

**Finnish Transnational Film Production:  
Collaboratives, Production Models and Work Culture**

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## Abstract

Transnational film production was spurred on by factors of globalization and technology like human migration, political and economic liberalization, interconnectivity, availability of cheap digital filmmaking resource and homogenization of film format. These factors are succinctly referred to as the 5 'scapes' of Global Cultural Flow (Arjun Appadurai, 1996).

This thesis used my thesis film 'Homebound' as the provocation for a discursive analysis of transnational film production between Finland and South Africa. What factors in transnational collaborative partnership yield the most value? What is the place of work culture and ethics in transnational film production? And finally, how does the difference in film production model between Finland and South Africa impact film production and work relationship?

The theoretical framework is situated in the argumentation that transnational cinema is made and received by agencies working beyond national borders, to create new kind of understanding and collaboration and also to enhance continuous transnationalization of film production, distribution, consumption and organization.

For this research, I analysed transnational film production processes in Homebound. This is contrasted with interviews of Finnish and South African filmmakers on the impact of networking, ethical leadership and the difference in production models on transnational film production undertaken by Finnish filmmakers in South Africa.

My research findings indicate that fundamental to transnational film production is the ability to identify the appropriate partnership, this should be done by matching the expertise and competence of partners to film needs; it could be visual or logistical. The role of the producer goes beyond the excel, it is also about understanding the work culture of the new place.

While technology has harmonized film format, there are clear differences in work culture and attitude between Finland and South Africa that a transnational producer must imbibe. Contrary to accepted notion, the advantage of South Africa for Finnish filmmakers is not only economic, but also demographic and geographic.

Keywords Finnish, Transnational Film Production, Production Models

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## 1. Introduction

‘Very critical to our understanding of globalisation is the dire need to use it as a synonym for liberalisation and greater openness.. the removal of administrative barriers to international movement of goods, services, labour and capital increases economic interaction among nations. (Akindele et al 2002: 7)

Globalization has had a profound effect on the social and economic processes of the world by liberalizing all the necessary factors needed to flatten the space for all players from different segment of the society and in all corners of the world. In the media, globalization of media is felt in the film value chain creation with shift in how production are funded, produced and distributed. The flattening of the factors of film production across socio-economic and cultural borders has given rise to transnational cinema.

In this thesis, I shall be looking into transnational film production between Finland and South Africa. This will be an analytical examination of transnational film production between Finland and South Africa touching on collaborative partnership, production model, work culture, ethics and their effects on Finnish film production in South Africa.

I will use my master thesis film ‘*Homebound (Kotimatka)*’ as the provocation model for a discursive analysis of transnational film production in South Africa. However, I feel that, that my personal experience is limited, to complement this, I will examine, compare and contrast the experiences of two Finnish and a South African filmmakers working on Finnish production in South Africa to mine.

It is important to emphasize that I have work life experience in Nigeria, which gives me some understanding of the production landscape in Africa, but then, with hindsight, my experience in

South Africa and Finland has opened up a new vista of knowledge. With such background, it is no surprise that I find myself writing about transnational film production between Finland and South Africa. But more importantly I will be using the experiences hereof as future provocation for Afro-Nordic film production studies.

**The main objective** of this thesis is to investigate the process of transnational film production between Finland and South Africa with special attention on the place of collaborative partnership, production model, work culture and ethical considerations within the production continuum. With a view to understanding the optimum consideration for locating Finnish transnational production in South Africa; the processes for beneficial collaborative partnership; challenges of production model, work culture and ethics, and over all impact on production value chain

**My research proposals** for this thesis are:

What factors in the collaborative partnership brings the most value to a production? What is the place of work culture and ethics in transnational film production? What are the pull factors for Finnish Film producers in the South African film production partnership? Finnish film landscape is modeled after the European Independent film model and while South African production service landscape is significantly influenced by Hollywood studio system: how does this difference impact the project and work relationship?

## **1.1 Thesis Structure**

There are five chapters in this thesis. First chapter 'Introduction' will lay the framework for the thesis; breaking down what is expected of this thesis into digestible tidbits. Chapter two presents discussions from literature on transnational cinema in general, including the argument against transnational cinema and the need for deconstruction of the current usage of transnational cinema as well as the Nordic/Finnish experience of transnational cinema in particular.

Chapter three is dedicated to the research design and methodologies that are used for research and analysis in the thesis. I will also compare and contrast views and findings from the interviewees with the theoretical background and then conclude this with a short summary of the thoughts expressed therein.

Chapter four will be a documentation and analysis of the transnational film production processes I adopted in *Homebound* production vis-a-vis the literature review. I will start with a brief description of the project, how I came about it and then look into the processes adopted in the production of the transnational short film *Homebound* in South Africa as well as point in the literature review that ties into these processes.

Chapter five is the closing of this thesis. I will discuss and analyse my prevailing understanding using preceding theoretical discussions, interviews and personal experience on the production of *Homebound* in the interplay of collaborative partnership, production model, work culture and ethics in the light of the thesis objectives and the research questions. I will also open the vista for further exploration of the issues in the future. There is also an appendix of interview questions at the end of the reference list.

## 2. Theory

As explained in the proposal, this thesis summarizes my experience as a film producer finding collaborative partnership for my short film *Homebound* in South Africa, I shall be comparing notes with two Finnish filmmakers and a South African film producer working on Finnish production in South Africa.

Some of the questions that have come up in the course of researching and writing this thesis are: How does a producer secure value adding transnational collaboratives? What factors in the collaborative partnership brings the most value to a production? What are the pull factors for the Finnish Film producers in South African film production landscape? In what ways, do work culture and ethics affect transnational film production?

Finnish film production is modeled after the European independent film model while South African production service landscape is significantly influenced by Hollywood studio system. How does this difference impact the project and work relationship?

There is a paucity of research on Transnational Collaboratives or even production study. However, there are researches in the area of transnational cinema which compartmentalizes collaborative partnership as a feature of Transnational Cinema. I will therefore examine these researches in Transnational cinema and see how they theorized about the roles of collaboratives in Transnational cinema.

By theorizing about Transnational cinema, I hope to examine what transnational collaboratives/networks are at work, how those elements come together and how the resultant clash of models and productions styles impact the project, work relationship between Finnish producers



and their South African collaborators and I hope to relate their experience to mine on the production of *Homebound* (Kotimatka, 2019) in South Africa.

## **2.1 Theorizing about Transnational Cinema**

Theorizing about transnational cinema is necessary to unpack meanings prescribed for transnational cinema by researchers and scholars. This is important in order to understand it broadly and then narrow down to perspectives pertinent to the focus of this thesis; the collaborative involved in transnational cinema and how they manage knowledge and cultural dynamics that each participant brings to the table.

To start with, a conventional definition of transnational will be helpful. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines Transnational as ‘extending or going beyond national boundaries or operating in or involving more than one country.’

In Cambridge Dictionary, it is defined as ‘involving several nations or used to describe companies or business activities that exist or take place in more than one country’. From these definitions, there is an agreement that ‘transnational’ involves people and other factors of production across international borders and time zones. While Cambridge Dictionary, sees collaborative as ‘involving two or more people working together for a special purpose’. Hence, these definitions suggest that one is an essential component of the other.

In defining transnational cinema, Henry Bacon (2016) opines that it ‘... refers to the cinema of the others, away from the mainstream, Hollywood’. Henry Bacon adds that transnational cinema are ‘films in languages that are not widely spoken or understood around the globe and thus their own audiences tend to be restricted to their own countries or countries with which they share the same language’ (Henry Bacon 2016:1). Similarly Ezra & Bowden (2006) view transnational cinema as comprising of responses to globalization in cinematic terms, represented by Hollywood’s

domination of film production, distribution, markets and the counter-hegemonic responses of filmmakers from former colonial and third world countries in form of transnational film productions.

These scholars agree that transnational cinema is a counter-weight to Hollywood domination of the cinematic landscape and idiom. They are representatives of an underrepresented and underserved voices in cinematic landscape and the need to seek a cultural balance in cinematic expression not dictated by Hollywood.

Durovicova et al ( 2010) affirms that transnational cinema is ‘... made and received in a global arena in which directors, funding institutions and film crews are active beyond geographical, national and cultural limitations...the term ‘transnational’ combines the notion of ‘the nation’ but at the same time ‘trans’ as an implication for unevenness and mobility and links people or institutions across nations. (Durovicova et al 2010: x)

Durovicova emphasizes the role of the human agency in transnational cinema, rather than seeing transnational cinema as a self-contained phenomenon, Durovicova points at the functional roles of agencies like filmmakers, financiers, the network they create, the diffusion and sharing of film technical know and the flow of these agencies across borders.

In addition to what has been stated by Durovicova, Mark Lorenzen (2008) citing several other scholars adds that transnational cinema “entails interconnectedness between a multitude of countries, leading to their integration into one (or several) global economic, cultural, and to some extent also political, systems or networks”. Mark Lorenzen (2008) distills these factors down to aspects of film production and consumption globalization, which we will discuss later.

Vijay Devadas (2006) broadens the discussion, when he states that transnational cinema can be defined in three broad ways as a term that underwrite a series of themes and subject matters viz; (i.) consist of cinema made by exiled and displaced filmmakers that has benefited from the cultural

exchanges from other place. (ii. )As organized resistance to the forces of globalization and liberalization and lastly as-this is referred to as 'tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization' by Arjun Appadurai (1996:32) and finally as the (iii.) force that seeks to contest the periphery and the centre categorization of the cinema. Devadas in his definition agreed with Henry Bacon (2016) and Ezra and Bowden (2006), in that they all see Transnational cinema as that which 'confronts Hollywood hegemony and market domination', however, he widened the scope to include filmmakers who have been displaced but now operating in another cultural space. Based on this itemization of the filmmakers roles in transnational cinema, he seems to agree with Durovicova et al, since both capitalize the role of the filmmakers moving across cinema cultural landscape with resources and know-how.

Speaking to these diverse way of seeing Transnational cinema, Mette Hjort (2010) opines that transnational cinema is a container for holding the different understandings of scholars on what is seen as transnational cinema as against national cinema. The term transnational cinema as a framework or a theoretical approach is a store house of many sub-theories that aimed to examine the dynamics in which the cinema culture has been evolving.

Similarly, Zhang Yingjin (cited in Chris Berry 2010:114) contends that the term is hard to define, in his words:

...'transnational' remains unsettled primarily because of multiple interpretations of the national in transnationalism. what is emphasized in the term 'transnational'? if it is the national, then what does the 'national' encompass-national culture, language, economy, politics, ethnicity, religion. and/or regionalism? if the emphasis falls on the prefix 'trans' (i.e.) on cinema 's ability to cross and bring together, if not transcend, different nations, cultures, and languages), then this aspect of transnational film studies is already subsumed by comparative film studies. (Zhang 2007)

On the back of these divergent theories on transnational cinema, have been criticism of what constitute 'transnationalism' and what is not. The current usage is deemed uncontained and cannot be said to mean a particular thing or another. Higbee Will and Hwee Lim S. (2010) have requested for 'critical transnationalism'. As looseness of the term has however contribute to making theorizing such an interesting and illuminating contribution to the field of transnational cinema. The contestation will only bring about, more theorization of transnational cinema which will be more reflexive, self contained and relevant.

What Mette Hjort(2010), Devadas(2006), Mark Lorenzen (2008) and Durovicova et al (2010) pointed out is that the realities of the contemporary filmmaking business has challenged the film producer to continue to locate film in an environment that will engender sustainability. The challenges of building sustainable independent film business in the face of limited public subsidy, investment, rising wages and salaries, coupled with the global economic downturn has forced filmmakers from all over the world seek for sustainable means of producing their project cheaper and in a more sustainable manner.

This trend has been noticed before now, Renaud and Litman (1985) international co-production can be adopted as a measure to deal with stringent economic situation faced by television producer in the United State and indeed other nation can adopt the same measure to make production viable.

However for the purpose of this thesis, we will return to definition offered by Durovicova et. al. (2010). This thesis is an analytical framework to define transnational cinema as the activities of producers working beyond own national border. Taking from the lens of Mette Hjort and Durovicova et al, this thesis looks at the transnational Cinema primarily as the activities of the film producer and secondarily that of film crews and funding agencies and institution working beyond their national border, it is what Mette Hjort refers to as 'opportunistic and auteristic transnational cinema'-that which is taking advantage of the economic realities and possibilities for cinematic collaboration across borders. Following from the above, Transnational Cinema is international or across borders that it links people together, people are working together for a special purpose, in

this case to produce a finished product, a film, a television series, a documentary or even a commercial.

## **2.2 Transnational Cinema: The Push Factors**

Without looking into the factors that influenced transnational cinema, we might fail to appreciate the multidimensional nature of transnational cinema. So that begs the question, in what context did transnational cinema as a theoretical concept and production practice develop? What are the factors or influences driving transnational cinema? Why are Finnish producers looking towards South Africa; what underlying factors are driving the move to South Africa?

To situate this within Mette Hjort's argument, that transnational cinema is a placeholder for differing perspectives and argumentations about 'globalized and networked realities that are those of a contemporary situation', is to come to the understanding that transnational cinema is a phenomenon fuelled by development in politics, financial services, human migration, as well as technology. This view is not very different by the one expressed by Devadas (2006) where he maintains that 'transnational cinema is pushing against the forces of globalization and liberalization that set loose upon the globe by the changing economic and socio-political landscape.' albeit differing only in the additional factors of political liberalization and interconnectivity.

But just how does globalization, human migration, political liberalization and interconnectivity hold light to transnational cinema? Which of the factors is the critical juncture? Are they co-dependent or the rest are the domino effect of one? Historically, according to Mette Hjort(2005:191) European co-production agreements in 1950s and 1960s...make a persuasive case for seeing cinematic transnationalism-as a phenomenon with a long history' which begs the question again of the point in history when globalization, liberalization and interconnectivity become a factor in transnational cinema.

### **2.3 Globalization: At the birth of transnational cinema**

‘Cinematic Transnationalism is now linked in various ways to certain types of globalization’ -Mette Hjort (2005 :192).

Just how true is Mette Hjort’s assertion above? what connection does globalization have with transnational cinema? If any, then It is crucial to examine these factors. What are the opinions from literature in the light of this perspective. From the foregoing, globalization, human migration, political and economic liberalization across borders were the push factors for transnational cinema. To these, one can add the advance in technology and availability of cheaper digital filmmaking resource materials.

Akindele et al’s 2002 in their study (cited in Mboti and Tomaselli 2013:6) posit that globalization is the 'transcendental homogenization of political and socio-economic processes and theories' that is characterized by global financial market, global security system, and interconnectivity’. This position reinforces the importance of the shift in the character of global politics especially with the with the failure of communism; the collapse of the USSR and the political turmoil in Eastern Europe; epochal event like the fall of Berlin Wall, liberalization of the economy in India and the end of apartheid in the South Africa.

Arjun Appadurai (1996) maintain that the complexities of globalization can be explained through ‘five dimensions of global cultural flows that can be termed (a) ethnoscaples, (b) mediascaples, (c) technoscaples, ( d) financescaples, and (e) ideoscaples’. Arjun Appadurai (1996:33). Arjun explains that each one of these complexities is in consonance and are influencing factors of globalization.

On ethno-scapes, Arjun Appadurai explains that:

By ethnoscape, I mean the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree. (Appadurai 1996:33)

This captures migration of filmmakers; producers, directors, actors from other cultures into new creative spaces; and this could be anywhere from New York to London, these tribe of creatives moved from the periphery, and are creating memory in form of films, away from Hollywood in term the visual landscape, story and language Their work serving are serving counter-balance to the hegemony of Hollywood and cinematic homogenization.

Arjun Appadurai in his words, explains financescapes as :

the disposition of global capital is now a more mysterious, rapid, and difficult landscape to follow than ever before, as currency markets, national stock exchanges, and commodity speculations move megamonies through national turnstiles at blinding speed, with vast, absolute implications for small differences in percentage points and time units. (Appadurai 1996:33-35)

Essentially explaining the ease with which the mobility of funds from financier, aids the production of transnational films, even when the funding is coming from another country. This possibility seemed so common place now, that financier and producers operating from 12 zones apart do not have to worry about how funding will get to them is part of the levelling of the financial that came with globalization.

For Arjun, technoscape is:

...the global configuration, also ever fluid, of technology and the fact that technology, both high and low, both mechanical and informational, now moves at high speeds across various kinds of previously impervious boundaries. (Appadurai 1996:34)

Technoscape is essentially an argument for the ease in communication, that make collaboration across boundaries increasingly possible, fast and easy. It is also speaks to the rate at which film technology is becoming more and more accessible. Such that cost is certainly no longer barrier.

Arjun refer to ideoscape as the ‘concatenations of images, but they are often directly political, and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counter ideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it.’

While mediascapes is ‘the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film-production studios) , which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and to the images of the world created by these media.’ Arjun Appadurai (1996:35-36)

Arjun states that both ideoscape and mediascape are tightly knit as both are connected how images are produced, manipulated with different inflections depending on whose end it serves and the medium through which it is served to the audience.

All these factors combined to give fillip to globalization, which is also fueled in large measure by economic liberalism -driven primarily by the market force- and the emergence of third wave of democratization, which increasingly make transnational cinema inevitable and increasingly feasible. While all these factor mentioned are in themselves lacking in consistency in how they behave, they are nonetheless incidental to, parameters for and constraints movements within and towards each others. So a cursory look into the role of globalization on transnationalism must take more than a glance at all these parameters to have a wholistics understanding of the forces at work.



## 2.4 Transnational Cinema in a Global North

The title of this sub-topic is loaned from Andrew Nestigen et. al. (eds 2016) book 'Transnational Cinema in a Global North: Nordic Cinema in Transition'. Here, I will briefly examine the responses of the Nordic countries to globalization and liberalization of the cinematic landscape.

'European nationals, with particular reference to the Nordic countries are not immune from the event going on in the world' the Nordic Cinema is just as affected as the rest of the world away from mainstream, Hollywood' In 2002, Mark Juergensmeyer (cited in Mette Hjort 2005:192-193) talking about the features of globalization, suggests that 'regional alliances' is one of the many forms of the phenomenon that came out of the forces of globalization which was perceived as inadvertently seeking to entrench hollywoodization of the global cinematic landscape and viewership.' So to combat what is seen as undue influence, the Nordic countries-which also include Finland seek to form closer regional alliances to have a united front to fight back against complete Hollywoodization of the cinematic landscape and audience in the Nordic countries.

In reaction to this force, Eurimage was established in 1988 (Ib Bondebjerg 2005) and the Nordic Film and TV Fund in 1990. Nordic Film and TV Fund was established to provide support for the development, production, distribution and promotion of high-level television and film productions in the Nordic countries (Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and their dependencies). These support are in form of funding for TV-fiction/series, documentaries, feature films with primary or potential audience located in the Nordic countries and potentially globally.

The Fund also provide initiatives to assist productions to travel further through the Nordic countries through distribution and dubbing. The objectives of Nordic Film and TV Fund links transnational filmmaking in the Nordic to a set of globalizing counter-balancing acts and strategies especially on the back of successful Danish films like *Pelle Erobreren* (1987) and *Babettes gaestebud* (1987) by Bille August and Gabriel Axel respectively. These films demonstrated that Nordic films could and indeed do have their own audience, not only in the Nordic countries but also on the global stage.

Mette Hjort (2005) corroborates these points when she suggests that the establishment of the Nordic Film and TV Fund was a direct reaction to the domination of the media culture by Hollywood, which is constantly seeking new markets through mega budget and also co-opting talents from these peripheries. The Nordic Film and TV Fund is seen as a platform to allow Nordic Filmmakers secure financial support to raise the production values of the their project to put the Nordic films in the global arena.

Mette Hjort affirms that the establishment Nordic Film and TV Fund ‘provides the institutional base for the crucial transformations that need to be identified with the rise and acceleration of the Transnational cinema in the Nordics’ (Mette Hjort 2005:192). Even though there had been waves of transnational collaboration in Europe beginning from 1950s and 1960s. The original idea behind the Nordic Film and TV Fund and its current modus operandi indeed provides clear understanding of transnationalism and globalization of the Nordic film and television industry.

‘The transnational flow of money has generated networks of producers with shared understandings and experiences, which in turn facilitates and intensifies cooperation in other areas, as agents positioned within multiple networks begin to share their contacts. At the same time, the growing tendency for directors and actors to circulate among the Nordic countries literally transforms the communicative space in which they operate from a series of interconnected national spaces to an increasingly integrated transnational arena.’ (Mette Horjt 2005:211).

With Nordic Film and TV Fund came increasing collaboration, across national borders which in turn led to useful networks that could be used to, not only negotiate new collaboration, but also to open the space for more understanding of each other, thereby creating the require openness needed for cultural heterogeneity in film production in the Nordic. Mette Hjort captures same sentiment when she opines that ‘What we are witnessing, more specifically, is the emergence of a genuinely transnational communicative space with a new-found tolerance for cultural hybridity’ (Mette Hjort 2005:193)

## **2.5 Globalization/Transnationalization of Film Production**

So far we have discussed the effect of globalization on transnational cinema and how it helps to locate transnationalism within what Arjun Appadurai (1996) called the 5-scapes. In this chapter, I will attempt to look into how globalization specifically turns film production into a transnational enterprise.

There is a paucity of conceptual frameworks on globalization of filmmaking and film production. However, Terhi Rantanen (2004) theorize about mediated globalization which touched on the production and consumption of media, similar to the views held by Arjun Appadurai (1996) on ideoscape and mediascape. Durovicova and Newman's (2010) global media theory expounds on the importance of filmmakers working in new environment and the attendant exchange of technical know-how, therefore taking filmmaking knowledge and expertise to otherwise cinematically marginal nations. This explains the increase in movement of film production to nation like Namibia and South Africa and explosion in the number of film production coming out of Nollywood in Nigeria.

Arjun Appadurai's (1996) concept of technoscape as '...the global configuration...of technology... both high and low...mechanical and informational, now moves at high speeds across various kinds of previously impervious boundaries. (Appadurai 1996:34) with attendant results of filmmaking processes and technology, seamless, easily available and accessible, at a never-experienced-before rate and cost, encourages the boom in filmmaking reflected in Nigeria's Nollywood with the discovery of cheap video technology as opposed to film.

Another technological effects of globalization on filmmaking is the harmonization/homogenization of formats, availability of cheap technology for filmmaking and closer cultural exchange and cooperation between nation-state through signing of film treaties.

The filmmaking value chain based on these frameworks have been impacted in four areas namely ‘‘1) involvement in filmmaking; 2) film consumption; 3) film production; and 4) organization of filmmaking’’ (Lorenzen, 2008).

Conversely Mboti and Tomaselli (2013) identify these factors as 1) network; 2) knowledge exchange; 3) characteristics of viewers; 4) co-productions and 5) international film festivals (Mboti and Tomaselli 2013:7). While citing the framework elucidated by Frau-Meigs, (2004), Mboti and Tomaselli conclude that the debate between European ‘cultural exceptionalism’ vs the American ‘free traders’ points to two poignant ‘effects on filmmaking; homogenization of formats,’ and ‘the struggle for content pluralism and cultural independency.’ Arjun Appadurai (1996) also allude to the latter perspective.

As pointed out earlier in the examples of South Africa, Namibia and Nigeria, the emergence of new countries as significant film production hubs and

‘film markets reflects the internationalisation of the business. Therefore, the key relationships for a film business might mostly be with trade partners operating internationally, providing access to or funding from, global markets, and often based in other countries’ (Olsberg•SPI 2012:12).

This framework indicates the importance of network in continuous transnationalism that filmmaking business is experiencing, the framework continues that ‘film production companies with the strongest international links tend to thrive’ (Olsberg•SPI 2012:12). The report concludes that ‘it appears that filmmakers who cultivate these types of business relationships in major film markets tend to build stronger links, over time, with a few of them and this can lead to more permanent financial, corporate alliances.’

This report lends credence to the increasing importance of transnational film business as the new operation model for achieving long term success in the industry especially for those coming from small countries or those from non-filmmaking nations, where the budget is small and the market is equally small due to language or demography. To realize the dream of a film that travel and really impact the international film market, a producer should look into transnational film production.

## **2.6 Finnish Film: A Transnational Enterprise**

The title of this chapter is taken from Henry Bacon's (ed. 2016) eponymous collection of essays on transnational cinema in Finland. Since we are theorizing about transnationalism in Film. How has transnationalism bring itself to bear on the nature of Finnish film, while there is a scarcity of literature on Finnish/South African transnational cinema, there is a body of work examining Finnish transnational film in the light of Nordic and European collaborations.

The development of the Finnish National Cinema can be traced back to the years following Finland's independence from Russia. Finland following the October revolution gained its independence but was plunged into a civil war which served to define the politics and to a large extent the art in the young nation.

Even though when actor Adolf Lindfors declared 'The future of our cinema is the representation of our nature and national character' in 1920s (cited in Seppälä Jaakko, 2017), it was a cry to cement the nationalistic feelings in Finnish Cinema, however Finnish cinema right from inception has always been international than national, since most of the earliest films were model after Swedish films of the Golden Age (Seppälä Jaakko, 2017). Outi Hupaniittu (2016) shares the same view.. Reflecting on the cinematic landscape of the era Outi Hupaniittu (2016) writes:

'During the 1920s, there were both Finnish and Swedish speaking film companies but the most prominent of them, Suomi Filmi, was a prominent supporter of Finnish

Language. Other producers were not able to challenge this market leader, which thus had a decisive role in establishing the notions about Finnish cinema' Outi Hupaniittu (2016:23).

However, in those periods, in spite of the nationalistic outlook of filmmaking in Finland, there was an early indication of tilt towards transnational cinema as the most prominent production company of the era 'Suomi-Filmi still attempted to model films after the Swedish films of the golden age that lasted from 1916 to 1924.'(Seppälä Jaako, 2017.).

Other possible reasons for the tilt towards Sweden could be attributed to the familiar story landscape and the Nordic fauna and flora, the folk-culture and cultural ties with Sweden and of course the fact that some of the actors who starred in the films were actually Finnish or Finnish born.

The 1930s witnessed the end of Depression in Finland and film business was booming as more people have the wherewithal to go to the Cinema. According to Anneli Lehtisalo (2016:83) the 'number of cinemas increased as well as the number of film premieres.'

The collapse of the Finnish studio system rather than weakening Finnish film production, strengthened Finnish transnational cinema as the emergent Finnish New Wave (Kääpä, P. 2016: 146-148) 'the movement was integrated with the International New Waves,'. This integration gave Finnish filmmakers opportunity for more international collaboration.

In another view, Henry Bacon (2016) opines that 'economic realities...prescribed certain limiting conditions for production, distribution and exhibition of films', coupled with international networking in terms of funding, production and distribution' ( Henry Bacon 2016:7-10) could also be said to be the factors that pushed Finnish filmmakers to explore opportunities presented by transnational cinema. Finding creative, cost effective and sustainable means to deliver value in the film production chain for the Finnish Film producer means exploring their film networks; this is more pertinent to the growing collaboration between Finnish filmmakers and their South African collaborators.

In the 1930s, the evolution of sound encouraged Finnish filmmakers to construct sound and recording equipment to resolve some technical problems occasioned by the new technology cinema. According to Kimmo Laine (2016), the positive side to this was increase in Finnish filmmakers' transnational filmmaking activities. For example Yrjö Nyberg and his Lahyn-Filmi company were responsible for sound recording *Love and Home Reserve (Kärlek och landstorm, 1931)* and a handful of other Swedish films and the first sound feature made in Estonia, *Children of the Sun (Noored Kotkad, 1927)*, was co-produced and sound recorded by Suomi-Filmi” (Kimmo Laine 2016:90).

The Finnish transnational cinema was shaped in part through the collapse of the Finnish Studio System and was strengthened in the shadow of the Finnish New Wave (Pietari Kääpä, 2016: 146-148) following on the development trajectory for other national cinema development in Europe and also from ‘...from economic realities that have prescribed certain limiting conditions for production, distribution and exhibition of films...this went together with wide international networking in terms of funding , production and distribution’ ( Henry Bacon 2016:7-10).

Finding creative, cost effective and sustainable means to deliver value in the film production chain for the Finnish Film producer means exploring their film networks. .This in effect has given birth to the rise of transnational film such that films are not necessarily the product of one nation but a product of collaboration across boundaries.

Finland joined the Media Program of the European Union in 1993. 'the program aims to create a stronger basis for European film and Television industry, strengthening its competitiveness against the American film industry, according to Soramäki and Okkonen (1996) (cited in Mervi Pantti 2005:183) ‘ the European policy stresses that the cultural agenda because of open market can be seen as a distinct threat to the audiovisual production of the European Union thus the Union favoured both regulation and embrace the liberalization of the economy’, clearly this approach speak to the ‘beginning in 1990s the Finnish Cinema policy debate turned not only on the

art/entertainment question but also on the line between international and national elements of cinema' (Mervi Pantti 2005:183).

Transnational Cinema clearly delineates the effects of socio-economic, political and cultural factors and then beam search light on the increasing role of networks, knowledge and skill transfer, co-production, production services and the 'other' market on global film production.

In view of the economic factors, producers are forced to make the choice of outsourcing production to places where cost of production derives the most value. Cape Town is one of such location where "...popular location for international filmmakers...are attracted by the weak currency, the diverse locations, the good services infrastructure including well-trained crews, top hotels (demanded by crews and actors) and the long sunny days of the summer months."(Tomaselli and Mboti 2013: 5).



### **3. Interaction with filmmakers**

‘Transnational cinema is made and received in a global arena in which directors, funding institutions and film crews are active beyond geographical, national and cultural limitations.’  
(Durivicova & Newman 2010:x)

In March-April 2019, I conducted 4 interviews with 3 filmmakers worked and are still working on Finnish productions in South Africa. To examine their thoughts about Finnish transnational film production in South Africa so as to gain insight into the issue under consideration. This chapter is an exploration of those interviews.

In the preceding discussion about theory, I presented the views of various scholars on the topic of transnationalism as well as the proposal for the deconstruction of the term. However, for the purpose of this research, the scope of the interview is filmmakers’ interactions beyond national border and the factors at play .i.e. collaborative network, production models, work ethics, culture, and effects of these factors on production value.

As much as I was compelled to examine the views of Finnish filmmakers who have been active in South Africa, there was a paucity of Finnish feature filmmakers in South Africa. To make up for this, I interviewed filmmakers who have worked in South Africa in television and commercial film production and are still working there. My interviewees, except for one, had been involved mostly in commercial films. I interviewed them because the gap between these two production area is not too wide.

These filmmakers have to deal with the same issues as those who work in feature or short film production; they have to network to get the right kind of production service company; they have to ensure that whatever partnership they secure deliver the most value possible; they have to deal with new relationship dynamics, with underlying issues of trust, control, power and respects for each others’ ideas and opinions. Essentially, they have to deal with the hassles of production just as if

they were in a feature film production. I feel these set of filmmakers do have the requisite experiences to discuss my thesis questions with me.

One decision I had a hard time making my mind up about, was deciding if interviewing a South African film producer on his perception of transnational Finnish film producers in South Africa would enrich the discourse. I contended with this because it was never originally part of the planned interviews. I decided that I should add the South African, even if I ended up not using the interview, it would still enrich my understanding.

It was good that I had worked with a couple of South African producers in the course of my thesis film: so naturally, they were people I considered as prospective subjects; one had never worked with Finnish Producers prior to our meeting, while the other has a running relationship with a Finnish producer, so I chose the latter for the interview.

For the main interviews, I interviewed Leandro Righini, a South African-Finn, Producer/Director who has been shuttling South Africa and Finland for over 10 years, producing mostly commercial films and 360° video projects. I interviewed the Finnish director, Sam Shingler, who has been working in South Africa lately, on commercial films production.

For the South African interview, I interviewed Patrick Walton. He is the producer at Shoot Away Production, Cape Town, in his capacity as a producer, he has produced many commercial films , short films, television series, a running reality show and he is also the organizer of Knysna Film Festival in South Africa.

The intention was to get his point of view on what makes good collaborations, what form does it take? As well as a look into the production models that the Finnish producers are used to vis-a-vis the South African production model.

### **3.1 Methodology**

I took the qualitative approach to this research. I adopted a structured interview technique, but I jettisoned it in favour of a semi-structured technique. I discovered during my first interview with Leandro Righini that speaking about the themes and idea took the discussion to new direction that my structured interview questions would not have covered. I discovered that it was richer to build on insight supplied by the interviewee and then ask more open-ended question on collaborative partnership, production model, communication issues and cultural barrier as relates to Finnish Producers in South Africa.

Considering the theoretical flexibility of this approach, it was a well reasoned choice, the thematic analysis technique provided for freedom to explore other perspectives that would have never been uncovered in controlled questions. My approach to this technique is deductive, such that the themes are directed using the existing concepts and idea captured in the theoretical discussion earlier. ("About thematic analysis" n.d.)

Initially I came up with seven questions for the interviewees. The questions were based on the research proposition in the introduction. However, after Speaking to Leandro Righini and Sam Shingler, I edited the questions into four since the interviewee because I observed that naturally, some of the questions are usually covered by the interviewees without being asked under another question. The four questions covered the same themes and ideas, however I never used the second set of questions. The questions are attached to Appendix 1

Two of the interviews were conducted on one on one basis with the interviewees Leandro Righini (personal communication 13.03.2019) and Sam Shingler (personal communication 23.04.2019), one was conducted via skype with Patrick Walton (Skype, 30.4.2019).

The interview with Leandro Righini was mostly unstructured, was very spontaneous and it was most relaxed of the interviews. I also had another opportunity to discuss with him again on skype (Skype 03.05.2019) to get clarification on some areas

I recorded my interview with Patrick Walton, Sam Shingler, Leandro Righini (second interview) the audio quality of my first interview with Leandro Righini was very bad but nonetheless I was able to dig out the main point and had them written down for use subsequently.

I transcribed my interviews with Sam Shingler, Leandro Righini and Patrick Walton to read through them for thematic analysis, however I did only to be able to extract the central thesis of our discussion for me to use in the writing,

### **3.2 Key findings from the Interviews**

The interviews were very illuminating and they went into the tenuous connection between transnationalism, economic realities, production models, communication, cultural barriers and work ethics. Each interviewee had a unique view of the issues but almost all seemed to have similar opinion on most of the issues.

I had set out to encounter widely diverse thought about Finnish transnational film production in South Africa, but most the ideas and themes discussed by the filmmakers were all very similar. They expressed very similar outlook on most of the issues.

Below are some of the subject matters that came up from the interviews.

#### **3.2.1 Network is everything**

To have a successful production one needs to have the right collaboratives who are willing to work with one on the project, collaborating partners must have the right mentality and the right skill sets for the project. It is tempting to look for the big production company with pedigrees, with lots of title under their belt when planning a production in South Africa, since these companies have the name and the work experiences, and have handled the biggest projects in the country, but this might not necessarily be the right approach. So, if one does not have the experiences, how does one deal with the issue of getting right network in South Africa?

According to Leandro Righini sustaining any kind of foreign production needs trustworthy collaborators. Essentially, a network of producers with whom the producer has built good relationship, a trusting relationship essentially, not that they will run off with the production money, but trusting that they can get the work done. Sometimes, this network might not necessarily be the one the producer has built, but that which others decided to share with the producer. And the right kind of network is built of mutual trust, and the assurance that the producer(s) is there to serve the purpose of the project and not to serve own interest.

This is quite daunting to achieve, since one cannot know who is trustworthy just by looking at their professional CV exclusively. So one must take takes evaluation of the producers or partners at personal as well as professional level. Professional is crucial to see what they can do, but the personal goes a long way too. Personal because the producer must strive to have an ethical, professional, respectful and diligent person on the project.

Patrick Walton stresses the importance of relationship building with potential partners. He maintains that building relationship from abroad is quite hard. One has to get close and personal to truly understand people. 'I think it is just getting to know each other. I mean, you have got teams coming from abroad. So the first two weeks is critical. The most important thing is get to know each other and from there, things seemed to fall in place quite easily.' He stresses the need for the team to be on the ground before the actual production and not get in close to production without being familiar with their team members.

Leandro Righini also toes this line, he adds that a foreign producer needs to take the extra measure of getting very familiar personally and professionally with potential partners. He adds that one needs to know the partner's professional antecedent intimately; what kind of project have they done? which one are they doing? What is the quality of their work vs the budget as well as their ethical disposition to crew and everyone working for them? How do they treat the people who work for them?

For Sam Shingler, it is primarily about locating ethical, professional producers in South Africa. He maintains that is important to the successes of the project, as well as the reputation of the foreign partner. Crew are wary of working on projects with producers who are unethical in the way they treat their crew member and which can be detrimental to the project. If unfairly treated, crew tend to get lackadaisical on the job and this might rob the project of initiatives and critical input that could make the difference. Film is a collaborative art and every hand is needed on deck.

Supporting the need to get the right network even further, Leandro Righini adds that, it is utmost to keep the need of the project in mind before one embarks on the search for a producer/production service company, if a project is visually demanding then it is a better decision to look for a producer who is reputed for this. If a production needed 20 different locations and extensive logistical planning, it is proper to put that in consideration when approaching a producer. You know you need to have someone who is very adept at deploying the best logistical strategy to get the job done. Essentially, the producer must have the key competence in the area that is super important to the project.

Leandro Righini also pointed out that the primary consideration to making the choice of who to work with should be primarily determined by need of the production. For him, this might entail going through different producers and production service companies, checking their past project to see who is a perfect fit for the project. Your last partner might not necessarily be a fit for your current project based on the needs. So, you go for someone who can.

### **3.2.2 Mega-production service company vs the small production outfits**

When taking the decision on the type of company to work with in South Africa, both Leandro Righini and Sam Shingler agree that having a big production service company on the job does not necessarily translate to better production value or excellent work ethics. They both agree that to secure the best money for value production service partners, one need to look for companies that are proactive and these are not necessarily the biggest production service companies. It is easy to mistake size for inventiveness and proactivity.

Leandro Righini quips that in 'Finland we have a cottage industry, it is an industry where I think most people are still grateful for the fact that the industry exist at all and people get to work in it, I think there is a level of gratitude there which transfers into work ethic which means people are willing to do anything they can to get the production done.' He added that the budget for film in Finland are limited and quite small compared to the scale of work that a typical South African production services company is used to executing for the Hollywood big budget production.

An inexperienced foreign producer might have the gutsy feeling of giving the project to the most experienced and the most renowned producers, but this might not be the best decision. For the reason stated above. Finland has a small budget cap compared to the mega-budget Hollywood production that are being shot in South Africa, and these big companies would usually approach the project with the mindset that this is just another small production, let us get it done and move and this is problematic.

Going for the big name on all the big production is the default step one would readily take. It was the way I went about getting the companies to work with. I checked the list of production services companies that have worked on projects at Cape Town Film Studio, the productions they were involved in and started sending emails. Some ignored me on the second email after after learning

we have such a small budget. It was not their type of work. A company decided to work with us, but would use semi-profession to crew our production due to our small budget.

Speaking about the misstep, Sam Shingler adds that working in South Africa, he realized that working with producers from small but experienced production partners can be quite beneficial; they tend to be motivated and are ready to push the limit; they are not used to getting foreign production project or the mega-budget projects, and so they are grateful to work with you and they will do what they need to for the best value in front of the camera

However, the big production service company would consider this just another small production and might not put the kind of energy and push the project needed to be successful.

Leandro Righini however sounded a warning, he said that, he has worked with small production partners but that is not a pass to say, all small production company are good and should be considered. He maintained that there are lots of small production partners that are not good and so one would also need to do critical evaluation before engaging them. Selecting small production partners with some relevant experience is a must but above all, having an extensive network of production partners is the main thing as one can select based on the peculiarity of the project in hand

### **3.2.3 Hollywood Studio Model vs European Independent Model**

Finland and South Africa are diametrical on the film production spectrum. The difference is part of the production model at work in each country, and this plays an important role in many ways. It affects the way people work and how production are crewed. According to Leandro Righini, Finnish production crew are used to multitasking because the budget is limited, production are smaller and crew is minimal, so they crew is willing to take on different kind of task, even when not asked to ensure the job is done. From my interaction with a very senior producer in Finland, this is mostly true for commercial films, it is not necessarily the case in feature film production in Finland.



However, in South Africa for the most part, especially when talking about feature films and television, reverse is the case. Patrick Walton, the South African producer, explains this in these words

‘I think the main difference is that the Finns tend to do more collaboration when crewing or when working, there is less of hierarchy because they seemed to doing combined functions, because of their more compact style of shooting. The reverse is the case here and that is something that Finnish Producer need to get used to in South Africa.’

Leandro Righini states that South African use the American Hollywood studio system production model which is based on a unionized system, where crews work in professional silo; people work in their own little box, and as such, they are not disposed to multitasking or working in a way that take them to a new role additionally to their regular task.

However, from personal interaction with feature film producers in Finland, this mindset is also prevalent in upper budget production in Finland; it appears that the bigger the production budget for feature film, the lower the incentive to multi-task.

Sam Shingler shares a similar view with Leandro Righini, he mentions that the mentality of the crew in South Africa is different, production crew are unionized but there is no union in the American sense of it, and production are not very bureaucratic as it is in United States. Permits are easy to get. Turn over is easy. However, people are usually tied to a particular role. The production landscape is protective in a way that it is hard to get in. Of course, one can be a runner but it is hard to push one’s way to become a gaffer, a DP or a producer for instance. The production environment is top to bottom management approach and this is a clear distinction from the Finnish production landscape.

This model ensures that people only work in their own narrow role and do not cross over to the next person's role. There is a veneer of protectionism. What this production model means to South African production according to Leandro Righini is that, it is not uncommon to have 200 crew on a feature film production in South Africa. This allows for clear configuration of each department, a clear framework on how the team functions; How is the set run? What does the camera department do? What does the grip do? What is the unit department responsibility versus the location department vs production department? Where does the task of one department ends and where does that of the other begins? In South Africa, these are well spelt out and each person understand own responsibility.

Leandro Righini adds that Finland is a bit less structured because the crew size is quite small, so responsibilities can and always overlap because the budget is usually limited and production goals are quite ambitious and producers to work hard to get the best value out of production without being exploitative. It makes decision taking more nifty and people are always taking initiative, in South Africa production is vertically integrated and organized.

Sam Shingler also observes something which others did not mention; the production model is producer driven in South Africa, as the producer are active creatively, rather than being tied down to their excel sheet as it is the case in Finland, South African producers tend to get involved creatively in the production.

Leandro Righini insists that technical flexibility and the ability to take on different roles according to the needs of the production is a must for a South African production partner(s) so one must strive to secure a producer that have that have that mindset as that will go a long way in making a production successful.

I understand these argument from my interaction with producers from South Africa, especially during budget negotiation. It was difficult for some to see my point of view about why we do not

need extra drivers for the property master, we should hire people who can also drive in the department.

### **3.2.4 Ethical Leadership in Collaborative Production**

‘As a producer you really need to be a servant leader and that in my opinion, is what I believe in. It is the best of leadership for production service’ - Leandro Righini

Sam Shingler states that the importance of ethical leadership in production cannot be over-emphasized. According to him ethical leadership in a production environment creates trust and encourage utmost productivity.

Leandro Righini says that having producers who are in the habit of messing with crew turnaround time does not serve the production ‘what you need in your production is somebody who serves the production, the crew who are making the production. So he must satisfy the need of the production as well as that of the crew. And that is my opinion of how to get the best out of the crew.’

Corroborating this position, Sam Shingler says that ‘My best experience is with a very small family production company, in this company everyone gets treated well, people come on set and you get the feelings that this crew really like the producer and you get the feeling when you communicate with them, when they say that, yes we could do that but it would not be fair on the crew-we need to pay the crew and they take the time to explain to you . You have got the feeling that they take social responsibility seriously. It makes one feel very good when one knows that one is dealing with very good people. One has to ensure that one works with ethical producer who takes the welfare of both the production and that of the crew really seriously’

## **4. Transnationalism in *Homebound***

This chapter is a bird eye view of my experience during the production of the short film *Homebound (Kotimatka)* in Prince Albert, South Africa. I shall limit the scope to securing collaboratives, filmmaking model, deal making, financial implication and general discussion on multiculturalism in South Africa. I shall examine the tools I employed such as network, research and personal experience as well as the obstacles confronted in the process. In chapter 5, I will discuss my achievements from the project as well as possible consideration about future project.

Based on Mette Hjort's(2010) prescription for Mehdi Charef's *Daughter of Keltoum (La Fille de Keltoum, 2001)* that the film appears to 'be strongly transnational inasmuch as transnationality is operative on several levels at once' with reference to its co-production arrangement involving France, Belgium and Tunisia, a global distribution initiative, an exilic film directors and multicultural world of the film. It is safe to examine *Homebound* in the same light; even though the film is a not co-production at the financement level, but the production was outsourced to another country, it was shot on locations in South Africa, While Post-production was done in Finland, The director is Finnish, the producers are Nigerian, Iranian and South African. The film is made in English, Somali and Swahili and was co-financed by Finnish Broadcasting Company, Aalto University and Finnish Film Foundation from Finland. It is apparent that we have the ingredient for a truly transnational film, however we never set out to make what Mette Hjort termed 'marked transnationality film'.

The short film has a multicultural storyline, it has a particular look and feel that necessitated the choice of a production country other than Finland; it called for very specific location choice but Finland. It also required cast with specific facial features, specific weather condition and specific landscape.

These characteristics brought up many choices of the production country. However from my experience working television in Nigeria; I knew that South Africa would be an ideal production country for the film, however I have never been to South Africa prior to the production, I had no connection whatsoever with the production landscape there other than second hand experiences of

professional colleagues who have worked there. However being privy to some of their project proved to be useful in the beginning but not so much in the thick of securing project partners.

#### **4.1 The Story of *Homebound***

I was invited to team up in a new filmmaking collaboration by Ilona Ahti and Antti Ahokoivu: both of them have lived in different parts of Africa at one point or another, and as an international student from Nigeria, it was an opportunity to collaborate on an international project. Ilona Ahti had called the group with the intent that we could use the project to to secure a new financment arrangement being put in place by of YLE, Aalto University and Finnish Film Foundation.

Other than this, the instant we met, I knew I was going to be part of the project. One of the main objective why I chose Aalto University was the possibility to work on an International Project within the confine of the School. So when we met, it was one of the point I mentioned.

Their background proved to be quite instrumental to our train of thoughts and we decided that the film must have an international dimension-we played with so different ideas as we did not come to the project group with prepared project.

During one of our brainstorming session our discussion veered to the raging refugees crisis and how the Finnish Government as we as a couple of other governments in Europe back in 2016 were sending refugees back to crisis prone nations where they would be at risk. That was an eureka moment for the subject we were seeking, that moment Ilona Ahti narrated a story she heard from a driver in Tanzania.

It was the story about refugees who were loaded onto buses and sent across the border to Burundi-their home country, only to be slaughtered by warlords, who labelled them as traitors and saboteurs. According to Ilona Ahti, the driver who narrated the story said he still lived with the trauma of

witnessing that atrocities. The driver felt he could have changed the course of event, but his inaction contributed to the massacre of those refugees.

I totally related with this story, I heard a similar story about Nigerian refugees displaced by Boko Haram insurgents: They sought refuge in neighbouring Cameroon. After a couple of months, due to limited resources and overcrowding in the refugee camps, the Nigerian government asked the Cameroonian government to send them back to refugee camps in Nigeria: They moved back to camps in Nigeria, however Boko Haram suicide bombers attacked the camps and many of the refugees were murdered.

At that moment, I knew we had a story. That story formed the fulcrum of our project 'Homebound' (*Kotimatka*).

The central characters of *Homebound* are two teenage brothers, Xidig and Saliim, living in a refugee camp with their widowed father. They are scheduled to be taken away from the refugee camp back to their home country. Their bus is waiting but one of the boys, Xidig, misplaces his stone tortoise, one of the four stones that each represent a family member. Saliim offers to go look for it, while searching for the stone, the refugee bus leaves him behind.

It is the pain of separation of these two little boys and the certainty of death at the border is the driving force of the story. And we see how Xidig pines for his brother with child-like innocence. Oblivious of likely death in the hands of terrorists at the border on the way home.

In order to build a complete team and move the project forward, we invited Marika Harjusaari (Director), Johanna Tarvainen (Co-producer)- who pulled out for other commitment- Jussi Jääskeläinen (Line Producer), and later Paria Eskandari (Co-producer) who had been a refugee in her childhood. We expanded the team until we had the team needed to pitch the project and then go on to secure funding to produce the project.

## 4.2 Researching the location

When I suggested South Africa as the location for this film, I suggested that based on two things: my experience from working in television production in Nigeria where certain elements of the productions were sent to South Africa. Add to this, my experience working with a South African-Finn in Finland and familiarity with a number of African countries.

So when we pitched the idea to the financiers; we were certain about the location and the story idea. After the first pitch, we got some encouraging words from people from within the industry, it was clear we were on to something. We were encouraged, so we knew that we must be better prepared for the next round of pitching.

I had reasoned that unless it was a well thought out plan, it would be difficult to win over the financiers and secure the funding because i) it is an international story; ii) it's larger than typical student film from ELO; iii) I have never produced any project of international dimension until then.

I embarked on desk research on South African film production service sector. For this, I relied heavily on South African Department of Trade and Industry's (2017) report which outlined some of the achievement of the South African film industry with particular reference to South African production services companies and the films recently produced by them such as the comic book adaptation *Dredd* (Kalahari Pictures); the paranormal thriller *Chronicle* (Film Afrika), *Labyrinth* (Film Afrika), *Safe House* (Moonlighting), *The Borrowers* (Moonlighting), *Mad Max: Fury Road* (Moonlighting Films) and *Eye in the Sky* (Raindog Film/e-One Productions/Moonlighting Films)...' (Nfvf.co.za, 2017) The shoot were reported done at the Cape Town Film Studios. With a profile like that, it was clear we are on track. I noted also that we could possibly shoot the refugee camp scene on the studio lot. It was also clear that there was no shortage of expertise in the South African film industry going by the scale of some of those production and then I started researching some of

the film production service companies mentioned in the report with special focus on a company called Kalahari Pictures who had been involved in the production of 'Dredd'.

After researching online resources, I spoke with Aleksi Bardy, about the project and he directed me to speak Leandro Righini of Make Films again.

Leandro Righini is a South African-Finn, he runs Cape Finn Productions based in Cape Town and Make Films based in Espoo. I intimidated him about the project and asked for his advice on the feasibility of producing the film in South Africa. He immediately suggested that we should move the film to Cape Town and possibly see if we could use the Cape Town Film Studios lot for the refugee camp or alternatively, the Karoo for its dry, dusty and reddish landscape. It was exactly what the film's world demanded.

Simultaneously, we were pitched to Finnish film production companies who will potentially be the executive producer. We got the nod from Making Movies, a Finnish film production company to be the supervising producer. Then it was time for the long wait for the funding to be green-light by YLE, SES and Aalto University, but in the meantime, I kept the search for a production service company in South Africa for the film on.

### **4.3 Securing collaborative**

More than having loads of budget, having the right kind of contacts can make production very easy, or not, if one does not have the right network. Networking is key to securing production collaborative that would put value into the project, a connected producer would secure good deals from contact that would not have been available for an outsider.

One of the first thing I did when I started sending out emails to production services companies, was to get my hands on the rate card from a production services company in South Africa, I did the



same for casting agents in South Africa. I had cinematographer friend I had worked with on a project back in Lagos, Nigeria and I also received help from contacts at AFDA Film School, Cape Town.

Beginning in March 2017, I started sending emails to production services companies in South Africa, specifically to those that had been involved in productions at Cape Town Film Studios, and I got a number of responses, we exchanged skype calls to discuss the detail of the project. However, each time I gave them the budget estimate and production expectation, there would always be a long pause. We wanted the impossible with the meagre budget, it was the general sentiment. I sensed that I might have been getting this response since everyone seemed used to working on Hollywood Studio budget size project, I came with a student budget for a Hollywood scale production value.

So, I asked Jean-Pierre De Wall to help speak to Michael Murphy, the owner of Kalahari Pictures whose company had been the South African production service company for *Dredd*, if we could get a pass with student rate. He introduced me to Michael Murphy and he was genuinely interested in the project and also mentioned some of the development project his company had done on other student films.

With Kalahari, I had series of discussion about the project with Michael Murphy via skype. They read the first draft of the script. After which Michael Murphy reached out to me to say, they were really interested in working with us. To show, commitment, we created a new schedule which I shared with my team, everything looked good, until we got to budgeting.

We had earmarked €120,000 for the production in South Africa, however our production plan vis-a-vis the plan we received from Kalahari, especially with regard to crewing and budget overshoot the budget and more important, we cannot get top of the shelf crew. This was made clear to me. I knew it was time to look further afield.

Our discussion with Kalahari was already in limbo-it was the same issue of logistic and travel and now crewing. I thought about taking the project to Namibia, I had reasoned that shoot just outside of Windhoek does not require us travelling 400 kilometres, since there is desert everywhere over there, I simply overlooked that lack of technical know-how in Namibia.

I sent emails to companies in the Johannesburg area; Johannesburg was more popular for television commercial but the need to look further afield was a necessity, since my team mate also thought it was worth a shot, so I did. I contacted a couple of agencies whose website also indicated that they have been involved in film production at some level. Of course, I knew from research that the area around Gauteng will not be suitable for the look and feel we aspired to.

Nonetheless, I got into discussion with a film/advertising agency called Rolling Thunder Production, Johannesburg. Producer/director, Hermann Venter was very opened to the project, however I knew that the possibility of working with them is very low from technical and location point of view; they were more attuned to working with commercial films and so when Venter saw the proposed budget for the film, he explained to me that, what we proposed as budget can only pay for 2 days of shoot. When I pressed further if we could work down the budget, I got this email from Saskia Rosenberg Haak, the secretary at Rolling Thunder Production:

I'd be happy to chat to you over Skype if you'd like just to guide you but that is, and i[sic] know this is a film and they are cheaper than commercials but that is what we would spend on a 2 day commercial to be honest. Accommodation per day per person at a very average guest house would be 100EURO [sic] per person per day so that alone is 4000EURO [sic] per person. Accommodation alone will be 32000EURO [sic] of your budget. It needs to be shot like a documentary to be brought in on budget and even then I would not be able to produce it for that amount. The gear would be a few thousand euro per day too. Your extras per day if there are 40 would be 4000EURO [sic] and it feels like there are many more than 40. This is not including the cast fee. I also have to say that there are no Somali actors in SA

that I am aware of. I am sorry but we will not be able to be able to help you on this project. It is such a great story but I do not feel it is possible to produce this within the budget you have. We won't be able to do it justice. I really do wish you all the best and I will of course keep it confidential. (Saskia Rosenberg Haak, personal email. 2017)

That email ended my search for a production service company in Johannesburg effectively. She had added that there was a problem with the casting since there were no known Somali actor in South Africa, of course my mind was on getting non-professional, but I never discussed that thought with them again at Rolling Thunder.

#### **4.4 Sourcing collaboratives: Kenya, Tanzania, Namibia, Morocco and Spain**

When I started prospecting for location and I discovered that the funding might not be sufficient based on our negotiation with these companies I started considering alternatives away from South Africa.

I spoke to Leandro Righini of Make Films about the possibility of taking the project to Namibia, where I had figured the wages were even lower compared to South Africa. I was right about the wages, Osku Pajamäki, who was a partner at Make Film suggested we should look into Namibia for three reasons: i) the location is the most appropriate as we can use the Namib Desert to achieve the arid feel of the film. ii) Namibian Film Commission had started giving out incentives to filmmakers to come to Namibia. Iii) The wages in Namibia were far lower compared to South Africa. I immediately set out to contact a film production services company in Namibia, but there was hardly any, I came up with only one company whose only work of note seemed to have been in musical videos and one short film. That was not the only challenge with Namibia; I discovered that all the equipment and almost all the crew used on the shoot of *Mad Max: Fury Road* were flown in from Cape Town to be used in Windhoek, and more significantly we have to also bring in the crew from

South Africa, and of course the Namibian Film Commission only give incentive to films with the express intention of developing Namibian talents. I effectively discontinued discussion with Namibia.

I reached out to companies in Tanzania, but discovered that, they were experienced mostly in documentary filmmaking, there is an acute shortage of production company or crew. Kenya looked good, I was informed about a Finnish filmmaker who made a film there recently, I wrote to about three production service company there, but we jettisoned the idea when Al-Shabaab ramped up attacks in Somalia and Kenya.

After our weekly meeting, we decided to screen out Morocco too; the jihadis operatives were then active in some part of Morocco. Spain was strongly considered but for wages and salaries, we decided to stick with South African , with the hope we could get more funding from the School or maybe magic would happen and someone would deliver everything we want with the same budget. It looked very unlikely.

#### **4.5 AFDA Holy Grail**

After having exhausted the other options, we consider reaching out to AFDA Film School, Cape Town through Aalto University. The reason was that they might be interested in our project and since we needed all the resources we can get; spaces for the casting and storage space production designer and the costumer designer would take away cost due space, we might also get a couple of crew members to work with us for free. It sounded like a good plan. However, nothing came out of that plan for some reasons; chiefly being that the timing was close and the other party could fix us into their plan.

#### **4.6 Little LA Production**

After seeing *Asad*, a film about a young Somali boy, living in a refugee camp. I noted that that film has some of the key elements we wanted in our future film. It was incidentally produced in South Africa. I reached out to Little LA Production, the production service company on the project. I contacted the producer introducing our project to him. He was enthusiastic about the project and asked if we would love to work with him.

I arranged a skype meeting to discuss the project. After several discussions with him over skype and explaining in detail our production value expectation, he mentioned that the reference film cost about \$1 million to produce. We did not have a quarter of that for the project. It was down to seeing what would work.

We discussed the scale of our project, and he mentioned that for what we wanted; the extras, the semi-desert or arid location, we will need quite a hefty sum to work with. We, nonetheless, got to work and proposed some cuts to our expectation. We decided to shoot around Cape Town rather than the Karoo to take away the cost of logistic. We proposed Langa Township for the refugee camp. The South African producer went to work to bring his working budget.

There was a snag however, when I suggested that we combine several roles for the crew, it drew lots of contestation from the South African producer. In his view, every role is important, the South African producer argued that everyone is important and it is not the norm to combine these roles- South Africans used to working under Hollywood studio system.

People were not attuned to working several roles while working on a single job description, they work only what they signed up for. A DTI person only works as DTI, not as camera assistant when not managing the data, the 2nd AD is only a 2nd AD, not more, nothing less. People are very compartmentalized in the mode of working and their attitude to work.

That way of working contrasted sharply with our independent filmmaking mindset, where the best boy can run with the rig and electricity when need be. We had a discussion about it. This is a small

project with limited budget, we could combine many roles. For instance we did not need separate production coordinator and production manager. The production secretary can assist the producers when needed, so there will be no need to hire PAs. The 1st and the 2nd ADs can manage without extra hand in that department. An extra hand meant additional cost for salary, logistics, accomodation and feeding.

And of course we did not need the whole village working in Art: but that argument was defeated, we needed several hands to build our extensive set needed for the refugee camp. We resolved to to hire locals on location to shave off logistical expenses of bringing people from Cape Town. After several back and forth, we agreed to cut out some of the roles but then, production budget stood at €247,000. We needed to have more cuts to the budget.

#### **4.7 Dealing with challenges and disappointment**

Funding was supposed to have been green lighted in November 2016, but we were only greenlighted at the end of February 2017. That affected the initial schedule spectacularly. We could not prepare as we should, since some of the task like preliminary scouting would have required some running cost.

When the funding did come, we decided to speed up things from our end, but it was clear that the director wanted to get more familiar with the project. Getting the fund in February has another important impact on the project; summer in South Africa starts in December and ends in April. We got greenlighted in February 2017, we had less than 2 months to do a thorough pre-production and then go to location to shoot. To catch up with the fleeting summer, we commissioned the producer at Little LA to scout locations in Northern Cape Town in November, but then everything looked green, what we needed for the film was reddish, dusty, and bleak landscape.

I was hopeful that by February 2017, the landscape would have changed, since that would have been the height of summer in South Africa. However, we got funding in late February 2017, and we had relaxed since we didn't get the funding as expected in December 2017 .

There was the need to visit South Africa and see the locations ourselves, but that was out of the question for various reason; the time was too short to plan a trip for a film that will be shot in the beginning of April, the budget was simply not available and we do not even have enough for the initial budget of of €247,000, later reduced to €193,993 sent by Little LA Productions for the production.

We had a talk with our financier, Ilkka Metsola, about the budget, he assured us that we might be able to get an extra €20,000 from the school, if we could justify the expenses. But that was just the tip of what we needed to cover the cost of production. With that assurance, I knew we needed to cut down the budget and we worked down the budget to €145,000.

While we were at it, the director called attention to the limited time she had to get familiar with the sub-text, the cast and the crew. She asked for more time to be able to do all these properly. Even though this will mean pushing the schedule forward, it didn't sit well with some of us, but we eventually agreed that it was all in the interest of the project,

I came up with a new schedule with the South African producer but then we noticed another issue, if we moved the project from April to May, that would be in fall, the landscape in Northern Cape Town is already changing and for the world of the story, that would be totally unsuitable. We either shoot in April without adequate preparation or shoot in May without a proper location. We needed to decide.

We had initial plans to a town called Tous Rivier, in the Karoo initially, but that plan had been abandoned due to the cost implication. I had calculated the logistical implication of moving over

100 cast and crew to the Karoo and that was simply not in our budget! But seeing the challenge, we started considering going to the Karoo and ask the school for some extra money to do that.

We had been assured of extra €20,000, but that is a fraction of the budget needed for the trip to the Karoo, so I moved our reserve to the production budget; it was not a good decision but there was no other way. Without going to the Karoo, we cannot have the right landscape, without the right landscape, we cannot properly situate the film in its world.

We agreed to move the set to Tous Rivier. I agreed with the South African producer to send his schedule, after a few weeks, he responded not with a new schedule but with the proposal to move the project to October 2017, he had other commitments too.

It came as a relief to us in a way, the director need to work with all the HODs on their plans, and that was progressing but a few more months would definitely make a better film.

And soon enough, October 2017 came, but the South African producer had other project lined up and it was obvious *Homebound* was not on priority list. He announced that he had to work on a film festival and this coincided with the new schedule, so he planned to move things forward to accommodate ours and his schedule. We simply needed a new plan.

#### **4.8 Every film needs a contingency plan**

When we started work on *Homebound*, Leandro Righini was one of the first filmmaker I spoke to, he had extensive experience and contacts in South Africa. With the challenges confronting the production, the possibility that we might have our funding rescinded, I called him and informed him about our search for a new service production company and if his company would be interested in working with us, more so, he understood the Finnish work culture.



He asked me to mail his company asking for a meeting. We arranged a meeting in late November 2017 with our financiers in attendance. After the meeting Leandro Righini connected us to production service company called Shoot Away Production based in Cape Town. This is simply what every transnational film project needs; the right network can make the project seamless, can be a leverage to get good deals.

#### **4.9 Finance, Artistic Compromises and The Shoot**

At how low a cost can we adequately present a given subject matter on film- Jerry Schaefer (1955) Every producer have to battle with this thought on every project; regardless of the type of production under consideration but more so for a transnational production. Inability to complete the shoot on budget and on schedule could put the production in jeopardy. So I was confronted with what to do to derive maximum production value from limited budget and within schedule.

What production approach would ensure the film's needs are met? The project needs on department by department basis were huge; each department wanted to have the best resources to work with.

When we started the pre-production of 'Homebound', we got almost all the above-the-line expenditures free and so the budget allocation for ATL was minimal; it was spent on research, field trip to Tanzania and production office needs totalling €7000. I pegged the production expenditure at €120,000 while €27,000 was set aside for post production and €20,000 for contingency.

In the beginning, €120,000 looked like a lot to cover the cost of production in South Africa. The prospective producer would provide equipment rental, crewing and casting, accommodation, feeding and per diem, logistics, as well as other aspect of production support for the project in South Africa.

I sent out emails and started negotiation with the producers. Below are some of the production estimates that were sent in:

Production Service Company	Proposed Budget (€)	Number of days
Kalahari Production	133,221	6
Rolling Thunder	360,000	6
Little LA	193,993	6
ShootAway Production	139,101	6

What was immediately clear, after a couple of discussions with the producers, was that the production budget plan would not work; the logistical demand was high; we were travelling over 400 kilometres from Cape Town. I reviewed the budget to €145 000 and we continued negotiation hoping to eventually make deal that will be favourable to the production. However, it was also obvious that our production team needed to make some artistic sacrifices to make this happen. So what were some of the sacrifices made to make the production possible?

#### **4.9.1 Artistic Compromises, Sacrifices and Shooting *Homebound***

The director requested a full month pre-production period in South Africa; to vet the cast for a second time, get replacement cast if needed; rehearse with the children for at least a full week; visit the locations and get familiar with all crew and cast; and she wanted at least seven shooting days to cover the extensive shot list and constant location change.

These were reasonable requests for the project but from the figures, it was clear that we do not have budget for these. So we decided on a compromise after much debate about what is crucial and what is important. We reduced the pre-production period to 18 days; removed the second casting opportunity; reduced the number of shots in consonance with the DP and cut shooting days to six.

The consequence of these was more apparent with casting. It played out during the shoot. We ended up with some actors whose scenes were unusable. Time was wasted with a particular actor who could not get his lines right. His acting were below par and his delivery was really bad. Unfortunately, he had a crucial line; that ended up being one of the trade off for not so tidy casting.

We reduced the number of shots; I knew that the possibility of a re-shoot was quite improbable. We reduced the number of shots; took out those not crucial to the story without compromising the story.

And then of course, there is a bit about human management that came out inform of a tussle between the South African producer and the director on whether to move the set when, we had problem setting up for another scene in the refugee camp. It ended in a standoff with me in the middle. Everyone left the production meeting angry but I knew I had to get them the next location the next morning, otherwise I would have to figure out where to raise money for re-shoot. I did make both party see that it was not essentially about their artistic point of view but about the film and we moved to the next location the next morning.

The camera department had a detailed cookbook with extensive floor plan for each scene complete with scene description and gears; a provision for a tow-truck to shoot bus scene; an extra camera with mövi and mimic plus operator that would be sourced from Finland. It was clear we cannot afford bringing in extra crew from Finland. So we made alternative arrangement for gear and operator in Cape Town. We removed the mövi totally. It was a hard to for the DP, as he had planned what he would have achieved with the equipment.

We also made compromises in on grip; we removed the running cart, the towing vehicle for the buses, scaffoldings and crane lift. We replaced the request for a teradek for paralinx to cut the cost down considerably.

The lighting requirement was reduced to the use of LED inside the buses instead of paying for additional lighting rigging on the deck of the refugee bus.

The production design for the refugee camp included a brick house for the NGO running the refugee camp; we discussed this with the Production Designer. It was difficult to get a location that has that kind of building and topography to accommodate the refugee camp. The other option would be to shoot it separately, but that would have telling impact on the post-production. We resolved that we do not need to create such issue further down the line. We removed the building and replaced with a tent. We converted the runners' jeeps into extra jeeps for the refugee camp set when not in use by the runners.

The sound designer wanted to go to South Africa with own crew so that his work can be seamless. We had a chat about this and decided that it is best for us to get a local to work with us. He worked with a South African assistant and they had very seamless work.

After all the back and forth and getting the right production service company, we spent 19 days on pre-production in South Africa, as against the four weeks planned earlier, six shooting days as against seven shooting days: the cuts were practical measures to fit the production need into the budget. Every department made compromises for the production to be possible.

We signed the contract for the production with Shoot Away production. We got the most practical solution to the issue of logistics, lean crewing and a very collaborative mindset to filmmaking.

During initial negotiation, we agreed €136,306 production cost with cash flow of 20% non-refundable for crew and accommodation, 30% for pre-production, and 40% when production started and 10% after the conclusion of shoot plus agreed overage.

At the end of the production, our production budget total plus the overage was €146,552.69. It was above our the initial plan but was still within budget. The most crucial thing at the end was that the

film came together artistically. Of course, there were a lot of things we would have done differently: we would have spent more time on casting, especially for the crucial extra, and we would have paid for more extra for the refugee camp scene, and of course for the buses; we would have relished an opportunity to reshoot a couple of scenes: like the goat herder scene, also a result of improper casting.

We achieved the visual objectives we set for the film, albeit a scaled down version. Considering the budget and the timing, we took prudent decisions within the confine of our resources. Made compromises where needed. It was painful and tough to decide what to keep and what to exclude but we all knew that must be done to shoot the film. But most crucially was getting the best out the partner we worked with where other producers had turned us down.

Our discussion with Shoot Away Production was more nimble, he understood exactly what we needed to do, having worked with Finnish production in the past was definitely an advantage, he knew that with that budget we cannot allow for a Hollywood style crewing and we would definitely do more with crew who have a can-do spirit. It all seemed so easy working with him. While we might say the casting was bit problematic, still in hindsight our resources was a great limitation.

## **5. Discussions and Conclusion**

My observation as a producer who chose to explore transnational film production between Finland and South African with regard to the issue of collaborative network, production models, work

ethics, culture and their effects on the Finnish production in South Africa, now that all the work on the artistic part and the thesis have been completed.

The emphasis in this thesis has been to look at the factors that are germane to successful production within the production environment in South Africa for a Finnish film producer.

I documented some of my observation in the pre-production and negotiation phase of the process, especially when searching for and negotiating with collaborative partners. I interviewed Leandro Righini, Patrick Walton and Sam Shingler after the premiere of 'Homebound'. Nonetheless this discussion will cover the main plank of the questions I raised leading up to this thesis and of course my other thoughts about the experience of being a producer on the project.

For this thesis, my research proposals are:

What factors in the collaborative partnership brings the most value to a production?

What are the pull factors for the Finnish Film producers in the South African film production partnership ?

Finnish film landscape is modeled after the European Independent film model and while South African production service landscape is significantly influenced by Hollywood studio system. How does this difference impact the project and work relationship?

**Based on these posers, the preceding theoretical discussions, interviews and personal experience on the production of 'Homebound', I will analyse my understanding of Finnish transnational film production in South Africa, contrast my point of view side by side with the interviews of the filmmakers, and state my experiences regarding transnational production in South Africa**

## 5.1 Getting right people in your corner

‘The transnational flow of money has generated networks of producers with shared understandings and experiences, which in turn facilitates and intensifies cooperation in other areas, as agents positioned within multiple networks begin to share their contacts. At the same time, the growing tendency for directors and actors to circulate among the Nordic countries literally transforms the communicative space in which they operate from a series of interconnected national spaces to an increasingly integrated transnational arena.’ (Mette Horjt 2005:211).

When I set out to do this project, I never had a prior experience in international project collaborative before, and so it was peculiarly challenging when I got into it. Of course, it was easy to act with conviction when I started out and I chose South Africa, but soon the reality of the situation with regard to limited budget pushed us to start evaluating the situation and to look elsewhere for the planned production value for the same budget, or perhaps less.

In had to evaluate, interrogate and negotiate with different production partners and film production environment in each country, that was tough. I did not anticipate that getting the right kind of partners to work with would be tough. One important thing lost on me, was the logistical implication of the project, or even the issue of security of the team, who would be operating away from home. I had been emphasizing visual needs of the project. I had to embark on extensive research and consultation with people within and outside the University.

For a short film, I had to contact people as far afield as Tanzania, Kenya, Namibia, Morocco, South Africa and contemplated contacts in Spain. Sometimes I got into negotiation with a potential production partner on the basis that they had the right visual environment, favourable exchange rate, talents while downplaying logistical needs, technical needs and of course, the most important aspect, the socio-political climate in the country of interest.

Eventually, we secured the right partnership in South Africa, I discovered that having a female director on the project became a challenge at some point, some of our talents were from deeply conservative background and the idea of a woman directing them in the film did not go down well with them. It was difficult at first for them to accept working with a female director. This factor was totally overlooked by me, in fact it was new to me.

The factors above are important issues to consider in researching for the right partners, who understand the need of the project intimately and are ready to open the conversation about decisions that will deliver the utmost production value.

The research, experiences and negotiation one needed for this project are not necessarily things one learn in a producing course, they come from real production experiences.

One cannot secure the right collaboration without doing a proper research, in lieu of that, having the right network of contacts who have the experiences to point one in the right direction would do. Mette Hjort (2005) believes that one of the things transnational film production should encourage among producer is the sharing of contacts, understandings and experiences, which in turn facilitates and intensifies cooperation in other areas. This is really very crucial for any producer launching production in an uncharted terrain.

This brings me to the second point, which is as important as the research itself, having the right kind of mentors as a fledgling producer, everyone should be afforded the people who can point one in the right direction in course of learning the rope. This is very essential and I would say that I benefited from this, in many ways and that relationship eventually was deciding factor that secured the partner we eventually worked

The summary of this is, one must do a diligent work of researching the potential partners, their past work, technical capacity, the film production landscape in that country as well as the socio-political climate of the country. Once all these are in order then, there is a high tendency for the production



to get the best value for money. The budget will never be enough with the wrong collaborative partners.

## **5.2 Transnational Film Production is not all about the Producer's Excel**

From my experiences and interaction with the filmmakers interviewed for this project, I came to understand that while, it is easy to think in terms of what number is in the excel, it is not always the sole factor for moving production to another country, there are additional factors like similarity in geographical and demographical landscape between the countries under consideration.

In this case, South Africa and Finland share a lot in common. There are pine forests, lakes, urban landscape and lots of talents -with Nordic features- in abundance, that it is easy to shoot in South Africa and pass it off as Finland.

Sam Shingler mentioned that these, among many other reasons are why he goes to South Africa for film shoot. Leandro Righini and Patrick Walton both added the time factor is a clincher as well: both Finland and South Africa are in the same time zone, so one can be on location in South Africa and converse with people in Finland without delay.

Another important factor is, while it is winter in Finland, it is summer in South Africa and one can easily plan and shoot film project with that timeline in mind. This basically captures the idea that Durovicova et al (2010) expresses about transnational cinema, about ease of mobility, and working beyond own border for a sustainable business. These point revealed that while sustainability and economic pressures are the primary driver for transnational cinematic production, there are also other factors at play in Finnish-South African transnational film production scene.

## **5.3 Immersion in a different production pipeline**

In the discussion on Transnational cinema, Arjun Appadurai (1996) mentions that globalization has brought about the harmonization of formats in filmmaking while Mark Lorenzen (2008) opines that the production value chain has been affected not only technologically but also in participation, consumption, production and organization. While these points are largely so, organization of filmmaking are not uniform across board. There is a lot of hybridization in the organization of film production. For instance, from my experience, Nigerian filmmaking landscape would be very chaotic for the average Finn in terms of organization, as the Nigerian production scene is both vertical and horizontal depending on what works, as crew move from one career line to another in between three productions, while there is a lot of room for multitasking in the Finnish film production landscape, it is much more organized, but it is also run and gun in approach, when compared to South African film production landscape. So there are differences in organization and in crewing. What is responsible for this discrepancy?

The American Hollywood studio system is known for it is extensive crew, bureaucracy and clear delineation of duty. The reverse is true for the European Independent film production model. South African production service landscape is significantly influenced by Hollywood studio system and as such production organization, reflects the American mentality about production, it is top down approach, dissemination of information, decision making and work culture. Finnish film production is the exact opposite of this. As pointed out earlier, it is organically flatter, less number of crew work on a film project at a time means people must collaborative more on tasks to get the job done. When asked, all the interviewees shared this opinion about the differences between the industry in South Africa and Finland.

It is also noted that South Africa is unionized a la Hollywood studio system, Leandro Righini clarifies that the crew are ready to do deals, they are ready to multitask, but the Finnish producer must take the initiative, since the default work culture is for people to work in silo on their designated task. If crew were hired by a rogue producer, they are likely to revolt if the producer

asked them to multitask then, due to lack of faith in the producer. That request will be interpreted as the producer trying to rip them off without paying.

Nevertheless, we were able to strike deal, on of above-the-line items, for example, in the budget preparation for the shoot of *Homebound*, there were separate entry for DIT and data wrangler, after showing the production service partner how financially unsustainable this would be for the production, the positions were merged. We were able to do this with a lot of position in the crew to fit the production budget into our financial plan.

It is also noteworthy that, I budgeted €120,000 for the production ab initio, nonetheless prior negotiation with various production services partners were beyond our budget: we got €360,000, €193,993, €133,221 and €136,306 in production budget from these partners. Later, it was obvious that I did not understand yet how dealmaking work in South Africa. Getting assistance from a senior colleague with insider knowledge of the South African film industry solved the budgeting challenge as we ended up working with a producer who was willing to do deals, cut down, merge positions in below-the-line where necessary to make ensure that we fit budget within our financial plan.

#### **5.4 Communication and Cultural Distance**

‘What we are witnessing, more specifically, is the emergence of a genuinely transnational communicative space with a new-found tolerance for cultural hybridity’ (Mette Hjort 2005:193)

Through cultural diffusion, culture do influence each other, nonetheless each culture has its own cultural nuances that might be difficult for an outsider to understand without experience it and this nuances are sometimes seen to be national character. These are part of people’s lived experiences that outsider would have to consciously imbibe to live it.

Mark Lorenzen (2008) citing several scholars states that transnational cinema entails interconnectedness between a multitude of countries, leading to their integration into one (or several) global economic, cultural, and to some extent also political, systems or networks (Held et al., 1999; Friedman, 2000; Stiglitz, 2002; Amin and Cohendet, 2004; and see a recent special issue of *Industry and Innovation on Knowledge Geographies*, vol. 12, issue 4, 2004).

I disagree with Lorenzen's theorization that transnationalism lead to cultural integration in filmmaking, from my experience in Nigeria, Finland and South Africa, work culture are quite different significantly. While it is factual that homogenization has taken place in technicals in filmmaking, that homogenization in work culture is yet to take place. The human factor has yet to be homogenized.

In my discussion with the interviewees, I asked if there is any cultural barrier between Finnish and South African film producers and what form do they take . This opened discussion on the place of communication and culture in building partnership. All the interviewees have very different opinions about it.

Patrick Walton says that the average 'Finnish producers tends to be very introvert producers or halfway between slightly extrovert, I think it is a cultural thing that South African producers need to get used to, the Finnish generally are quiet. They do not express how they feel, but I guess that is something one learns by being around Finnish people, but when taking decision, they are very direct, you get a 'yes' or 'no' out of most Finnish producers that I have worked with, instead of being messed around. It is quite refreshing and it is quite good but it takes a lot of getting used to.'

Leandro Righini affirms that South Africans and Finnish producers are quite similar in their national character' South Africans are straight talking people just like the Finns'. In his opinion, this similarity closed up whatever differences might have been perceived to exist in their national character or difference in language.

Sam Shingler on the other hand does not feel the South African film producers are as direct as the Finns, they are open to understanding others, especially the young people, while the older people are quite tough to get along with. However compared to his experience in Eastern Europe, he feels that the cultural barrier to communication is less pronounced in South Africans compared.

My observation is that South Africans are like the rest of Africans in general outlook, open, warm and ready to embrace the unknown, but not very direct about issues. They are not confrontational. They would go around issues cautiously and try to work out a solution or middle ground rather than turn that a request. It is an attitude that I am used. So it was not strange when dealing with the South African producers and I noticed this trait.

### **5.5 But why South Africa**

”Moving production from Finland to South Africa is economically prudent”- Leandro Righini

What are the pull factors for the Finnish film producers in South African film production partnership ? The quotation from Leandro Righini that opens this discussion comes across as the obvious reason why some Finnish filmmaker will take their production to South Africa. Patrick Walton in discussing this issues with me states that ‘in term of production service facilitation, the biggest thing is cost but with the exchanged rate, in favour of foreigners coming to South Africa, they can get lot more value for their money. The next thing in the value chain is the crew, there is no crew association here, It is not unionized’.

Leandro and Walton’s observation have been long held as the most obvious response to this question, for instance Renaud and Litman (1985) wrote that international co-productions is "the most effective response strategy to the new economic pressures reshaping the television programming environment, in the USA and abroad" and as late as 2012, Olsberg.SPI (2012)

believes that for most independent films to self-fund, they need to look into international co-production.

I do not agree with their argumentation, especially as regard the production of *Homebound*. The choice of South Africa was not borne primarily out of economic consideration, it was chosen based on the peculiarity of the project: the short film needs Somali talents. Of course it can be argued and it is true that there are many Somali in Finland, so why does anyone need to go to South Africa for what is hugely available here. That is also true. However, that is not the only reason, we need a specific weather and landscape that speak to the visual landscape of the film. This is definitely not available in Finland. This is the primary reason why I chose to go to South Africa.

Sam Shingler came close to speaking my mind. He also mentioned the economic angle, the currency being favourable and the wage being lower than in Finland, he also added that within the Cape Area in South Africa, there is a huge reservoir of talents, there is an incredible mix of people. The production infrastructure is highly developed. It is amongst the most developed in the world crammed into that little Cape area basically. But the most critical issue for the project is the landscape. The Karoo area of Western cape offered the perfect visual reference for the film

For me the most important factors were landscape, diversity of talents, these were the primary reasons for locating the film in South Africa, of course, the mathematics of the budget later became very important, but it was not on the list of the first considerations. So that argumentation for transnational film production is not usually borne out of sustainability or economic consideration but in some cases out of the character of the film project itself, as it is the case with *Homebound*.

## **5.6 Was it worth the trouble?**

There are many lessons I am taking with me from the film project and if I looked back on all the learning curves from the project, I will gladly undertake this again given the chance, seeing that it is always an opportunity to experience something different and cement what I had already acquired in knowledge.

Without the film project, I would never have had the opportunity to experience the South African production pipeline and work culture. That is something that I take with me. The project has built in me, a level of confidence, that I never had up until then, my ability to confront bigger project on a larger scale. Before now, I would never have dreamt of a project with over 140 talent and crew on one set. The scale of the project will be a reference point for me going forward into other projects.

Filmmaking is not democracy. Decision making in film production cannot be subject to democracy, there has to be a clear line of decision making to move the project forward very quickly. Keeping the communication line compact to avoid the broken telephone effect save one from serial headaches and disagreement that does not move the project forward.

If I were going to make another project in South Africa today, I know it is about the securing the right person, If one does not have the right person production partner, then you will need to spend a lot of money to get things done. Having a big budget is good, but having a competent partner for one's project is definitely the best. Also, one needs to understand when and where to make compromises, it is as essential as knowing how to make the right deal.

In our interaction different producers, each one of them had an idea how to achieve this project, but only one thought it can be executed with the planned budget and without overtly compromising the production value we had set out to achieve in the beginning

Having the right kind of network proved that to be totally untrue, because not only did we end up executing the project for a little over €146,552, we also were able to save some of that budget.

## **5.7 Conclusions**

My take away from this research is that a producer engaging in transnational film production should not only think in terms of the cost of production. The propensity to think in terms of what is in financial plan sometimes limit one from considering the project from the angle of project needs.

The first consideration when one starts a new project is to ask, what is the need of this project? What will serve the interest of this project? Who has the skills and the experience to meet these needs? Leandro Righini summed up this properly when he affirmed that one must consider first the requirement of the project; is it visually dense or logistically challenging? Before one can determine the type of partners to engage.

As a producer, we negotiate collaborative partnership, as we go through the process of knowing the people we are going to work with professionally, one must then ask, since this is a highly experienced and well qualified producer, how ethical is this producer? How does the producer treat the crew? There is a tendency to completely forget this in negotiation phase, but this will go a long way as it will determine how well the crew performs on one's. Understanding the nature of the people one work with is the most important ingredient to being a transnational film producer.

Regardless of the type of project I will be engaging in the future, these two point stand out as the critical points to take with me as I move ahead and I do sincerely consider looking into production studies in transnational film production environment



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## **Appendix 1**

### **Interview Questions**

26.02.2019

Akin Alaka

#### **Questions: Drawn up for structured Interviews**

1. What do you consider as the most important factor(s) one needs to have-like network, tools etc to maximize shoot in South Africa ?
2. From your experience, would you say that the South African Studio production model is different from that of Finnish European independent film model? In what way?
3. How does the production value chain differ between South Africa and Finland, what effect does it have on the project?
4. Is cultural distance between Finnish producer/director and their South African producer of any importance? How?
5. As director/producer what are the change management techniques you use to adjust to the gaps in value chain model and cultural difference in SA?

6. Do you think a treaty between South Africa and Finland can be useful in film production for Finnish Filmmakers working in SA
7. Would you encourage Transnational project for other producers? Why would?

Question: Re-drawn from the initial one.

1. What do you consider as the most important factor(s) one needs to have-like network, tools etc to South Africa ?
2. From your experience, would you say that the South African Studio production model is different from that of Finnish European independent film model? In what way?
3. How does the production value chain differ between South Africa and Finland, what effect does it have on the project?
4. Would you encourage Transnational project for other producers? Why would?