



# SCREENING REALITIES

**A study of the relationship of negotiation  
between Southeast Asian documentary filmmakers  
and the cultural institutes in the Netherlands considering  
investing in them**

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## **Abstract**

This case study looks at the relationship between the Southeast Asian documentary filmmakers and different cultural institutes in the Netherlands, to see how both parties negotiate their network in order to achieve what they need. This research is based on relevant literature about independent Southeast Asian cinema and interviews with Southeast Asian filmmakers and people working at cultural institutes in the Netherlands. Considering the Actor-Network Theory, these sources suggest that there was at one point a certain platform, but that the relationship is one that needs constant attention and work for the platform to remain, so as to be beneficial to the cultural institutes and the filmmakers themselves, as the network needs to be actively used.

*I would like to thank Rick Dolphijn, my parents, my wonderful respondents and Erik for taking time to help me write this, but more importantly, to finish this.*

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## 1. Introduction

Southeast Asia is a region that is made up of eleven countries and two territories, where at least a few hundred languages are spoken.<sup>1</sup> This region holds different developing economies, and with that, differing cultural expression. And as many countries are only just exiting the rule under dictatorial regimes, a number of them still deal with problems of censorship,<sup>2</sup> and some navigating a postcolonial context. With these burgeoning economies comes the need for people to express themselves politically, but also culturally and artistically. Some of this expression has gained attention outside of the Southeast Asian region. One of these forms of expression is through film, and more specifically, through documentary.

Documentary is part of the film medium that aims to instruct, educate, create a historical record, and in many cases also to entertain.<sup>3</sup> Though documentary is the retelling of certain factual-based stories, it is key to not forget the importance of the aesthetic form. The director is more than a recounter of factual information; they make films out of a need to express themselves creatively as well, and they have chosen film as their preferred way of telling this story. Documentary can be employed also as societal agent of change, that is, documentary has the ability to encourage discussion about societal issues.<sup>4</sup> Because not all facts are equally beneficial to different actors and may cause friction, some of them choose to screen, that is to censor, these documentaries. These different actors may be governments, festivals, cinema's or institutes both in Southeast Asia as well as outside of it.

Many of these documentaries are sent to film festivals outside of their country in the hope of them being shown to a larger audience. They are also sent to festivals in the Netherlands. In 2013 the International Documentary Film festival in Amsterdam (IDFA) focused on these Southeast Asian documentaries and had a special guest Southeast Asian who helped with selecting a segment of the film program. For the duration of the festival, Southeast Asian documentaries were in the spotlight and were seen by thousands.

With this context in mind, this thesis attempts to answer the following question:

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<sup>1</sup> "Languages of South East Asia at SOAS." *SOAS, University of London*, accessed March 25, 2014. <http://www.soas.ac.uk/sea/sealanguages>.

<sup>2</sup> "Southeast Asia: Dictatorships Are Gone, But Censorship Hangs On," *Global Voices Advocacy*, October 08 2013, accessed July 20, 2017, <https://advox.globalvoices.org/2013/10/08/southeast-asia-dictatorships-are-gone-but-censorship-hangs-on>.

<sup>3</sup> According to the Oxford English Dictionary.

<sup>4</sup> "What is the purpose of a documentary," *Desktop Documentaries*, no date, accessed 18 June, 2017, <http://www.desktop-documentaries.com/what-is-the-purpose-of-a-documentary.html>.

*How have independent documentaries and their Southeast Asian filmmakers created an audience and a long term platform in the Netherlands since the year 2013?*

This question will be answered by looking at the following sub-questions:

*What are the important actants in the network of this created platform and in which ways do they act upon each other?*

*What role does censorship play in this network?*

*In which ways are these Southeast Asian documentaries finding an audience in the Netherlands in a post-colonial context?*

The term 'platform' refers two things: first, the physical place where these films and their filmmakers are put in the spotlight for instance at the theatre where the film is shown and where a Q&A is held. Secondly, the platform is a created non-physical environment where different directors, scholars and other people interested in Southeast Asian documentary can join and discuss the related topics. It is a created sphere in which the participants can discuss and learn from each other.

This thesis will look at the way in which the Southeast Asian culture, society and government influence the choice of the filmmaker to look outside of their own country for funding, acknowledgement and the possibility of screening their films. It will also look at how the Dutch funds and organisations have created institutional platforms for the documentaries to be viewed by Dutch audiences. It will look at the networks that are involved in the process of showing a Southeast Asian film in the Netherlands, and how these networks function. Finally, it will look at the extent to which the platform that has been created is temporary or has more long term potential.

The countries that this thesis will focus on in particular are Cambodia, Thailand and Indonesia. This is first of all, because these countries were represented by filmmakers at the 2013 edition of IDFA. Not all of the countries in this region have an active film and documentary industry, and IDFA was a good indication of which countries did, based on the amount of films per country. In 2013, there were 9 Cambodian films, 3 Indonesian films and 3 Thai films as well as a number of others. Besides this, it was important to select countries whose film industries have been written about by different sources. Finally, in the case of Indonesia, the post-colonial context in relation to the Netherlands made it an intriguing case. These reasons all led to these three countries being selected for analysis.

The overall structure of this thesis is as follows: after this introduction and the motivation, we look at the methodology by which the analysis will take place. After this, the thesis will give a brief overview of documentary in these Southeast Asian countries; this will be followed by the discussion of the institutes and their motives for their interest in these films and filmmakers, and what interest they have in creating a platform for the films and their makers. Here we will also look at the way that the documentary filmmakers themselves look at the institutes in the Netherlands, and how their films are accepted, if they found this platform, and then, whether it was beneficial to them. Following this, a study of the actors in the networks in this thesis will take place, with a focus on the implications of the choices that are made by different actors. A conclusion with a summary of the answers to the thesis questions will bring a close to this study.

## **1.1 Motivation**

When in 2013 IDFA focused on Southeast Asian documentaries, more Southeast Asian filmmakers than ever before were brought to the festival to show their work. A platform was created for the makers, buyers and audience to interact more closely and offered potential for furthering the relationship between the Southeast Asian documentary film and different actors in the Netherlands. But would the one-time festival focus activate a stronger presence of Southeast Asian documentaries at following festivals and at other screenings?

A number of different organisations in the Netherlands have used their 'platform', that is, their cultural position, to bring Southeast Asian films into the spotlight. It is interesting to look at their reasons for this, and what the lasting results are of their decision to do so. And the answer may not be unique for Southeast Asian films specifically, but also relevant to films from many different non-Western countries.

As the filmmakers in this study will have other platforms outside of the Netherlands, this study can be compared to other, similar studies of ways in which different organisations in the West support films and other forms of cultural expression from developing nations. The effectiveness of cultural stimulation is relevant not only to the film industry, but also to other parts of the cultural sector. When the government is not looking at preserving or stimulating its own cultural traditions and industries, there need to be other ways for cultural expression to take place. Though the question of responsibility for supporting cultural expression will not be discussed here, this thesis will reflect on why the institutes choose to stimulate films and directors such as these and specifically how the Netherlands' own historical context is relevant to this with regards to their ties to Indonesia.

## 2. Methods and the Actor-Network Theory

This chapter discusses the methods used to answer the thesis question. A large part of the chapter focuses on the Actor Network Theory. This is the method of analysis that will be used here in order to study the Southeast Asian filmmakers and their work in relation to the possibility of showing their films in the Netherlands and the censorship that takes place in between all the interactions.

In order to analyse the results to answer the thesis questions, it is necessary to use different sources and methods. Qualitative, rather than quantitative, research will be used. This consists of a number of interviews with key respondents, a discussion panel at a seminar that was part of the IDFA program and relevant literature. The Actor Network Theory (ANT) will be used to analyse the relationship and connections between the different actors: namely the filmmakers, their work, the organisations and public in the Netherlands and of course the context of the Southeast Asian cultural industries, particularly with regards to the question of screening reality – is reality being shown on the screen and is it at the same time being censored (screened if you will)? First we will do a contextual analysis in order to find which interests are at play for the different actants in the context they are in

The Actor Network Theory is a method that analyses the networks and relationships that are created when two or more entities interact with each other.<sup>5</sup> The analysis starts from the data – using it to, eventually, shape results, and answering the thesis question, instead of working from a theory about the thesis topic and from there trying to prove or disprove the expected results. The following section explains how the ANT works, and how it will be used to analyse the data this study has collected.

Where sociologists claim that social networks are only made up of social ties,<sup>6</sup> Bruno Latour claims that the social is only something that can be measured by the traces left over from a new connection between elements that are in themselves not 'social'.<sup>7</sup> Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT) is a method of mapping how technology and objects participate in the world and the everyday lives of all people. It looks at the actions and motivations of the

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<sup>5</sup> Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005), 34.

<sup>6</sup> Stanley Wasserman & Katherine Faust, *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> Latour, 8.

human actors in relation to the needs of the non-human actors,<sup>8</sup> and how they form a network.<sup>9</sup> All things that happen are the result of two or more entities acting together. A camera and a filmmaker act together to make a documentary. Neither could have done it without the other. The object and the person are seen as equal in this method of analysis as they both have the same amount of agency. The ANT method deconstructs group formations that are in networks in order to see what they are doing. For instance, if we deconstructed the group 'film festival' we would find programmers, cinemas, directors, ticket booths, red carpets, and more. In the same way, the actants involved in the Southeast Asian cinema being shown in the Netherlands can be analysed. However, ANT also states that the networks must be 'remade' every day, or they would cease to be a network. In this sense, social relations are actually a process rather than a constant state of being.<sup>10</sup> Though it does not give answers to questions 'why' or 'how', instead this method provides a means for analysing social networks. The key point of using the ANT method is to analyse the way in which groups and networks dynamically make and remake themselves.

The ANT aims to avoid an essentialist view of things or occurrences. A film exists, for instance, as much as a technology made up of different pieces of digital data as it is a tool for human expression of creativity as well as a form of communication. Furthermore, the term 'actor' in the name refers not to the source of an action, 'but the moving target of a vast array of entities swarming towards it.'<sup>11</sup> Or to put it simply, it is that which is made to act by many other things within the network. But the term 'actant' is preferable, as it does not only suggest a thing that acts, but also can be the subject of another object or person's actions. The word 'actant' will therefore be used instead. The network formed between the Southeast Asian documentary and the Dutch cultural institutes, two different networks, can be considered using this Actor-Network Theory method. The different actants' interests must be aligned in a way that they will continue acting within a network. Walsham & Sahay write 'Successful networks of aligned interests are created through the enrolment of sufficient body of allies and the translation of the interests so that they are willing to participate in particular ways of thinking and acting that maintain a network'.<sup>12</sup> This thesis

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<sup>8</sup> Ping Gao. "Using Actor-network Theory to Analyse Strategy Formulation." *Information Systems Journal* 15, no. 3 (2005). Accessed 12 January, 2018. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2575.2005.00197.x.

<sup>9</sup> Walsham G. (1997) Actor-Network Theory and IS Research: Current Status and Future Prospects. In: Lee A.S., Liebenau J., DeGross J.I. (eds) *Information Systems and Qualitative Research*. IFIP — The International Federation for Information Processing. Springer, Boston, MA

<sup>10</sup> Latour, 35.

<sup>11</sup> Latour, 46.

<sup>12</sup> Walsham, G. & Sahay, S. (1999) GIS for district-level administration in India: problems and opportunities. *MIS Quarterly*, 23, 39–66. P 42.

will look at the interests of the different actants in order to conclude whether or not the network that was created would remain important enough for the different actants to maintain.

The analysis itself will be done by looking at the data and finding which actant is central to network that the study is analysing. The obvious choice would be to study the filmmaker as main actant. Following this, the other actants in the network will be analysed in the way they act and react to the central actant. Here one of the central actants is censorship: the decisions that are made by all the different actors and organisations in choosing or refusing certain films for different reasons. The data that is used will be based on interviews, relevant statistics, literature and participatory observations. There are three requirements for ANT based research. The first is that one must acknowledge that in ANT research, context does not exist. Instead, ANT makes a difference between actants that leave traces and actants that don't. Only the actants that leave traces will be considered, because an actant that leaves no traces has had no influence and is therefore not relevant to the network. The second requirement is that all actants that leave traces should be regarded in the same way, using the same kind of vocabulary, even if they are made of different substances, i.e. human and non-human. Finally, the study must emphasise the role of connections between actants and what its effect is on the actants and the networks. So the relations between the actants is as important as the actants are themselves.<sup>13</sup> The connection between the actants can also be referred to as negotiations, as the two (or more actants) negotiate together actively, with agency.

Finally, the question that the Actor-Network Theory method will look at in this study is where the initiative lies in the different networks. Which actants are more dominant at the moment of acting and will lead to the shaping and changing of the relationships within the network? A type of negotiation takes place between the different actants, and because the actants both have agency, their acting together is a negotiation in the form of an action and reaction. Because this thesis deals with different actors that are embedded in a social reality, the negotiation that takes place may be between, for instance, the actant in need of funds and those offering funds. The social negotiation between global North and South with regards to development offers this study an extra context. The Postcolonial relationship that the Netherlands has with Indonesia, for instance, may make the relationship between the different actants more complex. And with regards to censorship, for example, who is

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<sup>13</sup> Ritske Dankert, "Using Actor-Network Theory (ANT) Doing Research," Ritske Dankert website, 16 February 2016, accessed 2 March 2018, <https://ritskedankert.nl/using-actor-network-theory-ant-doing-research/>.



'screening' whom or what? Using the ANT this study aims to shed light on the complex relationships between the different actants and the networks they are part of.

Figure 1 Showing the place of censorship in the process of screening a Southeast Asian film in the Netherlands

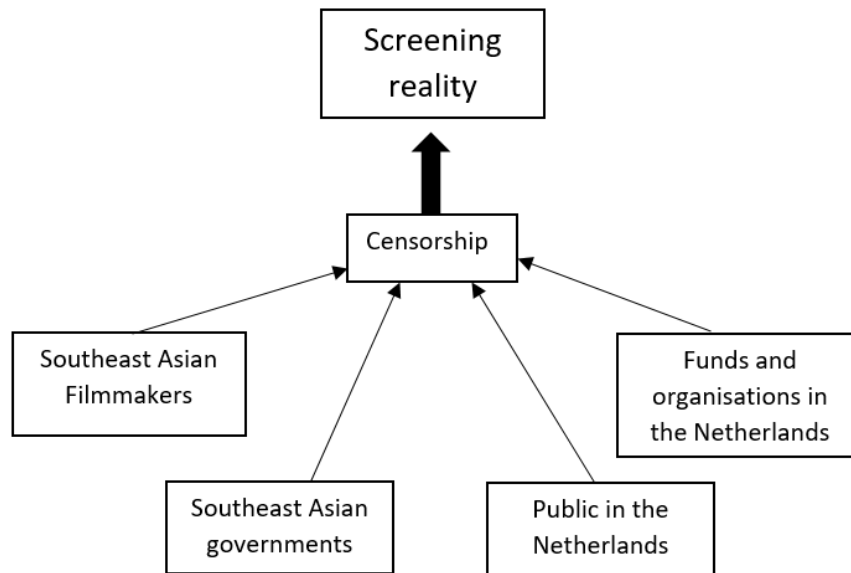


Figure 1 shows the main actants in the network. These are both human and non-human. Each actant is made up of many other actants, also both human and non-human. The key actant that will be focused on is labelled 'screening reality'. This term refers to a few different things. The first being that the study is about documentary, or the filming of reality. This reality that is being documented is a disputed reality; one in which censorship is used to show disagreement; different actants are 'screening' the films before they are shown to the public. Censorship is an important point here. Each actant is screening the reality in some way, which is the basis for the platform that is being created. They are screening each other in the way they choose to interact. By making decisions to act on one actant, they are not acting on another. The network is made up of actants screening other actants. There are different types of screening that have an influence on whether or not the films are being shown in the Netherlands. The filmmakers may encounter censorship in their own country – the government, film funds or cinemas may choose to censor the film by not financing it, by threatening the filmmakers with fines and jail time, but also cinemas that do not find the film interesting or good enough to show to their public. On the other hand, the organisations and festivals in the Netherlands may have similar questions about the

aesthetics of the documentaries and whether the topics are relevant to a potential audience. The topics that are often interesting to audiences and festivals in the Netherlands are not necessarily the same as in the countries the films are from.

## 2.1 Interviews

I.E. Seidman writes "I interview because I am interested in other people's stories. Most simply put, stories are a way of knowing."<sup>14</sup> To interview is to learn what other people know or think, and that is extremely relevant to this thesis. Furthermore, these interviews will enable us to analyse the networks that the actants in this study are all part of.

The main sources of research are interviews I conducted with some key figures in this debate. These can be split into two categories, the first being gatekeepers of the Dutch institutes. The first of these is Fridus Steijlen, a professor who works at the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, KITLV (the acronym is Dutch). Besides Steijlen, an interview was conducted with Raul Nino Zambrano, who in the program department of the International Documentary Film Festival, IDFA, and was in charge of the Southeast Asian program at IDFA 2013. The second category consists of the documentary filmmakers from Southeast Asia, two of which are from Thailand, these are Nontawat Numbenchapol and Kong Rithdee, who were also present at IDFA 2013, and Aryo Danusiri who is from Indonesia but who is currently studying in the United States. The article, *Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups* explains the reasons for using an interview, "to explore the views, experiences, beliefs and/or motivations of individuals on specific matters (...) Qualitative methods, such as interviews, are believed to provide a 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative methods".<sup>15</sup> These respondents, filmmakers from Southeast Asia, a professor in the Netherlands and a programmer at the documentary film festival are all actants, part of the network that has led to the distribution Southeast Asian cinema in the Netherlands. The information they gave in their interviews allowed for the finding of connections between the different parts of the network.

One of the main reasons for doing these interviews is to give more context to the results of the ANT analysis of the networks, much of which has not been written down. Whether this is because that particular aspect of the Southeast Asian film and its relationship to various

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<sup>14</sup> I.E. Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1991), 1.

<sup>15</sup> P. Gill et al., "Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups," *British Dental Journal* 204, no. 6 (2008): 292.

institutes in the Netherlands has not yet been catalogued, or whether it is because the information is based on the personal experience of a film maker, the interview as a source is extremely beneficial. "Interviews are, therefore, most appropriate when little is already known about the study phenomenon or where detailed insights are required from individual participants."<sup>16</sup> The information that can be gained from this is knowledge of the Southeast Asian documentary, the makers and the local situation regarding things such as financing and government censorship, and this information is absolutely relevant to understanding why the network has been created in the way it has. Furthermore the interviews will allow for the filmmakers to discuss their personal experiences with these different aspects of making a documentary and showing it, their experience with different kinds of censorship, the way they experienced the interest for their films in the Netherlands and the platform that they had access to. The information gained from the respondents involved in the institutes in the Netherlands will also provide both factual information and personal experiences and opinions. Through these interviews we learn more about what the institutional reasons are for working with these filmmakers and films from Southeast Asia.

The Southeast Asian filmmakers may find it more difficult to remain objective as they are very personally involved and affected by the topic at hand. This is less relevant when they are asked about their own personal opinion, but only when describing the broader, more fact-based information, but this can be verified with other sources. The interviews will be used in the body of the thesis, as part of the discussion, as the interviews will form a large part of data for the analysis of the networks. The interview not only give us more information about the connections between the actants in the network, they explain how the different actants work together to form this network, what the importance is of the network and in which ways the network has to keep 'acting' and remaking itself in order to remain active. The interviews add context that the ANT analysis cannot.

## **2.2 Textual Research**

Another way of gathering more factual information is through textual research. This study will make use of the existing research in order to situate it within the discourse already taking place within and about the Southeast Asian independent film industry. A number of articles and academic texts have been used in this study. Many of the articles have been written by authors from the Southeast Asian region, and so provide a better understanding

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<sup>16</sup> Gill et al., 292.

of the context in which the filmmakers have made and produced their works. These texts are often news articles written by local authors working in the film industry.

The thesis and sub questions will be answered using these different methods. The answers to the sub questions will inform the main thesis question.

### **2.3 Justification**

The choice for only interviewing three Southeast Asian filmmakers was made for a few reasons. The first and most important one being practicality. Kong Rithee and Nontawat Numbenchapol were suggested to me by Raul Nino Zambrano. Both were contacts of his, as they had a film showing at the 2013 edition of IDFA and were present at the Southeast Asian seminar held during the festival. Because I chose to discuss IDFA as a main part of this 'platform' formation, it was necessary to interview some of the directors who attended. These two directors were suggested because of their acquaintance with IDFA but also because of their ability to speak English. Not all of the directors had a firm grasp on the English language which limited the choice. Aryo Danusiri was suggested by Steijlen, as Steijlen thought him to be knowledgeable on the subject of Southeast Asian film. Furthermore, Danusiri is the only one who did not attend IDFA 2013 and may therefore look at the situation differently.

Though the filmmakers come from different countries, it is notable that generally speaking, they all say similar things. A lot of the information they gave coincided with what the literature said about the topic. The danger is of course, that because two out of three of the informants are Thai, the information gained from them is mostly about Thailand. To some extent this will be the case, but during the interviews they had some information about the other countries within the region, and what they said mostly confirmed what the literature said more broadly about the Southeast Asian region. The basis for these different Southeast Asian countries being described together is "provided by the countries' shared historical experiences of liberation from colonial rule via nationalist struggle, in turn superseded by the pervasive influence of Soviet socialism."<sup>17</sup> They are, however, different in how they are governed, the languages that are spoken, the cultures, prevalent religions, and much more.

In order to accurately depict the situation, it is important to consider the strong tendency to simplify the context of organisations, countries and whole regions, reducing them to their basic essence. Though the institutes would try to avoid essentialism when discussing the

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<sup>17</sup> Rachel Harrison, "Special Issue: Southeast Asia On Screen, Introduction: Cinema as an emerging field in South East Asian studies," *South East Asia Research* 14, no. 2 (2006): 134.

Southeast Asian cinema, the programming at IDFA could be said to tend towards it. By grouping the Southeast Asian films in The Emerging Voices from Southeast Asia program together, IDFA may have unintentionally suggested that the whole region is an up and coming film industry. Each country has a differing film industry, as seen through the different interviews. Four of the eleven countries within Southeast Asia did not have a film at IDFA 2013, and of those films being shown, the larger countries had more contenders. In that sense, the emerging voices are from the larger, more economically developed countries in Southeast Asia, while the festival used their contacts in the other, smaller countries to find and request films for their program. This was to no avail. While essentialism does not always have to be negative and can be seen as a 'necessary evil' as it allows for better discussion about a specific topic, it can be dismissive of many differences, even ethnic ones in the case of Southeast Asia. Rithdee said, "when you speak of ten countries as if they were only one, there are always problems. But in terms of programming, I can more or less understand (...) (they) put ten films from ten countries together and labelled it 'Southeast Asia', for the sake of convenience. But of course, there are more differences than similarities among films in this region."<sup>18</sup> Having said this, it is a region that is often discussed as such, and though varying in religion, ethnicity and language, just to name a few of many, it is also a useful way of talking about the region generally. In all regions and even within countries and cities, there are different cultures and languages, and there is a need to generalize in order to be able to compare them. IDFA would not have been able to find fourteen films of the same high level of quality to show from most of these countries individually. By being grouped together, they are more easily recognized for their individuality and differences. The results of this research are not homogenous, they are not the same for every country. But for the sake of the way the film festivals program the films, they are considered a collective and a region.

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<sup>18</sup> Kong Rithdee, in an interview with the author March 10, 2014.

### 3. Analysis and discussion

In this section we will look first at the Southeast Asian context, followed by the institutional context in the Netherlands, analysing them with the ANT method. This is done in order to draw conclusions about the means by which a platform is created, to what extent the platform is sustainable and in which ways censorship plays a role in this network.

#### 3.1 The Documentary Filmmakers in Southeast Asia

To understand why the Southeast Asian filmmakers would be interested in dealing with international funds and festivals, it is important to look at what the local situation offers them. The analysis in this will be on country by country basis, as the context in each country will to some extent differ from the others. The countries that will be discussed are Thailand, Indonesia and Cambodia. In all these countries, the government as well as the local population shape and are part of the context in which the filmmakers work. Vitali and Willemen write "The functioning of cinema as an industry and a cultural practice in any of these territories is overdetermined by the institutions of the state – from censorship through to taxation (...) – but the economic forces sustaining any given film do not necessary mobilize the available narrative stock in the directions preferred by the state."<sup>19</sup> Hopkinson, a filmmaker and directors wrote the following in a paper published by UNESCO "As informational film-making in a developing country can never be a commercially viable proposition in itself, it has to be largely financed out of public funds."<sup>20</sup> These different actants in the network of the documentary film, and money in particular, influence not only whether or not the film is made, but also if the filmmakers are able to choose the topic they wish to make a film about without interference from the government.

##### 3.1.1 Thailand

Two of the three filmmakers interviewed for this study are from Thailand. Both Nontawat Numbenchapol and Kong Rithdee had films featured in the 2013 edition of IDFA, in the Emerging Voices from Southeast Asia program. Both were present at the festival.

The context of the documentary film in Thailand is one where the government has no clear support system for art and culture.<sup>21</sup> Filmmakers can apply for funds, but there is no guarantee that they will receive it, and if they do, there is no fixed amount. The government

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<sup>19</sup> Valentina Vitali and Paul Willemen, *Theorising National Cinema*, 2006, 7.

<sup>20</sup> Peter Hopkinson, "The Role of Film in Development," *UNESCO Reports and Papers on Mass Communication*, no. 64 (1971): 13.

<sup>21</sup> Rithdee.

has no set budget, which provides little security and low expectations. According to Kong Ritthdee, many of the films that did receive funds tended to be propagandistic. The filmmakers need to find funding for their projects as most of them cannot finance it themselves. Like many independent filmmakers, most documentary filmmakers have alternative employment to be able to work on their own projects. Kong Ritthdee, for instance, is a film critic and journalist who made his film *GADDAFI* (2013) with a friend on weekends, in their own time. Numbenchapol is a filmmaker who works on other projects as a still photographer or cinematographer as source of income, and also worked on his own film project *BOUNDARY* (2013) when he had time.

There are possibilities for film education in Thailand. However, they have a very low budget, This means that the schools cannot provide up-to-date hardware or software, so the young filmmakers start with a larger challenge than their peers in the Netherlands, for instance.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the syllabus does not reflect on Thai film history, limiting the students' historical perspective. Often the students receive only one or two courses on film theory and film criticism.<sup>23</sup> The young filmmakers may experience less connection with their national film industry and may be quicker to look outside of Thailand for funds and a platform for their productions.

In many countries in Southeast Asia discussing some subjects is still a taboo. By showing the negative aspects of a country, the authorities believe the filmmaker could be undermining national identity and national security.<sup>24</sup> Some of the countries have fragile economies, making the global public opinion important. The Thai filmmakers interviewed were aware of specific topics that they needed to avoid, such as the Thai royal family. Censorship seems to be mainly a problem for the filmmakers who aim to show their films in public locally. One interesting result of censorship is that in some cases the censoring of a film has increased its audience, who are interested in seeing the film because of the fact that the censorship board has deemed it irresponsible, spurring the film's popularity.<sup>25</sup> This was the case in Nontawat Numbenchapol's documentary *BOUNDARY* (2013), where the board

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<sup>22</sup> Chalida Uabumrungjit, "The Age of Thai Independence" in *Glimpses of Freedom*, ed. May Adadol Ingawanij and Benjamin McKay (New York: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2012), 52.

<sup>23</sup> Uabumrungjit, 52.

<sup>24</sup> May Adadol Ingawanij, "Introduction: Dialectics of Independence" in *Glimpses of Freedom*, ed. May Adadol Ingawanij and Benjamin McKay (New York: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2012), 7.

<sup>25</sup> Angie Bexley, "Independence and Indigenous Film: The Framing of Timor-Leste," in *Glimpses of Freedom*, ed. May Adadol Ingawanij and Benjamin McKay (New York: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2012), 142.

was unprepared for the sudden upheaval from national and international news agencies. The ban was quickly lifted and explained to be a misunderstanding.

Though censorship has proven to be a challenge, distribution is also a complicated matter. Local distribution of Southeast Asian documentaries can be difficult. Some of the directors suggested that the locals are uninterested in documentary in general as they find it “boring and educational, something they see on TV”.<sup>26</sup> This attitude is one that Rithdee gives as explanation for documentaries not being shown at the cinemas. Numbenchapol’s film *BOUNDARY* (2013) premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival, and even after that he himself had to rent a screen at a local theatre in Bangkok to show his film.<sup>27</sup> There is a strong incentive to look beyond the own local context for financial support and attention.

### **3.1.2 Indonesia**

According to Danusiri, the Indonesian government is increasing the budget for culture, even giving grants to twenty or so short film projects.<sup>28</sup> This means that more money is available for film projects. In 2012 and 2014 two documentaries about Indonesia by the filmmaker Joshua Oppenheimer gained a lot of attention, and an Oscar nomination. Like Cambodian Rithy Panh’s work, the documentaries focused on the violent history of the country. These films were financed or produced mostly by organisations (funds or production companies) from European countries. But because they are (mostly) not Indonesian productions, they were free to tackle difficult topics without being censored.

With regards to censorship: Indonesia hosts the annual Queer Film Festival, Q!FF, that cannot screen its films at cinemas or public theaters or ask people to pay for tickets because that means that the censorship board is involved, and most films at the festival would not pass the Indonesia censorship board. The festival can only screen free of charge at cultural centers, where only a limited audience will come see them.<sup>29</sup> Some of the Indonesian films shown at IDFA dealt with Southeast Asian transsexuals or transgenderism. It is often the topics that are taboo in countries like Indonesia that make them more interesting for the Netherlands. However, in 2017 Q!FF has decided to stop as it was under too much pressure

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<sup>26</sup> Rithdee.

<sup>27</sup> Nontawat Numbenchapol, in an interview with the author February 27, 2014.

<sup>28</sup> Aryo Danusiri, in an interview with the author, March 14, 2014.

<sup>29</sup> John Badalu, interview by Chris Chong Chan Fui, “Me, Woman and That Woman,” in *Glimpses of Freedom*, ed. May Adadol Ingawanij and Benjamin McKay (New York: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2012), 81.



and had too few resources to keep going.<sup>30</sup> It claimed to be the longest running film festival in Indonesia.<sup>31</sup>

### 3.1.3 Cambodia

Cambodia has no formal film education programme nor does it have funds for independent films.<sup>32</sup> The most famous Cambodian documentary maker, Rithy Panh, studied in France. In 2017 a fundraiser was started to initiate the Cambodia Film Fund, aimed at educating young filmmakers and in order to fund new film projects.<sup>33</sup> Currently, the fundraiser is still going. It was set up by a number of Cambodian filmmakers who struggled because they had to fully finance their own films. They hope this will change things for young filmmakers and their education.

One aspect of education that is important is the historical education, not just of filmmakers, but also the education of the local people. Rithy Panh together with Ieu Pannakar, Senator and Minister of the Royal Palace, set up the Bophana Audiovisual Resource Centre in Phnom Penh that focuses on archiving and production of films in Cambodia. Much of film history has disappeared due to neglect of the old film reels and this Centre tries to preserve and restore old footage. "The Bophana Center acquires film, television, photography and sound archives on Cambodia all around the world; and it gives free public access to this precious heritage."<sup>34</sup> During the reign of the Khmer Rouge, independent and commercial media was destroyed as part of the Marxist and xenophobic ideals inherent of the time, the films that were made instead were propagandist.<sup>35</sup> These propaganda films are also collected at Bophana, as they reveal an important part of the Cambodian history. Furthermore, the Bophana Centre also trains young people filmmakers. Though this is a private organization, it is supported by different governmental organisations, including the Cambodian Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, the French Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs, the French Ministry of Culture and Communication, the US State Department and more.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> John Badalu, "Q! Film Festival Is Taking a Break. A Statement from the Founder." Twitter, 5 March 2017, accessed 5 December 2017, <https://twitter.com/QFilmFestival/status/838264670456684544>.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> "Cambodia," *Approaching a Niche: Documentaries in Cambodia*, *DocNet Southeast Asia*, accessed 2 March 2018, <http://www.goethe.de/ins/id/lp/prj/dns/dfm/cam/enindex.htm>.

<sup>33</sup> "Cambodia Film Fund," *TosFUND*, accessed 3 March 2018, <https://www.tosfund.com/en/campaigns/10>.

<sup>34</sup> "About the Bophana Center," *Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center*, accessed May 9, 2014, <http://bophana.org/en/about>.

<sup>35</sup> Sam Sam-Ang, "Preserving a Cultural Tradition: Ten Years After the Khmer Rouge", *Cultural Survival*, accessed June 6, 2014, <http://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/cambodia/preserving-cultural-tradition-ten-years-after-khme>.

<sup>36</sup> "About the Bophana Center."

Bophana Centre offers free screenings of documentaries and some foreign independent films, making them more accessible for the local population. The Centre also hosts the Cambodia International Film Festival, where not only local filmmakers but also foreign filmmakers are involved. This center is known to be supported by the well-known actress and filmmaker Angelina Jolie.<sup>37</sup> In this sense, Cambodia has more opportunities for young filmmakers. However this is not to say that censorship is not a problem. One journalist wrote "Cambodia is a 'free speech' nation, but you must be careful all the time".<sup>38</sup> Cambodia does not have a very high position in the World Press Freedom Index, fluctuating between the 132<sup>nd</sup> and the 144<sup>th</sup> place, with the country in the number one place having the most press freedom<sup>39</sup>. The charges most commonly laid against people with regards to the practical application of this censorship is 'defamation and damaging the country's image'.<sup>40</sup>

### 3.2 Censorship

With regards to censorship in other Southeast Asian countries: "The arbitrariness of state censorship is a perennial problem in Southeast Asia, particularly in Burma, which has ninety-four unlisted rules, making filmic representation a guessing game."<sup>41</sup> And it is not only the Burmese film industry has many rules. Rithdee commented that, ironically, the Southeast Asian country that has the harshest censorship is also the country that seems most committed to funding independent films, Singapore.<sup>42</sup>

Each country has some form of censorship that influences the films that are being made and the platforms that can show them locally and within the region. What has also been happening is an increase in internet censorship. Vimeo, a large video sharing website has been blocked in Indonesia, the Thai military threatened legal action against Facebook if they didn't block a number of pages that they believed threatened their national identity, Vietnam claims that YouTube has blocked a large number of the channels and videos that their communist government for censorship has deemed inappropriate.<sup>43</sup> These different

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<sup>37</sup> "CIFF's Honorary Committee," Cambodia International Film Festival, accessed 28 July, 2017, [cambodia-iff.com/committee/](http://cambodia-iff.com/committee/).

<sup>38</sup> Kay Kimsong, editor of the *Phnom Penh Post Khmer* in an email to Karen Coates of the Columbia Journalism Review, July 26, 2013.

<sup>39</sup> "World Press Freedom Index," Reporters Without Borders, accessed 29 March, 2018, <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>.

<sup>40</sup> "Cambodia," Reporters Without Borders, accessed 29-06-2017, <https://rsf.org/en/cambodia>.

<sup>41</sup> Gaik Cheng Koo, "Witnessing an Explosion: The Third Annual Conference of New Southeast Asian Cinemas," *Metro Magazine* 152 (2007): 86.

<sup>42</sup> Rithdee.

<sup>43</sup> Michael Peel, Hannah Kuchler, and Ben Bland, "Southeast Asian Censors test mettle of social media groups," *Financial Times*, 25 May 2017, accessed 23 February 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/c87c4364-3c43-11e7-821a-6027b8a20f23>.

websites are means by which filmmakers are able to promote their material, but these acts of censorship show more generally that the filmmakers must be aware of the types of topics or images that are likely to be censored.

### **3.3 Distribution in Southeast Asia**

After distribution through cinema's and festivals, the last step that the filmmakers take is digital distribution, online or with DVDs. Southeast Asian DVDs are more likely to be pirated copies than to be originals. Though selling pirated DVDs is illegal, it is a common business, and the officials tend to ignore the fact when given incentives.<sup>44</sup> Many films that do not pass through a country's censorship regulations will reach it through underground distribution. Though in most cases it is not illegal for a documentary filmmaker to distribute his or her film in this way, as they are not obligated to a production company, it does provide the filmmaker with a means of avoiding this censorship. It is important to note though, that even these markets might not be interested in distributing documentaries, but the director can sell his own home-burned DVDs. The other means of digital distribution is the internet. Some of the films that these directors have made can be viewed via YouTube or Vimeo. However, both Rithdee and Numbenchapol noted that online distribution is their final step. Once they have put it online, it can no longer generate an income, and will not be shown at a film festival as it will have lost its exclusivity. Considering the fact that many filmmakers find it more important and easier to distribute their films as widely as possible rather than to earn money from it, online distribution is a useful tool. The interviewed filmmakers have stated that earning money is not their reason for making these films, rather the issues raised in their film need to be addressed, and to do so an audience is needed.

Digitalisation has not only had effect on distribution, but the increased affordability and accessibility of digital technologies for production and post-production has made it much easier for potential filmmakers to work.<sup>45</sup> Film critic Alexis Tioseco described the situation, "It is difficult to speak of the current state of filmmaking in the Philippines without speaking of the significant effect that the emergence of digital video has had (...) making independent feature films has become a viable option."<sup>46</sup> This statement is applicable not only to the Phillipines, but also worldwide, of course. The digitalisation has lowered the cost of production, as the digital video cameras have become cheaper and the quality keeps on

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<sup>44</sup> John Torres, "Piracy Boom Boom," in *Glimpses of Freedom*, ed. May Adadol Ingawanij and Benjamin McKay (New York: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2012), 67.

<sup>45</sup> Adadol Ingawanij, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Alexis Tioseco, "Shifting agendas: the decay of the mainstream and rise of the independents in the context of Philippine cinema," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 8, no. 2 (2007): 300.

improving. For a low budget production, such as a documentary, very little is necessary. A filmmaker only needs a camera for filming and a laptop or computer for the post-production work. They could buy and download a film editing program but they could even acquire these programs illegally.<sup>47</sup> Because the Southeast Asian filmmakers, like many others, can be limited by the situation in their own country, they often look further for the support and interest they would like to find in their own country. They may apply for funds and to film festivals outside of their own region.

### **3.4 International funds**

Most of the funding that Southeast Asian filmmakers can receive will come from international funds, interested in supporting filmmakers from developing regions.<sup>48</sup> Numbenchapol talked about the need to keep working on applications for funding, because that was one of the main ways he managed to make his films. Of course, he also applies to local, governmental funds but applies to international funds as well to increase his chances of being selected for the funding. There are many funds that focus on developing countries, but most funds have conditions, a filmmaker must have proof of other funding, the project generally has to be at a certain stage already. The funds are quite selective, and have been becoming stricter.<sup>49</sup> Depending on which leaders are in the government, the subsidies for film funds change regularly. Some of the main film funds in the Netherlands are the IDFA Bertha Fund and the International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) Hubert Bals Fund (HBF).

Many international film funds prefer projects that are international co-productions. Often different members of the team that will produce and make the film are chosen, based on which national and international funds they are likely to be able to attract.<sup>50</sup> If one of the producers is French, the film is also considered a French production.

### **3.5 International Film Festivals**

The film festival is “a participant in many other aspects of the creative cycle—such as production financing, networking, and distribution—and thus turns into a key player in the film industry, as well as society at large.”<sup>51</sup> In this way, the festivals have an influence on

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<sup>47</sup> Adadol Ingawanij, 4.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Peel, Hannah Kuchler, and Ben Bland.

<sup>49</sup> Danusiri.

<sup>50</sup> Daniel Steinhart, “Fostering International Cinema: The Rotterdam Film Festival, CineMart, and the Hubert Bals Fund,” *Mediascape: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 2 (Spring 2006): accessed 20 February 2018, <http://www.tft.ucla.edu/mediascape/archive/volume01/number02/reviews/steinhart.htm>

<sup>51</sup> Dina Iordanova, “The Film Festival as an Industry Node,” *Media Industries Journal* 1, no. 3 (2015) 1, accessed 3 January 2018, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mij.15031809.0001.302>.

both local film industries as well as those across national borders. A festival is not just a place for film showing, but it is also a place for filmmakers to network. For many it is a place of business more than anything else. Eric van de Giessen, the coordinator of international support at Movies that Matter film festival explained that many international guests spend their time networking and connecting with different actors in the industry in order to remain in contact after the festival.<sup>52</sup> He said that if they keep in contact and they are actively making or producing films, then they are likely to stay on the radar of many of the people they have met. Alternatively, if a person only visits the film showings, they may not have the same experience or reap the same benefits that the first person may have after the film festival is over.

These filmmakers not only apply for funds internationally, but they also submit their films to international film festivals, outside of their own country, and even outside of Southeast Asia.<sup>53</sup> This is because there is a higher number of festivals in, particularly, the West, in Europe and North America, but also in East Asia. And though a filmmaker might like to screen his or her film in their home country, creating international awareness for their films, their name, but also the issues raised in the films, is beneficial for future projects and (not unimportantly) finding future funding. If a filmmaker cannot show their film in their home country because of the content or in some cases lack of interest from the public, the international film festival circuit is a good alternative. The film is more likely to gain attention and publicity when being screened at a film festival, as the larger festivals attract many journalist and film critics, interested in films from other parts of the world. Furthermore, in many cases the filmmakers are invited to travel to the festival and can broaden their own network there.

Paul Willemen suggests the “ironic situation” whereby the independent film becomes so dependent on the international film festivals that in many cases they can be called neither independent nor be fully part of their own national cinema.<sup>54</sup> This is also often the case with documentaries, whereby the film is made by a national director, but most of the funding and the education of the filmmakers themselves may come from a country, like the Netherlands. If that is the case, the film can be entered into national film competitions in the Netherlands. At the Netherlands Film Festival in 2013, the winners of the award for best student film were from Israel, and were the only non-Dutch speaking filmmakers in the

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<sup>52</sup> In conversation with Eric van de Giessen, 27 February, 2018.

<sup>53</sup> Adadol Ingawanij, 4.

<sup>54</sup> Paul Willemen, *Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory* (London: British Film Institute, 1994), 212.

competition, but because they had briefly studied at the Rietveld Academie in the Amsterdam, they were considered a Dutch production.<sup>55</sup> Though this particular case is not usual, it is not uncommon for Dutch films to have strong relationships to other countries.

De Valck explains that there is an international hierarchy in film festivals and that this means that the high budget or first tier 'third-world' films are much more likely to premiere in North America or Western Europe than in their own country or region. Often the film festivals in their own region are left with the second tier films.<sup>56</sup> De Valck also writes that these western film festivals offer more benefits in return for a première (prestige, network opportunities, etc.) and are therefore capable of attracting the most successful and established directors and films'.<sup>57</sup>

### **3.6 Institutes in the Netherlands**

#### **3.6.1 Introduction**

The Netherlands counts over twenty different film festivals in different cities and with different themes. Some festivals have come and gone<sup>58</sup> while other festivals have been around for a longer time.<sup>59</sup> The importance of the more well-known festivals in the Netherlands is that they are able to provide filmmakers with a steady platform on which to show their film. IFFR, for instance, has given filmmakers like the Japanese Miike Takashi momentum for their reputation in the western film industry; his reputation was solidified by his strong connection to the festival.<sup>60</sup> In 2018, IDFA announced that its newest artistic director would be Orwa Nyrabia, a film producer who previously had premiered his film as the opening film of the 2013 festival as well as having had a few roles within the festival itself.<sup>61</sup> The festivals and the filmmakers keep their connections warm, as they are able to benefit from each other. This section will look at the way the festival programmers and filmmakers collaborate to create a platform for the films, and why they do this.

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<sup>55</sup> Yair Moss and Danielle Zini (producer and director of *WHITE SOLDIER* (2013)), in conversation with the author, November 23, 2013.

<sup>56</sup> Marijke de Valck, *Film Festivals: from European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 71.

<sup>57</sup> de Valck, 71.

<sup>58</sup> The Latin American Film Festival, for instance, which started in 2005 and ended in 2013.

<sup>59</sup> The IFFR is the oldest, it started in 1972.

<sup>60</sup> Steinhart.

<sup>61</sup> "Orwa Nyrabia New Artistic Director of IDFA," International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, accessed 5 March 2018, <https://www.idfa.nl/en/article/98486/orwa-nyrabia-new-artistic-director-of-idfa>.

There are a few main institutes in the Netherlands that have shown interest in documentaries from Southeast Asia. The first and main one is IDFA, which screens between 300 and 400 films over the course of twelve days at the end of November. IDFA has different program sections, including feature-length, mid-length, short, student, panorama, but it also features special programs that change each year. Like other festivals, IDFA is a place where complex power relations are wrought.

### **3.6.2 IDFA**

In 2013 IDFA programmed a Southeast Asia program. Rithy Panh was invited to create two 'personal' sections in the programming; one with his own films, and another with films and documentaries that had inspired him. The festival had a specific category for Southeast Asian films. These were films from Vietnam, Singapore, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, Indonesia and Cambodia. The festival also hosted a seminar discussing Southeast Asian documentary cinema and many of its different facets. To understand why IDFA chose the Southeast Asia region as part of their program, we must look at the way in which IDFA chooses its films, both in general and specifically for this program.

IDFA considers a number of factors when creating its program. This is a screening process which, though necessary for the festival and limiting the number of films shown there, also comes with a hint of screening censorship – choosing the films that suit the moral standards of the Dutch audience. So the first factor in choosing the films to be played at the festival is, of course, the quality of a film. A good festival wants to show the best films, so that it remains interesting for its audience: the general public and the film professionals, such as other journalists and film critics. To remain popular, the festival requires high quality standards. These standards have to do with both the aesthetic quality as well as the morals that align with the expected audience. Where a festival in Cambodia may not want or be able to show a documentary about homosexuality, the Dutch audience are more likely to go see this. Where the government in many Southeast Asian countries would censor this, the government in the Netherlands is likely to support and promote films about the LGBTQ+ community and their rights. The festival programmers also take other details into consideration. Though the films in the Southeast Asian program were not part of a competition, they were expected to have a premiere status. IDFA prefers to screen films that have a World, International or European premiere status. Out of the fourteen film in the Southeast Asia program, only three did not. Another element affecting the programmer's decision to screen a film is the history of the filmmaker and his films. In the case of Nontawat Numbenchapol, the film *BOUNDARY* (2013) screened at Berlin film festival

before it came to IDFA. This made the film interesting for IDFA as the Berlin film festival gives it more value by association. Having gained this cultural worth, the film has already proven its quality and may draw more audiences because of it. If the name of a known or renowned director or producer is attached to a film, it becomes more interesting for a festival as it will gain more status. The main festival guest, Rithy Panh, had become better known. IDFA's choice to feature him as a main guest, and to use his work in the program is also to make sure that his future films will find their way to IDFA, hopefully premiering there.

This last consideration in programming is one of the main reasons that the Southeast Asia program, and many of the programs at IDFA exist. Part of a programmer's job is constant research for understanding trends in film festivals and finding the next best thing. Once a filmmaker has been to IDFA, they may return to IDFA, and if they are very good, and this gets noticed, the hope is that they bring their future films to IDFA. This is also a reason for the student competition. By discovering filmmakers at an early stage, the festival hopes that they remain part of each other's network. Alternatively, IDFA can pick up films that have played elsewhere, but before it reaches real success. The films *FIVE BROKEN CAMERAS* (2012) and *TWENTY FEET FROM STARDOM* (2013) were both picked up by the Academy Awards after they had been to IDFA, the latter winning the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature in 2014. Each year a number of the documentaries at IDFA receive at least a nomination for the Academy Awards.<sup>62</sup> In most cases, however, these films will have already played at larger festivals, like Sundance or Cannes before being screened at IDFA. Getting ahead of these trends solidifies the position that IDFA has in the cultural market.

During IDFA in 2013, more professionals and cinephiles were paying attention to the Southeast Asian filmmakers and their work. The filmmakers themselves had a place where they could gather. Aryo Danusiri's film festival experiences were important for his career as that was the place where he met colleagues and was able to network. At those festivals he met other Southeast Asian directors that he wouldn't have met otherwise.<sup>63</sup> This gathering can have different positive influences on the filmmakers. Chalida Uabumringjit writes that reaching an audience is a big issue for Southeast Asian filmmakers, she asks the question, "how can filmmakers cultivate an audience? Without the audience, for whom should filmmakers make films?"<sup>64</sup> Another problem is that the filmmakers themselves hardly see

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<sup>62</sup> "The Academy Awards Database," Academy Awards, accessed 5 March 2018, <http://awardsdatabase.oscars.org>.

<sup>63</sup> Danusiri.

<sup>64</sup> Uabumringjit, 59.



each other's work in their own region. The filmmakers have a place where they can watch each other's films in Amsterdam or at other film festivals. There they can watch the film, but also attend the Q&A's or meet the filmmakers over dinner or drinks.

One of the ways that IDFA focused on Southeast Asia was by hosting a seminar.<sup>65</sup> This seminar took place one day during the film festival and all of the Southeast Asian filmmakers and film professionals were invited to attend and join the discussion, along with academics interested in the region. It was open for the general public to attend. The seminar aimed to discuss the Southeast Asian film, on the basis of three main themes. The first was 'Making History', which reflected on the use of documentary for recording and retelling the sometimes hidden past. 'Everyday Life' paid attention to the recording of everyday life in Southeast Asia. The last theme was 'Changing Moralities', which was based on the number of films that dealt with gender issues, though it is not solely a gender-theme. One of the attendees of the seminar, Kong Rithdee was critical about the setup and said "it's very academic. (...) I hardly heard them (Southeast Asian filmmakers) speak because the professors did most of the talking", but he does see the benefits of the seminar and the program as a whole, "it's good to get to talk to them and establish contact among the filmmakers."<sup>66</sup>

IDFA also focuses on education, providing younger filmmakers with the chance to learn at the IDFAcademy, which hosts a summer school and a filmmaker's educational program during the festival itself. It invites filmmakers to bring their first or second film project in its development stage for advice from esteemed filmmakers.<sup>67</sup> Some of the Southeast Asian filmmakers have participated in this over the years. Particularly the filmmakers that are also supported by the IDFA Bertha Fund are advised to take part in this. Furthermore, the film festival also stimulates young filmmakers by creating a competition just for students. Investing in these student filmmakers makes them an eager part of the IDFA network, and with a good experience they are more likely to send any further work to IDFA as well. Here is another example of the Actor Network Theory functioning in practice, by keeping this relationship healthy, through the filmmakers offering their films and IDFA offering summer courses, workshops and so forth, the bond between the two will last longer, as both are "performing". Though often it is the case that when a filmmaker grows to be very

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<sup>65</sup> "Making History, Everyday Life and Shifting Morality in Southeast Asia," *KITLV*, accessed February 11, 2014, [http://www.kitlv.nl/pdf\\_documents/IDFA\\_seminar\\_22\\_November\\_2013.pdf](http://www.kitlv.nl/pdf_documents/IDFA_seminar_22_November_2013.pdf).

<sup>66</sup> Rithdee.

<sup>67</sup> "About Summer School," *International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam*, accessed May 7, 2014, <http://www.idfa.nl/industry/idfacademy/about-summer-school.aspx>.

successful, he or she might have their world premiere at a larger, more prolific film festival. At that point, another festival has more to offer in the way of press interest, luxury and international prestige. Once the filmmaker is in a position whereby they have the option of premiering IDFA or Sundance Film Festival, for instance, the latter will be the most likely option as it has more to offer.

When we look at the figures of the documentaries that have played at IDFA since its beginning in 1988<sup>68</sup>, we can see patterns in the number of Southeast Asian films.<sup>69</sup> Between 1988 and 2000, only five Southeast Asian films were shown and two of those were made a number of years before IDFA started and were shown in retrospective in 1993. This is an average of less than one documentary every two years, or 0.4 per year. Between 2000 and 2012 twenty-seven Southeast Asian documentaries were shown at IDFA, almost five times as many as in the twelve years before then. This is an average of 2.25 films per year. But nine of these films were shown in 2012, so most years there were only one or two Southeast Asian films in the IDFA program. In 2013, fourteen Southeast Asian films were shown as part of the Emerging Voices program and five works by Rithy Panh were also featured. In the years since then, not including the 2017 edition, there have been ten Southeast Asian documentaries, or 3.3 films per year on average, six of which were shown in 2014, one in 2015, and three in 2016. Since 2013 the numbers of Southeast Asian film per year have been decreasing. It is interesting to note that the 2017 festival has no Southeast Asian films, the first time since 2000. Of the seventeen countries in the Southeast Asian region, only films from eight countries have ever been shown at this film festival. Furthermore, since 2013 out of a total of 97 projects funded, only two Southeast Asian films have received funding from the IDFA Bertha Fund, one from the Philippines and the other from Myanmar.

The professors Sandra Ponzanesi and Marguerite Waller write about postcolonial, or more specifically, Third world cinema, that "It matters less what a film is thematically about and more about how it engages with history, subjectivity, epistemology, and the political ramifications of all of these."<sup>70</sup> To some degree this applies to the selection that IDFA makes in its programming of the Southeast Asian films. The topics and content of the documentaries are often secondary to the relevance the topic has at that moment. The

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<sup>68</sup> "Over IDFA," *International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam*, accessed 13 December 2018, <https://www.idfa.nl/nl/info/over-idfa>.

<sup>69</sup> This information is based on the readily available lists of films that have played each year at IDFA since it started in 1987 at <https://www.idfa.nl/en/collection/films?page=1>.

<sup>70</sup> Sandra Ponzanesi and Marguerite Waller, *Postcolonial Cinema Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 1.

documentary film festival also had a different program in the year 2013 that showed films related to ecological topics, because of the high number of excellent ecologically themed documentaries available, and more importantly, because the public is currently interested in this topic. But the main consideration for the programming is in fact the aesthetic of the film. Is it a good story, has it been filmed well? These go beyond thoughts of postcolonial consideration.

### **3.6.3 KITLV**

IDFA is not the only institute that worked on the Southeast Asia program during IDFA 2013. The KITLV, that is, the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies in Leiden was also involved in organizing the Southeast Asia Seminar. This Royal Institute in Leiden has as aim to collect and further research on Dutch colonial past and present. The Southeast Asian region, and particularly Indonesia is of interest to them because of its colonial past with the Netherlands. Steijlen has a project in Indonesia whereby he and a Indonesian filmmakers will travel to the same locations and interview the local people, look at the changing streetscape, see what has changed and what is staying the same. This project, named Recording the Future, is done so as to create a record of Indonesian daily life, for both research as well as possible documentaries.<sup>71</sup> This work is important as it can map parts of history that are often forgotten and the gradual changes in attitude about daily life that are not recorded otherwise. Steijlen had a leading role in the creation of the Southeast Asia Seminar.

### **3.6.4 International Film Festival Rotterdam**

Another key player in the Netherlands regarding the Southeast Asian independent cinema is the IFFR. This festival focuses mostly on fiction films, so it is not aimed specifically at the Southeast Asian documentary makers. However, one may argue that the fiction film, particularly from a developing country, can also feature and discuss the current situation of a country through the story and the portrayal of the country and characters in the film and so forth. IFFR is interested in these Southeast Asian fiction films for the same reason that IDFA is interested in the documentaries; they want to show what's new, what is up-and-coming. They aim to be ahead of the hype that may form around these films. They have an annual award for the best Asian film at IFFR, though this is often won by East Asian films. As a film journalist, Kong Rithdee has attended IFFR on a few occasions and said that Southeast Asian fiction filmmakers like the film festival in Rotterdam because of the HBF

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<sup>71</sup> Fridus Steijlen, in an interview with the author, February 10, 2014.

and because they receive the attention that they do not receive in their own home country.<sup>72</sup> It is important for the filmmakers to make use of all of the possibilities that the festivals offer. According to Steinhart regarding the IFFR, "CineMart, the festival's international co-production market, has created the opportunity for hundreds of independent filmmakers to find multinational co-producers in order to bring their projects to fruition."<sup>73</sup> They become part of a network, based on a platform set up by the festival. Over time this festival has made a transformation from being a director-driven event, shifting towards the industry partners as having as much importance.<sup>74</sup> Finding this balance is important. With regards to the relationship between the festival and the filmmakers: de Valck writes "Even if the actual money allocated by HBF is modest and if few real deals are made during CineMart, it is the prestige of being selected and the exposure to the larger festival's network that flows from selection that create opportunities for film projects and their makers."<sup>75</sup>

### 3.6.5 Others

Besides these film festivals, there are other, much smaller, organizations in the Netherlands that are interested in Southeast Asian film. CinemAsia Amsterdam is a small film festival that focuses on Asian cinema, mostly Indonesian, Chinese and South Korean films, of which only a few are in fact documentary. CinemAsia has a mission statement explaining that they exist to stimulate and increase the amount of Asian films within the Dutch film supply and they aim to create a platform for the Asian Dutch community, thereby serving a social interest. The program tries to reflect a cultural and social diversity, to allow for Asian diasporic films, made by Dutch- or American Asian filmmakers. This film festival takes place in a film theatre in Amsterdam over the course of five days.<sup>76</sup>

Besides this festival, there are also a few smaller organisations. In 2015 there was an Indonesian film festival in Amsterdam, showing 5 different current Indonesian films. The

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<sup>72</sup> Rithdee.

<sup>73</sup> Steinhart.

<sup>74</sup> Marijke de Valck, "Supporting art cinema at a time of commercialization: Principles and Practices, the case of the International Film Festival Rotterdam," *Poetics* 42 (February 2014), doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2013.11.004>.

<sup>75</sup> de Valck, "Supporting art cinema at a time of commercialization: Principles and Practices, the case of the International Film Festival Rotterdam," 57.

<sup>76</sup> "About Us," *CinemAsia*, accessed June 14, 2014, [http://www.cinemasia.nl/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=69&Itemid=73&lang=en](http://www.cinemasia.nl/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=69&Itemid=73&lang=en).

other organisation that also shows Indonesian films is the IndoFilmCafé at a cinema in Nijmegen that offers monthly screenings of different films, recent and older.

This chapter has shown the practical reality in which the filmmakers negotiate their film screenings in the Netherlands. This following section looks at the cultural context that places a part of the Southeast Asian cinema in stronger connection to the Dutch heritage as well as the Dutch public.

### **3.7 Post-colonialism and Indonesian film in the Netherlands**

Most of the Southeast Asian filmmakers were not working, or alive for that matter, when the Western colonialists left Southeast Asia and specifically what is now Indonesia. Steijlen suggested that they were not consciously thinking about post-colonialism through their work.<sup>77</sup> Though this may be true, it is part of a context that has played a significant role in the shaping of the country. The post-war decolonization was succeeded by the dictatorship of General Suharto, who killed over 500,000 alleged members of the Communist Party.<sup>78</sup> The Royal Netherlands Institute for Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies was set up because of the colonial relationship the Netherlands has had with these regions. Their histories are entwined. The institute still has its roots in this colonial history, as Steijlen suggested,<sup>79</sup> but the extent to which the colonial history still influences the relationship with the region (beyond having a closer partnership with Indonesia through shared history) is debatable. The interest is originally based on this colonial link, and academia are very aware of the fact that there is a need to reconstruct history together with Southeast Asian researchers in order to find a more accurate depiction of the situation in the colonial time. These academics seem more aware of the colonial and post-colonial impact on the region than many of the young filmmakers.<sup>80</sup>

The position that these institutes try to avoid is one whereby they could be blamed of Orientalist sentiment towards Southeast Asia. In his book *Orientalism*, Edward Said discussed the problematics of Western scholarship, which through the way it researches developing countries defines itself as superior to the “exoticized, inferiorized Orient,”<sup>81</sup> being “dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Other”.<sup>82</sup> Southeast Asia is a

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<sup>77</sup> Steijlen.

<sup>78</sup> M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c.1300* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 287.

<sup>79</sup> Steijlen.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ponzanezi and Waller, 2.

<sup>82</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (New York: Pantheon Books: 1978), 3.

developing region, and though it is non-homogenous in its development, each country within the region is still less economically developed than many Western countries, such as the Netherlands. This means that these Dutch institutes could take on a paternal stance towards the filmmakers, trying to help them as they seem to be lacking attention from their own governments. Regardless of the positive intention that an Orientalist may have, "Orientalism depends on this flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand."<sup>83</sup> This relationship is present, however, in the exchange of money or festival invitations. And though the relationship may not necessarily be post-colonialist, there is a definite power dynamic between the filmmaker and the festivals/funds whose focus is to appeal to a western audience and therefore requires a western aesthetic quality and narrative content.<sup>84</sup> Though the films that are produced by the Southeast Asian filmmakers are unique, the public would not have noticed if there had been less of them at IDFA. The funds and the festivals make choices and in this way offer opportunities that they do not have to offer to the filmmakers. There is always an imbalance between the filmmakers and the organisations in the Netherlands. Considering the ANT, the filmmaker is the first actant, seeking to create a network that involves the organisations. On the other side, the organisations and film festivals also create networks, but one in which they have less intrinsic need for the specific filmmaker with their film, as their network is large enough to find others. What is important to note is that while IDFA may consider their role as partly informative by showing the general public stories from all over the world, they are also balancing showing a 'realistic' depiction of the world and their need to show films that actually sell tickets. This does not need to be problematic, but it may lead to a festival choosing one film over another because it offers a preferential world view rather than an accurate one.

Many Southeast Asians, Indonesians in particular, have immigrated to the Netherlands and together create enough enthusiasm for the different film festivals and film groups to take place. Part of the public that came to see the Southeast Asian films had a Southeast Asian background. IndoFILMcafé is one such organization that aims to bridge the gap between the history of the Dutch-Indies and modern day Indonesia through audio-visual media,

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>84</sup> Tamara Falicov, "Migrating from South to North: The Role of Film Festivals in Funding and Shaping Global South Film and Video," in *Locating Migrating Media*, ed. Greg Elmer, Charles Davis, Janine Marchessault and John McCollough (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010).

attracting audiences of different generations of Dutch-Indonesians and Indonesian Dutch.<sup>85</sup> The films shown here are not premieres, but will have already run the festival circuit, and may even be much older. Some of the screenings also have a Q&A with the filmmaker.<sup>86</sup> This all suggests that that audience is more interested in the topic and background of the film than some of the IDFA audience may be.

This section looked at the way in which the post-colonial context of the Netherlands has some influence on the public and their connection to the Indonesian film. This following section uses the Actor-Network theory to look at the way in which the different actants work together in a network, which actants are the most dominant and take the most initiative, and the extent to which the platform, present in 2013 in the Netherlands has continued to be active.

### **3.8 Actor-Network Theory, the Southeast Asian documentary and the institutes**

This section will consider the networks within the independent documentary industry. These networks may be divided into many segments, for instance going by country, as each country has a different history and different key factors. As a country such as Thailand is a network we should consider the different actants affecting the documentary filmmakers within that country. First and foremost, the government, in the way that it funds (or in many cases does not fund) these films, in the way that it censors and, in the case of Numbenchapol, even bans. Of course the political situation in Thailand plays a role in both the content as well as the production and distribution of the Thai independent documentary. All these different things are actants in a network.

Beyond this, there is a network of institutions within the Netherlands that want to show these films and discuss them. This network is made up of many smaller networks, like IDFA and the KITLV, both of which have different reasons for being interested in these documentaries. Finally, the network contains more abstract components such as the different realities that are created through the different interactions within the network. This network is shaped by the expectations of each other network, and is connected strongly with the censorship that is taking place in the different networks.

In order to give a visual indication of how the different actants in this network are connected and lead to certain outcomes, the following figure can be useful. It shows a

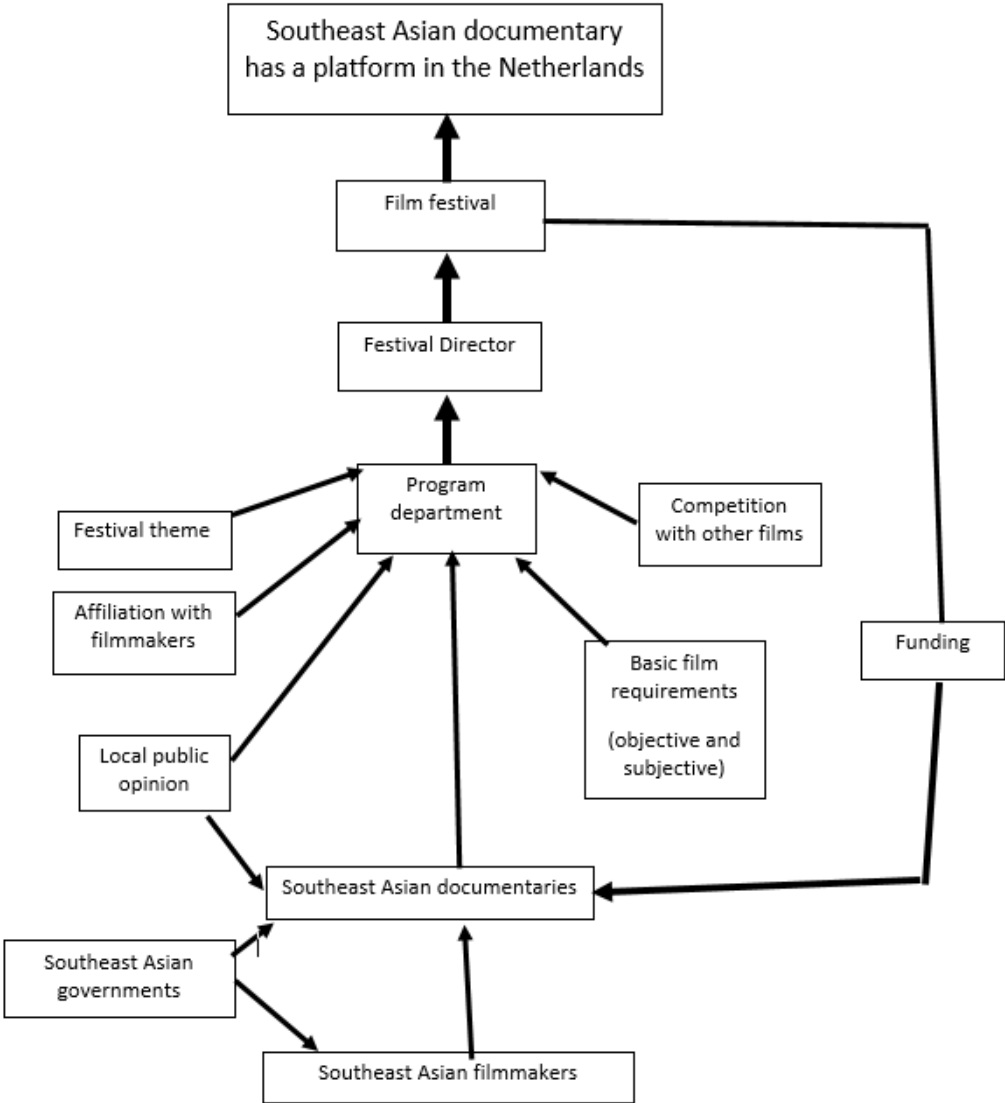
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<sup>85</sup> "Informatie." *Indofilmcafé*, accessed 10 June 2014, <http://www.indofilmcafe.nl/html/informatie.html>.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

generalized network that can be used to map the different filmmakers from different nationalities and their connection to the industry in the Netherlands. It can also be used to see the different points of censorship. While there are many more actors in this network, this figure highlights the main ones that have the most influence, and the path to the filmmaker being able to show their films in the Netherlands. The focus of this figure is on the network in the Netherlands.

Figure 2: Study of the network of a Southeast Asian filmmaker and the platform in the Netherlands



The arrows all show interactions and relationships that influence not only the documentary film itself, but also whether or not it has an audience and a platform in the Netherlands.



While ANT states that all actants are equal, many of the necessary actants are also quite self-evident and need not be discussed. Furthermore, though this figure suggest that there is a hierarchy, this is not the case. There is a sequence of actants the film and its maker interact with in order to move further. Many of the arrows in this figure are pointing at the program department. In the case of IDFA, this department has the greatest influence on which films are shown at the festival. The department is influenced by different things. The first is the basic requirements that a film has to have in order to be shown at the festival. This includes when it was made and whether it has already premiered or not. These are the objective requirements. Subjectively, the film needs to be of good quality and interesting enough to entertain a paying audience. Besides this, there is a limited amount of films that can be screened, so the quality of the competition influences the choices. The theme of the festival also greatly influences the films that are chosen. Looking at the figures of the number of Southeast Asian films at the festival, it is unlikely that the quality of the films from the region were suddenly much better in that specific year. Films were chosen that would otherwise not have had a place at the festival that year. And of course, the festival is more likely to show a film by a filmmaker who they are already affiliated with and whose work they already know. In the same way, the films can apply for funding at a film festival. They interact with different actants in the network, and if approved can receive funds in order to make the film.

*Figure 2* is not only applicable to IDFA, but also to other film festivals and film organisations, such as IndoFilmCafé, that make decisions as to which films they will be showing. Their selection criteria are different, with more focus on the story of the films than on the year the film was made or the premiere status. IFFR's network would look very similar, but with the basic requirements differing as they are not a documentary film festival. But all in all, each of these organisations and festivals are the sum of these different actants interacting together. This figure could also be similar for filmmakers from different regions. Their contexts may vary, but their network would work similarly.

The first actant that needs to be discussed is the documentary film, or filming reality. The nature of the genre means that documentary film can be controversial, as the films may depict realities that others disagree with. Screening reality, or censorship, acts on the documentary films in different ways, and always plays a role in the film that is made. The first and most clear form of censorship is that which is done by the local government in the country the filmmaker is from, or where the film is made. On the one hand, the problems in a country are a reason for a filmmaker to make a film, and on the other hand, the government may wish to stop the documenting of the problems in a country. Filming reality

is important to the filmmaker, shaping reality may be important to the government, but viewing reality is also important to the viewers. IDFA is made up of a number of actants that are actively screening in the way that they select films based on different factors. Some critics believe that the festivals do not encourage access to the non-commercial films by the wider public, instead, they stop them from being able to use formal distribution channels, through their festival, limiting exposure.<sup>87</sup> By choosing which films to show and which films to reject, they are able to create a narrative for the viewers. Many filmgoers in the Netherlands have never been to the Southeast Asian countries and by showing a certain selection, they are choosing certain topics and points of view over others. In a way, a censored reality of the area is being given to the viewers. Finally, the funds, like the festivals, are interested in certain films, often films with topics that are interesting to the local Dutch population, but some of these topics are not interesting or acceptable to many viewers in the country where the film was made. The funds will support filmmakers, based on their own agendas. The success of these films is closely linked to the agendas and interests of the public and professional audience.

The interest in the Southeast Asian documentary cinema is partly due to a small number of popular filmmakers that have drawn attention. Panh's role at IDFA in 2013 made him more visible to the audience in the Netherlands. For Cambodia, and other countries in the region with similar persons of interest, their own cultural economy is gaining notice because of their relationship to the person gaining fame. As Panh won an award at the Cannes film festival, interest in him and fellow filmmakers from the region may have increased.

One thing to note is that there was no strong connection between the different organisations that were screening or promoting Southeast Asian films in 2013. There is not one single platform, nor is there one network that connects these organisations' direction. In 2013 the different organisations (excluding IDFA and KITLV) were not working together to create a platform for Southeast Asian documentaries. The platform was there during IDFA, but that is where it stayed. The other festivals did not give any special attention to Southeast Asian film festivals or to the event at IDFA.

When looking at the data there is little evidence to show that there has been much growth in documentaries from this Southeast Asia at the festival. In 2015 IDFA only showed one Southeast Asian documentary. In 2016 they showed three. In 2017, none at all. Regardless of these numbers, the network that was created can have a longer lasting impact and can

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<sup>87</sup> Dina Iordanova, "Introduction," in *The Film Festival Reader*, ed. Dina Iordanova (St. Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2013), 1.

be reconnected more easily because of its previous existence. If the filmmakers whose work was stimulated at IDFA in 2013 haven't screened their films at IDFA in the years after, it doesn't mean that they aren't trying there, or elsewhere.

Looking again at the figure, the networks need to be active and engaged in order to keep being a network. The Southeast Asian filmmakers need to keep producing documentaries and presenting them to the public in the Netherlands for the network to remain. The strength of the network is as important for the filmmaker as it is for the festival. If the filmmaker was never able to screen his or her film, they would not be part of the network. It is on the basis of the initiative of the filmmaker that their film is spread to festivals and cinemas. The festivals can be much more passive in their position in the network. The filmmaker needs to ask for a place at the films festivals, they need to ask for funds, they need to find an audience. In this sense, the network in which the filmmaker resides is driven by the filmmaker him or herself. They don't necessarily want to make films that are approved by their own government and enjoyed by their own countrymen and -women, but they are actively looking for ways in which they can promote their films.

## 4. Conclusion

The research question and sub questions looked at the way in which the Southeast Asian filmmakers and the institutes in the Netherlands are part of the same network. We now look at how these have been answered in the analysis, starting with the sub questions.

*In which ways are these Southeast Asian documentaries finding an audience in the Netherlands in a post-colonial context?*

This study has shown that different organisations in different sizes have offered a platform for different films and documentaries from Southeast Asia, by Southeast Asian filmmakers. They are screened to different audiences for different reasons. At IDFA a part of the public had a Southeast Asian background, but most of the viewing public was there because of their interest in the film, the festival or for a number of other reasons. There are small groups that are interested in Southeast Asian cinema, and more specifically, Indonesia, due to the shared history. But the Netherlands does not have a stronger bond with most of the other nations in Southeast Asia than it does with many other developing nations, and the public will need other reasons to want to watch the films. For this reason, it is important for the Southeast Asian filmmakers to keep making films and to keep trying to show them at festivals and cinemas in the Netherlands. However, if they want their films to be shown at a festival in the Netherlands, the quality and subject matter have to reflect the Western expectations. It is not only a question of post-colonialism but rather of a very present power relationship between the east and the west. The assumption is that the quality that the western public and professionals dictate is a global phenomenon rather than a local preference.

The fact that the filmmakers come from developing economies means that there is likely to be an imbalance between these countries and the west, with the western public not always aware of its privileged position. The films are finding an audience if they are part of a network of film festivals or if they are promoted by other organisations. Because the general public knows little about Southeast Asian film, they need to be stimulated to watch them. IDFA has an informative role, showing the public the different films from all over the world. But, of course, there is a fine balance between offering a 'realistic' insight into Southeast Asia and in showing films that 'sell'.

In the end, the post-colonial context is not very relevant to the larger festivals or to most of the audience. It is only the films screened at the IndoFilmFestival that attract a specific

audience. The rest of the festivals focus on the quality of the films and the fame of the filmmakers to bring an audience to see these films.

*What are the important actants in the network that has been created and in which ways do they act upon each other?*

Using the Actor-Network Theory, this study showed that many different actants played a role. Though the list of actants that are part of the network would be a long one, this study focused on a few. The first is the documentary film, or 'screening reality', this also refers to censorship, the Southeast Asian filmmaker, the Southeast Asian government, the funds in the Netherlands, and the public in the Netherlands – with a focus on the post-colonial interest in Indonesia in particular that remains amongst the public due to shared histories. These different actants in the network also have differing levels of initiative. Some, like the filmmakers, must act in order to remain part of the network, whereas the film festivals and funds are more reactive than active as they hold a stronger position and do not need the individual filmmakers to succeed. The more popular a filmmaker is, the more initiative a festival will take in order to further their own agenda. The Southeast Asian governments and the Southeast Asian filmmakers generally have an active network in which both governments and filmmakers have an active role, responding to the actions of the other. In some cases the governments support the film, in other cases they censor the film and its makers.

The network is currently less active. IDFA has not been focusing as much (if at all) on Southeast Asian cinema since its program in 2013. Other festivals or organisations have also not given them any more attention than they did before. Southeast Asian filmmakers currently have as much chance of being screened at these festivals as films from other countries. While most of the actants are still present, the funds and organisations in the Netherlands have given themselves a smaller role in the network than in 2013.

*What role does censorship play in this network?*

Many actants in the network clearly have the power to stop or allow films and filmmakers to participate further in the network. First and foremost: the filmmakers make decisions based on topics they find interesting, relevant or one which they know they are more likely to find financial aid for in their own country or abroad. This screening takes place early in the process, when they have only just become part of the network. We also see the government of the country the film is from playing a role in censoring the film as a whole or sections of it. This is done in some cases by choosing to subsidize certain films and not others, but also

by criminalizing certain depictions. The festival censors in a different way. Of course, western quality standards are a reason for a film not to be shown at western festivals, but this can hardly be called censorship, as it is a contextually reasonable argument for not showing a film if the standards do not match the (perceived) standards of the funds or audience. Here the term screening is, again, more accurate. The topic of a film may lead to censorship. If a film glorifies a certain character with ideals that do not match those of the festival or the expected audience, the film is not likely to be shown. In the end, censorship plays a smaller role in what the filmmakers decide their film will be about and what they will show. The parts of the network in the Netherlands that are considering showing the film play a larger role in the decisions a filmmaker makes.

However, the films are chosen and rejected based on western ideals and requirements. And though this is strictly not censorship in the sense that they may be obscene, a threat to security or politically unacceptable, they are selected or rejected based on characteristics that are non-universal. They are screened on subjective characteristics. The question of content and of quality is relative to the audience. And while large parts of the global audience has gotten used to the western film requirements, it is not universal.

*How have independent documentaries and their Southeast Asian filmmakers created an audience and a long term platform in the Netherlands in the year 2013?*

All things considered, it is possible to say that a few temporary platforms were created, on which the Southeast Asian documentary filmmakers and their films received attention from academia, the general public, journalists, and their peers. The platform had multiple purposes which, according to those interviewed, were quite beneficial to these different parties. The academics focusing on Southeast Asia gained insight, shared insight and made new contacts for future studies. The general public got to enjoy the films and gain some knowledge about the region and the filmmakers and the issues that are important to them or that they find interesting. The journalists had more stories to write about and gained knowledge for future articles and such. The filmmakers, however, were the ones that benefited the most, gaining new allies in the region, seeing each other's work for inspiration and most importantly, being able to show their film and receive appreciation and encouragement for what they are doing. Of course, they are also much more likely to find funding for their next projects if they keep their relationships with the industry warm. Considering these different effects of this temporary platform, it is possible to consider it a successful endeavor in the short run. However, as Nino Zambrano said, IDFA hopes that this temporary platform will have some long term effects as well, namely stimulating Southeast

Asian documentary filmmakers to keep sending their continually improving films, hoping that the next big film will premiere at IDFA.

This network would have needed continual attention and activity from different actants for it to remain the network it was in 2013. Having seen the numbers of Southeast Asian documentaries over the years since 2013 at IDFA in particular, the largest documentary film festival in the world let alone in the Netherlands, it seems that this has not been the case, and they have not been able to retain the attention and interest of the documentary industry and network in the Netherlands. Kong Rithdee said that the only way to ensure the stimulation of documentaries from Southeast Asia at IDFA would be to focus on the region as part of the programming each year.<sup>88</sup> As Raul Nino Zambrano stated, IDFA is not planning on having a Southeast Asia program every year.<sup>89</sup> And though, generally, IDFA hopes that the filmmakers continue sending their films, it is also impossible to say how many films from this region have also been rejected as they do not fit the requirements of the festival.

According to the ANT method, the actants need to be in constant interaction if they are to continue being connected in the way they are. We saw that in the 2014 edition of IDFA, the amount of Southeast Asian documentaries had dropped, but was still higher than usual. After this, however, the numbers returned to pre-2013 levels. The platform has lost its momentum. On the one hand IDFA has seen an increase in Southeast Asian requests for funds from the IDFA Bertha Fund.<sup>90</sup> This suggests, perhaps, that at least this facet of IDFA has gained more notoriety in Southeast Asian circles. On the other hand, however, though there was an increase in applications from Southeast Asia, none of these filmmakers and films have been selected to receive from this fund in 2014.<sup>91</sup> Only two Southeast Asian project have been supported since 2013.<sup>92</sup> The filmmakers become dependent on film festivals such as these. And though this is in itself neither good nor bad, the question remains whether the Southeast Asian films do not lose their national identity in the process. If they focus their films towards western funds and western audiences, to what extent does this influence the film itself?

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<sup>88</sup> Rithdee.

<sup>89</sup> Raul Nino Zambrano, in an interview with the author, March 11, 2014.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> "IDFA Bertha Fund Supports Ten New Projects," *International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam*, accessed May 2, 2014, <http://www.idfa.nl/industry/latest-news/idfa-bertha-fund-supports-ten-new-projects>.

<sup>92</sup> "IDFA Bertha Fund Collection," *International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam*, accessed 18 January 2018, <https://www.idfa.nl/en/collection/idfa-bertha-fund?page=1>.

The interaction between the institutes in the Netherlands and the Southeast Asian documentary filmmakers has more to do with the colonial bonds than the filmmakers realize. This being said, it is not a conscious decision, it is merely the historical focus of the institute itself that has caused this to be the case. Neither the filmmakers nor the institutes are considering this bond beyond that the historical relationship means that there is a larger audience in the Netherlands. The idea that this region was chosen by IDFA as a theme because of the shared history is relativized by the fact that this program was only meant for one year. In 2014 IDFA focused on gender differences in the documentary world in their program *The Female Gaze*.<sup>93</sup> In 2015 the topic was Islam and the western world. Each year the topic is different.

This thesis focused on two different actants. First, the institutes interested in films and other forms of cultural exploration. Secondly, the Southeast Asian documentary world with its filmmakers, films and the challenges and opportunities in the region. Both of these areas of study have an abundance of topics and questions left to answer. Questions regarding the relationship of these institutes to filmmakers and artists with different nationalities would be interesting. For instance, looking at how (institutes in) countries such as the Netherlands can support the democratisation of countries in a region such as Southeast Asia through funding different forms of cultural expression. Southeast Asian independent film remains a topic ripe for studying. But while they are shown all around the world, they give an insight into regions that an audience may otherwise not be able to penetrate socially. Through showing these documentaries, the different institutes offer an audience new insights, and they offer the filmmakers new places to build their network, and through this to continue the work they want to do. It is an opportunity for the filmmakers, audience and the organisations to explore a wider world.

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<sup>93</sup> "A Sneak Peak at IDFA 2014," *International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam*, accessed May 2, 2014, <http://www.idfa.nl/industry/latest-news/a-sneak-peek-at-idfa-2014.aspx>.



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## **Interviews:**

- Aryo Danusiri, in an interview with the author, March 14, 2014.
- Fridus Steijlen, in an interview with the author, February 10, 2014.
- Kong Rithdee, in an interview with the author March 10, 2014.
- Nontawat Numbenchapol, in an interview with the author February 27, 2014.
- Raul Nino Zambrano, in an interview with the author, March 11, 2014.

## **Interview Aryo Danusiri, March 14, 2014.**

R: When and why did you start making documentaries?

A: So my BA is in anthropology, I've finished my BA, my undergrad in 1997. My thesis was about art films being in Indonesia. And it's been my long interest to work or make films, so as soon as I finished my BA I stopped to jump into the film industry. But I unfortunately at that time it was the moment of the monetary crisis, so I couldn't really find a good job at the time. But I was working with a good independent small production house which focused on making documentaries. So at that time I was working as a researcher. And then in 1998, after a year I did work at a production house and started making a documentary for a TV station in Indonesia. It's about music in Indonesia. It's called Zoom In. It is about the history of music in Indonesia. It's I think like 13 episodes. In the middle of the productions, at the 6<sup>th</sup> episode, the director decided to stop directing the program. So then the producer decided to ask two researchers, including me, to direct the program. So I had to chance to direct three programs out of the 13 programs, episodes. Before that, I was actually already making my short films with my fellows at the anthropology department, at the University of Indonesia. It was short fiction films. The title was "Jobless". So it's about how a man can lose his job and we were influenced by the kind of American dark comedy.

R: So that wasn't related to your research there?

A: No, but that was the moment when I wanted to make films. There was a film competition, organized by the Jakarta Art Council. It was very rare that they had a kind of competition. But it was... we had the time. And then it was also the moment when technologically digital film was being used by the youth in Jakarta.

R: You said it wasn't very often that there was a...

A: The previous name of the festival by the Jakarta Council was short film festival. But it was in the eighties. And I don't know why at that time of the monetary crisis they had this festival. Because it was the first time in the '90s. The title was Amateur film festival. They used that word, amateur. Because I think two or three years later they started making it a regular film festival and they changed it into Short Film Festival.

R: So that was your first film experience.

A: And we got the prize! Well, the fifth prize. And it's also like, we're anthropologists and we can make films... at the end it was also the moment when we also read a book by Michael Rodriguez (Danusiri means Robert Rodriguez). Do you know him? He's one of the filmmakers in the circle of Quentin Tarantino. And he made films with 16 mm, but they were box-office hits. And he made films easily, as an independent filmmaker. I forgot the title of the book.

R: That was the first time you made a film. And you said later that you made documentary because...

A: Yeah, so the reason why I stopped anthropology is because of my desire for making fiction films. My college, I also did theatre, even though it was experimental, in order to prepare myself to make fiction films.

R: so you always knew you wanted to make fiction films.

A: When I was in high school when I had to decide which subjects to do in college, I was attending a film screening at the Jakarta Arts Centre. At the screening of an Australian film, art house, and the film was so interesting. It was about the life of Japanese women in Australia. And the theatre the director told us that she has a background in anthropology and then after she did that, she went to something called 'Afters', a school of theatre, radio and television in Australia. And she did a Master's degree. And she made the films based on twenty interviews with women in Australia. I was like, wow, that's cool! So anthropology... Making films based on research. Later in 2002, I went to a film festival in Australia and I met the director. I met the director and I told her what happened and she was so honored.

R: And then you started making the documentary series about music?

A: Yeah, and after that TV-documentary about Indonesian music I made several short documentaries, but it was nothing, it was more of a job at the production house. But the thing happened in the fall of 1999 when a friend who works for the biggest NGO's on human rights violations at that time. The friend asked me to make a film for them. Then I went to their office and apparently the director had some footage from television about the conflicts and human violence. And I told him that I can edit this footage, because that's what they were commissioning. That I had to edit this footage. And then I told him that there is this new technology called mini-DV. It's digital, small, and cheap. It requires very small amount of film. So if you give money from the budget, then I can go and do the interviews. And he let me do that. SO that's my first time making my own project. At that time my motivation was more about how to make a program with film. It's something that was very mysterious for me. I didn't have any of these resources, I didn't have books, I didn't have examples of documentaries. At that time the technology was still less advanced than those around us. In Indonesia, Asia, we used Betamax, not VHS. So I was not really involved in this, I was just making things up. You had to go to the film directly for watching on, more concrete space. And to stay with the subject as long as possible. It was a more holistic approach of that place.

R: More anthropological.

A: Something like that.

R: When you make a documentary, what is important to you?

A: You mean like my first documentary?

R: even now, what's important to you when you're making a documentary, a topic?

A: My content is always like, how to engage with public debates about something, with my documentary. I've been doing many different ways of producing the documentaries. But the ultimate goals actually is about how to engage the public on certain issues.

R: when you make documentaries, are there any challenges?

A: A lot

R: I mean particularly in Indonesia.

A: Yeah, do you mean something about political problems?

R: For instance.

A: Because I started making films in 1998 when Suharto fell, so I didn't really face that... Of course in the film, I have to get permission from the state, which is... something like that. But I would imagine that it wasn't as difficult as before. Because previously it was more difficult to get permission to document things in Indonesia.

R: So you have to get permissions to make a documentary? And once it's been made, is there any form of funding that you can get from the government? Or from different groups in Indonesia?

A: Yeah, I get money from NGO's, I never got money from the government to make films. So money from NGO's or from part of my application. Because for me, doing this, everything is my way of making documentaries.

R: So when you make a documentary or film, are you doing something else as well, or is it your full time occupation?

A: It has been my main job. I have been working most of the time as a freelancer. So my main job is making films, and then I have to do something else in order to earn a living.

R: So you do a PhD in Harvard... As a living?

A: Something like that. This PhD thing is like... there are political reason for that. I started when I finished my master in visual anthropological studies in Norway. I had my son afterwards, and then I thought I needed to give him the best education, so that was the reason why I did this. So my reason was to put my son in a US school.

R: How long have you lived there then?

A: We just came back here two months ago, after working for two years in Indonesia. I started here in 2007.

R: And did he move with you?

A: He always moves with me.

R: What is your PhD about?

A: It's about the mostly working class youth in Jakarta. It is about a new movement that has been focusing on the Youth and how this Islamic movement is constituted by the (...) formation in Jakarta.

R: So it doesn't have anything to do with films?

A: I make films, and I am currently editing films. Because the PhD is part of the sensory ethnographic lab, so I have to make film.

R: what kind of position does the government take on documentaries like yours? Or does it not take any position?

A: When I make films, a couple of times I have made films for government TV. I make films for TV stations, so for that particular production I have to get permission. But for the NGO's, for other purposes I don't need the permission. Except when I go to conflict areas, like West Papua, then I need the permission. But it's not for production purposes, it's more like activist permissions. And what I can remember, about three years ago the government started to, in the national budget they started to give

bigger space, like a bigger portion of the national budget for education. And part of the education is for cultural expenses. So about two years ago they, the government, gave like 15 million Rupiahs for 20 filmmakers of short films. That was the only thing I got from the government. Because we have problems, we don't have... some of the friends, they are the activists of our Indonesia. They have been working on how to establish this kind of art institutions which should be supported by taxations to have that established. They are still working on that. But we don't have that kind of thing.

R: How do you distribute your films?

A: I go by different NGO's, universities to screen my film. They don't screen in the cinemas. In a way that I always produce my films with a kind of public funding, through scholarships, through NGO's. I never make money off screening.

R: Do you put your films online as well?

A: Yeah, when I was about to come here, there was a small company that was working on it. But I don't think that it's online now. It's like a new thing for me.

R: Do you use the internet in any other way for distributing purposes?

A: I'm always hesitant with putting my stuff online because I have sensitive issues and I felt that the quality of the films in YouTube is not as good.

R: Of course

A: Maybe because I am of that generation, you know, I'm the generation that is still, when I started the filming, I used analog. An analog camera, I started with big cameras. Now everything is digitalized.

R: Do you visit film festival a lot?

A: Yeah, my film was at an international Film festival in Amsterdam. At the Amnesty film festival. Actually, the first international was Jakarta International Film Festival, it was in Jakarta, but it was international. I knew the programmer, she was a friend. So she was working, making this festival. That screening made me more confident to start sending my films to International film festivals. I didn't have enough background in films, so I needed to prove that my film was up to certain standards. So that is why... And then also at that time, I think the internet started becoming more available and widespread in Indonesia, so then I could start doing word-searches on these film festivals, and I could e-mail them to waive the entry fees. I could send my films through fed-ex. I couldn't imagine how it would be without internet access. I wouldn't be able to participate in the international scene.

R: You have been visiting film festival with your films for a while now. Is that beneficial to you as a director? Or distribution of your film?

A: yeah, a lot. When I was at that Amnesty film festival, it really changed my understanding of what is making film about human rights issues? I was so struck by watching films by Rithy Panh. That's my favourite, the Land of Wandering Souls. It wasn't a typical human rights film. I thought I my God, this is so beautiful I want to make films like this. And then afterwards I went to the Singapore film festival. Because at that time, that film festival was very generous in giving invitations and covering costs of the filmmakers. After 2003 the amount of filmmakers at international film festivals exploded. So many film

festivals after didn't give free airline tickets anymore. So by 2010 I had been in about 10 international film festivals. 10 International Trips.

R: When you go to those film festivals, is it also to contact and network with other filmmakers?

A: Yes, of course. Actually at the second film festival was the Ethnographical film festival in SOAS in London. I went to London and it was my first time, ah, this is what they called ethnographical films, observational cinema. Oh I loved it. That was my first time meeting Metje Postma from Leiden University. And other important figures in Ethnographic films. I mean this network informed me about another Film festival. And there I met a professor at Tromsø University, and because of that meeting I applied and got a position and a fellowship to do a master at Tromsø University.

R: So it helped you along. I know you have also been to Holland before with your films, that you went to the Amnesty Film Festival in Amsterdam, and you have also been to Rotterdam.

A: Yes, and the Ethnographical Film Festival at the Tropical Museum.

R: How did you experience that, how was that?

A: It's a great venue for watching documentaries at the Ethnographic Festival. They had a very strict selection, so it had to be high quality films. I enjoyed that film festival a lot. I could watch good films.

R: Do you think that there is a lot of interest in Southeast Asia as a region for film festivals?

A: Yeah, I think so. I think it was... Previously my film was not included in the main competition, but in another competitive section about Indonesian films or something. It was in 2005, in Rotterdam festival, that had a program called Southeast Asian films. They were inviting a lot of Southeast Asian filmmakers. Even at that time they had a special discussion on Southeast Asian films.

R: And before that, there wasn't much?

A: I think so... I mean, here and there some filmmakers like me or more senior filmmakers, were would be invited to go to a festival. But I think that the name, that level, Southeast Asian films, that was started in about 2005.

R: Why do you think that is?

A: I don't know. I think I remember that was the first time I realized that we were a region, we just started talking about that, Southeast Asian films. But what does it mean? Being Southeast Asian? What does it mean to make Southeast Asian films?

R: Do you have an answer for that?

A: Southeast Asian... It's like the legacy of the Cold War right? More like political aliens. So it's more like political, the legacy of the Cold War. It was in the history, we had this strong connection, all of these Asian countries, in the pre-modern age. But we have lost that connection, and we have to rebuild.

R: And do you think that thinking about Southeast Asia as a region, is that positive or negative?

A: I think it's positive. Two year ago it was my first time travelling around Southeast Asia. I went to Ho Chi Minh City, and then I went to Cambodia and up in Bangkok. But again, the reason why I was able to



do that travelling was because of a film festival in Ho Chi Minh. And then I was enjoying the trip very much, because I had never been in another Southeast Asian country except Singapore.

R: Do you have a lot of connections and networks with people in other Southeast Asian countries?

A: Yeah, through e-mails. Through online communication. And we usually met at international film festivals, in Rotterdam. But not in Southeast Asia. That's ironic?

R: I have heard that before, but I think a film festival makes everyone go to one place. But Southeast Asia is a very large area, so you have to travel far to see each other.

A: Yeah, geopolitical forms... My question is how we constitute Southeast Asia more as a geo-cultural form, not as a country or land.

R: That's a good question. Do you think that, you said that you had been to quite a lot of film festivals in the Netherlands, do you think there is more interest from a country like the Netherlands than other film festivals, or is it just by chance?

A: I think so. Especially the Rotterdam Film festival, that has been very supportive to the development of Southeast Asian films. That's very obvious.

R: One of the reasons why I asked to interview you was because the other people I interviewed all went to the International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam this last year, where they had a Southeast Asian program. But I thought it would be interesting to look at someone who wasn't involved in that. That's how I came here.

## Interview Fridus Steijlen, February 2, 2014

RS: Ik heb al wat research gedaan naar wat u hier doet en ik zag natuurlijk dat u bezig bent met Recording the Future, wilt u daar wat over vertellen.

FS: Recoding the Future is een project wat, wij noemen dat een longitudinal data generating research project. Dat is eigenlijk om aan te geven dat het langdurig is en dat het de bedoeling is dat het onderzoek is wat ook bronnen materiaal oplevert voor andere mensen. Als je heel eerlijk bent moet je het omdraaien, wij zijn met het project begonnen om een database te creëren voor toekomstige onderzoekers. Tegelijkertijd, tijdens het creëren van die collectie is het idee om er zelf onderzoek mee te doen. Het idee is het vastleggen van het dagelijks leven in Indonesië, en te kijken hoe dat in de loop van de tijd verandert. We zijn er op gekomen vanuit een groep mensen daar. Vanuit een groepje die zich vroeger bezighield met oral history. En wat we deden was, we gaan nu al mensen interviewen over hoe het was vroeger. En wat we nu zeiden was, laten we proberen om alvast dingen gaan vastleggen om te kijken hoe dingen aan het veranderen zijn. Kun je je laten inspireren door de serie 7up, ik weet niet of je dat kent. Dat is een BBC serie, in de jaren '60 begonnen en gaat van een uitspraak van, ik dacht dat het een jezuïet was, hij zei, neem een mens van 7 jaar en je weet al hoe hij er later uitziet, dan is hij al klaar, zijn basis. Dus dat betekent dat als wij nu een doorsnee van de Engelse samenleving gaan maken, mensen interviewen over wie ze zijn en wat ze willen, dat is de toekomst. Dat hebben ze met 7 jaar, 14 jaar en 21 jaar. Dus om de 7 jaar zijn ze gaan interview, kijken, waar sta je nou, wat is een vergelijking met hoe zag het er vroeger uit. Het is nu 49/56 up, dus die mensen zijn nu 56.

RS: Volgens mij heb ik het wel een keer gezien

FS: je kent het ongetwijfeld. Maar die volgen mensen en wij gaan locaties volgens. Dus wij zeggen niet, we nemen zo veel Indonesiërs, maar we nemen 8 plaatsen in Indonesië en daar filmen wij het dagelijkse leven. Elke 4 jaar gaan wij terug en proberen we een deel van de opnames die we maken te herhalen, exact. Door een bepaalde route te lopen en daar mensen die je tegenkomt te interviewen en dat op te nemen. Dat de camera begint te lopen vanaf het begin van de wandeling, gaan bij mensen naar binnen winkel binnen, mensen op straat aanspreken van, wat doet u hier? Waar komt u vandaan? En met de auto rondrijden en de hele dag de camera op een bepaalde plaats laten staan en daarnaast nog alle variaties in thema's, nog een winkel in of een kantoor in, gewoon verschillende variaties. En dat doen wij dus nu, dit is 12 jaar, dus nu ga ik voor de 3<sup>e</sup> keer, na april, meestal ga ik april, dan heb ik alle locaties drie keer gezien. En dan heb ik dus vijfhonderd uur of zo. En waar je dus kan zien van wat wel wat niet verandert, dat is het idee. En we hebben dat project, wij doen dat samen met Indonesiërs. En het is een Indonesische crew die filmt. En die ook de interviews doet. Ik ben er wel, maar zij doen de interviews, dus het is toch een soort gelijkwaardig project en als product daarvan hebben ze tot nu toe een aantal documentairetjes gemaakt. Echt puur gebaseerd op bij toeval tussen aanhalingstekens geschoten materiaal.

RS: Want wat was de precieze reden voor het project?

FS: De reden was eigenlijk dat we dachten, het is denk ik een beetje een zoeken naar de vraag, kan je het dagelijks leven vastleggen? Wat is dat eigenlijk? Waar moet je dan naar kijken? Ik heb volgend jaar een sabbatical en dan ga ik kijken wat we echt doen. We hebben in de tussentijd wel wat fellow gehad die daar ook naar gingen kijken. Waar staan we nu? En tegelijkertijd is het eigenlijk een doel geven aan een toekomstige generatie onderzoeken die dan naar de filmpjes kunnen kijken. Als je filmpjes nu kijkt

uit de koloniale tijd die door Lampstra (?). (...) heeft een hele serie films gemaakt over (...) het heette toen het koloniale instituut. Ook op de opdracht van het koloniale instituut om filmmateriaal te hebben bij lezingen die ze in het land organiseerde. Als je daar naar kijkt dan zie je het leven van een Europees gezin, de islam, straatbeeld. Het is mooi, en het geeft een soort nostalgisch gevoel, zo van oh ja zo zag de koloniale tijd er uit. Maar wat heel interessant zou zijn is om te kijken hoe nou dat gezin waar hij filmt, of dat straatbeeld wat hij heeft, hoe dat in de loop van de tijd verandert is. Wanneer is nou dat (...) gekomen, wanneer is de architectuur verandert. We hebben ons project opgericht, kan je dat vastleggen? En kunnen wij toekomstige onderzoekers dat aanbieden? EN dan gaat het om als ik nu een film maak in Indonesië... Ik kan wel vanaf het internet allerlei dingen vinden, ze hebben zelf ook wel amateurfilms gemaakt. Kan ik die, die kan ik natuurlijk ook naast de oude films van Lampstrazetten. Alleen het nadeel is die even amateurfilm die is in Jakarta gemaakt en die Lampstra film is in Surabaya gemaakt.

RS: In een andere cultuur?

FS: Niet per se andere cultuur, in dit geval niet, maar het had ook een andere cultuur kunnen zijn, Indonesië is heel breed. Maar waar het om gaat is als je het meer wetenschappelijk wil aanpakken, je wilt exact weten op welke plek het is en eigenlijk ook op welk tijdstip dit is. Zo veel mogelijk metadata. En dan kan je iets zeggen over wat er echt verandert.

RS: Wat is voor jou het belang van dit soort opnames, ik heb het eigenlijk over hedendaagse documentaires?

FS: Er zijn meerdere thema's, we hebben het in ons seminar een beetje geprobeerd uit... Wanneer is jouw scriptie klaar, je onderzoek? Het is je masterscriptie?

RS: Begin April. Of half April

FS: dan moet je klaar zijn? Wij gaan een special IAS newsletter samenstellen met artikelen over documentaire uit zuidoost Azië.

RS: volgens mij had ik zoiets al gehoord

FS: maar die komt pas in juni uit. Maar ik heb de artikelen eerder want die moeten naar de redactie om... Ik ga zes april naar Indonesië en daarvoor wil ik ze naar de redactie hebben, dus ze zijn dan al beschikbaar. Dus we moeten even kijken wat er mogelijk is. Ja kijk, als je er gewoon bijzet dat het nog gepubliceerd moet worden dan is het geen probleem.

RS: Ik ben nog in onderhandeling met wanneer mijn deadline precies is.

FS: ben je een harde onderhandelaar.

RS: nee, dat moet ik nog zien.

FS: Even kijken, d'r zijn verschillende aspecten die volgens mij belangrijk zijn, waarom documentaires belangrijk zijn in zuidoost Azië. Maar dat geldt niet alleen voor zuidoost Azië, maar in het algemeen. Ik denk dat je in documentaires een stuk uit het dagelijks leven, datgene wat ik ook probeer systematisch te doen, dat kan je ook voor een belangrijk deel meekrijgen uit documentaires. Ze hebben thema's die wij in het seminar aan de orde stelde, documentaires als het archief van het dagelijks leven. Je laat dingen zien die op dat moment in bepaalde periode normaal zijn in hoe het leven eruit ziet. Een ander

ding is een beetje afhankelijk weer van die thema's, ze kunnen bijdragen aan de geschiedschrijving. Ze kunnen op twee manier, het kan een bron zijn van geschiedschrijving, maar het kan ook bijdragen aan geschiedschrijven in de zin van, je maakt een historisch thema. IDFA had Rithy Panh met z'n Missing Picture, en dat ging natuurlijk over de Khmer Rouge en je hebt de Act of Killing over Indonesië, wat niet bij IDFA was maar wat een belangrijk periode was. En wij gaan ook vergelijkingen zien, tussen die twee films als het gaat over de representatie van geweld en hoe dat heel verschillend is, en voor een deel verklaarbaar doordat Rithy Panh zelf een slachtoffer is terwijl Joshua Oppenheimer die de film The Act of Killing heeft gemaakt geen slachtoffer is. Dat ze een bepaalde manier waarop ze gaan kijken, maar ook de manier waarop je politiek naar die dingen wil gaan kijken. Nou, het kan door een historisch thema te nemen, kan het zelf historiserend zijn. Maar door ook soms doordat het een beeld vastlegt kunnen vervolgens onderzoekers of mensen die de geschiedenis beschrijven het weer als een bron gebruiken om geschiedenis om te schrijven. Even kijken, dat is dat, dus het gaat om het dagelijks leven, het gaat om... plus een belangrijk element maar het is ook een tamelijk algemeen begrip, documentaires werken als agents of change, ze kunnen bijdrage tot verandering, en als je naar het huidige IDFA kijkt en de IDFA programmering afgelopen jaar, was daar heel veel transgender, tenminste zover het gaat over de emerging voices of Southeast Asia. Ik denk, ik maak mij sterk dat het een keuze is. Ik denk dat... er is meer dan dit, maar ik denk dat Raul in zijn, maar dat weet ik niet zeker, dat daar toch een soort bewuste keuze is geweest om wat meer aandacht aan die transgender en seksualiteit te besteden. Hij had ook een ander thema kunnen noemen. Maar het zegt iets over het werk als, en het zijn ook bijvoorbeeld die filmen van Two Girls Against the Rain uit Cambodia, die ging over... Ken je hem, heb je hem gezien?

RS: Niet gezien

FS: Anyway, die zei ook van, ik heb die film gemaakt in het kader van een gay festival, en het was gay en ik wil ook gewoon bereiken dat homoseksualiteit en lesbisch zijn beter geaccepteerd wordt, dus dat is ook een heel bewuste inzet van de film. In dat seminar wat we deden was, toen hadden we deze drie thema's, historiografie, everyday en agents of change, en elk blokje werd ingeleid met twee keer een halve minuut, een scene van een film. En bij de agents of change hadden wij een keuze gemaakt van een stukje uit Consider en een stukje uit the Mangoes, en Consider is die Thaise film waar een transgender leraar/lerares is geworden op een school waar heel expliciet de boodschap in zit, we moeten rolmodellen worden, we moeten daar over praten. Het is een hele cognitieve benadering van, terwijl er in the Mangoes wordt gewoon een transgender gevolgd van Jakarta naar zijn plaats van herkomst. En door een transgender te laten zien werk je als agent of change.

RS: EN normaliseer je het?

FS: althans, je probeert een bijdrage te doen. Dus het klopt, je hebt verschillende manieren. Je denkt, ik ga een lans breken voor transgender door een transgender te laten zien en te zeggen, dit is belangrijk dat we dit doen en d'r over praten, wat natuurlijk een heel andere benadering is dan dat je het gewoon laat zien.

RS: u had het al over de seminar, ik kon er helaas niet bij zijn en heb pas na IDFA besloten wat mijn onderwerp zou zijn en ze hebben het ook niet opgenomen.

FS: het is wel opgenomen.

RS: door wie?

FS: mij.

RS: zou ik uw kopie mogen? Ik had bij IDFA gevraagd en ze zeiden, nee dat hebben wij niet opgenomen.

FS: dat klopt, ik heb het laten opnemen, Raul wist het.

RS: Ik had het aan iemand anders bij IDFA gevraagd.

FS: Juist omdat ik vanwege dat special dat wij aan het maken waren dacht ik ja, ik ga die discussie opnemen.

RS: precies, dat is heel erg interessant. Zou ik er een kopie van mogen?

FS: Je hoort wat mensen vertellen, wat daar heel belangrijk was, d'r gebeurde eigenlijk twee dingen. D'r waren twee dynamieken die ik heel interessant vond aan die seminar, dat was wat er gebeurde tussen de jonge filmmakers en wat er gebeurde in de discussie. Want de filmmakers maken films, die mensen discussiëren niet, eigenlijk. Dat is niet hun ding, denk ik. Maar doordat ze bij elkaar zaten en ook van elkaar hoorde en ook elkaars film kort hebben vertoond, kwam er een ontzettende boost uit. Tensminste, dat zag je ook later in de week als ik ze later tegen zou komen dan waren ze met elkaar bezig. Ik denk dat dat ook was omdat ze daar met z'n allen geprofileerd hadden. Plus er kwam best een interessante discussie uit. Het was fragmentarisch omdat het kort was en het waren veel onderwerpen. Maar het was een heel erg interessante wisseling tussen wetenschappers en filmmakers. Waarbij je op een gegeven moment ook ziet dat jij je soms een extra laag in kan leggen die een filmmaker zelf niet bedacht had. Dat was denk ik goed, het was een discussie op een platform, en volgens mij gebeurde dat niet zo vaak.

RS: Volgens mij gebeurt dat ook niet zo vaak. Mijn vraag is, verder, wat voor doelgroep was eigenlijk bij het seminar?

FS: Het seminar was... de doelgroep bestond uit twee... studenten, studentenwetenschappers, mensen die zich bezighouden met zuidoost Azië en daarbij geïnteresseerd zijn in documentaires en in film, in bewegende beelden. En dan voor ons wilde wij, eigenlijk zowel mensen die zich bezighielden met zuidoost Azië als object van studie maar ook als tool voor onderwijs. Omdat je dat kan gebruiken, die echte discussie die wij hebben gevoerd was later, daar kan ik je ook weer krijgen, die heb ik ook opgenomen. De doelgroep was dus onderzoekers en wetenschappers die zich bezighouden met zuidoost Azië en het bewegend beeld. En filmmakers! Omdat ik denk dat, het is goed voor de erkenning van de documentaire makers dat hun wetenschap iets zegt van, ik kan er iets mee. Het is niet de bedoeling dat documentairemakers zeggen, we moeten ons conformeren aan allerlei eisen van systematiek weet je wel, het is een andere tak van sport. Maar ik denk dat dialoog erg goed is zodat wetenschappers meer vertrouwen krijgen en een beetje kunnen duiden op wat er gebeurt. Dat waar ik net al naar refereerde, het verschil tussen Rithy Panh en Joshua Oppenheimer, door d'r over te praten kan je op een gegeven moment zeggen, als ik een beeld vergeef van hoe gewelddadige regimeveranderingen plaatsvinden zoals in Indonesië en in Cambodja. Ik zie een beeld taal, dat is iets anders dan geschreven taal en die wetenschappers moeten dat leren begrijpen. Dat zijn echt dingen die volgens mij belangrijk waren. Voor een deel gebeurde daar ook wat mee. De andere discussie die wij hebben gehad, d'r waren nog twee filmmakers van IDFA bij, dat was de laatste woensdag 27 november, toen was er in Leiden de lounge van

Leiden Global. Leiden Global is een samenwerking tussen de universiteit Leiden, KITLV, Afrika instituut, rijksmuseum voor volkskunde, oudheidkunde, een aantal musea en onderzoeksinstituten en de universiteit. En dat begon op dat moment en dat bevindt zich op het gebied van area studies. En dat heb ik samen met Bart Barendrecht een discussie gehouden over, wat kunnen we hiermee? Met documentaire in ons onderwijs en in ons onderzoek? Waar moeten we naar kijken en wat zijn beperkingen. En er zaten twee mensen bij, en daarna hebben we nog twee films vertoond en een Q&A gehouden, maar dat was leuk vooral, misschien ook voor jou wel interessant.

RS: dat was dat tweede ding wat je had opgenomen toch? Ik vroeg mij ook af wat voor platformen er zijn binnen Nederland voor documentaires uit zuidoost Azië?

FS: specifiek zuidoost Azië niet. Je hebt die Asian cinema in Amsterdam. Die heb je nog steeds volgens mij. De laatste keer dat ik daar een keer bij een bijeenkomst was in de Balie. Toen was er een Indonesische film, maar dat is niet specifiek documentaire, dat gaat iets breder, gewoon film, als het maar beweegt en geluid maakt. En het was een fictie film over westerlingen en over de Indonesische revolutie. En de indruk die ik kreeg was dat ze toch nog erg bleven bij China en het vast land van Azië. Zuidoost Azië als platform heb je niet echt. Je hebt hier en daar wat in Nederland, zoals in Nijmegen heb je Indofilmcafe waar een keer in de zoveel tijd ze proberen Indische of Indonesische films te... en het kan variëren van gewone film tot documentaire. Er wordt niet echt een onderscheid gemaakt volgens mij, tenminste, ik ken het niet.

RS: tussen documentaire en film?

FS: of nou, een platform. Je hebt mensen, die zijn gewoon geïnteresseerd in films en zuidoost Azië, alles wat daar vandaan komt, leuk.

RS: want dan is IDFA de enige die een beetje die richting op gaat.

FS: IDFA was de enige die nu dat doet, en CinemAsia. Die doet dat ook, een keer in de zoveel tijd hebben ze ook een festival. Maar dat is wel veel beperkter en heb je beeld voor beeld een antropologische film festival. Dat huis dat zat vroeger bij het tropenmuseum heb je Eddy Appel die is daar de directeur van, en beeld voor beeld programmeert met enige regelmaat wel Indische of Indonesische films en documentaire. Dit omdat het audiovisueel antropologisch is zit je al minder in de fictie en dichter op de non-fictie. En de reden dat verder de Tong Tong Fair in Den Haag, dat is heette vroeger het (...), en elk jaar heb je een Indisch festijn met restaurants, optredens en in den Haag heb je de grootste op het Malieveld, die heet Tong Tong fair en er is daar twaalf dagen lang een Indisch feest. Ik weet dat het dit jaar dat het theaters een dag, ze kwamen praten of we eventueel een dag of een avond met films hadden. En dat kunnen dan Indonesische films zijn, documentaires uit Indonesië, en waarschijnlijk op het film, documentaire films, antropologen uit Nederland die iets met die Indische achtergrond hebben.

RS: Want is, je zegt dat er niet zo heel veel platform is in Nederland.

FS: niet echt, niet een gedefinieerd platform.

RS: dat er geen samenwerking is. Maar er is wel aandacht voor films uit die regio.

FS: aandacht, behoefte en d'r is een markt voor, een markt in de zin van dat mensen er naar willen kijken. Maar het gebeurt hapsnap, behalve zo'n indocafé die kijken ook naar allerlei films die in Nederlands uitkomen en die programmeren af en toe een Indonesische film. Er zijn ook naderen die ook

wel geïnteresseerd zijn, maar d'r is niet echt een club die zegt, wij houden ons bezig met... Wat je zou kunnen vragen is, je zou kunnen kijken bij... Ken je Camera Lucida? Van antropologen in Amsterdam? Die hebben een netwerk zitten (...) maar d'r is niet heel erg... Maar die zijn in Amsterdam en hebben een heleboel dingen ook online staan. Maar dat is een platform voor audiovisuele antropologen, dus niet een platform voor zuidoost Azië of documentaire.

RS: In Nederland is er dus enigszins aandacht voor, denk je dat er binnen Nederland meer aandacht voor is dan in andere landen?

FS: Nou ja, dan moet je een onderscheid maken tussen Europa en de rest. Want als je naar zuidoost Azië gaat, dan is er heel veel aandacht.

RS: buiten zuidoost Azië?

FS: In Australië is er wel redelijk wat aandacht voor. Ik weet niet of er daar een heel platform voor is die zich specifiek met documentaires bezighoudt, maar Australië... maar dat heeft alles te maken met het feit dat dat hun regio, dat is hun achtertuin. Misschien zou je daar iemand kunnen interviewen en wat vragen stellen. Je hebt in Bretagne een festival, een documentaire festival, en die hebben elk jaar een thema en die hebben besloten om dit jaar Indonesië als thema te nemen. Die waren ook op IDFA, daarom weet ik dat, want ze kwamen bij mij terecht. Ze hebben met heel veel mensen gesproken uiteraard, omdat ze op zoek zijn naar films en gaan nu ook naar Indonesië toe om te kijken. Bretagne of all places! Een duidelijke Link. Waarom niet? Maar voor de rest, het is niet echt, voor zover ik weet, want het is ook de vraag, als ik heel eerlijk ben, meer de vraagstelling, we zeggen wel dat het een soort emerging voices is van zuidoost Azië documentaires, maar dat moet wel blijken nog. Want de IDFA zei, de Bollywood films, als je kijkt naar de fiction film, die hebben het wel, die slaan aan, dus wij denken dat de documentaires er wel achteraan komen, zei IDFA. En ik moet zeggen dat ik het niet helemaal weet. Ik zat afgelopen april in Indonesië, en toen wist ik dat dit zou komen. De eerste gesprekken met IDFA waren aanstaande, en toen heb ik met mijn contacten in Indonesië, want ik werk met Indonesische collega's. Een deel van hun zijn gewoon documentaire makers. Dus het zijn gewoon filmers, professionele filmers. Dus ik had het met hun erover, wat zijn nou goeie films op het moment, wie maakt er nu goeie documentaires. Stel dat IDFA vraagt, heb je tips? Ze zeiden, ja het grote probleem is dat, en ik bedoel, dit is heel erg kort door de bocht waarschijnlijk, maar diegene die goeie films maken dat zijn de mensen die in workshops mee kunnen doen die gewoon betaald worden. Ze krijgen daar faciliteiten, ze krijgen geld en ze krijgen coaching. En dan daarna moeten ze het zelf weer doen. En dan zie je vaak dat de documentaires minder zijn qua kwaliteit omdat ze faciliteiten niet hebben. Je zag het ook een beetje bij de films in het IDFA. Er waren een paar die waren gewoon gelikt technisch. En dat waren ook de producten van workshops. Ik vond Mangoes bijvoorbeeld, inhoudelijk interessant, maar in de kwaliteit wat minder. En dat had alles te maken met gebrek aan faciliteiten. Maar tegelijkertijd is het ook heel mooi want dan zeg je, ja ok, dan heb je de faciliteiten maar zorg wel dat er documentaire komt, want ik vind het thema erg belangrijk. Je wilt het gewoon maken. En dat is een soort gedrevenheid van documentairemakers die erg goed is. Maar dat is wel iets dat je ziet. Tegelijkertijd, er waren twee films uit dezelfde workshop, Chocolate Comedy en Farewell My School. En die laatste is van Ucu Augustin, en die heeft mij een paar andere dingen gegeven. Ja, de kwaliteit is op zich wel goed.

RS: maar dat is toch ook een bekendere naam?

FS: nou, ze is ook een gedreven maakster. Is ze bekend?

RS: ik heb over haar gelezen in een boek over films uit zuidoost Azië.

FS: is dat het boek over vrouwelijke filmmaaksters.

RS: nee, het is geproduceerd door Busan film festival, het heet Asian Documentary Today.

FS: oh, ken ik niet.

RS: die heb ik van Raul te leen.

FS: ok, ja.

RS: daar wordt ze in genoemd, het is niet dat het heel ver...

FS: het is ook zo dat in een land, en dat vind ik nogal ongelofelijk, ik weet niet of het ongelofelijk is, ze kennen elkaar allemaal. In een land van 250 miljoen mensen. Het is een kleine wereld en datzelfde geld denk ik voor Nederland, alle documentaire makers kennen elkaar. Maar het verbaast mij een beetje. Ik had eigenlijk verwacht dat het toch breder was. Maar goed, ze heeft een paar bijzondere dingen gemaakt en je hebt er wat, ja, d'r zitten dus goeie dingen in. Een ander punt, en dat is een discussie die wij nog moeten hebben is wat ik net zei, van alles wat in zo'n workshop gemaakt wordt, diegene met de faciliteiten hebben een bepaalde kwaliteit. Tegelijkertijd moet je d'r voor open staan dat filmmakers niet uit Europa misschien ook op een andere manier filmmaker. Als ik zie, ik heb redelijk wat films gezien, ook van vrienden van mij die dan geen hardcuts nemen in hun films. Je weet wat een hardcut is? Gewoon op naar de volgende shot. Maar het is altijd zo'n vegende beweging.

RS: dat vinden zij heel mooi.

FS: dat kan een vorm van esthetiek zijn. En sommige dingen die slow d'r ingezet worden.

RS: dat vonden wij vroeger ook mooi. Smaak verandert.

FS: smaak verandert, maar het kan ook zijn dat bepaalde smaak zo blijft. Ook daar moeten we proberen open te staan, dat dat andere soort beeldtaal kan zijn. En dat je daar ook, dus ook bij het interpreteren of gebruiken van het materiaal moet je dat onderzoeken. Wat zie ik hier en waarom zien we dat zoals we dat zien? En dat is denk ik toch een hele boeiende discussie die we moeten voeren.

RS: Want dat kan ook gebaseerd zijn op wat mensen in dat land zelf als esthetiek waarderen. Als ze dat in hun eigen films kunnen zien. Want ze maken natuurlijk ook films voor een bepaald publiek. Want ik had nog een vraag, word er in het land zelf ook veel waardering voor hun films, is er veel waardering voor?

FS: er zijn een aantal film festivals in Jakarta en Yogyakarta en daar worden ze wel hier en daar vertoond. Maar het is denk ik net zo als over Europa om heel eerlijk te zijn, is het een niche. Iedereen die naar die film festivals gaat, die gaat, die komt elkaar tegen bij het volgende festival. Het enige wat je hier kan zeggen is, ik denk dat er in Europa nog meer documentaires gemaakt door documentairemakers die het op de televisie halen. Ik heb het idee dat dat nog niet zo is in zuidoost Azië.

RS: dus ze gaan niet expres documentaires kijken.



FS: Nee, een televisiezender maakt zijn eigen documentaires. Het is niet zo dat wat wij hier hebben, dat als je een goeie documentaire maakt dat je uitgezonden wordt door VPRO, of de KRO. Deals zijn met broadcasting companies, dat maakt het denk ik wel wat anders.

RS: Denk je dat wat er hier in Nederland gebeurt enig effect of invloed heeft op de filmmakers daar. Bijvoorbeeld door de workshops?

FS: Ja, het heeft impact omdat zij elkaar hier ontmoeten. Maar dat had ook ergens anders kunnen zijn, dat hoeft niet per se hier te zijn. Dat is niet per se onze kwaliteit. En dat was ik zie gebeuren op dit moment is dat een van de... Chairun Nissa, dat is de filmmakers van Chocolate Comedy. Die heeft niet meegewerkt aan een andere film, die is net uit. En daar heeft zij, dat post zij dan op Facebook en je ziet allerlei mensen die ook op IDFA waren, die niet uit Indonesië, maar uit Thailand of Myanmar, daar heeft ze niet contact mee via IDFA. Het is in feite, maar dat is de functie van een wetenschappelijk congres voor wetenschappers is, is de functie van dit soort film festivals, is dat ook voor de filmmakers. En heeft ze dus een platform, zo'n platform heeft voor hun, is dat belangrijk. Mensen die je kent en herkent, een explosie van films. Tegelijkertijd moet je dan niet weer denken, dus als wij dat dus niet doen dan kunnen ze niets.

RS: dan vinden ze het wel ergens anders

FS: het is dan wel zo, en daarom vind ik het programma van IDFA interessant, je kan het wel door het te creëren extra stimulans geven.

RS: Zou je kunnen zeggen dat een deel van de interesse die wij in Nederland hebben voor die regio ook heel erg historisch bepaald is?

FS: Nee. Het is zo dat, of laat ik het zo zeggen, de historische relatie is niet bepalend voor de, is niet per definitie of puur bepaald door de interesse. Zoals nu heeft IDFA ZOA als thema. Raul denkt al over Latijns Amerika voor de volgende keer omdat hij daar zelf heel erg uit komt. Ik heb niet de indruk dat deze keuze van IDFA nu daardoor gegeven is. Het enige wat je kunt zeggen is dat, als ik kijk naar Asia cinema, dan zie je dat China, dat wordt sterker, en films van Bollywood oriëntatie. Waarom? Omdat veel hindoestanen in Nederland zitten. Dat bepaalt die oriëntatie. Dat er meer aandacht, eventueel voor Indische films of Indonesische films, dat slaat aan omdat er een grotere doelgroep is. In die zin zou je kunnen zeggen, die doelgroep is er omdat er een koloniale relatie is geweest. Dat zou kunnen, maar het is niet zo dat volgens mij, Indonesië zodanig in onze genen zit dat het grootste deel van Nederland daar iets mee heeft. Er is een grote groep mensen die daar een relatie mee heeft, daar zijn ze ontvankelijk voor, maar het is niet dat er Nederlanders zijn die echt gaan zoeken.

RS: zijn er verder buiten IDFA, is het platform, als ik dat zo mag noemen, heeft het daar enige relatie met die Indonesische mensen?

FS: Hoe bedoel je?

RS: uw instituut heeft ook toch een beetje te maken met.

FS: daar zijn wij uit voortgekomen, we bestaan al 164 jaar. Wij zijn onlosmaakbaar met de koloniale geschiedenis gebonden. En zo zijn er een heleboel, zoals het Indofilmcafé. Dat kan je ook niet losmaken van de koloniale tijd, in de zin dat, het is een initiatief en een activiteit van postkoloniale, nazaten van postkoloniale migranten. En dat bepaalt waarom zij de films uit Indonesië en Indische films in Nederland

programmeren. En dat heb je in die zin wel. En ik zal, waarom doe ik daar iets mee? Omdat ik op dit instituut werk en omdat we al een lange relatie en een postkoloniale relatie en een moderne relatie hebben met Indonesië. En dat is historisch bepaald want als die koloniale geschiedenis niet was geweest, dan weet ik niet of wij ons daar mee bezig zouden houden. Dus dat is moeilijk om dat heel erg goed te zeggen, maar het is inderdaad zo. De Tong Tong fair heeft als grootste doel Indisch Nederland, dus die zal dat dus wel programmeren in plaats van een Bollywood film. Omdat dat minder aansluit bij het publiek.

RS: Heeft u nog interessante dingen om te zeggen?

FS: dat weet ik niet. Wat wilde je gaan schrijven? Je wilde volgens mij weten hoe het met IDFA zat, en

RS: ik heb hier opgeschreven wat mijn bedoeling is. Mijn vraag is, maar ik heb er niet heel erg naar gevraagd, in hoeverre de, want ervaar je documentaires die vanuit die regio komen als, ik heb het hier in het Engels staan, Increasingly Post-colonial?

FS: dat is een vraag gesteld vanuit een voormalig kolonie. Niemand in Indonesië zal nadenken of ze een postkoloniale film maken. Ze zijn gewoon vrij, independent. Dit is niet post-kolonialisme, het is een non-issue. Zij zullen zeggen, dit is Indonesisch. Wat een interessante vraag zou zijn, maar dat is iets anders, de vraag iets anders framen door te zeggen, je hebt een bepaalde periode zie je dat... er is een heel goed onderzoek geweest naar dekolonisatie, met het idee, je hebt Nederlands-Indië, een koloniale samenleving, en je krijgt onafhankelijkheid. Het is niet zo dat dat van de ene op het andere moment verandert. De ene dag is het zo en de volgende dag heb je Indonesië. Allerlei verhoudingen, ik bedoel in bedrijfscultuur... Een interessante vraag is, kan je iets zeggen over films voor 1950, voor 1945, voor 1942. En in hoeverre die films, documentaires verandert zijn en wanneer dat is. Kan je in de manier waarop je films gemaakt hebt, en de issues, kan je daar iets zeggen over dat ontwikkelingsproces van kolonie naar postkoloniale samenleving of een andere soort samenleving. Ik denk dat als je dat zo zou stellen, dat zou je kunnen doen, dat kan je wel zien. Maar we zijn al heel ver voorbij dat punt, zijn we uit die koloniale samenleving gekomen. Het is een heel interessante vraag als een leidraad voor wat ik net zei, het analyseren van die documentaires omdat, op een gegeven moment zal je zien, maar dat weet ik niet zeker, maar het zou dus kunnen betekenen dat in de jaren '50, een revolutie oorlog en een koloniale strijd afgelopen is, dan kunnen mensen zich weer toespitsen op documentaires maken. Dan kunnen documentairemakers kijken, wat zijn de issues die mensen aan de orde stellen in documentaires. Een film uit de jaren '50 die heet (...) eigenlijk was het een fictie, het was niet echt een documentaire. Het was een film die corruptie en gekoketteer met machtposities aan de kaak stelde. Het was een kritiek. Het was maatschappij kritiek. In die zin is fictie film, het kan maatschappij kritisch zijn. Dus je kan op een gegeven moment zien dat daar thema's in komen. Ik denk dat je nu, vanwege allerlei antropologie, dat er in Indonesië veel meer thema's aan de orde worden gesteld waar mensen eigenlijk commentaar geven vandaag op de samenleving.

RS: want is er veel vrijheid voor die regio?

FS: nu, waarvoor?

RS: voor documentaires waar politieke problemen, sociale problemen aan de orde gesteld worden.

FS: ze worden wel gemaakt, en het ligt er een beetje aan hoe je ze presenteert, of ze geaccepteerd worden. Je hebt censuur commissies en het probleem van censuurcommissies is dat je moet proberen

om daar uit te komen. De Joshua Oppenheimer is ook niet via de censuur commissie gegaan. Die is in een soort underground circuit vertoond, heel bewust omdat hij wist dat als hij het zou aanbieden, dat ze dan problemen zou krijgen. Stel dat hij wel aangeboden zou worden, dan zou het een officiële issue worden. Dan zouden alle islamitische, alle rechts-radicalen groepen zouden zich er tegen kunnen verzetten omdat het geformaliseerd wordt. Het is een discours die je creëert, een weg, een kanaal die je creëert omdat te omzeilen.

RS: zo'n indruk kreeg ik ook van die film. Dat je niet al teveel kan zeggen.

FS: en dat klopt, ik heb bijvoorbeeld twee films van Ucu, die heeft een film gemaakt over prostituees. Het is een oud, bekend thema. Er zijn mensen die al tientallen jaren geleden met NGO's bezig, maar het zijn wel... er wordt geen commentaar gegeven op de samenleving. Het ligt eraan hoe je het verpakt in de netwerken hoe dat verspreid kan worden.

RS: maar dat is alsnog een beetje underground?

FS: IK weet niet of het echt, ik denk dat het voor een deel kan bestaan omdat het een niche is. Ik vraag mij af of die rechtse islamitische groep echt doorheeft wat voor films er allemaal verspreid wordt.

RS: zolang het niet in de grote bioscoop...

FS: het komt niet in de grote bioscoop. Daar zit denk ik... dus ik zou nu over de huidige Indonesische film überhaupt niet nadenken over postkoloniaal. Maar het is wel een interessante vraag. Het is zelfs zo dat, en ook dat is een manier van kijken naar filmmakers als bron van geschiedenis. Je hebt dus in de jaren '50 filmmakers die waren opgegroeid in de revolutiestrijd. Dus die maken andere thema's en stellen andere vragen, want die kregen op een gegeven moment de militaire dictatuur en de jaren '90 waar mensen zich verzetten tegen de militaire dictatuur van Suharto die in 1998 moeten terugtreden. Nou om een voorbeeld te geven, wij begonnen ons project in 2003. De filmer waar mee wij werkte, die nog steeds betrokken maar niet meer filmt, hij was filmer geworden in de reformatie periode. Dus in de strijd, in de reformatie, in de studentenbeweging die tegen Suharto was. Dus hij is heel erg in anti-autoriteit, hij wil overal de corruptie laten zien, hij was ontzettend gepolitiseerd. Dat hoor je in zijn interviews waar we praten over het dagelijks leven. Je hoort dat in zijn interview. Diegene die nu filmt en de interviews doet is 28 en de andere is ietsje jonger, dat zijn de twee die nu filmen. De vraagstelling is heel anders. Waarom? Toen Suharto terugtrad, dat is meer dan 16 jaar geleden. Toen gingen zij net naar de middelbare school. Dus ze hebben die tijd niet meegemaakt. Dus ze stellen andere vragen. Dus in mijn project zit een andere laag waar je ziet dat ook in de interactie tussen de filmers en de bevolking, je ziet de verschuiving duidelijk. Wij willen 100 jaar bestaan dus zie je op een gegeven moment verschuiving ook in wat voor vragen de filmers stellen.

RS: want in de eerste jaren...

FS: was Lexi, hij was agressief en als er een uniform tussen zat dan ging hij erin. (...) niet, omdat ze een hele andere relatie met de uniformen heeft. Het heeft met karakter te maken van de persoon, maar ook met hoe je gesocialiseerd bent en opgroeit. Dus ik kan mij voorstellen dat in het begin van, dat een deel van de documentaires in 1950, ja '50, kreeg je vaak het vastleggen van wie zijn de belangrijke vaders van de revolutie die we net gewonnen hadden. Dat is belangrijk. Dat is geschiedschrijving op dat moment. Daarna kan je ze bekritisieren. En dan in de jaren '90, dan krijg je weer een andere soort kritiek op de staat. Dus het zijn altijd, het geldt niet alleen voor onderzoek het geldt niet voor filmmakers (...) als je

gaat kijken zie je dat onderzoekers gaan dingen onderzoeken, dat heeft te maken met politieke ontwikkelingen. Ze reageren ook op datgene in de samenleving. Ik heb een boek, dat heb ik van iemand geleend, dat ligt thuis, het is niet zo diepgaand, maar dat gaat over documentaires uit zuidoost Azië en alle landen worden zo ongeveer besproken. En het is een... ik zal je de titel sturen. En van verschillende landen staan daar dan elke keer drie behalve van Brunei. Overall staan drie artikelen in. Ik vind ze niet heel diepgaand, maar het geeft wel een beeld. En een van ze, bijvoorbeeld over Indonesië. Wanneer is Indonesische cinema ontstaan, dus het gaat niet alleen over documentaires. En die man zegt, als je nou de definitie neemt, is cinema een territoriaal begrip, dus films gemaakt in? Of films gemaakt door? Als je films gemaakt in neemt, hoe zit het dan met alle westerns die opgenomen zijn in Spanje, zijn het Amerikaanse films of Spaanse films? Maar als ik zeg 'door', dan moet je dus kijken naar wie de script maakt en directors, regisseurs. En eigenlijk moet je dan, dat betekent dus dat je allerlei films die gemaakt waren waar Indonesiërs bij betrokken zijn geweest, voor de dekolonisatie, die moet je meenemen als Indonesische film. Dus de Indonesische cinema, volgens deze schrijfster, die zegt, ja dat begint in de jaren '20 jaren '30. Dus als je kijkt naar de thema's, dat zijn koloniale thema's waar Indonesiërs bij zijn betrokken. Die zegt dus, om even te reageren op jouw punt van de postkoloniale tijd. Die zegt, de koloniale tijd was ook onderdeel van de Indonesische cinema, dat is ook ons deel, die tijd. Dus in die zin helpt het je die vraag te polariseren.

RS: dat is een kwestie van definitie.

FS: de kwestie van definitie is meer de aanzet, afhankelijk van hoe je het definieert krijg je een ander antwoord is wat deze auteur zegt. Als je een bepaalde definitie gebruikt, dan moet je ook deze films er bij betrekken. Dus dan kan je niet zeggen dat Indonesische cinema pas na 1950 na Nederlanders vertrokken waren omdat de Indonesiërs daarvoor ook al bezig waren, dus waarom zouden we het niet ook rekenen tot onze cinema, wat op zich een interessante. Dus wat je dan krijgt is dekolonisatie van de koloniale geschiedenis. Wat zij dekoloniseerde, ja dat was weliswaar de koloniale tijd maar het waren Indonesiërs die daar bij betrokken waren.

RS: zodat de westerlingen ook uit de cinema verdwenen, en terecht.

FS: ja, snap je, dat maakt het wel, ik zal even kijken wat de titel is. ik vind hem niet heel diepgaand. Het is een Fransman die op een gegeven moment een workshop gaf waar veel mensen bij betrokken waren. Het is ook een tweetalig boek, Frans en Engels. Ik wil het eigenlijk hier gewoon bestellen.

(...)

Wat er kan gebeuren als je zo'n contest uitschrijft dat mensen zich daarnaar gaan voegen. En soort van, dat wordt de maatstaf, en ik denk dat dat ook een beetje die school van Rithy Panh, die wordt de maatstaf van Cambodia.

RS: Ja, ik ben het daar ook mee eens maar ze suggereerde eigenlijk dat geen enkele documentairemaker überhaupt de gedachte had dat er iets anders zou kunnen zijn. En dat soort opmerkingen.

(...)

Met dat postkoloniale, ik denk dat ik er niet hetzelfde mee bedoelde als jij er mee bedoelde, dus dat is wel handig om aan te passen. Ik bedoelde meer dat het een soort reactie was op de overheid en de problemen in de samenleving, maar ik denk niet dat ik postkoloniaal een juiste term daarvoor is.

FS: nee, want hoe bedoel je dat.

RS: ik bedoel dat het de problemen in de samenleving vanwege de met name recente politieke geschiedenis.

FS: wat je dan vraagt is in hoeverre is de documentaire wereld in Indonesië maatschappij kritisch en geëngageerd.

RS: mijn vraag gaat verder door over wat voor platform er in Nederland te vinden is, juist voor dat soort films.

FS: Op het moment dat je dat zo zegt, als je koloniaal weghaalt en je vraagt, is het maatschappijkritisch? We hebben het daar ook over gehad, het gaat over die transgenders, en door de issues aan de kaart stelt, die Lexi waar ik het over had, die heeft films gemaakt over corruptie en over uitbuiting van Indonesische arbeidsmigranten vrouwen. Die in het buitenland werken, dus er worden wel degelijk kritische films gemaakt, en daar is enig platform voor als wij een film hier hebben, wat niet heel vaak voorkomt, of als er films in Nederland zijn, d'r zijn een groep van Indonesische (...) die daar weldegelijk veel mee wil en die daar enorm voor openstaat, maar dat is dan dus niet het platform die heel bewust is voor documentaire, maar dat zijn mensen die betrokken zijn, politiek geëngageerd met Indonesië.

RS: dat zijn meer de agents of change

FS: maar maatschappijkritiek en geëngageerd zijn zitten vaak al heel snel.

RS: dat zie je bij de meeste documentaires

FS: en dan zit je al toch redelijk in de agents of change en de thema's die je bespreekbaar wil maken. En daarom ben je ook archivist van het dagelijks leven. Het zijn thema's die wij uit elkaar trekken, maar ze hebben allemaal met hetzelfde te maken.

RS: ze zitten vaak door elkaar heen.

FS: het is een prisma van verschillende dimensies.

RS: daar kan ik wel wat mee denk ik.

FS: qua literatuur is er niet zo veel. Het is niet alleen documentaires, maar hoe het in de Indonesische filmindustrie is, en ik denk dat hij ook wel...

## Interview Kong Rithdee, March 10, 2014

RS: When did you start making documentaries?

KR: actually all the films that I have made, I made with two friends and we started... our first film was 2006. And that's our first film. It's called Inbetween. It's like a 40 minute film. It was shown on TV and it was shown at Thai Short Film festival. And then we made another one in 2008 and 2010. The latest one that was shown in Amsterdam was from last year, Gaddafi. If you want the details I can e-mail you, with all the names of the films.

RS: I think I can find that online. What was the reason that you started making these films?

KR: it's difficult to say. Because all the films that we have made so far deal with the subject of Muslim people in Thailand. I'm not sure if you have seen Gaddafi. Or...

RS: I had some issues with the viewing rights so I haven't seen it, but I know what it's about.

KR: So all the films that we have made have dealt with the issue of Muslim people in Thailand and I think the reason that we made our first film was in response, in a way, to the tension between the Muslim world and the rest of the world after 9/11. And because in Thailand, I don't know if you follow the news, but in Thailand there are some problems in the southern part of Thailand between the Muslim radical movement and the Thai government. So I think our film is an attempt to voice the Muslim opinion, to voice the... Not the voice, that's not the right word. I think what we've been trying to do is to project the human face to the conflict between the Muslim and the... that we feel that is going on in Thailand and probably the rest of the world. I'm not sure if you understand because if you see the films, then you understand.

RS: I understand. You said that all of your films have been about the Muslims in Thailand, what is the reason that you chose this as a topic every time?

KR: I think because when you hear the stories about Muslims, especially after 9/11 in Thailand, after 2001, 2002, when the problem in the southern part of Thailand became more serious. Every time you hear about Muslims, it's about... you only hear the extreme voice of Muslim. You hear bin laden, you know. Preaching, or you hear, very very liberal Muslim denouncing his own faith. So you either hear the extreme right or the extreme left. And I and my two friends believe that there is a middle way, there is a moderate voice that should be heard. And I think that all the films that we have made try to push forward this moderate voice. For example in our first film, Inbetween, it's very simple, we just interview 4 Muslim people that grew up in Bangkok and let them talk about how they grew up and how they reconcile their faith, their very Islamic way with the way of the world. And we hear that they, even though they are Muslim living in a Buddhist country, they can find their way. They can live a life in Thailand by practicing their faith, the Islamic faith. But also they can live with the rest of society. And that is our first film. And for example, the film we made in 2010 which is called Baby Arabia. It's about a Muslim rock band. So again, it's about how Muslim people practice this worldly profession by being a musician. So that's the underlying concept, it's how we negotiate, how Muslim people in Thailand negotiate their life in order to preserve all their spiritual belief and the reality of everyday life that they have to live.

RS: do you think you will be continuing to make documentaries about these Muslim issues? Or is it just that you...

KR: I think so, I think we make films that... we respond to a situation or we respond to whatever touches us at that point. And the issue of Islam in Thailand is relevant to us. But that's not the only thing because we made another film, but it was not shown outside of Thailand. Last year we made a film called In the Shadow of History. It was made to commemorate forty years of the student uprising. A political uprising in Thailand 40 years ago. So we made a film, based on old footage of the event. So again, the Muslim issue is very important to us, but we are also interested in their issues as well.

RS: You started off a journalist thought, right?

KR: Yes, my main job is as a journalist.

RS: Could you describe the situation of the Thai documentary? I think, in general, there are more people wanting to make documentaries because it doesn't cost that much money compared to making a fiction film. So last year, for example, there are many Thai documentaries, but there was one that went around many festivals. It's called Boundary and I think that's a good example of how one person, because basically that film was made by 1 person, a young guy. The subject is the border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia. And this film was shown in Berlin last year, the Berlin film festival. So in general I think that a lot of young people, a lot of young filmmakers cannot make a fiction film because of it's a lot of money and a lot of support. They realize that the documentary form is one way that they can tell their stories. But of course, there's no commercial possibility for documentary, unless you make it for TV.

RS: Is there a lot of interest in Thailand for your films, or films like it?

KR: Not really, not that much. My film got very little, very small interest. But for example, the film that I told you about was shown in cinemas, it was released in the cinemas and not that many people went to see it, even though the subject is very topical. So in general, not much interest. But on television, people still... the perception of the audience is that documentary is something boring and education, something they see on TV. So when the audience sees that there is a documentary in the cinema, they don't get it. Why? Why would you see a documentary in the cinema? They think this is something you can see on TV.

RS: It's like that in Holland as well though.

KR: I think everywhere, but in Thailand we don't have the channel or the proper venue for documentary, even here on TV, you have to stick to the rules, you have to, you cannot do a creative documentary or a challenging documentary. You have to stick to the basic form in order to get shown on TV.

RS: Is the government any help to documentary makers like you?

KR: no, there is no policy of supporting documentary maker, there is no policy of supporting any filmmaker in Thailand.

RS: So how do you make films?

KR: different ways. We improvise. For example, for Gaddafi, the film that was shown in Amsterdam, because we made it for TV, so the TV gave us the money. Which is not much, but just enough to make and finish the film. And we don't make any money out of it. Everything was spent in making the films.

Our previous film was made with the support of the funding in Korea. So we applied for funding and they gave us some money and we were able to make it.

RS: at Busan?

KR: Yes, from Busan, their Asian Network of Documentary. But for our previous film we also got some money from the government. They gave us some money. When I say no support from the government, I mean it in the way that, there is no structure of supporting, if you know what I meant. There is no committed budget, so every year there is a central budget and you can apply but you know there's no program, there's no... You just apply and sometimes they give it to you and sometimes they don't. But there's no fixed budget. For either documentary or fiction.

RS: You said that you don't earn any money from it, why do people make documentaries?

KR: In my case because I have a job, so I don't have to make a living by making documentaries, so I am lucky. Also my two friends who make films with me, they have other jobs which support them. So this is something we do, our passions, because we want to tell our stories. But for other filmmakers, they cannot make a living making documentaries, except if you are the company that is producing programs for TV, then it's possible. Because there are several companies that make wildlife documentaries. Or traditional, you know the kind of social related documentary. Only for TV, then it's possible to make a living out of that. But if you make documentaries with the aim of showing in the cinema, or you want to tell challenging stories or stories that you don't see that much on TV, then it's difficult.

RS: Do most other documentary makers have a job besides...

KR: I think they have to do something else to support themselves. For example the guy who made boundary, I think he had to do like, he is a cinematographer, so he works on other films, for example. And he makes films when he can raise money from here and there.

RS: and different funds

KR: so it's difficult to have a permanent job as a documentary filmmaker except if you work for TV.

RS: But you were speaking about the international funds, like the Asian Network? Are there a lot of those that are able to support filmmakers like you in Thailand or other places in Southeast Asia?

KR: I think quite a lot, but the competition is very high because everyone also wants to use that funding. The Hubert Bals fund, but that's for fiction movies I think. In Rotterdam... And has been very generous to Thai filmmakers. And IDFA has some kind of funding project as well. So there are several, but you have to share and keep sending applications and it's very competitive. So I would say, it's not very easy to raise money. It's not very easy, but that's one of the reasons because with documentary you don't need that much money if you can, you know, if you can borrow the camera, if you can borrow the microphone and you do it without wanting to make money, then it's possible. But of course, I say this because in my situation I have financial support from other jobs, so this is something I can manage on my own.

RS: I actually interviewed the director of Boundary a few weeks ago, it was very interesting because he said that his film was actually banned temporarily. But he said that it wasn't very normal for that to happen. Is that true?



KR: Not normal meaning, not many films get banned.

RS: it's not typical then?

KR: not that many films get banned. In the past 3 years maybe 3 or 4 films. But in his case it was very strange because they banned it and then they lifted the ban a few days later. They said it was a technical problem. But it's very political, in the way the censorship works, and because his subject matter is very very sensitive. And nobody can explain what actually happened.

RS: But he said that he believes it might have been because of all the people he contacted on Facebook.

KR: Probably, I mean, there are several theories. Because when the film was banned, it became big news everywhere. Like all the major newspapers reported on the ban. Because it's about Thailand and Cambodia and the case was in The Hague, in the national court of justice. So it was not just about a film being banned, it was just about Thailand and Cambodia, you know, international news. SO the story was blown up quite a bit. And I don't know if that put some pressure on the censorship.

RS: Does the internet and different platforms you have there affect your work? For instance by funding or being able to show your film online, do you see that happening more often?

KR: I think, you know if you make a film I think our first priority is to try and show it in the cinema or at least on TV. For a filmmaker, that feels more like a privilege. It feels more like, ok this is why we make film, we want to release it in the proper channels. But I would say that the internet is a supplementary distribution channel. For example, most of the films we make, we try to push it on other channels and then upload it to YouTube later, maybe like 3-6 month after.

RS: But do these films eventually go onto YouTube or Vimeo in the end anyway?

KR: Yes, we put most of our films, we put our last two films online. But not for everyone then, because some of the films we make will be released on DVD, so we're not supposed to put it online, because we have the DVD version of it, for example. So I would say in general, the internet is a supplementary channel. Maybe it's important of course, because it reaches a lot of people, but how many videos on YouTube, how many video are there on Vimeo? You know a billion? The competition for attention from the people is very high. So we, I would say, we would try to get it in the cinema or on TV first. And then the internet is a supplement.

RS: You said that you also release some of your films on DVD.

KR: Only one actually.

RS: Is that to a local market?

KR: Well, actually it's international because this is the film we made in 200. It's called the convert. It was released by a company in Singapore. Because the subject of the film is about a Buddhist woman who converts to Islam to get married to a Muslim man. And in Singapore I think this is quite common today, so they think they can find an audience with this subject.

RS: But this is usually not the case though, to find, to release it on DVD.

KR: Yes. For example, boundary, I don't think there's a DVD, because the subject matter is very specific to this part of the world.

RS: Although it did go to Berlin...

KR: It went around to several places.

RS: could it be that if it get shown a lot, that people don't need to buy the DVD anymore?

KR: Probably, it's difficult to say, because you know that the festival audience is huge in Europe, but in Asia it's very small. So DVD should help, yes.

RS: I actually listened to the audio recording of the seminar at IDFA and I heard you were there and you gave a very good speech...

KR: I don't remember what I said at all.

RS: Actually, I noted it here, people clapped at the end. What did you think of the seminar? You can be completely honest, this is not for IDFA.

KR: If I can remember it...

RS: DO you remember the seminar?

KR: I remember the feeling that it's very very... First of all it is very academic, and I am not very familiar with academic environments. It's not natural and I don't know how to put it. But you know you have these three or four professors, trying to come up with themes based on the films of Southeast Asia. And I mean they are good people, and some of the things they said are quite interesting, but it's very academic. Meaning it's quite remote from.

RS: From what you do?

KR: yes, from the reality, from the ground level reality of the people. I mean, of the filmmakers. And the format of the seminar is strange, because you have almost 20 filmmakers from Southeast Asia sitting there and some of them didn't get to speak at all. In my view I think we should let these people speak and the academics, those professors should not speak too much. They should ask questions and the filmmakers should speak. Of course the films speak for themselves, but now that they are there in person, they should be able to speak more than that.

RS: Because they're the ones who actually have the experience with the things that are being talked about.

KR: yes, now it's like they are trying to... like the professors are trying to analyse Southeast Asia based on the films. Which is OK in a classroom, I think, but not in that environment. I think the filmmaker should be able to explain more from the film, or to answer questions. If people see the films and want to know something more, they should be able to ask questions, and filmmakers should be allowed to speak. I know a lot of Myanmar people were there, and me, as an audience, I want to hear them speak. But I hardly heard them speak because the professors did most of the talking.

RS: I think another part of what they were trying to do was to create a sort of platform where, if they didn't speak during the event, that you could talk to them outside of the event. Did that go on?

KR: Yes, probably. Or maybe they can just make it longer, because that was two hours.

RS: it was one and a half hours...

KR: if they make it longer, it could be more substantial. I mean it's not bad, but it feels incomplete in many ways.

RS: Did you find it very relevant or useful? Did it benefit you in any way?

KR: yes, in general, yes. I don't know how to put this, but with the academic environment I feel very uncomfortable. It's like they're trying... they treat... It doesn't mean any offence, but university scholars and professors sometimes treat films or people who make films as subjects, as insects that they study. And sometimes I don't feel comfortable with that.

RS: of course, that's a good point.

KR: maybe it's just me, but I was quite bored actually at the seminar. But I think it was Raul who put the microphone into my hands so I had to say something.

RS: he asked you if you would like to say something. I think what you were the first one to say that the three different themes in the Southeast Asian films were very much linked. You said this about half way, so it took a very long time for people to start talking about that. After the event, did you get any more contact or, what part of it was useful to you? Was it useful at all?

KR: It was of course, I mean the best thing is because we get to meet people. We get to meet filmmakers from the region that some of them have heard the names of. I only knew them by name so it's good to get to talk to them and establish contact among the filmmakers. But with the audience, with the university people, not really. It feels like a one-time thing. But was it useful? Yes, because I get to hear interesting things that they say, even though I don't remember much of it. But the attempt to look at the region as a whole and to try to, you know find common or shared themes among these countries is something that I am interested in as a journalist, as well. So in terms of contact, in terms of a spark that got me to think more, maybe it was useful in that way. And of course it was useful in the sense that I met filmmakers from the region.

RS: I think another reason why they did it was because they noticed that documentaries sent in from Southeast Asian countries were lacking, that there weren't many being sent in. Do you think that something like the program they had would encourage the filmmakers to send more work?

KR: I would say so if they do it consistently. You know, because last year at IDFA the Southeast Asian program was... they change things every year.

R: I think it's just one year

KR: last year it was Southeast Asia, but next year it will be something else. And I understand that as a festival you have to find something new every year, but, yes, I think, from my own experience I would love to send my next film to IDFA again. Because Gaddafi was shown there and it was, the screenings, people seemed to be interested in the film, so in terms of moral support I feel that our film was appreciated to a level. So I would love to send my next film to IDFA again. And because, you know in Southeast Asia there is no major festival that could also function as a gathering place for filmmakers. In Southeast Asia you don't have any. Especially for documentary. So for example, for fiction film, a lot of the Southeast Asian filmmakers like to go to Rotterdam as it is such a big support. They champion

independent filmmakers from Southeast Asia. So you know that's were. And the filmmakers from Southeast Asia have to go. For documentary, you know what I mean, because there is no such thing in Southeast Asia, we have to go somewhere else. We have to go to Busan, we have to go to IDFA. WE have to go somewhere else to feel that our films are actually shared, and that's where we meet other filmmakers form the region. That's always interesting for me.

RS: Why do you think these festivals are interested in the region?

KR: I think for festivals, they just need new players, they just need new character s to feature, if you know what I mean. Again, I don't mean any offence, but this year lest feature Africa, this year SEA, this year the Middle East, for example. But this is how festivals are conceived. But I would say that for example, Rotterdam, they are quite consistent. Their passion for Southeast Asian films is quite real and substantial. But for documentary, I'm not really sure. I think they just have to keep looking. They might want to feature your film, you must just keep looking.

RS: I know that you have traveled to other festivals as well. Do you have the idea that other festivals or other countries are very interested in the region, besides the Netherlands?

KR: I think maybe like five or six years ago when there was an emerging, you know five or six years ago you have Apichatpong, the Thai filmmaker who won the Palme D'or. And for example you have (...) Mendoza, for example who won best director in Cannes. You have a couple of Young Malaysian filmmakers whose work was shown in Rotterdam. What I'm saying is that when there are a bunch of filmmakers, like not one, but maybe five or six or seven filmmakers in the region that are making interesting films, then the whole region became a subject of interest. And then when, for example, in the past two or three years it was not done, I mean the region was not that hot anymore. But certain filmmakers like Apichatpong, he's established as one of the best directors working in Asia. So when he makes film, people are always interested. But unless there are a whole pack of filmmakers that make interesting films, then the region does not assert itself as.

RS: then all the interest is only on one director and not...

KR: not the region as an entity. I noticed that about five or six years ago, there were many films coming out of Malaysia and the Philippines, and from Thailand. So the interest in the whole region went up. But then right now, the Malaysians do not have anything interesting from Malaysia anymore. From Indonesia, hardly anybody, maybe one or two. From the Philippines, you only have one or two, from Thailand you only have Apichatpong. So there's no presence of the whole region, but just individual filmmakers. But if you have a lot of people from the region coming up at the same time, then the whole region becomes, you know, more.

RS: More prolific?

KR: Yeah.

RS: and could you see that happening in the near future?

KR: It is possible, I mean, we have young filmmakers trying to make things all the time. But I think the problem with the whole region is that there is no support from the government. For filmmakers in Southeast Asia, you have to look at support from abroad. The Hubert Bals fund, from IDFA, from workshops here and there, from Pusan, you know. From other places except from their own country. So

I think that that is the nature at the moment. Because unless you have persistent support from the government, then it's always a struggle for young filmmakers. But for example, if you look at Korea, they keep producing interesting works, they keep producing new young filmmakers because their cultural infrastructure is so strong, so established. But we don't have that kind of thing in Southeast Asia. So I mean, it's possible, but it's difficult.

RS: We talked about your own government and the lack of structure there, are there countries in SEA where there is more funding and support from the government or public funds?

KR: I think in Singapore. Singapore is a rich country so I think the government is quite active in trying to promote the making, but of course in Singapore you have other problems, like censorship. And their creative industry is not as open as other countries in the region. I don't know that much about other countries, but I think more or less that filmmakers have to improvise a lot. They have to look for money anywhere they can. Of course the government will help them. It's not fair to say that they don't help us at all. But because they don't have, what can I call it, an organized policy to support art in general. SO when they support it, it's a one-time thing or it's something they do just for certain interest. Like they want to promote something and they promote it, and then next year it stops. That happens quite a lot.

RS: do they commission films themselves as well?

KR: in Thailand, no. Sometimes they do but it's more or less a propaganda film. You know what I mean? To celebrate the king's birthday or something like that which is OK, some of them are not bad, but it's not real creative effort.

RS: How do you feel about that as a filmmaker, that your own country doesn't support you in that way? Or is it just...

KR: We've grown up with this, we look at other countries and sometimes we say, look at Korea, they have a system of support, why don't we have it? But because we are used to it, we understand that this is the way. This country operates and we come to terms with it, more or less, if you know what I mean. It's just a situation that we have to deal with. I mean we try to fight for support. We try to fight for funding. Actually four years ago there was a big campaign to get money from the government to support films, and then... it didn't go anywhere. We didn't really succeed.

RS: as campaigns often do.

KR: yes, and we just thought, OK, this is how, this is the way we live. This is how we have to work, looking for some money elsewhere. So we accept it to a certain degree. And this is fiction film. But for example Apichatpong again, he has looked for money on our side of Thailand. And he is our most famous filmmaker, for example. Even he, like (...) he's still not getting much support from Thailand. So what about the rest of us, we're not as famous or as talented as him. If you know what I mean.

RS: because the government doesn't look at him as an asset in that sense?

KR: Of course, when he won the prize, they took him under their wing, the ministry of culture promoted and organized a celebration for him. And if he asked for money again, maybe they give him something. But what I want to see is infrastructure, a fixed budget every year, or a fixed budget for film school, or you have a fixed budget for distribution of art films or documentary films. But they don't have anything like that. It's just one thing or one time, if you want to do this, you ask, and if they agree, they give you

some money and that's it. Next year, if you want it again, maybe you apply them and try to convince them. Sometimes you get it and sometimes you don't. And you have to keep asking. There's no fixed system or fixed policy of how to support arts.

RS: I know that IDFA had a program about Southeast Asia, but I find it strange that a whole region like that, with so many countries and so many people are put into one program. It doesn't seem like that the countries are being compared with each other, but instead turned into one large group. Why do you think about that?

KR: that's true, but I mean, when you speak of ten countries as if they were only one there are always problems. But in terms of programming, I can more or less understand. If you go to Dubai, they have a section for African film. You have like 30 countries in Africa. But they lump it together as one big entity. So in terms of programming, in terms of editorial thinking, I can understand that. But I think it is also important to emphasise that, OK, we put ten films from ten countries and labelled it Southeast Asia, for the sake of convenience, for the sake of understanding. But of course, there are more differences than similarities among the films in this region.

RS: Do you see a very strong difference in film styles, or difference between the different countries? Or is it even person-bound.

KR: I'm not sure, maybe Thailand and the Philippines, because they have big film industries. So sometimes the styles are more challenging. Or the filmmakers want to experiment some, for example. But in terms of subject matter, in terms of topics, I think that you can see a lot of difference in that sense. Because each country has different problems, each country has different social situations, political situations, so in terms of subject matter, that's more interesting, that you see differences. And again, which brings us back to that seminar in Amsterdam. I think the attempt to find common themes is important, but that must not overshadow the fact that there are so many differences. Sometimes when you want to find common themes, shared themes, you overlook the differences.

RS: OD you think that had a positive or negative effect on the seminar? Or any effect at all?

KR: I think it's positive, like as if, it was useful, it was positive. For me as a journalist, as a filmmaker. A lot of things people said that day got me to think about the region, about the way to... I mean of course, when you look at ten films from different countries, you try to analyse it, you try to find common trends between them, and that seminar helped me to think about those things in that way. To be fair, I don't remember much, but some of those films stay with me. Some of the films I saw at IDFA from other countries, I still remember them. But I don't remember much about the seminar, even though I remember that I found it interesting towards the end, I was bored at the beginning.

RS: it started slowly.

KR: yes.

RS: did you watch a lot of other films then, at IDFA?

KR: There were about two or three films that I saw. Some of them were shown in Bangkok, at other events. Some of the films from Myanmar. Some of them are being shown again here.

RS: what kind of access do you have to other documentaries from SEA or also other countries?

KR: not much. We have a documentary film festival which is quite good. But not very big. It's quite a small one. The next one is in two weeks. They're showing a lot of films from Southeast Asia. Then we have another film festival, again not very big, a lot of Southeast Asia films. So we have a few events where we get to see SEA films. It's not too bad, but it could be more.

RS: What effect does being a journalist have on your filmmaking?

KR: I never thought about it, but when you are a journalist, you approach a subject with a certain way of thinking, a certain way of looking at the information and you look at how you want to get that information and how to approach the subject and how to analyse the subject. But with filmmaking I think, for me, filmmaking is the attempt to find an answer, so sometimes I don't know what I'm going to get, and sometimes I don't know what the film is going to be like, so we just make it. But with journalism, you at least have to have something in your mind of what you want to do, you have to have a certain structure in your mind, of what you want to do. And because journalism is my profession, so I take it more seriously. This is something I do in my free time, basically. So I enjoy it more. And I'm not stressed out when I don't get to make films, and I don't get stressed out when I go out to shoot, because I enjoy it. When you go to work, its work, so you feel differently about it.

## Interview Nontawat Numbenchapol, February 27, 2014

RS: Why did you start making documentaries?

NN: I don't want to control the environment, I love to follow people within their environment. That means it's a documentary. That's the first reason. The second reason is that it is pretty hard to look for funding, I can make a documentary with a low budget. If I want to make a fiction I have to use a lot of budget for making it. But for documentary it's easy to shoot, I just go to the space that I want to shoot and just shoot it. I have only a camera and a sound recorder, just shooting.

RS: It's easier. What's important to you when you're making a documentary?

NN: The point of the film is the story. When I know what I want to shoot, I have a proposal, every time I make a documentary I make a proposal. I write what I want to shoot or the story I want to tell. And then when I am in other locations, when I see something that can support my idea for the story, then it's the first reason.

RS: So the story? How do you choose your stories?

NN: An example: Now I want to make a new film, but I try to search and research for a story. But now I cannot find an inspiration. But for *Boundary*, at that time when I heard that story, I saw inspiration. I really wanted to shoot it and when I got that feeling, I knew I wanted to make that film.

RS: So is it something specific that inspires you? Or do you have to research it first?

NN: I am someone who needs inspiration first, and then after that I research it. But now I try to research first.

RS: Did you attend the seminar at IDFA?

NN: Yes.

RS: They discussed 3 types of documentary: Historical, every day and shifting moralities. Would you place your work in any of those three categories?

NN: First I shoot a space, but I love shooting daily lives. At that time I'm not interested in Bangkok, because it's too simple for me, I know it too well. When I go into some place different from my life, everything looks interesting to me. Especially if that place has a problem or conflicts. If it's different to Bangkok, it's so interesting to me. For *Boundary*, the problem with the conflict is that everything starts with problems in Bangkok, and what people there are saying. I really wanted to show the simple life of the border people to my friends in Bangkok. What happens with them...

RS: Did you have any trouble making that film because I read that you had some censorship problems after you finished everything? Did you have problems making the film?

NN: A lot. Because the story that I wanted to tell is sensitive in Thailand. First, for shooting at the border, at that time while there was a war between the countries... For example some place in Thailand at the border, with the tank, I could not shoot over there. And in some places it looked too dangerous for shooting. So finally when I got the footage from the border, and I really wanted to go across the border, to shoot in Cambodia. But because I'm Thai, the people from Thailand had just bombed the border in



Cambodia, and so I was looking for someone to take me to shoot my film at the border... At first I tried to go across at the border, but I couldn't because the border was closed at that time. I tried to fly to Phnom Penh to look for a crew to go with me, but Cambodian people, nobody wanted to take me to the border because I'm Thai. Someone thinking I'm spy from Thailand or something like that. It wouldn't be safe for them. I spent the time looking for a connection to bring me to the border. Finally I got my co-producer, he is a Cambodian but grew up in France. He helped me look for someone. Finally we got a crew to take me to shoot at the border. But I had to tell everybody in Cambodia that I wasn't Thai. I told everybody that I was Chinese American. And finally, when I wasn't Thai, everything became really easy. When I wasn't Thai, everybody looked nice and healthy and was willing to help me, take me to the border. They really loved to talk into my camera, because they really wanted to tell the world what happened in their lives, What Thailand was doing to them.

RS: That scene where those men are sitting and talking about Thailand, did they know you were Thai?

NN: No, we got them to talk about Thailand. The language is different.

RS: How did you convince them?

NN: There was a problem because when shooting in Thailand, I know what they are saying. But In Cambodia I didn't know what they were saying. I told me crew what I wanted to shoot. They answered my questions, but I didn't know what was being said. My translator helped.

RS: So that was a challenge as well.

NN: It was very hard to make a documentary in the different language. And then I had problems with the censorship in Bangkok.

RS: You had to remove the first sentence right?

NN: First the censorship banned my film, and I was pretty shocked. I posted my frustration to Facebook, and I was so surprised that in 1 night my post was shared over 2000 times. In one night. A post about the censorship of my films. Everybody shared this. They complained that the censorship does not make sense. And then in the morning when I woke up, a newspaper called me to interview me about this problem. Finally the Guardian in England and other news agencies started picking up the news and it became big news in Thailand. So the censorship came back to me and said it was OK to screen the films.

RS: The seminar also said that Facebook helped getting around things like that. How have you experienced that? Maybe not specifically Facebook, but how has the internet helped you with distributing your film?

NN: Because my film is a low-budget film, I cannot pay for another medium. Just only Facebook to promote it. It's also good for internet films, because Facebook is good for promoting. It's good for independent films because Facebook is so powerful for promoting. After the censorship was OK with me screening my films, I talked to the Cineplex to screen my film, and it was a problem as well because they didn't want to screen it because it was sensitive, a sensitive issue. Some theatres don't want to screen it because of political attitudes. But I got a theatre that let me screen the film, but they didn't want to put it in their system because they didn't want any problems. So I had to rent a theatre and sell tickets by myself.

RS: Did that go well?

NN: Yes, it was good because it was a full house. But I cannot rent too much because I'm not sure after that if there still is an audience that would pay. I would have to pay per screening. In Bangkok it showed around 4 times, in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, in the North and in the South.

RS: It's been shown inside of Thailand, have your films, and Boundary specifically, been shown outside of Thailand?

NN: You mean IDFA or something like that?

RS: Yes, but has it been shown at other places as well?

NN: IN Cambodia too, at the Cambodia International Film Festival last year.

RS: That must have been very interesting.

NN: Yes, but they told me that I could not promote the screening on Facebook, because they didn't want a problem before the screening. And I could not go to Cambodia at that time. We screened in Japan, Milan, and screening in Indonesia.

RS: What is your government's position on documentaries like yours?

NN: I think my film is the first case. They didn't have this kind of political issues in the theatre before. IT was a first. But at that time there was another documentary that talked about politics too, but it wasn't censored like mine. I think the government doesn't want to ban any film anymore, because when my film was banned, it wasn't good for the government and the people's attitudes.

RS: Do you think it got more attention because it was banned?

NN: Yeah, probably. You know that Thailand has a monarchy. It is super sensitive, they have a law about the monarchy. People cannot say anything bad about the monarchy. If someone does say something negative about the monarchy, they can put you in jail. Because of that, Thai people cannot make a film about monarchy.

RS: So that's one thing that was very sensitive.

NN: Yes, that's super sensitive.

RS: your film didn't really talk about it.

NN: But my film has two scenes where they talk about monarchy, and you saw the picture on the wall of the school. But that's OK. I didn't show anything big bad. But in the first scenes of my film, at the place where people died, at first they were on stage talking about the New Year, celebrating the New Year and talking about our king who is 84 years or something like that. The censorship wanted to make me mute it, and I had to mute it because it was too dangerous for me, to show it. Because at that place a lot of people have died only four months ago, and they're still celebrating the king at that time.

RS: You said before that it's quite difficult to find finances for your film, could you tell me more about that? For Boundary or your other films.

NN: For Boundary, I got the funding from Singapore. You can ask for funding if the piece of art talks about cross-culture. I got funding from Pusan film festival. It's not much, but it can make a film. Another one, after Boundary, it's more easy to look for funding in Bangkok and Thailand because they know me from Boundary, right? And then other films are not as sensitive as Boundary, so I got funding from Thai PBS.

RS: So it's easier to find funding now that you have made a name for yourself with this previous film.

NN: It's better, but not much easier.

RS: How did you hear about IDFA?

NN: At first I knew IDFA from a Thai filmmaker who got his funding from IDFA, a few years ago. Then for Boundary, IDFA told me they saw Boundary in Berlin, where my film premiered. After that, they e-mailed my agent, asking to screen Boundary. Finally I screened it at IDFA.

RS: So you didn't send your film to IDFA, they contacted you about the film. Do your documentaries fully depend on funding?

NN: When I got funding from Pusan, I did the shooting, but I didn't have money for post-production. I tried sending it for post-production, but I couldn't do it. I brought it to the post-production company in Bangkok, asked them if they could support me for finishing this film, because I want to do sound mixing and color-grading and conform to the screening format. I'm lucky because they helped me and finally I had to post the films to the festivals.

RS: So what is your relationship to places like IDFA?

NN: that was my first time at IDFA. They treated me well, the hotel and guest support.

RS: Did the Southeast Asia seminar help you?

NN: It helped me just a little. Some things can open my eyes and give me inspiration, but it wasn't enough for me. I think that was because I'm from Southeast Asia, and that seminar had professors talking about Southeast Asia. When I hear the people from Europe talking about Southeast Asia, I think I know everything more than them. Some things, I did not agree with them.

RS: What kind of things?

NN: I can't remember, it's not news for me. But it's good for me to know the European opinions on Southeast Asia. But I can't remember what they were talking about.

RS: Are you in contact with other documentary filmmakers in Thailand?

NN: I met some other Southeast Asian filmmakers at IDFA. We see each other at other film festivals. It's like a community.

## **Interview Raul Nino Zambrano, March 11, 2014.**

RS: Hoe lang bestaat het Zuidoost Azië programma al?

RNZ: Het kwam als een idee in 2012 en daarna is het ontwikkeld in 2013. Begin 2013 deden we de research en het eindproduct was het programma tijdens IDFA.

RS: Waarom hebben jullie hier voor gekozen?

RNZ: Het eerste idee kwam van Ally, ze ging in 2012, ze was uitgenodigd via DocNet Southeast Asia voor een seminar in Thailand waar vooral filmmakers en producenten uit de regio kwamen. En ze is daar geweest, ze vond het heel interessant, ze vond toch een beetje, nou er zat een bepaalde energie in de dingen die ze heeft gelezen en toen met de makers gesproken en aangezien dat in andere jaren de aanwezigheid van makers of films uit de regio niet zo groot was dacht we, dit is het moment waar we aandacht kunnen schenken aan de regio. Dus zo begon het idee. Daarna gingen we ook weer praten (...) laten we dat doen. En dan, laten we er research van maken. En dan, ik ben begonnen te analyseren hoeveel films hadden we gekregen in de laatste vijf jaar. Dan contact opnemen met die makers, en vooral met de makers waar we al een relatie mee hadden, geselecteerde films. Om te kijken of ze mij in contact konden brengen met andere filmmakers of andere projecten, juist met het idee dat we iets gingen doen met Zuidoost Azië. Toen hebben we besloten om een trip te doen, we gingen naar Malaysia naar Asian side of the Doc, dat is meer een pitch co-production market, daar waren niet alleen zuidoost Azië maar ook Aziatische films. Daarna hebben we gekoppeld aan een evenement in Cambodja, van dezelfde groep die Ally heeft uitgenodigd het jaar daarvoor. Ze noemen het de strategie seminar en de titel vorig jaar was, the voices of Southeast Asia, how to bring the new voices, something like that. En ook weer een soort seminar waar veel producenten en regisseurs en televisie broadcasters aanwezig waren. En tussen die twee evenementen gingen we naar Myanmar voor een paar dagen. Daar hadden we contact met een filmschool, en we gingen dus op bezoek bij een filmschool en ook een andere festival die voor het eerst werd gehouden over human rights en dignity. Dus we hadden bepaalde netwerken die hadden we zo gekoppeld en gingen we daar naartoe. Na onze reis waren we super enthousiast over wat er gebeurde, filmmakers, jonge projecten waar we feedback op konden geven. Broadcasters ontmoet, en we dachten, we zitten op een goeie lijn en we willen een soort programma maken, en we hebben toen besloten, laten we het doen over recente films, nieuwe films. Het had ook een keuze kunnen zijn, om alleen maar een retrospectief te doen, maar er was een soort energie. En er waren drie hele verschillende landen, maar alle drie in een soort transitie. Malaysia heeft heel veel geld, maar zijn heel slecht in freedom of speech. Myanmar is heel erg open maar had een heftige dictatorschap en Cambodia zat er een beetje soort van tussen. Maar op het moment is documentaire een beetje aan het doorbereken, nadat de fictie film goed gaat. Juist die transities, daarvan dachten we, moeten we iets doen. Daarna gingen we juist met de contacten die we hadden gemaakt meer e-mailen en toen kwamen we bij de films.

RS: want wat is het doel van het programma?

RNZ: nou ons doel was ten eerste aandacht schenken aan een regio die wij, als je ziet inderdaad in de afgelopen jaren niet zo aanwezig was, en dat heeft natuurlijk met verschillenden dingen te maken. Dat betekent dat de film industrie in die regio is niet zo ontwikkeld. Natuurlijk hebben we films gekregen, maar kwalitatief niet genoeg om te vertonen bij IDFA. Terwijl we hebben natuurlijk zelf een winnaar gehad uit de Filipijnen, niet zo lang geleden. We hebben een aantal gehad, maar als je kijkt naar de 300

films die wij vertonen was het niet meer dan 5. Dus we wilde kijken wat er aan de hand was. En we merken altijd dat als we speciale aandacht geven aan een regio, dat heeft als gevolg dat mensen meer enthousiast zijn, ze kennen onze fonds beter, we kunnen dingen sturen. Het is vaak zo dat mensen niet wisten hoe IDFA werken, of niet durven, of sommigen vonden IDFA te groot, dat is Amsterdam daar komt mijn film nooit tussen. En dan kom je uit filmschool en dan denk je, forget it, ik ga nooit mijn films sturen. Het doel was ten eerste naar ons publiek om de regio aan de aandacht te krijgen, omdat het in transitie is en dat in de komende jaren gaan we er meer van horen omdat er dingen gebeuren, en snel en op een goeie manier met een goed enthousiasme. Ten tweede meer voor ons als festival om ons te positioneren als een platform die ze kunnen gebruiken, kom stuur maar je films, want we kunnen iets voor elkaar betekenen.

RS: Op basis waarvan heb je een selectie gemaakt?

RNZ: De beperkingen die wij hadden... het moest ten eerste niet ouder dan augustus afgelopen jaar zijn, voor de rest hadden we geen lengtebeperking. Wat voor ons belangrijk was, was de goeie energie van transitie en ontwikkeling. Die energie wilde wij laten zien in deze films. Dat was ons idee, maar je bent natuurlijk afhankelijk van wat je krijgt. Hoe dan ook, van de films van dat moment. Maar ik denk dat het wel zeer is geslaagd, van wat wij konden krijgen, van de weerspiegeling van de energie die wij toen hebben gezien. En we wilde ook, en ook diverse, je hebt hele kleine verhalen tot de grote verhalen, en ook qua vorm dat ze divers waren. Dat vonden wij belangrijk, dat konden we ook zien. Dat is heel divers, iedereen weet precies hoe je een film kan maken, maar iedereen doet het op zijn eigen manier en dat wilde we laten zien.

RS: En was diversiteit in de landen ook belangrijk

RNZ: zeker, zeker. Officieel zouden we heel graag een films van alle landen, tenminste, maar qua aanbod zijn er uit bepaalde landen films gekomen. Uit de Filipijnen zijn dit jaar wat films gekomen, maar toch, niet een film die wij goed genoeg vonden. En we denken altijd aan ons publiek, en is het iets dat we aan ons publiek kunnen vertonen. Verdient de film een groot doek? Wat we toepassen is onze regels van creatieve documentaire, het moet gewoon een IDFA film zijn. We kunnen in de selectie geen concessies maken. Natuurlijk waren het niet allemaal perfecte films, maar we zagen wel dat we ze wilde laten zien. Zo is de industrie in dit moment in die landen.

RS: Je zegt dat de industrie, door wat je programmeerde, dat je wilde laten zien wat er gaande is in deze regio. Was het ook een keuze om bepaalde dingen te programmeren om bepaalde films uit een bepaald land juist te stimuleren.

RNZ: Niet als doel zelf, maar het is wel een beetje deel van de grote doelen. Ik merk het zelf, bijvoorbeeld dat... mijn regio is Latijns Amerika, ik heb zelf meegemaakt dat op het moment dat wij films selecteren uit een land waar bijna geen documentaire uit komt, dat heeft geholpen op een of andere manier dat meer films worden gemaakt, of meer projecten worden ingestuurd naar IDFA. Niet dat wij de enige oorzaak zijn, maar het heeft wel geholpen. En in die zin, natuurlijk, wij willen niets meer dan dat die makers ook een nieuwe kans krijgen om nieuwe films te maken.

RS: maar dat is dan iets dat je over een jaar weer kan nagaan.

RNZ: precies.

RS: wat voor andere instanties bestaan er binnen Nederland voor documentaires uit Zuidoost Azië, qua fondsen of vertoningsmogelijkheden.

RNZ: Er zijn bepaalde festivals, die zijn wel heel gefocust... films of Asia... Film, die alleen maar Aziatische films vertoond waaronder Zuidoost Azië. Rotterdam heeft altijd een hele goeie, ook voor Aziatische films. Niet speciaal voor die regio in Nederland, je ziet bijvoorbeeld wel dat qua onderzoek, er bestaat wel een instituut of Asian studies, een groot onderzoekscentrum in Leiden. Maar qua cultureel gebied. Ja, het moet heel specifiek over een land gaan, een jaar over Vietnam of Cambodia. Dan komen er verschillende culturele organisaties bij elkaar. Oh ja, Cinemasia heet dat festival in Amsterdam. Voor de rest kleine initiatieven, maar zo groot was het nooit eerder gedaan, vooral voor documentaires. Rotterdam heeft een aantal jaar geleden ook de focus gelegd op Zuidoost Azië maar dat was fictie en niet echt documentaires. Dus voor documentaires is het heel bijzonder.

RS: Hebben die films die worden opgestuurd ook invloed op de manier waarop je programmeert?

RNZ: Nee, want wat we wel heel nadrukkelijk maakte was dat we niet een soort ghetto wilde maken, dus we hebben de films ook geprogrammeerd met andere films. We wilde niet dat je denkt, ooh alleen de zuidoost Azië films... je kon zien dat door het hele festival er een soort flavour was. Je hoeft er niet per se van te houden, we hebben ze ook aan een paar Nederlandse films gekoppeld. Dat vonden we interessant. We wilde het niet een aparte vertoning maken, het moet meeleven voor iedereen.

RS: Vind je dat er in Nederland een platform is voor dit soort documentaires?

RNZ: Dat is heel moeilijk om aan te tonen. Dat is een hele grote vraag. Ik denk dat we hebben laten zien dat er iets interessants aan de gang is. Het IDFA publiek is heel nieuwsgierig. En kijken deze films met open armen. Er waren veel mensen bij de Q&A. Al mijn filmmakers waren hier. Ze hebben buiten IDFA ook afspraken gemaakt. In die zin heeft het wel zijn functie als platform gedaan, en dat kon je wel zien. Maar wat voor gevolg, of wat voor publiek... dat is heel moeilijk te bewijzen. Ik denk dat de nieuwsgierigheid bestaat en dat we ten minste hebben laten zien dat er hele interessante films uit Cambodia of die regio komen.

RS: Is dit een project wat maar één jaar bestaat of...

RNZ: Wat we hopen is dat dit krijgt als gevolg dat we meer films krijgen uit de regio, dat meer filmmakers zich gaan aanmelden voor onze Bertha Fund. En op het moment dat er meer films gemaakt worden kunnen we meer kijken en selecteren. Maar goed, dat is in de hoop dat dat gebeurt. Ik denk het wel, want als je ziet hoeveel meer entries er uit de regio zijn gekomen voor de eerste ronde van de fonds, dan is het wel gelukt.

RS: dus die zijn al binnen gekomen.

RNZ: ja!

RS: Wat voor interesse is er voor deze regio buiten Nederland en buiten Zuidoost Azië?

RNZ: Zoals ik zelf heb ervaren toen ik daar was, is dat er toekomst en mogelijkheden zijn. Dat zagen we toen we in Myanmar waren, het is een land van opportunity, en we zagen heel veel bedrijven van alle soorten heel veel bezig waren om grote panden te kopen. Dus je merkte een bepaalde sfeer dat binnen twee jaar als je terugkomt, dat het een andere stad zal zijn, in Yangon bijvoorbeeld. En dat telt ok voor

de meeste van de landen van Zuidoost Azië. En natuurlijk kan vanuit financiële interesse tot culturele interesse. Ik ben vooral nieuwsgierig. Ik denk dat wat heel opvallend is, is dat het een hele jonge generatie is. Er zijn heel veel jonge... niet alleen op cultureel gebied of documentaire, maar die willen heel veel doen. Ik denk dat heel veel mensen denken dat ze die regio in de gaten moeten houden, want misschien komen er hele grote meesterwerken vandaan.

RS: zijn er andere festivals buiten IDFA die er veel aandacht aan besteed?

RNZ: Specifiek over documentaire weet ik niet. Maar bijvoorbeeld Rotterdam heeft altijd een selectie, dit jaar waren er makers uit de Filipijnen. Misschien word er wel in de gaten gehouden. Maar andere festivals? Dan is het vaak heel specifiek over Azië.

RS: Ook in het buitenland?

RNZ: wat je merkt is dat elk festival heeft per jaar een soort land-thema. Dus we zouden ook binnenkort ook een ander land of regio kiezen. Je moet continue... het is altijd interessant om te kijken, of een retrospectief of een recente film, toch bepaalde aandacht. Afrika zou ook het volgende continent zijn waar we aandacht aan besteden, of centraal Amerika waar er heel veel ontwikkeling is.

RS: Dus het is niet dat er vanuit Nederland meer interesse is in het gebied dan uit andere landen.

RNZ: dat kan ik niet zo zeggen, niet per se. Het was ook niet dat wij een sponsor hadden die dat heel graag wilde. Het was meer waar ik interesse in had, het publiek was nieuwsgierig. En de publicaties... het is ook interessant. Er is altijd een groep die een soort connectie heeft met die landen, maar niet op een groter niveau, dat hebben we niet opgemerkt. Je ziet wel dat bepaalde... niet per se Zuidoost Azië, maar vanuit Azië is er meer en meer interesse bij de film industrie om bij IDFA te komen, om films te coproduceren. Dat zie je ook... je ziet het meer, we hadden vorig jaar veel meer Zuid-Koreanen dan andere jaren. Er was ook een delegatie uit China. Die andersom begint meer te worden.

RS: Heb je gezien dat mensen de seminar waardeerde? Wat vonden mensen?

RNZ: ik had allee contact met mensen waar we het mee deden. We waren zeer tevreden. Het komt ook zelf bij de newsletter, daar komt een speciale bijlage bij de Center for Asian studies. Het is een gevolg van wat er in de seminar is gedaan. Ik ga een stukje schrijven en anderen gaan ook een stukje schrijven. Ik vind het fantastisch, we zijn nog steeds in contact. Ze vonden het heel interessant om mee te doen. Tijdens IDFA hadden ze in Leiden ook een ander evenement. Daar hebben ze twee van de filmmakers uitgenodigd, en ze zijn daar geweest. Dat ging helemaal buiten ons. Ze vinden dat dat heel succesvol was. Er zitten bij visuele antropologen, daar word meer aandacht gegeven aan documentaire en documentatie, dus ook foto's. Dus...

RS: Denk je dat daar wat meer van gaat komen?

RNZ: voorlopig, na de laatste nieuwsbrief... want we hebben wel gesproken, stel dat we in de komende jaren... We gaan niet weer een seminar doen, maar stel dat er een interessante film uit de regio komt. Dan zou die absoluut als eerste gevraagd worden om een extended Q&A te doen. Het was voor allebei heel positief. Ik kwam met mijn ervaringen, research en films, en ze kwamen met hun eigen onderzoeken. En we complementeerde elkaar heel goed. Dat was heel positief. Ik denk dat dat absoluut nog een keer gaat komen.

RS: heb je nog dingen die je wilt toevoegen?

RNZ: Wat wel interessant was was dat alle filmmakers hier waren, dat ze andere afspraken hadden gemaakt. We kunnen niet alles voor ze doen, maar ze hebben een nieuwe kijk op de dingen die wij hier doen. We zijn ook een van de festivals. Een paar hebben wel naar IBF gestuurd, dezelfde filmmakers, dus dat is heel positief. Kijk, ik ben tevreden. Ik denk inderdaad, de films, je hebt je eigen opvattingen, het waren niet de perfecte films, maar we hebben ze ook niet gepresenteerd als de beste films. Het is kijken van, dit is wat we hebben, ook bedenken dat er binnen vijf jaar misschien een meesterwerk komt.

RS: en als die niet komt, dan doe je over vijf jaar weer hetzelfde programma.

RNZ: ik hoop dat er in de komende jaren een delegatie uit Cambodja en Maleisië komt. Kom maar naar films kijken! Dat is heel fijn.

RS: want denk je dat die documentaires daar op lokaal niveau werken?

RNZ: ik denk het wel, ik hoop het wel. Af en toe lukt het wel, weet je, het is als zij een goeie ervaring hebben gehad, dan komen ze enthousiast terug. Vaak is het ook kennis. Ze wisten niet dat de fonds bestond. Dan ben je precies, nu heb je een mogelijkheid, en dan moet je proberen om een goeie treatment te schrijven, en misschien krijg je geld om een film te maken.