

**Film Festivals in Africa:
A Study in Sustainability**

by

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of this thesis is to determine which factors ensure the sustainability of film festivals in Africa based on both theoretical and real-world perspectives. In order to achieve this objective, I will analyse the history of film festivals, and also explore related theoretical aspects such as the sociological concept of spatial flow and actor-network theory. In addition to this theoretical research approach, this thesis also applies an auto-ethnographic approach. Based on many years of first-hand experience working in film festivals in Africa, I have identified four key indicators of what is necessary to sustain the current environment and the future of film festivals in sub-Saharan Africa, with a focus on festivals in Anglophone Africa. These are: community and identity, physicality and place, technology, and financing and funding.

The core issue addressed in this thesis is to look at how film festivals in sub-Saharan Africa can become not only sustainable, but also how they can become viable and valuable elements within Africa's film industry infrastructure. By looking at the four areas I have identified as essential to this success – (1) community and identity, (2) physicality and place, (3) technology, and (4) financing and funding – I aim to highlight a possible best-practice path forward that will ensure the long term success of film festivals in Africa within the larger African film ecosystem.

This thesis will contribute to what is at present a very limited knowledge base on film festivals in Africa. In order to contextualise the space that film festivals in Africa occupy in the global film industry, as well to provide a theoretical perspective, my research has

drawn on disciplines such as sociology and economics, in addition to film festival studies. This thesis includes an analysis of broadly accepted concepts such as a global, hierarchical network or circuit of film festivals, and an in-depth exploration of the position festivals in Africa occupy near the bottom of this hierarchical network.

The four frameworks or indicators that I argue are fundamental to the understanding of the current role and future sustainability of film festivals in Africa are each presented in a separate chapter. In each case, the chapters include the theoretical relevance of the particular indicator to film festivals in general, followed by a specific focus on its practical implications for film festivals in Africa.

1.1 *Definition of the four concepts*

1.1.1 Identity/ Community: The various mechanisms by which a festival's self-defined identity or brand is developed and expressed are essential to its on-going sustainability and success. Identity is defined here as a festival's curated and established brand, its target communities and audiences, and how it positions itself in relation to its location and to other festivals in local, regional and international contexts. A festival's identity can be understood and defined from multiple perspectives both internally and externally. Festival identity is positioned within the context of a globalised world economy and its hierarchical or unequal global film festival network. However, I also look more specifically at the identity a festival creates for itself, particularly in relation to its local context, the communities that it includes and engages with, and its real and/or imagined audiences. This concept of identity is viewed through various theoretical lenses such as globalisation, spatiality and actor-network theory, and related to my lived experience of film festivals in Africa. in a

seeming paradox, I strongly advocate in this thesis that film festivals in Africa have a strong sense of identity that is clearly linked to local communities and audiences in order to compete globally and to secure support from the increasingly scarce financial resources required for long term sustainability.

1.1.2 Physicality and Place

This concept of the lived and physical spatial nature of film festivals, contextualised within an understanding of globalised hierarchies and networks, explains the impact of the film festival as a lived event happening in a particular time and space. From a theoretical perspective of spatial theory, taking account of the realities of particular venues, festival screening locations, and the importance of local (real) audiences, I examine how the physicality of film festivals, particularly in Africa, is a critical factor in the success of these events. I will address the various ways in which the politics of space, from the city and even the country in which a festival is held to the specific screening and festival venues, has an impact the festival's long term viability. Issues of accessibility, the political and personal ways in which individuals and communities relate to various spaces, and the historical impact of festival locations are all essential to understanding how festival audiences are included in, or (unintentionally or not) excluded from festival events. In a post Covid-19 world where 2020 and 2021 have seen the physical film festival put on hold, the importance of physicality will still be critically important even if, as discussed below, hybrid models of festivals that incorporate both physical and virtual events become the norm.

1.1.3 Technology

Various innovations in technology and disruptive new platforms are having an impact on film festivals around the world, especially in a post 2020 Covid-19 environment. Both from a theoretical and practical perspective, festivals are having to adapt and evolve to ever more challenging financial and physical event constraints, whilst advances in technology threaten the very nature of a physical film festival event. In this thesis I argue, however, that despite the major challenges facing film festivals in Africa, and despite the ways in which Covid-19 has disrupted many festivals, technological and digital innovation benefit film festivals in Africa that are willing and able to embrace them. The African film industry space has developed very differently from that of the global North or West. Due to the realities and even the constraints of the African film space, such as a lack of cinema circuits, as traditionally understood, the vast distances between cities, and the lack of access to technology, the film festival in Africa has had a different space and function from festivals in other parts of the world. Within this context, I believe that many of the advances in technology that have disrupted film festivals globally are, in fact, opportunities rather than challenges for festivals in Africa that are willing to adapt and evolve.

1.1.4 Financing and Funding

The ability of film festivals to attract funding and finance is intrinsically linked to their status and place within the hierarchy of global film festivals. The ability of a film festival to secure on-going and sustainable avenues of funding, through donor support or commercial sponsorship, is a direct outcome of how a festival manifests and expresses the three frameworks I have outlined above; namely its identity and community, its physical and lived experience, and its adaptation to innovation and technology.

These four indicators affect all film festivals. However, African film festivals are affected in distinctly different ways. From the work that has been done on the African film landscape, and through my first-hand experience, it is clear that the African film industry environment does not even remotely match the norms of the globalised world, most notably in the space of cinemas and cinema culture. Most African countries, apart from notable exceptions such as South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Ethiopia, do not have a cinema circuit, and in most countries physical cinemas simply do not exist. Historically, and even up into the present day in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and even the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba, mobile cinemas that take films to remote locations and villages are more common than cinemas. Without this traditionally understood cinema circuit, film festivals in Africa have historically been the only places for a filmmaker to screen, promote, or sell their films to both audiences and potential buyers. While this has changed due to online and other technological advances, as will be shown at a later point in this thesis, access to many of these new technologies is still limited in Africa, and hence, the role of the film festival in Africa is still very different from that in the global North.

Globally, those who study the history of film festivals, generally agree there has been a conscious shift at almost all film festivals towards the business and deal-making side of the film sector. Over the past few years almost all major film festivals now also host markets, hold competitions, and run other business related aspects that target international filmmakers, distributors, funders, and broadcasters as primary markets and audiences. I will argue, however, that film festivals in Africa, based on the unique landscape of the film industry and its audiences, have always had to focus on the business side of things and have

therefore evolved along a different path from their European and North American counterparts, even while facing many of the same challenges.

Funding for film festivals in Africa also poses a specific set of challenges; most festivals are funded by donor organisations from the West and the North. As will be shown, African cities and even national governments are not able to, unlike their Western counterparts, fund and support local film festivals. Film festivals in Africa then are more often than not dependant on foreign sources of funds. Global donor organisations, be they embassies or foreign government bodies such as The French Institute, The British Council, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and others, are often linked to very strict conditions that do not allow festivals to use the funds as needed. An example from ZIFF related to workshops where this kind of donor funding was available for all hard costs for workshops to be covered, such as venue hire (at a Western owned hotel), technical costs, and transport costs, but the funding would not cover the fee for the local workshop developer on the ZIFF team. Donor funding therefore provides both benefits and challenges to many festivals, and also often impacts decision on programming and venues. As will be shown later in this thesis, there is often a conflict in festivals making decisions that address the desires and demands of actual local audiences, and the perceived audiences of potential donors, foreign guests, and media.

The example of how the commercial needs of sponsor brands can impact decisions made by film festivals is demonstrated later in this thesis most clearly in the case of the Cape Town Film Market and Festival that strongly relied on corporate sponsors.

The concept of a global hierarchy of film festivals within a network, where film festivals in Africa are positioned as actors that are disadvantaged from the start, is one that has been widely discussed within film festival studies and is a concept that I use as the cornerstone of the arguments in this thesis. I propose that festivals taking place in Africa have a unique set of challenges as well as opportunities that need to be identified and understood in order for these festivals to survive. These challenges may originate from similar pressures and factors to those that festivals face elsewhere in the West or Global North. However, the ways that festivals in Africa are affected by these pressures, and the ways in which they respond, are unique to the African environment. The field of film festival studies, supported by other areas of theoretical research such as sociology and spatial theory as well as concepts of globalisation, can provide a framework from within which to understand this particular space that film festivals in Africa occupy.

The conclusions that I draw are also influenced by my personal experience of working within the film festival space in Africa for more than ten years. This experience at two very different film festivals with very different histories and trajectories provides much of the grounds for my analysis in this thesis. I will draw on over five years of in-depth experience at a festival with a long history and specific origin, the Zanzibar International Film Festival (2012-2018), as well as experience at the Cape Town International Film Festival that was presented in only 2017 and 2018. By analysing the realities of these two very different events within the framework identified in this thesis, I argue that Africa's unique environment holds the key to ensuring a sustainable film festival future.

I propose that in order to claim a firm position within the global festival circuit, African festivals must ensure that they exist at a meeting point between authenticity and community that is rooted in Africa. This key to sustainable success is a festival rooted and connected to its local audiences, regional communities, and film industry with a clear understanding of its role both as a cultural and social meeting point, and with a historical place as an “industry node”. Rather than mirroring the trends and trajectory of festivals in Europe or North America, and shying away from the “Africanness” of their local environment, I argue that African film festivals could be more sustainable and successful if they firmly embraced their unique identities, local communities, the limits and opportunities presented by their local physical realities, and their distance from the developed world’s film industries. Film festivals in Africa have the opportunity to leverage their community and identity, physicality and place, technology and disruption to create opportunities for sustainable funding, growth and transformation.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

My literature survey revealed that there is limited research on film festivals in Africa beyond key work by authors such as Lizelle Bisschoff (2012, 2013) and Lindiwe Dovey (2013, 2014, 2015). While it is true that much of the more generalised research on film festivals provides information on global trends, there are few resources available on film festivals in Africa and how they align with, and deviate from, historically determined global norms in festivals from Europe and North America. In much of the current writing on film festivals, authors such as de Valck (2006, 2007), Loist (2016), and Iordanova (2010) offer extensive analysis of the way film festivals, over the past few decades, have changed from being cultural and artistic celebrations to more industry-, finance-, and commerce-driven events.

In order to create a theoretical framework within which to understand film festivals, and more specifically, film festivals within Africa, I have taken a multi-disciplinary approach. I have included theoretical approaches from the fields of film festival studies, economics, media studies, sociology, and general social sciences. I have specifically included research on actor network theory, the public sphere, the spatial turn, and the impact of globalisation and its relevance and applicability to film and film studies. I believe my decision to integrate these theories within film festival studies in this thesis makes a significant contribution to the research on film festivals in Africa.

When utilising the academic texts across disciplines that have been written from a Western perspective and based on Western data and inputs, it is important to recognise where these writings may or may not be relevant to the African context. Within this thesis I use many of these broader academic concepts and adapt the thinking to apply to the four key concepts

of investigation. While some of the writings referenced were developed without taking considerations of African cities, spatiality or economic factors in mind, they are, in many instances, still relevant for the discussion in this thesis. By applying some of these concepts to an African concept it is possible to develop them further and identify how they also do shed light on some of the issues relating to film festivals in sub-Saharan Africa.

2.1 *Film Festival Studies*

In the expanding field of film festival studies there are various approaches, including historical, theoretical, political and economic approaches, with a few key scholars bridging the gaps between these approaches. The multi-disciplinary approaches taken by Skadi Loist, Marijke De Valck and Dina Iordanova (2010, 2015), have proved particularly relevant to this research. These authors have defined and investigated the concept of a global hierarchy within the film festival space. Their work also incorporates aspects that are directly related to my arguments on the future and sustainability of film festivals in Africa. While Iordanova (2010) writes about Western film festivals, many of her concepts are particularly relevant when applied to the African context. Of key importance is Iordanova's 2015 article "The Film festival as an industry node" in which she discusses not only the shift in film festivals from purely cultural events to sites of business and commerce for the global film industry, but also the related shift in how scholars write about these events. Iordanova (2015:9) also expands on the description of the global "film festival circuit" that she outlined in 2009, pointing out that film festival studies is now an established field of study, that delve[s] deeper into specific aspects of this or that festival, and highlight[s] previously discounted matters of interest. All of these efforts are important in bringing our attention to key phenomena that have been overlooked and denied existence for years.

She goes on to describe a model for the study of film festivals that is particularly relevant to my research: “to employ a technological metaphor ... such examination focuses on the festival’s ‘hardware’ (venues, hubs), its ‘software’ (films, programming, sidebars), and the ‘interface’ of its components (the coverage, the party)” (2015:9-10).

In *‘Global cities and the international film festival economy’* Julian Stringer (2001) refers to the global film festival economy and the notion of a circuit that has multiple layers of meaning. He envisions three possible usages of the term. Firstly, he refers to the “common sense understanding, a closely linked network of inter-related events”; secondly to it as a “closed system”; and thirdly, “as a metaphor for the geographically uneven development that characterizes the world of international film culture” (Stringer, 2001:177). Stringer also neatly links the global hierarchy of film festivals to the cities that host them, noting that it is also the cities themselves, in a quest for destination marketing and tourism, as well as for status within the film industry that drives many of these events. Loist et al’s (2016) work on film festivals also provides key insights into understanding the historical and sociological trends that have shaped the modern film festival. They also provide an important understanding of the way in which festivals operate within a global circuit. One of the seminal concepts that underlie this thesis is that film festivals are part of a global network with established hierarchies and related flows. De Valck and Loist (2016:49) describe the film festival circuit as “an all-encompassing idea, covering the entire landscape of a few thousand odd festivals, [while] on another level, when talking about ‘the circuit’, practitioners and journalists have a select number of top tier festivals in mind”.

Others who have strongly influenced this thesis are Harbord (2002, 2007), Stringer (2001), Shiel (2001), and Czach (2004, 2010), whose work relates to the way global forces and trends, both theoretical and practical, are affecting film festivals. These topics include: programming and curation, economics and financial aspects, politics and identity, cities and urbanisation, history and development, technology and convergence. These various approaches to film festival studies reflect the intrinsically multi-disciplinary approach required within this space. While the aesthetic discourse of films is situated within the realm of traditional Film Studies, a discussion of finance involves economics, and the politics of place and related discussions border on sociology. This thesis uses a similar multi-disciplinary lens, but specifically applies these theories to festivals within a uniquely African space. Shiel and Fitzmaurice (2001:2) underline this *in Cinema and the city: Film and urban societies in a global context*:

The interdisciplinary contact between Film Studies and Sociology ... can be profoundly useful in addressing key issues which the two disciplines share [and] which have become especially acute in the contemporary social context. These include: the perennial issue of the relationship between culture and society, particularly in what is now commonly referred to as the current global post-modern social and cultural context, and the operation of political, social, and cultural power in the urban centres of the present global system.

As part of the inter-disciplinary research approach, readings from Media Studies and on ways in which technology impacts sectors such as film, media, and content have generally also been included. One area of particular importance, the concept of convergence and its impact, has been explored by a number of authors. de Valck and Teurlings (2013) in *After the break: television theory today 2013*, as well as de Valck's "Screening the future of film festivals: A long tale of convergence and digitization (2008) address this concept, as does Henry Jenkins in *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide* (2006). Based on

these works, the concept of convergence is understood within this thesis to mean a collapsing or merging of the formerly distinct mechanisms and categories of content consumption. Filmed content moved through a very specific and rigid value chain that also created defined and distinct categories such as cinema (film) or TV. New technologies have meant these categories have merged.

Other work of importance for this thesis from within the Film Festival Studies genre includes David Archibald and Mitchell Miller's *Film festivals dossier* (2011), *Festivals and the cultural public sphere* (2011) edited by Gerardand Delanty et al , Robert Koehler's *Cinephilia and film festivals* (2009), Joseph Palis' *Film festivals, the globalization of images And post-national cinephilia* (2015), Cindy Wong's *Publics and counterpublics: Rethinking film festivals as public spheres* (2016), Bill Nichols' *Discovering form, inferring meaning: New cinemas and the film festival circuit* (1994), and Kirsten Stevens *Fighting the festival apocalypse: Film festivals and the futures in film exhibition* (2011) .

2.2 Spatial Theory

As Shiel and Fitzmaurice (2001:3) point out, a sociological perspective on Film Studies, has mainly been applied to films as texts and to “the effects of film on society ... and for the most part with the reflection of society in films”. de Valck and Loist (2009: 180) explain this multi-disciplinary approach as follows: “one way to tackle the problem of film festivals as elusive and hard to define objects for academic study is to see them as sites of interesting discourses and practices.”

An understanding of the festival circuit is also closely linked to an understanding of the spatial nature of film festivals. A number of authors, including various writings by de Valck (2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2018), Loist (2016), Stringer (2001), and Shiel, Fitzmaurice, and Wong (2001), discuss the concepts of space, particularly the relationship between cities and space. A number of modern film festival scholars have used Habermas's (1962), *"The structural transformation of the public sphere"*, as a starting point for the analysis of film festivals. Habermas presented theories on the rise of a bourgeois public sphere that emerged in the 18th and 19th centuries. He then tracked what he believed, was the demise of this public space as the lines between public and private became blurred and as the public sphere was being captured by vested commercial and/or government interests. He was critical of the effects that commercialization and consumerization had on this sphere, which he strongly believed was necessary for the functioning of healthy societies. When discussing film festivals as public events with both real and imagined audiences, their role in perpetuating this notion of the Habermasian public sphere is often referred to by scholars including Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong (2011), Lindiwe Dovey (2014) and Liz Czach (2004). Wong actually devotes an entire chapter in *Film festivals: Culture, people and power on the global south*, to the "rethinking of film festivals as public spheres" (2011: 83).

Dating back to Habermas (1962), it is evident that an understanding of what is defined, and who defines public space is essential to understanding the impact of the physical space and flow of a film festival. Habermas saw a public space as a fluid concept, determined by those in control and often fraught with meaning beyond the physical boundaries of a space. The sociological concept of the spatial turn is spelled out by Marina Low in *The spatial turn: For a sociology of space* (2013). There she cites the work of a number of researchers to

demonstrate the different ways in which physical space is understood from a sociological perspective. She cites the early writing of Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey who fleshed out the processes in which “space becomes controllable and becomes commodity” (2013: np). She also refers to Anthony Giddens’s understanding of space as “the place where events occur,” and develops this concept further with the understanding that “any constitution of space is defined, on the one hand, by social goods and human beings, and, on the other, by their association” (Low, 2013: np). Yishai Blank and Issi Rosen-Zvi (2010) analyse the impact of the physical space of a venue in relation to other sociological trends, while the ways in which the physical space of a festival reflect its identity and culture are discussed in articles such as Ros Derret’s *“Festivals & regional destinations: How festivals demonstrate a sense of community & place”* (2003) and Ginette Verstraete’s *“Media, places, and assemblies: From videowalls to smart environments”* (2016). Shiel and Fitzmaurice (2001: 5) also specifically refer to the spatial turn and the “growing recognition of the usefulness of space as an organizing category”. They emphasise the role space plays “at the level of production, distribution, and exhibition, [and] the role of cinema in globalization” (2001: 5). The analysis of the impact on the success of film festivals in Africa is due to specific venues, their history, cultural associations, and their accessibility and locations within a city space is an implication of this sociological definition of the spatial turn.

Also of particular relevance to my focus on film festivals in Africa is the understanding of the particular situation of the African city within a global and historical context. In this paper, I elaborate on how the historical and global economic disadvantages of African cities impact many of the film festivals hosted there. This is also touched on by Shiel and Fitzmaurice (2001:7) who discuss the “encounter, between cinema and the post-colonial

urban centre in the third world which remain beset by massive poverty and endemic social injustice". My research includes this sociological understanding of the way in which film festivals function and is similar to the approach described by Shiel and Fitzmaurice (2001:3):

[To] produce a sociology of the cinema in the sense of a sociology of motion picture production, distribution, exhibition, and consumption with a specific focus on the role of cinema in the physical, social, cultural, and economic development of cities.

This sociological approach to cinema, then, is not rooted in the content of cinema per se, but rather in how the actual screening and viewing of cinematic content is interlinked with the development of cities. Film festivals sit at the heart of this intersection. The particular implication of this is explored later in this thesis.

2.3 Globalisation and Actor Network Theory

In order to understand the current status of film festivals, I also examined contemporary theories related to the rise of the city within the newly globalised world order, and the ways these relate to film festivals. My chief means of doing so has been to investigate how destination marketing and tourism feed into this global network and hierarchy of film festivals. The work of de Valck (2007) is particularly important in this regard, especially her historical analysis of festivals which demonstrates how festivals operate from a network and system theory perspective. In *Film festivals: From European geopolitics to global cinephilia*, she describes how the "network approach ... indicates a spatial move away from geopolitics and 'the nation,' towards the global economy and 'the city'" (2007: 17). Recently, some scholars have taken to using the framework of actor network theory (ANT) to describe many of the global processes in film and media studies, and more

specifically in film festival studies. Actor network theory is based on the work of Bruno Latour (2013), a French scholar, whose work has been developed by others. In *“Unblackboxing production: What media studies can learn from actor-network theory”*,

Teurlings describes ANT this way:

At the core of ANT is the idea that every existing phenomenon consists of actors that operate within a network. A network is not a given but is something that has to be established. It needs to be kept together, in other words, it is a precarious achievement. The reason for this is that the actors in the network work together but they have the tendency to drift off or go their own way. (2013, 103)

Teurlings (2013) provides a clear breakdown of the ways in which each node within a network can affect the others, specifically how those in media and related studies can use this network theory to understand the complicated interplay of these nodes within any specific network in a global context. Up until recently, within media studies, ANT-driven interpretations of power and the role of the so-called ‘translator-spokesperson’ (typically understood in this context as the institutional actors such as broadcasters, and advertisers), was seen as one of “obligatory passage points”, meaning, traditional broadcasters, aggregators etc. “occupied a particularly powerful position within the network” (Teurlings, 2013: 108). However, when one looks at the technological drivers that are completely transforming this “network era”, the implications are, as he points out, “that the impact of technological convergence is likely to come at the detriment of the broadcaster whose position as an obligatory passage point is challenged” (2013: 108).

If one substitutes film festival for broadcaster in this analysis, then it is possible to apply this analysis understanding film festivals within a global context, as well as within the changing technological landscape. This thesis investigates how the film festival’s role as a “passage point” is indeed being challenged by technology and how, globally and in Africa,

the power, impact, and place of festivals in the film industry network can address this challenge.

As will be shown in this thesis, film festivals in Africa operate distinctly within networks. I will discuss how festivals fit into global hierarchical networks of film festivals, how they sit within the network of systems in the African film value chain, and how their locations and links to cities also tie into economic networks of access to resources, or lack thereof.

ANT is also used in this thesis as a tool for understanding the role and power of audiences in a space through a process that Teurlings (2013:111) explains, “perhaps the single most contribution of ANT has to offer is an approach that combines a view of audiences as resistant, or as not automatically complying with the roles attributed to them, while also paying attention to the institutional settings in which media conduct their business”, specifically applies ANT as a way to understand the newly globalised film and film festival environment. (De Valck, 2007: 37) refers to the seminal work of Latour in developing this theoretical understanding. After adding to Latour’s work, she uses it to explore how “local festivals connect to the international film festival circuit”. This perspective offers particularly valuable insights when applied to film festivals taking place within Africa, especially if one combines Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital. DeValck (2007:37) describes “the festival network [as offering] opportunities for the translation of symbolic value into economic value ... [F]ilm festivals are, in short, sites of passage that function as the gateways to cultural legitimization”.

2.4 History of Film Festivals

There is a great deal of academic writing on film festivals from a historical perspective, much of it focused on European festivals. This research provides an important backdrop and context for this thesis in terms of the historical, cultural and economic processes that have impacted major festivals and how the global festival network has evolved. De Valck (2007:19-20) defines the three chronological phases of film festivals thus:

1) as platforms for national cinema, 2) as showcases for auteur or art cinema and Cinephilia, and 3) as globalized and professionalized events, then we are currently in the age of the professional film festival.

This historical perspective provided by de Valck, with a particular focus on the shift from nationalism to transnationalism within film festivals, and the accompanying challenges and implications, has been an important backdrop to my research. I have used this to compare and contrast the African historical evolution of film festivals with that of their Western counterparts.

The history of film festivals has also been covered extensively by authors such as Liz Czach's "Film festivals, programming, and the building of a national cinema and cinephilia; Stars, and film festivals" (2004), and notably by de Marijke de Valck (2006): *Film festivals: History and theory of a European phenomenon that became a global network*. Other sources that explores the impact of the globalisation of film festivals are: "Film festivals: History, theory, method and practice" (De Valck, Marijke, Kredell, Brendan & Loist, Skadi 2016), de Valck (2018) "Screening world cinema at film festivals: Festivals and staged authenticity" (2018), and Palis (2015) "" (2015). Both de Valck and Palis examine the historical trends of film festivals as they shifted from nationalist events, to transnational cinematic celebrations of

cinophilia. The concept of cinephilia as a determining force for film festivals throughout history is also examined Robert Koehler (2009).

In terms of the history of film festivals in Africa, there has been some academic writing that does investigate the history and role of the dominant Francophone festival, FESPACO, such as Lizelle Bischoff's *Sub-Saharan African cinema in the context of Fespaco: Close-Ups on Francophone West Africa and Anglophone South Africa (2009)* and in the writing of Mantha Diawara (1992, 1994). The place of this festival within Africa must be acknowledged and included in this thesis is a brief comparison of FESPACO to the other main festivals under consideration, namely The Zanzibar International Film Festival and the Cape Town International Film Market and Festival.

2.5 African Film Studies & Film Festival Studies

Much of the academic literature relating to African film and film studies is historical or regional in nature. Most of this work focuses on the history of African film in the post-colonial era, with particular focus on either specific filmmakers or geographical regions.

While my research does touch on key historical elements of film production and film festivals, both globally and within the African context, it does acknowledge the role of colonialism and the post-colonial era with regard to the state of Africa's film industries, as well as Africa's disadvantaged position within the global market. This thesis, however, is not an attempt to do an in-depth exploration of the history of film or film festivals in Africa, specifically in relation to colonialism. It is more interested in gaining an understanding of film festivals in Africa within the current globalised world, cognizant that the underpinnings

of this system and the place of Africa within it were created in the colonial and post-colonial eras. While many of the books and articles written on African cinema focus on its historic development (pre- and post-colonialism), few authors seem to have applied actor-network theory, concepts of spatial flow, or a sociology of film discourse. Within African film studies, even less has been written about film festivals in Africa.

A few scholars have dominated this space, namely Lizelle Bisschoff (2009, 2012, 2013, 2015), Lindiwe Dovey, (2013, 2014, 2015) and Mantha Diawara (1992, 1994). The writing of these three influential authors on African film and African film festivals has been of great value for this research. Lindiwe Dovey, was personally involved in the Slum Film Festival in Nairobi, has used a methodology that incorporates both a theoretical and first-hand (auto-ethnographical) approach and written about it at length. Dovey's writings on African film festivals include historical analysis, but they are very grounded in the contemporary role and impact of these festivals. She has written a number of works including, *Curating Africa in the age of film festivals* (2014), "Through the eye of a film festival: Toward a curatorial and spectator centred approach to the study of African screen media" (2015), and, with Joshua McNamara, and Federico Olivieri, "From, by for: Nairobi's Slum Film Festival, film festival studies, and the practices of development" (2013). Dovey (2015:10) is critical of the lack of writing focused on African audiences and festivals, arguing that "the lack of sustained attention to film festivals in African screen media studies is symptomatic of a broader disregard for the material contexts, social lives, and diverse spectators of films". Dovey places a strong emphasis on spectators and audiences in much of her work, both from a theoretical and practical perspective. She often prioritises the role of audiences and

challenges festival programmers, participants and commentators to identify “whose taste is to be prioritised in curatorial work “ (2015:17-18).

This particular issue is spelled out explicitly in her writings on the Slum Film Festival in Nairobi which I reference extensively along with the work of Federico Olivieri and Joshua Michael Wong. Dovey (2015:9) also highlights the ability of festival audiences to contribute to what she calls the “liveness” of festival events and this particular importance within the African context. Her understanding of the physical lived space that film festivals in Africa occupy is complemented by her ability to place the African film festival firmly within the greater theoretical discourse. In her writing, she acknowledges the Habermasian public sphere as it relates to the African film festival “concerns, not the sharing of money, but of ideas, and experiences” (2015:9). Dovey also writes about the broader context of African film and content production and consumption which is particularly relevant to my analysis of the future sustainability of film festivals in Africa in light of recent global technological disruptions.

Lizelle Bischoff has written about both the significance of programming African film festivals as well as the impact of festivals themselves in works such as *Representing Africa in the UK: Programming the Africa in motion film festival* (2013) and *Sub-Saharan African cinema in the context of Fespaco: Close-ups On Francophone West Africa and Anglophone South Africa* (2009), where she unpacks the historical legacy of FESPACO. In their article, “Digital as the new popular in African cinema” (2012) Bischoff and Overbergh provide an important overview of the links between technology and the consumption of African filmed content over the past decade. Her research into the rise of Nollywood and related styles of

content, and the ways in which this content is consumed are relevant to my analysis of the impact of new technology platforms on film festivals in Africa. The role of Nollywood and its massive impact on film production and consumption in Africa are not the focus of this thesis; its role in terms of creating the backdrop and environment in which film festivals in Africa operate is.

Other writers who have also looked at this phenomenon and its impact include Moradewun Adejunmobi in *African film's televisual turn* (2015), Jonathan Haynes: *African cinema and Nollywood* (2011), and John McCall: *The Pan-Africanism we have: Nollywood's Invention of Africa* 2007. Adejunmobi's work is of particular relevance when discussing the impact (if any) of convergence within the African content sphere. As Adejunmobi (2015:121) points out, "when asked what 'films' they have watched recently, many Africans are more likely to refer to filmed narratives they have watched on television". The works of Mantha Diawara – including *African cinema: Politics and culture* (1992), and *On tracking world cinema: African cinema at film festivals* (1994) have also been important references for the background of the African film industry and film festival space from a historical perspective.

With regard to specific film festivals taking place in Africa, my personal experience at the Zanzibar International Film Festival has also been supplemented by the writings of David Slocum: *Zanzibar International Film Festival* (2003), his 2009 *Film and/as culture: The use of cultural discourses at two African film festivals*, William Bissell's *From Dhow culture to the diaspora: ZIFF, film, and the framing of transnational imaginaries in the Western Indian Ocean I*(2013), and Sharae Deckard's *Dhow aesthetics: Negotiating the global and the local: The 9th Zanzibar International Film Festival* 2006.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview of Academic Questions

As previously noted, this thesis aims to identify the ways in which four key factors; community and identity, physicality and place, technology, and financing and funding are fundamental the future success of film festivals in Africa.

In order to address these four areas of enquiry I have taken an approach that combines academic research across a range of disciplines, and then apply those to a particularly African context, as well as to an autoethnographic approach based on my experience working at two film festivals in Anglophone sub-Saharan Africa.

This methodology therefore involved, in terms of the academic research, transferring academic concepts written from a Western perspective to an African context and acknowledging this transference. Additionally, this methodology had to take into consideration my own role within these festivals as an active insider participant, but also in some cases, as an outsider due to my own identity.

3.1 Academic Research

I undertook comprehensive research into diverse, relevant theoretical content for two main reasons. The first was to gain an in-depth understanding of the space that film festivals occupy globally, and more specifically, in Africa, within the current trends of academic thinking. The second reason was to put myself in a position to clearly analyse the challenges and opportunities that these festivals have. As illustrated previously, the

extended and diverse reading list for this thesis covers a range of topics related not just to film-festival studies, but also more broadly to sociology, festival studies, and topics including digital trends in media, convergence, cinephilia, community, history of film festivals, and transnationalism. I first gained a broader understanding of the history and theory related to film festivals that operate within a globalised space. This enabled me to understand the broader context in which film festivals operate, both in terms of a theoretical understanding, but also within a real-world approach that includes concepts of globalization and the realities of the global film festival network.

My research methodology then, focuses more closely on film festivals in Africa, and the writings related to their place, historically, culturally, and economically, within the broader space of African film studies. By combining various aspects of the history and theory of film festival studies, with a more specific understanding of these aspects in relation to film festivals in Africa, I am able to posit a range of specific circumstances and impacts that, I argue, are essential to the survival and sustainability of film festivals in Africa.

3.2 First-Hand Experience / Autoethnography

Apart from research into film festivals, this thesis also makes use of the autoethnographic approach that is based on the extensive experience I gained over five years of working on two major film festival events, namely the Zanzibar International Film Festival (ZIFF) and the Cape Town International Film Market and Festival (CTIFMF). My approach to writing from an autoethnographic perspective has been informed by some key writings on the topic. The article "Autoethnography: An overview," defines an autoethnographic approach as:

An approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. This approach challenges canonical ways of doing research and representing others and treats research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act. (Ellis et al, 2011:19)

In writing and reflecting on my work and experiences at both ZIFF and the CTIFMF, I have attempted to contextualise both the ways in which I operated as an outsider, geographically, linguistically, or culturally, as well as the ways in which this impacted my perceptions of my role, and the ways in which I was perceived.

The authors go on to explain that “when researchers do autoethnography, they retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity. However, in addition to recounting their experiences, autoethnographers are often required by social science publishing conventions to analyse these experiences” (Ellis et al., 2011, 273). This definition clarifies my specific approach to writing about my experiences and my analysis of them within a defined theoretical context, whilst reflecting on and acknowledging my own identity and background. I acknowledge my personal status, as a white South African woman working in South Africa and Zanzibar, as well as the impact that my position had on the organisations.

In the context of ZIFF, my inability to speak Swahili may have limited my understanding of many of the internal conversations happening within the festival team. Although there were a number of foreigners on the team from across Africa and Europe, it is necessary to note that as a white woman working within a culture dominated by traditional Muslim

culture, my role in the festival team was particular. The various elements of my outsider identity, white, English speaking, and women impacted my role within the festival and in relation to external and international partners. In some instances there was perhaps a perception bias and privilege in dealing with foreign donors, who, whether consciously or not, were comforted by the presence of a white foreigner within the festival team.

In the South African context, I acknowledged my position based on the divided racial history of the country and its ongoing legacy. The complexities related to my role as a white, middle class South African woman working in a still very divided city and country also needs to be acknowledged. The CTIFMF team was very diverse across race, gender and age demographics, however, especially within South Africa, race is often an issue and the festival itself was, at one point, accused of being too Eurocentric and even racist. I was therefore very aware of the way in which my whiteness was perceived, especially in my role as a spokesperson for the festival. My role in this regard, I am sure, would have also impacted perceptions of the festival along with many other factors.

The authors also describe a range of types of autoethnography including indigenous ethnographies, reflexive ethnographies, narrative ethnographies, layered accounts, and interactive interviews. The best description of my approach is that of narrative ethnography, that,

refers to texts presented in the form of stories that incorporate the ethnographer's experiences into the ethnographic descriptions and analysis of others. Here the emphasis is on the ethnographic study of others, which is accomplished partly by attending to encounters between the narrator and members of the groups being studied. (Ellis et al., 2011: 275)

My specific first-hand experiences at the Zanzibar International Film Festival (ZIFF) from 2014 to 2018 as well as at the Cape Town International Film Market and Festival (CTIFMF) in 2017 and 2018 have provided me unique insights into two very different kinds of festivals in Africa. I am aware that this first-hand experience within the core teams of these festivals has also in some ways influenced these events, and I acknowledge that as a participant in these events, my perspective may be influenced by a host of factors such as my personal background, my specific role and access to information within the organisation, and my actions and decisions as an active participant in the events.

As also explored above, my participation in these festivals as a white South African woman would have further impacted both my understanding of the internal processes of the teams, and the ways in which these teams were perceived.

Nevertheless, I have still been able to develop and share critical insights from these festivals that complement and support some of my key theoretical research. I also state that all other members of the ZIFF and CTIFMF teams were aware that while I was taking part in the events, I was also using my experience there for research for this thesis. My role, therefore, as participant and observer was acknowledged by me and recognised by the other members of the teams. In this thesis the information disclosed has been the subject of public discourse and does not breach any confidentiality. There were no confidentiality clauses in my work contracts, and no specific private or confidential conversations are referenced in this thesis.

Many of the observations, recommendations, and insights included in this thesis with regard to each festival were submitted to the respective festival teams in reports submitted either or after the festivals. Throughout the times I was involved with the festivals there was active dialogue between myself and my colleagues as to ways to improve the events, best practice recommendations, and how I could also better understand the very specific local contexts of each event. Much of the autoethnographic elements of this thesis are therefore based on those reports and interactions, here contextualised within an academic research framework.

For five years I worked as part of the core team of ZIFF, starting out simply handling media relations, and eventually in 2018 becoming one of the four people who produced the entire event as well as the accompanying DISCOP Zanzibar market that took place simultaneously with the festival. Working among a diverse international team for a very locally identified and grounded festival required continual self-awareness and required me to check-in regularly with the locally based team. Regardless of this, however, I need to acknowledge that my outsider and international perspective impacted the festival directly through my lack of knowledge of Swahili, my international media and industry connections, and a distinctly modern and progressive view on issues such as feminism and related issues.

For the CTIFMF, I worked for both years that the festival took place, the inaugural and follow up year (2017–2018), mainly working on publicity and communications, but also engaging closely with the Board of Directors and key production team. I have also worked within the African film industry space for over 10 years in a variety of roles that include the

founding and running of a Pan-African not-for-profit for women in the film industry, the Ladima Foundation.

The Zanzibar International Film Festival, (ZIFF), with its 21-year history of being steeped in culture and identity, is a festival at a crossroads, highlighting many of the theoretical and practical issues being discussed by film festival scholars. On the other hand, the Cape Town International Film Market and Festival, launched only in 2017, is a strictly economic-, geographic- and industry-driven festival with very little claim to a cultural or community identity or voice. Through my experience I was able to assess how the differences between the founding history, management style, links to culture and community, approaches to fundraising and other key aspects of the festivals affected their outcomes, successes, and potential for long-term sustainability.

Both the CTIFMF and ZIFF management teams of 2017 and 2018 were informed that I would be using my personal experience for this thesis. I did not conduct any formal interviews with staff or Board members of either event and this paper does not rely on or include specific information on individuals or their roles: my analysis is more systemic in its focus. I do not disclose any confidential information in this thesis.

CHAPTER 4: FILM FESTIVALS & IDENTITY: BY WHOM AND FOR WHOM?

4.1 *A Question of History*

Historically, issues of identity (and most often national identity) were central to the role and place of film festivals in the West. However, the historic progression away from national towards the business imperatives of the globalised film festival circuit has meant that many film festivals have abandoned their direct links to their specifically local community or identity markers; or, at best, these markers have become secondary considerations. These community markers in the age of national film festivals were easy to identify in that the promotion of locally made films was the predominant aim of the festival. These festivals were national celebrations of local languages, cultures, and identities. As festivals evolved within the globalised modern era and become more international in focus, their role within local communities has become less clear, and their ability to self-identify in a way that is both globally appealing and yet relevant to the local audiences has become more of a challenge. To understand how festivals have evolved and transitioned, then, is not merely an academic exercise, but is rather key to understanding the current festival landscape and its sustainability, especially when looking at the different history of film festivals in Africa. By analysing various scholarly approaches to understanding film festivals and their history it is also possible to see where these may fall short in explaining the complicated dynamics at play of festivals in Africa.

In the following sections I will argue that many of the current approaches to understanding the film festival do not take account of elements at play in the African environment. More specifically, local, regional, national and Pan-African identity and community issues do not

follow the global historical norm, and therefore must be viewed differently. One also cannot discuss the role of film festivals in Africa without acknowledging and reflecting on the history of colonialism in Africa. Film festivals were often simply used as a political tool to govern and dominate. For the purposes of this thesis, while I acknowledge the impact colonialism has had and that it has led to the status quo, I do not give much attention to festivals during that era as they fall outside of the scope of this study.

While the history of festivals is not my main focus, it is important to understand the history and context from which many film festivals have evolved. There have been many books and articles written about the historical evolution of festivals including Liz Czach's "Film festivals, programming, and the building of a national cinema" (2004), Kenneth Turan's "Sundance to Sarajevo: Film festivals and the world they made" (2002), and a host of articles by Marijke de Valck, which outline the evolution over time of national European festivals to the divergent transnational phenomenon that it is today. This approach looks at the global dominant trends in the conscious or subconscious evolution in the self-identification of film festivals as well as the light they throw on the African context.

Much of what is written on the history of film festivals concerns the history of politics European and Western politics. The political and ideological underpinnings of the first established film festival, the Venice Film Festival and many to follow, were related to the machinations of Western powers before, during, and after World War II. The foundation of the first major film festivals had little to do with film as an art form, but a great deal to do with propaganda and national identity. When European nations were fighting to win the battles as well as in the hearts and minds of citizens, film festivals were used as a tool to

aid nation-building, with the growth of the film industry an off-shoot of this patriotic process.

As Palis (2015:33) describes it, these festivals had a “focus on spotlighting and honouring the vision of the auteur as well as the distinctive narratives of national cinema”. This nationalist-model of film festivals lingered on until the 1960s, when there was a shift and “festival directors and programmers began selecting films on thematic instead of national basis” (de Valck: 2007: 28).

This pivot towards independently organised festivals focused more on the art and industry of cinema continued through the 1970s, and after the end of the Cold War. When nationalism was overtaken by transnationalism, festivals followed suit. In the 1980s and beyond, as economic globalization became more dominant, festivals became “sweepingly professionalized and institutionalised” (de Valck, 2007:20). Festival organisers could now look to a global market and soon were combining the ‘international’ with the ‘national’ by inviting nations to participate in an international showcase where they could present of a selection of their finest films” (de Valck, 2007:20). This process was not inevitable nor completely linear and it is important to look at the process and its often inherent contradictions and ask, as Chan (2011:258) does:

How does the national emerge from a transient event that seeks to market itself as international? One route of enquiry may be to return to the historical roots of the modern film festival, and to consider the drive for internationalism inherently embedded in the national one.

These contradictions can still be seen in major festivals such as those in Venice, Berlin, and Toronto that still leverage national financial support and the associated benefits, while

defining themselves as places of the “transnational circulation of cultural products” (Iordanova, 2010:16).

These festivals need to be seen as negotiated spaces where these various local, national and transnational interests form a matrix “that can tell us something about the relationship between film, cultural policy, and globalization in the new millennium” (Iordanova, 2010:16). Within this transitional period, formerly national festivals became more outwardly focused, meaning that these festivals redefined themselves within a global context, competing with other festivals and destinations both from a film and tourism perspective. With more and more festivals emerging and vying for global recognition, there is the beginning of the emergence of a festival network with festivals each self-identifying by various means in order to secure their position. To address this, many became vehicles of cinephilia, serving as a tool for the so-called avant-garde or independent film industry distributing films outside traditional distribution networks, and “helping people find films and guiding audiences in acquiring refined tastes. Film festivals, in other words, not only make a variety of films available, they also frame the films in a rich discursive context” (de Valck, 2008:np).

Another very successful mechanism to gain global status was to rely more on their host-city as a defining factor of identity, one not necessarily linked to cinematic content at all, but rather depending on local tourism initiatives and city-driven support to promote the festival as a destination event. As deValck and Loist (2009:187) state, “the city, much more than the nation, is the spatial entity that has come to define festivals’ identity and functional logics”. This process was separate from film programming, based more on

marketing and image-making. Within this model, funding for festivals is more likely to come from city tourism bodies and organisations focused on supporting destination marketing than from a national government. Stringer (2001:40) describes the situation this way:

[M]any festivals now market and project... not just narrative images, but a city's own festival image, its own self-perceptions of the place it occupies within the global space economy, especially in relation to other cities and festivals.

In time, the international film festival became a professionally run event often identifying more with its host city more than its country, with an identity linked to high profile films, filmmakers or unique cultural perspectives. This shift then, was also inevitably towards the business and economics of film, and no longer just the aesthetics of cinephilia or the promotion of a national culture. The shift of festivals to becoming self-aware entities within what is now known as the creative industry space has impacted these festivals programming objectives, leading to a diversification of their functions and funding models.

Loist (2016:59) offers this explanation:

[A]s public funders are increasingly interested in tourism profits and elevating the public cultural image of a city, festivals are funded with the logic of creative industries..... These shifting interests are directly observable in changes to funding models which have moved money and focus from arts and culture to business and development funds.

The shift in which film festivals moved from being cultural nationalistic endeavours to being public-private partnerships driven by tourism, the business of film, and transnational flows reflects the history of film festivals in the West, and is not necessarily mirrored in the history of film festivals in Africa.

4.2 From Colonial to Pan-African: Festivals in Africa

The trajectory of film festivals in Africa is different from the national to transnational journey of film festivals in Europe and the West. While one could argue that film festivals in Africa now also operate as players within the global (and highly unequal) network of festivals, and have become more intrinsically linked to their host cities, the process leading to this outcome has not been the same as that in the West. The current disadvantaged space that most African nations and cities still occupy within a global context is directly linked to the history of colonisation and the economic and cultural exclusion of Africa from the global world of material and cultural exchange.

Its history has had direct implications for the success or failure of film festivals in Africa. In discussing these, the African film festival landscape in early independence and the post-colonial era needs to be included. Across most of Africa, film exhibition and distribution mechanisms in the colonial era were established primarily to control and “educate” the subject populations. Dovey (2015:88) refers to the historical legacy in which missionaries or colonial film units “constructed” African audiences as “a homogenous and non-individuated mass to be feared and policed”. She explains that these mobile screening events showed films that were “instructional and valorised ‘Western’ technology. For example, Africans were shown films about why they should cultivate and drink tea and coffee and save their money in banks” (Dovey, 2015:88). While this specific historical era is part of the central thread of this thesis, the impact of this and subsequent historical and cultural processes needs to be acknowledged in order to understand the current film industry and film festival landscape within Africa. Film screenings in the colonial era were acts of cultural and political subjugation by the colonial powers of their subjugated

populations. There was no concept of national cinema, as there was indeed, no concept of nation for African territories run by foreign powers. As many African countries gained independence within the so-called post-colonial era, a new sense of Pan-Africanism was developing and Africa was starting to see the late emergence of the film festival, with Africa's first festival. The Pan-African Festival of Cinema and Television, known by its French acronym FESPACO, was formed on a strong Pan-African ideology in 1969. Therefore, one can argue that film festivals in Africa were transnational before they were ever national or long before the term applied to festivals elsewhere. As Slocum (2009, 139) describes in the *Film Festival Yearbook 1*, many film festivals in Africa "approached culture in the broad terms of identity-creation".. In other words, as opposed to a film festival reflecting a Pan-African identity, festivals were actually used to create this very identity in the first place.

The early film festivals in Africa, as opposed to those in Europe that were developed to promote an existing ideology or national agenda, were used as tools in the process of identity and ideology building. As African nations emerged from colonialism in the 1960s and 70s, filmmakers were able to produce and screen films in Africa for the first time. These films became tools not just for nation-building, but for many, as tools for building Pan-Africanism as a concept in itself. In Africa, the first established and globally recognised festival was FESPACO, a festival also very much aimed at developing a Pan-African identity expressed through film. The event was also promoted by its host nation, Burkina Faso and was an overt attempt to drive a Pan-Africanist cultural and economic revolution. Over the decades, FESPACO has maintained its strong Pan-African identity, even though its influence within an ever-changing industry may have diminished. FESPACO came to represent the "focal point of Africa's consciousness, the place where this perennially neglected continent

comes to examine itself. And as the medium chosen for this task, film assumes an importance that is rarely felt elsewhere” (Turan, 2002, 70). Two other early film festivals on the continent, the Durban International Film Festival (founded 1979) and the Zanzibar International Film Festival (founded 1998), major festivals that are still running today have always been international in their programming. One of the only festivals that has had national programmes from the outset is the Ethiopian Film Festival that was founded in 2005.

It is important to also keep in mind that most African festivals have not been able to draw on funds provided by a national government. From the outset, FESPACO was strongly supported by the government of Burkina Faso. However, this support was predicated on Thomas Sankara’s Pan-African idealism. For many years now FESPACO has been supported by the French, and most festivals in Africa rely on funding from international NGOs and European or Western agency support. This historical, and still dominant funding model means that “the African film festival can be seen, at least partially, as an extension of globalism in so far as the political economy of film continues to be dominantly Western capital” (Anthony, 2005:19) .By their very nature and dependence from the outset on international funding, often from previous colonial powers, film festivals in Africa have never been actualised as the distinctly national endeavours their European counterparts were. FESPACO and ZIFF have not always been spaces for cultural celebration only, but also important sites for transaction and commerce related to film, given the lack of any film industry to speak of on the continent,. Unlike in Europe where there is a distinct trajectory from the cultural to the commercial, festivals in Africa, mostly out of necessity

have always had to combine the two. In exploring the early years of ZIFF, Slocum (2009:147) makes the following point:

ZIFF had always from its beginnings demonstrated a commitment in programming to the complicated linkages between cultural production and the social and economic conditions in which they operate.

As long ago as 2007, ZIFF introduced its Soko Film – or film market – as a commercial sidebar to the cultural screenings. To illustrate this point, Slocum quotes from the ZIFF Strategic Plan 2007–2010 that states that ZIFF has “the opportunity to engage with the pressing task of rationalizing the role of creativity and innovation in the interest of economic empowerment and social well-being” (2009, 147). As I argue in my discussion of my role as a producer of the 2017 Soko Film and the 2018 DISCOP Zanzibar, this strong focus on economic empowerment has been essential to the success of the event.

4.3 A Question of Identity

The question as to which festivals, in Africa particularly, will survive the stiff competition for the limited financial resources is, in my view, intrinsically linked to the issue of a festival’s identity and to what, if any, community it is linked to or directly associated. Within today’s festival landscape, most festivals, apart from the genre specific festivals or activist identity festivals such as queer, feminist or indigenous, identify most strongly with their location (usually their host city). However, with their international programming mandates and marketing focus, means that this city-focused identification is often in name only. As explained previously, the rise of the city over the nation within the globalized economic context, and therefore as the key identity marker of festivals, on the one hand, has meant that one hand, festivals have had to find myriad ways to differentiate themselves as unique and

relevant to specific audiences, often through a brand based or on location, film genre, cultural heritage or identity-community). Yet, on the other hand, festivals need to be as accessible as possible to a broad spectrum of audiences, as well as being open and welcoming to and inclusive of the global film industry, commercial sponsors, and funders. This paradoxical tension means that while festivals need to be anchored in a unique community or identity, often geographically grounded with the support of its accompanying audiences, they also need to speak to secondary or even “imagined” audiences who exist on a global and transnational scale and who could bring with them resources, both financial and cultural.

The more that film festivals try to promote themselves within the global network as “international”, and hope to attract secondary international audiences, the more difficult their positions become in relation to local audiences and communities. De Valck (2016:2-3) offers this explanation:

[T]o stage an international film festival involves additional services ... operating industry and press offices, organizing industry and press screenings, such services require substantial funding and as a result, international film festivals are more dependent on a variety of stakeholders backing up the event financially.

Constantly having to source funding within a resource scarce environment that is both looking for authentic uniqueness and yet global accessibility is one of the major challenges that film festivals currently face. As festivals compete for attention, resources, limited world premieres and high-profile guests, they have had to find new ways to out-position their rivals. Stripped of their historical national identities, many festivals have had to completely re-define and rebrand themselves. Festivals that do not have a specific identity

in terms of programming, for example, an activist slant (environmental, LGBTQ) or a genre focus (horror, documentary), now need to define themselves in opposition to other international festivals. Focusing on the spatial location and attractions of a particular city is one way to achieve this. In this thesis, I posit that it may be the self-defined notion of a festival's identity that is the essential force driving all other elements in a festival. This identity is what drives decisions regarding film and event programming, screening venues and locations, funding opportunities, and ultimately the sustainability of any given film festival event. An analysis of festivals through network theory that is based on a model of economic competition and scarcity leaves little room for examining the aspects of community and identity within this model. However, these are the aspects, I would argue, that are essential to the survival of festivals in an ever-more competitive landscape of film festivals that pits festivals against each other in the global network. It is essential to understand the link between a festival's identity and its economic viability. I argue, specifically in the case of festivals in Africa, that film festivals without an authentic and relevant cultural or community driven identity are significantly disadvantaged in regards to financial sustainability, audience support, and their overall ability to succeed over the long-term. The general trend within the analysis of festivals seems to indicate that festivals with more industry and business driven agendas are more likely to survive. However, I will demonstrate, through the specific examples of the Zanzibar International Film Festival and the Cape Town International Film Market and Festival, that this is not as clear-cut as it appears, especially within the African environment.

4.4 *Some Cities are More Equal Than Others*

One of the perspectives that underpin this thesis is that film festivals operate within a globalised and hierarchical network that drives the importance of interrogating film festivals through the lens of economics and business imperatives. There is, as Stringer (2001:138) explains, a specific relationship between uneven geographic development and film culture development:

[T]he common understanding as a closely linked network of interrelated and interdependent events, as a closed system, impossible to keep up with, [and] as a metaphor for the geographically uneven development that characterizes the world of international film culture.

In other words, the neo-liberal framework of the global economy and how cities fit into this framework can be a metaphor, or even be seen as having a direct relationship to underdeveloped film industries in the so-called developing world. This specific analysis of the unevenness of the global playing field will be especially relevant to my analysis of film festivals in Africa. Loist (2016:49) also addresses the unevenness of the hierarchy and points out the internal tension within this definition that excludes festivals perceived as remote or distant from the centres of power and money:

[O]n the one hand the film festival circuit is an all-encompassing idea, covering the entire landscape of a few thousand odd festivals, on another level, when talking about 'the circuit' practitioners and journalists have a select number of top tier festivals in mind.

Thus, while the concept of a global circuit is intrinsically a construct of a globalised world and economy that is supposedly inclusive and holistic, it speaks directly to the inherent economic inequalities built into the system that inevitably exclude cities and by default, festivals that are not at high up on the hierarchy. Discussing film festivals as part of a global network then, already constructs the conversation in economic and business terms. This

concept of a circuit as an economic function is also explained by Loist (2016:52) in another interpretation of the circuit as “the circulation of money, for instance in the form of distribution revenue of film production funds flowing through the increasing number of markets ... on the festival circuit”. She makes it plain that “both interpretations of the circuit metaphor – whether it denotes films or people circulating through festivals, are linked to the business side of this world” (Loist, 2016:49).

Iordanova (2010), in the *Film Festival Yearbook 2*, invokes another metaphor to understand this global network, that of a “vertical mosaic” as conceived by Canadian sociologist John Porter. This framework is determined by a mosaic, or range of factors that lead to a similar hierarchical structure whereby “different ethnic, linguistic, regional and religious groupings is vertical in that it reflects the different access to economic and cultural power that these groupings have within the social sphere”(Porter, 2010:16). The metaphor of a mosaic of factors, all contributing to a vertical or hierarchical structure reinforces the argument that festivals whose identities are intrinsically tied to economically and culturally powerful cities have a built-in advantage within the festival. To this end, over the past few years, within a globalised world, the film festivals at the top of the global circuit hierarchy, including Cannes, Berlin, Toronto and Venice, have successfully merged their city location with their festival identities, regardless of the festival programming or filmmatic focus.

Later in this thesis I explore the specific links between festivals and their physical venues, the spaces and locations within a city in which they take place. Here I examine the ways in which festivals have linked their brand and identities to their physical host locations. In the past, this was the host country, but, more recently, their host cities. These relationships

and how they manifest economically and culturally are essential to understanding the spaces that specific festivals hold within a globalised economy and the hierarchy of film festivals and their hosts. For film festivals this means that it is the festival's host city, now seen within an international (transnational) network of competition rather than a national one, that is more and more important to the festival's success or failure. As cities compete for scarce resources, from business and tourism, a film festival's survival has become critically linked to that of its host city. Stringer (2001:138) views the rise of city-linked film festivals as a particular manifestation of this new globalised reality: "cities now act as the nodal points on this circuit, not national film industries ... The circuit exists as an allogorization of space and its power relationships." Stringer (2001) also points out that the position a city-identified festival holds within the global hierarchy is symbolic and intrinsically linked to the economic and cultural influence of the city in which the festival takes place. This can be understood geographically, as in terms of a particular city's access to international funders and media, or politically, in terms of a city's ability to centre itself within a national or regional space. By this Stringer means that this "circuit" of city based commercially driven film festivals reflects a new power hierarchy that no longer exclusively privileges the needs of the nation (and its film industry), but rather highlights the privileged space some cities occupy.

An understanding of the role of globalization and the rise of neoliberalism is an inherent factor in understanding this process. De Valck (2007:40) places this phenomenon within the changing global environment of festivals: "since the global spread of festivals and the necessity to compete with each other on a global market for funding, cinema resources, and media attention, festival tend to foreground the (cultural) specificity of their location".

De Valck (2009:187) later argues that “the city, much more than the nation, is the spatial entity that has come to define festival’s identity and functional logics”. The identity of the city then, becomes a driver of the festival content and identity itself; it is the city’s support of the festival as a tourism and investment opportunity that will ensure its success or failure. This process is being shaped in the context of globalisation where the role of the nation has become less important. As Shiel (2001:6-7) explains, “the view held by large numbers of social commentators today is that the city, more so than the nation ... is the fundamental unit of the new global system which has emerged since the 1960s of which the mobility of capital and information is the most celebrated feature”. Major cities are now having to compete with each other for direct investment, tourists and profile within a globalised world both in and out of the film industry. This can be seen, for example, in South Africa where Cape Town and Durban compete both as tourist and filmmaking destinations. A similar view is expressed by Loist (2016:59):

[T]he global city paradigm [that] ensures competition on both national and international levels. While for a long time the nation has been the defining element in cultural identity, transnational transactions amongst regional or global cities have largely supplanted the old model. Today global cities compete for funds and economic gains, for tourism, [etc.].

Making a crucial point, Stringer (2001) also highlights that the international film festival circuit – and the roles occupied by the dominant festivals – is directly linked to the inequality and hierarchy of cities across the world. In other words, generally speaking, wealthier cities tend to be seen as more important, whether it be their film festivals or they as tourism destinations. Hence, film festivals directly benefit from the established inequality and place in the hierarchy of their host city. Stringer (2001:138) explains it in this way: “through a complex festival circuit these festivals and therefore these

cities/spaces/selves become ranked in importance. Inequality is thus built into the very structure of the international film circuit. “The battle for recognition”, Stringer recognizes, “is a fusion between the festival itself and the host city’s own self-image (often heavily mediated through the agency of the local tourist board and civil leadership structures” (Stringer, quoted in Koven, 2008:40). Festivals linked to wealthy and culturally accessible (to the global film elites and funding resources) cities, then tend to prioritise and leverage this identity marker more than other cultural or community driven identifying features.

For festival host cities such as Berlin, London, Cannes, Venice, and Toronto, this localised festival identity is derived more from the global identity of these cities than on any specific physical local community. The globalised and “internationalness” of these cities creates the festival identity more than any specific local culture or community. In other words, although these festivals’ identities are defined by their host cities and locations, their main audiences and markets are not primarily local residents; but rather they focus on attracting the global film industry and its players, funders and supporters. Hence, a film festival hosted by a city willing and able to commit resources and funds towards promoting the festival as a destination event, and one that already holds a privileged place within the global hierarchy, is much more likely to succeed. The fusing of the festival’s identity with that of the city, therefore, becomes not just an abstract issue of programming, but rather a distinctly financial advantage. In fact, when one looks at the relationship between festival programming and its city-based identity – it is difficult to find one. Major festivals linked to cities still generally have a national and international focused film programme – one that leverages the city’s benefits to attract top films and talents – but not primarily from films or filmmakers from the host city.

It is clear therefore that multiple elements are at play to either advantage or disadvantage specific cities and their festivals. As Rhyne (2009) explains, while the city is the key locus of the festival and its identity, it is still the national infrastructure of an advanced film industry, the support of national film bodies, and links to multinational resources that make it possible for specific festivals to thrive. This process is further explained by Rhyne (2009:13) in *The Film Festival Yearbook 1*:

[T]he film festival is profoundly located in cities, regions, and nations, branded through their local tourism boards, promoted through their national cultural commissions and funded through supranational initiatives and private foundations with the goal of establishing international network of film distribution and exhibition, the effects of which subsidize a multinational commercial entertainment industry that is often looking to find a way of exploiting local markets.

The programming of a professional festival, competing in a global network needs to reflect the unique identity of the festival as well as ensure accessibility, commercial viability and global reach. De Valck and Loist (2009:187) elaborate, “at large film festivals in particular, programs tend to have a strong international character and therefore attract cosmopolitan visitors who to celebrate and consume world/art cinema, rather than screen programmes that express regional distinctiveness and cater to local populations. However, as Rastegor (2016:187) points out:

[F]estivals organized around the film industry are programmed and organized according to a different set of resources, expectations and goals than community based festivals; the commitment to a clearly articulated mission is necessary for guiding the curatorial process of all festivals ...a festival’s audience cannot be everyone and concretely understanding show the audience is, is necessary for accomplishing the festival mission.

In the West then, it has become apparent that the most successful film festivals are those that are able to leverage the geographic, economic, and reputational advantages of high profile host cities within the global festival network. Most of the high-profile festivals of the West are major destination events that promote their host city as a unique tourist destination, and at the same develop and promote a film programme that is internationally driven. These festivals are able to rely on the impact of their host cities as identifiers and market themselves successfully without the need for significant links to local communities. Whilst some of these festivals also attract significant local audiences, it is clear that their ability to thrive is based on their international appeal and ability to attract high-profile international films, guests, media, funders and visitors. Neither Venice nor Cannes could survive on local audiences or resources alone.

4.5 *African Festivals: African Cities*

The situation described above, in which a film festival is able to take full advantage of the attractions of the city with which it is associated and, yet simultaneously develop and promote a high-profile internationally-driven film programme, is virtually non-existent within the African context. African film festivals not only have to compete for extremely limited local and regional resources, they have to work within an inherently disadvantaged global system, in which they are linked to cities host cities, and even host nations, whose lack of proximity to power and resources place them at the bottom of the global network. If, what Stringer (2001:138) was quoted above as saying is true (“the [festival] circuit exists as an allogorization of space and its power relationships”), then, to put it plainly, African festivals have a very low position on the hierarchy of global festivals, because they are in Africa and in African cities. The historical context that has created this situation is

predicated on the position and privilege of many Western nations. This has become an upward trajectory of privilege for many major city festivals such as Toronto, Berlin, Tribeca, London, and Cannes. In contrast, African cities, often sitting at the bottom end of the global hierarchy in terms of investment, tourism, and reputation, simply do not have the resources to compete, let alone to promote film festivals. The relationship between festival identity and their host cities in Africa is also clear when one understands that,

the encounter between cinema and the post-colonial urban centres in the third world, which remain beset by massive poverty and endemic social injustice, may sometimes seem a strange one, given the natural capital-intensive and technologically intensive character of cinema as a cultural practice, and is often a particularly fraught one. (Shiel and Fitzmaurice, 2001, 7)

The basic reality is that most African cities, especially the larger urban centres are simply incapable of providing the investments required for the development of a major film industry or festival. Film festivals in Africa then, have little or no incentive to seek a strong association with their host city, and by and large, until very recently, have not done so.

Apart from a handful of urban centres and most of these in South Africa, very few African cities have the kind of civic- and tourism-driven infrastructure to fund and support city-driven film festivals. The few city-named festivals in Africa thus tend to be in South Africa. The Durban Film Festival, the Joburg Film Festival, and the Cape Town International Film market and Festival, reflect cities that at least have a nominal ability to support the events through funding and through destination marketing drives. The only other major sub-Saharan city-identified festival is the Nairobi Film Festival. That has only taken place sporadically and without continued success. Most long-term and sustainable film festivals in sub-Saharan Africa are still nationally or regionally identified: The Ethiopian Film Festival,

the Zanzibar International Film Festival, the Zimbabwe International Film Festival, the Congo International Film Festival, the Rwanda Film Festival, the Uganda Film Festival, and many other festivals in Africa take their names from a regional identity marker. The Zuma Film Festival in Nigeria is named after the famous rock in the area and the Black Star Film Festival in Ghana refers to the flag, for instance.

Hardly any of these festivals named above have been able to improve their position significantly in the global hierarchy of festivals. The inherently unequal nature of the global film festival circuit, as explained previously, means that not only do they not receive the benefit of municipal funding, tourism support, or even national film funding, but they are also not linked to established multinational companies, or more specifically, a multinational film industry. A notable exception, and probably the most well-known and sustainable festival in sub-Saharan Africa is the Durban International Film Festival that has in fact, received support from its associated University, city and from national government. But this festival remains an anomaly compared to other festivals in Africa. More generally then, film festivals in Africa have historically derived their identities from very strong cultural or political drivers developed either regionally or from a Pan-African perspective. Accordingly, African film festivals have historically, and continue to do so, developed their funding, audiences, and identities from specific cultural, political, and community drivers. Having to rely on different funding sources, mostly through commercial sponsors or international donor organisations, film festivals in Africa have identified themselves with specific local cultures, issues and audiences. These festivals need to attract local sponsors who want to connect with local audiences, as well as global donors who are looking for specific programmes that also speak to local communities.

4.6 Culture and Commerce: The African Film Festival

As, in most cases, sub-Saharan African film festivals cannot rely on either national or city governments for funding and support, they have had to develop along different lines from their European festival counterparts. The identities of many of these festivals have long been linked to the Pan-African ideals of the post-colonial era or to very specific local communities and cultures. The identities of festivals in Africa have therefore been more closely associated with local audiences and communities. It is only more recently that many of these festivals have endeavoured to compete in the global network. For festivals in Africa, the mandate has always had to be both cultural and financial as in many countries, even today, film festivals are sometimes the only places where African films can be formally screened and the only places for engagement between audiences and filmmakers. Perhaps more than in other cities, it is in cities in Africa that one can see how “European and American interests have ... controlled the structures of distribution and exhibition throughout the colonial world, almost exclusively so in Africa, and most of these arrangements have persisted long beyond the moment of formal independence” (Shiel & Fitzmaurice, 2001, 25). Within Africa one can see that:

[T]he intersection of commercial, non-profit and aesthetic interests in film festival institutions makes the network indicative of a new breed of cultural industries that are shaped by global economic shifts in the transnational circulation of cultural products. Understanding the festival space as a space in which these interests are negotiated can tell us something about the relationship between film, cultural policy and globalization in the new millennium. (Iordanova, 2009:16)

Historically, film festivals in Africa have had no other options but to be both the cultural and economic flag bearers of the film industry. While the advent of new technologies (which I will look at more closely later in this thesis) has increased access to African content, the fact remains that most people in Africa do not have access to cinemas or to streaming

platforms. Film festivals are powerful social and physical gatherings that engage directly with local audiences and promote local film industries. This position has meant that the actual audiences for these festivals, and their cultural and identity markers have always had to engage and intersect with commercial and business driven imperatives. Additionally, the reliance on global funders has meant that African festivals have had to be aware of and responsive to the needs of their local communities. Donor organisations tend to fund only festival programmes that speak to localised needs and communities rather than to festivals that programme and promote foreign or international films and filmmakers.

In order to survive, African film festivals, have had to identify closely with their local audiences and develop programmes that can appeal to funders on the basis of authentic relevance. Although most African film festivals do have international screening programmes, the inter-reliance between local film industries and festivals has also meant that these festivals have also carried the responsibility for developing the craft and raising the level of local filmmakers. Lindiwe Dovey (2014:132) highlights the links between community audiences, location, culture, and identity: “[M]ost contemporary film festivals in Africa call themselves international, although a few are dedicated to screening only African films. The older festivals have also felt the pressure to reinvent themselves in this new era.” Film festivals in Africa are also involved in the process in which “film festivals make manifest competing and overlapping definitions of film: film as ‘artistic expression’ and film as ‘economic product for trade’” (Dovey, 2014:142). As Dovey implies, many film festivals in Africa are feeling the pressure to re-invent themselves and also to compete in the global network. I would argue that the festivals that have an authentic and relevant

community-derived identity will be able to successfully position themselves within this network.

4.7 *The Zanzibar International Film Festival: The Festival of the Dhow*

Since, as I have shown, these festivals are not able to benefit from the economic or cultural influence of their host cities to attract international guests or interest, their real value comes from their cultural uniqueness and authenticity – something that many Western festivals lack. It is this very lack of access to international talent and funding that makes African festivals relevant to their local audiences that will make them appeal to global audiences. The links to local cultures, languages and communities that have given African film festivals their identities are what will assist them to compete in a competitive global context.

If one looks at the other long-standing film festivals across Africa, namely the Ethiopian Film Festival (founded in 2002), the Catharge Film Festival started in 1966 (and the oldest festival in Africa), and the Zanzibar International Film Festival (ZIFF), the common thread amongst all of them is a strong regional and localised cultural identity. ZIFF, as an example, has leveraged the powerful symbolism of its very specific local cultural identity. The concept of Dhow culture as a geographically and regionally defined cultural identity has been used by the festival since its inception. Founded 22 years ago by a core of powerful and influential Zanzibaris and Emerson Skeens, an American transplant to the Island who was obsessed with the culture of the island and soon became accepted as a local, ZIFF has always been, as its core identifier, a festival of the Dhow countries. This identifier was a powerful tool developed by Skeens and the early ZIFF board as a way of marketing Zanzibar

and the festival to a global market. It highlighted the uniqueness of Zanzibar as a location and destination, but it also emphasised its role as an annual means of promoting Zanzibar as a centre of regional culture:

[ZIFF] was positioned to be a laboratory of refining understandings of Dhow culture and then a platform for communicating these understandings. ZIFF was therefore positioned as a resource for both the ongoing intellectual exploration of the concept of 'Dhow culture' and the practical support of productions representing that culture. (Slocum 2009, 145)

Although ZIFF has created its identity based on local cultural markers, Dovey, for example, sees ZIFF as "symbolic of many of the possibilities and problems of the new wave of 'international' festivals in Africa and their relationship to the neoliberal capitalist global order". The festival founders themselves may have had conflicting understandings of the role of the festival. Formed by a number of foreigners such as the American Emerson Skeen, run by locals such as long time and recurring film festival Director Martin Mhando, and used on and off for many years as a political tool by Zanzibari politicians, ZIFF has long struggled with competing aims and agendas. As Dovey (2014) reveals:

The fact that cultural and economic discourses do not sit comfortably together at ZIFF, is evident particularly in the printed materials that have been produced by the festival. In the 2013 ZIFF catalogue, Chairman Mahmoud T. Kombo's welcoming address creates an oxymoronic counterpart to CEO/Festival Director Martin Mhando's greetings on the opposite page. Kombo makes a plea to 'all Zanzibar and Zanzibari businesses', and to 'Hotels and Tourism businesses' and 'Advertising agencies' to 'utilize; the 'platform' of the ZIFF to 'maximum' effect (p. 6).

Kombo's emphasis on tourism and commerce, and his business jargon, are in striking contrast with Mhando's humanist, poetic discourse that focuses on ZIFF as a place of "sharing the values of justice, freedom, love and harmony in our history of maritime relations" (p. 7). Almost every page of the ZIFF catalogues bears these conflicting

narratives and discourses—with “outreach” programmes for children and people living in villages outside Stone Town (Zanzibar’s capital) listed opposite advertisements for the swankiest hotels in Zanzibar, far beyond the purchasing power of most Zanzibaris and thus appealing to foreign tourists and their image of Zanzibar as an exotic island ” (Dovey, 2014:145-146)

While Dovey is accurate saying that there is an innate tension between the need to be culturally authentic and at the same time attract international audiences and commercial funding, I would argue, based on five years working closely within the organisation, that, at least up until 2019 ZIFF successfully managed these internal tensions between the local and international imperatives, both essential to the success of the festival, due primarily to its strong and consistent links to its authentic identity. Dovey (2014:148) acknowledges that despite the festival’s internationalist tendencies and a “curatorial approach [that] may sound suspiciously close to the flattering concept of “world cinema”, Mhando and ZIFF have also broken ranks with traditional festivals by “actively and enthusiastically programming local video movies from the Nollywood spin-off industry known as ‘Bongowood’”.

In the 2017 official ZIFF catalogue, the cultural and commercial aspects of the festival are presented as not in conflict, but as two elements of the larger event. In his message, the Festival CEO Daniel Nyalusi (2017:8) introduced the Soko Filam market and the partnership with DISCOP Markets as “ushering in a new era for ZIFF and for the East African film industry”.

In the catalogue, Chairman Khombo (2017:6) had this to say about the festival:

It was the love of audiences that triggered the beginning of the festival and it is to audiences that we look up as we celebrate the 20th anniversary . As the Festival of the Dhow Countries we see Zanzibar at the centre of the Indian Ocean world with the African continent at its base. Through the Dhow, our festival symbol, we celebrate cinema as the connecting tool just like the Dhow plied the Indian Ocean to unite all those who travelled past and through Zanzibar.

Of key importance to its identity, for over 22 years ZIFF maintained this consistent iconography of the Dhow, in its logo, posters, awards and copy. This powerful symbol has encapsulated the heart of the festival identity regardless of changes in sponsorship or programming pressures. This marker of the Dhow countries has become intrinsically linked to Zanzibar through ZIFF and the Dhow Countries Music Academy on the island. Although it does not have much official recognition as a geographical term, it is a cultural signifier referring to the large wooden sailing boats that explorers and fishermen have used for centuries in the region of East Africa. Linked to taraab music, Dhow culture is a fusion of Arab, Indian and African identities. One of the highlights of the festival every year is the opening Dhow Race – an event that perfectly projects the marriage of culture and economics. Six to eight corporately-sponsored dhows compete in a race that for the past few years has been sponsored by local company ComNet. The branded dhows take to the ocean while hundreds of locals and visitors alike cheer on their favourite corporate dhow, a very successful way of securing funding and promoting the festival’s cultural identity marker in one single event.

ZIFF, over the past few years, and during the five years that I was involved, succeeded in its balancing act of positioning itself as an international festival within the global circuit based on its authentic cultural identity. Over the years ZIFF survived on a combination of regional corporate sponsorship and the support of many international donors – all of whom have

respected and supported the Dhow Country mandate and identity of the festival. The festival leveraged its unique location and culture (without the support of any national or local tourism bodies) to become an internationally recognised event. While it still may be “low” on the global hierarchy, up until 2019, the festival was self-sustaining, growing in both size, relevance and impact, and becoming recognised as one of Africa’s top festivals. The Zanzibar International Film Festival is a unique festival in the Africa environment. Its origins and identity are bound to the local culture and to a specific physical location that has significant destination-marketing appeal in terms of modern tourism. As the opening lines in Ziff’s story on its 2019 Facebook page proclaimed: “Just the name Zanzibar conjures up positive and mythical images – long known as a hub of trade, communications and a true cultural melting pot – Zanzibar is one of Africa’s top tourism destinations – and for good reason.” This underlined the importance of its location, history, and regional identity to the festival and to its international appeal.

It is important to note that ZIFF was never a simple nationalist endeavour. The federation between Tanzania and Zanzibar is convoluted and often contested. Nevertheless, although the island has a strong identity, the festival has always maintained its regional association. This has not been unproblematic. Over the years, the tension between the mainland and the island, has manifested itself more and more over the years as Tanzanian and Kenyan filmmakers have begun to dominate the screening programme at ZIFF. Unfortunately, the few local (Zanzibari) productions are often of very poor quality. The festival has recently experienced a backlash from the tiny but emerging island-based industry to the mainland players in Tanzania and Kenya. This backlash is not only related to film selection, but also to staffing and support of the event. In 2018, there were rumours circulating that island

producers had been “blacklisted” by the festival’s Tanzanian Festival Manager and the locals, who were pushing for less involvement from mainland players. The reality, however, is that the island simply does not have the resources to stage the event without the financial and logistical support of mainland companies and individuals. So, while the nationalist fervour of some Zanzibaris has led to tensions within the festival, the undeniable truth is that the event is a regional event that includes the East African mainland, as well as Arab and Indian countries.

At the same time, the festival’s island location is also seen by some in East Africa as a backwards move, with industry professionals in cities such as Dar es Salaam (that has no film festival), and Nairobi often expressing a form of professional jealousy as to why such a small and isolated island has such a high profile festival. ZIFF has truly had to struggle and come up with creative ways of convincing others about the benefit of having Zanzibar location of the festival, despite the evident attractiveness of the setting.

From the outset, ZIFF has been funded and supported by a host of global funding bodies and non-profit organisations, each with their own agenda, often reflected in the elements of the programme. It has never been possible for ZIFF to take on a purely nationalist agenda. Many funding bodies have, however, actively supported the festival’s cultural identity, seeing the support of the festival as a support of East African culture at large. At the same time, donor funding has also ensured an international and global perspective within the festival’s programming, marketing and audiences. The founding members of ZIFF, many of whom remained on its Board of Directors until as recently as 2017–2018, have ensured that while the festival has always included an international element, it has

retained a strong cultural identity. To this day, the awards at ZIFF are the Silver and Golden Dhow and much of the festival's iconography, entertainment and programming is strongly linked to Zanzibari cultural and physical identity.

Even from its early years, as highlighted in an article by Slocum (2003:28) looking at ZIFF 2003, "several films shown at ZIFF are current staples of a global festival circuit marked by contemporary transnational film and media production and distribution". Over the past few years, ZIFF has had to work harder to find the balance between its strong cultural identity as a driver of programming and funding, whilst also taking a role as an important film industry event within the network of African (and global) film festivals. In its early years and through its growth trajectory, this strong cultural marker has enabled the festival to be instantly recognizable and uniquely appealing. As more and more festivals across the globe (including in Africa) have altered their identities and programming perspectives, ZIFF has remained consistent, making it unique within the global network. ZIFF's ability to leverage its location (not a city but small and specific enough to be one) has enabled it to promote itself as a destination (as will be discussed further in the next chapter), but also to give itself a positioning that no other festival can own or co-opt. The unique cultural heritage of the region, to which the festival is pegged, gives it a competitive advantage. Even though ZIFF's filmmatic programming has always included a range of international films and filmmakers, it has never lost its local flavour. As mentioned earlier, for many years ZIFF has also featured local video style movies and the local inhabitants of Zanzibar, as opposed to the few local filmmakers, have passionately supported regionally produced films, especially those produced in Tanzania in Swahili that are affectionately as Bongo Movies. While many other festivals in Africa, including the CTIFMF, eschew some African produced films due to low

production quality or lack of international sales potential, ZIFF has long embraced this kind of hyper-localised content ensuring that local and international audiences are given a unique experience.

ZIFF has also managed to maintain programming integrity despite the need for donor support. The festival has managed streamline its donor programming requirements by creating a sub-program called “the Festival of Festivals”. Here, donor countries are given a specific venue on a specific day to screen the content of their choice. This clever programme tool enables ZIFF to take donor money, and include their requisite programming in a way that still keeps the integrity of the festival programme itself. While ZIFF’s identity as a festival of the Dhow Countries has given it a competitive advantage, the festival has also managed to incorporate this cultural identity into its location as a tourist destination. Zanzibar as a location calls to mind the cultural images so closely linked to the festival. It has thus been easy to position the Zanzibar as both a destination and a cultural identifier all in one. Where the festival has the advantages of having a unique location to position itself within the hierarchy of festival destinations, it has suffered from having no cinema infrastructure and receiving no governmental funding.

This lack of financial support from the government is in stark contrast to the millions spent by other cities and governments who promote city identified film festivals. In fact, ZIFF pays rent to the government of Zanzibar for its offices and screening venues at the Old Fort and does not even get a special rate for costs such as cleaning or electricity for the venue. One of the Board Members of ZIFF, and its Chairman for some years, Mahmoud Kombo, now the Minister of Information and Tourism, has, for all his influence and high government

status, not been able to direct any kind of funding or even infrastructural support to ZIFF. The festival is a major tourism driver, so much so that in 2018 there was not a single hotel room available in Stone Town during the festival. However, there is no support even from a marketing or collateral perspective from the local government. Minister Khombo and other notable politicians often mention its importance on the island's cultural and tourism calendar at the Opening and Closing of the event , and yet not one government department offers financial support. ZIFF has to pay for the censoring of films, for the use of the venue, for additional security from the local authorities, and for permission to put up posters around Stone Town. Even local hotels are often reluctant to support the event financially, at most providing venues free of charge and rooms at discounted rates. Zanzibar is one of the world's most attractive tourism destinations and ZIFF as a festival benefits from the association, just not in any real financial terms.

4.8 *The Cape Town International Film Market and Festival: For whom and by whom?*

In contrast to ZIFF, CTIFMF's stated aim from the start was not only to compete in the global network, but to stake its claim to a dominant place in it. In the very early marketing copy for the inaugural CTIFMF in 2017 on its website, the organizers referred to it as the Cannes of Africa, and highlighted the first world beauty and appeal of the city. This type of referencing made the festival's aims of competing globally very clear. At the same time it led to problems and attracted criticism from locals and internationals alike. The festival was appealing to first-world audiences (this will be discussed later) by referring to Cannes, and at the same time glossing over the reality of life for most Capetonians.



Riana Howa @RianaHow · Sep 7, 2017

What if #CapeTown becomes the #Cannes of Africa? #CTIFMF could make it so, writes @enverduminy @CapeTownTourism iol.io/bcd9n



Responsive Studio posted a video to playlist **Our Work**.

December 5, 2017 · Cape Town · 🌐

Our team had the opportunity to cover this year's Cape Town International Film Market & Festival. The vision of the #CTIFMF is to become the 'Cannes of Africa'. We are in no doubt that the film festival will grow rapidly in the years to come; we loved being a part of it. Check out the video to see some of our work. — with Eden Myrrh Toohey and 13 others at Nu Metro V&a Waterfront.

Social media post September 7 2017 Figure 4.1

The festival's initial positioning of Cape Town as a global hot spot for the rich and influential did not appeal to a local constituency, and also failed to use the city's unique (and not always pretty) attributes to help to position itself globally. In other words, if Cape Town is Cannes, why not go to Cannes? Creating an identity linked to another high-profile festival destination, meant the CTIFMF chose not to establish a unique selling point in the global festival network and also alienated locals. While eventually this type of wording and positioning changed in the public domain, it continued to drive many of the festival programme and outreach decisions. When dealing with potential sponsors and participants, this type of language was often used, weakening the ability of the festival to create its own unique identity within the local or the global space.

The CTIFMF can be understood as the epitome of a modern festival project. albeit one that did not prove to be successful or sustainable as it took place only in 2017 and 2018 and left behind debt and disgruntled employees. The festival's identity was solely based on destination marketing linked to its location and host city, the city of Cape Town, which was wholly imagined as an economic driver for the local film industry. There were no clear cultural or community markers linked to the festival to drive programming, specific audience outreach, or even funding. From the outset, the festival tried to position itself squarely in competition with global international film festivals both in terms of film programming and the strong focus on the business side of the industry. The festival emerged from the Cape Winelands Festival – an auteur international film festival with little desire to position itself as anything else. Its description of itself in 2013 reflects this: “While its perspective is clearly global, the Festival is also a showcase and forum for the South African film industry. The festival will again focus on the theme Reconciliation and Acceptance of ‘The Other’” (Stellenbosch Travel, 2013). The festival took an international approach to programming, combined with a destination marketing approach to create its uniqueness: “What sets the Cape Winelands Film Festival apart from the many other film festivals worldwide is their distinctive approach to film programming, committed celebrity guests and friendly leisurely pace. You will have plenty of time to enjoy the wine country's amenities” (https://www.capetownmagazine.com/events/cape-winelands-film-festival/11_37_10287)

When the event was launched as an international cinephilic programme, having Cape Town in its name became problematic. The first year of the CTIFMF saw a strong international film focus, with only a handful of African films, and, in the view of many, not enough South

African titles. The inclusion of “Cape Town” within the festival name, would, to many require an programmatic and cultural link to the city itself – something the festival programmers did not necessarily agree with. The CTIFMF from the outset aimed to promote itself as an international festival – competing, perhaps unrealistically, for world premieres, top-industry celebrities, and the related corporate sponsorship. However, without a tangible link to the cultural communities of the city, and in year one, as many pointed out, an exclusion of many industry players, the festival had to deal with strong criticism from the local film industry as well as from the public.

The CTIFMF Board also made a conscious decision to try and secure accreditation by the International Federation of Film Producers Association as an internationally competitive film festival, hence many of its programming decisions were guided by these rules.

According to the FIAPF website:

FIAPF is also a regulator of international film festivals, including some of the world's most significant ones. FIAPF 'International Film Festivals' Regulations are a trust contract between the film business and the festivals who depend on their cooperation for their prestige and economic impact. (FIAPF)

The CTIFMF had hopes of being accredited as a competitive festival, the highest level of accreditation, and was, therefore, subject to strict guidelines on how many films must be in competition with one another, the size and composition of juries, and the rules stipulating how many films must premiere at the festival. These guidelines put an immense amount of pressure on the budget of the new film festival. The decision to adhere to these rules to be eligible for official recognition also strongly affected many of the programming decisions as well as the overall identity of the festival. It also had major financial

implications for the festival, leading to increased financial obligations without the funding to support them.

Accreditation by the FIAPF is seen by many festivals as a marker of legitimacy and it has long been claimed that it creates a ranking system or hierarchy amongst global festivals. The organisation, however, has denied this. The debate spilled over into the public domain in 2007 when Sundance director Geoffrey Gilmore criticised FIAPF's film festival policy (which is widely seen as a ranking system for international film festivals) of perpetuating mediocrity,. According to Shackleton (2007):

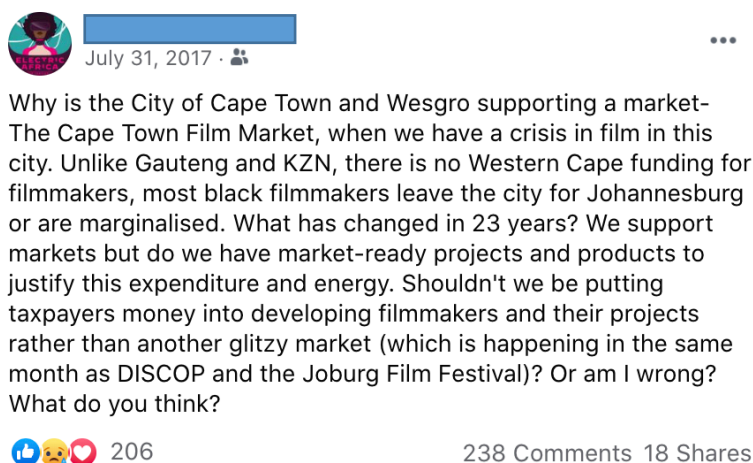
Gilmore's comments and FIAPF's response highlight a long-running debate about the accreditation system which endorses festivals in four categories: competitive feature film festivals, competitive specialised feature film festivals, non-competitive feature film festivals and documentary and short film festivals. The first two categories are commonly referred to as the 'A-list' and 'B-list' and are sometimes used as such by film festivals in their marketing efforts. However, the classification has raised eyebrows because it places smaller and less established events such as Shanghai in the same league as Cannes and Venice, among the 12 festivals in the first category.

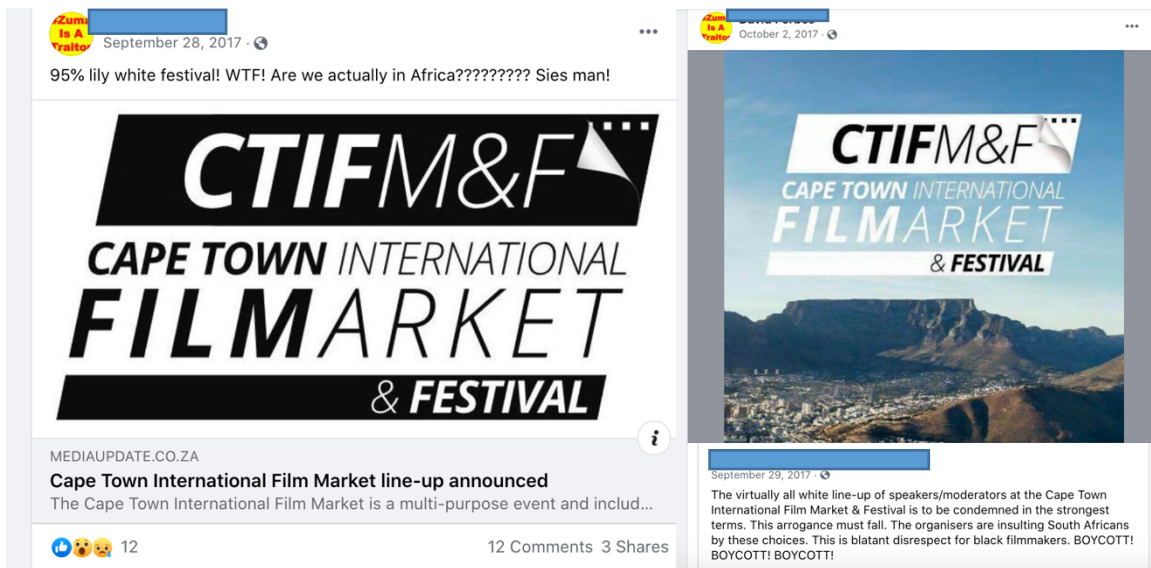
This public and heated debate brought the tensions within the global hierarchy of festivals to the surface and showed how their proximity to power and money, rather than their programming or filmmatic elements, can affect their position in the hierarchy. Gilmore seems to be suggesting that the A ratings festivals such as Shanghai are being given may be based on the power and money that China and Shanghai invest in the event rather than the quality of their programmes. If this is in fact the case, then the CTIFMF's attempt to secure this kind of A list ranking would be a long shot indeed.

As I experienced at first-hand, the CTIFMF's aim of becoming one of the elite global festivals played a key role in determining its programming, jury selection, and venue selection. From the first, the CTIFMF's aim was linked to the festival's desire to gain global recognition and to compete within the global hierarchy of film festivals. The CTIFMF attempted to use the tourism value of its location in Cape town to gain a competitive edge within the global network, much in the way of top-tier festivals such as Toronto and Venice that are strongly associated with their host cities. To some extent, the CTIFMF was successfully able to do this in year 1 since most of the funding for the festival came from Cape Town Tourism, and the City of Cape Town. However, in the long term, funding of the kind needed was not available either on a local level or globally, given the competition the CTIFMF faced from wealthier and much more influential cities and festivals. The level of funding support the City of Cape Town could offer from a tourism and destination marketing point of view was simply not enough to allow the CTIFMF to compete globally, or even to fully sustain the festival locally. It was clear from the start that other sources of funding were necessary. Another factor was that Cape Town's location, far from the main festival and film industry centres of Europe and the United States, put it at a disadvantage. Things might have been different had the festival been able to garner the support of partners such as South African Tourism. Unfortunately, although South African Tourism was engaged at multiple levels by the festival organisers, there was never a coherent strategy between Cape Town Tourism and South African Tourism to market the festival as a destination. Finally, Cape Town does not have access to the global talent, media and industry that its international counterparts or even its local competitor, the long established and respected Durban International Film Festival, do. In attempting to compete with festivals with the prestige of Cannes and the like, the CTIFMF failed to recognise that a new festival, and at that one at the tip of the

global south, simply could not and would not attract the kind of international film screenings and talent required to compete globally.

As already noted, by targeting international audiences, and making programming and other decisions on the basis of international prestige, the CTIFMF also alienated its local audiences to some extent. At the same time, the complex and conflicted cultural landscape and history of the city itself made it difficult to target local communities in the City of Cape Town. Anyone trying to define the identity of the city would find it difficult because of the spatial and cultural apartheid that still exists within the city. The organisers of the first edition of the festival did not adequately address this nor did they adequately engage with potential local audiences or the local film industry. This was largely due to their focus as on the global festival network and global markets. This failure is evident in the social media backlash, a lack of industry support for the festival expo and events, and a lack of significant numbers at screenings.





Social media posts September & October 2017 Figure 4.2

The CTIFMF was able to secure support in its first year (and second) from the City of Cape Town based on its host-city identifier and its promise to be a driver of tourism (industry guests to the event), and eventually to position Cape Town as a film festival destination. However, this support was not matched by other players within the industry or corporate South Africa. In year two, the festival suffered massive losses, despite its ability to prove its relevance as an African event from both film and industry programming perspectives. The CTIFM's industry programme for year one was a non-starter, with a planned major exhibition at the V & A Waterfront proving to be a major disappointment: only a handful of industry players participated. In year 2, the Market Programme, headed by Elias Ribeiro managed to include the local film industry while also bringing in major international festivals and players from Cannes, the Berlinale, Rotterdam, as well as many others. The industry programme also aimed to link with the rest of the continent, with the Nigerian Film Board and Kenya Film Commission joining their South African counterparts from the NFVF in a series of meetings. The market team staged a series of monthly meetings in the

build-up to the event that invited any and all players from the Cape Town film industry to attend. By creating a sense of inclusion and ownership, there was a substantial increase in support from the local industry. The 2018 film programme was much more Africa focused and also had a very strong focus on South African, and Cape Town based filmmakers. Overall however, in its first two years, the CTIFMF failed, in my view, to establish a strong identity – not even to its location, the city of Cape Town. At the same time, by trying to compete with other major festivals at a global level, the CTIFMF set itself up for failure.

This cinephilic approach to film programming, later supplemented with the beginnings of an African identity in a city with a very limited market for such films, meant that the festival found it hard to attract audiences of sufficient size. The festival did not even manage to fill cinemas at its key locations in the V & A Waterfront. People with the desire and ability to pay to attend screenings in Cape Town are few in number and homogenous. They are largely middle to upper class, older, and white. Despite some efforts the festival was not able to attract a young, black and more diverse audience. Although the iconography of the festival attempted to project an image of a mass-urban market, the programming, venue selection, the price points, and overall messaging told a different story. In its first year, the festival used popular South African actress Pearl Thusi as its “face of the festival,” However, at the time Thusi was personally focused on pursuing her international career and despite her popularity, she had a limited ability to connect with key audiences. Additionally, in a major miscalculation of the mood of South African audiences, Thusi and the CTIFMF produced a video of Thusi replicating performances from a range of American feature films – with only one South African film (Sarafina). The festival was then accused of being out of touch, racist, imperialist etc. and heavily criticised in social media platforms.

The festival's second year saw the team attempting to use what they had learnt in year one to adapt their strategy and programming. However, the festival was still not able to position itself clearly. Given the African focus of marketing materials, supported by a more Africa focused programme, the overall positioning of the festival was still too internationally focused and failed to resonate with local audiences and funders alike. Established as a for-profit business with a main stated aim of driving the Cape Town, South African, and African film industries forward, the festival was unable to achieve financial success. In its first year, its identity based on global economics and forces alienated its local audiences and the local film industry. This was rectified in the second year of the festival. However, the damage had already been done. Failure to attract proper financial backing in 2018 meant the festival did not take place in 2019 and still owes millions of Rands to suppliers.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE PHYSICAL FESTIVAL: THINK GLOBAL ACT LOCAL

5.1 *The Festival as Lived Space*

The previous chapter analysed the role that a festival's self-defined identity plays in its ability to compete in the global network, and specifically part the location (city or country) of a festival plays in this regard. There is another spatial component in film festivals that must be investigated. Regardless of the country or city a film where a festival takes place, the specific location of the screenings and related events within a city's spatial and sociological flow are essential component of a festival's success. In order to understand what makes a festival sustainable, It is essential to recognise that it is a physical event that takes place at a specific time and in a specific physical location with live audiences. The spatial importance or the spatial flow of film festivals, and its implications need to be explored in depth, both generally as well as specifically in Africa. Decisions regarding the physical venues and spaces that festivals occupy have an impact on their ability to attract audiences, funders, media support, and ultimately their ability to succeed. Festival venues and their accessibility, history, reputation, architecture and spatial layouts, ultimately also shape the festival itself. The spatiality of a festival and its relevance to its audiences are inseparable and even a well-funded and programmed festival may not be sustainable if the lived experience it offers is not in line with its self-proclaimed aims and identity.

In this section, I will look at the "liveness" of the film festival itself, examine the role of audiences, and examine festivals from a spatial theory perspective. The role that the location of a festival plays in its historical development and trajectory cannot be

overstated. Location in this sense goes beyond the continent, country, or city where a festival take place.

In its opening statement, this thesis presented the view that the location of a film festival within a globalised hierarchical network contextualises the way that the physicality of a film festival can be understood. A festival's geographical location can be analysed from a number of perspectives such as the demise of the nation-state, the relative location of the festival in relation to social and power infrastructures locally and internationally, and an understanding of the location of physical space and flow. Rhyne (2009:13) offers the following explanation:

[T]he film festival is profoundly located in cities, regions, and nations, branded through their local tourism boards, promoted through supranational initiatives and private foundations with the goal of establishing international networks of film distribution and exhibition, the efforts of which subsidize a multinational commercial entertainment industry that is often looking to find a way of exploiting under tapped local markets.

The understanding that film festivals occur in cities and that the identity of these takes precedence over national identities is a widely-held view among film festival scholars. The advantages offered by a particular host city within the global festival network have already been discussed.

The concept of spatial theory, or the spatial turn, gained momentum in the 1970s as part of a growing sociological approach to many disciplines. This spatial turn, as Shiel and Fitzmaurice (2000:5) explain, is "a growing recognition of the usefulness of space as an organizing category ... it has helped us to understand how power and discipline are spatially inscribed into cultural texts and into the spatial organization of cultural production". This

understanding may be applied to the film industry on a number of levels, from the global industry and its means of production, distribution, exhibition, down to the specific status of cinemas as places that are a “peculiarly special form of culture” (Sheil & Fitzmaurice, 2001:5). I take this to mean that the space, or location, of a festival is relevant in terms of its geographic position, in relation to the centres of the film industry (privileging those festivals in the West), as well in terms of the physical space in which each particular film is screened to a particular audience. The space in which a festival takes place is, therefore, not an undefined or neutral concept, but should be understood as “a materialistic conception of space and another based on the theory of action” (Low, 2013:17). This understanding is based on the work of French academic Henri Lefebvre, as well as that of David Harvey, whose work was based on Lefebvre’s, as a “materialistic orientation [of] space in order to explain the new formation of power relations”, given that “space control is a central mechanism of reproduction in capitalism” (Low, 2013:18). Lefebvre believed that, by reclaiming urban settings, people could transform “mundane everyday spaces [into] acts of resistance, escape and liberation from state and capital” (Blank & Rosen-Zvi, 2010, 4). In view of the way film festivals have historically become sites of capital flow in a globalised economy, the role of film festivals as a space of resistance can be understood. The rise of activist-, identity- or cause-driven festivals around the world is evidence of the way some festivals operate as spaces of resistance.

Low (2013:21) further describes globalisation as directly impacting on our understanding of space as “a social product or activity of creation”. In the article she cites Anthony Giddens’ 1991 theory of structuration and focuses on the importance of the “activity of creation,” that can be understood to mean that space has meaning only through the action

that takes place in it. Space then is the place where things occur and where relationships are forged. Film festivals, therefore, infuse the spaces in which they take place with meaning. The spaces, in turn, have an impact on the festival itself. Janet Harbord's analysis of film festivals as "spaces of flow" explains that "festival space [are] made up of complex dynamics of local and global forces, always defined by the physical place in which the event is being organised, but at the same time embedded in an international circuit" (Harbord:2002 quoted in DeValck & Loist, 2009:186-187). Wong (2016:85) sees so-called A-list festivals "as heirs of the liberal bourgeois public sphere and [also] alternative festivals that address specialised populations and concerns and thus recreate publics and discourses". She points out that film festivals challenge existing power structures, be they commercial cinemas or mass media and, therefore, live up to the Habermasian ideal of public spaces as "participat[ing] in the varied public and counter public spheres in the larger world, adding their own distinctive contributions to the discursive formation of public spheres" (2016: 86). Wong argues that current A-list festivals "very much resemble the classic bourgeois public sphere of letters, even in their conditions of emergence, in negotiation with both government and private spheres" (2016:86). She also claims that "perhaps nowhere are the ties of Habermas' public sphere and the A-level festival more evident than in the relations of festivals and nation-states" (2016:87). The concept of a public sphere is also intrinsically linked to the theoretical construct of space and its implications for the way space is defined. The space that a festival occupies, then, not just within its space in the global hierarchy, but also within a particular physical location in a city, is relevant. Starting from a basic understanding of Habermas (1962) and the notion of the public sphere and public space, the spatial turn as related to film festival studies incorporates economic, sociological and historical perspectives. In other words, this

understanding seeks to flesh out the relationship between the physical space of a festival, how and where it is situated, taking account of greater societal trends such as accessibility, class structure and exclusion, and representation.

It is also important to unpack the concept of “public space” and ask whether or not festivals take place in a so-called public space or rather within closed spaces that limit access to audiences based on economic, cultural, geographic, and political influences. The intricate matrix of the forces that determine a festival programme, in turn, determines whether or not the festival space is open and accessible to specific audiences. If the space a festival occupies is afforded meaning by the actions and events of the festival programme, then whether or not it is “public space” will be determined by the festival programme. This openness and accessibility of a festival to particular and various audiences is an integral element of how festivals operate and their ability to succeed. How a festival identifies its audience(s) and how its identity and programming resonate with those audiences will be directly affected by the festival’s geographical location within the global hierarchy, and by the physical spaces in which it both creates and operates.

Within an African context, the physicality and location of film festivals have perhaps even greater importance. This is related to the particular defining characteristics of the film environment on the continent, not just with regard to festivals, but the entire film industry and cinema cultures as a whole. The reality of the African environment is that very few cities have formal cinemas and multiplexes. Those that exist are dominated by US blockbusters and are beyond the financial reach of most local inhabitants. It is, therefore, necessary to recognise that the space for viewing films in Africa is intrinsically different in

its film viewing culture and practice and must be seen as such. It is necessary to view the festival in-itself as a physical event, a ritual in time and space that takes on the unique and powerful attributes of the live, physically located, and time-constrained nature of the event.

5.2 *Festival City Spaces*

A film festival exists at a specific time of year, in a specific country and city, but more than that, a film festival's events, such as screenings, workshops and panels take place in specifically selected physical locations and at set days of the week and hours of the day. All of these decisions taken by a festival's management, whether consciously or not, will have a direct effect on the success of a festival in terms of fundraising, attendance, prominence, and ultimately, its sustainability. Yet the thinking that goes into many of these decisions often has inbuilt, unconscious biases, such as assumptions relating to perceived festival audiences and their behaviours and tastes. Examining the screening and events at the festival's chosen venues and even the times of these events can reveal the hidden assumptions on which decisions are based. For example, this examination can reveal whether a given festival is targeting local communities and audiences or targeting its imagined audiences such as the global film industry, potential funders, or the media. These kinds of decision can reveal whether a festival is actively engaging with the local realities and targeted at its most immediate audiences – those likely to attend specific events – or whether the festival management is more interested in attracting the interest of other audiences further afield. An analysis of these kinds of spaces which festivals occupy can be done through the lens of spatial theory from a sociological point of view or through the lived experience of actual festivals.

Starting with the theoretical perspective of festival studies, one way to understand the festival event itself as “materialized in the physical space, which constitutes and enables movement, encounters and the crossing of boundaries between multiple categories of field participants” (Ruling & Pederson, 2010:320). Ruling refers here to the physical spaces of festival that provide the opportunity for multiple participants and types of participants to co-mingle, either by accident or design. This helps to understand the framing of the intentionality in which chosen spaces actively “constitute and enable” attendance. Put another way, specific material spaces will have pre-determined impacts on the how and the who of audience involvement at festival events. This highlights the importance of crossing boundaries, particularly when looking at the venues in which festival events take place. Specific locations exist within spaces that are often bounded. These boundaries may constitute borders when talking about countries, but also these may be constituted in more subtle ways such as between neighbourhoods, between public and private spaces, and between cultural and locally understood areas of engagement. Whether or not audiences will move across these boundaries to visit particular events and venues has a direct impact on the success of festival events. Without an understanding of the impact of all these kinds of borders, festival programmers may alienate audiences without even intending to do so.

Film screenings themselves, where guests sit and watch a film, are only one manifestation of the materialised space of film festivals. The many sidebar events, from cocktail receptions, press events, panels and masterclasses are often what differentiates one festival from another, sometimes even more than the films on screen. The actuality of the film festival is about much more than just a screening of films. It has become a physical space where value, meaning, and importance are ascribed to key events and to certain

films. The choice of locations and times for the screening of a particular film confers status and meaning upon that film, and in this way film festivals have become sites where the hierarchies of the film industry and film industry practitioners are created and perpetuated. These physical sites, depending often on the cities in which they take place, often provide access to resources in terms of funders, high-profile celebrities and professionals, multinational media houses, and audiences. The spaces of the festival do not just privilege some players and products within film industry space, but they can also privilege the audiences for these films. This process is often a local manifestation of the global trends of power and access where:

[T]he film festival is a particular manifestation of the way that space is produced as practice” can be an informative way to understand this process. This so-called ‘spatial-turn’ is useful when looking at film festival events due to their nature ‘as a peculiarly special form of culture’. (Shiel & Fitzmaurice, 2001:5)

The chosen locations in which film festival events take place and the implicit ways in which power-relations are intrinsically built into these choices is not random; these locations are chosen on the basis on many factors acting affecting a festival management team, even if they are unacknowledged. According to de Valck and Loist (2009:186-187), “we should understand festival space as being made up of complex dynamics of local and global forces, always defined by the physical place in which the event is being organized, but at the same time, embedded in an international circuit”.

In addition to examining the festival space as both a reflection of and as a creator of financial and cultural privilege, it is necessary to unpack the ways in which film festivals can create new kinds of spaces through their potential to transform existing landscapes even if only temporarily. A film festival has the ability, within a specific time and place, to layer a

new topography onto an existing cityscape, a map based on cultural connections and links, an understanding of the city as a cultural landscape. As guests journey from one festival venue to another, they will perceive the city in a new way, cross boundaries and potentially dismantle these in the process. From a spatial perspective, it is also possible to postulate that film festivals can thus become creators of a particular kind of urban space within cities. While this new version of space will in turn be influenced by global, national and local economic forces, it is still possible for festivals to imagine a different way of being in a city. The physical routes and journeys between venues – across cultural and geographic boundaries – that a festival creates can transform the way people engage with and experience both the city itself, and the festival itself. It is possible to see how the “emotional attachment to the national landscape and the built environment, climatic changes, and shared memories of communal heritage allow individuals to come together for formal or spontaneous interactions like festivals” (Derret, 2003:39).

Within a city festival space one can imagine a new way of interacting within established spaces, an understanding of the “programmable city” as posited by Elsaesser (2000). Within a city space, the festival program becomes its own network within a network. A festival can only sustainably manage and grow such a physical programme network, as de Valck (2007:195) explains, with reference to Latour’s network theory: “[i]n a stable institutional network that, in the Latourian sense, is maintained mainly via invisible interconnections.” These invisible interconnections between the physical events can also be understood as the pre-conditions for such a festival to be possible in a city space. These pre-conditions include the ability to walk or travel safely between festival venues via secure streets and public transport, the support of media and other partners in sharing the

information with communities from across the city and, perhaps critically, the presence of an audience with the disposable income and leisure time to attend these events. Stable cities, those often the ones privileged within the global network, are more likely than others to have these pre-conditions, enabling them to own the process of cultural production. Through this process, these cities are able to produce cultural privilege through transforming the city space during the festival. This process further enables these festivals to maintain and compete for position within the global network. In other words, cities that are safe to explore, those that have extensive and accessible public spaces, and those with strong public transportation networks are more easily able to create open flow – and more able to produce successful festival events. Festivals that exist in this city-space time and place are:

more capable of creating a festive atmosphere, which not only alerts and attracts visitors to the screenings, but also puts them in the mood for discoveries. Another set of reasons why spatial characteristics are central to the way festivals function is linked to actual presence. (de Valck, 2008:np)

Creating a spatialised network of cultural activity within a city can become a powerful tool in the further marketing and development of the festival (and the city) within in the global network. The film festival then becomes a curated experience that operates within both a materially and socially constructed space, and within a broader spatially constructed network.

5.3 *African Festival City Spaces*

The cultural privilege enjoyed by many internationally respected cities that is manifested by a particular ease of spatial flow is not typical of African city-spaces. The fraught colonial history of African cities, the realities of extreme inequality, and the lack of resources within

African cities means that the lived spaces of festivals in Africa are different from those in the West. The role of the physical space of the film festival in Africa also takes on additional significance when one understands the context of film viewing in Africa and the importance of the city in this space. Most African countries lack commercial cinemas on a large scale, and those that do exist do not screen African-made content. It may be said, then, that film festivals in Africa have become one of the few places where audiences can see African-made films. This kind of cinematic experience is only possible in the city, and, at that, only in a few major cities in African countries such as in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso and South Africa. There, film festivals “are still genuine meeting places where the spectators restore the active participation which all African spectacle traditionally demands” (Bartlet, 2000:246). The physicality, the rituals, and the social interaction at film festivals in Africa have heightened significance. As Dovey (2014:9) explains:

The Habermasian idea of a ‘public sphere’ exceeds the notion of the ‘market’ which is focused on the exchange of goods for money. The ‘public sphere’ in contrast concerns the sharing not of money, but of ideas, and experiences.

Here, Dovey is referring to the way the spatial flow of cultural and financial production is manifested within an African context. Film festivals in Africa, perhaps due to the uniqueness of the actual film viewing experience itself, take on a more intense level of “liveness” in that they represent rare opportunities for people to gather in a social environment that supersedes the traditional market. As Dovey (2014:9) explains, “most crucially, within Africa, film festivals remain one of the few venues through which filmmakers can meet African audiences.”

While convergence and technology are rapidly changing this environment, as discussed in the following chapter, film festivals still have the important function in Africa of gathering of people in one physical space to share a specific kind of social cinematic experience. Highlighting the importance of physicality within the African context, Dovey (2014) quotes Marie Lora-Mungai, CEO of the Kenya based VOD platform Buni TV. She refers to the African environment where social gatherings within safe and structured settings take on additional significance due to their scarcity. Mungai notes that “in a market like Africa, there is still a very strong connection to physical stuff ... I’m not even talking about TVs as much as ... people watching together” (Dovey, 2014:13) The prioritised importance of the watching together over the location itself is also important to note. Film festivals in Africa often occur in places without a culture of cinema-going, a problem that is also exacerbated by the inability of most of the population to afford cinema tickets, even in cities where these facilities exist. The (in)accessibility of these venues, both physically in terms of transport distances and costs, as well as in terms of entrance fees, is also a major issue for many festivals in Africa, disqualifying many potential visitors from being able to attend these events. Therefore, the actual screening venues of film festivals in Africa can vary greatly, with the larger more urban festivals in countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia and South Africa taking place in cinemas, to (major) festivals such as ZIFF, and events, to some extent FESPACO, having to create physical screening spaces in hotels, sports grounds, churches, and even open fields. Smaller niche festivals, such as the Nairobi Slum Film Festival, are the exceptions in that they are run by and for a particular localised community, and therefore take place within a very specific geographic location. In general, however, it is the realities of the African city that need to be taken into account when choosing the physical location of film festivals. These decisions will inherently privilege

specific audiences and participants – again, either by accident or design. African cities such as Cape Town still reflects the spatial divisions of the power structures of Apartheid. The majority of poor Capetonians live over an hour away from the city centre with little access to any meaningful infrastructure. The CTIFMF, as well as most other film and entertainment events that take place in the city, take place in a central business district that is physically, financially, and even culturally far beyond the reach of the majority of the city's population.

The differences within the spatial flow and understanding the way venue selection and socially constructed space operates within ZIFF and the CTIFMF strongly affect the success or (possible) failure of each of these events. The Zanzibar International Film Festival has the luxury of taking place within the confines of the imminently historical, cultural and walkable space of Stone Town. This small centre of the island, a UNESCO Heritage Site, is a rich source of culture and history for any visiting tourist, and has a high density population within its small confines. During the festival period, ZIFF was able to have an impact on and include just about every part of Stone Town into its own festival circuit – with all venues in walking distance of the main hub of the historic Old Fort. The entire space of Stone Town became part of the ZIFF spatial network – a specific film-centred map was laid on the town. This made it possible for various venues, both indoor and outdoor, to create a celebratory and social experience in Stone Town for 10 days. It would be virtually impossible to spend time in Stone Town during the festival and not encounter the festival in some way. While most of the film screenings were in the hotels (easy for tourists and visitors to find), other events such as art exhibitions, talks, music and dance performances and other installations took place in public spaces throughout Stone Town. The festive liveness of ZIFF was tangible within Stone Town and culminated in nightly outdoor film screenings and concerts at the

Old Fort. Free to locals, and at only a small entry fee for visitors, these screenings and the concerts were the biggest social gatherings in Stone Town. Locals gather to watch the films, regardless of their origin. However, as I will discuss below, the Bongo Films in Swahili attracted the biggest local audiences.

With these annual film screenings being literally the only cinematic gatherings on the island all year, locals and visitors looked forward to and enjoyed them hugely. The physical location of the festival at the Old Fort meant anyone living in Stone Town had easy access to the venues. Despite the strongly Muslim ethos of the island, men, women and children alike gathered for these films and attendance cut through some of the cultural and social divides of the town. The social and accessible atmosphere of these screenings differed greatly from the more serene and cinephilic viewing that took at the transformed hotel venues. These screenings were less well attended, especially by locals, but they still attracted visiting tourists and festival guests in significant numbers. ZIFF had the unenviable task of having to create screening venues in a town that does not have a single operational cinema. All screening equipment had to be set up in hotel conference rooms as these were the only venues with the capacity for daytime screenings that could seat adequate numbers of guests. Having to use hotel venues for screenings posed a number of challenges apart from the obvious technical and financial ones. Local Zanzibaris were less likely to attend these screenings as the spaces inside hotels were generally off-limits to locals. Hotel security prevented access during the rest of the year and so locals were not comfortable about entering these spaces during the festival. Hotels then were considered as tourist spaces and most residents of Stone Town would not attend the screenings in these venues

unless specifically invited to them. This meant that attendances at these screenings were lower and audiences mainly comprised curious tourists or festival guests.

ZIFF has always had a strong commitment to reaching out beyond the audiences of Stone Town. While the island itself is, relatively speaking, small, it takes considerable effort for people living in the villages scattered across Zanzibar and the neighbouring Pemba to get to Stone Town. Therefore, Ziff created a number of Village Panorama events early on in its existence. These were often sponsored by global funders such as the UN, UNICEF and Save the Children, and the programmes have historically had both an educational and entertainment element. While these screenings could potentially alienate audiences because of their issue-driven donor films on domestic violence, AIDS, and alcohol abuse, the use of the locally-produced Swahili language Bongo Movies were very popular with local communities. These outdoor village screenings were an essential element of ZIFF and ensured that the physical footprint of the festival reached beyond Stone Town itself. ZIFF was able to leverage the safe and easily navigable space of Stone Town to create a spatial flow that included the entire town. The flow and physical venue selection was limited by the lack of cinematic screening spaces, and, therefore, had limitations. However, overall the festival managed to create an inviting and accessible physical experience for locals and visitors alike

The CTIFMF on the other hand had more challenges from a spatial perspective. It inherited the scars of spatial Apartheid that are so evident throughout the city of Cape Town. This racially and economically divided city, which has changed little in 25 years, still poses challenges for any event wanting to create a sense of common identity or spatial flow.

While it would be challenging for any event to cover the vast areas that make up Cape Town and its surrounds, the centralised city centre does have the potential to create a cultural topography that flows through the space. Unfortunately, in its two first years, the CTIFMF did not manage to create such a spatial flow or even come close to creating a cultural circuit within the spaces of the city of Cape Town. The central location is in a somewhat contested space that is in essence a shopping mall, making it almost impossible to create a living festival atmosphere or circuit within the city.

The CTIFMF in its inaugural two years was required to secure substantial funding, this immense challenge, as experienced by most film festivals, and especially those in Africa, often leads to decisions that are designed to secure funding, but perhaps not to ensure the accessibility of the festival to a majority of markets. The CTIFMF, as has been shown, was attempting to position itself as a first world friendly market and event, one able to complete as a viable actor in the global network of film festivals. In order to be perceived within the network in this way, the festival needed to secure corporate sponsors and attract guests from overseas. To that end decisions on issues such as the key locations and venues of the festival were determined not necessarily by local factors, but with larger financial and reputational issues in mind.

The first year of the event Absa bank was a major sponsor of the event and the various invitation only sponsor cocktail and networking events were held in one of the city's most prestigious and expensive hotels within the V & A Waterfront precinct, The One and Only. The selection of a venue as inaccessible as this indicated the nature of the corporate, international, and intentionally or not, inaccessibility of the event with access to the hotel

being very securely monitored. Many festival events took place at this venue, creating in some ways a mirror situation to Zanzibar where events and screenings taking place in 5 star hotels were not attended by locals who felt culturally and physically excluded from these spaces. With South Africa, and in particular, Cape Town's spatial apartheid still in tact due to transport issues, high security presence at these venues, and overall cultural exclusion still a reality, the selection of this venue for many industry events would have created a sense of exclusion for many of those historically banned from these spaces. The venue itself, The One & Only hotel also was a partner of the event, hoping to showcase its conference facilities and banqueting services to an elite and international market. The events at the hotel therefore were aimed more at high profile sponsors and foreign guests as opposed to the local film industry and often this was reflected in the low attendance at industry events.

When it chose to house itself primarily within the privately owned space that is the tourist centre of Cape Town, the V & A Waterfront, the CTIFMF had already, at least symbolically for some, cut itself off from the heart of the city. While the V & A Waterfront is physically accessible via highway and taxi routes, it is still primarily a tourist and shopping space for higher income residents of the City and for tourists. While there appears to be plenty of outdoor-public space, the V & A is all privately owned. It costs money to park, and all activity within the space is strictly regulated and monitored by private security firms. In 2018, the CTIFMF made use of the outdoor Amphitheatre space at the V & A (which it did not do in 2017) to show some free outdoor screenings, but these were not properly branded as part of the festival, and passers-by did not necessarily distinguish the screenings from the other entertainment taking place on the stage. Therefore, apart from branded

poles and some posters, guests to Cape Town, and event to the V & A Waterfront could pass through day after day without knowing the festival was taking place. Without any adjacent cultural or community driven programming outside of (expensive) screenings inside the mall cinemas, the festival created no spatial or cultural footprint in the city. The industry programme that also took place in the V & A, as well as the festival programme, lacked any social cohesion that could be created around other kinds of festival programming, from music to outdoor screenings to exhibitions. Although a handful of screenings also took place at the Labia Theatre in the city, these were not well marketed or included in the festival programme. The CTIFMF was not able to create a spatial sense of itself as a festival, in part, I would argue, due to its lack of links to a specific community or identity. The festival lacked key cultural markers, programmes or cues within the city before or during the event. These physical events, activations, or even branded spaces create the “liveness” that Dovey and others talk about as essential for the festival experience. There was an attempt, that sadly did not come off, that would have assisted greatly in creating this sense of “liveness” and that was the plan to do an outdoor screening on the side of one of the most prominent buildings in the city. The CTIFMF had hoped to stage a free outdoor screening on the side of the Media 24 building at the bottom of town and close off the adjacent roads to make a giant screening venue. This event, which would have taken place before the festival, would have been an effective way to bring the city to life and create a sense of space for the festival within the city.

5.4 Festival Audiences: Real & Imagined

The role of the audience of a festival, whether the actual audiences in attendance or the so-called “imagined” audiences for whom the festival may also be programmed, is critical

in understanding the sustainability of film festivals. The way in which a festival understands, defines, attracts and includes audiences is clearly linked to its identity, as discussed previously. Festival audiences may be intrinsically defined in relation to the location of a festival and the nearby communities including potential film viewers as well as the local or regional film industry. However, when programming, festival curators often have to balance the various audiences that a festival may have; the local physical communities or “real” audiences, and those “imagined” audiences not necessarily present at the physical events. By “imagined” audiences I refer to the host of potential individuals and organisations, including local and international sponsors, potential sponsors, government bodies, media organisations, the global film industry and elites – none of whom may even actually attend any of the festival events. These imagined audiences can exert significant pressure on festivals and can sometimes lead to the de-emphasizing of the importance of local “real” audiences or communities.. In order to attract physical audiences, festivals, create identities and leverage identity cues that speak to particular groups. Smaller identity festivals such as those based on a cultural identity (LGBTQ, Indigenous) or genre (horror, sport) find it easier to programme and market themselves to their relatively homogenous audiences

Film festivals whose brand or identity markers rely on, and identify with specific geographically local communities are more likely to select venues, films, and events that attract and are accessible to these audiences. Film festivals can then leverage both their locations and programmes to create identity cues to attract particular audiences, as the festivals become

special meeting places where different groups; e.g. film professionals, stars, and everyday cineastes can meet and talk about film in a way that is not possible anywhere else ... the general feeling of belonging to a group of a cinephilic community is heightened by identity cues. (de Valck & Loist 2009:184)

The ability of many the top festivals in the global hierarchy to access and engage with global capital, audiences, and funders that can easily travel to these events means that it is easier to base their programming and even venue on the needs of both real and imagined audiences. The imagined audiences, in fact, often do become actual attending audiences because of the ease of travel and access to financial and industry resources. In order to keep their position at the top of the hierarchical global network, these festivals have to speak to multiple audiences, ranging from the actual communities that live within the spatial environment of the festival, to the imagined audiences further afield. This includes potential funders and sponsors, film industry personalities across the globe, and even other film festivals. In order to compete on a global scale in terms of securing the range of resources necessary to stage a major festival, and, at the same time, also ensure the physical attendance of audiences, festivals need to succeed in both these areas. It is here in the physicality of festival events, where, as Iordanova (2010) explains, the audience finally is centred. It is in this space, as a live event where “organizers, and audiences must come face-to-face in exactly the same place at the same time. They practically suspend the “imagined’ element of the community by substituting it with a very real one” (13). This idea is developed by Rouff (2009:5), who explains that “who attends film festivals determines how and for whom they matter... the audience not the films make the festival”. He adds that “each festival constructs its own ideal spectator” (2009, 9). In this way, it is possible to understand the central importance of the festival audience at the event itself, and how the most successful festivals in the global network concurrently resonate with

their local real audiences and transform the potential of imagined audiences into the reality of actual ones.

5.5 African Festival Audiences

Festivals taking place in more remote locations as opposed to the centres of the global film and economic hubs, such as within the African context, do not enjoy the luxury of being able to programme for global imagined audiences in the hope that they will manifest as physical or real audiences at festival events. Instead, I would argue, they do so at their peril. While some festivals in Africa may feel the pressure to programme for imagined audiences in order to secure external funders, or to position themselves globally, I argue that if they do so, they potentially alienate their real, local audiences, and are likely to jeopardize their own sustainability. The example of the Slum Film Festival in Nairobi highlights the inherent tension within festivals that feel the pressure of economic imperatives. Often, albeit sometimes unintentionally, they find themselves drawing up programmes for a secondary or imagined audience as opposed to the actual audience, the local community or the spectators in the vicinity. The festival was organised by two community-based organisations, but funded primarily by foreign embassies and non-profits. The organisers, in selecting the name The Slum Film Festival were intentionally attempting to create a “transnational slum community across continents” (Dovey et al, 2013, np) This so-called imagined global community of slum-dwellers and related donors acting as an imagined audiences created problematic issues in terms of curation and the actual audience. The films that were screened at some of the events were selected by donors whose programme was for an imagined, rather than an actual audience. Their specific developmental agendas were aimed at exploring the ambiguous concept of “slum

dwellers” and disregarded the very specific desires and interests of the audience at hand.

The article by Dovey et al (2013) explains the process and outcome:

[I]n this environment, rather than adopting a position of moralizing people’s leisure time by screening the development oriented films supported by Hot Sun and Slum TV’s funders and donor, the projectionists spontaneously changed the program to fit the audiences’ tastes, thereby empowering the audiences, in a way, as festival programmers themselves.

The film programme of the Slum Festival was supposed to be from the Slum for the Slum, but the festival curators made the error of programming for a global concept of the Slum – as opposed to selecting and authentically programming for their actual audience. The rebellion of the projectionists, much to the delight of the audiences was a self-correcting mechanism. This spontaneous revolt by the actual audience of the Slum Festival is an example of the process described by de Valck and List (2009:186):

[C]urators imagine a certain program ... The program is dependent on the audience and its actual reception. Film festival offer a framework which generates certain audience expectations with their program. Festival curators often try to encourage the active reception of the audience.

Over the years the Zanzibar International Film Festival has walked a similar tightrope between programming for these divergent audiences and their interests, and, as has been mentioned above, the festival has used a number of programming tools and diverse venues to overcome some of these challenges. An effective tool that was created by the ZIFF management team was the creation of a “Festival of Festivals,” a sub-programme of film screenings not in competition and sponsored by other festivals, Embassies or cultural organisations. These three to four hour blocks of programming would be branded by the

host sponsor, and some of the funds from the sponsorship would be earmarked to bring in local students to ensure that the screenings were well attended, and to provide educational and entertaining programming for young people on the island. The Village, Women, and Children Panorama outreach programmes of the festival that presented mobile screenings in smaller villages outside Stone Town and even on the island of Pemba would also include the typical donor developmental films, along with an entertaining Swahili language feature film. These Panorama programmes were able to satisfy donors and the imagined audience of the international donor community without compromising the core festival programme. Additionally, as described in the section above, the nightly screenings at the Old Fort were generally a mix of East African films designed to entertain mainly local audiences, but were also of significant production and plot quality to engage the many international guests that also attended. One night during the festival was also always committed to the so-called “Bongo Movie” industry, the low-budget and very popular Swahili language films produced in the region. That evening was always incredibly well attended by local audiences.

The full programme of screenings in hotel venues could be described as being programmed for more international or imagined audiences. These venues would screen films from all over the world, many of which would be considered art-house films that would not necessarily appeal to local audiences. As an international film festival, ZIFF has had to draw up programmes with an international audience in mind, regardless of how many international guests were physically in attendance. The support of a number of donors and commercial partners, as well as the festival’s own stated agenda of creating an international meeting place dictated that a certain amount of programming be done for its imagined audiences. On the whole the festival was able to successfully manage this process up till 2018. It

maintained its strong “dhow culture” identity and links to the Zanzibari population by not only screening relevant films, but also ensuring that a range of other cultural events took place during the festival.

The usual Dhow Race that opened the festival every year did not take place in 2019 due to a change in the festival management team (I was no longer involved). It had been one of the most successful tools in both stamping the local community’s identity, presence and participation within the event whilst at the same time appealing to and attracting imagined audiences such as tourists and visitors to the island and the festival. Local fishermen were sponsored (mainly by local companies) in a traditional Dhow race that would see hundreds of locals and tourists alike flock to the beach to attend. The link between this race, and the awards presented on the Awards night, The Golden and Silver Dhow, were important cultural identity markers that not only linked the festival to its local audiences in Zanzibar, but also appealed to visitors. Local traditional musicians were brought in daily to perform at the public park, Foradhani Gardens, just across from the Old Fort. Local dance, art, and music performances were included in the nightly concerts that took place after the film screenings. ZIFF’s key identity was manifested tangibly in ways that included the local Zanzibari population, and appealed to global imagined audiences at the same time. Through film curation that included films that would be perceived by many global festivals as inferior in quality and not appropriate for screening at the flagship festival venue, a range of venue selection, and a programme of diverse events, ZIFF was able to establish authentic links to its local community and audience for many years, whilst ensuring that the programme appealed to global imagined audiences outside of the region.

The CTIFMF, in contrast, faced intense conflict between its perceived or imagined audience versus its actual or real audience in the city of Cape Town. As discussed previously, the festival's aim of positioning itself first and foremost within the global festival network influenced its programming, marketing decisions, scheduling and venue selection. These decisions hindered the festival's ability to resonate with the actual audiences who would attend the screenings. This led directly to the event's failure to attract sufficient attendance, and concomitantly to attract the necessary financial support. No festival took place again and large amounts remain unpaid to suppliers and staff years later. Most film screenings did not attract an audience; only a few high profile evening events sold out. While the CTIFMF voiced its commitment, along with most other African festivals, to "audience development", it had no clear strategy in this regard. This is largely due to their failure to successfully define the audience it was trying to attract or develop. The festival, in partnership with the Western Cape Department of Arts & Culture, did arrange for learners from a number of high schools from poorer township areas from outside the city centre to be transported to the festival to watch films and visit the small industry expo that took place in 2017. However, this was an ad-hoc arrangement with no strategic objective beyond ensuring that there was an audience in the cinemas. Only a couple of hundred students attended.

The majority of films screened at the CTIFMF, especially in 2017, but also in 2018, are what would be considered art-house cinematic films with very few South African or African films. The selection of films for the festival in 2017 could be compared to one that for a festival in Europe or North America, except for a small spattering of African films. In 2017, only one African film was selected from outside South Africa, one from Kenya, for the main

competition. There was an Arabian Nights thread in the programme, in that films from the Middle East, with one from Morocco, were chosen. The China Africa Film Festival had exclusively Chinese Films. In his introduction in the official festival brochure, Festival Director Leon van der Merwe refers to a number of films that are Oscar nominees, films from Nordic countries, Thailand, and Turkey. He writes that “the CTIFMF allows movie lovers to discover the art of cinema. Our audience is taken on a cinematic journey through these countries when they watch the films” (CTIFMF brochure 2017). Noticeably, he makes no mention of African films or even the South African film industry.

The low attendance figures clearly show that the emphasis on world cinema and the focus in 2017 and 2018 on regions like Transylvania, the Nordic Countries and Asia failed to resonate with local audiences. While the film programme included more mainstream and African titles in 2018, the majority of the films selected for the festival still appealed to a small and elite demographic with an interest in global cinema and the disposable income to pay over R70 a ticket. In 2018, the films that were the most successful in terms of audience attendance were South African, particularly the ones that were more accessible and commercial. These include Kagiso Legida’s *Catching Feelings* and the Afrikaans film *Kanarie*. However, in terms of its programming focus, these were not the films at the centre of the festival in terms of scheduling and promotion. It is certainly true that many festivals have to strike a balance in their programming decisions between more commercially appealing titles and those considered auteur. However, what the CTIFMF did in its first two years was to lean strongly towards the obscure, international niche, and so-called highbrow art films. The CTIFMF was attempting to speak to an audience of the global festival elite and its related industry players. Along with the internationally focused film

programme, a significant amount of money was spent on bringing international guests and jury members to the festival, quite possibly in order to compete in terms of FIAPF A-List competitive festivals, and to shore up its international credentials.

The dearth of local industry support in 2017 reflected the lack of authentic links to the local film community, particularly to the African film industries and communities. This lack of connection lay not only in the programming for 2017, but also in the inaugural market programme aimed specifically at the Cape Town and broader South African film industry. Initially, there was provision for massive exhibition space, but the market team was unable to sell more than three or four stalls to film businesses. As a result, the entire exhibition was cancelled. Fortunately, the lack of industry outreach was remedied in 2018 by means of a very strong build up involving a presentation of monthly events aimed at the local film industry. The industry programme of the CTIFMF in 2018 could be considered a success with regard to audience relevance and attendance. The events hosted by Market Director Elias Ribeiro in the months leading up to the 2018 edition ensured that members of the local industry felt that they were being included in the programming decisions and that the festival did, indeed, represent them. Despite some of the strides made in 2018, a number of factors, such as the overall event curation, film programming, venue selection and branding of the festival failed to create tangible identity markers binding it to any of the communities of Cape Town, apart from a very small cinephilic elite. This inability to create tangible links to local audiences, the film community and other key stakeholders such as funders within its first two years meant that it was unable to find the support to continue. The festival's failure can be partly attributed to its focus on programming for an imagined

global audience of the film industry elite as opposed to building a solid local platform from which to grow.

As discussed previously, the initial marketing and identity markers of the festival failed to resonate locally and, worse still, even offended and alienated large segments of the local population. The venue locations and costs, based on the issues of Cape Town's spatial flow and the legacy of Apartheid planning, as previously discussed, even further demonstrated how the CTIFMF failed to effectively or consistently understand, engage with, or attract the very necessary and very real audiences that are required for a festival to survive. Instead, the festival overly appealed to and relied on its ability, like many globally elite festivals, to transform imagined audiences into real ones. However, Cape Town is a city that is physically and financially distant from centres of global film capital, which meant that the chosen strategy was unrealistic. Additionally, the festival was not able to appeal to its imagined global audience on the grounds of uniqueness such as ZIFF's exotic Dhow brand. In many ways it ended up being no more than another global festival that happened to be in Cape Town. Film audiences could see many of the same films in Europe and would therefore not need to travel such a distance to attend. There were simply not enough draw-cards for global film capital, celebrities, or even audiences to travel the distance to the event.

CHAPTER SIX: TECHNOLOGY & DISRUPTION – AFRICA CONVERGED

In recent years film festivals globally have had to address the so-called disruptions posed by the rapidly changing technology and film viewing landscape, from streaming platforms and the proliferation of video on demand to expanding satellite and digital television footprints. Many academics, and even festival practitioners, have predicted the end, or at least the decline of the film festival as we know it. This reaction or over-reaction, I would argue, by some of the world's highest-profile festivals to the changes in screening and viewing patterns is often representative of this thinking. However, I would argue, that within the African context, the changes brought about by technology are an opportunity rather than a threat, and festivals should embrace these changes. The (imagined) threats posed by technology such as streaming and video platforms are having a different kind of impact in viewing patterns in Africa from the rest of the world due to the specific history and environment of film viewing. As previously discussed, there is a lack of cinema complexes in most African countries, excluding the two powerhouses of Nigeria, that reportedly had, as of 2018, 194 screens (FILMONE Nigerian Box Office Yearbook), and South Africa had 70 complexes and approximately 800 screens (National Film & Video Foundation 2018). This lack means that new technologies have increased the audiences for films, and particularly for African films. Most African countries only have a handful of formal cinemas in major cities and this lack of formal screening venues has led to the informal viewing culture that has dominated the African continent. Private, and often pirated screenings in homes, halls, churches and even outdoors have been the main means of showing Africans films.

Digital platforms, mobile streaming, VOD, OTT and the various technology enablers around content have simply altered the means of content transmission, away from traditional free to air or pay TV channels towards phones, computers and small screens. However, I would argue, this shift in *how* content is viewed in Africa has not fundamentally changed *where* it is viewed: films in Africa are usually viewed at home or in smaller social gathering spaces other than cinemas. Festivals have always played a vital social role, in addition to their cultural or filmic function. It is also important to unpack the specific situation in Africa where, although millions of Africans have access to digital content on their smart phones, the reality is that the costs of accessing content in this way are still prohibitive for most people. According to Internet World Stats, Africa’s internet penetration was only at 39% as of Q1 2020, while the majority of people in Africa are not able to, and will not be able to consistently access this kind of content for many years. The graphic below from gmsa.com reflects this coverage gap:

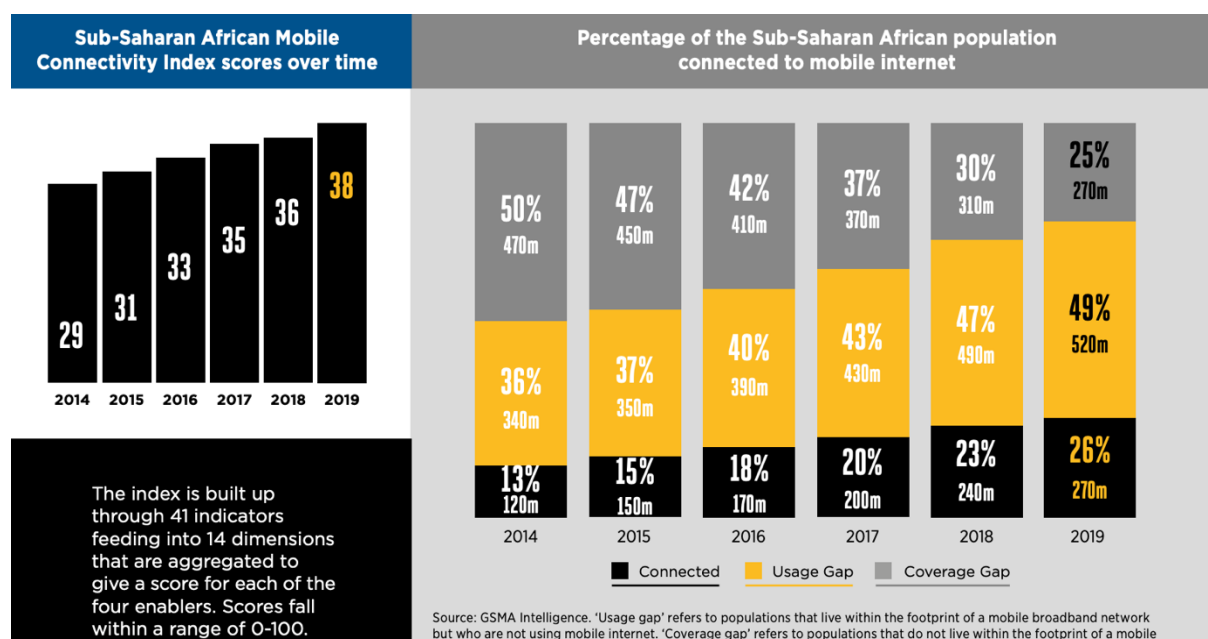


Figure 6.1 GMSA Sub-Saharan African mobile connectivity

Once again, this coverage gap means that film festivals (in addition to the historically popular pirating and TV viewing of content at informal gatherings) are still critically important vehicles for the viewing and sharing of filmed content in Africa. Additionally, the rigid structures of filmed content categories that exist and are important to many Western festivals, such as those that strictly differentiate TV or web content from cinematic content, simply do not exist within the African film ecosystem. The advent of these platforms, therefore, has not affected the curation of festivals in Africa as it has done in Europe and in North America. Similarly, without a cinema culture to speak of, film festivals can still occupy a primary space within the African landscape.

In an eventual post Covid-19 world after at least a year of almost no physical film screenings at cinemas or at festivals and the advent of the Zoom festival, this question and the importance of on-line festivals has greater pertinence. While it is very likely that the world will see the resumption of some in-person festivals after 2021, many smaller events may not survive or may opt for hybrid models of in-person and on-line events. This section, however, concludes that there is a future for African festivals in this kind of hybrid model, a model that will continue to see the key importance of in-person events based on the very real lack of access to data and internet access for millions of Africans. The business and social imperatives of the live festival will continue, albeit improved and adapted with new technology. In this chapter, I will contrast the implications of and reactions to technology disruption of film festivals in the global North and in Africa, and will highlight the opportunities that these changes create in Africa.

6.1 Content Convergence

Convergence has been one of the buzzwords of the global film and media industries for a while, and as all content roads seem to lead inexorably to digital, the various lines between content categories and the means in which this content is produced and consumed have begun to blur more and more. Henry Jenkins (2006:2) explains convergence as follows:

By convergence, I mean the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kind of entertainment and experiences they want.

Jenkins's definition can be applied specifically to film content that in the past had a very specific and linear distribution flow. Films, in the developed world, were first released to cinemas in conjunction with festival screenings, and from there would be released on VHS, or more recently DVD or Blue-Ray. Finally, these films would eventually end up on broadcast TV, first pay TV and lastly in the value chain, free-to-air. This linear model has been completely inverted in recent years and audiences now consume film content often first and exclusively on streaming platforms, completely bypassing cinemas and traditional TV platforms all together. The linear model of distribution was intrinsically tied to Hollywood driven content categories that separated cinematic (film) content from TV content and has existed for decades. It is only very recently that the slickly produced original films and TV shows on Netflix and HBO amongst others have thrown this model and these categories into disarray. As Jenkins (2006) points out, the power has shifted from the owners of the content to the audiences viewing the content. Audiences now expect to be able to consume high-quality blockbuster movies on any platform they desire – they do not want to be dictated to on when, where or how their content is enjoyed. De Valck (2008:np) explains the phenomenon this way: “the age of convergence is also witness to a

tremendous expansion of the possibilities for user interactivity as well as an increase in choices available to consumers.” This convergence of content and consumption have been led globally by players such as Netflix, HBO, Disney+ and now even Amazon Prime, Apple TV+ and YouTube TV. Thanks to these content producers and distributors, types of contents and their means of consumption have blurred traditional categories and thinking, at least for those producing and distributing content in the so-called developed world.

In an age where content, including that of movies, moves away from being solely consumed on the big screens of commercial cinemas being viewed on the small screens of televisions and devices, the economics of the industry are altering. Convergence has had a major impact on cinema culture across the globe, with EU statistics for 2018 showing a major drop in cinema attendances: “total admissions in the European Union decreased by 3.0% to 955 million tickets sold. This is 29.4 million fewer than in 2017 and the fourth lowest level registered in the EU since 2009” (European Audio-visual Observatory, 2018). These changes have numerous implications, one being that niche, or non-mainstream content has more potential and a longer commercial life, within this new economic model. This extended commercial life of film titles has been called “the long tail” by Chris Anderson as quoted in de Valck. His views, along with a diversity of other conceptions around the economic disruption caused by cinema are underpinned by the cinema model of supply and demand. de Valck (2008:np) goes on to describe an environment that has moved from “scarcity caused by limitations in the physical world and brings us instead into a world of abundance and choice”. For many film producers, convergence has, therefore, presented a variety of opportunities to reach wider and more diverse audiences. In the developed world of content, this break-down between formats and delivery mechanisms has

transformed the industry. In her book, *Television and British Cinema: Convergence and Divergence since 1990* (2014), Hannah Andrews points out that up until very recently, there were separate academic and economic discussions on cinema and TV and it is only in the past decade or so that researchers and experts have realised that television is one of the biggest opportunities for filmmakers. Some scholars have expressed concerns for the future of the film festival. This includes Roya Rastegar, the former programmer of the Tribeca Film Festival, whose essay on the curatorial crisis describes a situation where

digital technologies have provided greater access to the means of film media and production ... thousands more films are being made each year... This increase has created a crisis in curating – an urgent need to filter through these productions and connect films with audiences. (2018:310)

This situation along with the other tensions brought on by tech disrupters is playing out in major festivals worldwide. The challenges for festivals pivot around their ability to still retain relevance and to attract the kind of audiences and funders required. The curatorship and programming issues that are arising out of the breakdown of traditional content categories are then further exacerbated by an environment where almost any content is available at anytime and anywhere. Some, therefore, wonder what place the film festival has in the modern world? De Valck (2008:np) frames the situation succinctly for most festivals around the world:

[T]he question with regard to film festivals is how this surge in possibilities for digital distribution will influence the current festival model. In a media economy characterized by scarcity, film festivals were the appointed places where people looking for specialized and hard to find films would gravitate towards. In a (future) media economy characterized by abundance media audiences can just as easily find and purchase their favourite niche products or discover new one on the internet or on digital television channels.

Film festivals need to solidify their roles and relevance in this newly disrupted global media environment and some are adapting to the new formats. Others are even combining virtual and physical festival events as this trend increases rapidly during the lockdowns of 2020 and beyond. de Valck (2008) points to the advent of this new kind of festival, the so-called online film festivals and analyses two of these, the American Media that Matters Film Festival and the Japanese CON-CAN Movie Festival, demonstrating how both events, although they host screenings online, both still stage physical events. Although these festivals acknowledge and embrace new technologies, supporting my previous argument about the importance of the physicality of the festival, they also include physical events. De Valck explains the benefit of this physicality as such: “physical events have major advantages over their online offspring. For one, events taking place in actual space and time are more capable of creating a festive atmosphere, which not only alerts and attracts visitors to the screenings, but also puts them in the mood for discoveries” (de Valck, 2008). This hybrid model came into prominence in 2020 with the rise of Covid-19 and its associated lock downs and travel bans. While the hybrid model has advantages such as global reach, many global festivals with high quality content continue to ignore some of the most important new technology platforms.

The response of many of these high-profile film festivals to this abundantly diverse and rapidly expanding media environment has been to double-down on traditional categories and processes in an attempt to maintain control over these historically rigid film categories and distribution models. The on-going battle between Netflix and The Cannes Film Festival attests to this tension. The festival tries to maintain that the definition of a film depends how and most importantly where, it is distributed and consume, rather than how it was

produced. The Cannes Film Festival has adamantly insisted on the linear distribution model for film at the 2018 and 2019 festivals leading to its conflict with Netflix:

The central sticking point is the so-called theatrical window. Since 2018, a rule has been in place stating that for films to compete at Cannes, they must be shown in cinemas in France. French law, meanwhile, mandates that films can't be shown on a streaming platform until three years after their cinematic release. Indeed, Cannes announced the new rule before its 2017 edition had even ended, a response to the vocal outcry from French exhibitors about the inclusion of the Netflix films *The Meyerowitz Stories* and *Okja* in the competition that year.

Perhaps the most contentious outcome of the negotiations so far was the absence from last year's Cannes of Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma*, a film whose rich aesthetic was particularly well suited to the big screen. With a three-year wait for on-demand streaming out of the question for Netflix, Cannes would only permit it to show out of competition. In response, Netflix removed all of its films from the festival that year, and took *Roma* to the Venice Film Festival instead, where it won the Golden Lion. It then went on to win three Oscars, as well as Best Film at the Baftas. (Thadeus-Johns, 2019)

The main drive behind the Cannes pushback, according to this article, originated from the French cinema industry, as Marc-Olivier Sebbag, chief executive of the Fédération Nationale des Cinémas Français explains:

The problem is that Netflix wants to have the benefits of the cinema industry without contributing to it" (Thaddeus-Johns, 2019). German and UK cinema owners have also protested against Netflix's *Roma* being included in major festivals, further deepening the battle lines. In 2019, Netflix decided not to submit any films to Cannes, not even to the competition. Ironically however, Netflix did pick up the rights to two films that were screened at Cannes, *Atlantic's* and *I Lost My Body*, inadvertently reinforcing the importance of film festivals such as Cannes. In fact, according to *Mint e-paper* (2019), '39% of Cannes premieres since 2009 have gone on to stream on Netflix, although most first had theatrical runs'. ("Netflix isn't absent at Cannes: It's everywhere, 2019)

The challenges being faced by Cannes and other festivals will only increase as new players enter the streaming market, further upsetting the traditional distribution model as more and more high profile filmmakers opt to produce their films exclusively for these platforms.

In 2020, Cannes had to cancel the festival due Covid 19, and has not yet decided whether to open its competition this year. Wiseman (2020) reports thus:

Artistic director Thierry Frémaux had previously said that Spike Lee's Netflix film *Da 5 Bloods* would have played Out of Competition. Lee was set to chair the jury. The movie would have marked Netflix's return to the festival after a three year absence, sparked by the festival banning non-theatrical movies in their Competition. We understand the film wasn't announced today on account of it being earmarked as a special presentation. (Wiseman, 2020)

Other major festivals such as the Venice International Film Festival did include the Netflix films *The Laundromat* by Stephen Soderbergh and Noah Baumbach's *Marriage Story* in its competition line-up in 2020. The outcome of this stand-off is yet to be resolved, but it is clear that the content landscape is changing, and adaptation will be required. Given that even a new tech player such as Netflix is interested in both submitting films to festivals and is using film festivals as a space to explore new acquisitions, film festivals still have a role to play.

6.2 Africa Converged

Based on the premise that convergence is directly impacting the ways in which content is being viewed, as well as breaking down the traditional barriers between content categories, its impact in Africa is still very different from that in Europe and North America. This is not to say that technological changes are not having a massive impact on the overall distribution and consumption of filmed content in Africa, however, it is important to note the differences within the African environment and how they influence the ways in which technology is affecting the film festival event. Historically and even up to the present day, in most African countries outside of major cities, there are very few, if any, commercial retail cinemas to speak of. As a result, most Africans have always viewed their content via

personal devices; be they TV screens or tablets, computers. or phones. The primary ways that African (and even international content) has been consumed in Africa has been through pirated content, broadcast content, and through informal screenings (legal or not). This is especially true of African content. Even in cities where there are cinemas, up until very recently they have rarely screened African films. It has been over two decades since the proliferation of video and digital film production, exemplified by Nollywood in Nigeria and the Bongo Movie industry in East Africa. Prior to this age of mass produced and mass consumed content, as Bischoff and Overbergh (2012:114) point out, the [African] films were usually seen in film festivals, French cultural centres, and European house circuits". Additionally, across Africa, broadcast TV has not just been a platform for distribution for most kinds of content, but also television stations have acted as significant commissioners and producers of a variety of content, including film.

For producers in Africa then, "the development of cinema has been intimately linked to technological progress. Technology has been particularly important for African cinema as a symbol of colonial authority, of modernity, of progress, and as a catalysing factor in transforming filmmaking from an expensive activity of cultural and educated elites to an activity attainable by the people" (Bischoff & Overbergh, 2012:114). Based on a film history that has never prioritised or privileged cinematic viewing over TV or small screen viewing, the impact of convergence as it is understood in the West has been significantly different. Additionally, very few have access to the kind of broadband spectrum required to adequately stream content. Consequently, Africa is many years away from the kind of full-on penetration required for a major disruption just yet. It is extremely difficult to secure accurate data on Netflix or Showmax subscribers in Africa as neither platform releases this

information. Estimates printed in late 2019 in BusinessTech stated that Showmax has approximately 500 to 600,000 subscribers in South Africa, and no significant numbers elsewhere as it has only launched in Kenya and Nigeria in 2019 and began a major expansion in 2020 and 2021 (“Showmax subscribers vs Netflix in South Africa”, 2019). Netflix is optimistically estimated to have 300,000 subscribers in South Africa; it is more likely to be only half of this. According to a recent article in TechPoint, Netflix probably has only around 50,000 subscribers in Africa’s most populous country, Nigeria, after three years in the market (Oludimu, 2019). In early 2021, Statista.com claimed that Netflix had 1.2 million subscribers on the continent, whereas *The Wall Street Journal* estimated the number of Netflix subscribers at just below 2 million and Showmax subscribers at 688,000 in December 2020 (Wexler, 2020). According to the Research and Markets website, “Africa will have 12.96 million SVOD subscriptions by 2025, up from 2.75 million at end-2019. From the 10 million additions, South Africa will supply 3 million to take its total to 4.3 million and Nigeria will add 2.1 million to total 2.73 million. Netflix accounted for 45% of the region’s SVOD subscribers by end-2019. The company will retain its share by 2025 (5.70 million subscribers – up from 1.23 million in 2019). Disney is not expected to start until 2022 but will have 2.71 million paying subscribers by 2025.” (Research and Markets)

These relatively small numbers within the 1 billion plus population of Africa mean that the impact of streaming platforms is still minor for the majority of Africa’s content consumers. Although across Africa, there has been a digital revolution on the continent with more and more people owning smart phones and devices, as well as satellite and box-top digital television packages, the lack of access to affordable and consistent internet services has meant that the impact of disruptive technology platforms has been limited. African

audiences may have more access to content, and more specifically to African content- but the ways in which the content is being consumed have not radically altered from the traditional methods of TV screens and informal public screenings. Pirated, private and informal screenings are still extremely common across Africa and are described by Bisschoff and Overbergh (2012:117) as:

low barrier occasions.... social rather than cultural events. The logistics, viewing on a television screen, being outdoors, seated on wooden benches, low image and sound quality ... the contrast with the rare 'traditional' multiplex theatres could not be bigger.

In the past, these informal screenings would often take place on TV screens, with content provided by a DVD, for instance. With the latest technology trends, the only change has been that the content now may be streamed from a VOD platform or similar. However, the informal and small scale of these events has not really changed over time. Technology has simply made it easier for more people to watch more often. Similarly, the manner in which convergence has broken down traditional content categories in other parts of the world is not the same in Africa. These distinctions between so-called film content, meaning films for cinematic release, in comparison to TV content, productions made for TV, have never made sense within the African environment.

Another important distinction to make relates to the historical Western conception of movies or films as an innately separate category of content from television, intrinsic to festivals such as Cannes, Venice and Berlin, makes little sense in an African context. The rigid distinctions between film (cinematic released) and TV / streamed filmed content do not exist in Africa. It would be impossible for a film festival in Africa to have a stipulation, like Cannes, for a film to have a theatrical release in order to be eligible for the festival. The

vast majority of African films screened in film festivals in Africa will never get a theatrical release, and in fact, the film festivals themselves have become an integral part of the African film distribution network. More likely however, film festivals in Africa are the first port of call for feature length productions, which often use the festival in its heightened role as an “industry hub” to secure further distribution. As Moradewun Adejunmobi points out, the writer Carmela Garritano titled her book on the history of Ghanaian film *African Video Movies* rather than *African Video Film*, because video “captures the aspirations and ambitions of video producers in Ghana” (Adejunmobi 2015:120). Garritano pointed out that “other scholars write of ‘home videos,’ ‘video films,’ and ‘cinema’ in their examination of related phenomena in different locations in Africa”. These varying descriptions of some of Africa’s most popular content are not simply a semantic exercise, but rather it reflect the realities of how African content is produced and consumed. According to Bridgit Meyer (1999:52) in her research on the video industry in Ghana, “being a hybrid medium, video can be projected both on TV and theatre screens, while at the same time it is subject to new possibilities of reproduction”. All of these authors are alluding to the difficulty of utilizing the rigid classification categories of content that many Western festivals and industry professionals are still trying to maintain. This blurring of categories can also be seen when asked what ‘films’ they have watched recently, many Africans are more likely to refer to filmed narratives that they have watched on television.

To take one example, Nollywood films are most frequently watched as home video, and for this reason, Jedlowski calls Nollywood “small screen cinema” (Adejunmobi, 2015, 121). Two decades ago, therefore, Africa experienced “a shift from an understanding of video as a substitute for celluloid to the use of video as an easily marketable mobile media, [that]

implied a shift in Ghanaian video filmmakers' orientation" (Meyer, 1999:52). Additionally, in Africa, traditional cinema releases have never represented the major source of income for film producers, particularly so for African films, and cinemas are not, and have not been the primary screening mechanism for films. For decades rather, African content consumption has been what could be understood as "converged"; people have consumed all kinds of content, whether films, series, soapies, and shorts predominantly on their TV or other small screens. Therefore, within an African context, regardless of the kind of content, small screens, driven by audience choices and sourced from various means, dominate the viewing landscape. I would argue that convergence in Africa has simply led to more of the same; more opportunities to produce a variety of content, and more ways to consume content – without altering the fundamental social, economic and cultural structures of the industry.

In this context, technological disruptions do not pose the same challenges as in more developed markets, but rather, in fact provide opportunities for film festivals in Africa. The rarity of formalised social film viewing experiences within most African locations, combined with the unique economic impact, spatial and cultural flows created by festivals can offset, and even exploit, the changes brought on by technological disruption. Within the African context, especially in the communal aspect of film viewing, it is still the physical and social experience of viewing a film, rather than the content of the film itself that is often central. In other words, it is not so much what is being seen that is attractive about a festival, but rather the socialised cultural and intrinsically social experience within a specific time and place. Film goers at festivals such as ZIFF often experienced the main evening's screening as social and cultural event, a lived experience that could not be replaced by streaming the

same content. In fact, I would argue that the increased access to and promotion of African content, is leading to a renewal of the festival event as it still remains one of the few places in Africa where audiences can gather together in a public space to consume and discuss film. De Valck (2008:np) explains this experience thus:

In a media economy characterized by abundant choices for consumers, it is the embedding in a supportive and spectacular sociocultural context – e.g., immersing oneself into the festival crowd that is crucial in stimulating people to watch the festival films. It is the actual festival space that matters. Contrary to what ‘the long tail’ model would have us believe, the fact that the festival space is only accessible for a limited time (decreased availability), further strengthens its appeal.

Successful film festivals in Africa, therefore, are those that can harness the power of the social, cultural, and “livedness” of the film viewing experience while ensuring that the content of the programming resonates with the audience. In Africa, it is relevant content in specific locations and socially constructed settings that will ensure that festivals thrive despite technological disruptions. Dovey (2014:13) offers the following explanation: “the media landscape has been transformed not only by YouTube, but by the arrival of a range of African oriented television channels, OHTV, the Africa Channel ... and complementing these specific apps for mobile devices with African content”. Ever more of these channels are available on the DSTV platform, many now regionally targeted such as Maisha Magic Bongo Tanzania, Maisha Magic East Kenya, Mzansi Magic South Africa. At the same time, operators such as Netflix are aggressively pushing their African-made content. Even within Africa where, as we have pointed out previously, the physicality and the importance of the social element of film watching are still paramount, film festivals are “still having to reconsider their value in light of these new ventures, to emphasize what it is they can offer that the broadcast and

online organizers cannot” (Dovey, 2014:13) Audiences across Africa, even those with limited access to pay or streaming platforms are still able to access more and more diverse content than ever before. The elite, who have access to streaming, are able to watch at their leisure and others do so socially through pirated and shared content. Festivals for even niche audiences have to adapt in order to remain relevant to local audiences, as is evident from the previously cited example of the Slum Film Festival: audiences have more and more opportunities to access content, even those in rural or so-called slum areas:

[A]n urgent matter for festival directors today is how to respond to the digital age ... With the shift towards more participatory creative cultures, it can be expected that audiences will demand a greater say in festival programming practices. (de Valck, 2012:37-38)

6.3 ZIFF & DISCOP 2018 The Converged Event

The opportunities for film festivals in Africa presented by the changing African industry and the advent of new platforms and content genres were reflected in one of ZIFF’s most successful editions in 2018. While working at ZIFF, I was also involved in one of Africa’s largest TV content market events, DISCOP Markets, that took place annually in Johannesburg and Cote d’Ivoire. The organiser of DISCOP, seeing the increased opportunities in East Africa was interested in producing an event in the region and I introduced him to the ZIFF management team. After a number of discussions, it was agreed to incorporate DISCOP, although a traditionally TV oriented event, into ZIFF, a traditional film event. Based on this partnership and with an understanding that new forms of content could be incorporated into the festival, ZIFF Festival Director Fabrizio Colombo decided to open up the festival competition to both TV and web series, a first for any African festival. This “festival within a festival” provided a host of opportunities, not just for many more

producers and attendees, but also for the festival itself in terms of sponsorship and additional partnerships. As opposed to resisting the pivot towards shorter, serialised, “made for TV,” content (or streaming as the case maybe), ZIFF 2018 instead embraced this category of content and made it the focus of a festival within the festival, dedicating three days of screenings to web and TV content.

The separate awards category and screening schedule was also an opportunity to enlist new sponsors to work with ZIFF and promote content across both the DISCOP and ZIFF platforms. Due to my relationship with The Africa Channel, the North American based cable channel that operates Demand Africa, a streaming platform for African content, I was able to ensure that they came on board as a title sponsor for the TV and web series category at ZIFF. The sponsorship package crossed over into the DISCOP content market, an event that is solely focused on the buying and selling of African TV content to a global market. DISCOP Zanzibar effectively took on the role as the industry programme and content market for ZIFF, operating independently in terms of content and programming, and yet sharing key resources between the two events. The event also was unique in that both events crossed the previously more rigid borders between film, TV, and web content both in terms of the screening programme and the marketing side of the event. DISCOP markets have operated across Africa for over a decade as stand-alone content markets primarily for TV, and more recently aimed at streaming VOD and similar platforms. Their strong reputation and industry sidebar programme of panel discussions attracted a host of additional visitors to Zanzibar that would not ordinarily have attended ZIFF.

The attendance numbers for ZIFF were the highest in many years, with over 700 registered delegates at the two events. This was at least double the previous year's attendance, based on my experience managing the accreditation process at the event. Filmmakers whose films were selected for screening at the festival received free entry to DISCOP Zanzibar, a ticket that would normally have cost \$250 or more. In addition, these filmmakers had access to the strong contingent of international buyers who were attending the event, including the Africa Channel, Cote Ouest, Canal+, Showmax, and others. Buyers attending the DISCOP market also received passes to all ZIFF screenings, and the link to a creditable film festival with a host of films on offer added to the value in attending the market. The partnership with ZIFF was also of strategic value to DISCOP in positioning itself as a gateway to all kinds of content, including film. Films that were screened at ZIFF in 2017 and 2018, such as Kenya's *SupaModo* and *18 Hours* and Namibia's *Katukuru*, were all soon picked up for distribution on Showmax, based on the relationship developed between Discop Zanzibar and Ziff.

The web and TV series category attracted interest not just from sponsors and buyers, but also from a whole new category of producers who in the past may not have been interested or able to attend ZIFF. In Africa, filmmakers often start their careers by doing a series, either TV or web, and the over 100 entries in the category was a testament to its relevance. The screenings of the web and TV series were well attended by the general public as well as potential buyers. The inclusion of this category and its ability to create opportunities across the ZIFF and DISCOP platforms showed how a festival can successfully embrace the changes brought about by technology, as opposed to fighting them. ZIFF 2018 was hugely successful in a way that also enabled it to still maintain its authenticity and focus on regional content

and cultures, whilst still speaking to a wider international industry audience. Through the partnership with DISCOP that prioritised the independence of each event, whilst still ensuring that there were enough shared resources, ZIFF was able to maintain its Dhow country identity and to be recognised as an “industry hub”. Unfortunately, the new management that was brought in for ZIFF 2019, chose not to continue the strong partnerships and links that were created during the 2018 edition and no festival took place in 2020. Over and above the lack of consistent follow-up on the success of ZIFF 2018, the impact of Covid 19 and the increase of hybrid festival models re-enforces demonstrates the need to embrace disruption, whether in terms of content and genre boundaries or ways in which content is consumed, to ensure that film festivals in Africa succeed.

6.4 CTIFMF vs Streaming

In contrast to the adaptability of ZIFF, during a similar time period of 2017–2018, the CTIFMF operated in a different paradigm, aligned more closely to festivals in the West and Global North. As previously discussed, the CTIFMF defined itself as a global festival and its audiences were local cinephiles and global film elites. However, its target market, specifically the Cape Town urban elite, had been significantly affected by streaming and other digital innovations. As an essentially cinephilic global cinema festival, in a modern South African urban environment, targeting high-income and digitally connected audiences, the CTIFMF was directly competing with the likes of Netflix and Showmax amongst other global streaming platforms. The majority of the key market of the CTIFMF had the means to stream content similar to what was on offer at the event. The festival, therefore, needed to ensure that it had a sufficiently compelling programme to appeal to this market and attract them to physical screenings. The venues, choice of films, and times

of screenings, and cost of tickets, all appealed to an elite market, yet this was a market with the strongest digital connections. With its focus on an international film industry market, the festival also complied with some of the rigid category rules. Its film selection was thus different from many other African film festivals such as ZIFF that was more open to “video” or made for web or TV formats. The CTIFMF would have benefitted from the hybrid model that has become common in the Covid-19 2020 era, with film screenings online and onsite, enabling it to reach its intended global audience.

CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDING THE FUNDING

The global proliferation of film festivals, many of which are competing for similar audiences, and more importantly, for similar sources of funding, has meant festivals are having to become more and more creative in order to secure the increasingly elusive funding required to survive. As discussed in previous chapters, the factors that have become ever more important for the sustainability of festivals include the ways in which the production teams self-identify authentic communities of interest and the global relevance of their locations or host cities, as well as the ways they adapt to technology trends and disruptions.

Historically it is possible to see the links between the funding of festivals and their specific identity or defined purpose, from the first political driven festivals funded by governments to promote a specific political or nationalistic agenda to the more recent trend of “identity or activist” festivals funded by specific interest groups. This history demonstrates that where festivals have served the specific aim or interest of a third-party, funding has usually followed. However, more and more festivals have failed to align their audiences with what they have to offer, and have chosen instead to be overly influenced by their place in the international film festival hierarchy. It has become common practice for festivals (especially those in close geographic proximity) to compete for the same pool of funds from a small group of potential donors and sponsors.

With the almost complete disappearance of the national model of film festivals from the scene globally, state support for many of these events has decreased. Film festivals that have relied on obtaining their funding from a combination of state and other funding

organizations, have found that many of these sources of funding have either dried up or been greatly reduced. At the same time there are ever more events and projects vying for funds from top local or global companies and brands, or from within the film industry itself. This is partly why festivals have been forced to make their identity markers more commercialised and more localised. More and more festivals now derive both their identities and funding from their host cities (rather than the state) whilst simultaneously developing economically driven strategies such as tourist and destination marketing partnerships with these host cities.

Festivals have also had to become more industry-oriented with almost all major festivals centring the business of film in their event programmes. Festivals now jostle to position themselves as locations of commerce, business and deal-making within a globalised film industry, acting in accordance with what Jordanova terms “industry nodes” (2015). However, given, as elaborated previously, that film festivals operate within a global network that is based on inherent inequalities in the economy as well as in the film industry itself, it is not difficult to understand why many festivals find the process essentially fraught, especially those in Africa. Ironically, many of the economic forces that are only more recently affecting film festivals in Europe or North America have impacted festivals in Africa from the outset. It is thus necessary to compare the differing economic situations from both a historical and a contemporary perspective

7.1 Funding and Function

Funding for film festivals has historically been linked to their functions as a number of economic and funding models presented by film festival scholars demonstrate. Ruby

Cheung (2010:75) writing in the *Film Festival Yearbook 2*, describes what she sees as three prevalent funding models for film festivals:

1: Host country funding with commercial sponsorship, 2: host country / city funding with commercial sponsorship, and 3: predominantly private donations combined with commercial sponsorship.

These three models are predicated on linking the funding to the festivals' identity and function. In the first model, a national government would promote a festival based on some sort of perceived benefit, either from a nation building, global destination marketing, or economic development perspective. The second model is a combination of the national model supported by the host-city model that would (along with commercial support) drive tourism and economic activity within a specific region. These two models rely on a festival's identity markers being linked to a nation or city, whereas the last of Cheung's models is based predominantly on private and commercial sponsorship and would be more relevant to identity or activist type events.

Dina Iordanova (2010), co-writing with Cheung in the *Film Festival Yearbook 2*, describes three kinds of film festivals based on their function and related funding opportunities. These are, festivals aimed at cultural diplomacy on a global scale, festivals focused on business interests related to an identified diaspora, and festivals based on identity agendas. There are similarities between these categories and models, particularly with regard to the importance of host country (government) funding. Iordanova (2010:217) explains the reason for this in this way:

[E]ven if it is not always directly demonstrated, the support that a festival receives from a government backed agency or other politically powerful body is of crucial importance... Festivals that are organized with the blessing of governmental and

publicly backed NGOs stand a better chance of visibility and promoting their causes within the public sphere.

Festivals that have the support of governments, as historically most of the top European festivals have and continue to have, will be more successful than others. I would argue that this privilege is based on the proximity of these host countries (or cities) to the power and financial bases of the globalised economy. According to Iordanova (2010:17), festivals in the second category, those in host countries that cater for a diaspora:

use film as a means of promoting the agenda of the diasporas and diasporic businesses. Foreign language media, travel agencies... can often be found in the list of sponsors for these film festivals and sometimes even the film selections very clearly reflect the need for touristic promotion.

These festivals are also able leverage the benefits inherent in their functionality by tapping into diasporic businesses, and also the support of their host country in order to drive tourism and economic growth. However, their more niche audience relies less on any identity markers or financial support from host countries or governments. Iordanova's last category of identity festivals would match Cheung's third category of funding models based on private donations and organisations.

However, while it is clear, as Cheung (2010:74) states, "the very nature of specialized film festivals has predetermined their funding sources", it is also important to understand how this has evolved over the decades in the process towards city-centred and film industry centred models. Historically, funding for creative and cultural endeavours was the function of national governments. Most major Western film festivals were founded on government resources with specific nationalist aims. From the early editions of Venice and Berlin, and up until the modern day iterations of these events, national government funding continues

to be essential for the survival of many film festivals. As de Valck (2007:219) points out, historically film festivals supported in this way “did not have to generate revenues. Their first function in the festival setting was not to make money, but to show the ‘best’ in national cinema productions (as artistic accomplishments and expressions of cultural identities”. Heavily subsidised and freed from the pressures of having to actually be financially viable for decades, these festivals were able to establish their reputations and positions within the global network over many decades. However, as she states, after the changes to festivals in the 1960s and 1970s, and it became clear that “film festivals were not simply alternative exhibition spaces ... What set film festivals apart from the beginning was their capacity to add value to films and filmmakers” (de Valck, 2007:210).

As festivals came to be seen as more than simply screening venues for nationalist cinema, and began to serve as an ever globalizing film industry, their commercial value became more and more apparent. As festivals have recognised that their place within the global festival network hierarchy can enable access to top film stars, filmmakers, and the associated funds, festivals “have become professionalised [and] have developed more and more initiatives that involved local companies (sponsorship), international film industries, (match-making market, training and funding) in the festival network” (de Valck, 2007:211). National governments then, would continue to support some of the most well-known and successful of these festivals based on a new agenda. Rather than simply supporting these events as national showcases, these events now could be supported as economic drivers for growth on both national and regional levels.

7.2 Culture and Industry Collide

For many festivals, especially those whose identity and function are not intrinsically linked to a prominent host-city or powerful local film industry, securing funding is a problematic process that continually straddles the line between authenticity and commercial necessity.

The space for creativity, cultural identity, and community within festivals can be limited by the necessity of fundraising. Loist (2016:59) elaborates on this concept:

[A]s public funders are increasingly interested in tourism profits and elevating the public cultural image of a city, festivals are funded with the logic of creative industries, with an eye on jobs for creative workers and their positive impact on the city image. These shifting interests are directly observable in changes to funding models, which have moved both money and focus from arts and culture to business and development funds.

Loist (2016:58) sees this process as a direct outcome of the rise of neoliberalism: “[C]ulture, which used to be a field that was supported with public funds because it was deemed important for the formation of a cohesive national identity, has increasingly turned into a value-generating creative industry.” In other words, the creation of culture is now seen as an economic function. More often than not, film festivals now need to fall into line with this economically driven function, as opposed to being able to rely purely on the notion of celebrating culture for culture’s sake, or even film for film’s sake ... This apparent tension between the function of, and the funding of, so-called cultural festivals and more commercial ones is not always clear. As Chan (2011:257) explains in *the Film Festival Dossier*,

there is no doubt that film festivals can function both as cultural celebrations and market places. Indeed... the dichotomy between the worlds of art and commerce in film and in film festivals is a false one, festival programmes can often be faced with the difficult choice between culture and commerce.

Finding the space between this choice is possible if, as Chan points out, they are not necessarily seen as polar opposites or as choices to be made. There are models, such as was shown with ZIFF and DISCOP, where the two sides of the coin can meet and the business and art of film can co-exist. Developing this co-existence is of central importance when examining the ways in which film festivals will need to secure funding in the future. Successful festivals will need to navigate and adapt to the impact of global economic factors and more regional and localised realities. More and more festivals rely on the necessity of dual funding models based on public or donor funds that emphasise the cultural or artistic elements of the festival, on the one hand, and corporate or film industry sponsors and funders on the other hand:

[T]he film festival phenomenon might be understood ... as a play between the local and the global, mediated through supranational cultural policies and motivated through a complex negotiation between governmental bodies and corporations. (Rhyne, 2010:10)

Rhyne posits that film festivals that operate from within the cultural realm are “primarily administered and funded through public/private partnerships,” and that this “festival-as-non-profit model also puts festivals in competition with one another. Each must have its own mission, its own agenda, its regional or programmatic focus and prove that it activates the use of funds to uphold this mission” (2010:19). With a very select group of festivals dominating the global landscape, and an increase in the number of smaller festivals, many festivals are finding it increasingly difficult to attract funding. The idea of finite resources having to be shared by an ever growing pool of festivals has become one of the criticisms of the ever-growing film festival space as critics point out that there the growth of festivals is not matched by the growth of available financial resources. Stevens (2011:np) points out that “critics as well as industry commentators [are] increasingly voicing concerns over the

sustainability of a glutted network, suggesting that the influx of events is placing strain on the resources of their existence – film product and financial aid. These resources, they argue, exist only in a finite quantity”. This complex negotiation between culture and commerce and between government bodies and corporations is paradoxical, especially in the case of film festivals. On the one hand, they are struggling to secure locally-driven public funding, and, on the other, they are struggling to secure their place within a global network in order to appeal to broader industry and corporate funding sources. The paradox is that in order to be recognised and to be competitive, smaller (and indeed African) festivals, need to focus strongly on their unique cultural identities. However, it is this strong link to niched culture that can often make it harder to secure commercial funding that has its eye on broader international audiences. Without the support of their government, festivals have to rely on commercial support. However, if the festivals bow too strongly to commercial forces they lose the identities that make them unique and that resonate with their local audiences, the very foundations on which many of these festivals were built.

A film festival’s function and related identity impacts its ability to find funding, and with funding becoming scarcer, the status of each individual festival within the hierarchy of the global network becomes more important. It can be argued further, that many older (Western) festivals such as Berlin, Cannes, and Venice, have been able to rely on government support to establish and sustain their reputations without the need to be economically viable in their own right. This initial advantage further translates into economic benefits based on these festivals’ higher status in the global festival network. Put another way, these festivals were heavily supported in their most difficult and formative years, and now benefit from decades of (perceived) success as they hold the top positions

in the global hierarchy of film festivals. These festivals can now secure the best talent, global corporate sponsors, and major media attention, even without the support of their governments. Clearly then, not all festivals were created (or treated) equally within the global network, and those not operating within the top tier of the hierarchy find themselves in a constant struggle for funding.

Most academics and film festival critics tend to agree that as a result of these increasing funding pressures, film festivals around the world have had to include the business of film and increase industry-driven and distribution-centred events, rather than being simply cinephilic exhibition events. In her article, "The film festival as industry node", Iordanova (2010:7-8) makes the point clearly:

[T]oday, it has become the norm that film festivals not only show film, but also engage with the film production and distribution. These developments have resulted in a situation where the film festival is no longer mainly an exhibition operation, but becomes a participant in many other aspects of the creative cycle ... most importantly, the importance of the film festival as a node in the cinema production and distribution cycle is becoming increasingly recognized by all stakeholders involved in the festival operation.

Many scholars have a similar view, "with some scholars having recently argued that the international film festival circuit is increasingly functioning as an alternative to traditional distribution" (Ruling, 2010:320). Loist (2016:59) explains it this way:

Since the mid 2000s, festivals have moved increasingly into various segments of training and funding of all stages of film production and distribution, adding markets, talent campuses, and script writing labs, while also facilitating coproduction markets and distributing film funds.

Robert Koehler (2009:85-86) is concerned that "festivals have allowed themselves to become markets ... [that are] merely another phenomenon of ongoing globalization processes, of which cinema ... is a dramatic expression of its reality, power and potential".

Koehler sees the process of festivals becoming markets as a “tacit admission that the actual purpose of these exhibitions are sales markets under the culturally cool guise of a festival” (2009:86). All of these writers point to the transformation of many traditionally cinephilic festivals into business events. All major festivals have always had markets, but they find themselves competing now to become major elements within the global film distribution network. This rapid evolution has not, however, played out in the same way in Europe and in Africa. For many decades, with or without accompanying film markets, festivals have played a pivotal role in assisting filmmakers to promote and distribute their films. In fact, over the course of time, festivals have been one of the only ways for African filmmakers to do so.

As this evolution continues, film festivals around the world are required to leverage their role as essential players within the global film industry and economy. Once again, their success in this endeavour is directly related to their pre-existent status in the global hierarchy of the film festival circuit. Top festivals in the global network thus now have an additional means of securing funding and support by promoting themselves as important industry players within specific “alternative” distribution networks for independent and “world cinema”. As more and more festivals give prominence to film markets in their event programmes, the globally constructed competition for resources moves to this area too:

[M]arkets ... have proven so successful over the long term, opening up countless doors to films that were previously shut out, that they have proven too tempting to festivals that, by their nature, play a vitally different game and sever a starkly different purpose. The success of markets is merely another phenomenon of ongoing globalization processes. (Koehler, 2009:85)

In other words, using the same processes as before, the few elite festivals of the West and Global North are able to use their strong reputations, built on their long-term support by and proximity to the wealth of their governments, of the international film space, and of well-established host city relationships and infrastructure to consolidate their positions and ensure access to funding.

7.3 *Africa's Festival Economics*

The reality for film festivals in Africa, as in other emerging or developing markets, is distinctly different from and much more challenging than the reality for the global West and North. It is self-evident that film festivals in Africa occupy a lower position on the hierarchy or “vertical mosaic” of the global film festival network. This position has affected their ability to attract global films, funding, and attention. This situation is further exacerbated by the lack of significant funding resources within Africa, particularly from governments, cities, or even commercial sponsors. African countries (and even African cities) have never had the same kinds of budgetary resources available or state funding dedicated to the promotion of arts to make it possible to really focus on “national cinemas”. Hence, historically film festival events in Africa have always required funding from other sources, be they NGOs, foreign countries, commercial and business interests, or philanthropists. From the outset, the largest and most successful, film festivals in Africa, such as FESPACO, have always been both culturally and economically driven events with a strong Pan-African identity and agenda, but yet primarily funded by France. Whilst FESPACO strongly identified with and supported the Burkinabe culture, it was also a Francophone and Pan-African project, and significantly supported by French organisations and funders.

The tendency for African film festivals (and the African film industry) to rely very heavily on donors, usually European or American donors, has led to very specific challenges and tensions between the stated aims and objectives of these events and the mandates of their donors. This tension can also be seen in the early years of the Slum Festival in Nairobi. This festival was always intended to be “by the slum and for the slum”. The tension was evident in numerous ways, which included, as earlier discussed, the audience “hijacking” the actual programming, but also could be seen in the festival’s closing night in 2012. According to Dovey et al (2013), it was during this VIP invite only event that the issues of financial support and who provides that support became most apparent. Instead of hosting a public event in the slum for the slum, the closing night was hosted in the heart of Nairobi, which was inaccessible to most slum dwellers. As Dovey explains:

[T]he festival funders, head of associated organizations and representatives from partner embassies at the closing ceremony of the [festival], as well as the way the ceremony itself played itself out, all point towards the real ‘business of this festival,’ the business of development funding (2013:np).

The article goes on to make the point that “the business here was not the profitable business of the international film industry, but rather the continuation of aid to slum dwellers” (2013:np). Some years before, David Anthony (2005:19) offered this analysis:

[W]hile festivals have been useful showcases for rising generations of African cultural workers, social documentarians ... they also exist in a framework perennially dominated by Western markets, distributors, and dependent on foreign funders. In this financial sense, therefore, the African film festival can be seen, at least partially, as an extension of globalism, in so far as the political economy of film continues to be dominated by Western capital.

Film festivals in Africa have had to hold the dual role of cultural exhibitions and platforms, as well as business oriented gatherings. While the history of film festivals globally, as

elaborated by de Valck and others, shows an evolution from festivals as nationalistic projects, to more “auteur” and cinephilic events, the economic realities of the film industry on the continent means that this line of evolution is not as clear cut in Africa. Whereas scholars such as de Valck and Loist (2009:183-184) understand the modern shift of most festivals to that of “a platform for and of the film industry ... festivals have been expanding their operations consistently from exhibition to distribution, facilitating sales and networking”. African scholars point out that African film events have always had this function. The work of Manthia Diawara addresses this particularly through his analysis of FESPACO, which he sees as a space that was developed in order to address the needs and concerns of African filmmakers. Unlike many other scholars who would simply see festivals as cinematic exhibitions, Diawara’s understanding of FESPACO is that the festival has always, in a sense, been an “industry node”. According to Koven (2008:np), Diawara’s understanding of FESPACO is “more of an industrial conference, the films themselves, their display, the generation of an African audience for African cinema becomes secondary to the forum of mutual support for the impoverished African cinema”. As a film festival event, however, FESPACO has struggled with this tension between its Pan-African aims and its reliance on foreign (French) funding, leading many critics, as Diawara (1994:388) points out, to contend that “FESPACO is a European festival organized in Africa”. This view was still valid as recently as 2018 when the FESPACO delegation at the Berlin Film Festival included four French donor and funder representatives and one Burkinabe. Diawara (1994:386) is critical of the fact that African cinema has not been given its due:

[T]he cultural industry around African cinema is growing larger and larger, generating new festivals in every corner of the world, but from the point of view of the film industry, African cinema is no more important than it was ten or fifteen years ago.

In other words, despite many years of interventions, FESPACO has yet to have a major impact on the African film space. With the support of many French institutions and the various regimes of Burkina Faso, FESPACO has managed to support and develop an identity for Francophone film culture. However, as Diawara points out, it has not realised its economic and business ambition of establishing a Pan-African industry.

The economic and historical realities of film festivals in Africa are different from those in the developed world. The large body of scholarly work that addresses the new commercialisation or industry focus of film festivals often ignores the fact that festivals in Africa have always had to play dual roles; not only as an exhibition – but because of the nature of that exhibition – to act as an alternative distribution network. The complete lack of comprehensive cinema networks in most African countries has meant that alternative means of film viewing have always existed. Film Festivals across Africa have, therefore, always played a part in distributing films in Africa, as most of these films will not be seen anywhere other than in festivals, and possibly via broadcast. There is no “traditional” cinematic distribution system across Africa, the point bemoaned by Diawara (1994) in his critique of FEPACI and FESPACO. Hence, film festivals, even those who historically, like ZIFF, positioned themselves as distinctly culturally-, not industry-driven events, have in fact, always played an integral role in the film industry in Africa. ZIFF’s 2018 partnership with DISCOP Markets and its shift towards the industry was a recent development that amplified this role. As Slocum (2009:147) points out by quoting from a ZIFF strategic plan, the festival always had a dual cultural and economic mandate, “culture [has come to be] seen squarely as an opportunity to engage with the pressing task of rationalizing the role

of creativity and innovation in the interest of economic empowerment and social well-being”.

7.4 ZIFF 2018: Cultural Industry Node

The Zanzibar International Film Festival 2018 represented a high point in the festival’s long up and down struggle for financial viability, but sadly, even with the right model in place, internal issues meant that 2019 was another low point for the festival, with low attendance and other issues. The highly successful 2018 version of the event saw a successful unification of the strong cultural identity of the festival supported economically by the regional and African film industry, as well as commercial sponsors and donors. The festival operated on a break-even financial scenario in 2018 for the first time in many years and was poised to continue its success. However, due to internal issues with its Board of Directors, and a lack of firm governance, the festival senior management team, including me, all resigned after the 2018 edition.

The success of ZIFF in 2018 was due to the ways in which the festival was able to promote its authentic and locally rooted identity to both local, regional and international audiences, leveraging its unique location as part of this identity. The festival was also able to harness the benefits of digital disruption and translate this into financial support. This success is particularly notable since throughout its history, ZIFF has had no government support at either a local (Zanzibar) or federal (Tanzania) level. Over the years the festival has also had varied success in securing commercial sponsors, with a high-point being the signing of a deal with Zuku, the pay TV platform, in 2012. However, the success was short-lived, when, only four years into a 10 year deal, Zuku abruptly cancelled the contract. This cancellation

was based partly on the company's own financial position, but also because the festival was not necessarily living up to the commercial considerations that the company had anticipated in terms of market reach and African film industry status. The cancellation of the contract, literally in the months leading up to the festival's 2016 edition was a dramatic blow to the festival, leaving it once again totally dependent on international NGO's, foreign governments and embassies, and small local businesses.

ZIFF's unique identity and function over the years as a culturally distinct and strongly regionally defined event had for years been its means of survival economically. However, going into 2017, the festival was in very serious financial trouble. One of the additional challenges that faced ZIFF (and many other developing country festivals) is that the funding that comes from foreign donor organisations and governments very often has very constricting strings attached. These funds are generally to be used for a specific workshop, programme theme or project, and do not necessarily support the overall festival production or logistical costs. On an on-going basis, ZIFF has managed to piece together support from a variety of donors including the British Council, Alliance Francaise, GIZ, the US Embassy, Danish Film Institute, ACCRA (Italy) amongst others. These funding sources have enabled ZIFF to consistently create a programme of workshops, exhibitions, and outreach programmes in addition to the main screenings. However, in order to sustainably run the festival, ZIFF needed to secure additional sponsorship. Historically, apart from the Zuku deal, most of these sponsors were small local businesses Zanzibar, or less frequently, Tanzania based businesses. However, these businesses did not have the budget to pay the salaries of year-round festival staff. In fact, most ZIFF staff (including me) were volunteers and were only able to gather in Zanzibar for about one month a year.

Based on the perception projected by brands, and even the East African Film industry that Zanzibar was a small festival in a minor market, outreach to major Pan-African or international brands such as banks, cell phone companies had not proved successful despite consistent outreach over a number of years. In 2016, the management team, including me, realised that it was necessary to change the status and positioning of ZIFF within Africa's hierarchy of festivals. In order to do this the festival needed to leverage funds from within the growing African film industry and to become part of the growing trend that sees festivals becoming "industry nodes". Apart from workshops targeted at the local (very small) emerging film industry, ZIFF had never really positioned itself as a major film industry business event. Over the years, ZIFF had strongly defined itself as a cultural celebration and had used its Dhow culture identity and exotic location as key drivers of attendance and sponsors. However, in 2016 the management team realised that the only way to keep the festival going as a showcase of Zanzibar, East African, and Dhow country culture was to introduce a more business and industry focused market element. In 2016, Festival Director Fabrizio Colombo I tasked me with delivering the first stand alone "Soko Filam" (Film Market) event to take place at ZIFF 2017. While ZIFF had offered what it called Soko Filam in the past, it had never been run as a strictly business to business Pan-African event in the film industry. DISCOP Markets, an annual TV and content expo and market had tried to stage events in Nairobi at various times between 2009 and 2011, but the industry was not sufficiently developed at this point to support such an event. The first Kalasha Industry Market, produced by the Kenya Film Commission, only took place in Nairobi in 2018, hence Soko Filam 2017 was a first of its kind in the region. I was able to secure a sponsorship of R250,000 for the event from a (now defunct) digital TV start-up, Mahala TV.

This meant that the event could be hosted at the Hyatt Hotel in Stone and that it was able to offer most of the exhibition spaces at reduced rates or even free to small businesses. In my role as event producer I was then able to secure smaller sales and sponsorships for partners such as the Kenya Film Commission, The Kenya Film & Classification Board, and Clouds TV.

The initial response to ZIFF's Soko Filam event from the film industry validated ZIFF's decision to become an industry event. The team was able to secure 18 exhibitors and to put together a comprehensive side-bar programme of panel discussions and talks, all of which took place parallel to the film festival and its programming. Key regional and Pan-African speakers and companies took part including, MyChoiceTV, Showmax, Aya Distribution, TRACE Africa, Ronga TV and others. The build-up to the event was successful and over 100 delegates travelled to Zanzibar to attend. The increased media coverage, sponsorship, and overall interest in the event meant ZIFF benefitted from additional funding revenue and increased attendance. At this time, in my capacity as the Director of Red Flag Media, I was also handling the media and publicity for DISCOP Markets in Joburg. As I mentioned previously, DISCOP hosted several TV and content markets annually across Africa, and at this time, partly based on the success of Soko Filam, the organisers, Basic Lead, were considering returning to Nairobi for a 2018 edition. I engaged in discussion with Patrick Zuchowicki of Basic Lead about hosting a DISCOP Zanzibar in 2018 and linking it to ZIFF in order to create a major East African industry event. He agreed to do this and a formal partnership was reached with ZIFF. I was appointed to produce the event alongside ZIFF 2018 and the combined event was launched at a press conference in Dar es Salaam just before ZIFF 2017. The response to the announcement was overwhelming. the entire East

African film industry took note of ZIFF. What had long been seen as a small cultural event on the island of Zanzibar that ignored by the major industry players in the region was now a major film and content event on the Pan-African (and global) map.

As the planning for 2018 commenced, I was responsible for the organisation of DISCOP Zanzibar 2018 and also for securing sponsors across both ZIFF and DISCOP. Many companies which would not have considered supporting ZIFF previously were now open, not just to attending, but also to sponsoring the event. One of our key challenges was to integrate the commercial aspects of the industry event into ZIFF without compromising its strong cultural identity. This was achieved through a strategic co-positioning of the two brands, with a few collaborative cross over events. Each event was able to keep its strong and recognisable brand and key identity markers, but the physical proximity of the venues and the parallel timing of the events ensured mutual benefits. While the two events took place at separate venues, DISCOP Zanzibar took place during ZIFF. Registered guests for each event had the same accreditation and could attend both ZIFF and DISCOP events. Those who purchased tickets to DISCOP thus received the added value of being able to attend all the ZIFF screenings and cultural events, while official ZIFF guests (filmmakers etc.) had the advantage of being able to attend DISCOP and benefit from the meeting service and panel programme.

As was previously discussed, as a way of attracting sponsors and a broader diversity of attendees, ZIFF embraced the new converged state of content and introduced the TV and Web Series Festival as part of a festival at ZIFF along with its own awards. This addition to the programme, as described in the previous chapter, makes sense within the African

context, since the production of TV and web series, along with music videos, is the entry point for many African filmmakers. A number of years earlier ZIFF had put in place a Music Video Category in the main festival awards and through this addition we managed to secure TRACE, Africa's largest music TV media group, as a sponsor. This stand-alone category, with its own screening venue and schedule, also enabled a seamless link to the DISCOP event which was known as a TV content market. I was able to secure the North American based Africa Channel as a sponsor to cover the TV and Web Festival. Submissions and final judging for the TV and web categories went through the same process as all other film categories, but the screening was put together as a separate event, branded by the Africa Channel. This commercial partnership was ideal as the Africa Channel was wanting to establish a firm relationship with African producers as well as to look for appropriate content. Another cross-platform sponsorship was secured with the Kenya Film Commission (KFC) who also had a major presence at both ZIFF and DISCOP events. This formal recognition of the festival by the Kenyan government and film industry was a major achievement; as part of their sponsorship they sent a delegation of Kenyan filmmakers and politicians. KFC also sponsored the screening of the Kenyan film *Supa Modo* which was later picked up by Showmax, another sponsor at the event. DISCOP Zanzibar managed to sell all the available meeting tables, and the attendance between ZIFF and DISCOP Zanzibar 2018 was double the usual ZIFF attendance. There was literally not a hotel room to be had in Stone Town, and for the first time in many years, we were able to create a break-even scenario for ZIFF. By combining the exotic culture and location of Zanzibar as an idyllic destination with the power of the DISCOP industry brand, we had found a way to turn ZIFF into an East African industry node – without compromising the very regional and unique identity of the festival. Major success markers related to attendance, financial viability, sales of films, and positive

media coverage all indicated that this model would be a sustainable way to move ZIFF forward.

Unfortunately, due to internal issues within the Board of Directors, most of the ZIFF 2018 senior management team resigned. DISCOP Markets then decided not to return to Zanzibar for 2019, and with very little institutional memory left in the team, the sustainability of the festival is again in question. There was greatly reduced funding and attendance in 2019 with a much smaller programme and very little industry support. The festival did not take place in 2020 due to Covid-19. There are, however, attempts to revive it in 2021.

7.5 CTIFMF: No Community – No Funding

A very different kind of funding and sponsorship situation led to the collapse of the Cape Town International Film Market and Festival after just two editions, 2017 and 2018. The CTIFMF, as explained previously, did not succeed in connecting to any specific cultural or community identity markers or audiences from within the Cape Town film industry or even more broadly. From the outset in year 1, the CTIFMF attempted to position itself within the global film festival network and to compete internationally against top-tier film festivals based primarily on its position in Cape Town, and its claims to develop the (South) African film industry. With a film programme that was aimed at an auteur, world cinema audience that makes up a very small percentage of Cape Town's population, albeit the strong cinema going population, and a lack of connections with the film industry, the CTIFMF faced significant challenges. The industry market programme was badly organised, and only a few stands were sold in the large exhibition space that had been set up at the Cape Town harbour. Despite free entrance, the foot traffic was hugely disappointing. The local film

industry had felt alienated from the event and did not show up to support the panel discussions (for which they had to pay) or the free exhibition. The lack of attendance at the films was also a financial blow as the financial planning of the festival had included revenue for both the film and the market programme.

In its inaugural edition the festival's only major donors were the City of Cape Town, Wesgro, relevant tourism bodies. There were also a few smaller donations from the commercial institutions such as Absa Bank. The festival was not able to attract audiences in significant numbers in 2017, nor was it able to gain traction within the local industry. Another difficulty that the CTIFMF faced when raising funds is that, as opposed to many other festivals, the CTIFMF was established as a for-profit private company, making it difficult for some donors and governments to support it. These and other various factors that have been outlined throughout this thesis including marketing missteps, a lack of resonance with the audience, and a failure to achieve key successes meant that it was an uphill battle to secure sponsorship for the 2018 edition.

In 2018, based on the advice of many within the team, including me, the Board of Directors of the Festival attempted to position the event more closely to the African industry and African audiences. Despite many moves in a positive direction, especially in terms of industry outreach, the CTIFMF was still not able to secure the funding required for their vision of the 2nd edition. In the planning for the 2nd edition, the Board of the CTIFMF also relied too heavily on what they assumed would be major support from commercial sponsors, as well as once again from the City of Cape Town. While The City of Cape Town and Wesgro came on board as sponsors again for 2018, they reduced their level of support.

Despite this, the planning for year two was very ambitious both in terms of the market and the festival. The strong desire of Festival Director Leon van der Merwe, along with the rest of the Board, for CTIFMF to be seen as a major festival on the international circuit had huge financial implications. Compliance with the criteria of the FIAPF in terms of the number of films, venues and even international jury members led to extremely large budgets.

The CTIFMF film and market programmes for 2018 were exceptional on paper. However, unbeknown to the staff and management of the event, the Board of Directors had not actually secured the necessary funds for such an ambitious project. With its more South African, and Africa focused film and industry programme, there was increased support from the local and regional film industry. However, after a financial disastrous year due to water shortages and cancelled shoots, the Cape Town based film industry was in no position to financially support the event. Once again, the planned industry expo, which had been counted on for essential revenue, fell apart in the planning and only a handful of stands was sold. Additionally, the Market programme, which had cost a few million rand, still was only to attract a couple hundred ticket sales. The film programme taking place at Ster Kinekor and Nu Metro at the V & A Waterfront also needed to sell a significant number of tickets in order to contribute to the bottom line of the festival. However, numerous factors that have been previously mentioned, such as the international programming that alienated many audiences, the cost of tickets, the choice of venues, and an overall lack of a film-going culture, meant that ticket sales were significantly less than anticipated. The financial crisis that faced the CTIFMF was evident even in the weeks leading up to the festival, with last minute sponsorship and funding outreach being made. In the end, the festival took place within a budgetary shortfall of millions.

As of the end of 2020, two years after the 2018 edition, there are still millions of Rands in unpaid debts from suppliers both small and large. This reputational fallout from the 2018 edition makes it unlikely, even if all the debtors were to be paid, that the festival would take place again. CTIFMF failed to succeed as a business or as a celebration of film, measured in terms of ticket sales and revenue. As a primarily commercially driven event, the CTIFMF was hoping to use all the modern day tools that other major festivals use in order to succeed; a hot location with financial support from local city and tourism bodies, a strong local film industry, and an appeal to commercial sponsors. However, it seems clear what the CTIFMF did not take into account is that it takes festivals many years to build a firm support-base comprising their host city, local film industry, and commercial sponsors. Many of these festivals actually started out as cultural showcases, nationalist propaganda events, or similar, and that during those years were therefore heavily subsidised, enabling them to take up their positions, as previously mentioned, at the top of the festival food chain.

The CTIFMF was trying to compete, at the same level, and on the same terms, with festivals like Cannes, The Berlinale, and the Toronto International Film Festival, in its first and second editions. As I have pointed out, their initial positioning statement even called the CTIFMF the Cannes of Africa. Without the understanding that the local funding resources and audiences are nowhere as mature as those in other major cities, and that without the existing position as a global festival player, the CTIFMF was never going to be able to achieve these aims. By alienating the local industry in its first year, and also by failing to make an emotional connection or resonate with any community or audience that could

open local sponsorship doors, the festival made another miscalculation when it tried to position itself as a strictly global business event.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have demonstrated how four key concepts, from both academic and practical perspectives, have impacted and will continue to impact the development, on-going sustainability, and success of film festivals in Africa. The four factors investigated in this thesis were: the identity and associated community of a festival, its physicality as a lived event within specific spaces, its ability to adapt or evolve in relation to potentially disruptive technology, and the ways in which these issues impact its ability to sustainably, secure funding. While in this thesis I have explored the academic and theoretical underpinnings of these concepts, including actor-network theory, convergence, and the spatial flow, these interwoven and inseparable concepts of identity and audiences, physicality and adaptability do not, in fact, merely operate at the level of theory. They are critical real-world factors that can and do determine whether a festival will survive or not as well as the role it will have within the film space.

With regard to festivals in Africa, using both research and autoethnographic approaches, I have demonstrated a number of points that could be considered best practice for festivals in Africa looking to be relevant, sustainable, and successful. One of these key approaches would be for a festival to have tangible authentic links to local communities and audiences, both in terms of the local film industry and in terms of audiences that would view the films. Programming decisions that select films that are appealing to the real audiences of a festival as opposed to perceived external audiences such as potential donors and sponsors, accessible and relevant venues that do not exclude communities due to lack of physical access or lingering post-colonial legacies, and the ability to adapt and accept disruption and

innovation within the film industry have all been discussed as important for the future of film festivals in sub-Saharan Africa.

In this thesis I have shown that film festivals in Africa, because of their unique circumstances, histories, and nodes occupied within the global hierarchical network, have had to adapt and evolve in relation to these challenges in specifically different ways from their Northern or Western counterparts. This analysis has been done within the widely accepted paradigm actor network theory and how it manifests in the hierarchically structured global film festival network that has been developed over a long history of colonialism and an economic system that enabled wealthy cities and states to subsidise festivals for decades while simultaneously extracting resources from African cities and states. These festivals continue to benefit from these historical legacies as nationalistic and government funded enterprises that enabled them to develop as leading festival events. Even now, as the funding of festivals has transitioned from nationally funded to city-focused and funded events, these same festivals continue to benefit from their association with wealthy and globally connected host cities that are often business hubs for film, but also for a range of potential sponsors.

It is clear that many of the top Western film festivals such as Berlin, Cannes, Toronto, and Venice would not have been able to claim their places at the top of the global hierarchy of festivals without this legacy. A global economy, one predicated on centring Western nations and global cities, often at the expense of the so-called developing world, has shaped the ways in which film festivals operate to this day. Festivals that have benefitted from decades of financial and related support from national governments have been, by

and large, freed from the need to be financially viable or to focus on the business of film, enabling them to develop as cultural, social, and iconic events, already ahead of the competition when the time came for them to stand on their own financially. These festivals have had the privilege of decades of financial support enabling them to develop their international brands and to now attract commercial and corporate sponsors, often based in their host cities or in close proximity.

African festivals, in sharp contrast, have followed a different trajectory altogether, one predicated on a colonial and post-colonial history that has made it virtually impossible for either national governments or host cities to financially support these events in the past up until the present. The entire film industry in Africa has only recently emerged into a viable industry with its own production and consumption ecosystem. African nations, cities, and industries are still dealing with the legacies of colonialism and a neo-liberal globalised economy that still exploit African resources and people. Without the support of national or local (host city) government support, historically, film festivals in Africa have had to survive financially via a mixture of commercially driven sponsorship, industry (including television) support, and most often cultural aid or donor support provided by Western governments or agencies, usually with their own agendas. As I have demonstrated in this thesis, without the prevalence of traditional cinema circuits, most African films, even to this day, have been viewed in informal private and social gatherings or via broadcast TV, and more recently via streaming and video on demand platforms. As actors within the film industry network in Africa, film festivals have played a very different role to their Western counterparts, often being the only places in which African films can be viewed together in a social context, and also serving as some of the only places where the business of film can

be conducted. Major film festivals in Africa, over the years then, have had to play a vitally important role as Pan-African gatherings that function both as sites of cultural and cinematic celebration, as well sites of vital commercial significance. Up until very recently, formal distribution platforms and a functioning Pan-African film industry, film festivals in Africa have always had to play this dual role as social and cultural gatherings around film, and as a space where the film industry would gather to do business. The transition made by Western festivals from cinephile events to “industry nodes” was not required in the Africa as festivals here have always operated as such.

Film festivals in Africa, in further contrast to their European or North American counterparts, have also had to adapt differently with regard to the impacts of content convergence and digital disruptors. As has been shown, for festivals in Africa, where the vast majority of the population has at best limited access to broadband or WIFI, the impact of streaming and similar VOD platforms such as Netflix and Showmax have been contained. In this thesis I have explored how within the African film and content space, the rigid differentiation between video, film, TV or web content simply does not exist. Festivals in the West, who worked on the premise that the cinematic experience was paramount and therefore cinematic content should take precedence over video, TV or web content, are now finding themselves in direct competition and, at times, as has been shown, even in outright conflict with these new technologies. Within the African context, this thesis has explored how within the African content ecosystem, audiences do not distinguish between these kinds of content, and are well used to watching film (and all other content) on various devices from televisions to screens set up in churches or halls. The strict boundaries between content genres based on where or how they are distributed simply do not exist

within the African film space. This fluidity is easier to incorporate in the African film festival model, as demonstrated by the success of ZIFF in 2018. In fact, this fluidity actually presents opportunities for African festivals that embrace web, video and TV content to attract new local audiences and even funders. By understanding the viewing behaviours of their local audience and ensuring that programming appeals to local communities, and takes account of the ways in which the African film industry actually operates, festivals in Africa can balance their cultural and commercial aspects.

Film festivals across Africa have a mixed history of successfully managing these factors and being able to create sustainable legacies. Festivals such as ZIFF have proven that it is indeed possible to successfully merge an authentic community identity, relevant both to local communities as well as to its visitors, whilst at the same time creating a viable business environment. As a festival event, ZIFF is an example of how a strong authentic, locally anchored identity can translate into international interest, funding, and success, whilst still maintaining local audiences through relevant programming and outreach, as well as through physical events and venue selection. In contrast, the short lived CTIFMF was unable to connect to local audiences, adapt to changing digital competitors, or ensure industry or financial support. As an event that billed itself, even in its name, as first a market and then a festival, and as one distinctly operating from a global industry perspective, without any tangible local cultural or identity markers and roots, the festival was unable to compete either globally or locally. For a festival in Africa to be recognised globally, it needs to first be successful and resonate in its home city and country such as the Durban International Film Festival that has long leveraged its links to the University of KZN and to the South African film industry. The CTIFMF prioritised an imagined audience of international elites,

media and industry players over its actual audiences and was therefore unable to survive beyond two years.

Based on their long histories of balancing their roles as locally important spaces of film business, as well as of social and cultural meaning, film festivals in Africa need to ensure that their approach to the four key frameworks enables them to function sustainably despite their relatively low position on the global film festival hierarchy. I have argued that for film festivals in Africa to raise funds sustainably and to be economically viable, potential challenges of the African film festival landscape into opportunities. I would argue that the first and most obvious perceived challenge, the geographic and economic distance from the established film industries of the West and North, can be turned into an advantage. By using strategically and locally driven identity markers festivals can highlight their uniqueness and authenticity as opposed to the slick commerciality of many other major festival events. The best example of this is the way ZIFF created and developed the enticing and exotic notion of the Dhow Countries as its identity marker. This has made it attractive to filmmakers, visitors, donors and the industry alike for over two decades. ZIFF has been able to achieve international success through its emphasis on its strong ties with local culture and the film industry. By celebrating its distance, its small and niche market, and evolving along with and adapting to the changes in the industry around it, ZIFF was able to reach a zenith in 2018. It is a model that could be emulated by other festivals on the continent.

In very different ways, festivals such as the Nairobi Slum Film Festival and the CTIFMF, demonstrate the ways in which festivals in Africa will fail if they do not take heed of the

need for authentic identities that are lived and practised, most critically as far as film and event programming, and venue selection are concerned. Film programming for festivals in Africa must be relevant to local audiences first and foremost. Yet, many of the most successful festivals in Africa continue to programme for the international market, with many of their guests coming from other parts of Africa and beyond. Festivals such as ZIFF, the Ethiopian Film Festival, The African International Film Festival in Lagos, The Durban International Film Festival, to name but a few, have a strong Pan African film focus that mirrors the fluidity of the African film industry. These festivals include what would be considered art-house films, alongside the kinds of video-film content such as such as Nollywood and Bongo movies that would be not be included at Western events. The vibrant and social function of film screenings at African film festivals also appeals to international visitors who could not experience either the content or the screening experience anywhere else.

By selecting films primarily from the global North, the CTIFMF's offered a programme that was similar to small festivals in Europe or North America. Visitors from Europe would most likely have already seen these films at festivals or at cinemas, thus there was no particular call to attend a festival so far away. Having only a small amount of African content and offering a completely sanitised "first-world" festival experience, the CTIFMF was putting itself into direct competition with middle-tier festivals in Europe and North America without creating a unique element that would entice international audiences to attend. Given its lack of local audience connectivity, the festival was simply not sustainable.

In terms of the importance of venues and the physicality of the festival experience, festivals in Africa are often dealing with post-colonial legacies. The expense of traveling across Africa, the instability of many borders and regions, and the legacy of the spatial planning of African cities all influence the festival experience. Whilst spatial flow and the sociology of “public spaces” may seem to be theoretical concepts far removed from the film festival experience, both of these festivals faced the consequences of not understanding the importance of the spaces in which festival events take place. In addition to the obvious issues of accessibility of venues to local audiences, it is important to understand the social and historical connotations of many spaces in urban Africa. Buildings and even neighbourhoods that were historically closed to large sections of Africa’s population during the colonial era or more recently in Apartheid South Africa may still be considered uninviting and off-limits to many local audiences

By ensuring the authentic local identity and community audiences through relevant programming, by creating a liveness that reflects and welcomes all guests through strategic and well thought out venue selection and spatial flow, and by embracing the fluid and converged nature of African content and the ways in which it is distributed and consumed, film festivals in Africa can ensure their viability and place within a global film festival network. A key thread that is clear from the research outcomes in this thesis is that film festivals in Africa, within their space often on the periphery of the global network of festivals must cater to their local, regional, and African audiences, donors, innovations, and industry dynamics in order to have a sustainable future. Film festivals in Africa must program films that appeal to audiences in a commercially viable manner in order to both create opportunities for filmmakers, and to secure audiences. These festivals must screen

these films in locations and venues that are both geographically and culturally accessible, and these festivals must embrace the new ways in which audiences are viewing and accessing films. Film festivals in Africa that are relevant to their local audiences and create accessible and welcoming lived and shared physical experiences are more likely to secure long-term commercial sponsors and international grants and funding. Additionally, festivals in Africa that recognise and celebrate the importance of their local cultures, content, and audiences will be more flexible and resilient in the face of rapidly changing technology, enabling them to embrace the challenges. I would argue that a festival in Africa, especially a new festival, attempting to compete and position itself within the global festival network hierarchy based solely on its business importance and commercial relevance, and without a local community or industry grounding, is destined to fail. In order to remain as sustainable events, relevant to both local and international markets, African film festivals, must recognise their uniqueness and convert their inherent challenges into advantages within the hierarchical global network of film festivals

In future, African festivals can and should alter the definition of success so that it is not intrinsically linked to the global hierarchical criteria so deeply ingrained in the international festival network. The very challenges posed by Africa's geographical, economic, and technical uniqueness can in fact become opportunities. By embracing local audiences, traditions and norms of viewership and production, understanding how these elements tie-in to securing funding, and recognising that it is not necessary, or even desirable, to attempt to compete with Western festivals, African film festivals can develop a new trajectory and carve out a sustainable future in partnership with the African film industry.

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