



# **SOFT POWER, THE BRICS AND WORLD CINEMAS**

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# What is Soft Power?

- **Soft Power and the ‘power of attraction’ rather than ‘coercion or payments’**
  - Joseph Nye
- **The need to leverage ‘national strategic narratives’**
  - EU’s ‘Preparatory Action’ report *Culture in EU External Relations*

# The BRICS and Film

- The BRIC countries represent 40% of the world's population and are predicted by some commentators to overtake the G7 economies in the next 20 years or so.
- Film Industry plays a variety of roles across the BRICS, including...
  - Public diplomacy function
  - Economic function

# 'BRICS turn film market on its head'

- Rapid growth in box office takings from Brazil, Russia, India and China has “flipped” the film market, focusing US filmmakers and distributors on international opportunities and creating a bigger US market for foreign films [...] China overtook Japan as the largest international film market last year, growing by 36 per cent to \$2.7bn [...] With Bric markets showing compound annual growth of 14.9 per cent since 2008 compared with 2.2 per cent in the US, international audiences are becoming “a much bigger part of our programming strategy”, said Rich Gelfond, Imax chief executive.

– Andrew Edgecliffe-Johnson *FT* (3 April 2013)

# Some of our questions

- How is public policy around soft power reflected in the types of films that are produced by, and in, the member states? What does soft power 'look like'? Do the films produced help to support the 'national narratives' the BRICS ostensibly wish to communicate? How do films negotiate, or how are they shaped by, the competing imperatives of the global film industry?
- Can a distinction be drawn in BRICS film industries between production aimed at domestic and overseas audiences? How might filmic narratives intended for an overseas audience differ from those for domestic circulation, and has the new 'soft-power agenda' made an impact on the kinds of narratives/representations being produced?
- How do domestic BRICS productions find an audience? What are the mechanisms of their consumption in the digital age? How do these mechanisms provide new opportunities, as well as challenges, for both governments and individual citizens to reflect upon the nation's soft power potential
- How might governments and non-state stakeholders in film industries evaluate the impact of such soft-power strategies, and especially resolve political and strategic ambitions with the aspiration to entertain, make an artistic product and/or make a profit?



# **The Case of South Africa?**

- On the continent, setting aside external actors, South Africa is probably the country with the best claim to the exercise of soft power, as defined by Nye: through its culture, its political values, and the legacy of its foreign policy. Nigeria may have Nollywood (cultural reach through its film industry), and its economy may have overtaken South Africa's as the largest in Africa, after the April 2014 rebasing of its gross domestic product calculations; however, Nigeria still has some way to go in rivaling **the South African story**
  - Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, *Current History* 2014

# From Apartheid Pariah to Rainbow nation Paragon

- The power of its democratic story internationally
  - The global significance of Nelson Mandela as an unimpeachable moral authority
  - The role of the TRC as an international model (Northern Ireland, German Enquete-Kommissionen into the GDR.
  - The Rainbow nation
  - Very progressive constitution
  - All driven by internal priorities, rather than the external forces that had helped to bring down the National Party Government

# Some of the State's Soft Power objectives?

- **To support the development 'global south'**
  - International rather than national agenda
  - Support and protect international human rights
- **To be an African leader**
  - Mbeki's 'African Renaissance'
    - Focus on challenging neo-colonialism
  - Shift towards economic focus und Zuma
  - Reticent of ever using 'hard power', even when potentially legitimate (eg in the DRC)
  - Commentators calling for a better understanding of 'smart power'
  - Some cynicism in the region about South Africa's 'altruism' (is its role in the BRICS all about supporting Africa or positioning itself?)
  - #Rhodesmustfall, #FeesMustFall

# The role of film?

- As we have gathered here for this Indaba, we are emboldened by the reality that our sector, the cultural and creative industries, including film, now occupies the center stage in ongoing efforts to foster social cohesion and nation building as well as the economic empowerment of the people of South Africa. Indeed we have met at a time when our sector is no longer seen as a nice-to-have addition to the ongoing work of socio-economic transformation. In this regard we are reminded that the cultural and creative industries have been identified in IPAP2 (Industrial Policy Action Plan) as one of the key sectors that are critical to the goal of strengthening our country's industrial base.
- “The country's rich cultural legacy and the creativity of its people mean that South Africa can offer unique stories, voices and products to the world.”
- It is, among others, through film that we can open powerful spaces for debate about where we are, as a society and where we are headed.
- Film is one of the mediums through **which we can tell our unique and compelling stories to the world.**
- We have seen on many occasions that the world is hungry to hear **the South African story; a story of a people that have overcome adversity and are now working together towards a shared and prosperous future.**
  - Minister Paul Mashatile, 4th Film Indaba, November 2013



• [Scottnes L. Smith 2015](#)

- We are gathered here to celebrate the spirit and determination of young South Africans who are telling their own stories and writing their own history. What we have is a soul stirring movie that is yet another milestone in the growth and development of the South African film industry.
- As the Department of Arts and Culture we are proud to have played our part in the production of the film *Hear Me Move*. We believe it is a film that is destined to draw attention to the potential and power of South African talent. In fact, it will make waves in the global arena. It is always important for the artists and producers to remember that film has the ability to evoke the mood and tone of society in a particular ere.
- The production of ***Hear Me Move* is a turning point in getting the young of South Africa to tell their own stories and write our history**. As we approach the end of the yearlong celebrations of our Twenty Years of Freedom and Democracy, it is fundamental that young people are seen to be taking their rightful place in society. It was our first democratic President, Nelson Mandela who said: we can judge a society by how it treats its young children. Through work such as these, this generation seeks to discover its mission and sets out to fulfill it. We see young people who are reflecting the soul of their nation.
- **This production will be our cultural ambassador** who will give South African artistic genres exposure to world audiences. We believe the success of this **movie will put South Africa on a global map and also increase the contribution of the South African film industry to the Growth Domestic Product (GDP)**. As the DAC, we are serious about the business of the arts. In fact, *Hear Me Move*, as with other productions, is part of our broad strategy to advance the economic potential of the arts and culture sector. In line with the objectives of the Mzansi Golden Economy (MGE) strategy, we are making efforts to develop the South African films to be globally competitive.
- Ladies and Gentlemen, let us take this opportunity to congratulate our young production team of *Hear Me Move*. We are confident that they will make us proud **as they fly the South African flag high in the United States**. I am confident that they will represent us with pride and laudable excellence.

# Competing imperatives?

- Supporting economic growth
- Supporting the development of a unified ‘imagined community’- the ‘Rainbow Nation’
- Telling South Africa’s stories to international (= western) audiences
  - Are these the right priorities?
  - Is it achieving these goals?

# Supporting economic growth

- **The new Hollywood? Cape Town takes on Tinsel town?**
  - South Africa's varied landscapes offer huge flexibility (*Judge Dredd, Blood Diamond, Lord of War, Safe House*)
    - Cape Town can be anywhere you want it to be: Middle East, Afghanistan, Bolivia, Sierra Leone
    - More hours of sunshine than LA
    - Local Tax incentives and good exchange rate make it the go-to location for Hollywood runaway productions
  - Providing employment for indigenous technicians
    - The **film industry** contributes more than R3.5 billion annually to GDP, and provides employment to more than 25 000 people.
  - But limited opportunities for local creative talent?

# Nollywood versus the South African Model?

Although both South Africa and Nigeria are developing countries, differences in the sophistication of local demand have given rise to two very different local film industries. In **Nigeria there is virtually no gap between the expectations of different parties in the film industry (e.g. customers, producers and distributors), resulting in a robust but low-quality industry.** Learning is slow, because the need for adaptation, (re-)integration and (co-)development is not clear. Although the underdevelopment of an economy has the potential advantage of minimizing the risk of lock-in and creating a greater incentive for trying new solutions, and meeting some of the criteria for “radical innovation” as proposed by Christensen (1997), the industry fails to meet a threshold level of quality that would allow it to challenge the industry globally.

In contrast, in South Africa familiarity with a high-quality foreign offering creates a substantial gap between the actual and desired capabilities of the emerging industry. This gap may create the motivation for learning, but it is hard to close the gap—that is, integrate the weaker local with the stronger foreign capabilities—across all segments of the value chain. The most appropriate response seems to be to identify niche areas where the emerging industry is most likely to achieve the desired high level of capabilities. Because the work of foreign partners serves as model of what the less developed country aspires to, the industry tends to be very responsive to the needs of those partners. Both the rapid pace of learning and upgrading and its narrow scope result from the fact that capabilities co- develop with the needs and requirements of foreign partners.

- Helena Barnard & Krista Tuomi, 'How Demand Sophistication (De<sup>2</sup>)limits Economic Upgrading: Comparing the Film Industries of South Africa and Nigeria (Nollywood)', *Industry and Innovation*, 2008 15:6, 647-668 (p. 665).

like in

'2014 marks the 20th anniversary of democracy and freedom in South Africa. To commemorate this landmark date, **South Africa at 20: The Freedom Tour**, a season of South African cinema, will take place from October 2014 to April 2015 at venues across the UK.

The arts – including music, film, theatre, literature and visual arts – have played a pivotal role in the anti-apartheid struggle and the important role of creative expression in South Africa continues today. South African films are increasingly gaining world-wide recognition. Recent high-profile successes include the Academy Awards nominated *Yesterday* (2004), Academy Awards winner *Tsotsi* (2005), sci-fi feature and Academy Awards nominated *District 9* (2009), and Cannes nominated *Beauty* (2012). South Africa at 20: The Freedom Tour will open up the diversity, creative innovation and technical brilliance of South African cinema to UK audiences. With African cinema consisting of less than 1% of film exhibition worldwide, the season will counter this marginalisation of African cinema and provide access to local audiences to films they would not otherwise get to see.'

Festival a result of the 'Ouagadougou Declaration' (FESPACO FEB 2013)

02:24

HD

The background is a movie poster for the animated film 'Zambezia'. At the top, the names of the voice cast are listed: JEREMY SUAREZ, ABIGAIL BRESLIN, JEFF GOLDBLUM, LEONARD NIMOY, and SAMUEL L. JACKSON. Below the names, the title 'ZAMBEZIA' is written in large, stylized, orange and yellow letters. Underneath the title, it says 'IN 3D'. The main image shows several colorful birds in a savanna landscape. A large white bird is on the left, a blue bird is in the center, and a brown bird is on the right. There are other smaller birds in the background. The scene is set in a savanna with trees and a body of water in the distance.

# Telling South Africa's stories to international audiences

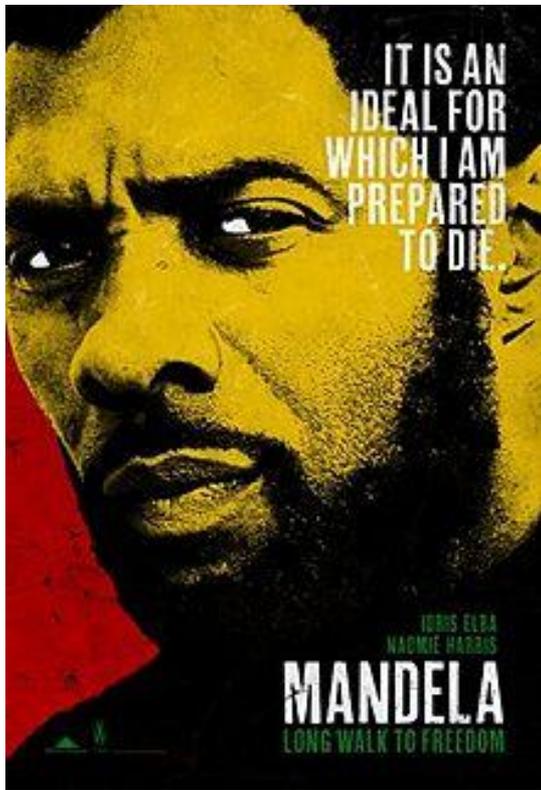
- South African films have tended to gain very limited distribution internationally.
  - Some noticeable exceptions- eg *Zambezia* (Wayne Thornley, 2012)
  - grossed \$18 million
  - highest earner for 30 years.



# *Tsotsi* (Gavin Hood, 2005)

- Wins best Foreign Language Oscar
- New or False Dawn for the industry?
- Like the Runaways, shows the industry playing to Western networks?
  - Following the ‘rules’ for winning an Oscar?
    - a ‘film has to be “foreign enough,” but must also not flout the aesthetic codes of the dream factory too flagrantly’.  
(Georg Seeßlen)
  - Plays to the expectations of ‘World Cinema’
    - ‘Cinema of Resistance’ in the mode of *City of God* (Fernando Meirelles, Kátia Lund, 2002)





# HEAR ME MOVE



# The Imagined National Community?

- **Hugely diverse local filmmaking market massive burgeoning of talent.**
  - 11 official languages and a multitude of ethnicities and races
  - Need to encourage ‘a national South African cinema of diversity’ (Martin Botha)
- **Question amongst filmmakers about the stories they perceive to be supported and the stories they want to tell**
  - “It can’t always be about Aids or crime or [Nelson] Mandela. People have everyday concerns and we need to relate to those.”

Tshego Molete, head of skills development at the Association for Transformation in Film and Television.
  - ‘If you talk politics, race or racism, people go “Sh-shh.’ Whhite people still have a strong hold over our society [...] You [have] never really seen a blakc South African make a true black political film about the past.’

Sechaba Morojele
- Recent growth of interest, particularly, in Afrikaans films?
- Vendawood?

# The Imagined Community?

- Very limited distribution and exhibition possibilities (1% of screen space given over the SA films?)
- Need for audience development initiatives?
- Need for affordable cinemas in townships?
- Continued social and ethnic divisions within the industry?
  - The need to support black filmmakers and black audience development?
- The role of the NFVF. How can this be improved?

# Community Voices

#changingthestory

Emerging black filmmakers fund



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