting, and post-production locations. (Miller, Govil, McMurria, Maxwell, & Wang, 2005, p. 185) Miller et al argue that this emphasis on above-the-line "artisan" workers as criteria for awarding funding privileges "bureaucratic elite decision-making based on authorial measures of cultural value," thereby upholding a longstanding European history of valuing auteurist or art house cinema over more popular works. (Miller, Govil, McMurria, Maxwell, & Wang, 2005, p. 185)

While overly simplistic, this auteur/popular binary is useful for thinking about the relationship between multinational systems of public funding and the texts they value. In the next

section, I will show how a different multilateral co-production fund, the MEDIA Programme, incentivized the production of films and TV shows that were at times textually the opposite of arthouse cinema and at times indistinguishable from it.

### **Europudding: Co-productions and Blandness**

In a 1990 article in *Sight and Sound*, media executive and critic William Fisher shares a recipe for a relatively new concoction that had quickly become a staple in the diet of Europe's producers: Europudding.

Take a story that crosses the borders of two or more Member States in the European Community. Anodyne, preferably historical subjects are recommended. (Take care not to favour any single national perspective or choose a subject that could offend the national sensibility of any of the other EC Member States). Add a writer and director from these same Member States then gently solicit investment from their domestic television networks. Fill in application forms for EC-wide production subsidies (30 copies in English and French). Fold in the appropriate number of actors and technicians from each country. Yield: Two hours-plus of a deal driven fictional 'screen entertainment' devoid of distinctive contour or flavour. For gravy, sell your Europudding as a feature film in your constituent EC Member States and as a telefilm/miniseries abroad. (Fisher, 1990, p. 225)

Fisher shares numerous examples of the wide variety of flavors Europudding can accommodate, from Italian epic dramas “that mix and match polyglot casts in biblical and historical settings” to a Robert Altman directed biopic on Vincent Van Gogh, *Vincent and Theo* (1990). Still, he writes, “It doesn't take a culinary historian to recognize that the above recipe isn't part of Europe's traditional cultural cuisines.” (Fisher, 1990, p. 225) While Fisher does not elaborate on these traditional cuisines, Europudding is most often contrasted against national cinema's presumed sense of cultural specificity and overall quality.

The unappetizing textual mushiness Fisher humorously describes emerged because of both changes in media regulation under EU integration and new forms of funding for pan-European cooperation. On the one hand, the widespread deregulation of television throughout

European nations in the 1980s (Sanz, 2012) led to the increased saturation of American content on European channels. To counter American dominance, the European Community created the Television Without Frontiers Directive in 1989, under which networks agreed that a majority of the content they broadcast would be from members of the European Community. In turn, the European Community created the MEDIA Programme to provide financial assistance for intra-European co-productions and their distribution and promotion in meeting this new goal. (Fisher, 1990, p. 225) Once again, co-productions were a strategy to preserve local markets and their cultural specificity while also competing with Hollywood. Besides the financial incentives provided by MEDIA funding, co-productions made financial sense for producers trying to compete effectively with Hollywood productions because of the ability to pool resources and share risk across countries and because of co-productions' potential to better reach international audiences. (Baltruschat, 2002)

Initially, however, because of these new international production arrangements, co-productions were deemed to have a lack of cultural specificity and aesthetic quality. In order to appeal to international audiences, many co-productions focused on specific genres, particularly historical films. Historical themes allowed co-productions to distance themselves from potential controversy in contemporary international affairs. At the same time, well-known historical stories that were "common knowledge" were regarded as global stories regardless of their national origin, and came with audiences built-in. (Selznick, 2008) Additionally, attempting to meet the complex requirements of multiple public and private sources of funding often resulted in compromises to the productions themselves, (Baldwin, 1997) ranging from alterations to the script to hiring less preferred crewmembers to meet national quotas. (Hoskin & McFadyen,

1993) This meant films that were perceived to be “lacking the unity and direction found in media texts produced by one company or at least within one nation.” (Selznick, 2000, p. 52)

While Europudding has remained a popular descriptor for aesthetically clumsy European co-productions, many producers have since learned to effectively navigate the complex multinational funding process while appealing to international markets, producing films that have widespread critical appeal compared to their badly dubbed forebearers. (Kirschbaum, 2005) These films avoid Mette Hjort’s definition of Europudding: the “chaotic transnational mix that was never meant to be made salient [which] intrudes on the viewer’s awareness as a result of a failure properly to contain transnationality on the level of production.” (Hjort, 2010, p. 14) For instance, *Breaking the Waves* (1996), an English-language film set in Scotland by Danish director Lars Von Trier, won the Grand Prix at Cannes Film Festival despite drawing on funding from over 20 sources in 9 countries plus both Eurimages and the MEDIA Programme. (Baldwin, 1997) *Breaking the Waves* manages to successfully disguise the “transnational mix” of funding, cast, and crew that went into its production, evoking an isolated Scottish village that is more or less convincing. Other co-productions, meanwhile, have attempted to integrate local specificity through so-called “natural” co-productions: films that feature multiple nations for story-based reasons, often with dialogue in multiple languages. (Kirschbaum, 2005) *L’Auberge espagnole* (2002), which received funding from the MEDIA Programme, told the story of students from England, Italy, France, Germany, and Belgium studying abroad through the Erasmus program (the EU-supported educational exchange program) in Barcelona. Nevertheless, European co-productions in general have continued to be caught in the “irreconcilable tension between cultural specificity and international trade,” (Hammett-Jamart, 2004, p. 48) receiving criticism for favoring popular genres and themes which are “increasingly global in orientation to the

demise of locally relevant issues and their representation.” (Baltruschat, 2002, p. 1) As we will see in later sections, tensions between local specificity and the global also exist in European co-productions with the Global South, but take on very forms as Southern filmmakers navigate European funding systems and the expectations of Northern audiences.

### **Co-productions Funded by ACPCultures+**

ACPCultures+ demonstrates how European co-productions with countries in the Global South face many of the same complications as their intra-European counterparts, but with the added difficulty of operating across a lopsided set of power relations. For producers in the South, European co-productions connected to grants are often vital for covering production and post-production costs that remain prohibitively high. (Pattison, 2015) In fact, in some years European co-production funding has provided support to the entirety of some countries’ film production: in 2004, for instance, this was the case for Kazakhstan, Mozambique, Mali, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Algeria. (Randall, 2010) ACPCultures+ itself publicizes that it has provided support for the only feature film from D.R. Congo in 30 years (*Viva Riva*) and the only feature-length film in history from Mauritius (*Lonbraz Kann*). Furthermore, as a primary market for films from many countries in the Global South, European audiences – along with those in North America and at international film festivals – are also critical to these films’ financial success. Thus, the “global film funding regime” to which ACPCultures+ belongs affords Southern audiovisual professionals like Zeleke opportunities that might not otherwise exist. At the same time, producers and directors in the South are constrained by both the complex requirements attached to European co-production funding and the expectations of Northern audiences, raising questions about authenticity and representation.

While intra-European co-production treaties are construction around areas of perceived cultural affinity, many Europe-Global South co-production agreements follow the pathways of longstanding colonial ties that, much like as we saw in Chapter 1 with ACPCultures+, merge development aims with national interests. The UK, for instance, signed a co-production agreement with its former colony Jamaica in 2007 that provides tax breaks and other benefits for British producers working with the Jamaican industry, while granting Jamaican producers “access to financial and personnel resources not available locally.” (Price & Arlene, 2009, p. 40) Likewise, Spain and Latin American industries cooperate through the Ibermedia regional fund, which has assisted over 200 films and which provides access for Spanish films to Latin America’s much larger market. (Villazana, 2008) Meanwhile, in Francophone Africa, where filmmaking had been prohibited under colonialism, the dual post-independence structures of development aid and economic exploitation that connected France and its colonies became the basis for audiovisual assistance, as France began to “provide technical and financial assistance to Francophone African filmmakers, part of which was obligatorily spent in paying French technicians and French post-production services.” (Thackway, 2003, p. 7) France continues to be one of the primary funders of African film and, as previously discussed, has also been one of the main proponents of EU aid to African cultural industries through ACPCultures+ and its predecessors.

ACPCultures+ has awarded funding to 28 audiovisual productions, about double the number of projects funded in its two other categories. Like intra-European co-production funds, ACPCultures+’s funding requirements institutionalize normative conceptions of culture through its funding requirements, but along regional – not national – lines. The bulk of the program’s funding requirements deal with the geographies of ownership and funding – not with the textual

quality of the proposed production. Every proposal must have two or more partners, two of which must have their offices in different ACP countries. If both partners are located in Africa, they must be from different regions (East, West, Central, Southern).<sup>12</sup> The same goes for multiple European partners: their main offices must be in at least two different countries. Finally, in a requirement meant to maintain equity in favor of ACP countries, the number of ACP partners must always be greater than European partners. Nevertheless, these production requirements allow audiovisual productions funded by ACPCultures+ to be headed by EU-based producers so long as they have sufficient partners in ACP countries. EU-based companies, then, can profit from the aid provided by ACPCultures+, upholding some of the previously discussed criticisms of economic exploitation in European-Global South co-productions. This structure, in which Northern-based companies can benefit financially from Northern development aid, resembles France's interventions in post-independence African audiovisual industries. For 11 of the 29 production projects that were approved, a European country was the primary producer: 8 of these are French, and the rest Portuguese. French producers were also partners for 11 productions.

While ACPCultures+ allows European producers to be the primary applicant, the program requires that directors and writers be “from the ACP zone.” This means “ACP cinema” is defined not by business arrangement or ownership, but by the assumed authenticity of the above-the-line creative professionals “from” the ACP zone (a zone, ironically, defined by economics rather than cultural affinity). Like Eurimages, then, the program takes an auteurist-based approach to defining what constitutes ACP cinema. Three of the productions it has funded have directors from the Caribbean: *Re-percussions - Pan ! l'Odyssée Africaine* in Trinidad and

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<sup>12</sup> This cross-regional focus is an example of the Cotonou Agreement's emphasis on regional integration mentioned in Chapter 1.



Tobago, *Meurtre à Pacot* in Haiti, and *Cristo Rey* in the Dominican Republic. The rest have had directors from Africa, including 5 from Burkina Faso, a country that hosts FESPACO and that has a long history of film that circulates widely throughout global cinephile circles (*Ina Season 2*, *Bayiri - La Patrie*, *Qui parle de vaincre?*, *Thom*, and *L'Oeil du cyclone*).

While there are no explicit requirements about a production's setting, all the films that received funding have been set in, shot in, and featured primary cast from ACP member countries (although many brought in cinematographers, composers, and other workers from Europe or the US). It is difficult to know whether this was by chance or the result of the preferences of the selection committee, but funding stories of Africa and the Caribbean written and directed by professionals from those places corresponds what interviewees at the European Commission told me was one of the most important aims of the program outside of economic development: that people living ACP countries can "see their own images." This aim is curious: some of these films, like *Lamb*, did not circulate in their directors' countries of origin. In contrast, productions from already successful by aesthetically distinct industries in ACP countries, such as Nigeria's Nollywood, did not receive funding despite their ability to also allow audiences to "see their own images." When I asked European Commission administrators if there was a reason no Nollywood films were funded, I was told that "The content is different." At least some of the filmmakers it has awarded funding to agree: Chadian director Mahamat Saleh Haroun told the Guardian in a 2002 interview about being one of only two filmmakers working in the country, "It makes it even more imperative that we make films. It's important because we don't have the opportunity to see our own images on the screen instead of American or European ones. Otherwise we have a colonization by images." (Jeffries, 2002) In a later interview, he called Nollywood a "monster" that replicated money-obsessed Hollywood. (Topping, 2013)

Haroun's distinction between his own Chadian films and European ones is important, since one of the main criticisms of European co-production funding for Southern audiovisual industries is that they rely on Northern audiences and systems of evaluation. For instance, while there are exceptions (such as the TV series it has funded), most of the content ACPCultures+ does fund is that which is able to circulate within international film festivals and theaters in Europe. While the program is open to proposals for nearly any genre of film or TV show providing it is standard-length, for instance, most of the productions that have received funding are feature-length fiction films – a format that makes up the bulk of entries at film festivals. There are four exceptions: one documentary film (*Re-percussions - Pan ! l'Odyssée Africaine*), one documentary TV series (*Mozambique: From War to Peace*), and two fiction TV series (season 2 of *Ina* and *Les concessions*).

Indeed, one of the primary ways ACPCultures+ understands its success in funding production is through its films' performance in international film festivals. In its "Best Practices" page for Burkinabé director Sékou Traoré's film *L'oeil du cyclone* (Eye of the Cyclone), ACPCultures+ notes that the film was "selected in more than 50 EU and ACP festival[s], and winning 15 prizes (three of which were at FESPACO 2015)." (ACPCultures+, 2016) Ivorian Philippe Lacôte's *Run*, it notes, was selected for the "*Un certain regard*" section of the 2004 Cannes Film Festival, meaning that "for the first time in the country's history an Ivorian film was [sic] been chosen for the famous festival's official selection." (ACPCultures+, 2016) Chadian director Mahamat Saleh-Haroun's film *Gris Gris* won the Vulcain Prize at the 2013 Cannes Film Festival. (ACPCultures+, 2016) Franco-Senegalese director Daouda Coulibaly's debut film *Wulu* was "projected in over 60 festivals around the world" and "it is worth noting that the film was selected by Cannes for 'Un Certain Regard' in 2012. Within the same year, the

film won the Golden Tanit at the Carthage Film Festival.” (ACPCultures+, 2017) *Murder in Pacot* by Haitian filmmaker Raoul Peck, whose 2016 documentary on James Baldwin *I Am Not Your Negro* was nominated for an Oscar, also received praise for its success at the Berlin and Toronto film festivals and for being “unanimously acclaimed” by critics for its “real artistic proposition and the expression of a unique and salutary voice, coming from Haiti. [sic]” (ACPCultures+, 2016)

While Chapter 3 of this dissertation discusses the film festivals funded by ACPCultures+ in more detail, it is important here to highlight the role that international film festivals play in supporting audiovisual production from ACP Countries. Festival runs can help films gain entry into international markets. They have also themselves become important sources for co-production funding, with funds that operate much the same way as European co-production funds. Some of these festival funds, such as the joint San Sebastián Film Festival/Toulouse Latin American Film Festival *Cine en Construcción* (Films in Progress) follow obvious colonial trajectories or cultural or linguistic affinity. (Falicov, 2013) Others, such as the International Film Festival Rotterdam’s Hubert Bals Fund, can be broadly considered as part of the international development milieu, incorporating economic and social development aims into their activities. (Ross, 2011)

The importance of these European funds demonstrates the enduring relevance of Manthia Diawara’s 1994 proclamation, “Africa cinema exists in exile.” (Diawara, 1994, p. 386) This exile refers not to the numerous African directors like Yared Zeleke who live abroad, but to how the funding structures, audiences, and valuations of quality for African film are in large part located elsewhere. Diawara traces how by the 1990s film festivals in Europe and the United States had become the primary exhibition venues for African films, surpassing even the importance of

Africa's largest and most important festival, FESPACO, because of the larger Northern markets they provided access to. This expansion of production funding and distribution for African film outside of Africa had ambivalent economic and cultural impacts. For instance, Diawara describes festivals as contributing "to the 'ghettoization' of African films, because they only use them for purposes of multiculturalism as required by their own citizens." Meanwhile, the expansion of opportunities for African films was not accompanied by corresponding growth in production or distribution structures for African cinema. The realities of the African film industry, he observes, "are those of an *auteur cinema* with diversified funding sources coming mainly out of Europe." (Diawara, 1994, p. 366)

ACPCultures+'s combination of emphasis on festival accolades, critical praise, and authentic-yet artful representation of Southern voice (such as Haiti) speaks to a mode of production linked to what Tamara L. Falicov terms the "globalized art-house aesthetic." Like Diawara's exilic industry, this term involves funding structures, audiences, and valuations of quality for Southern film are in large part located in the North. She defines this aesthetic as

a particular narrative, *mise-en-scène*, use of actors and other aesthetic choices that more easily facilitates transnational border crossing, successfully engaging global art-house audiences through familiar art-house forms of realism with the objective of generating critical acclaim, winning prestigious film festival awards and ultimately generating revenue at the box office. (Falicov, 2013, p. 254)

This textual form, then, is both a product of and an appeal to a global circuit of distribution and exhibition that is dislocated from the site of production, designed to make local stories from the South legible for festival and art-house audiences. This involves careful navigation between the incomprehensibly locally specific and the globally-understandable blandness of Hollywood, in which Western textual norms – but not stories – are universal.

It must be a narrative that is universally understood, and when we say universal we mean western, but yet the global must overlap with the local. It can't be too global because if that were the case that's too homogeneous, too formulaic, you may as well go see an industry film in California. But on the other hand it cannot be too local or unrecognizable. People might not get the interstices of the local politics or humor. (Pattison, 2015)

To appeal to international audiences seeking an alternative to the presumed inauthenticity of Hollywood productions, festivals programmers favor narratives that balance locally specific stories with global accessibility.

Falicov is understandably weary of the funding system connected to this globalized art house aesthetic. Both Northern-funded festivals and co-production funds have been framed as paternalistic (Ross, 2011; Falicov, 2017) and neocolonialist (Randall, 2010; Thackway, 2003) for their control over Southern audiovisual industries and texts. In addition to having to overcome the same production-related dilemmas as intra-European co-productions – for instance, the apparition of a Spanish character for no apparent reason in a Spanish-Latin American co-production to fulfill nationality requirements (Falicov, 2007) – Europe-South co-productions face additional difficulties because these imbalances of power. Scholars have argued that these funding mechanisms can favor texts that reinforce Northern imaginaries of the South, including a predilection toward poverty porn (Ross, 2011, p. 262) and stories of marginalization (Pattison, 2015) as well as a narrowly defined scope of what constitutes local authenticity. For instance, producers and directors have also faced pressure to make their films look more “authentic” and “African.” (Bartlet, 2000) Additionally, some funds for African-European co-productions only accept proposals for productions located principally in Africa, which constrains “where African filmmakers [are] allowed to direct their cinematic gaze.” (Thackway, 2003, p. 8)

These critiques of Northern funding schemes and their impact on Southern audiovisual texts shed light on the difficulties facing filmmakers from the Global South and the complexities

of representation. Yet in doing so, I want to propose that they too easily reify the very representational and industrial divides they address. While European in origin, art house cinema – even that made with European funding – has become a form that circulates widely outside of Europe and is embraced by audiences and audiovisual professionals across the globe.

### **Situating the Texts of ACPCultures+ Co-productions**

Yared Zeleke spent his early childhood in a slum in urban Addis Ababa's Merkato neighborhood. His father was imprisoned by the Marxist Derg regime when Zeleke was 3 years old but escaped to Japan and later the US. His mother remarried, and Zeleke was raised by his grandmother until he was 10, when he was sent to San Francisco to live with his father, who was now a stranger to him. After college, Zeleke moved to Norway to pursue a masters in agro-economic development in a "young idealist moment" in order to give back to his country. (Miranda, 2016) Unhappy with the subject, he asked himself, "If Ethiopia was prosperous and peaceful like Norway, what would I do with my life?" (Miranda, 2016) The answer was filmmaking. "I put aside the guilt about what I should do and decided to pursue what I love to do. I've always loved cinema and I've always loved stories." (Miranda, 2016) As a storyteller, Zeleke is inspired by the traditional Ethiopian stories his grandmother told him growing up; as a filmmaker, his influences are far more global: Bengali director Satyajit Ray, Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami, the Bollywood films he watched growing up in Ethiopia, French director Robert Bresson, and American films like *Network* (1976), *My Own Private Idaho* (1991), and the darkly comedic films of his instructor at NYU and acclaimed American filmmaker Todd Solondz.

Zelege's international life story and group of influences is not uncommon among filmmakers who have received funding from ACPCultures+. The program does not have citizenship or residency requirements for its directors or writers, stating simply that they must be "from the ACP zone." As previously discussed, out of the directors of productions who have received funding, ten were educated in France, four in the USA, while others attended schools in the UK, Spain, Germany, Portugal, Cuba, Belgium, the Netherlands. Many are expats living in Europe, and most received training at the most prestigious film schools in North American and Europe. Chadian filmmaker Mahamat Saleh Haroun, who received funding for both *Gris Gris* (2013) and *A Screaming Man* (2010), left Chad for France in the 1980s during the period of violence after the country's 14-year civil war ended. He has lived there ever since. (Topping, 2013) Director Daouda Coulibaly, whose ACPCultures+-funded thriller *Wulu* draws inspiration from both acclaimed Malian director Souleymane Cissé and violent American directors like Brian De Palma was born in Marseille to parents from Mali and Guinea. (Vourlias, 2016)

For Zelege, at least, his own experience of dislocation has helped determine the kinds of films he has wanted to make. *Lamb*'s focus on childhood migration and loss was inspired by his own dislocation from his homeland. "My story is the story of so many immigrants who are snatched out of where they belong," he told *Variety*. "That outcast is in me, it's in my psyche, and that's very much my narrative." (Kamin, 2015) While living abroad, Zelege longed for his childhood home despite its shortcomings. "My childhood was much like a fairy tale, even though Ethiopia was going through war and there was political chaos and famine." (Kamin, 2015) A childhood pastoral, *Lamb* likewise juts youthful idealization of home up against harsher realities of displacement, famine, climate change, political instability, and patriarchal gender roles.

Considered in tandem, Zeleke's biography and film recall the exilic perspective Edward Said describes in his 1984 essay "Reflections on Exile." While acknowledging the pain that accompanies exile, Said also credits vital creativity and moral vision to the exile's perspective of "seeing the world as a foreign land." Indeed, *Lamb*'s treatment of Ethiopia's people and landscapes feel both sumptuously celebratory and carefully measured, as if the camera were both intimately familiar with the country and observing it for the first time. Zeleke describes the lush landscapes of the Ethiopian highlands that serve as a backdrop for most of the film as themselves being a central character, noting that most films about Ethiopia are not shot there. For instance, in the Hollywood production *Beyond Borders* (2003), a romantic drama about international aid workers played by Angelina Jolie and Clive Owen, Ethiopian scenes were shot in the deserts of Namibia. "In Ethiopia," Zeleke said in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, "we don't have desert like that. Therein lies the problem, you're watching a film about Ethiopia, but you're not looking at the country itself. There's nothing wrong with the desert. But it connotes a certain emptiness and that is not Ethiopia." (Miranda, 2016)

Implied in Zeleke's focus on the authenticity of place is the idea that Ethiopia should be represented correctly to the world, to audiences who are unfamiliar with the country's landscapes, people, and culture. Indeed, his interest in sharing his lost childhood country was evident when I met the filmmaker in Addis Ababa where he was living while working on a documentary gig about an Ethiopian sustainable model town for Swiss production company Doklab. Our multiple interviews invariably turned into meals – sometimes one right after the other – at his favorite Addis Ababa eateries, shopping excursions to handicraft markets, and walking tours of the city's historic sights. Despite the complexity of its funding sources that we will soon see, *Lamb* can hardly be subject to any of the criticisms about a sense of place that



intra-European co-productions face. In many of the other films that have received funding from ACPCultures+, similar care is taken to convey a sense of place. *Lonbraz Kann*, directed by David Constantin, captures the natural beauty and industrial exploitation of the sugar cane industry on Mauritius. The city of Kinshasa in an inescapable backdrop in the crime noir film *Viva Riva*, while the impoverished Cristo Rey neighborhood of Santo Domingo is both the location and the title of the Dominican film *Cristo Rey*.

In contrast to their unitary sense of place, the majority of these films – whether by the design of the selection process or by chance – follow characters and issues that are on the move, oftentimes crossing national borders or dislocated from their homes. The crime and love stories at the core of *Viva Riva* are crossed by regional flows of commerce and people that subtly but perceptible steer the film’s narrative action. The gasoline that the titular character Riva (Patsha Bay) illegally acquires comes from an unspecified location outside of D.R. Congo’s borders, and Cesar (Hoji Fortuna), the Angolan crime boss, has murky connections to military forces back home – plot points that run parallel to D.R. Congo’s ongoing conflict with its wealthier neighbor Angola over maritime oil rights and Angola’s treatment of its own Congolese population. *Grigris* – a coproduction between Chad, Cameroon, France, and Burkina Faso – likewise follows the black-market gasoline trade, as the titular handicapped aspiring dancer (played by non-actor Soueymane Deme) begins to work for smugglers to pay off his father-in-law’s hospital bills, swimming canisters of gas across a river under cover of darkness across Chad’s border to Cameroon. Another clear “natural co-production” is the Dominican-Haitian-France co-production – which was distributed by HBO Latino – *Cristo Rey* (2013), by the Dominican Republic’s first female director Leticia Tonos: its story explores the racism and discrimination Haitian immigrants experience in the Dominican Republic through an ill-fated romance between

the white sister of a Dominican drug lord and the black half-Haitian son of a deported Haitian woman. Even *Lamb*, the film that seems the most nationally contained in its depiction of isolated rural life in a sparsely populated, rugged mountain region of Ethiopia, features domestic dislocation: Not only is Ephraïm forced to leave his home; his distant cousin Tsion (Kidist Siyum) eventually travels to the city in search of a different kind of lifestyle.

Based on plot summaries alone, some of these examples might seem to follow tropes of poverty porn. Their characters, however, are hardly portrayed as victims. The complex dynamics of globalization are often connected to characters' difficulties: Grigris' romantic interest Mimi (Anais Monory), for instance, is a prostitute whose customers are obnoxious wealthy foreigners. Even in *Lamb*, climate change is subtly but perceptibly responsible for its characters' upheavals. Broadly considered, these co-productions are not stories of isolated and self-contained Southern authenticity, but narratives that illustrate Africa and the Caribbean's connections to and with a globalized world.

### **The New Landscape of the Globalized Art House**

*Lamb* demonstrates, in part, the durability of the industrial structures of exile Diawara described nearly a quarter century ago. The film was financed nearly entirely through a mix of European public funding and European producers. It has played at too many international film festivals to list – 11 in Florida alone – and won numerous awards along the way. While it secured theatrical distribution throughout much of Europe, besides a short run in Tunis the film did not screen in Africa aside from an out-of-competition showing as FESPACO and as part of the Maisha Film Festival in Uganda.

Yet the film also suggests how this structure exists today intertwined with new audiences, industries, and circuits of distribution. Digital distribution has reconfigured not only the geographic scope of distribution for African films, but also the relationship between notions of what constitutes “films of a higher caliber” and more lowbrow entertainment: Despite the accomplishment of being the first Ethiopian film to screen at Cannes Film Festival, Zeleke expressed personal disappointment that Netflix did not buy the rights to his film not only because of the financial rewards, but because of the validation of quality it provides. (*Lamb* has since been picked up by Amazon’s subscription streaming service and the curated art film platform MUBI.) Likewise, multiple audiovisual industries emerged in Nigeria, Ghana, East Africa, and elsewhere that have become popular with national, regional, and pan-African audiences. In Ethiopia, where *Lamb* did not screen, a national industry produces hundreds of low-budget, primarily direct-to-videodisc films each year. (Teshome, 2017) These films have until recently relied solely on local funding mechanisms, and rarely circulate abroad aside from the Ethiopian diaspora. *Lamb* perhaps illustrates not an African industry in exile, but one constructed across international networks of taste, affinity, and belonging.

Yet if *Lamb*’s production and distribution makes a case for African filmmaking disconnected from popular audiences in African, another ACPCultures+ funded production shows a potential future for connecting audiences and films on the continent. A co-production between France, DR Congo, Senegal, and Belgium, the noir crime thriller *Viva Riva* was not only was it the first feature film to be produced in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 25 years; it also had a rare continent-wide release in Africa, opening not only in DR Congo but also Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, Botswana, Kenya, Uganda, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Zambia, Namibia, and Zimbabwe over the course of several

months. It swept the African Academy Awards, won MTV's Best African Film award, and even won an award in Nigeria, despite the country's own domestic industry.

In Congolese director Djo Tunda Wa Munga's second feature film, we meet titular character Riva (Patsha Bay) as he's on the cusp of becoming a very rich man: through some unspecified but shady means, Viva has acquired a truckload of gasoline which he's brought to fuel-scarce Kinshasa, hoping to wait until the city's crippling shortage boosts gas prices sky high before selling off his spoils. While celebrating his future cornering of the city's gas market with an advance he received from his partners in the deal, Riva sees Nora (Manie Malone) dancing at one of the city's nightclubs and is immediately smitten. Overconfident from his impending wealth, even the reputation of her boyfriend, a powerful Kinshasan named Azor (Diplome Amekindra), doesn't discourage Viva from pursuing her. Soon, however, Azor is the least of Viva's problems, as the cutthroat Angolan criminal boss Cesar (Hoji Fortuna) – and the unnamed lesbian army commander (Marlene Longange) he coerces into helping him – begins to track Riva, and his gasoline, down.

While slickly shot, *Viva Riva* doesn't shy away showing audiences the grittiness of Africa's second-largest city. Aside from the film's outright violence – requisite for any crime drama – it alludes to the city's wobbly infrastructure with water and gas shortages, as well as social issues: its female characters are forced to side with whichever male characters can best protect them in the moment; the Commander faces verbal and physical violence seemingly related to homophobia; and both prostitution and Kinshasa's infamously numerous street children are well-represented. Despite the vividness of its urban African mise-en-scene, however, *Viva Riva* is as grounded in Western film conventions as it is local specificity, drawing on genres such as film noir, crime thrillers, and gangster films. Olivier J. Tchouaffee argues that in doing

so, *Viva Riva!* recontextualizes “western movie genres with African tropes that draw from the arsenal of African oral storytelling motifs and practices.” In doing so, it engages its audiences in an “interactive, collaborative, and symbiotic relationship” that “depicts real world similarities that the public finds relatable and has come to favor.” (Tchouaffe, 2016, p. 300) Both *Viva Riva!*’s realistic portrayal of urban Kinshasa and its utilization of globally popular Western genres make the film more relatable to urban African audiences because both speak to their everyday lives. Part of life for the middle class in Africa, like most places, is consuming media from elsewhere.

In an interview with *The Guardian*, the film’s co-producer, South African Steven Markovitz, argues that African audiences are interested in seeing African films that better reflect their lived realities.

African cinemas have been dominated by Hollywood and European cultural programmes catering to the intellectual elite, not tapping into a growing middle class who are interested in seeing films about themselves and their neighbours. [...] There is an audience, a real market for African films. They have disposable income and they want to be entertained. We hope that this will create a pipeline for further African titles on the continent. (Smith, 2011)

Markovitz already has another African film with Munga in the planning stages. Tentatively titled *Inspector Lou*, the thriller follows a “veteran Chinese cop” who “heads to Kinshasa to track down his Chinese gangster nemesis” who has been living large after escaping to Congo. Once there, the veteran teams up with, of course, a young local cop and together they try to bring the bad guy to justice. (Roxborough, 2011) Instead of turning to old colonial ties for funding, this time Munga and Markovitz are trying to secure funding from one of the largest sources of investment and immigration to Congo in recent years: China.

## Conclusion

This chapter has looked at how films funded by ACPCultures+ are enmeshed in a Brussels-centered system of grant-enabled international co-production funding, and considered this funding scheme alongside the texts it has helped to produce. European co-productions with the Global South have been criticized for both paternalistic requirements attached to funding and textual outcomes that reinforce Northern prejudices, and as we have seen, the films funded by ACPCultures+ privilege European notions of art house filmic aesthetics and industrial practices while simultaneously encoding developmental imaginaries into its funding requirements. These co-productions, thus, signal the enduring relevancy of Diawara's 1991 critique of the ambivalent impact of European funding of Africa's "cinema in exile." Yet while the representational and economic inequalities between the North and developing countries that are implicit in his critique persist, the rise new modes of (digital) distribution and the emergence of new audiovisual industries in countries in the ACP Group of States reconfigure the Europe-centered system of funding and exhibition Diawara describes. In this respect, the films funded by ACPCultures+ can be understood not as the products of conflict or domination between North and South or global and local, but rather as the products of complex international sources of funding, transnationally mobile filmmakers, and networks of taste, affinity, and belonging that do not align with national borders. *Lamb*, for instance, attempts to correct inaccurate portrayals of Ethiopia's landscape and culture through a focus on local specificity for audiences who may be unfamiliar with the country. Meanwhile, *Viva Riva* achieved pan-African appeal by combining the conventions of Western genres with African tropes.

In the following chapters, we will see how this global film funding regime introduced here shapes formal distribution efforts and audiovisual training in ACP countries, as well as how this regime is entangled with Hollywood and international development and human rights efforts. As we will see, like the co-productions discussed here, the distribution and training initiatives attempt to integrate industries in ACP countries into the transnational web of dirigisme and protect them from US competition. Yet even while exploring formal distribution and audiovisual training, the relationship between funding structures and texts will remain an important juncture for thinking about dirigisme and media diversity outside of the nation-state.

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **Formal Distribution on the Peripheries and the Case of Africa's First VOD Platform**

#### **Introduction: Cinema Le Normandie**

Cinema Le Normandie sits on Avenue Charles de Gaulle in N'Djamena, Chad's capital city. The theater was built in 1949, eleven years before the country gained independence from France, but was shuttered in the 70s after the outbreak of civil war and ensuing conflict with Libya. When Chadian director Issa Serge Coelo decided to re-open the theater in 2011, it had been abandoned for decades, but \$1.5 million dollars from the government helped him repair the building. Today, Le Normandie is the only operational cinema not only in Chad, but in the Central African region, showing first-run films in 3D and Dolby surround sound. (Dongmo, 2014)

As a node in the networks of commerce and media that link Hollywood, Europe, and less developed countries, Le Normandie is illustrative of how profit-oriented laissez-faire systems and government-directed dirigiste cultural policies compete and intertwine in regions that lack large domestic audiovisual industries and that are outside of or peripheral to what Ramon Lobato calls formal circuits of film distribution. (Lobato, 2012) As Miller et al note, while often conceived of in binary opposition, laissez-faire and dirigiste models “overlap” – a fact easily



illustrated by the global texts that converge upon Le Normandie. (Miller, Govil, McMurria, Maxwell, & Wang, 2005) The theater screens some local productions and art house films, many of them financed through public funding from Europe and international film festivals. Yet the majority of the films it screens exemplify the international production arrangements – often with European partners – that increasingly finance the expensive Hollywood films that dominate box offices in much of the world. At the time I’m writing this, its line-up is nearly identical to that of multiplexes in US metropolitan areas: the Hollywood Tom Cruise vehicle *Jack Reacher 2*, the Russian and American-produced *Ben Hur* remake, Mel Gibson-starring French-produced *Blood Father*, and the French/Belgian/American *Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children*. Coelo schedules such releases to coincide with their European and North American openings – as well as screening soccer matches – in order to attract audiences to the theater. (Dongmo, 2014)

Even these screenings of Hollywood productions have not made Le Normandie self-sustaining. Its continued operations depend on a similarly globalized mix of private and government subsidies: Le Normandie receives support from the Chadian telecom Tigo, Chad’s Ministry of Culture, and the European Union. (Dongmo, 2014) This blend of public and private external support for the theater’s continued operations speaks to the idea that formal film distribution and exhibition is worthwhile even if it is not profitable, that it merits public funding and government intervention – a core concept of dirigisme. But it also hints at the tensions inherent in the expansion of European notions of, and policy for, an audiovisual public good beyond Europe’s cultural and regulatory edges.

This chapter deals with the fifteen distribution projects funded by ACPCultures+ that, like Le Normandie, attempt to bring formal audiovisual distribution to developing countries that lack it or that are tenuously connected to its global circuits. Unlike Cinema Le Normandie, these

distribution projects take the form not of physical exhibition infrastructure that connects global films to local audiences, but rather of film festivals, networking initiatives, film markets, and digital platforms that attempt to connect regional industries to global networks. As discussed in this dissertation's chapter on audiovisual production, critical scholarship on the relationship between European funding structures and Southern audiovisual industries has often focused on textual outcomes: films that employ narratives and aesthetics that are readily legible to European audiences and funding sources, thereby delimiting the possibilities for Southern media even while increasing production. (e.g. Miller 2016, 75; Falicov 2013) Similarly, this chapter interrogates how ACPCultures+ seeks to solve the "problem" of formal audiovisual distribution in ACP countries by adapting distribution policies that are legible to those in the North.

These initiatives draw on EU audiovisual distribution policies and notions of an audiovisual public good: for instance, in their combined embrace of regional – as opposed to national – distribution frameworks, their affinity towards film festivals, their optimism for digital distribution, and their intertwining of art house productions with Global Hollywood. Furthermore, like Le Normandie, these distribution projects involve collaboration and cooperation between European funding mechanisms, Southern audiovisual professionals, and private sources of funding, and simultaneously attempt to protect Southern industries from Hollywood's reach while integrating them into global systems of formal distribution. At the same time, these projects are marked by difference from intra-EU distribution initiatives and regulation. In seeking to improve the distribution of film and TV from Africa and the Caribbean, for instance, these projects corral such content into discrete platforms, as if African or Caribbean content were a special interest genre. Meanwhile, the impetus behind ACPCultures+ structures

these distribution project along developmental and humanitarian lines, causing them to take shapes dissimilar to their EU relatives.

In addition to showing how ACPCultures+ adapts European formal distribution for ACP countries, this chapter also considers how these distribution initiatives attempt to replicate European “cultures of circulation.” (Lee & LiPuma, 2002) As Lee and LiPuma argue, while “circulation and exchange have been seen as processes that transmit meanings, rather than as constitutive acts themselves,” circulation of goods and capital is also a cultural phenomenon “with its own forms of abstraction, evaluation, and constraint, which are created by the interactions between specific types of circulating forms and the interpretive communities built around them.” (192) While European nations’ circulation of film and TV outside their borders originally served strategic or instrumental national aims, since World War II and, in particular, with the rise of the European Union, the circulation of cultural goods has itself become understood as both a public good that can promote unity and cross-border understanding and as an essential element of participation in the global economy. At the same time, which texts and modes of distribution are understood as “cultural” in the first place is bounded, revealing tensions between dirigisme and laissez faire texts and systems of distribution.

Circulation necessarily “presupposes the existence of [...] interpretive communities.” (Lee & LiPuma, 2002, p. 193) Through an overview of the distribution projects funded by ACPCultures+, this chapter shows how these projects imagine such communities. I focus in detail on one illustrative case study: an ultimately unsuccessful project that attempted to create Africa’s first online, subscription-based Video-on-Demand (VOD) platform called AfricaFilms.TV and a complementary fleet of VOD-based mobile exhibition scooters called MobiCINE. AfricaFilms.TV reveals competing and overlapping Northern imaginaries of African

audiences: as subjects of the development sector's largesse, as would-be cinephiles held back by lack of access, as diasporas eager to reconnect with familiar media from home, and as consumers to be linked into formal distribution economies. These imaginaries ultimately failed to line up with the actual African audiences, while ACPCultures+'s developmental mandate constrained AfricaFilms.TV's ability to compete in an increasingly crowded distribution landscape. Nevertheless, this chapter shows how the platform posed important questions about formal distribution and global audiences that are still being navigated by new commercial African VOD ventures.

### **Cultural Exchange and Distribution Policies in the EU**

Like the trajectories of European co-production funding discussed in Chapter 2 and of European audiovisual education that will be discussed in Chapter 4, the policies and logics of audiovisual distribution and cultural exchange in Europe have transitioned from nationalist to regional to global. Long before the creation of the European Union, European countries strategically promoted and exported their national cultures abroad to other European nations in order to pursue national aims, but since WWII cultural exchange between European states have become understood as a way to promote European unity and cross-border understanding. In this section, I outline this transition in order to understand how the distribution initiatives of ACPCultures+ follow European distribution policies and broader cultures of circulation. Although this chapter is concerned with audiovisual distribution, I also consider the idea of the circulation and exchange of culture more generally, drawing on Gregory Paschalidis' comparative history of cultural institutes, "Exporting National Culture: the history of cultural institutes abroad." (Paschalidis, 2009)

From their emergence in the late 1800s through the beginning of World War I, the period Paschalidis calls “cultural nationalism,” the aims of European cultural institutes were primarily nationalist, but their operations were not bound by state borders, suggesting a complex relationship between nation-building, sovereignty, and culture. Some institutes, primarily German, promoted national languages in expat communities in neighboring countries, for instance, while others operated in colonial possessions, such as the Dante Alighiere Society in Libya. Paschalidis argues that these early cultural organizations were not projects of colonial expansion, but rather attempts at nation-building that saw each country’s cultural nation as extending far beyond its political borders – in the case of the Dante Alighiere Society, as far away as the Italian emigrant communities in South America. (277-278) On the other hand, France’s Alliance Française operated in France’s colonies as a tool for expansion and influence, driven both by the country’s *mission civilisatrice*, as well as and competition with the British for colonial influence in the Middle East and Ottoman Empire. In all cases, however, “the major ideological force behind [all of] them is a pervading cultural nationalism, with its characteristic emphasis on culture and language.” (279)<sup>13</sup>

During World Wars I and II, the era of “cultural propaganda,” national cultural institutes began to operate not only in colonial and expat communities, but also set up shop in neighboring European countries, using culture more strategically to promote political and foreign policy aims instead of general nation-building. After World War II ended, however, cultural relations resumed their international trajectory during the period Paschalidis calls “cultural diplomacy,” as

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<sup>13</sup> The first intergovernmental organization dedicated to film, the International Educational Cinematic Institute was founded during this period in 1928, with the mandate of encouraging “the production, dissemination and exchange of educational films in order to promote international understanding among the world’s peoples.” (ATOM/UNESCO Archives) The International Educational Cinematic Institute was located in Rome, however, and therefore disbanded when Italy withdrew from the League of Nations in 1937.

cultural exchange became understood not as a competitive, strategic tool for advancing national interest, but as a process with intrinsic value. This is reflected in Europe's cultural policy more broadly: in 1954, for instance, the Council of Europe proposed the European Cultural Convention – now ratified by 48 Council members and 2 nonmembers – which institutionalized culture as an aspect of European states' external relations with each other. The Convention links national to European culture, stating that signees “shall take appropriate measures to safeguard and to encourage the development of its national contribution to the common cultural heritage of Europe.” (Council of Europe, 1954, p. Article 1) Interestingly, it also required each nation to encourage the study of the “languages, history and civilization” of other signees, and to “promote the study of its language or languages, history and civilization in the territory of the other” signees. Thus, the Convention institutionalized not only the notions of a common European cultural space, but also reciprocal (as opposed to competitive) cultural exchange between members.

The final stage of cultural institutes begins in 1989 with “cultural capitalism.” Paschalidis links this state to the end of the Cold War as well as the EU's budding engagement with “the cultural dimension of the European integration process” (284) that helped to transform the logic of national external cultural policies even further, as the “once dominant bilateral mode of cultural relations, characterized by asymmetric, uni-directional flows [gave] way to a multilateral model, based on mutuality and partnership.” (284) Within EU cultural institutes, this was reflected by the creation of EUNIC in 2006, an organization in which all national EU cultural institutes pooled resources and harmonized operations to promote mutual understanding and collaboration. At the same time, however, the circulation of culture became increasingly wrapped up in nation branding and the economic benefits that national cultural industries could attain through global markets.

Likewise, within the EU's audiovisual sector, cultural exchange within Europe became further institutionalized with more binding legislation that balanced cultural exchange with the exploitation of international markets. On the one hand, like the EU's its activities in the areas of audiovisual production and training, EU audiovisual distribution is today shaped by funds that foster transnational collaboration. The MEDIA program, which also funds production and training, intervenes in distribution by providing funding for several areas of film distribution, promotion, and exhibition: cinema networks, the promotion of European works online, initiatives that support increased access to film markets, film festivals, sales agents, and groups of distributors. Access to all of these funds requires varying degrees of trans-national cooperation: for instance, distributors must be promoting the trans-national distribution of a film produced by an EU member state outside its country of origin.

On the other hand, in contrast to the EU's activities in audiovisual training and production, its policies targeting audiovisual distribution are also characterized by a strong regulatory element that seeks to integrate diverse national distribution systems – particularly broadcast, cable, and internet – into the EU's single market. The impetus for regulation around broadcasting and distribution came in the early 1980s, as satellite broadcasting in Western Europe crossed national borders with disparate regulatory frameworks. This led to a green paper on creating a common market for satellite and cable broadcasting in 1984, followed by the 1989 Television Without Frontiers Directive – the foundation for European broadcasting policy. (European Commission, 2012) Television Without Frontiers provided a common cross-border regulatory framework for broadcasters within the European Union, set quotas for European content, and outlined common rules for advertising, hate speech, and the protection of minors. Its successor, the 2007 Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), amended the act and

expanded its scope to include online TV content. Most controversially, both policies disallowed member state restrictions on broadcasts from abroad in an effort to create a single EU television market. (European Commission, 2012)

EU cultural policies dealing with audiovisual industries are, by nature, transnational, as they intervene in the relationships between nations within Europe as they attempt to create a common European cultural space and single market capable of competing with US media industries. In this reconfiguring of the relationship between national sovereignty and cultural policy in the audiovisual field, EU policy adds elements of deregulation and privatization – or *désétatisation* – to national cultural policy’s protectionism and concern for social development. (Beale, 1999; Schlesinger, 1997) Television Without Frontiers and the AVMSD both follow the EU’s pattern of intra-EU deregulation and extra-EU protectionism: the “country of origin” policy limits member states’ sovereignty over their national broadcast media landscapes, while the quotas on European productions in the AVMSD simultaneously attempt to protect European audiovisual industries from competition with Hollywood. Broadcasters’ programming must have the majority of their non-sports and news content originating from EU member states (as well as certain non-EU European countries and certain co-productions with EU member states), as well as setting aside ten percent of their programming for works by independent producers.

This combination of deregulation and public subsidies for transnational audiovisual collaboration within Europe is, in many ways, a global strategy. On the European Commission’s website, regulation is positioned alongside the support provided by the MEDIA program as one of the key measures to promote European film and TV and their global circulation.

The European audiovisual industry suffers from a trade deficit with the US industry of 6 to 7 billion Euros every year. One way of promoting European productions is the support delivered by the MEDIA programmes; another instrument are the measures of promotion



of distribution and production of European and independent audiovisual productions as set out in Articles 13, 16 and 17 of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive. (European Commission, 2012)

Both MEDIA and the AVMSD, then, are meant to work together to accomplish the same aims of competition with US audiovisual industries and the circulation of European audiovisual works abroad. As we will see in the following sections, while the distribution initiatives funded by ACPCultures+ lack a regulatory element, they nevertheless build on such attempts to protect local industries from US domination through regional and global systems of formal distribution and transnational collaboration.

### **Distribution Projects Funded by ACPCultures+**

ACPCultures+ has funded 14 audiovisual distribution programs over its three rounds of funding. Three of these target the Caribbean, while the rest deal with sub-Saharan Africa, including one project aimed at the Indian Ocean islands of Réunion (technically a part of Metropolitan France and, by extension, the European Union), Mauritius, and Comoros. While these projects do not attempt to recreate theatrical exhibition like *Le Normandie*, they nevertheless emphasize distribution that is familiar to European audiences and industry, including film festivals, networking events, and digital distribution. Unlike the European Union's distribution policies, these activities do not attempt to regulate broadcasting in their target countries. In fact, they eschew satellite, broadcast, and cable nearly altogether. Instead, they loosely follow the example of the MEDIA Program, encouraging regional distribution initiatives that construct both transnational human and digital networks to bypass disparate national regulatory environments in order to better compete against Hollywood.

Sidestepping national frameworks, these projects also tend to focus on regional and global approaches to distribution, much like the MEDIA Program. However, while these projects build connections between ACP member countries, these networks are also intertwined with European businesses and organizations. Because of the requirements for ACPCultures+ funding, all of these projects had multiple partners in ACP Countries, yet eight were headed by European companies or organizations (primarily France) and all but two had at least one European partner. For instance, transnational networking projects attempted to connect distributors across sub-Saharan Africa with those in Europe. The creatively named *Mise en réseau de distributeurs et de diffuseurs dans 4 pays* (Getting Dealers and Distributors Networked in 4 Countries) networked broadcasters in Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, and France under the direction of the Angers, France-based *Cinémas et Cultures d'Afrique*, an organization that seeks to develop cultural exchanges between France and Africa and promote the continent's culture throughout France. Another, called *Animation d'un réseau de télévisions africaines* (Animating African Television Networks) aimed to network television distribution professionals throughout francophone West Africa, and was headed by the French governmental organization Transtélé CFI and supported by Burkina Faso's FESPACO and Cameroon's *Association Ecrans Noirs*, two African film festivals. Meanwhile, the Exchange and Networking Project aimed to link extant film festivals in the UK, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago to encourage the promotion of each country's films,<sup>14</sup> and was headed by the UK-based BFM International Film Festival, which specialized in films from African, Latin America, and the Caribbean that had not yet screened in the UK.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, none of these networking projects are listed in ACPCultures+'s 5 Year Results report.

<sup>15</sup> BFM has since gone out of business, and its website <http://www.bfm.org.uk/> is now home to British Furniture Manufacturers.

## **Film Festivals and Distribution**

As the participation in networking initiatives by festivals like FESPACO, Association Ecrans Noirs, and the BFM International Film Festival suggests, film festivals serve as important, multi-purpose nodes in the dirigiste system of formal distribution. They also illustrate how ACPCultures+'s distribution initiatives replicate European cultures of circulation. In addition to the film festivals that cooperate and spearhead ACPCultures+ distribution initiatives, two festivals also themselves receive funding from the program: The International Images Film Festival for Women, which takes place in Nairobi, Mogadishu, and rural Uganda, and the Festival Île Courts, based in Mauritius, Comoros, and Reunion.

As Lindiwe Dovey notes in *Curating Africa in the Age of Film Festivals*, film festivals began in Europe, but today play an important role in supporting the production, distribution, and exhibition of certain kinds of African films. (Dovey, 2015) In the late 1990s, there was a new wave of film festivals in Africa, as well as African themed film festivals throughout Europe. At the same time, major international film festivals like Toronto International Film Festival began offering programs devoted to African filmmakers. (Dovey, 2015, p. 2) With lack of “formal and robust distribution opportunities both in and beyond the continent,” film festivals serve as “discrete exhibition outlets” that make a wide variety of African films financially viable and socially visible (Dovey, 2015, p. 5) and create opportunities for filmmakers to enter into global film circuits of distribution. They also increasingly serve as centers for not only sales, but for training programs, production funding for short films, and other activities in areas that lack audiovisual infrastructure.

This catch-all feature of film festivals – as well as the way formal distribution in countries in the peripheries is often precariously sustained by diverse sources of funding – is

particularly evident in the case of the Île Courts Film Festival, which describes itself as “a tool-kid for the development of cinema in Mauritius.” (Île Courts , 2017) The festival functions as center for numerous film activities – including training workshops, debates, professional meetings, and short film production – on an island nation that, while an attractive location for foreign productions, had not produced a feature film until director David Constantin’s 2014’s *Lonbraz Kann*, whose production was also funded by ACPCultures+. Originally co-organized by the Institut Français and the Mauritius-based NGO *Porteur d’Image* (of which Constantin was a member) the film festival’s first iteration in 2007 was a small affair with several screenings, one scriptwriting workshop, and about 200 audience members. As one of the founders of the festival, Constantin was inspired by the difficulty he himself had faced trying to form a production company in Mauritius after returning from studying cinema in France. In its second year, the festival turned into a “tool to make films,” funding a select number of filmmakers to create films to be screened the following year, according to Elise Mignot, who has helped organize the festival since 2009. (Mignot, 2017)

By 2015, the festival had grown to 12,000 attendees, and had created a wide array of side projects, including week long training courses in screenwriting and rotating topics such as directing or producing animation, documentaries, fiction, and technical topics like sound and photography. They have also implemented programs in the country’s schools and throughout the Indian Ocean on film analysis and production for youth. While Mignot told me that they hope to one day form the country’s first production company, in the meantime the festival has created the country’s first distribution project thanks to funding from the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* (OEF): FilmBox. Mignot told me that FilmBox is, in part, was intended to provide training and experience in distribution for local residents in hopes that “real distribution

companies” could emerge in a few years. The initiative’s success has been relatively limited, due to the lack of formal market for short films, but FilmBox has sold DVD collections of Mauritian short films, sold festival subscriptions for Mauritian films, and sold some contracts for TV and VOD screenings.

Despite all of these activities, the festival – and by extension, the island’s film scene – operates with constant precarity. After the Institut Français ceased funding the festival in 2012, the organizers cancelled the event for a year. While they applied for several awards from international organizations, including Dutch organization HIVOS, the International Documentary Film Association’s Bertha Fund to support documentary filmmaking in developing countries, and UNESCO’s International Fund for Cultural Diversity. If ACPCultures+ had not awarded them funding to operate for three more years, Mignot told me, Île Courts would be no more. While the future after ACPCultures+ funding expired was unclear, Mignot said that being recognized by an outside program gave the film festival “credibility working with people on the island.” The stamp of approval from the EU, in particular, was valuable: Mauritius receives EU aid for numerous agricultural programs, including its sugar production, an area where the EU has provided ACP countries with 1.25 billion Euros in aid. (European Commission, 2018) “The EU and ACP are famous for here for the sugar protocol. People know that EU funds are very strict, so they know we can handle a big project like this.” (Mignot, 2017)

### **Entering Regional and Global Markets**

Festival Île Courts illustrates some of the difficulties facing efforts to bring formal distribution to the periphery and to connect them with wider audiences abroad. While the festival has created a unique local microculture for cinema production and viewing and made some inroads at collaborating with “nearby” islands in the Indian Ocean, it is still deeply dependent on

European funding and audiences despite its efforts to integrate Mauritius into the global economy of formal distribution. A 2011 quantitative study of the international film trade, for instance, found that exchanges of films between African countries were the most uncommon of any region in the world, and that African countries trade films more actively with European countries than they do among themselves. (Chung, 2011) Africa, thus, differed from other regions, in which local hubs of audiovisual production exported films to neighboring countries, competing – at least to an extent – with exports from global hubs in the US and Europe.

Interviews I conducted suggested similar difficulties for distribution in the Caribbean. Emilie Upczak, who ran an ACPCultures+ funded distribution project in Trinidad and Tobago called the Caribbean Film Mart, told me, Caribbean films “end up in a niche that doesn’t catapult them towards larger audiences or make them any money.” (Upczak, 2016) In an attempt to get films distributed beyond that niche, the Caribbean Film Mart at the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival provided coaching for selected Caribbean filmmakers on how to pitch their projects to distributors, and the chance for 15 filmmakers to meet with distributors from Europe and North and South America, including Magnolia, Tribeca, Sundance, and Cinéma du Monde.

It might be surprising that an EU program designed to prop up smaller, local audiovisual industries in developing countries against Hollywood also connected them to American distributors like Magnolia and Tribeca, giving Northern execs a say in what kinds of films from the Caribbean get made and seen. But such seemingly contradictory entanglements between American and European audiovisual industries, and between *laissez faire* and *dirigiste* industry models, is a common feature of EU audiovisual policy. For instance, as Upczak told me, the Caribbean Film Mart was modeled on the coproduction market at the International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR), which is itself funded in part by the EU’s MEDIA program, and which

likewise connects art house film creators to private co-producers, distributors, and financiers. In the case of the Caribbean Film Mart, more so than encouraging Caribbean filmmakers to adapt to the tastes of execs and audiences in the US and Europe, the coaching sessions provided filmmakers with tools to help them better participate in a globalized industry marked by diverse and sometimes competing values and practices.

## **Digital Projects**

If film festivals offered a temporary space for exhibition, networking, and job coaching and other distribution-related activities in areas that lack permanent audiovisual infrastructure and institutions, digital projects funded by ACPCultures+ attempted to work around infrastructural hurdles by turning to the internet. Two digital databases attempted to create networks of people and information that crossed national borders. Mokolo aimed to be a central database for information on African film for both audiences and professionals, and was spearheaded by the Goethe-Institut in partnership with Germany's Experimental Media Lab at the Academy of Fine Arts, Senegal's Africa Culture Technologies (simply, the Senegal-based tech staff who contribute to the development and maintenance of Mokolo), Cameroon's ActivSpaces Association (a tech hub and incubator supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs organization Stichting Doen and the Dutch NGO Hivos), and the Kenyan-based production company Awali Entertainment. The Caribbean Film Database (part of the Caribbean Film Mart project) aimed to do the same for the Caribbean, with a Caribbean-based team of partners under the direction of the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival.

Three streaming services also received funding. *Afrique en Doc TV* acquired a catalog of 100 African documentaries for its VOD platform under the leadership of the French organization of the same name, in partnership with Mali's Be Ka Films, Madagascar's Endemika Films,

Congo's Inzo Ya Bizizi production house, and France's HDR Communications. Meanwhile, a Caribbean project attempted to overcome the same obstacles to local and international distribution as Caribbean Film Mart by appealing to diaspora audiences directly, rather than connecting with foreign distributors. The 3D Distribution Project is an ambitious project spearheaded by CaribbeanTales Worldwide Distribution, the distribution arm of CaribbeanTales, a company with offices in Toronto and Barbados. CaribbeanTales Worldwide Distribution bills itself as the "main global platform for Caribbean film and television content" as well as the only "full service film distribution company that specializes in the acquisition, marketing and sales of Caribbean-themed programs." (Sonique Solutions, 2014) CaribbeanTales Worldwide Distribution already held the rights to hundreds of Caribbean films and TV shows, which it sold primarily to cultural and educational institutions. The 3D project – which stands for "Digital, Domestic, and Diaspora" distribution – aimed to secure the rights to hundreds more Caribbean and "Caribbean themed" productions, and to distribute them through both cable and broadband in the Caribbean, as well as through a transactional VOD platform for the Caribbean diaspora.

In an interview with the Trinidad and Tobago *Guardian* announcing the new VOD venture, CaribbeanTales Worldwide Distribution's founding director, Dr. Keith Nurse, frames the VOD platform – called CaribbeanTales.TV – as a way for an established but small, peripheral industry to achieve financial viability in a globalized media environment.

We've seen through Netflix, for example, that there's a huge demand for TV in an online on-demand framework. The digital environment allows for multiple platforms for distribution; it makes these kinds of ventures viable. In the past we (the Caribbean region) were just too small. Film distribution was far more difficult, far more expensive than it is now. Thanks to technology we now have the means to achieve results. (Trinidad and Tobago *Guardian*, 2015)

Invoking the success of Netflix, Nurse positions the affordances of home streaming on-demand as a solution to the difficulties and expense of theatrical distribution for small industries. As I



discuss in the next section, the ACPCultures+-funded AfricaFilms.TV VOD project also shares this belief that online streaming can provide a technological solution to longstanding inequities in global media distribution. At the same time, Nurse, sees online distribution as part of larger global dynamics that have challenged the primacy of Western distributors.

What we don't have is an organizational framework to convert our talent into a financial asset, an intellectual property asset that can be traded, that can employ people and can give us a share of the market. That is what is at issue now. We don't need a pat on the back. In the good old days success was defined by whether you were picked up by a major distribution company. But if you look at how Indian and Nigerian cinema have been successful, it's not about American distributors being interested. (Trinidad and Tobago Guardian, 2015)

Online distribution, thus, is understood as providing the possibility of overcoming both the organizational hurdles that small markets face in connecting with international distribution, as well as the American distributors who have served as gatekeepers to larger markets. At the same time, the success of Indian and Nigerian industries despite lack of connection to Western gatekeepers offers hope for the success of new global industries. In contrast, however, the next section's examination of another ACPCultures+ funded VOD project will show how even digital distribution initiatives that attempt to counter American dominance and connect smaller industries to global systems of formal distribution can nevertheless be constrained by Northern imaginaries of audiences in the Global South.

### **AfricaFilms.TV and MobicINE+**

Of the fifteen distribution projects ACPCultures+ selected since 2008, only one has received funding in each of the three successive rounds of calls for applications: an ambitious project that aimed to create Africa's first Transactional Video-on-Demand (TVOD) platform coupled with a fleet of mopeds capable of piracy-proof mobile theatrical exhibition. Named

AfricaFilms.TV/MobiCINE+, the project was the idea of Enrico Chiesa, a European whose background is in independent distribution and exhibition: he was head of Majestic Cinemas in France, a small chain of ten art screens and five multiplexes, and director of the non-profit Art Cinemas Confederation (CICAE), a network of 3,000 independent cinemas. CICAE receives funding from the EU's MEDIA program, so Chiesa was familiar with the aims and bureaucratic procedures for the EU's support for audiovisual industries at home. Despite this expertise, he counts AfricaFilms.TV/MobiCINE as a qualified failure. Because of a variety of unforeseen factors, the VOD platform is now closed, the mobile distribution units quickly abandoned projecting cinema, and Chiesa himself lost a significant personal sum on the venture. (Chiesa 2017)

AfricaFilms.TV and MobiCINE are illustrative of ACPCultures+'s distribution initiatives' aims and tensions – and particularly how these distribution initiatives attempt to simultaneously connect and protect content from ACP countries from global flows of cash and audiovisual content. Furthermore, AfricaFilms.TV is also notable for its failure to become financially viable. Vicki Mayer has argued that production studies should turn more attention to the examination of failures, particularly as a way to better understand what constitutes success within a particular industrial context. (Mayer, 2009, p. 23) Transferring her observation to the study of distribution, the case of AfricaFilms.TV provides insight into how the ACPCultures+ program understands a successful distribution initiative in the Global South, and how that understanding ultimately failed to connect with audiences.

As Ramon Lobato argues, studies of distribution need to consider audiences: “Who is the audience? How are they constructed as such? What are the material limits that determine which texts are available to which audiences?” (Lobato, 2012, p. 6) Given the history of media and

development initiatives deployed by the North onto audiences in the South, this call for attention to audiences is especially true for studies, like this one, that link distribution and development. The case of AfricaFilms.TV/MobiCINE involves competing and overlapping constructions of African audiences: as subjects of the development sector's largesse, as would-be cinephiles held back by lack of access, as diasporas eager to reconnect with familiar media from home, and as consumers to be linked into formal distribution economies.

### **AfricaFilms.TV and the Scramble for VOD**

When ACPCultures+ (then called ACP-Films) issued the call for proposals in 2008 that led to AfricaFilms.TV/MobiCINE, both the development sector and entrepreneurs and investors were buzzing about the mobile phone boom in Africa that began earlier that decade. (Aker & Mbiti, 2010) With the rise of smartphones, mobile networks offered the possibility to leapfrog over not only the minimal landline infrastructure of many rural areas, but internet infrastructure, as well. The promise that mobile networks held was part of the inspiration for AfricaFilms.TV:

“Our ambition was to pioneer the field of digital distribution in Africa. In that time in 2008, VOD was just starting. Facebook was still young. The digital landscape for film was not scifi, but it was not far from it. We had a great vision, to consider that Africans have a very low rate of television and internet connection and landlines, but already one could see that tele and mobile were going to grow fast.” (Chiesa, 2017)

AfricaFilms.TV's application to ACPCultures+ envisioned a not-too-distant future in which the bandwidth required for VOD reached across the continent, thus leapfrogging over another infrastructural hurdle: theatrical distribution. While the continent has 1.25 billion residents, it has only around 200 movie screens – or about one per 6 million residents. And with middle class incomes around \$12 a day, theatrical ticket prices of \$4 are still a luxury. (Maritz & Probyn, 2017) VOD on mobile phones offered a way to connect audiences and content into the formal distribution economy. This was an exciting prospect for those at ACPCultures+; even during my

2013 visit to the program, its administrators were excited about the prospect of Africans streaming films on their mobile phones through VOD platforms that were paid for by innovative online payment methods.

Despite this optimism for the future of VOD in Africa, however, AfricaFilms.TV found the current tech infrastructure and customer base within much of Africa unable to support the platform. After failed attempts to partner with local telecommunications companies for revenue sharing arrangements from the AfricaFilms.TV catalog, the bandwidth costs proved prohibitively expensive to end users, surpassing the price paid for the audiovisual content purchase itself.

To build the business while African internet infrastructure caught up, AfricaFilms.TV initially attempted to appeal primarily to two audiences living outside of Africa: the African diaspora living in Europe and North America who “willing to catch up on TV soaps their families watched in the motherland,” and Northerners “eager to discover African art films and documentaries.” (Chiesa, 2017) In an interview with the Institute Français in South Africa, Chiesa said that besides South Africa – a national audience that was “ready” for VOD – his target audience was “The diaspora – internet maniacs who need a daily direct touch with the homeland – and the cine-buffs interested in Africa.” (Diez, n.d.) In this way, AfricaFilms.TV saw connecting African content with global consumers as critical for the development of sustainable audiovisual industries in sub-Saharan Africa, a characteristic it shares with both other programs ACPCultures+ has funded and with later VOD startups on the continent which have also targeted diasporic audiences.

The process of content acquisition for AfricaFilms.TV involved seeking out content that would appeal to the imagined tastes of these two intended audiences but was also complicated by existing European and international interests in African film. Initially, the process of securing

content was guided by what Chiesa called a “very ‘Western view’ on ‘African cinema’.” (Chiesa, 2017) Indeed, the gathering of content relied heavily on European resources and prioritized African productions that had already been vetted by European and transnational organizations. For instance, AfricaFilms.TV initially utilized the database of the France-based African film website Africultures.com to identify acquisition targets and their rights holders. Chiesa found that these films were already held by European distributors and/or the African Film Library – a collection of over 600 African films available for pay per view from South African broadcaster M-Net, an important force throughout sub-Saharan audiovisual industries.

With AfricaFilms.TV’s relative lack of capital and a business structure based on a transactional video on demand (TVOD) service, non-exclusive rights, and revenue sharing with filmmakers, it had no resources to make down payments for these titles to their holders. Still, the venture continued to rely on European understandings of both what kinds of African films were worth showing, and what kinds of films African audiences should be shown. AfricaFilms.TV secured additional funding from nonprofits and cultural organizations like the Goethe Institut to travel to film festivals to obtain African arthouse productions: Africa Doc in Saint-Louis, Senegal in 2009 (funded by a mix of French and Senegalese sources, like the Institut Français and Senegal’s Ministry of Culture); Africa in the Picture in the Netherlands in 2009 (funded by the Municipality of Amsterdam) and the Tri Continental Human Rights Film Festival in Johannesburg in 2010 (funded by the European Union, Amnesty International, Greenpeace, South Africa’s Department of Arts and Culture, and other NGOs and government agencies). During the same time, AfricaFilms.TV also signed two important catalogues: the popular comedic films made from the late 60s through the mid-2000s by Ivory Coast director Henri

Duparc (from *Les Films Henri Duparc*), and nearly two dozen activist documentaries from the South African Uhuru Productions.

By 2012, AfricaFilms.TV had secured a thousand titles, split between primarily documentaries and features films from francophone West Africa, as well as an assortment of South African films of different genres. Yet because of the factors discussed below, the service only brought in a few thousand dollars in revenues annually. AfricaFilms.TV turned to YouTube (where competitor Iroko.TV got its start), uploading much of its content for free and taking in ad revenue. This ended up being a more profitable distribution model. AfricaFilms.TV continued to acquire content, including around 3000 sitcom episodes from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Senegal, and Ivory Coast in an attempt to appeal to diaspora audiences. The company also continued to search for new content at film festivals and NGOs, securing, for instance, around 100 titles from the Documentary Film Association of South Africa and the short films that screened at the previously-discussed ACPCultures+ funded project, Ile Courts Film Festival in Mauritius (a country with a film industry small enough that this meant most Mauritian productions ever made were now available on the platform). Still, AfricaFilms.TV struggled to get both press and viewers. Appealing to diaspora and cinephile customers proved challenging, in part because of the difficulty of building brand awareness online. “The internet,” Chiesa told me, “is an ocean that you can’t shed light upon if you don’t own a million suns.” (Chiesa, 2017) Ultimately, AfricaFilms.TV abandoned the platform altogether, selling the technology they had developed to a competitor, Buni.TV.

Although it was the first attempt at VOD in Africa, AfricaFilms.TV faced competition early on. Within Europe, inexpensive satellite packages provided multiple channels of francophone African content for diasporic audiences. Satellite also increased its presence within

Africa, as in 2012 Canal Plus began offering a satellite TV service in 20 Sub-Saharan Francophone countries and Ghana, which provides film and TV shows from Europe alongside European-African co-productions and African films. (Canal Plus Takes Africa, 2013) Soon after AfricaFilms.TV launched, new VOD ventures also emerged. The aforementioned Buni.TV followed a model much like AfricaFilms.TV before being acquired by French-based “international urban” station Trace TV in 2016. (Vourlias, Trace TV Buys Pan-African VOD Platform, 2016) Afrostream, founded in 2015 and shuttered in September 2017, (Bakang, 2017) advertised itself as the place to watch “best black films and TV shows” – including Hollywood hits like *Django Unchained* and *Boyz n the Hood*, (Afrostream: le Netflix afro, 2017) and current American TV shows like *Blackish* (Walt Disney Company France, 2016) – to European subscribers before expanding to 24 African countries and securing investment from French telco Orange. (Dillet, 2016) The most successful African VOD venture is IrokoTV.com, founded by a Briton of Nigerian descent, which acquired exclusive online rights to 5000 English-language Nollywood productions which it streamed on Youtube for free, gaining a large following before launching a mobile-only subscription platform and securing \$40 million from Northern investors including US hedge fund Tiger Global. (Oluafemi, 2016) It recently partnered with France’s Canal Plus to make a mobile-only subscription VOD platform targeting francophone Africa. (Keslassy, 2015)

AfricaFilms.TV would not have existed without ACPCultures+’s support of over \$1 million dollars: Chiesa says the project was “simulated by the possibility of getting funding” from ACPCultures+. (2017) At the same time, AfricaFilms.TV’s origins as an EU-sponsored development initiative proved to be a constraint in the increasingly crowded VOD field. First, while other VOD ventures made use of diverse international resources, because of what Chiesa

called “ideological reasons,” (2017) AfricaFilms.TV moved its technological development operations from Paris to Dakar, in order to develop a truly African app with African partners. While Iroko also based its tech operations – including nearly 20 developers – in Africa, Chiesa credits AfricaFilms.TV’s move with difficulties in the platform that resulted in only 700 titles in its 4000-deep library getting uploaded. Second, because of AfricaFilms.TV’s developmental mandate, its catalog differed from was those of its competition. Iroko offered popular Nollywood content in a modern streaming format, while Buni.tv and Afrostream offered African content alongside black media from the Americas and Europe. As an ACPCultures+ funded project, however, AfricaFilms.TV necessarily valued arthouse over commercial, and acquired content that was strictly geographically bounded and that had been vetted by Northern organizations supporting art, development, and human rights.

### **MobiCINE+: Mobile Distribution Between Cinema and NGOs**

While AfricanFilms.TV envisioned a global solution to the problem of African distribution, MobiCINE+ thought locally. The program created mobile cinemas: mopeds mounted with projectors and computers. In itself, this was not innovative. Europe had deployed mobile cinemas to Africa for nearly a century, first as a means to project colonial power, and later as delivery methods for educational development documentaries and instructional films. (Larkin, 2008) MobiCINE+, however, aimed for a different kind of control: digital rights management (DRM). MobiCINE+ utilized AfricaFilms.TV’s VOD protections to ensure that films could not be copied, or even shown multiple times without payment. Like Chiesa, program managers in Brussels saw piracy as a “big problem for ACP movies” (Richert 2012) – an obstacle to the development of formal distribution systems and local audiovisual industries.



Chiesa attributed the widespread closure of African cinemas in part to both piracy and to ticket fraud, which prevented distributors from being compensated. MobiCINE+ attempted to address both issues, while promising a solution to much of sub-Saharan Africa's lack of theatrical exhibition infrastructure. The program loaned its mobile units to operators who had each undergone two weeks of training, and who were themselves then responsible for rounding up audiences in cities in Senegal and Mali. Chiesa envisioned these operators as "bottom of the pyramid entrepreneurs who would go from place to place, from schools to cultural places, to screen films for roughly 20 cents." (Chiesa, 2017) The operators collected and kept the ticket sales themselves, but paid MobiCINE+ for a token to unlock each file for the duration of each screening. According to Chiesa, "The business model was to say, we don't want to control ticketing, we just want to sell to guy on his motorbike. This model was no longer based on the audience paying for a ticket – that wasn't our problem anymore." (2017)

The program aimed to have over 1000 such units operating across francophone Africa. Ultimately, however, many of the same issues that stymied AfricaFilms.TV made MobiCINE+'s original model untenable. In particular, since MobiCINE+ drew on AfricaFilms.TV's library, they were unable to show the kind of content that was in demand with urban francophone audiences: Hollywood blockbusters and, to a lesser extent, very recent African releases. AfricaFilms.TV had talks with Disney and United Artists in 2010 in an attempt to screen their films, but the studios were weary of the program. From his experience in France, Chiesa had learned that Hollywood films can help to prop up the distribution of smaller domestic productions. "Not one cinema in France could show French indies without the money from American blockbusters – and it's the same in Africa. You don't want to create a ghetto – you want to have films people want to watch. We had a supply problem, with no American films."

(2017) Indeed, throughout my fieldwork, African audiovisual professionals expressed the desire to have their films shown alongside Hollywood and European productions in theaters, film festivals, and streaming services.

This supply problem speaks to a larger disjuncture between Chiesa's understanding of MobiCINE+ and that of its European backers. In interviews, ACPCultures+ administrators touted the project's ability to show African films to rural African audiences while minimizing its potential for profitability.

They project it to the village. Not for payment, but for participation with work, or with food, even food for the technicians. So, people don't even have to pay necessarily. So the children and young people and older people, they can see their own images. It's good. (Richert, 2013)

Chiesa, meanwhile, was clear about MobiCINE+ being a business venture that catered to media-savvy urbanites with disposable income for entertainment. "It's not NGO-based, to show films in the bush, but big screens in the city to people who worked there and were eager to pay money for it." (2017)

Ultimately, however, Chiesa decided to switch modes and utilize MobiCINE+ literally in the service of NGOs. While simultaneously attempting to pitch the mobile cinema units' potential for promotional events to global brands like Nestle and Unilever – an effort that founds limited success – Chiesa also began selling MobiCINE+'s services to show educational documentaries, primarily in elementary schools around Dakar. The city's government, in partnership with international NGOs and the embassies of the USA, Canada, the Netherlands, Germany, and Spain, enthusiastically supported the screenings, and over the course of 4 years, MobiCINE+ had shown over 4000 films in schools. The films were primarily short documentaries by mostly African directors, covering social issues like child marriage. They were

shown to audiences of around 60 children aged 5 to 12 years old for 20 Euros per screening. Chiesa says that this venture into the NGO sector was the most profitable of any of AfricaFilms.TV or MobiCINE+'s activities, but he seems to find at least as much consolation in the "strong cultural impact" the program had. Despite MobiCINE+ ending up "so far from cinema," he was proud that for some in its young audience members, it was the "largest projected image" they'd see, "their first documentary," or their "first African film." (2017)

### **Conclusion: VOD After AfricaFilms.TV**

This chapter has shown how ACPCultures+'s attempts to bring formal audiovisual distribution to developing countries involve complex entanglements with Hollywood, European film industries, EU audiovisual policies, and international development. While attempting to ameliorate lopsided global media flows and the reduce the influence of Hollywood in developing countries, ACPCultures+ replicates European dirigiste notions of an audiovisual public good and understandings of what constitutes formal distribution, including integration into global circuits of commercial distribution. Nevertheless, as the case of AfricaFilms.TV/MobiCINE illustrates, the program's intertwining of dirigisme with development can constrain distribution initiatives' ability to engage with commercial markets and the desires of local audiences.

AfricaFilms.TV's failure can be connected to tensions between the humanitarian and development aims of ACPCultures+ and the demands of audiences and markets. Its failure may show the limitations of development-funded formal distribution initiatives, but subsequent and more commercially successful VOD ventures like iROKO have built on its innovations, such as appealing to diaspora audiences and working with local telcoms to make mobile streaming more affordable for customers, while also appealing to popular audience tastes. Moreover, similar

tensions between the public good and the expectations of audiences and markets have continued to shape some subsequent commercial Africa-centric VOD. For instance, Tonjé Bakang, the founder of one of the largest Africa-oriented VOD services, Afrostream, describes the inspiration behind the venture as a response to the low level of African and black representation on other streaming services. In an interview in TechCrunch, Bakang said, “When I was a kid, for a long time, I was looking for role models on TV to relate to them.” (Dillet, 2015)

Afrostream began as a platform targeting the francophone African diaspora in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Switzerland, and eventually expanded to the UK and 24 sub-Saharan African countries. It gained rights to 2000 hours of content that took a very global view of what constituted Africa – collecting together African, Afro-Caribbean, and African American produced and themed films and TV series ranging from Nollywood films to Hollywood productions like *Djanjo Unchained* and Kevin Hart comedies. In its four years of operations, the subscription-based service gained 10,000 subscribers and a place on the boxes of 12 million French households, becoming one of the most successful Africa-focused VOD platforms. Still, in September of last year, unable to turn a profit or raise more funding, Afrostream went out of business. In a detailed post-mortem of the company that he published on *Medium.com*, Bakang outlines some of the difficulties that led to his company’s demise, including the high costs of both licensing media – particularly major Hollywood productions – and the cost and difficulty of directing advertising to potential subscribers in Africa and the diaspora. While the venture secured some initial funding from European telco Orange and 4 million in from Silicon Valley investors, this funding only lasted two years, and Afrostream had trouble finding additional investors. One quote from Bakang’s post-mortem stands out as a way to understand the unique

difficulties that African VOD faces on the global stage: “None of my potential investors really understood the problem that Afrostream solved.” (Bakang, 2017)

Bakang’s statement – that Afrostream solved a problem – speaks to a tension between Afrostream’s profitability and its mission to fix a representational imbalance. Reflecting back on Afrostream’s demise, Bakang states, “My team and I have proven that we cannot limit our expertise to an Afro cultural theme or to the African market.” (Bakang, 2017) Similar to Chiesa’s dismay at MobiCINE+’s inability to show Hollywood productions alongside its African content, Bakang understands the cordoning off of African-themed content in a discrete platform as an untenable strategy to increase the continent’s global representation in media.

Unlike most VOD elsewhere in the world, and unlike global VOD expansions into Africa – like Amazon Prime Video and Netflix, which opened in Africa in 2016 – African VOD ventures view their efforts not simply as tapping new and lucrative markets, but as correctives to a global media landscape in which Africa is in many ways excluded, disconnected, and underrepresented. In taking it upon themselves to tackle these issues, African VOD ventures face challenges that many other VOD ventures do not. As with AfricaFilms.TV and Afrostream, VOD ventures founded by African entrepreneurs have gone out of business, sold off their assets to global conglomerates, or radically changed their business model. In fact, in 2016 – a mere 8 years after the very first African VOD platform began – the African tech website *Disrupt-Africa* published what read like a postmortem for the entire sector, called “The Rise and Fall (?) of African VoD Startups” that asked, “Is the ‘boom’ era over for homegrown African VoD entrepreneurs?” (Mulligan, 2016)

Without a clearly established success story in Africa VOD yet, it’s difficult to know whether Chiesa and Bakang are correct that dedicated African-focused VOD is an impossible

model. But some Africa-centric VOD ventures show how companies can better account for local cultures of circulation instead of replicating global formal audiovisual distribution norms with African content. iRokoTV, for instance, besides its focus on Nigerian cinema, has “localized” its service – which is available online in the Global North – as mobile-only for African subscribers, and instituted pricing schemes and features such as offline viewing that cater to local economic and internet infrastructure. Likewise, the start-up MyChoiceTV, whose offices I visited in Nairobi, is attempting to account for the tastes and economic realities of African audiences through a transactional VOD service that includes African films alongside international blockbusters a mere 3 months after their theatrical release dates in order to capitalize on the relatively high costs and lack of infrastructure that characterizes moviegoing in much of the continent. While the platform has not yet been launched and its success is far from guaranteed, it nevertheless suggests an interesting counterpoint to AfricaFilms.TV’s mission to show Africans their own images by instead attempting to provide African audiences access to and participation in global forms of cinema and consumption.

## CHAPTER 4:

### Audiovisual Training Programs and Maisha Screenwriting Lab: Developing Scripts

#### Introduction: Moderately Altruistic Non-Governmental Organizations

*Jethro by Jethro*, a 2016 short film by Ugandan director Malcom Bigyemano, opens to a nondescript meeting room with two administrators at a table: a Ugandan woman and a white man of nondescript origin. A banner in the background has the acronym MANGO, or “Moderately Altruistic Non-Governmental Organization (Uganda),” and inside the “O”, there’s the outline of a mango that is shaped like the African continent. An excitable filmmaker stands in front of the administrators, and after performing a few karate chops into the air he begins a pitch in Lugandan (a local language) for what he calls “Uganda’s first sci-fi comedy” titled *Toilet Time Travelers*. He spends more time touting his production company (Mega Pixels Mega Pictures) than the plot, emphasizing that it was founded in Kampala’s Ndeeba neighborhood, or, as he calls it, “Ndeebawood” – a local industry that does not actually exist but borrows credibility from Nigeria’s successful Nollywood. A perturbed administrator stops him mid pitch, asking “Is it all in Lugandan? But the advert says we only wanted stories in English.” The filmmaker mentions the possibility of subtitles (unwittingly breaking the fourth wall, he points to where they are on the screen) but he’s ushered out of the room to make way for the next pitch. Before he leaves, he

exclaims, “Why do you people sabotage us? Do you know what I had to go through to get here? You stand in the way of getting what isn’t even yours!”

This scene is a familiar one for many filmmakers in East Africa, and it speaks to the tensions between foreign aid and local cultural production. In the absence of a large regional industry of its own and with the ubiquity of Northern aid organizations, NGOs often act as the gatekeepers that provide funding, resources, and credibility to for would-be film and TV creators in East Africa. Swapping out the logics and lore of the film industry with those of humanitarianism and development organizations, NGOs’ funding decisions revolve around the imagined cultural and social value of media texts. For Mr. Megapixels, this means that *Toilet Time Travelers* – presumably inspired by the Hollywood sci-fi comedy *Hot Tub Time Machine* (2010) – won’t receive funding from MANGO.



Figure 6: Jethro x Jethro



But more than simply showing how aid organizations pass judgment on the kinds of audiovisual texts that are worth funding, *Jethro x Jethro* suggests that these organizations can shape how filmmakers think about themselves and their work in local and global mediascapes. The film's final applicant, Jethro, pitches a story about a rural blind girl with incredible artistic talent who, with the help of organizations like "UNTI, WNTO, USBSF, [is] finally able to sell her work and support her family of five. No, ten. Her family to TWELVE whose only income from their small garden is squandered by their alcoholic father." Jethro's appeal to the white savior narrative is exaggerated for comedic effect, but his awareness and manipulation of Northern expectations turns out to be a strategic move rather than capitulation: just as the judges perk up at this story of local poverty and international assistance, Jethro reveals the pitch is a ruse. "That's the type of shit we won't be making. It's poverty porn, the way white people expect to see Africa: gifted but with flies on its face, waiting for the right NGO to save it. We've heard that story, and it's a great story, but it's not our only story." As the pitch goes on, Jethro begins to pitch something vague and philosophical about the nature of life itself. The white judge, however, interjects: "Tell me Jethro, is there anything particularly African about this film? Anything... indigenous about its origins?"

This scene highlights a dilemma in humanitarian and development organizations' funding of cultural production in the Global South: for those in the Global North, the impetus to increase audiovisual output from regions like East Africa can be grounded in notions of difference that limit the subject matter of audiovisual productions. For the white administrator, the purpose of MANGO is to fund films in which Africans represent the features that make Africa different from the rest of the world. Neither Mr. Megapixel's localization of a Hollywood "sci-fi comedy"

for Ugandan audiences nor Jethro's experimental musings on the nature of life promises a story that is sufficiently African as that of a child in a slum overcoming poverty.

Yet even though Jethro's initial poverty porn pitch depressingly peaks the interest of the administrator-gatekeepers, *Jethro x Jethro* doesn't doom East African filmmakers to reproducing Northern imaginaries of an Africa that needs saving. Rather, it suggests that although East African filmmakers must operate within the constraints of a system entangled with NGO funding that still operates through developmentalist logics, it is still possible to use its resources to tell stories that subvert judges' expectations and use the resources – monetary and not – of the NGO system in unintended ways. Gradually, *Jethro by Jethro* becomes a meta-narrative, as Jethro reveals that he's inverted the judging process itself and is now directing the very film we're viewing. A boom mic falls into the frame and make-up artists touch up the judges' faces, to their surprise. The terrified female administrator, shell shocked at having the tables suddenly turned on her, exclaims, "I'm not your fucking actor -- I'm an administrative director of this initiative."

While *Jethro by Jethro* ends with this inversion, the pitching process it depicts is only the prelude to the application process aspiring filmmakers undergo to gain access to training programs, workshops, and professional development activities run by NGOs like MANGO. As they do so, conditions attached to foreign funding select and shape the content they make and the lessons they receive. At the same time, participants may simply jump through the hoops necessary to secure funding, like Jethro does in his initial pitch, or use the landscape of NGO assistance as the *mise-en-scène* for creative acts that defy expectations.

This chapter focuses in part on one such program – one that is likely one of the real-life inspirations for MANGO: Maisha Film Lab. Based in Kampala, Uganda, Maisha runs ten day-long screenwriting courses in four East African countries annually. Successful applicants to the

program hone their screenplays with input from their peers and instructors, and at the end of each course, the author of what is judged to be the best script receives \$5000 to produce a 10-minute film (the same length as *Jethro x Jethro*).

I attended Maisha's screenwriting course in Nairobi, Kenya in the summer of 2017, where I observed lessons, talked with students and instructors during meal and coffee breaks, and saw scripts develop. In contrast to MANGO, Maisha's administrators and instructors are not uncritical adherents to the stipulations of Northern funders; accounting for their program's position as a gateway between Northern funding/values and local filmmakers is part of the day-to-day operation of the film lab. In fact, it was one of the Maisha instructors who introduced me to *Jethro x Jethro* in the first place – one of the many examples of the humor and self-awareness that the instructors I met brought to their job. But while much warmer than MANGO, like it, Maisha operates through funding from donor organizations in Europe and North America and it is a site of dynamic interaction and negotiation between the priorities of Northern funding organizations and the aspirations of East African filmmakers.

ACPCultures+ was the primary source of funding for Maisha in 2015 and has also funded 14 other film and TV training programs since 2008. This chapter explores how ACPCultures+ and other sources of funding understand audiovisual value, knowledge, and expertise, how that influences training programs, and how administrators and aspiring filmmakers work within these dynamics. While ACPCultures+ does not dictate the curriculum for these training programs, its selection of programs (and, in turn, their self-presentation to Northern funders) suggests how European logics of audiovisual instruction are adapted for European imaginaries of students in Africa, the Caribbean, and Pacific islands.

## European Film Education

Before discussing Maisha Film Lab and other training programs funded by ACPCultures+, I want to position these programs within the history of European film education. Instead of a comprehensive overview, I highlight a few aspects of the shifting relationship between educational institutions, the state, and notions of filmic value (primarily auteurism versus commercially oriented filmmaking). I draw on Duncan Petrie and Rod Stoneman's *Educating Film-Makers: Past, Present and Future*, the only critical history of film schools in Europe (and the United States), which shows how shifting notions of art, commerce, and culture coalesced around institutions of audiovisual education.<sup>16</sup>

In Europe, the state directly funded and intervened in film education, using it to pursue national agendas ranging from propaganda to competition with Hollywood.<sup>17</sup> The growth of film education signaled the importance that film (and later TV) was seen to have as a cultural form, as an economic sector, and as a powerful means of delivering messages – as well as the enduring tension between those three functions. Within Western Europe, film instruction eventually adopted a stance that balanced individualist artistic expression with concerns about the ability of filmmakers to be successful within changing industries. I argue that this curricular orientation provided a means for European film instruction to define itself outside of national frameworks, to uphold opposition to big budget Hollywood filmmaking even as it collaborated with American film schools, and to encourage the exportation of its model of filmic instruction outside of Europe.

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<sup>16</sup> I should also mention Dana Polan's better-known *Scenes of Instruction*, whose history of early film education in the United States – while more distant in its historical and geographic focus – also explores the “tension between the practical and the cultural” and debates between art- and industry-focused approaches to filmic education.

<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, in the United States, film education emerged within the institutional framework of the university, concerning itself not with national cultural and economic agendas directly, but rather with alternating opposition and connection to Hollywood.

## National Film Education: From Ideology, to Auteurs, to Industry

European filmic education began through publicly-funded “national conservatoires,” which were modeled on well-established training institutions for music, dance, and drama. (Petrie & Stoneman, 2014, p. 17) National conservatoires had close ties to national governments and industries, and reflected and supported shifting national ideas about the role of film (and later, television) in relation to politics, culture, and industry. The very first film schools emerged as state projects to support national ideologies: on the left, Moscow’s All-Union State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK), which was founded in 1919 during the upheaval of the October Revolution; on the right, Italy’s 1924 Istituto L’Unione Cinematografica Educativa (Educational Film Institute) supported “pro-Fascist newsreels and educational films” (Petrie & Stoneman, 2014, p. 22) while its *Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia*, founded in 1935, supported training for the creation of fascist feature films during Mussolini’s regime.

France followed, first with the 1926 the technically-oriented *Ecole technique de photographie et de cinema*, and then with a series of institutions that provided training not only in technical aspect of filmmaking, but also in writing, directing, and film studies: the 1940 *Centre des jeunes du cinema français* near Cannes, which relocated to Nice in 1941 as the *Centre artistique et techniques des jeunes du cinema* and eventually to Paris in 1943 as the *Institute des hautes études cinématographiques* (IDHEC). (Petrie & Stoneman, 2014, pp. 24-25) Founded during the Nazi occupation of France, the IDHEC took a different view of film than its contemporaries in the USSR and Italy, eschewing nationalist and political approaches to filmmaking. Instead, the center’s president Marcel L’Herbier, himself an avant garde filmmaker, pursued aims that were concerned with the artistic and culturally enriching potential of the medium, such as fostering a culture of cinema within society and producing filmmakers whose

work embodied “human values.” More so than film schools in the USSR or Italy, then, the IDHEC’s concern for promoting film as a cultural good foreshadowed those of contemporary film education in Western Europe. However, it was only after the war that the school became a blueprint for the proliferation of film training programs that were to follow by incorporating curriculum aimed towards industry growth and the professionalization of students.

While postwar film schools in the Soviet nations of Eastern Europe were part of state controlled audiovisual industries, Western European schools had a more ambivalent relationship to national industries, and “as film industry jobs were not guaranteed in the same way they were in the command economies of Eastern Europe, so the continuity between film school and professional careers was also more uncertain and inconsistent.” (Petrie & Stoneman, 2014, p. 33) As a newly independent France attempted to rebuild itself, the *Centre national de la cinématographie* (CNC) began funding the IDHEC, and the institute’s curriculum increasingly oriented itself towards “craft training and professionalism that was deemed necessary for the reinvigoration of [the] French film industry.” (Petrie & Stoneman, 2014, p. 26) For instance, coursework was organized around discrete industry tasks: “direction, production, cinematography, sound, editing, script writing, set design and costume design.” (26) This new focus did not supplant the institute’s previous focus on artistic innovation; instead, the institute grappled with how to incorporate both technical and artistic values into its training.

This tension between industry-oriented quality cinema and artistic, experimental, auteurist cinema remained an important feature of European film schools. Auteurist modes of instruction rose in the 1970s as national film schools opened in West Germany, the UK, Denmark, and other Western European countries. By the 1980s, however, film schools increasingly emphasized specialization and team collaboration – instead of training a director-

auteur in every aspect of filmmaking – as a way to create “entrepreneurial professionals who could build successful careers in relation to changing markets” (36) and technologies, such as the increasing importance of television. The National Film School of Denmark, for instance, expanded its training areas in directing, cinematography, and sound to include screenwriting, producing, and editing, and had students engage in collaborative projects to learn to work successfully as a team, to create a feeling of collective authorship, and to create filmmakers could respond to changing market conditions.<sup>18</sup> This industry-oriented approach continued in the following decades, eventually being taken up by the European Union in its transnational training programs.

### **Internationalizing Film Education**

Audiovisual education in Europe’s embrace of collaborative, industry-friendly approaches to film and TV corresponds to increasing deregulation and economic integration throughout what eventually become the European Union. In postwar European cultural industries, cross-border exchange and collaboration began to complement national cultural policies, changing their economic and cultural logics in the process. Audiovisual training was no exception. For instance, one important and illustrative channel for early international collaboration was the *Centre International de Liason des écoles de cinema et de television* (CILECT), founded in Cannes in 1955 to foster collaboration and exchange between European film schools – especially to bridge the divide between capitalist Western and communist Eastern countries. Like other European audiovisual programs CILECT followed a trajectory from intra-European cooperation in the postwar years to a more global orientation in the 70s and 80s. By

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<sup>18</sup> Later in this chapter, The National Film School’s curriculum will be discussed in more detail, focusing on the rise of writing in film instruction.

1982, the Centre had expanded its membership well beyond Europe, to “more than fifty television and film schools and institutes around the world” (Wagner, 1983, p. 59), including top institutions in the United States like Cal Arts, UCLA, NYU, and the American Film Institute.

That year’s meeting in Sydney, Australia shows CILECT and its member schools beginning to think about film training outside of Europe and North America. CILECT funded a report by the Danish National Film School called *Bridging the gap: a report on the development of film and television training for the developing countries*. A review of the report by Morrison Hammond of Macquarie University summarizes the reports aims and recommendations. These include that CILECT members provide opportunities at their institutions for students from developing countries, but even more so urges advanced training occur in developing countries with the help of CILECT members, and a focus on “the training of trainers” in developing countries. (Hammond, 1983, p. 7) While Hammond laments that “for so long there has been a style of training that was predicated in the belief that the practitioners in the industrialized world knew what the peoples of developing countries needed, and how they should be trained,” (8) he sees the report as a step towards film education institutions in the North becoming more attentive to the needs that developing countries perceive themselves to have.

*Bridging the gap* demonstrates an emerging awareness of some of the complexity involved in audiovisual education across borders, particularly those that mark divides in wealth and power. CILECT acknowledges in its recommendations that film and TV training are contingent on local industries and cultures, and what is deemed good training might vary from one place to the next. At the same time, as audiovisual policy in the European sphere increasingly moved beyond its nationalist roots, it became inseparable from the demands of the global marketplace – filmic education being no exception.



The creation of the European Union brought policies and initiatives that continued both transnational collaboration and an industry-driven approach to film education, as it attempted to create a common European cultural and economic space. European Union policies simultaneously built on and transformed the aims of national policies, including support for audiovisual education, such as protection against cultural and economic incursion from Hollywood. EU audiovisual initiatives – such as the MEDIA Program that began in 1991 – included funding for film and TV training programs that brought together professionals from across EU member countries, their neighbor countries to encourage pan-European collaboration and exchange of expertise. The 2011 MEDIA Mundus program opened up these educational programs to partnerships between EU member states and countries throughout the world, while ACPCultures+ and European Union development initiatives aimed at the MENA countries do the same for their respective target regions.

These programs follow a model developed by the European Audiovisual Entrepreneurs (EAVE) in 1988 that feature short, traveling workshops structured around projects. Rod Stoneman, who participated in such programs over the course of ten years, argues that the programs are structured to foster “exchange of ideas and expertise.”

Combining experienced practitioners from the north and south with participating filmmakers from the region, they function as the temporary space for interchanges as compared with the more fixed transmissions of such permanent structures as state run film schools. (Stoneman, 2013, p. 63)

Stoneman’s language suggests a difference in spirit as well as scope between these short workshops and state funded film schools: while permanent institutions “transmit,” temporary programs offer “interchanges” instead of inculcation. Still, as I will argue in the following sections, power and authority shape these temporary interchanges in numerous ways.

### **Audiovisual Training Programs Funded by ACPCultures+**

ACPCultures+ has funded 15 audiovisual training programs over its three rounds of funding. One of these targets the Pacific Islands, three the Caribbean, and rest sub-Saharan Africa. ACPCultures+ describes these educational programs in categories that reflect the genre they deal with (radio, animation, TV, fiction filmmaking, documentaries, video arts), as well as their target audience for instruction (students, persons wishing to pursue a career in filmmaking, teachers, Audiovisual and cinema professionals in the Caribbean). The majority of these projects are presented as industry-building initiatives that will enable the growth of local film and TV industries, rather than opportunities for individual artistic expression. Most tout collaborative, project-based learning, and many extend beyond the classroom, providing guidance and support for production and exhibition of works made by their trainees.

Most of these contain a competitive element similar to MANGO and many short courses in the Global North. Sparring Partners, for instance, held 20-day courses in documentary filmmaking for 190 young filmmakers in Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic; provided up to 5500 euros for the production of 18 documentaries in a competition open to trainees from the course as well as other filmmakers; and the promotion of those short films at festivals in Latin America and Europe through guaranteed exhibition at Terra di Tutti Film Festival in Italy, Belo Horizonte Festival in Brazil, Cine Migratorio de Santander in Spain, and the Budapest Festival of Short Film in Hungary. (ACPCultures+, 2017) Similarly, Melanesian Beat held training sessions aimed at participants from Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, and Vanuatu with the end goal of producing the region's first sitcom. *Talents D'Afrique*, sponsored by France's Play Film, trained participants from Gabon and Congo in documentary filmmaking, screenplay

writing, and editing, and at the end of the course participants shot documentaries about artists in the two countries.

Overwhelmingly, these training programs describe themselves as filling in the gaps they perceive in local audiovisual ecosystems and their relation to global markets, industries, and taste cultures. The Action 3i Project, for instance, developed an audiovisual Master's program at the Institute of Audiovisual Professions (ISMA) in Cotonou, Benin and a Bachelor's at the National Institute of the Post and Information and Communication Technologies (INPTIC) in Libreville, Gabon. Harkening back to CILECT's discussions in the 1980s about helping film education in developing countries, the two programs were modeled after courses from Belgium's Institute of Broadcasting Arts (IAD), which was the primary sponsor of the initiative. Action 3i is described as responding to a lack of quality audiovisual education in Gabon and Benin. It notes that "there were no training schools for audiovisual professions in Gabon" (ACPCultures+, 2016), and that courses in film and TV in the region have problems in the scope and content of their instruction: they are overly academic and not practically-oriented, and deal poorly with subjects such as lighting design, scriptwriting, stage management, or sound management. By providing audiovisual instruction that follows Belgium's IAD curriculum, 3i aims to not only improve the technical ability of audiovisual professionals in Gabon and Benin, but to enable African audiovisual productions to fill a local demand for content that is currently being met by global imports.

*Dans la plupart des pays d'Afrique les chaînes de télévision publiques et privées se multiplient, la demande de productions locales en cinéma, en télévision et en radio croît fortement et trop souvent encore, l'offre s'alimente auprès des productions audiovisuelles occidentales, latino-américaines ou asiatiques faute de productions africaines suffisantes. (Action 3i, n.d.)*

[In most African Countries, both public and private television channels are multiplying, demand for local cinema, television, and radio productions is growing, and yet all too often, the demand is fed by Western, Latin American, and Asian audiovisual productions because of a lack of sufficient African productions.]

Likewise, Abdoulaye Falls, the deputy chief executive director of ACP3D Action, describes his program as utilizing education to enable Africans to meet local demand and compete with international animation industries, mitigating imbalances in global flows of media and commerce.

“In a market where 2D and 3D animation is expanding, ACP countries are mostly missing. The aim of the project was to strengthen ACP countries professionals’ abilities to produce 3D animated movies and answer to their own needs (instead of import them), but also to gain export market share following the example of what Asia did for 2D animation” (ACPCultures+, 2016)

To meet these aims, ACP 3D set up a 2-year training program in 3D animation within the African Institute of Management in Kampala, Uganda, acquiring film and sound studios and animation workstations for each student.

In contrast, a program run by France’s CFI (the country’s organization for media cooperation abroad) described itself as attempting to improve African television not to better meet local demand, but rather to meet the tastes of global audiences. Called *L’Afrique en série*, the program taught TV production skills to about a hundred audiovisual technicians in TV industries in Francophone and Anglophone countries including Ghana, Cameroon, Niger, and Burkina Faso. Each of the 12 courses offered by the program focused on a different topic related to the production fiction TV series – such as sound mixing, sound recording, editing, framing, directing, and production coaching. All were taught by professionals in the European TV industry, mostly from France. Even though in many places African TV is successfully competing with foreign imports for African audiences, for CFI, these depictions of African lives do not

measure up to the aesthetics of global TV tastes. *L'Afrique en série*'s website states that many African TV programs are “technically weak,” which “reduces their circulation potential in countries outside of Africa.” Through these training courses, they hope to meet the objective of helping “the best African series to achieve the international standards demanded by the field of global broadcasting.” (CFI, n.d.)

*L'Afrique en série*'s judgment of the technical and aesthetic quality of African TV is jarring for its bluntness amidst the measured language characteristic of NGOs and government aid programs today, but it nevertheless is illustrative of frictions that are pervasive in many such audiovisual education and training programs: not only between the value attached to different regional aesthetics, but within audiovisual education on a global scale. If national conservatoires pursued national aims, they also cultivated national aesthetics and narrative modes. But how can filmic tastes and textual norms be taught outside of these national frameworks? How are local narratives constructed in an era of increasingly global audiences and markets? A look inside the classroom at Maisha Film Lab suggests a less facile answer than CFI's website.

### **Situating Maisha Film Lab**

Maisha Film Lab has conducted film training courses in East Africa since 2005. The lab was founded in 2004 by Mira Nair, the Indian American filmmaker perhaps best known as the director of *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) who developed connections to Uganda when she shot her 1991 film *Mississippi Masala* in Kampala. Unable to find local audiovisual professionals to work on the film, Nair flew in crewmembers from abroad. Maisha is intended to remedy that lack of local professionals. Accordingly, when the program was announced, Nair said, “My goal is, in five years, to be able to present to the world a locally told story made in Uganda or Tanzania, but

with the highest of international standards.” (Kamin, 2004) Like CFI’s statement on African TV, Nair’s wording here reflects a sense that growing local industries is contingent on appealing to global audiences, that local narratives need to be communicated in a way that caters to dominant global tastes and that can be integrated into global industries. On the one hand, Nair’s statement is a practical one, since meeting international standards are key to Maisha’s success in attracting funding from foreign donors and in helping its graduates secure work after they complete the course. At the same time, Maisha provides a space in which instructors and students negotiate Northern notions of quality film with their own, and carve out a space for local audiovisual productions alongside foreign imports.

For its first several years, Maisha conducted month- and two-month-long courses in documentary and fiction filmmaking, respectively. These courses, held at Maisha’s home base in Kampala, covered diverse aspects of production ranging from screenwriting to directing, and culminated in the collaborative creation of a short work. Because of the costs involved in maintaining equipment and bringing in instructors with such diverse production expertise, the organization transitioned to teaching primarily screenwriting courses. Today, it holds four screenwriting courses a year throughout East Africa – Nairobi, Kenya; Zanzibar, Tanzania; Kigali, Rwanda; and Kampala, Uganda – functioning as a traveling, temporary film school in a region that has until recently lacked permanent audiovisual educational institutions. During the film lab’s ten days, participants receive group and individualized instruction in screenwriting, learn how to navigate the East African filmmaking industry, and make local, regional, and international industry connections. Completing Maisha gives them not only useful training in screenwriting, but also a prestigious resume addition and a valuable professional network that can lead to future jobs and resume additions. For one student, the course is also a chance to get a

short film funded: at the end of each course, the author of the best script receives \$5000 to produce it.

Like the fictional MANGO, then, Maisha serves as a gatekeeper between aspiring filmmakers and sources of funding and professional validation. Completion of the prestigious program helped students gain access to the film scene in Nairobi, East Africa, and beyond: admission into other competitive film training programs, such as the more production-oriented, German-funded One Fine Day; to gain admission into short film festivals; to sit on the selection panel for film festivals.

At the same time, all of its students have already found varying levels of success in media and audiovisual industries. One of the application requirements, for instance, is previous completion of a short film. During the lab I attended in Nairobi, many students already had more substantial filmographies. Alex Kanyi, for instance, had created three slickly-shot experimental short films in the past ten years. Kanyi also organized a series of “guerilla” exhibitions of Kenyan films called Black Popcorn, which used creative arrangements to support its screenings such as having a hotel host an exhibition for free in exchange for drink sales. This DIY, entrepreneurial spirit was common among lab participants: Vigilance Atieno founded a collective called the Dark Shade Movement that promotes self-confidence and societal appreciation of dark skin women, while Kenji Gathecha supports himself primarily through an equipment rental service he runs for local filmmakers. Other students’ employment ranged from shooting documentaries for NGOs, writing for TV and popular blogs, and creative work in advertising. One attendee, Beatrice Mategwa, took leave from her position as a Public Information Officer for the UN Mission in South Sudan to attend the course, and had contributed to stories for Reuters Television and Africa Journal. Whether or not they earned their livings in

media production or had connections to local audiovisual industries, these students were all deeply knowledgeable and invested in film and TV, particularly American and local productions. During snack breaks and lunchtime, discussion often revolved around current theatrical releases like *Baby Driver* and *Dunkirk*, and hype-generating TV shows like Netflix's *Black Mirror*.

Maisha's instructors are working film professionals who have hailed from Africa, Europe, and the USA. They have included internationally acclaimed directors from Africa and the Caribbean such as Mauritanian director Abderrahmane Sissako (*Timbuktu*), Haitian director Raoul Peck (whose 2016 documentary *I Am Not Your Negro* was nominated for an Oscar), and Chadian director Mahamat Saleh-Haroun. They have also included Hollywood professionals who will likely not see their works screen at Cannes but who have managed to achieve the difficult task of making a living through their work, such as Justin Ware (who wrote one of the scripts for an *American Pie* sequel) and Jack Amiel (who contributed to sitcoms like *Malcom in the Middle*). This diverse mix demonstrates Maisha's openness to different kinds of filmmaking: commercial as well as arts films, international as well as local. During my time there, the program was established enough that all of the instructors were now former graduates with diverse filmmaking backgrounds: Cajetan Boy, a leading Kenyan screenwriter; Angela Emurwon, an internationally renowned playwright from Uganda; and Ng'endo Mukii, a Kenyan experimental animator and director of virtual reality films. This trio of instructors was complemented by Joel Tugaineyo, Maisha's part-time program co-coordinator and a director and screenwriter himself, and Maisha's sole full-time employee, Kibby Fioria – who since 2012 has organized and attended training labs, produced the short films made by Maisha participants, secured funding from international donors, and represented Maisha at film festivals and industry events throughout the world.



Maisha's permanent headquarters is situated on a large hillside property on the outskirts of Kampala that overlooks Lake Victoria, and aims to be a center for the community, hosting regular events such as yoga classes, public lectures, film screenings and festivals, and dance performances. (Maisha Film Lab, n.d.) Nair plans to build an outdoor cinema, amphitheater, and an African film archive on the grounds. The organization also has a small office in the Chelsea neighborhood of New York City. While Maisha's annual presence in Nairobi is fleeting in contrast, the organization nevertheless occupies a vital place in the city's local audiovisual infrastructure and culture. The lab takes place in a compound located four miles outside of Nairobi's city center that also houses a guest house (where some of Maisha's instructors and staff – and myself – stayed) funded by a local Christian organization, an Italian restaurant and cafeteria, and several nonprofit organizations. Maisha's film lab is held in the conference/screening room of one of these nonprofits, the East African documentary fund Docubox.

Maisha and Docubox share more than a physical space, and their relationship illustrates the structure of the local film and TV industry and its connections to the wider world.<sup>19</sup> Docubox's Project Director Peter Mudamba described the organization's goal as "our own stories with our own people and to share these with the rest of the world," (Mudamba, 2017) echoing Maisha's slogan, "If we don't tell our stories, no one else will." Another prominent organization in Nairobi that receives funding from the German government, One Fine Day Films, describes its mission in strikingly similar terms despite being a commercial – albeit non-traditional – production company: "to give African filmmakers an opportunity to write and

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<sup>19</sup> Nairobi boasts a growing DVD and video film industry called Riverwood that has been attracting the attention of the Kenyan Film Commission and South African broadcaster M-Net, but organizations like Maisha and Docubox do not interact much with this industry.

produce their own stories and, under the mentorship of experienced filmmakers, reach an international audience on the big cinematic screen.” (One Fine Day Films, 2016) This shared mission of helping to produce East African stories that have a global reach involved multiple points of overlap – both locally and abroad – that speak to how foreign funded audiovisual organizations in East Africa together construct media industries and cultures that extend well beyond any single initiative. Taken together, these initiatives play an important role in deciding what films get made and shown outside of multiplexes and pirate video shops, and occasionally in those venues, as well: One Fine Day’s production *Nairobi Half Life* (2012) not only received international acclaim in film festivals like AFI and the Durban International Film Festival, it also received a much rarer months-long box office run in Kenya’s multiplexes. Even several years after its release, the crime drama by David “Tosh” Gitonga was often mentioned in Nairobi as evidence for the potential of the Kenyan film industry to have it all: productions that appealed to both Kenyan audiences and film festivals abroad, that earned both profit and accolades.

Within Nairobi, audiovisual organizations like Maisha and Docubox maintain relationships with each other that are characterized by collaboration, exchange, collegiality, and the sharing of resources. Docubox, for instance, was considering partnering with One Fine Day for a project, and one of Maisha’s Nairobi instructors, Ng’endo Mukii had also previously received a filmmaking grant from Docubox for an experimental animation-documentary hybrid. One evening midway through the screenwriting course, Docubox hosted a public screening in the compound’s garden of director Nathan Collett’s *Togetherness Supreme* (2010) as part of its Peace at Elections Campaign, a series of politically-minded film screenings leading up to the presidential election that would occur in a few weeks. The film, which deals with the conflict and violence in Nairobi’s Kibera slum leading up to and following Kenya’s 2008 election, was

“mandatory viewing” for Maisha students. The Italian restaurant housed in the Shalom House compound even joined in, offering free pizzas to the first few attendees who could correctly answer a handful of trivia questions about other films Docubox had recently screened.

### **Appealing to Foreign Donors**

Despite their willingness to be collaborators in the creation of a particular kind of audiovisual culture and industry in Kenya, organizations like Maisha and Docubox necessarily compete for limited funding from a small pool of donors. Both organizations have at one point received funding, for instance, from the now-defunct Danish Center for Culture and Development (CKU). In the eyes of these donors, there is little room for redundancy in funding audiovisual industries. Despite the shared mission of creating local stories for global audiences, audiovisual organizations are careful to clearly convey their unique niche – for instance, documentary filmmaking versus fiction screenwriting – to differentiate themselves to foreign donors and to make a case for their unique importance to the region. At the same time, how they present themselves to donors is also constrained by the developmental lens through which most donor organizations view their activities.

Taken together, Docubox and Maisha show how local audiovisual organizations must carefully negotiate their own institutional priorities with those of foreign donor organizations. Docubox, for instance, has had to adjust its activities to fit the priorities of foreign donors: After they lost funding from the Ford Foundation during that organization’s transition to a new funding model, Docubox turned to the Dutch organization HIVOS, whose aid came with the condition that Docubox expand to include projects in Uganda and Tanzania. Mudamba stressed that despite these adjustments, Docubox’s core mission does not change for donors. For instance, he stated that while the documentaries Docubox funded during the 2015 round of applications focused on

social issues, that was simply because those were the strongest candidates that year. He contrasted funding these documentaries about social issues with the “NGO type docs” dealing with “malaria and mosquito nets” that appeal to many funding organizations. (Mudamba, 2017)

“Mosquito nets” recalls Jethro’s poverty porn pitch to MANGO, and while the term was a recurring shorthand for development-minded NGO-funded filmmaking during my time in Nairobi, audiovisual training programs also negotiated funding with for-profit companies. Docubox, for instance, was in talks with both Japanese multinational camera corporation Canon and German multinational electronics corporation Bosch, and Mudamba was currently trying to figure out the best way to meet those corporation’s priorities without changing Docubox in a significant way. Likewise, Maisha has run additional programs when funding could be secured, oftentimes pivoting to meet the differing priorities of NGO and corporate sources of funding. These range from a partnership with HBO in 2016 to produce two documentaries, to several youth-oriented programs including screenings and training courses in Gulu, a city in Northern Uganda that is of particular interest to development and humanitarian organizations because of the violence it suffered at the hands of the Lord’s Resistance Army and the subsequent displaced person camps that were built there. (ACPCultures+, 2017) Appealing to shifting donor priorities was difficult work. As Maisha’s program director Fibby Kioria told me, in so-called “aid-tired” countries like Kenya, donors prioritize ever more specific minority and disadvantaged groups, such as women, youths, and the LGBT community. Mudamba alluded to similar pressure from donors to actively target minorities, which Docubox had resisted. “Filmmakers are minorities here,” he said. (Mudamba, 2017) As we will see, this pressure from donors to meld development themes into East African audiovisual training programs also extended to the production of students’ audiovisual texts.

Within this complex funding situation, Maisha has found success with a variety of foreign donors. Besides ACPCultures+, Maisha's contributors have included the Rockefeller Foundation, the governments of Denmark and the Netherlands, the Abu Dhabi Film Commission, the Belgian NGO Africalia, the Swiss NGO LUMA Foundation, and the English grant-making foundation the Mohamed S. Farsi Foundation, to name a few. In the eyes of these donors, Maisha Film Lab is considered to be a model organization because of its ability to produce results that are easily recognizable to foreign organizations. In a report by the Danish Culture and Development Agency CKU, the program is held up as an example of successful audiovisual development because of its ability to train audiovisual professionals who can receive international recognition, and because of its contribution to developing the potential of East African audiovisual economies.

[Maisha has] provided 550 film scholarships and produced 50 films that have been screened at 20 international film festivals. By promoting a cinematic culture and training filmmakers it has been contributing to the industry's capacity. (Consult4Change, 2016)

Likewise, ACPCultures+ highlights Maisha in the "Best Practices" section of its website, citing former students' success in primarily international venues: Oscar winning actress Lupita Nyong'o<sup>20</sup>; director Ritesh Batra, whose film *The Lunchbox* screened at Cannes in 2013; and Kivu Ruhorahoza, whose 2015 film *Things of the Aimless Wanderer* played at Sundance and Rotterdam Film Festivals. (ACPCultures+, 2017) Similarly, CKU's report credits Maisha with growing Uganda's filmmaking capacity enough that it could contribute to a Disney/ESPN production, the 2015 *Queen of Katwe*. The film is the culmination of Mira Nair's aim of making a locally told story that meets high international standards. Nair convinced Disney to shoot on location in Uganda (and, for indoor scenes, in South Africa), an uncommon move. The film's

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<sup>20</sup> While listed as a graduate by ACPCultures+, Nyong'o was actually a production assistant at Maisha.

crew included numerous graduates of Maisha’s training courses, and it starred many young Ugandan actors in debut roles alongside Lupita Nyong’o and British-Nigerian actor David Oyelowo.

*Katwe* embodies some of the complex global flows and tensions involved in telling “African stories” dependent on foreign funds. The film tells the true story of a chess club in a Kampala slum, where an inspired instructor leads several of his impoverished students to victory in prestigious international chess competitions. Adapted by an American screenwriter from a book by an American sports writer, it is a narrative that reshapes some of the tropes of “poverty porn” that Jethro railed against – their instructor, for instance, is African, not a white savior – but hardly escapes these tropes altogether. Still, a *New York Times* piece about the production called *Queen of Katwe* a “landmark film” for Disney because it is “set in Africa about Africans, featuring only black actors.” Nair echoes that sentiment: “It’s bizarre to think that a modern tale of Africa without animals hasn’t really been made before.” (Sulcas, 2016)

The fact that its contributions to *Katwe* are cited by donor organizations demonstrates that these organization value Maisha’s ability to grow East African filmic talent in a way that can promote the region’s integration into Northern audiovisual economies, and in a way that can produce local stories according to international norms about audiovisual quality. For these donors, audiovisual quality is understood as something that can be improved through education, and not necessarily a site of contested values and norms with regional variation. In this respect, they value an industry-focused audiovisual education over one that prioritizes individual artistic vision. Still, the CKU report does have a telling moment that shows how understandings of quality are constructed. In describing Maisha’s success, the report cites increased media literacy as one benefit of the training courses. The lab introduced its participants to

analytical methods and critical media consumption. Indeed, with these skills, some former participants disclosed that they could no longer tolerate watching west African soap operas because of their poor quality. (Consult4Change, 2016, p. 38)

While, on the one hand, CKU sees Maisha as successful because of its ability to grow East Africa's film economy, on the other, it sees Maisha as successful because of its ability to turn participants away from a regionally successful industry. This contradiction, then, shows how Eurocentrism can structure audiovisual assistance. But as I will discuss in the following sections, it is also unintendedly true: Maisha's instructors and curriculum did teach students to approach media critically, but they did so in a way that found fault in American and European films as much as West African soaps. In doing so, the screenwriting lab carved out a space for local cultural production that is at once critical of and compatible with global audiovisual economies and circuits of cultural valuation.

### **In What Sense Can Writers Be Trained?**

Maisha's screenwriting lab came to be as a result of both design and necessity. While the organization's mission statement and Mira Nair's statements about its founding stress storytelling, the organization was also created out of Nair's inability to find a Ugandan film crew and initially taught film production. Economic constraints led to its eventual focus on screenwriting, but the privileging of writing nevertheless has important implications for thinking about voice, representation, and filmmakers on the peripheries. Whereas other elements of filmmaking, such as those taught by CFI's ACPCultures+-funded courses like sound recording and editing, have been understood as teachable technical skills, screenwriting was long been understood as an innate, unteachable talent. Along with the task of directing, it is also the most inextricable from notions of authenticity and representation. This makes screenwriting a particularly resistant skill for integration into global audiovisual economies: runaway

productions from Hollywood do not choose their locations because of the ubiquity of inexpensive scribes.

As a subject of instruction, screenwriting emerged inextricably linked to existential debates about the role of film education – particularly whether film itself should be an art or an industry. Prior to the 1980s, filmic writing had not been an important or distinct area of instruction in Western Europe and was often rolled into coursework on directing. However, the shift away from auteurship that accompanied the National Film School of Denmark’s industry-oriented revisions its curriculum was accompanied by a new focus on writing, as both a strategy to distance curriculum from director-centric auteurism and as a response to a “more industrial conception of the process, in which the script represents not only the pre-filmic story but also the core around which a ‘package’ can be assembled in order to raise production finance.” (Petrie & Stoneman, 2014, p. 39)

A selection of papers from the 1980 General Assembly meeting of the International Association of Film and Television Schools (CILECT) provides a snapshot of how institutions viewed screenwriting instruction soon after its introduction. The organization was based in Cannes and was founded in the 1950s to foster collaboration and exchange between European – and eventually, global – film schools. During the meeting, a “provocation” was posed: “In what sense can writers be trained?” (CILECT, 1980, p. 1)

The CILECT meeting brought together various respondents to answer that question and discuss “the training of writers and directors in the art and the craft of screenwriting.” (CILECT, 1980, p. i) While training programs in writing abound today, the task of screenwriting – and artistic writing in general – had long been considered the product of inspiration, not technique. In the words of Ulla Ryum from Denmark, “one reason why screenwriting was not taught in



Denmark until 1976 is that ‘learning to write’ has traditionally been considered to be a vulgarization of the ‘free pursuit of creative talent.’” (CILECT, 1980, p. 29) While the National Film School of Denmark had abandoned such view, other institutions – like the West German *Deutsche Film und Fernseh Akademie* (DFFB) – still held it. Heinz Rathsack of the DFFB explained:

The DFFB does not have a specific course for training screenwriters. One of the main reasons for this is the recognition that schools exist all over the world for painters, actors, musicians or filmmakers, but with very few, rather insignificant exceptions, there are no comparable schools for authors or poets. Every writer or repute in the world is self-taught. (CILECT, 1980, p. 42)

For Rathsack, this view of the writer does not mean that writing cannot be improved, but it does mean that it is futile for film schools to attempt such a task.

The actual achievement of the writer lies in his or her creativity, in the ability to make fantasy into something tangible and capable of being put into effect. This is not an ability that can be taught, but it is a talent that can be developed further. To recognize such a creative talent, to stimulate it, to guide and encourage it through sufficient contracts with directors, cameramen, and script editors – all represent a pedagogic skill for which I am unable to now provide guidelines. (CILECT, 1980, p. 43)

Other schools, however, had either implemented screenwriting courses or – like Belgium and Sweden – bemoaned that they had not done so yet. For these schools, rather than the “free pursuit of creative talent,” screenwriting was a specialized element of filmmaking that was distinct from other forms of writing. Toru Otake of Nihon University in Tokyo wrote that his program aimed to teach students how to “think cinematically.” (CILECT, 1980, p. 47) Likewise, Leville Smith of the Danish Film School wrote that one of the points emphasized at the beginning of courses was that “screenwriting is not a literary activity.” (CILECT, 1980, p. 35) For schools that had the most developed screenwriting curriculum, like Denmark and the USSR’s VGIK, teaching screenwriting involved teaching both dramaturgical conventions about characters and story arcs with the ability to think visually. Rather than simply a turn toward

industry and away from auteurship, then, the rise of screenwriting instruction was also a reaffirmation of film's ability to tell stories about people.

I pause on this CILECT meeting not to draw a direct line between European screenwriting in the 1980s and Maisha film lab, but to illustrate some of the tensions at play in screenwriting instruction and how curriculum can be connected to larger discussions about art and commerce. But what how do these discussions play out in industries on the peripheries?

In a coincidence that is fortuitous for this project, CILECT's published proceedings from the 1980 conference also includes a second section, "Problems of Training in the Third World." A precursor to the *Bridging the Gap* report, this section primarily deals with financial and organizational recommendations for expanding technical audiovisual training in developing countries – an abrupt change from the student-oriented thoughtfulness of the screenwriting section preceding it. Still, Heinz Rathsack does consider what education in European institutions might mean for the experiences and outcomes of students from the Global South. He notes that a years-long course in Europe would result in "severe disruption of [a student's] social and cultural-environmental ties." (CILECT, 1980, p. 67) As a result, students would likely face convincing incentives to stay and "practice the profession in the country which provided the training whereas reintegration into the home country becomes extremely difficult." (CILECT, 1980, p. 67)

Rathsack's concern is dependent on the existence of overwhelming cultural difference ("Integration into the new environment raises problems which prove insurmountable for many third world students"), but also on disconnected industry practices and networks. Together, this makes film training abroad unable to grow local film in developing countries, both industrially and in terms of developing a distinct filmic voice.

A third world country cannot establish its own national identity in the film sector if the filmmakers receive their training in a foreign country, with such a considerable period of their lives spent abroad and detached from their socio-cultural context. (67)

Rathsack uses this concern as the basis for advocating for CILECT's growing involvement in creating film courses in and for developing countries. In turn, the organization's attempt to mitigate the need for those in developing countries to study film abroad in European institutions can be seen as part of a growing concern in some parts of Northern audiovisual industries to bring tailored educational opportunities in film to those in the Global South with the aim of providing local ways of integrating industries into global marketplaces. An article in the August 1, 1979 issue of *Variety* titled "Black Africa's Film School," for instance, touts the potential of the *Institut africain d'éducation cinématographique* in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in educating filmmakers in how to be successful in an increasingly deregulated marketplace.

If there is one element essential to the blooming of a new African cinema, it is definitely an educational system that will train young Africans in the practicalities of production as well as the niceties of the marketplace. Before the existence of INAFEC, African filmmakers had to be trained either in Paris or Moscow, in educational systems which played down the idea that film is an art as well as an industry. The outcome, inevitably, was that the Black Africans who returned home having studied in Moscow or Paris, made films which lacked broad appeal and were therefore never released internationally. If anything, INAFEC has made certain that students who finish its three year program will leave having been sensitized to the economic realities of film. (Michaud, 1979)

For Maisha Film Lab, the answer to "can writers be trained?" is a foregone conclusion: they can. But its answer to questions of cultural difference and national filmic identity are understandably more nuanced. Cultural difference for Rathsack was a zero-sum game – an obstacle for one's success in a foreign educational institution, and, once overcome, an obstacle to the creation of authentic national filmic identities. Operating decades later in a more globalized media landscape, however, Maisha takes an alternate view of cultural difference and local

authenticity, positioning East African filmmaking as an important region in global audiovisual industries that, while underrepresented and unique, can effectively speak to global audiences through mastery of storytelling techniques.



Figure 7: Maisha Screenwriting Lab

The instructors emphasized hard work, structure, and working within economic and logistical constraints as the key to success in the film industry, and simultaneously deemphasized more romantic ideas of the filmmaker as an inspired artist expressing a unique vision. As the instructor Angella Emuron explained, “Structure is what’s left when you don’t have inspiration, in those moments when there isn’t pure inspiration.” While all students came to the course with completed scripts, they were constantly workshopped and revised to incorporate the instructors’ lessons about plot structure and characterization. A primary focus of the first few days, for instance, was on story mapping: identifying and improving the basic structures in each students’ script such as protagonist, key relationship, central problem that leads to a goal, and obstacle. As

the course went on, instructors tackled the 3-act structure, which was eventually expanded into 10 key points that every plot should meet. This was a complex and challenging task. To list a few examples, goals must be “specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and time-bound.” A protagonist, meanwhile, should meet eight characteristics:

- 1) have a problem to solve
- 2) have something to gain or lose. Something at stake
- 3) be willful
- 4) be relatable
- 5) be realistic / 3 dimensional
- 6) be adaptable
- 7) be charming
- 8) be able to solve the problem themselves

These detailed structures were thoroughly debated and complicated throughout the course. The lesson about the characteristics of a protagonist, for instance, led to a discussion about protagonists who are morally corrupt or unlikable, such as Hamlet, the protagonists of mafia movies, and Jordan Belfort, the protagonist in Martin Scorsese’s *The Wolf of Wall Street*. (2013) Soon after, a discussion of antagonists – who must be willful, three dimensional, stronger than the protagonist, and lacking in a moral compass – led to discussion about what could constitute an antagonistic force in lieu of a character. Horror movies, it was noted, with the exception of *Get Out* (2017) oftentimes simply had bad things happen to protagonists through happenstance, supernatural forces, or even nature. The instructor Angella Emuron used the examples of colonialism, racism, sexism, and an unfair justice system as “systems or environmental forces that create an antagonistic space for your protagonist.” Cajetan Boy, meanwhile, noted that tradition could also be an antagonistic force.

Maisha's curriculum is proprietary and has gone through multiple iterations, but the structures it emphasizes are not uncommon in screenwriting courses in the US or Europe. Instructors highly recommended and occasionally drew lessons from the book *Save the Cat! The Last Book on Screenwriting You'll Ever Need*, a popular screenwriting book by Blake Snyder, who was one of the most successful Hollywood spec screenwriters (his script for 1989's *Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot* sold for half a million dollars after a bidding war). The title of Snyder's book alludes to the importance of including a moment in which a protagonist does something kind or nice to help audiences root for them, inspired by Sigourney Weaver's character in *Alien* (1979) literally rescuing a cat at one point. Snyder argued that these elements were missing in today's big Hollywood productions, which focused more on spectacle than story. (Snyder, 2005)

Despite drawing on American and European screenwriting instruction, however, Maisha's emphasis on formalism occasionally butted up against the norms of foreign films and their depictions of Africa in interesting ways. In one example, the instructor Cajetan Boy presented good story structure as a potential solution to avoid cliched representations of poverty and suffering: "Careful of giving people heavy burdens, like blindness – don't use characters as vehicles for a message that needs to be passed on."<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Angella Emuron noted that "a good movie has all levels of obstacles" facing its protagonist – including internal, inter-personal, and environmental obstacles. To illustrate what not to do, she noted if obstacles are all internal, the film will be insufferably boring and lose the audience's attention, citing "European film" as an example before correcting herself to "art house" films. In American films, in contrast, obstacles are all environmental, like car chases and explosions, which makes them vapid.

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<sup>21</sup> Similarly, during a lunchtime discussion about the Netflix series *Sense8* – which is partially set and shot in Nairobi – Cajetan Boy noted that, for him, the show failed because it "has an agenda that compromises it as a show."

Meanwhile, in Nigerian films, all obstacles are inter-personal, which makes them melodramatic and like soap-operas. Maisha students, it was implied, could do better. Later in the course, when a student asked if there were any alternatives to the 3-act structure, Emuron drew on structures from other regions, noting that Indian films use a 9-act structure while African oral storytelling uses a looping, spaghetti-like form, and expressing a desire to one day make a film that followed that structure.

These examples speak to how instructors negotiated the local, the global, and the universal in their instruction, and how structure became a strategy to teach universal filmmaking that was not tethered to any dominant film culture or tradition. Similarly, Maisha's instructors were aware of the expectations that Northern donors and audiences had for African film, and accounting for Maisha's position as a gateway between Northern funds and local filmmakers was part of the day-to-day operation of the lab. To illustrate teaching concepts and foster discussion, they showed short films that were made by previous graduates or filmmakers from elsewhere in the global south. These films avoided cliched representations of their protagonists as poor and in need of Northern assistance, even while often addressing social issues. For instance, Mumbai-based Payal Sethi's short film *Leeches* (2016) follows a young woman in Hyderabad whose virginity is sold off to an older man in a "one day marriage" and who manages to escape thanks to her gruesome use of the titular parasites. Maisha graduate Gary Mugisha's *Jinxed* (2016), meanwhile, turns urban crime and violence against women into a horrific dark comedy, as a young woman on her night out must escape armed robbery, crooked police, forced prostitution, and serial killers. Another film, *Must Be a God Fearing Christian Girl* by Maisha graduate Wanjiru Kairu, was a character-driven dramedy following John – a self-described "handsome,

self-employed businessman” who thinks very highly of himself – through the awkward results of online dating.

Despite the breadth of these examples and their eschewing of the poverty porn Jethro railed against, Northern imaginaries in some ways defined the kinds of stories students themselves sought to tell. The instructor Angella Emuron told me, “In terms of artistic films, we aren’t there yet. We still see too many scripts where a girl gets raped, where a robbery happens, where an orphan is struggling to survive in a slum.” Maisha let me observe their application process, and I did see many scripts on subjects like these in application materials. The instructors suggested that these submissions were, in part, an attempt by applicants to appeal to what they perceived to be the expectations of NGOs, like Maisha, that rely on foreign donors – indicating how development aid structures the local film industry. As Fibby Kioria told me, “There’s a lot of money out there for films about malaria and mosquito nets and HIV prevention. We need those films. We just need a lot of other kinds of films, too.”

The short films that have emerged out of Maisha’s labs have – like the examples mentioned above – overwhelmingly helped fulfill that need for “other kinds of films,” but there are illustrative exceptions. Maisha’s staff and instructors’ involvement with each winning script continues after the screenwriting course through production: in addition to the organization making experienced professionals available to advise on direction and other tasks, Kioria herself serves as producer for the films. As part of this process, Maisha staff and instructors provide ongoing feedback on completed versions short films that often lead to successive rounds of revisions. I sat in on one of these review sessions and was, myself, invited to share my feelings about the three films. The first was a piece in which an ancient alien – who we meet only in voiceover – inhabits and controls a patient in a mental hospital, a surreal, experimental take on



insane-or-not trope that, while bizarre, was slickly shot and could likely perform well in film festivals. The second was a melodrama about an affair that was technically more suited for video or TV release than film festivals. The third was a simple story about female genital mutilation in rural Uganda, in which a father has a change of heart and reverses his decision to force his daughter to have the procedure at the very last moment. The film about the mental patient had gone through dramatic changes since its script won a Maisha lab – originally, there was no explicit alien presence – and Maisha’s staff and instructors were surprised by the form it had taken. The film’s experimental nature resisted both easy judgment and Maisha’s emphasis on narrative structure and character development, but there was a consensus that the director had found his unique voice and that the film should be considered complete. The melodrama, on the other hand, had been plagued by production problems, and the version shown apparently diverged from the promise of the script; the Maisha staff had hoped the film would turn out better but thought that this cut might be the best version possible given the limited usable footage. Compared to these two films, and the other films in Maisha’s orbit, the final film stood out for its didacticism. The group of staff and instructors noted that it was well shot and acted. With some degree of ambivalence, they agreed that the film would become popular and profitable with issue-oriented NGOs, perhaps becoming the go-to film for FGM advocacy.

Maisha’s willingness to accept so many different genres, including the occasional film that might appeal to aid and development organizations, reflects the course’s concern for creating successful industries. As formal instruction wound down, the instructors included practical advice for navigating the local industry and its complex entanglement with foreign sources of funding. Ng’endo Mukii, herself successful in the international film festival circuit, provided advice about film festival submission etiquette and strategies, such as securing screening fees or

non-monetary compensation for festival screenings and the importance of networking at festivals. These film festivals were an opportunity, but not one that was entirely without drawbacks for filmmakers who would prefer not to be pigeonholed.

“Be attentive to diaspora film festivals. They’re keen to hear our voices. But you also don’t want to get locked into them. The good thing is that they are made up of people who are passionate specifically about African and African diaspora voices who are looking to fund films and work with people.”

Cajetan Boy, meanwhile, emphasized more local, entrepreneurial, and collaborative approach to dealing with a difficult financial environment.

“I’m an independent filmmaker, and I come from a space where I don’t have much patience and time to look for funds. Out of this group, 9 of you are not going to get funding [...] They say the parent of a child has no shame because they have to feed their kid. I don’t either. I’ve gotten everywhere by asking people for help and resources/ You’ve got to make linkages with likeminded people and find a way to make your movies. If you guys want to make your movies, you’ve got to start collaborating – that is the biggest problem in Kenyan film – everybody wants to do everything themselves.”

He advised students to be business-minded and not to get too close to their scripts. “Sell it and move on.”

### **Formally Evaluating Scripts**

While Maisha’s curriculum emphasized structure, it was generally agnostic towards a story’s content, message, and genre, allowing for an impressive diversity of stories. The scripts that developed during those ten days varied wildly. Owino Sang’iewa – who was returning to Maisha for the second time, after winning a lab several years ago – wrote a dark screwball comedy about a loser whose wife dies in labor because of his procrastination. Vigilance Atieno’s script was a drama about rival clique of girls at a university, focusing on a beautiful, dark-skinned girl named Ivy. The story underwent substantial revision, including the removal a plotline about HIV and the addition of a faint comedic tone. Beatrice Mategwa’s script followed

Imsa, a single woman in her 40s who is a work-obsessed television reporter in unstable regions for the UN. Mwendu Ngao, a lifestyle blogger and TV writer, wrote a somber story about the aftermath of suicide in a Catholic family. One of the most surprising was about a woman who sells her best friend to a shadowy man who buys people in order to harvest their skin. I talked with its author, Stanley Gitonga King'ori, after an instructor suggested some changes to one of his drafts, about whether it made more sense for the woman's skin to be taken off because it would be sold on the black medical market, or because it would be used in rituals by Satanists. Later, he was considering whether a lion should kill off one of his script's characters. Ultimately, he decided against the lion because it didn't serve character development and marred his script's structure.

As the end of the course approached, the formal elements that had been emphasized throughout the 10 days' lessons became the primary way to evaluate the competing scripts. After a collaborative and highly-entertaining read-through of all the scripts, a jury made up of Maisha's staff and instructors (and one friend of the staff who just happened to drop by that day) evaluated each script on a sheet with nearly 20 categories, including opening act, resolution, and key relationship. Breaking scripts down into their formal elements served as a way to add a feeling of objectivity to the process of selecting the winner and overcoming personal preferences, as well as evaluating how well students learned the course's lessons. Yet even this process was not free from influence from abroad. Because I had watched the scripts develop through the course, and because of my perceived expertise in aid to audiovisual industries, I was unexpectedly asked to sit in and "vote" with Maisha's staff. My mere presence disadvantaged the two scripts that had dialogue in Swahili, a language that I do not understand.

After tallying up the votes, we were all surprised when a violent, action-packed thriller won. Ostensibly about an upstanding family man named Marshal who is on the run after leaking information about corporate corruption, the script is primarily one long fight scene. For most of its ten pages, it meticulously detailed how the protagonist, and at one point his wife, use everything from broken glass to fire extinguishers to beat their pursuers in a gruesome fight in a bakery they stopped at on their way to the airport to escape the consequences of the leak. While no script was a clear frontrunner beforehand, we were surprised that this action-packed thriller won. That was how Maisha's evaluative system worked: in emphasizing formal elements, judges from different countries with different tastes in film were unable to simply select the film that best matched their genre preferences or their cultural background.

While I had personally rated the film highly in many categories because of how precisely it described each shot, I had also gone into Maisha at least partially expecting to see the transmission of European filmic values or developmental logics onto its students, like in the film against female genital mutilation. Or, alternately, I thought I might observe some kind of active resistance to these things, a powerful indictment of European interference in Kenya. However, Kenji Gathecha, the film's author, had created a script that was unconcerned with defining its position towards such issues. Instead, he had adapted the "global universal" that is the Hollywood fight scene for a Kenyan context. The script didn't represent Kenya to the world; it was a Kenyan film that would be legible anywhere in the world.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has illustrated how Northern funding programs' understandings of filmic value, knowledge, and expertise influence what training programs in the Global South receiving

funding and shape those training programs' priorities. This system of Northern funding can constrain texts and industrial practices in the South in various ways: by prioritizing didactic "mosquito net" films with educational and development aims, by foregrounding notions of difference that delimit the subject matter of Southern filmmakers, and by devaluing locally popular forms of cultural production (such as West African soaps). At the same time, contemporary forms of European state-supported audiovisual training have come to emphasize the exchange of ideas and expertise and a balance of individualist artistic expression and industry-oriented practical skills, allowing initiatives like Maisha Film Lab the flexibility to negotiate Northern notions of quality film with their own in the classroom, and carve out a space for local audiovisual productions alongside foreign imports. Through an emphasis on formal structure in the writing process, Maisha supports a diverse range of East African genres that position East African cultural production as a unique node in a globalized environment of media production and circulation.

Despite Maisha's impressive ability to accommodate, find value in, and help develop scripts as diverse as Gathecha's violent thriller and the anti-FGM message movie, the organization may not host another screenwriting lab. During my visit, Fibby Kioria was unsure of what direction the Foundation would pursue next, and this reformulation of Maisha's activities is due to both practical and existential reasons. The organization has been conducting film training workshops for over 15 years and is looking to explore new horizons for growing the East African film scene. At the same time, however, the labor involved in annual appeals for foreign funding is a difficult to maintain. Thus, even without the kinds of constraints that this chapter has shown can be connected to Northern sources of funding, the transitory nature these funds creates precarity that can profoundly shape Southern audiovisual industries.

For now, instead of the four-country screenwriting labs Maisha had been organizing for many years, in 2018 the organization is participating in an initiative launched by the German Film and TV Academy (DFFB) that brings together students from the German school, East African applicants selected by Maisha, and students from Ghana's National Film and Television Institute for writing workshops at each of the African institutions with the aim of producing a 9-episode, 10-minute web series. It would be interesting to know what the DFFB's former employee Heinz Rathsack thought about how much both his organization's position on screenwriting instruction and the education of filmmakers in the Global South has changed since CILECT's 1980 conference.

## CONCLUSION

In her article “Donor Values and the Case of Film in Tanzania,” Jane Bryce relates the stories of aspiring filmmakers in Tanzania, a country with plenty of international development agency presence, a small but growing local video film industry called Swahiliwood, and little in the way of a formalized industry with international reach. Bryce shows how the operations of development agencies shape the country’s audiovisual industries, providing opportunities for audiovisual professionals that are both economically enabling and creatively constraining. Many international development organizations in Tanzania produce audiovisual materials for fundraising purposes and films with developmental aims and are happy to hire local talent for their audiovisual productions. Their relatively outsized budgets mean that many filmmakers can support themselves and their own cinematic passion projects by taking on development gigs. For aspiring Tanzanian scriptwriter Adbu Simba, who struggled to find a director for his scripts in Tanzania and even in South Africa – which boasts a large film industry with regional and international reach – international NGOs operating in his home country provided a fallback, as finally, he “bowed to the inevitable and accepted a commission to write the screenplay for a donor film for HelpAge International on the plight of elderly caregivers left with AIDS orphans.” (Bryce, 2010, p. 166) Understandably, this employment in service of development agencies’ aims did not fulfill Simba’s artistic aspirations: “There’s no virtue in trying to be an artist in Tanzania,” he told Bryce. (Bryce, 2010, p. 166)

While ACPCultures+ aims to change the audiovisual landscape in developing countries, the organizations Bryce discusses have aims that are more commonplace within the development milieu. HelpAge International, for instance, focuses on improving the quality of life for older people. Nevertheless, her article shows how even the “traditional” development sector can exert significant influence – however unintended – on the broader media landscapes of the countries in which it operates. Indeed, HelpAge International’s film about orphans with AIDS recalls the kind of Northern-funded developmental narratives that we have seen in various forms throughout this dissertation (including a blistering critique in *Jethro x Jethro* in Chapter 4) as well as their entanglement with local audiovisual industries. In Chapter 2, Yared Zeleke’s *Lamb*, Djo Tunda Wa Munga’s *Viva Riva*, and other ACPCultures+-funded co-productions incorporated subtle messages about social development and human rights into their narratives, while, like Simba, Zeleke took on work for development organizations to support himself between films. In Chapter 3, MobiCINE+’s fleet of mobile cinemas, despite its founder’s original intentions, found showing educational films for development organizations to be more lucrative than showing cinema for African audiences. And in Chapter 4, in Maisha’s screenwriting labs, some applicants and students turned to “mosquito nets” scripts and poverty porn tropes about orphans in slums in order to appeal to what they perceived as the expectations of foreign donors. Similar relationships between aid and local industries appeared throughout my fieldwork in Nairobi, where many audiovisual professionals I encountered likewise navigated the profitability of taking on work for development and human rights organizations with their own artistic endeavors. The fledgling free VOD service Rununu.TV, for instance, streams sponsored media and special events from development and humanitarian organizations to support its assortment of TV shows and films. Meanwhile, production house Lightbox Africa Limited has taken on



projects for the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) promoting maternal health and for the Alliance Française, Goethe Institut and UNESCO promoting environmental responsibility. For Lightbox, such work has supported their own fiction short films and, they hope, might one day fund a feature length film.

This kind of impact of humanitarian and development organizations on audiovisual industries in developing countries has not been sufficiently studied from a media industries approach, and one reason I turn to Bryce's article in this conclusion is to suggest the importance of this area – particularly at a mid-range and/or micro-level vantage perspective that incorporates interviews and fieldwork with industry employees – for future scholarship on global media industries. This dissertation has shown how the activities of a single European audiovisual assistance incorporate European logics of the audiovisual public good, cultural exchange and diversity, and audiovisual policy, and has at times pointed towards how ACPCultures+ can be understood in relation to the broader development sector, but more research is needed to understand the commonalities of audiovisual assistance programs and their collective relationship to and impact on audiovisual industries in developing countries.

Another reason I address Bryce's article here is that her account of HelpAge International's inadvertent impact on Tanzania's audiovisual industry brings into focus something that is oftentimes difficult to discern amidst audiovisual assistance programs' efforts at growing Southern audiovisual industries and ameliorating imbalanced global media flows: that no matter the number or kinds of feature films, workshops, and distribution initiatives they fund, as part of the development sector they necessarily impact audiovisual industries in unintended ways, creating relationships between sources of funding, audiovisual professionals, and audiences and markets that differ from those in Northern industries. While ACPCultures+'s staff

and publicly available materials demonstrate an acute awareness of how the globalization of Northern laissez-faire audiovisual industries impact the audiovisual landscape in countries in the ACP Group of States and even their own biases towards art house styles of cinema over Hollywood blockbusters, they were unaware, or at least uncritical, of impact the development sector has on audiovisual industries in developing countries. Increased self-awareness and self-reflexivity in this regard would likely help to appease the criticisms we have seen of audiovisual assistance programs like ACPCultures+.

In contrast, the audiovisual professionals who have received funding from ACPCultures+ I interviewed were aware and at times critical of their relationship to foreign funding sources, local industries, and global media industry practices and expectations. In Chapter 2, Yared Zeleke spoke of the difficulties of securing European funding for *Lamb* as well as those of navigating Ethiopia's authoritarian government. He believed that it might have been easier for him to find work in the US film industry because of his training in the film program at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts than it was to operate within the global film funding regime. In Chapter 3, Enrico Chiesa acknowledged his lack of expertise in African media industries and his reliance on a "very Western" view of African cinema in determining AfricaFilms.TV's library of film and TV content. And in Chapter 4, Maisha's staff, instructors, and students positioned themselves and the program in relation to the expectations of foreign sources of funding, the ubiquity of media with developmental messages in Nairobi, and the varying narrative conventions of European, American, and African films. Such critical awareness often helped funding recipients creatively navigate the complex system of Northern audiovisual funding in ways that defied expectations or that took a different interpretation of ACPCultures+'s policies. In this respect, this dissertation has shown how, when viewed from a mid-level perspective that

pairs policy analysis with interviews with funding recipients, audiovisual assistance programs like ACPCultures+ can be understood not as projects that simply reinforce longstanding cultural hegemonies, but rather as a critical components of certain globalized Southern audiovisual industries that, like other sources of audiovisual funding, is both productive and constraining in various ways.

At times, this dissertation has discussed the precarity faced by audiovisual professionals working in ACP countries who rely on Northern sources of funding like ACPCultures+. In Chapter 3, Île Courts film festival was forced to cancel their operations for a year after their funding from Institut Français dried up, and in Chapter 4, we saw how Maisha and Docubox engage in a near-continuous search for new sources of funding, modulating their activities when necessary to be in sync with donor priorities. While programs like ACPCultures+ offer temporary respite from funding woes, they also contribute to this kind of precarity through their transitoriness and their sensitivity to even minute changes in the Northern organizations and governments that fund them. During interviews and fieldwork conducted for this project in 2017, many recipients of funding from ACPCultures+ were eagerly awaiting a new call for proposals from the program or its successor. Because of the cyclical nature of EU and European Development Fund budgets, ACPCultures+ – like its predecessor ACP-Films – was meant to expire at the end its current funding period, but its prompt resuscitation seemed to be widely expected among funding recipients. So far, however, no new call has been released, the ACPCultures+ website was taken down during the writing of this dissertation and the program – in the form described here, at least – appears to have ended its operations without an indication of what the future of EU aid to cultural and audiovisual industries might be. Furthermore, the current 11<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund is scheduled to run until 2020, and its expiration

coincides not only with the EU's budget but also with the Cotonou Agreement that has guided the aid and trade relationship between the EU and the ACP Group of States since 2000. It remains uncertain what kind of EU-ACP agreement will take Cotonou's place.

Adding to this precarity are recent developments within the EU that call into question both its status as a "cosmopolitan empire" and the future of its media policies. Since I began this project, the EU has seen a surge in nationalism that threatens the stability of the EU and its member states. Excluding some regional nationalist movements (e.g. Scotland, Catalonia), Europe's diverse nationalist movements share a common dislike of the EU and of immigration, particularly from Africa and the MENA region. Such movements are, of course, not encouraging signs for the tenability of the EU's relationship with countries in the ACP Group of States. At the same time, the 2016 Brexit referendum – perhaps the most dramatic collusion of xenophobia and Euroscepticism in recent years – threatens to disrupt audiovisual industries in the EU as well as the UK. The UK is tied with Germany as largest audiovisual market in the EU (21% of the entire EU) and is the primary country of operations for EU-wide TV channels and on-demand services. It also produces 16% of all EU films (not including UK-Hollywood co-productions), is home to three of the EU's largest media groups (Sky, ITV, and BBC), and produces the 4<sup>th</sup> most TV hours and perhaps the most shows with international reach. (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2018) Considered in tandem, Brexit's impact on the EU audiovisual landscape and Europe's rise in nationalism could alter the fabric of the EU, its engagement with the wider world, and its project of creating a pan-European identity through cultural and audiovisual policies. These recent developments suggest a reversal, or at least a speedbump, in the trajectory of European cultural and audiovisual policies outlined in Chapter 1 from national to pan-European to global. Subsequent chapters expanded on this trajectory in different areas,

each showing a shift in European policies from national to global that helped set the stage for ACPCultures+: co-production funding in Chapter 2, distribution and exchange in Chapter 2, and audiovisual education in Chapter 4.

While the rise of nationalism within the EU suggests that ACPCultures+ may not return, the global film funding regime is larger than any single program or government. However, even if audiovisual professionals in the countries that comprise the ACP Group of States will continue to be able to apply for grants from film festivals, NGOs, international organizations, and government initiatives, this dissertation's case studies provide insight into how the relationship between Southern industries and Northern sources of funding is rapidly changing for reasons besides tumult in the North. In Chapter 3, we saw how new commercial VOD ventures have built upon AfricaFilms.TV's strategies (e.g. targeting diasporic audiences) while simultaneously taking advantage of both a better grasp of African audiences and of the improvements in internet and mobile infrastructure that the last decade has seen in much of sub-Saharan Africa. Chapter 2, meanwhile, turned in part to how VOD for Northern audiences like Netflix and Amazon Prime provide not only ways to distribute films like *Lamb* outside of the film festival circuit, but also new ways to understand global notions of filmic quality.

Chapter 2 also touched on new ownership arrangements that disrupt the idea of a unidirectional flow of cash from Northern donors to Southern industries. For instance, we saw that new local industries have emerged since Diawara's 1991 critique of Africa's "cinema in exile." Nollywood, in particular, has expanded its global reach in recent years, with high budget "new-Nollywood" productions adapting Nollywood's idiosyncratic themes and tropes for formal theatrical and online distribution both in Nigeria and abroad. (Miller J. , 2016) At the same time, investment from China – an increasingly important investor and business partner in Africa – in

African film industries shows how audiovisual industries on the peripheries are wrapped up in larger processes of economic globalization. Chapter 4, meanwhile, pointed towards how emerging African industries are sidestepping both the art house and the video film to make films that reframe African stories as part of the global landscape of popular media.

Together, these shifts suggest the beginning of a transition for audiovisual industries in countries in the ACP Group of States from dependency on Northern largess to commercial viability in a globalized economy. Rather than this growth and change discounting the relevancy of audiovisual assistance programs like ACPCultures+ for research on audiovisual industries on the peripheries, as media scholars we should attempt to better understand both the foundational role that audiovisual assistance has played in shaping the path these industries have taken, and the ways audiovisual assistance and local industries together reframe what audiovisual policy and the public good can mean.

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