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## Industry Sections

### *Documentary Film Festivals between Production and Distribution*

Across the 1990s and 2000s, festivals specializing in documentary films proliferated across Eastern Europe, a term I use here to describe not only the former Soviet Sphere, but also the Balkans, the Baltic States, Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus<sup>1)</sup>. This phenomenon is rooted in the recent exponential growth of festivals built around a specific theme or genre of film. It was also a product of the adoption of third sector-model organizational structures in the field of cultural management (non-profit organizations funded through public and private partnerships),<sup>2)</sup> and of the revival of the feature length theatrically released documentary — a format previously reserved for television.<sup>3)</sup> International interest in such films was sparked by documentarian Michael Moore's high-profile success at Cannes in 2002 and in 2004.<sup>4)</sup>

In this essay, I argue that the last twenty years have witnessed a change in the roles documentary festivals play in film culture. Where festivals once served primarily as exhibition sites, in recent years, the growing presence of industry sections at these events has result-

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- 1) I acknowledge the rather idiosyncratic and unorthodox use of the term Eastern Europe in this essay, however, for the purposes and focus of this study and the term reflects the ever-growing connections between documentary cultures within these countries. I refer to Eastern Europe not as the geopolitical area, but as a spatial delimitation.
  - 2) See Ragan Rhyne, 'Film festival circuits and stakeholders', in Dina Iordanova and Ragan Rhyne (eds), *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit* (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2009), pp. 9–39; Ruby Cheung, 'Funding models of themed film festivals', in Dina Iordanova and Ruby Cheung (eds), *Film Festival Yearbook 2: Film Festivals and Imagined Communities* (St. Andrews: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2010), pp. 74–103. On the organizational complications that arose from competition between the Karlovy Vary Film Festival and the Golden Golem in Prague see Dina Iordanova, 'Showdown of the festivals: clashing entrepreneurs and post-Communist management of culture', *Film International*, vol. 4, no. 5 (October 2006), pp. 25–38.
  - 3) See Ana Vicente, 'Theatrical Distribution of Non-fiction Films in Europe' (MA Dissertation: University of Salford, 2004) and Amy Hardie, 'Rollercoasters and Reality: A Study of Big Screen Documentary Audiences 2002–2007', *Particip@tions*, vol. 5, no. 1 (May 2008).
  - 4) Documentary attracted academic attention in the previous decade following the publication Bill Nichols seminal *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

ed in their exerting a profound influence not only on film criticism but also on film production and distribution. Festivals have become nodal points for the negotiation of cinematic culture insofar as they serve as meeting points for professionals working in production, distribution, and criticism. Accordingly, their study promises to provide us with important insights into the development of European film cultures. Moreover, comparative studies of festivals will enrich our understanding of the festival hierarchies which have developed in the region, and allow us to reflect on how they have been shaped by cultural policies, especially those of the European Union.

### Films, Festivals, and the Industry

Two initiatives have helped to energize the study of film festivals. First, Marijke De Valck and Skadi Loist established the Film Festival Research Network. Second, since 2009, Dina Jordanova has overseen the annual Film Festival Yearbook, which brings together work on the topic.<sup>5)</sup> A qualitative leap in the field was provided by the publication of De Valck's 2007 monograph *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia*.<sup>6)</sup> In contrast to previous works, her study approached festivals from a multitude of perspectives, examining geopolitics, economic practices, media coverage, and audiences.<sup>7)</sup> She dedicated an entire chapter to the Cannes Film Festival's roles as a market and an advertising platform. De Valck also drew upon Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital to shed light on the processes through which festivals act as mediators for the creation of symbolic value, both for films and their makers.<sup>8)</sup> In doing so, she was able to move away from oppositions between art and commerce,<sup>9)</sup> while acknowledging that such oppositions remain central to journalistic and some academic treatments of festivals.<sup>10)</sup> Furthermore, a debate has unfolded about the significance of the international festival network, with Jordanova

5) As a result of their collaboration on both initiatives, Skadi Loist and Marijke De Valck include an annotated bibliography of film festival studies in the *Film Festival Yearbook Series*. See also Marijke De Valck and Skadi Loist, 'Festivals', *Oxford Bibliographies Online, Cinema & Media Studies* (2013), <<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199791286/obo-9780199791286-0155.xml>> [accessed 10 December 2013].

6) Marijke De Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).

7) For an exception see Kenneth Turan, *Sundance to Sarajevo: Film Festivals and the World They Made* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 13–61. The author describes Cannes, Sundance, and ShoWest as "festivals with business agendas", and analyzes their markets, promotional practices, and other industrial activities.

8) Other authors have utilized this concept to analyze film festivals. See Janet Harbord, *Film Cultures* (London: Sage Publications, 2002); Liz Czach 'Film festivals, programming, and the building of a national cinema', *The Moving Image*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2004), pp. 76–88; Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong, *Film Festivals. Culture, People, and Power on the Global Screen* (London: Rudgers University Press, 2011).

9) See Stephen Mezias (et al.), 'Much ado about nothing? Untangling the impact of European premier film festivals', *Creative Encounters Working Paper*, no 14 (2008), pp. 1–31; Stéphanie Torche, 'Les logiques économiques et culturelles dans les festivals de films: Analyse et représentation' (Dissertation: Université de Frیبourg, 2008).

10) This is the case with a Mark Peranson's article, in which he posits two "ideal" film festival models: the business festival and the audience festival. The former is connected to production and distribution strategies; the

challenging the assumption that festivals serve as an alternative distribution channel to Hollywood, something both Thomas Elsaesser and De Valck proposed.<sup>11</sup> She argued instead that they serve more as an exhibition network, whose connections and commercial significance to film circulation is not as obvious as first thought.<sup>12</sup>

Even though there has been an increase in interest in documentaries from Eastern European scholars writing in English,<sup>13</sup> the festivals themselves have received scant attention. The few publications that do in fact consider the festivals and their industrial dimensions are largely aimed at industry professionals, fashioned as they are either by festivals organizers or by organizations that promote documentary films. This is the case with the articles that were produced within the framework of the Seedox project, an initiative that was executed during the 2008 GoEast Film Festival (Wiesbaden Central and Eastern European Film Festival in Germany), which included a symposium devoted to South-Eastern European documentary.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the Czech-based Institute of Documentary Film (IDF) produced two professional manuals, both of which were designed for film professionals participating in its Ex Oriente Film Workshop.<sup>15</sup> These publications included several articles that highlighted funding opportunities within the international festival circuit and the dynamics of global film distribution.

Given the dearth of internationally-focused scholarship on Eastern European documentary film festivals — especially on their industrial dimensions — this essay sheds new light on this complex and constantly developing subject. As the first attempt to map the international network of documentary festivals, the essay seeks to identify the main industrial activities included in the festivals' programs, focusing on the international dynamics of the festival network, and the relationships between events inside and outside of this region. In so doing, I hope to show the extent to which such connections have shaped the development of Eastern European festivals.<sup>16</sup> I begin by charting the historical develop-

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latter to exhibition. Despite the limitations of such a strict demarcation, Peranson highlights important issues relating to new economic practices in the international festival circuit. See Mark Peranson, 'First you get the power, then you get the Money: two models of film festivals', in Richard Porton (ed.), *Dekalog 3: On Film Festivals* (London: Wallflower, 2009).

- 11) Thomas Elsaesser, 'Film festival networks: the new topographies of cinema in Europe', in *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), pp. 82–107; Marijke De Valck, *Film Festivals*.
- 12) Iordanova, 'The Festival Circuit'.
- 13) See Jadwiga Głowa (ed.), *Zooming on history's turning point: documentaries in the 1990s in Central and Eastern Europe / Dokument po przełomie. Film dokumentalny lat 90. w Europie Środkowo-wschodniej* (Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 1999); One World human rights film festival and Visegrad Fund (eds), *Visegrad Documentary Library 1989–2002* (Bratislava: International Visegrad Fund, 2002); Margit Rohringer, *Documents on the Balkans — History, Memory, Identity: Representation of Historical Discourses in the Balkan Documentary Film* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2009); Hans-Joachim Schlegel (ed.), *Die Subversive Kamera: zur anderen realität in mittel-und osteuropäischen dokumentarfilmen* (Konstanz: UVK Medien, 1999).
- 14) Seedox (South Eastern European Documentaries), <[www.seedox.org](http://www.seedox.org)> [accessed 12 May 2013].
- 15) Andrea Slováková (ed.), *Documentary Handbook. Making a Documentary in Central and Eastern Europe in the Context of International co-production* (Prague: Institut dokumentárního filmu, 2005); Radka Weiserová (ed.), *Documentary Handbook 2: Ex Oriente Film — Making Creative Documentary in Europe* (Prague: Institut dokumentárního filmu, 2007).
- 16) This study is limited to the analysis of those industry activities that are conducted in English. The international perspective of this essay does not stand at odds to studies of national cinema. Further examinations

ment of the international network of documentary festivals in Eastern Europe. From there I shift my attention to nascent industrial aspects of these festivals, focusing on their new roles as intermediaries for distribution. Finally, I consider these developments in relation to European Union cultural policies, placing particular emphasis on the creation of institutes to promote documentary films.

### The Rise of Documentary Festivals

The historical development of the international network of documentary festivals in Eastern Europe is characterized by four phases. During the first phase, which unfolded across the late 1950s and the early 1960s, a small number of events were created as showcases for national cinema. A second phase, from the late 1960s to 1989, saw the emergence of new models promoted and controlled by professionals. In a third phase, during the 1990s, non-profit organizations funded through public and private partnerships entered the field as festivals organizers. A fourth phase unfolded in the 2000s, during which time such events proliferated, creating a periphery of the festival circuit.

During the first phase, only three festivals devoted to documentaries took place in Eastern Europe: the 1955 Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animated Film, the 1959 Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival, and the 1961 Krakow Film Festival for Documentary, Animated, and Short Films. These events were created to promote national cinema, and their programming policy was influenced heavily by political interests. The first two festivals listed were staged as alternatives to two fiction film festivals: the Berlin International Film Festival of 1951 and the Yugoslavian Film Festival in Pula of 1954. The third provided a showcase for Polish films. Festivals devoted to fiction films had taken place in the region since the 1940s, modeled on those held at Venice in the early 1930s, and, after WWII, in Cannes and Locarno. For example, Czechoslovakia's inaugural Karlovy Vary Film Festival was held in 1946, and the Manaki Brothers festival was first run in the Macedonian town of Bitola in 1950. This phase also saw the launch of the Berlin International Film Festival in 1951 and the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen three years later. Due to their programming, the German festivals maintained close ties to Eastern Europe both before the Berlin Wall was erected and after it fell, often providing a stage for international political negotiations during the Cold War.<sup>17)</sup> Between 1968 and the disintegration of the Soviet Block, few new festivals were established in Eastern Europe.

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of documentary film festivals should be sensitive to the local conditions in which these events take place; they should consider the roles that local media, criticism, and audiences play with respect to the constructions of national cinema.

17) See Heidi Fehrenbach, 'Mass Culture and Cold War Politics: The Berlin Film Festival of the 1950s', in *Cinema in Democratizing Germany: Reconstructing National Identity after Hitler* (London: University of Carolina Press, 1995), p. 234; Andreas Kötzing, *Die Internationale Leipziger Dokumentar- und Kurzfilmwoche in den 1970er Jahren* (Leipzig: Leipziger Univ.-Verlag, 2004); Caroline Moine, 'Blicke über den Eisernen Vorhang: Die internationalen Filmfestivals im Kalten Krieg 1945–1968', in Lars Karl (ed.), *Leinwand zwischen Tauwetter und Frost: Der osteuropäische Spiel- und Dokumentarfilm im Kalten Krieg* (Berlin: Metropol, 2007), p. 255; Pauline Gallinari, 'L'URSS au festival de Cannes 1946–1958: un enjeu des relations franco-soviétiques à l'heure de la "guerre froide"', 1895: *Revue de l'Association Française de Recherche sur l'Histoire*

Instead, it was festivals in Western Europe that began to serve as a platform for Eastern European films. The year 1969 saw the launch of the Nyon International Documentary Film Festival in Switzerland, which exerted a profound influence on the international circulation of Eastern European documentaries during the Cold War. In 1980, Etnofilm: Medzinárodný festival dokumentárnych filmov was launched in the town of Čadca, located in the Slovakian part of Czechoslovakia. During this phase, two documentary film festivals also took place for the first time in the Baltic region: the 1987 Parnü Documentary Film Festival and the 1989 St. Petersburg Message to Man Documentary Film Festival.

The appearance of the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) in 1988 initiated a third phase in which themed and genre-specific festivals proliferated across Europe. IDFA was a non-profit organization. This so-called third sector organizational model served as a blueprint for those festivals that sprang up in the following decade. Among those held in Eastern Europe were the 1991 Golden Rhyton Festival of Bulgarian Non-feature Films,<sup>18)</sup> the 1993 Astra Film Festival in Romania, the 1997 Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival in the Czech Republic, and the 1999 Images of the Twenty-First Century: Thessaloniki Documentary Festival in Greece. Some of these festivals gained a measure of international visibility in the 2000s thanks to their incorporation of industry sections — parts of the festival devoted to industry activities. For example, both the Jihlava and Thessaloniki festivals became meeting points for film professionals working in the region. It was also during this phase that the European Documentary Network (EDN) was set up. As detailed below, this institution played a key role in the development of industry activity within such festivals.

Since the year 2000, documentary festivals have spread across Eastern Europe, due mainly to private initiatives run by those documentary filmmakers traversing the international festival circuit in the previous decade. Several events were inaugurated during this phase such as Dokufest: the International Documentary and Short Film Festival in Prizren, Kosovo in 2002; the Planet Doc Review Film Festival in Warsaw, Poland in 2004; and Zagrebbox: International Documentary Film Festival in Croatia in 2005.<sup>19)</sup> Several docu-

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*du Cinéma*, no. 51 (2007), pp. 23–43; Caroline Moine, 'Le festival du film documentaire de Leipzig, un lieu d'échanges culturels internationaux? Entre mythe et réalité', *Relations Internationales*, no. 116 (2003), pp. 559–571; Lena Kilkka Mann, 'The provocative Željimir Žilnik: from Yugoslavia's black wave to Germany's RAF', *Südslavistik.online*, no. 2 (May 2010), pp. 35–57; Jindřiška Bláhová, 'National, Socialist, Global: The Changing Roles of the Karlovy Vary Film Festival, 1946–1956', in Lars Karl and Pavel Skopal (eds.), *Cinema in Service of the State. A Comparative Perspective on East Germany and Czechoslovakia, 1945–1960* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014, forthcoming); Stefano Pisu, *Stalin a Venezia. L'Urss alla mostra del cinema fra diplomazia culturale e scontro ideologico (1932–1953)* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2013).

18) This is an exemption because it was organized by the National Film Center, a public institution established by the government.

19) These include: The Cronograf International Documentary Festival in Chisinau, Moldova in 2001; the Diálēktus European Documentary and Anthropological Film Festival in Budapest in 2002; the Vilnius Documentary Film Festival in Lithuania in 2004; the Magnificent 7: European Feature Documentary Film Festival in Belgrade, Serbia in 2005; the Lemosos International Documentary Film Festival on Cyprus in 2006; the Art Doc Fest in Moscow, Russia in 2007; Documentarist in Istanbul, Turkey in 2008; Views of the World — Nicosia International Documentary Film Festival on Cyprus in 2008; Beldocs: International Documentary Film Festival in Belgrade, Serbia in 2009; Fórum: DOCSk in Košice, Slovakia in 2010; Makedox in Skopje, Macedonia in 2010; and UnderhillFest in Podgorica, Montenegro in 2010.

mentary festivals specializing in human rights issues also took place in Eastern Europe at this time, the most prominent being the 1999 One World International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival in Prague.<sup>20</sup> During this most recent phase, industry activities were incorporated into the programs of most Eastern European festivals, thereby expanding the festivals' agendas and increasing their power to shape the international co-production and distribution of documentary films. Organizations responsible for the promotion of documentary film have also played key roles in incorporating industry activities into festival programs. Following the example of EDN, two further institutes with supranational reach were created in this period: the Institute of Documentary Film/Institut Dokumentárního Filmu (IDF) in Prague in 2001, and the Balkan Documentary Center (BDC) in Sofia in 2010.

### Industry Sections and Documentary Cultures

In *Film Cultures*, Janet Harbord analyzed a wide range of practices associated with film viewing. She focused particularly on the politics of space related to sites of exhibition. Following Saskia Sassen's work on festivals' contributions to the branding of their host cities, Harbord explored the influence these events have had on the international circulation of films, thus drawing our attention to the importance of considering the ways in which festivals shape contemporary film cultures. She suggested that

Film Festivals serve a global function in advertising cultural products, generating information about them and situating a point of information exchange. If this argument tells us something of the value of film for the global economy, how do we begin to theorize the reverse, the impact of the globally connected festival on the cultures of film? I want to suggest that the various discourses of the festival operate as open and closed vectors to the circulation of knowledge about film, and thus are productive of particular cultural values that secure routes of distribution and exhibition.<sup>21</sup>

If we are to respond to Harbord's question through an examination of the network of Eastern European documentary festivals, it is necessary to consider the industry figures that have risen to power in this circuit over the last decade. I would argue that the industry sections have impacted significantly not only on the discourses articulated by these events, but also — and above all else — on production and distribution practices developed for the international market.

20) Other human rights festivals are: the Verzio Human Rights Documentary Film Festival in Budapest, Hungary in 2004; Docudays UA International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival in Kiev, Ukraine in 2004, and One World Romania in Bucharest in 2008. One World in Prague was both a relevant player and a catalyst for similar events in Europe, collaborating with the organization on the first editions of *Verzio* and *One World Romania*. See Tereza Porybná (ed.), *Setting Up a Human Rights Film Festival: A Handbook for Festival Organizers including Case Studies of Prominent Human Rights Events* (Prague: People in Need, 2009).

21) Janet Harbord, *Film Cultures* (London: Sage Publications, 2002), p. 66.

In the last twenty years, the role of film festivals has shifted from exhibition, wherein politics and regional diplomacy exerted a significant influence, to production and distribution, wherein the presence and influence of economic agents has increased. The inclusion of commercially-oriented activities has bolstered the festivals' ability to attract overseas professionals, which in turn has increased their capacity to impact film circulation internationally. The events and activities related to production and distribution can be divided into seven categories: pitching forums, co-production and development workshops, festival funds, film markets, pre-selections of films, promotion activities, and networking.

### **The festival as funding forum**

Among the most important changes to have occurred in the festival circuit in recent years are initiatives designed to attract investors to films that are still in development. Such activities, which include pitching forums and, since the onset of the economic crisis, crowd-funding events, aim to bring together potential investors and documentary filmmakers.

A pitching forum is a semi-public event typically open to delegates holding an industry or press accreditation, where filmmakers pitch their projects to a panel of experts. Such panels are usually composed of commissioning editors from (mainly public) television stations, of distributors, and of representatives of film funds. Their aim is to offer a "neutral space" within the festival in which these various parties can broker deals. Forums are strongly linked to markets inasmuch as they take advantage of the presence of television commissioning editors seeking content in order to secure funding via pre-sales or co-production agreements.

Crowd-funding is in some respects similar to pitching forums, with the main difference being that investors are members of the public who are encouraged to contribute small amounts of money to help finance a project. The rise to prominence since 2008 of this model of film financing is in part a product of the global economic crisis having decreased pre-sales to, and co-production deals with, television companies.<sup>22</sup> The proliferation of online social networks and of video platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, which have enabled potential contributors to be reached in person, facilitated the proliferation of this funding model.

Following the example set by these events, and by their Western European counterparts such as Amsterdam's IDFA Forum (1991–), Leipzig's The Art of Pitching (2001–), and Nyon's Pitching du Réel (2006–), several Eastern European festivals have hosted fundraising events. The capacity of these pitching forums to attract investors, as well as their impact, varies from festival to festival. Some events have attracted significant attention in recent years. The first of these is the East European Forum, which has taken place in the Czech Republic since 2000, as a result of a joint initiative between the Jihlava International Documentary Festival and the Institute of Documentary Film in Prague. In an effort to increase its appeal to overseas film professionals, in 2012, organizers relocated the Forum

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22) See Melanie Sevcenko, 'The pitch is a dying standard', *Dox: European Documentary Film Magazine*, no. 88 (Winter 2010/2011), pp. 30–31.

to Prague, while also integrating it into the One World Human Rights Documentary Film Festival; this forum mainly covers those Eastern European countries that once comprised the Soviet Sphere of influence. The second major funding forum has been a part of the Krakow Film Festival since 2006. Run in collaboration with Arkana Studio, the Dragon Forum concentrates on projects being developed in former Soviet countries. The third major pitching forum is Docs in Thessaloniki. Held in Greece since 2003, this event is a collaboration between the European Documentary Network and the Thessaloniki International Documentary Festival, primarily serving projects from the Balkan region. Since then, several peripheral festivals in the region have also included fundraising activities in their programs, including Croatia's Zagrebdox (2005–), and Kosovo's Dokufest (2010–). The difficulties filmmakers taking part in those peripheral events encounter when trying to attract backers suggest that the events themselves effectively function as research and development exercises, enabling filmmakers to hone their pitching skills for those occasions upon which they stand a genuine chance of securing financing.

Finally, some pitching forums are run independent of festivals. Such events typically comprise the final part of international co-production and development workshops. They include the Baltic Sea Forum which has taken place in the Latvian capital of Riga since 1996, and which includes projects being developed in the Baltic Sea region and the former Soviet Sphere of influence, as well as the Aristoteles Workshop and Pitching, which has been run in Romania in conjunction with the television station Arte France since 2005.

### **The festival network as a co-production platform**

The development and co-production workshops, which run in conjunction with the pitching forums, aim to help filmmakers develop documentaries, to apply for international funding, and to attract co-producers. Training is provided alongside project development. Where smaller workshops offer a single opportunity for filmmakers publically to present their projects, longer ones boast up to four weekend-long sessions spanning an entire year, during which filmmakers offer progress reports. At the latter, a producer and a director work together on funding, content tailoring, marketing, and distribution strategies, which are in turn evaluated by a tutor in later sessions. The final session normally takes place at an international festival, and involves presenting the project at an actual pitching forum.

The workshop model was brought to Eastern Europe by professionals who had been inspired by Western European events set up in the early 2000s, including the Berlinale Talent Campus in Germany, Italy's Documentary in Europe, and Esodoc (2004). Among Eastern Europe's most influential workshops is Prague's Ex Oriente Film Workshop, which was first run by the IDF in 2003 and which from 2012 was co-organized with One World in Prague. Other workshops established in the 2000s include Docs in Thessaloniki, the Dragon Forum, and the Aristoteles Workshop.



## The festival as producer

Recently, festivals themselves have started to offer financing to filmmakers. Examples include the Hubert Bals Fund run by the Rotterdam Film Festival, the World Cinema Fund of the Berlin Film Festival, and the San Sebastian International Film Festival's Cine en construcción.<sup>23)</sup> Although such initiatives are not yet offered by Eastern European documentary festivals, their very existence has influenced documentary film culture in this region. For example, the Jan Vrijman Fund, which was established by the IDFA in 1998 and recently renamed the IDFA Bertha Fund, underwrote non-EU-based projects while also supporting other Eastern European initiatives such as pitching forums and even the festivals themselves — as it did with Zagrebdox. The later inclusion of films underwritten by the same festivals that allocated these monies has come in for criticism, giving rise to the notion of “festival incest”.<sup>24)</sup> Two others funds of note that have impacted upon the festivals and productions of Eastern Europe are those offered by the Hungarian-born investor George Soros. The Soros Foundation and the Open Society Funds are both run from the United States but during the 1990s helped spread the third sector model to the former East Bloc countries so as to promote an “open society”, a “civil society”, and to help “countries make the transition from communism”.<sup>25)</sup>

## The festival as market

Film markets are central to the international impact of the festivals for the simple fact that they are one of the principal reasons that industry professionals attend festivals in the first place. These markets are built around films in selection at the festival and at other festivals. Special video-libraries are created, and a catalog is provided which describes the content, national origins, and genre of the films as well as the contact information of those involved in their production and distribution.<sup>26)</sup> The influence of television in the distribution of documentaries is clearly apparent in the manner in which the films are categorized by well-known television genres: current affairs, environment and wildlife, art, music & culture, lifestyle, history and politics, adventure and travel, science and technology, sport, and so on.<sup>27)</sup> The most important markets in Eastern Europe include the Thessaloniki

23) See Daniel Steinhart, ‘Fostering international cinema: The Rotterdam Film Festival, CineMart, and Hubert Bals Fund’, *Mediascape*, no. 2 (Spring 2006), pp. 1–13. On the influence of shaping peripheral cinema see Miriam Ross, ‘The film festival as producer: Latin American films and Rotterdam’s Hubert Bals Fund’, *Screen*, vol. 52, no. 2 (Summer 2011), pp. 261–267; Minerva Campos, ‘La América Latina de “Cine en Construcción”: Implicaciones del apoyo económico de los festivales internacionales’, *Archivos de la Filmoteca*, no.71 (2013).

24) Alex Fischer, ‘Conceptualising basic film festival operation: an open system paradigm’ (doctoral thesis: Bond University, 2009), p. 138.

25) Open Society Foundations, <<http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/about>> [accessed 11 May 2013].

26) For an academic analysis of film festival markets see Charles-Clemens Rüling, ‘Festivals as field-configuring events: the Annecy International Animated Film Festival and Market’, in Iordanova and Rhyne (eds), *Film Festival Yearbook 1*.

27) These categories are used in the catalogue of the 12th International Doc Market of the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival 2010. Other catalogues use different labels. For example, the East Silver Central & Eastern

DocMarket, (1999–), the East Silver Market in Jihlava (2004–), the Krakow Film Market (2005–), and the Prague One World Documentary Film Festival (2012–). Thanks to economic aid provided by the EU's MEDIA programme,<sup>28)</sup> these markets have gone “digital” in the sense that new technology allows a wide audience to view a film simultaneously and to give feedback immediately. Attending the Sunny Side of the Doc market in La Rochelle, France, has become something of a must for Eastern European professionals aiming to develop their international profiles. This event, which is also a fair where production companies, distributors, and televisions meet to promote, sell or buy audiovisual content, has served as a platform for Eastern European filmmakers to present their projects and source funding.<sup>29)</sup> Although Western European markets are competition to Eastern European ones, inasmuch as they are fighting for the attentions of the same industry professionals, in recent years, their interaction has also been characterized by cooperation. Oftentimes one festival's market will promote the offerings of another. Thus, for example, the DOK Leipzig's 2011 catalogue highlighted films available at Chiledoc, East Silver, the Krakow Film Foundation, and Doc/Fest Sheffield.

### The festival as distribution platform

As noted above, it is unclear to what extent the international festival network can be considered an alternative distribution network. Yet, several distributors do use festivals to gain information about newly completed films and those in development,<sup>30)</sup> while some sales agents use festivals to secure distribution deals for the filmmakers they represent and to promote their films. Although this debate is far from closed, I would argue that even though the festival circuit cannot be considered a distribution network in and of itself — by virtue of the fact that it does not generate filmmakers revenue from film screenings — the industrial activities that orbit documentary festivals can lead to distribution deals. As the commissioning editor Jordi Ambrós has pointed out, this situation is a product of the presence at such events of television representatives, sales agents, and distribution companies.<sup>31)</sup>

Therefore, if we consider “distribution” in its narrower sense — that of generating revenue from the dissemination of films — the three principal means by which Eastern Eu-

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European Documentary Film Market of 2010 uses the following: animated, anthropology, archive, creative, docu drama, docu series, drama doc, experimental, gender, health, mockumentary, philosophy, etc.

- 28) The MEDIA Programme is an initiative of the European Union which was established in 1991 in order both to develop and support European audiovisual industries. It offers funds for initiatives, which promote production, distribution, exhibition, and film literacy in member states, EU candidates, and EU partners such as Switzerland.
- 29) For several years, the East European Stand has served as an umbrella under which Eastern European institutions can present their products and initiatives at this international market.
- 30) See Peter Biskind, *Down and Dirty Pictures: Miramax, Sundance, and the Rise of the Independent Film* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004).
- 31) See Jordi Ambrós 'Financiación y difusión: mercados y festivales de documental', in Maria Inmaculada Sanchez Alarcón and Marta Díaz Estévez (coords.), *Doc 21. Panorama del reciente cine documental en España* (Gerona: Luces de Gálibo, 2009).

ropean festivals function in this respect are online distribution, festival fees, and the delivery of films to theaters, television, and DVD. Autlook Filmsales (Austria), Deckert Distribution (Germany), and Taskovski Films (UK) are among those distribution companies operating at festivals specializing in Central-Eastern European documentaries. These companies work with television stations and theatrical exhibitors, and have been responsible for the international distribution of several films made in the region, including *CZECH DREAM* (2004).

Sales agents are primarily concerned with getting as much exposure as possible for the films they handle. They design a festival strategy, taking into account the buyers attending a given festival, the possibilities of winning awards and thus recognition, and the fees that a festival charges for screening films. For this reason, it can be argued that festivals serve as genuine distribution platforms, thereby leading to the generation of revenue, at least for some industry professionals. What is more, it needs stressing that some of the individuals attending these events do so in a number of professional capacities, assuming the roles of distributor, sales agent, and even producer, as is the case with Heino Deckert, manager of Deckert Distribution and the production company Maja.de.

The festivals themselves also act as distributors when they screen some of the films from their own programs at other festivals. Thus, in 2010, a section of Zagrebdox films was set aside for DOK Leipzig, and the Krakow Film Festival partnered in this way with various festivals including those held in Annecy, Grenoble, and Leipzig.<sup>32)</sup> Other forms of distribution are employed by institutions that promote documentary and by film funds. Among the most effective are those used by the IDF's East Silver Caravan, which sends a selection of its films to such international festivals as HotDocs in Toronto. Another example is provided by Polish Docs, a joint-initiative of the Krakow Film Foundation and the Polish Film Institute, which arranges screenings and promotes Polish documentaries at overseas festivals and markets.

Festivals also group together to act as a single programming body, which enables them to promote specific films from their regions in the international circuit, while securing funding from supranational institutions. In this respect, the Doc Alliance initiative of 2008 involved five festivals: CPH, DOX Copenhagen, DOK Leipzig, Jihlava IDFF, and Planet Doc Review — FID Marseille joined in 2012 and Doc Lisboa a year later. Doc Alliance started life as both a programming strategy, which included a selection of films that circulated between member festivals, and as an online distribution platform specializing in documentaries. Doc Alliance, a successor to the Doc-Air web portal, which was launched in Prague in 2006, has established itself as a bona fide VOD (Video-on-Demand) service.

The difficulties involved in securing a theatrical release for documentaries that have been screened at festivals prompted several industry professionals to employ self-distribution. This was the case with the Balkan Documentary Distribution Network (BDDN), a group made up of distributors and festivals including Makedox, Dokufest Kosovo, and

32) Krakow Film Festival: <[http://www.krakowfilmfestival.pl/en/festival/about\\_festival](http://www.krakowfilmfestival.pl/en/festival/about_festival)>, [accessed 20 May 2013].

Underhill, which concentrated on handling documentaries made in the former Yugoslavian countries. This network purchases films, distributes them to festivals and theaters, and arranges DVD delivery, VOD, and television broadcasts.

### **The festival as promotion platform**

With international festival networks developing into indirect distribution platforms, filmmakers, distributors, and other institutions have ensured that promotional activities have been integrated into these events. Such activities include sponsored parties, the presentation of films that are being developed, the production of marketing materials, and a wide range of PR strategies intended to promote films across various media. Institutions that promote either documentaries or the cinemas of specific nations or regions have increased their visibility at festivals by circulating promotional brochures and by lobbying organizers to devote sections of their festivals to the films they promote. Successful instances of such practice are provided by Polish Docs and by IDF and East Silver, which organized work-in-progress presentations for the region's filmmakers at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival under the banner of "Docutalents From the East".

The advertising opportunities afforded by film festivals account for both the introduction of screening fees and the ambiguity of their implementation. This means that, while some filmmakers are required to pay a fee to be included on a program, others — normally represented by sales agents or distribution companies — receive revenue from festival screenings. Thus, whereas distribution companies like Taskovski Films Ltd. demand screening fees, festivals boasting an international presence such as DOK Leipzig can charge a fee to screen films that have been premiered at another festival. The fact that the larger, better established festivals might precondition a film's inclusion on a program by its having received an international premiere (a practice that Eastern European documentary festivals rarely impose) influences the circulation of documentaries in Europe because of the marketing potential of these high-profile international events. In this respect, IDFA's use of such policies impacts upon the decisions that sales agents and filmmakers make about production and distribution schedules, and upon the festivals' abilities to attract those industry professionals for whom such events serve as gateways to international markets.

### **The festival as networking space**

Above and beyond direct monetary gain, industry professionals generate revenue indirectly from festivals via the accumulation of symbolic capital and through acts of reciprocity. Events such as award ceremonies and meetings enable revenue to be generated indirectly, because they can lead to theatrical distribution deals and to sales to television stations. Forging professional relationships also helps filmmakers to secure income. As De Valck notes of IDFA, "the festival is, indeed, what matters, not only because the invitation already adds (modest) value, but mostly because it grants them access to the professional

(network) opportunities of the event<sup>33)</sup> Contacts made at festivals often blossom into long-term professional relationships, and can lead to future collaborations. This drives the development of the network by way of cooperation and reciprocal practice based on mutual invitations. After all, most professionals believe that networking is central to commercial success.<sup>34)</sup>

Since the 1990s, increasing of international contact between the members of the festival circuit has magnified the importance of the festivals not only as nodal points for documentary exhibition and criticism, but also as meeting places for professionals in the region. Moreover, as organizers become more aware of their festivals' roles in facilitating social interaction within their circuit, they have an active role in delimiting, through accreditation and invitation, and, above all else, in enabling — through parties, ceremonies, special events, meetings and so on — the social relationships that take place there.

### Cultural Exchange and Media Policies

The incorporation of industry sections into Eastern European documentary film festivals is closely related to the institutional and funding policies of the European Union, especially those implemented by its MEDIA Programme. Such policies have been applied in those Eastern European countries that are candidates for EU membership, and which tend to participate in the program through the activities of independent institutes which promote documentaries internationally such as Copenhagen's European Documentary Network (EDN), Prague's IDF, and the Balkan Documentary Center in Sofia (BDC).

The inclusion of industrial activities has increased festivals' capacity to attract professionals from abroad. This situation has facilitated both the flow of films from the region into the international festival circuit and international co-productions, which has in turn given some festivals a position of superiority over others. Consequently, countries such as the Czech Republic (one of the first to participate in MEDIA Programme) have served as meeting points for programmers, commissioning editors, and distributors from Western Europe and North America, thereby becoming a something of a regional hotspot. International contacts established by Eastern European professionals at the beginning of the 2000s have played a central role in this process, particularly those who became leaders of cultural management in their countries by applying industrial models from Western Europe. In this respect, traditional distinctions between Western Europe and Eastern Europe are rendered largely obsolete.

Legal frameworks that developed in the EU over the last two decades have affected the capacity of festival organizers to position their events within the broader international network of documentary festivals. In this sense, the 1990s and 2000s represent a transi-

33) Marijke De Valck and Mimi Soeteman, "And the winner is ...": what happens behind the scenes of film festival competitions, *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 13, no. 3 (May 2010), p. 290–307.

34) This point was made by the former chair of EDN Tue Steen Müller. See Tue Steen Müller interviewed by Tue Steen Müller, 'The biggest problem of Eastern European documentary', in Radka Weiserová (ed.), *Documentary Handbook 2: Ex Oriente Film — Making Creative Documentary in Europe* (Prague: Institute of documentary film, 2007), pp. 31–33.

tional phase for the legal frameworks in which Eastern European media operates. The gradual inclusion of countries from this region into the EU and into its MEDIA Programme, sometimes prior to receiving EU membership, has been central to the establishment of regional cultural exchanges. Whereas national Film Institutes were founded in response to new audiovisual laws, the aforementioned institutes for documentary film emerged as independent initiatives run by industry professionals.

The establishment of the European Documentary Network (EDN) was closely tied to EU audiovisual policies. The MEDIA Programme went through a total of four phases, each lasting five years: MEDIA I (1991–1995), MEDIA II (1996–2000), MEDIA Plus and MEDIA Training (2001–2006), MEDIA 2007 (2007–2012), and an additional programme MEDIA MUNDUS (2011–2013). In the first phase, the office for the development of documentary was set up in Copenhagen. However, this office was closed as the second phase began — a new policy organized MEDIA offices in accordance with new criteria, substituting previous bodies — dubbed Media desks specializing in genres such as documentary, animation, and fiction films — for branches based on national cinema (opening Media desks in both member states and EU candidates). Consequently, professionals in Copenhagen started a similar project, EDN.<sup>35</sup> If we trace the professional trajectories of EDN's founding members such as its former chair Tue Steen Müller it is clear that they swiftly became members of an international elite promoting the incorporation of industry sections into European documentary festivals.

A considerable portion of funding for new EU-member states and EU candidates such as Croatia has thus been directed to those Western European professionals who were hired to tutor and moderate at Eastern European workshops and pitching forums. This has led to knowledge exchanges and network development. Eastern European professionals have also been provided with the opportunity to work on international co-productions, and to become cultural managers in their own countries; among some of the most prominent are the Bulgarian Martichka Bozhilova, who became known for *GEORGI AND THE BUTTERFLIES* (2004), the Latvian Uldis Ceculis, and the Pole Krzysztof Kopczyński.<sup>36</sup> Participation at seminars, round-table discussions, co-production workshops, and pitching forums organized by festivals have offered a space for professionals from different countries to exchange knowledge about their respective institutional and funding models, leading to the creation of organizations and the emergence of lobbyists, both seeking to implement these practices in their home countries.<sup>37</sup> As a result of the interaction of professionals from the East and the West, new hierarchies among festivals have taken shape,

35) Tue Steen Müller interviewed by Željko Mircović, 'Professional Documentary Helper: An Interview with Tue Steen Müller'. Online: <<http://www.dokweb.net/en/documentary-network/articles/professional-documentary-helper-interview-with-tue-steen-m-ller-104/?tag=1>>, [accessed 10 May 2013].

36) Tue Steen Müller interviewed by Tue Steen Müller, 'The biggest problem of eastern European documentary'.

37) For example, the Romanian association Documentor, which was founded in 2007 by the film director Alexandru Solomon who had participated in the international co-production of *GREAT COMMUNIST BANK ROBBERY* (2004), has been negotiating with national television to include the figure of the commissioning editor and has helped to put in place a legislation. See Alexandru Solomon interviewed by Hana Rezková, 'Documentor: New Gateway to Romanian Documentary Film'. Online: <<http://www.dokweb.net/en/documentary-network/articles/documentor-new-gateway-to-romanian-documentary-film-99/?tag=13&off=430>>, [accessed 1 January 2014].

whereby certain festivals, such as Jihlava and Thessaloniki, have become nodal points for filmmakers targeting funding for their projects and looking to develop professional relationships.

Although an exhaustive study of the different fees and première policies of individual festivals in Eastern Europe is beyond the scope of this essay, these phenomena must at least be broached if we are better to understand the hierarchies that structure their operations within the film festival circuit. A preliminary analysis of première policies allows us to identify first level events, second level events, and peripheral events. Such a hierarchy reflects the preferences of producers and distributors when it comes to screening their films at festivals. The première policies of Western Europe festivals such as DOK Leipzig, IDFA, and Nyon precondition the circulation of films in Europe, as some Eastern European filmmakers elect to screen their pictures at these sites before releasing them on their respective domestic markets. However, the fact that DOK Leipzig, Jihlava IDFF, and the Astra Film Festival each take place at roughly the same time affects their capacity to attract films and industry professionals. While Jihlava found a solution by cutting a deal with Leipzig that allows industry professionals to attend both events — with a “friendship bus” provided by the festival shuttling individuals between the two cities — the Astra Film Festival struggles to compete with Jihlava as a major event in the Eastern and Central European documentary calendar.

At the institutional level, East-West interaction has enabled Eastern European countries to glean insights into the dynamics of capitalism, into changing laws, and into public television management. Successful initiatives such as Ex Oriente Film Workshop and East European Forum (organized by IDF), and Krakow’s Dragon Forum serve as examples of how Eastern European professionals, inspired by their western counterparts, spread the “western” model to Eastern European countries. By contrast, festivals such as Bulgaria’s Golden Rhyton have remained very much local events, with their organizers having failed fully to capitalize on the potential offered by Sofia’s Balkan Documentary Center to promote Bulgaria as a cinematic center for the Balkans.<sup>38)</sup>

This analysis of the international network of documentary festivals as a system of interrelated events has shown how international exchange increased exponentially in the last years. This finding challenges the demarcation of a particular region such as “Eastern Europe”, on the grounds that these interactions have extended the scope of cultural events. In addition to festivals in Leipzig, Oberhausen, and Nyon, which had already become points of reference for film professionals from communist countries during the Cold War, new events held in Western Europe, such as IDFA pitching forum in the Netherlands, became pivotal for Eastern European professionals. Similarly, festivals taking place in Greece and Turkey started collaborating with institutions in Bulgaria and the former Yugoslavia. Collectively, they operate under a supranational “Balkan” identity. Thus, it is necessary to consider cultural regions not only in terms of geopolitical space, but also as international open networks, which extend in a numerous directions. In this sense, it is possible to con-

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38) Dimitris Kerkinos (ed.) *Ματιές στα Βαλκάνια: 1994–2013 / Balkan Survey: 1994–2013* (Thessaloniki: Thessaloniki International Film Festival). Some chapters available in English online: <[http://www.filmiconjournal.com/blog/category/4/balkan\\_survey/](http://www.filmiconjournal.com/blog/category/4/balkan_survey/)>, [accessed 16 January 2014].



sider a city like Amsterdam as a part of the Eastern European cultural sphere, because the changes which took place in this region in the last decade cannot be understood without looking at what happened in IDFA in previous years.

## Conclusions

Brochures published by the EU's MEDIA Programme listing those projects financed by the EU in 2013 provide insights into the changes that have taken place at film festivals in recent years. Most of the projects which focus on training, the market, co-productions, and promotional activities, are organized by film festivals, with documentary films being well represented.

As this essay showed, the proliferation of documentary festivals in Eastern Europe since the 1990s has been paralleled by industry sections being included on festival programs. Training workshops, pitching forums, film markets, promotion practices, and networking activities have transformed these events from sites of exhibition and international diplomacy into nodal points for documentary film production and distribution. It is not coincidental that recently published MEDIA brochures bore the title "MEDIA Training & Networks 2013" and "Markets and Networks", thus spotlighting the importance of professional networking. This essay's consideration of such relationships has permitted a deeper understanding of processes of international transference of knowledge. An understanding of this phenomenon helps us to explain the development of new festival hierarchies in the



region, in a manner that economic analyses alone cannot do, thereby enabling us to move away from the separation of art and commerce as independent spheres. In returning to Janet Harbord's question of how best to analyze the impact of international film festivals on film cultures,<sup>39)</sup> I would propose that it is advantageous to look at the specific dynamics of festivals, especially the politics of film selection and the dynamics and politics of networking. One might therefore ask two new questions: how might we best analyze the impact that the festivals' dependency on external resources such as films and industry professionals has had on film cultures? And how might we best understand the impact of practices of reciprocity such as long-term partnerships in this process?

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39) Harbord, *Film Cultures*, p. 66.

## SUMMARY

### **Industry Sections**

#### *Documentary Film Festivals between Production and Distribution*

**Aida Vallejo**

A network of festivals specializing in documentary film has spread across the globe over the last twenty years. These festivals have developed from exhibition sites into multifaceted events in which the combination of industry sections and distribution networks has provided a new arena for the production of documentary films. After providing a brief overview of the historical development of the international network of documentary festivals in Eastern Europe, this article focuses on the industry sections that have recently been incorporated into them, examining the new roles undertaken by these festivals. The article concludes by considering how these developments have been shaped by European Union cultural policy, considering the EU's influence on the international dynamics and hierarchies that have been taking shape across the festival circuit.