

Manuscript version: Author's Accepted Manuscript

The version presented in WRAP is the author's accepted manuscript and may differ from the published version or Version of Record.

Persistent WRAP URL:

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/182281>

How to cite:

Please refer to published version for the most recent bibliographic citation information. If a published version is known of, the repository item page linked to above, will contain details on accessing it.

Copyright and reuse:

The Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) makes this work by researchers of the University of Warwick available open access under the following conditions.

Copyright © and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable the material made available in WRAP has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

Publisher's statement:

Please refer to the repository item page, publisher's statement section, for further information.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: wrap@warwick.ac.uk.

Table of contents

Chapter 1: The Finnish Documentary Ecosystem

Chapter 2: A Brief History of Finnish Documentary

Chapter 3: The Current Finnish Documentary Scene

Chapter 4: Financiers' Panel

Chapter 5: Producers' Panel

Chapter 6: Directors' Panel

Chapter 7: Conclusion: Finnish Documentary Beyond the Golden Age

List of illustrations

Figure 2.1: Finnish documentary film ecosystem 1896–1917.

Figure 2.2: Finnish documentary film ecosystem 1917–1939.

Figure 2.3: Finnish documentary film ecosystem 1939–1945.

Figure 2.4: Finnish documentary film ecosystem 1945–1960.

Figure 2.5: The Finnish documentary film ecosystem 1960s–1970s.

Figure 2.6: Finnish documentary film ecosystem of the 1980s.

Figure 2.7: The Finnish documentary film ecosystem 1990s–2010s.

Figure 2.8: Finnish documentary film ecosystem, 2010s onwards.

<H1>Chapter 1: The Finnish Documentary Ecosystem</H1>

<H2>Introduction</H2>

Documentary in Finland: History, Practice and Policy is part of a book series dedicated to an ecosystemic view of documentary film cultures. A key imperative for this volume is to re-evaluate the

ways in which scholarship approaches individual films and their production context. Instead of viewing them simply as individual films or reciting histories of auteurist genius, we approach documentary production as cultural constellations. In doing so, we draw from scholarship conducted in media ecology studies, which adapts concepts from the study of (natural) ecology, such as ‘evolution’, ‘extinction’, ‘cross-fertilisation’ or ‘punctuated equilibrium’, and applies them to the study of a specific media system in order to avoid common pitfalls of either an economically determinist or textually determinist account. Practised by scholars such as Lance Strate (2008) and Carlos Scolari (2012), media ecology does not intend to fix the problems of other methods, but instead seeks to find ways to account for gradual and sudden shifts of various kinds of media production and content within the same system. Through this, it can avoid the critiques often faced by media scholarship where the focus is too heavily on the text (i.e. studies that do not take into account production processes, policy, exhibition, reception) or ones that prioritise the industrial context (and thus in the process overlook creative practices and the content itself).

In this book, we suggest that Finnish documentary culture functions like an ecosystem with deliberate (but porous) boundaries and a multitude of participants (agents) who influence and are influenced by these confines. While studies of Finnish documentary culture have presented historical overviews (Sedergren and Kippola 2009 and 2015) and thematic analyses of specific films and filmmakers (Toiviainen 2009; Anderson 2014; Aaltonen 2014), we suggest that adopting approaches from media ecology can provide us with a more comprehensive and responsive perspective on the formation and continued existence of this culture that accurately reflects its constitution. Finnish documentary culture has not developed in a neat historical pattern that we can summarise (even) in a book-length narrative. Seminal historical events, such as two world wars, the expedient modernisation of society, Finland’s changing position in Europe, have all influenced documentary production in immense and complex ways. In terms of film culture, technological factors (film as new media; television; VHS, digital media), artistic movements (New Objectivity; New Waves), cultural policy (funding incentives; taxation laws) and

institutions (the Finnish Film Foundation; the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE) all play a complex role in this ecosystem in ways that refuse easy linearisation.

Rather than separating the pathways of media analysis, media ecology seeks to emphasise the interactions between different elements in a system – structure, content, impact – that might otherwise be considered separately. Here, we draw from Neil Postman’s use of the word ‘ecology’ which ‘implies the study of environments: their structure, content and impact on people’ (1970: np). This is because, according to Scolari, ‘media create an “environment” that surrounds the individual and models their perception and cognition’ (2012: 209–210). Far from being a description of how elements – technology, texts, institutions, audiences – operate together in a system, media ecology maps the ways in which these elements co-create an environment that has, in turn, an effect on the very elements within it, what Strate refers to as a maelstrom of cause and effect:

The maelstrom is our media environment, and the only way out is through synthesis or pattern recognition. We cannot get out through linear logic and cause-and effect thinking alone. We need to work dialectically and ecologically, riding through complex systems on the edge of chaos. (2008: 137)

For Scolari, the maelstrom forms ‘an environment that includes different media and technologies ... subjects (i.e. content producers, users, readers, and media researchers), and social/political forces (Hollywood majors, wikileaks, legal regimes ...)’ (2012: 209–210). Such complex approaches work well in attempting to understand Finnish documentary culture, with its local focus, its generic developments and its constitution as a site of negotiation between competing elements – the subject, the text, technology, institutions, the audience. In this book, we focus on exploring historical and contemporary developments, including the roles of a multitude of players in the field, responding to a wide variety of socio-historical and political challenges or to cultural-artistic or cultural-economic

provocations. Through this, a picture of Finnish documentary culture as an evolving ecosystem emerges.

Within this category there are two processes in particular that are of interest to us: the process of ‘evolution’ within the environment, and the concept of ‘punctuated equilibrium’ between different elements within the environment, both of which provide key conceptual tools used throughout the book. Evolution, as used in a media ecology context, is a broad analogy. It can be used to discuss the general notion of change over time caused by environmental forces, or it can be used in a more biological sense to look at the processes within media forms – and other elements within the media environment – that affect the processes of evolution. In this book, the notion of evolution comes through strongly in Chapter 2, which focuses on a history of Finnish documentary. The chapter captures the complex processes of how elements within a media ecosystem operate and respond to one another. Media ecosystems can also experience sudden transformations – referred to by Scolari as episodes of ‘punctuated equilibrium’, when sudden bursts of transformation and development occur, quite out of rhythm with the usual temporalities. Chapter 2 captures such instances of punctured equilibrium when, for example, television as an emergent technology disrupts the stability of the whole cinema industry, often referred to as the ‘Golden Age of Finnish cinema’ (see Bacon 2016), or when digital media provides a boost to documentary distribution. Here we can see how ‘media coevolve and hybridize each other. These two processes can be seen as two sides of the same coin; if we think in time, we will discover coevolution; if we think in space, we will see hybridization’ (Scolari 2012: 217). For Scolari, intermedia ‘co-evolution’ and their eventual ‘hybridisation’ are key concepts, and they play a major role in this book too, especially when we cover the impacts of technological development and digital convergence on Finnish documentary culture.

In the context of documentary film culture, media ecology can be used to discuss the dynamics through which funders, producers, directors, subjects and audiences interact with industry-wide transformations.

The documentary ecosystem can be imagined under a number of paradigms – political economy, performance tradition, production studies, cultural studies – but to capture the richness and diversity of a documentary culture, these elements need to be viewed as they collide with and influence each other. A Finnish documentary culture analysis, as practised in this book, focuses on funding structures, dominant modes and texts, the demographics of the audience, the professional codes of the filmmakers, a documentary's existence across technologies, and its relationship with other genres, industries, platforms or practices. In the 'maelstrom' of a constantly transforming documentary film culture, the various ecological processes can be reimagined as follows:

Thinking ecologically suggests we look at big pictures, at the whole assemblage of agents that constitute documentary ecosystems. This attempt immediately becomes a daunting task. The sheer profusion of what we might identify as documentary materials is overwhelming. Documentation and recording of our everyday lives is the super-abundant fruit that seeds and sustains the Internet: it is overwhelming. (Dovey 2014: 11)

Jon Dovey's admission stands as a warning to anyone who attempts to survey or analyse the field of documentary film and/or media production. Firstly, as the quotation suggests, the field is unwieldy, and it has long been noted that it is a minefield in terms of definition (Winston 2008). What can be counted as documentary, and importantly, what can't? These discussions go to the heart of how media texts operate within and across societies, territories and technologies, and navigating between the positions of Minh-ha, Winston, Renov and Bruzzi can leave the student of documentary in a profound quandary as to the usefulness of their mission. Perhaps in the face of this debate and diffuseness, documentary really only exists as a category of convenience, one that needs to be addressed simply because it is so widely used, rather than as a term with any precise meaning or significance.

The contemporary situation exacerbates this confusion in a number of ways. Firstly, as Dovey notes, the sheer quantity of documentary material now available on digital platforms makes it almost

impossible to trace the linkages of influence, inspiration and affect that previous eras of film and media studies have tracked, even the ones that challenged the very existence of documentary as a category. Secondly, the fundamental shift from existing mainly on the static platform of analogue television – the major home of documentary between the end of the Second World War and the onset of high-speed internet – to being dispersed across a panoply of digital platforms and spaces is another massive challenge to the category of documentary. The notion that documentary was a film form, existing through its expression of a forward propulsion, has come into doubt due to the overwhelming proportions of what Williams (2004) once referred to as *media flow*. The balance between textual unitary integrity and the intertextuality of the platform on which that text is accessed has all but collapsed. Here, the application of media ecology to documentary can open up a highly useful and flexible analytic analogy, through which the multivarious processes at work can be evaluated in terms of their correlation and co-causal nature.

<H2>Media ecology in small nations</H2>

While the overall analysis presented in this book is inspired by a media ecological perspective, that perspective also welcomes and utilises a number of other approaches to analysing a media production ecology. Similarly, while ‘media ecology’ can be used to trace the casualty of a process across boundaries (of nations, regions, artistic movements, production structures), and to make sense of the atomised and fractured production processes of late capitalism’s increasingly globalised digital mediasphere, this study makes a specific choice to follow a specific tradition of documentary-making in a specific geographical territory: Finland. This decision emerges from our hypothesis that Finland’s documentary scene is a microcosm in which the global processes of artistic flows, commercialised pressures, creative innovations and digital disruption can be seen to work upon the traditional form of documentary. There are many other forms of documentary – television documentary, internet docs, corporate docs – and they have their

producers in Finland, but creative, artistic and independent documentary in Finland has a specific function due to the high levels of state subsidy and public regard.

The Finnish media landscape also works as a media ecosystem with its own patterns of evolution. As Finland is a 'small nation' cinema culture (see Hjort & Petrie 2007), it provides an ideal venue for exploring how a documentary film culture evolves and develops over time and in response to external challenges such as technological convergence and globalisation. Despite having only 5.5 million inhabitants, Finland has a vivid documentary scene. Annually, about 20 feature-length and 10 shorter creative documentaries are produced. Total financing for documentary production is around €4.5 million annually, with the Finnish Film Foundation (Suomen elokuvaseura, SES) and the Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yleisradio, YLE) being the main financiers. From the 1990s to the 2000s Finnish documentaries gained remarkable success both domestically and, crucially, also at international film festivals. This period has been called the 'Golden Age of Finnish documentary' (Haase 2013), as it evinced a stable environment in which to cultivate a variety of approaches to producing documentary in Finland.

Approaching the small nation framework from a media ecology perspective allows us to capture the complexity of 'national film culture' in general, not only of documentary film, in an age of globalisation and convergence. Such perspectives echo critics such as Kääpä, who suggests that national cinema as a conceptual framework needs re-evaluation: "instead of observing how cinema binds the nation together, it is more productive to focus on those elements that indicate their heterogeneity and polyphony" (Kääpä 2010: 264). Yet at the same time, the recent re-emergence of populism and reimagining of the nation state in the age of Trump and Brexit has further complicated the resonances around this term. In an age where the concept of the 'national' is being appropriated as a political tool for the right in the service of global capitalist institutions in a new configuration of alt-right 'long distance nationalisms' (Thobani 2017), the role of a smaller-scale 'local' national re-emerges with renewed importance. In cinematic terms, are the creative aims of filmmakers now safer in the hands of Miller et al.'s (2002) 'international division of

cultural labour', despite the neoliberal connotations of such market conditions, than in the hands of state organisations in thrall to a seemingly regressive evolution in the notion of the national? Or is the 'local' national emerging as an important alternative to alt-right internationalist 'nationalisms'?

These shifts are to be seen particularly strongly in the case of small nation cinemas. In terms of their dependence on Miller's global division of labour, small nations can be especially vulnerable to the pressures of the global cinematic marketplace:

small nations by definition have very limited domestic markets for all locally produced goods and services – including culture – I saw have been forced by the neoliberal economic and political pressures of globalisation into a greater dependency on external markets. (Hjort & Petrie 2007: 15)

Due to such pressures, small nation fiction films tend to be shot on location, with lower budgets, and drawing on national literary and topographical tropes (Hjort and Petrie 2007: 78–79). Language can be a key factor within the dynamics of a small nation's industrial and artistic cinematic practice (ibid.). The cinematic artist within a small nation may well have an advantage over their counterpart in a larger nation. Higher levels of co-operation across disciplinary silos within cinematic production, in addition to a workforce more used to working in several production capacities, can lead a small nation's production culture to be highly flexible and creative, especially in terms of transnational financial agreements and arrangements. Furthermore, the 'editorial' aspect of their construction (script, locations, performance) can be affected by the financial strings attached to specific productions. In addition, especially in terms of the 'small nation' and the global market for both fiction and documentary films, the notion of diasporic filmmaking has become increasingly important, with the balance between audience size and diasporic language or identity spread being crucially important (Bacon 2016: 9). In a world where even smaller nations, preserved as such in the past by social and technological isolation, are now more ethnically

diverse and heterogeneous than in the past, a national film culture is less able to rely on a traditional stock of stories and images, or if it does so, it risks losing its representative link with its contemporary national base. All of these ideas, as we will see, are key features of Finnish documentary culture.

Furthermore, the study of small nation cinema is complicated by a set of paradoxes that directly feed into our analysis of Finnish documentary culture:

- that small nations can breed cinema cultures that habituate cinema-going, cinema-making and other distribution, therefore lessening the need/function of marketisation within cinematic distribution;
- that similar sized populations can produce markedly different cinema ‘markets’;
- that while traditional ethnic, literary and geographic markers are essential in bringing together an audience to a story of national significance, the changing nature of the nation makes these markers less relevant;
- that even large European countries cannot effectively mobilise national cinematic tropes;
- and that in the face of the American dominance of commercial cinema, producers from such countries have to pool resources in transnational ‘European’ productions.

While the national and the transnational have always been part of the cinematic picture, in recent times the balance between both has changed. On one hand, the national has become more transnational, with production sustained only by spreading costs over territories through complex co-production arrangements and licence payments. On the other hand, the transnational, under pressure from the Hollywood model, is forced to play a game with national film funds, governmental policy, state funding, auteur aspiration and audience reception – all crucial aspects of the Finnish media ecosystem – that grounds projects in national discourse, if only in terms of production location and the nationality of the production staff. By focusing on a small nation study of Finland’s documentary production community, we can clarify the ways these

dynamics manifest in this particular context. Through this, we are able to study the ecological dynamics of a group of practitioners and policy-makers, who are close enough to share the same conditions, but separate enough for their differences and similarities to provide significant commentary on the way in which today's digital mediasphere is transforming the idea of documentary, in its 'purest' form.

<H2>Small nation documentary cinemas</H2>

The next question to raise is the possibility and desirability of grafting documentary onto the idea of a 'small nation cinema'. Firstly, what are the positives and negatives of talking about a national documentary cinema, big or small? What distinguishes a documentary cinema from a national cinema per se? The answer could be that documentary's 'claim on the real' (Winston 2013) situates it as a locus of political and public communication regarding the real world. As a consequence, it has been traditionally assumed that documentary needs to be shielded against the corrosive effect of neoliberal marketplace systems in order to carry out a vital public function. Documentary's traditional reliance upon, and dominance by, state-owned (or at least identified) broadcasting networks provides a measure of evidence that documentary requires support of this kind.

The challenged state of public service broadcasting in the West, coinciding with the evacuation of documentary from the traditionally imagined domestic TV environment in favour of VOD and mobile devices, has strained the established relationship between broadcasting and documentary to the limit. Critics point to the reduced quality of documentary output on national broadcasting networks, where reality shows have come to dominate (Dovey 2000; Dover 2004). The problem with this position is that it takes a very narrow view of what constitutes documentary formally. While critics mourn the decline of individual feature documentaries on television, others note the growing subtlety and maturity of reality television, with its ability to capture niche audiences within the contemporary digital multichannel

viewing landscape (Biressi & Nunn 2005; Hill 2014). From this perspective documentary has not declined on television, but instead has evolved together with the particular affordance of the platforms on which it is viewed. Although it is debatable, Corner suggests it is difficult to merely cut these kinds of production out of consideration due to a seeming lack of ‘quality’:

It is much harder now to place an exclusive emphasis on cinema when studying documentary, particularly in countries where an indigenous documentary cinema is marginal if it exists at all. In many countries, including Britain, documentary television is an area of significant cultural work with a long and diverse history. Those approaches to documentary which engage with broadcasting primarily through the debate around ‘reality television’ are working with a framework likely to be severely skewed in its understanding of documentary’s scope, values and continuing potential. (Corner 2008: 32–33)

However, if one stays within the usual boundaries for defining cinema – single text, theatrical release, large-screen format, communal viewership – then these evolutionary forms of documentary exclude themselves. What remains are mainly feature-length documentaries that have a life in a recognisably cinematic setting, albeit they are also available on TV or mobile platforms. In this sense, perhaps documentary is also better off following a nomadic existence, pitching its tent on the international circuit of festivals and forums, and living on scraps gleaned from a weakening public service broadcasting system. This, together with some remaining state and altruistic support is what sustains and maintains feature documentary production as it stands, as O’Sullivan testifies in the UK example:

the headline-grabbing, highest-grossing documentaries of the last fifteen years give a distorted impression of the market. Behind the rare million-selling hits lies a fragile ecosystem heavily dependent on distribution support from the BFI, charitable support from the Bertha Foundation and supportive gatekeepers like Picturehouse to sustain its niche in the

market ... the BBC's Storyville strand has been the only home for creative documentaries on British free-to-air television, acquiring forty films a year. After seventeen years as Storyville commissioning editor, Nick Fraser recently left the BBC to head up documentary SVOD start-up Yaddo, pointing to a new potential source of cash for filmmakers competing for dwindling pots of European co-production money or crowdfunding their films. (O'Sullivan 2017: 152)

O'Sullivan also casts doubt on the often made claim that there has been a 'boom' in cinematic documentary, which might be able to turn the tide of the documentary industry's reliance on TV. However, despite the growth in cinematic documentaries – 'from four titles released in UK cinemas in 2001 to one hundred and seventeen in 2015' (O'Sullivan 2017: 135) – box-office returns do not match those for fiction films, and the emergence of documentary initiatives and distributors in the first decade of the 2000s has waned in the second decade (O'Sullivan 2017: 137–141). So, while documentary has to some extent re-established itself in the cinema, this is still a presence funded largely by TV money – what's left of it – and is not replacing the kind of social engagement, local groundedness or variety represented by the TV documentary culture of the 1980s and 1990s.

Even outside the broadcasting arena, documentary has always been a multiformat, multi-platform genre. Documentary has always been at the forefront of the adoption of new technologies in the search for immediate and raw/mediatised experiences of the real. To discount documentary's televisual and interactive evolutions is to discount the vast majority of work made within the documentary genre today. As Bondebjerg points out, new systems of distribution are strengthening the notion of a transnational documentary culture:

the arrival of widespread and often transnational digital platforms, as well as TV stations sometimes being given access to already broadcast programs, with VOD, streaming and different

forms of download, the technology has created a potential global network for the distribution of documentary film. There are still national barriers, and other problems in treating this global documentary archive, but at least technologically the potential is there ... Technology in itself is not enough; there needs to be public demand and widespread public interest in transnational dialogues.’ (Bondebjerg 2014: 257)

These concerns over the role of small film cultures, competing in an open transnational digital market, manifest in Finnish documentary culture, as the following chapters show. Accordingly, we will approach it as a distinct (but always overlapping and transnational) small nation media ecosystem, challenged by domestic social, political, cultural and economic developments, but also much wider infrastructural transformations in technologies and the nature of the media business.

Studying Finnish documentary production culture

While media ecology and small nation film cultures provide thematic frameworks through which to explore Finnish documentary culture, the field of production studies provides us with more tangible tools for this analysis. Production studies of media cultures analyse the wider structural elements underpinning the production of media texts. Industry studies, whether of specific national media systems, regulatory incentives, film studios or professionals, have proliferated in academia largely as a consequence of Caldwell’s 2009 study emphasising a range of reflexive devices through which industry professionals characterise their own labour and position within the industry. Caldwell develops a critical understanding of the politics of industry labour from a social sciences angle that positions the study of the media industry not so much as an activity focused on the artistic and creative practices leading to specific outcomes but as something much more focused on the everyday realities of labour practices, with all their accompanying politics of inequality and high-level competition.

Such practices are key, as documentary still exists as a social practice, especially on the level of production. As Nichols notes (2017: 213–214), documentary’s community of practice is where the form really exists at its strongest, in an international network of organisations, schools, companies, channels and festival distributors that upholds the notion of documentary, as some variant on Grierson’s famous aphorism – the creative treatment of actuality – with its associated reverberances of art and science. In this age of documentary dispersal, it is these communities of practice that we look to in order to identify patterns and movements, as members of these communities negotiate the multivarious structures that in turn organise the activity of documentary production: its engagement with social class, technology, economic infrastructure and, ultimately, culture.

The production of documentary cinema relies on an expansive infrastructure of media and cultural policy establishing a framework that sets the conditions for creative labour. Here, questions of strategies for financing production – from development to post-production and distribution, to the work conditions of above- and below-the-line professionals – are of crucial importance. Going beyond the text into concerns over the socio-economic and political context of production is vital, as not only do these questions address a range of important factors co-ordinating the creative process but they also connect with substantial ethical and moral questions over the labour conditions of creative professionals who devote their lives to the creation of often politically committed art.

A focus on media production – from the general infrastructural questions of economic and strategic management to the dynamics of the industry workplace – can enhance our understanding of the documentary text but also contribute a significant vital dimension to understanding film culture as a social, economic, political and cultural mode of production. Much like media ecology’s emphasis on long-term overlapping patterns, this pragmatic perspective provides a vital counterbalance to narratives of artistic ingenuity and innovation, suggesting that there is much more to the dynamics and agencies of documentary culture than self-expression and political commitment. By emphasising the limitations and opportunities that emerge as a consequence of external conditions and internal negotiations, production

studies as a field enables us to trace elements and dynamics of Finnish documentary cultures to highlight its social, cultural, economic and political dynamics.

A sociological focus on media production leads to analytical approaches that evaluate production cultures as unique environments (or ecosystems). Such perspectives have been developed by a range of scholars (as featured in Mayer, Banks and Caldwell 2009) to critically evaluate the economics of the media business, policy, organisational management and ownership. Far from an approach that seeks to highlight neoliberal notions of successful competition and managerial efficiency, the study of production cultures is much more engaged with the precarious nature of work, especially as a result of how media industry practices function akin to any other commercial business with economic and political concerns. By critiquing the darker side of the Hollywood business, such a focus on the politics of labour in the film industry tends to be explicitly critical of its inequalities and exploitative practices:

As a field of study, production studies captures the ways that power operates locally through media production to reproduce hierarchies and inequalities at the level of daily interactions. Production studies, in other words, ground social theories by showing us how specific sites, actors or activities tell us of larger lessons about workers, their practices, and the role of their labours in relation to politics, economics, and culture. (Mayer, Banks and Caldwell 2009: 15)

Much of the above paints a picture of an industry under pressure from a multitude of angles, whether it be the commercial imperatives of a multi-billion dollar film business or the imposition of protectionist regulation on co-production incentives. Yet, the key significance here is to do with the limitations on creativity these pressures impose and how they resonate into the creative practices of media professionals in a wide range of contexts. By initiating a pragmatic exposition of media business emerging as a complex compromise influenced by a variety of often competing factors, they dispel the myth of the unchained creative and emphasise the complex navigations and negotiations that a media creative has to co-ordinate before the creative labour congeals into the final text. The myth of the auteur becomes a challenge in these conditions, as the external input from all of these co-ordinates challenges any easy

notion of ownership of creative and artistic practice. Consequently, approaches from media ecology studies can serve to highlight the role of these infrastructural, systemic power constellations that often supersede the role of individual creatives, production companies, national cultural support organisations and even regional support mechanisms (such as the Nordic Film and Television Fund). At the same time, these participants, of course, continue to impact all areas of the ecosystem, providing a dynamic field of analysis that we evaluate throughout this book.

<H2>Documentary production culture studies</H2>

Documentary production is often conducted with small crews run by independent companies operating with comparatively small budgets. Many of the concerns expressed by the above-cited authors of major production studies work do not apply here, as concerns over the exploitation of below-the-line labour, for example, are often very different due to the small scope of these operations. Similarly, the key implications of the new international division of cultural labour are often only tangentially connected with documentary productions, as they tend to be premised on local crews and connections, and even international collaboration is premised on close networks and committed artisans. Thus, the problems of exploitation that so permeate critical production studies are much less the focus here, even though several studies (such as Furtado 2019; Battaglia 2018) have explored the regulatory and economic conditions of various national documentary cinemas.

Much of the academic discussion of documentary production cultures focuses on introducing specific cultures (as in Furtado and Battaglia), or production concerns are addressed as part of a larger cultural history of documentary film in these specific contexts. The notion of documentary production cultures studies is thus something of an anomaly in media studies, as academics have tended to focus their attention on the politics of documentary content (not unsurprisingly, considering how the form is often associated with reportage and a close relationship with truth) or notions of authorship (again, not exactly

unexpected, bearing in mind how closely the history of documentary has been written as the propriety of great inventors and fearless mavericks willing to confront stark realities and uncomfortable truths).

There is certainly scope here to conduct more orthodox production studies, as the history of media technologies, for example, has influenced documentary form and allowed documentarians to contribute substantially to film history, journalistic processes, experimental art and transmedia landscapes. Similarly, the economic-institutional organisation of documentary production often provides a viable template for progressive production management, but as they lack the sort of top-down cohesion of large-scale industrial co-ordination endemic to much fiction film production, the role of and management in documentary companies are often under studied.

This lack of focus can often be directly attributed to the (lack of) economic weight documentaries carry. While documentaries have been produced by major production companies often under their specialist labels, most documentaries are produced by small production companies, sometimes even set up for the purpose of a particular film. The perception of documentary as 'educational' cinema marginalises its commercial potential and leads to a situation where its economic goals and, by extension, financial infrastructures are fundamentally different. Documentary production is often directly supported by public funding, especially in the smaller markets like Finland, necessitating a very different approach to competition and the political economy of the 'industry'.

Thus, to adapt production studies to documentary film requires a rethinking of some of the key fundamental approaches of the field. Instead, the realities of documentary production as part of small nation film cultures necessitates a re-shifting of some of the parameters of production cultures studies. To take one example, the precariousness of the gig economy that throws up huge challenges to the livelihoods of creative media professionals extends pervasively into the Finnish documentary culture, where individual producers and even production companies operate at a gig level due to the ways the resource base for industrial production is heavily limited, firstly, by the often uncommercial nature of documentary film, and secondly, by the small national contexts in which they are produced and still often

consumed. While many of the thematic areas endemic to the precarious nature of the creative industries (Curtin and Sanson 2016) – uncertain labour conditions, high levels of competition, pressures on creativity, power imbalances between public and private media companies – apply in the context of Finnish documentary, they manifest differently, firstly, in relation to the political economy of documentary production, and secondly, in small nation contexts. As resources become more limited, so do the opportunities to carve out sustainable careers in the sector.

From the perspective of production studies this approach provides an alternative angle to thinking about labour power and industrial relations in the Finnish documentary ecosystem. Whereas in the study of large industries, questions would be asked of exploitation of below-the-line professionals, here the focus is much more on the influence of infrastructural inequalities and balances. For the most part, Finland's media environment has been organised to be conducive to artistic production. Such emphasis on the artistic is not only a consequence of the realities of a small nation film culture, which is largely supported by public funding, but also the persistent need to enforce arguments emphasising the socio-political and cultural value of documentary film.

<H2>Methodological approaches to documentary cultures</H2>

To analyse the dynamics of the Finnish documentary culture, we developed a multi-level methodological approach. Our key focal point was to organise three panel discussions – one with Finnish financiers, one with producers and one with directors – each of them presented and analysed in separate chapters. The material for these chapters comes from interviews with panels of industry professionals, recruited to provide explanations of how they perceive the state of Finnish documentary. In this way the voices of the different actors in the ecosystem can be heard and their mutual relations and interactions made visible. In addition, we conducted a wide range of interviews with professionals in the documentary scene, including distributors, festival directors and film critics. The material emerging from these engagements with

different constitutions of the ecosystem forms the primary material for this book and provides insight into the mindsets of professionals challenged by various disruptions. Here most traditional certainties – whether in terms of technology, financing, internationalisation or the creative act – are undergoing considerable and comprehensive shifts. Collecting interview material from panels provides an important new dynamic to analysing this material, as they provide cultural understandings of the dynamics of work in the industry. The material from the panel sessions gesture towards understanding how the Finnish documentary scene works as a community, or even a specific form of culture, with a range of norms and conventions that tie these individuals together.

The materials provided by our documentary practitioners embody what John Caldwell calls ‘industry self-reflexivity’. According to Caldwell, ‘many film and television workers critically analyse and theorise their tasks in provocative and complex ways, whether approached through industry documentation or personal interviews, is usually highly coded, managed, and inflected’ (Caldwell 2008: 2). Industry data from such tasks comprises a novel vantage point into intra-industry dynamics and focuses on the ways that industry professionals talk about their work, which ‘need[s] to be understood as forms of local cultural negotiation and expression’ (2008: 2). Thus, the activities of individuals and organisations in the process of managing, negotiating, consolidating and conducting film production form a culture to be analysed, a culture with a set of values and beliefs and a sense of (enforced) cohesion that can be dissected for its dynamics of power and agentic diversity among its members. A key part of understanding such a culture comes from, precisely, addressing the narratives that individuals and organisations construct around their roles and activities.

At the same time, we must remember that this comprises what Caldwell (2009) describes as ‘industry theorising’. These are the types of activities used by industry professionals to describe their roles and activities as part of a wider systemic relational field and comprise attempts by the industry to wrest control over the narratives it projects externally to its audiences. Industry theorising can be used to outline how discussions and interviews with documentary creatives act as self-reflexive means to position oneself

in the wider political economy of the documentary media environment, premised on statements focusing on exploratory industry analysis and one's place and response within these developments, often projecting ideas about the past trajectories against current developments. Hence, we need to approach the statements made by our panellists and interviewees as discursive practices that evoke their subjective views of the documentary ecosystem, and reflect the self-positioning of their identities within these structures.

These panels also evoke Caldwell drawing on the imaginary of the community in his understanding of production cultures. Such a perspective deliberately connects with Benedict Anderson's imagined communities framework to evaluate how production organisations in specific locations coalesce into similarly, often imagined, national work communities ('Hollywood' in Caldwell's case), which in reality consist of competing and disparate work groups often labouring in unbalanced power conditions. Such a connection is relevant for our purposes, as the conception of an imagined community avails itself to the context of small nations, where a limited range of individuals operate in close-knit circles. The panels and interviews allow us to imagine these communities productively, especially as we draw from Matt Stahl's analysis of how the industry works on the level of the subjective and the structural. Accordingly, industry engagements can only provide us with so much access, but contextualising these perspectives with industry documents and other material, in particular, enables us to make sense of how media work makes sense to professionals: 'the social-psychological experience of work on the one hand and its political economic conditions and organisation on the other' (Stahl 2009: 55).

Caldwell adds to this a perspective on 'represented communities' that functions on the basis of industry self-imaging. Whereas imagined communities are premised on a sense of belonging, facilitated by a shared set of cultural customs and linguistic tropes – the sort of industry lingo we see in trade magazines – represented communities are much more particular. Evocations of them can be found in industry publications seeking to explore new developments in the sector where industry insiders stake claims on developments and innovation. These can come through in ethnographic research facilitated by access to

the industry as much as in professional publications that draw the parameters establishing a particular framing of the industry.

Thus, these sorts of self-imagined representations of the role of media professionals by media professionals are a productive means to distinguish the dynamics of the documentary environment – in addition to the more felt sense of community we see appearing in industry professionals reflecting on their practice. Here, one part of any analysis will reflect the often banal day-to-day realities of individuals and companies operating in the sector and the other on a much more markets and management-focused form of projection of the constitution of the industry designed to showcase its relevance and competitiveness. Combining such approaches affords a productive framework in which to address the particularities of the Finnish documentary environment, as production cultures studies facilitate understanding of how the cultures of work operate among the documentarians, providing a combination of perspectives that rely on both individual testimonies and external communications like corporate strategy reports that showcase often ideal perspectives of how the industry ought to operate and how it does so in reality.

<H2>Conclusion</H2>

This book will explore the Finnish documentary ecosystem through the critical prism of media ecology and production studies to understand its complex evolution and its contemporary dynamics, characterised by political, economic, cultural and technological transformations. As indicated in this chapter, we start this analysis with a chapter focusing on the history of Finnish documentary, where we map the evolutionary patterns and systemic disruptions that shape its development. The main focus of the book will be three lengthy interview panel chapters that attempt to replicate the ways the documentary media ecosystem functions as a complex dynamic. Each of the chapters focuses on a particular level of this ecosystem, including panels devoted to directors, producers and financiers. These chapters draw from

production culture studies and an intense focus on the industry media ecosystem to ask critical questions about the role of power and creativity in this ecosystem, defined by the limited resources of small nation film cultures increasingly operating in a transnational framework. Through this multifaceted, multi-vocal analysis, we build a picture of a constantly evolving industry that continues to face existential challenges but where innovative creative practices emerge and ongoing institutional support mechanisms are sustained in order to maintain production.

<H1>Chapter 2: A Brief History of Finnish Documentary</H1>

This chapter outlines a brief history of Finnish documentary film. Instead of focusing on showcasing outstanding films and filmmakers, the approach we take is much wider, reflecting the ‘ecosystemic’ approach of the book. Here, we will try to understand the outline of Finnish non-fiction film from social, cultural and economic points of view, emphasising especially ecosystemic interpretations. We are interested in the following questions: What is the cultural, political, economic and societal environment in which these films are produced? Who makes non-fiction films? For what purpose are they made? What kind of structures and systems exist in different eras? How are the films financed? What is the cultural meaning and position of documentary film at different times?

While cinema, and film culture in general, had its roots in non-fiction media, non-fiction film was not recognised as an institutionalised (and respected) art until much later, especially when compared to fiction film. In Finland, this mostly happened as late as the 1990s, even though there were many important documentary filmmakers and great artistic achievements in the preceding decades. While the debate over art and popular culture has been well versed in documentary scholarship, including in relation to Finnish cinema (see Sills-Jones and Kääpä 2015; Mickwitz 1995), in this chapter, we are more interested in establishing a systemic historical point of view on Finnish documentary film production rather than focusing so much on aesthetic or artistic angles, or valorising auteurist or even generic perspectives. Accordingly, for us, the objects of study consist of most cultural products that can be considered non-fiction or documentary films, including newsreels, corporate films, educational and propaganda films, and creative documentaries.

Finnish documentary has been periodised extensively, with scholars Jari Sedergren and Kippola (2015: 17–18) dividing the history of Finnish documentary and short film into four periods: 1) the era of pioneer companies; 2) the period following Finnish independence and the Civil War to the advent of the studio system (1919–1939); 3) the war years (1939–1944); and 4) post-war documentary culture. Erkki Astala

(1985) has written about two generations of Finnish documentary filmmakers, while Jouko Aaltonen (2011: 33–38) has structured this history into four generations of Finnish documentarians. In this book, we combine these periodisations and develop a new approach that periodises Finnish documentary film as follows:

1. New inventions (1896–1917)
2. Rise of the studios (1917–1939)
3. War propaganda years (1939–1944)
4. Documentary films focusing on recovery and rebuilding society (1945–1960)
5. Political and social documentary of the 1960s and 1970s
6. The interlude of the 1980s
7. New Finnish documentary film (1990s–2010s)
8. Disruption in the ecosystem (2010s–)

The main focus will be on periods 7 and 8 – that is, the years when Finnish documentary ‘became art’ in both the aesthetic and institutionalised sense. However, it is also important to understand the ‘big picture’ of how non-fiction film and its ecosystem have developed in Finland. Accordingly, in each section of this chapter we connect the documentary films of an era to the wider frame of Finnish society, culture and history. As is perhaps obvious, there are major ecosystemic similarities and differences between these eight periods, but our analysis will focus both on continued patterns as well as significant overlaps between them. To illustrate how they develop, we have provided graphs outlining the key aspects of each era at the end of each historical section. Although these figures simplify the system at work in each era, they illustrate how the system works and how capital flows in the documentary economy. In addition, we

include separate text boxes to provide short introductions to some of the most important films, filmmakers and film companies of each era.

<H2>New inventions (1896–1917)</H2>

As an autonomous part of the Russian empire up to 1917 and located in close proximity to Saint Petersburg, the capital of the empire, it is not surprising that cinema arrived quite early in Finland. The first public film screening was organised in Helsinki in June 1896, less than half a year after the first Lumière screening in Paris. On his return trip from Saint Petersburg, where he had filmed the coronation of Emperor Nikolai II, a representative of the Lumière company organised cinema screenings in Helsinki. Instead of the planned two days, screenings took place over eight days. The new invention was enthusiastically received and soon film screenings were organised in different parts of the country, first in occasional locations by touring entrepreneurs, later in special cinema houses.

Small private entrepreneurs, such as the circus owner Johan Abraham Walfrid Grönroos (1861–1916), saw an opportunity in this combination of business and amusement, touring the country with an American projector. Finland Kinematograf International, the first stationary cinema house, was founded in 1901 by confectioner Gustav Nordin (1871–1961) (Sedergren & Kippola 2009: 45; Hilapieli 2021: 86). Other entrepreneurs came from the field of photography, including engineer Karl Emil Ståhlberg (1862–1919), who owned a cinema house called ‘Around the World’ (Maaailman ympäri), established in 1904. Ståhlberg was among the first filmmakers to document modern life in Helsinki. The miracle of cinema was so impressive that people were willing to pay for a ticket to see on the silver screen life they could have seen for free on the streets of Helsinki. Domestic films, which appeared in the programme of “Around the World” were often sceneries, ‘living postcards’, around Finland. This is logical, considering that Apollo Atelier, also owned by Ståhlberg, was doing good business by photographing sceneries and publishing them as postcards. News, scenes from different events, ‘actualities’, or ‘topicals’, were another aspect of

the programme and the Finnish audience witnessed state visits, military parades, academic ceremonies, shipwrecks and other accidents. As a representative of the Pathé Feres company in Finland, Ståhlberg also imported photographic and cinematographic equipment and materials, providing an early example of the international connections of the Finnish film industry.

Other active companies included the Finlandia Film Corporation (Aktiebolaget Finlandia Film), founded by engineer Erik Estlander (1871–1946) in 1912. The company made forty films altogether, among which were sports events, modern life, military parades and sceneries around Finland. Some of their films chronicled the then current First World War as wounded Russian soldiers were hospitalised in Finland and cinematographers documented their arrival. Another significant company, Oy Maxim Ab, and cinematographer Oscar Lindelöf (1887–1954) recorded Nikolai II's visit to Helsinki in March 1915.

Despite these early signs of a healthy level of interest in domestic production and imported programming, from an ecosystemic point of view, the cinema business on the whole was very unstable and unstructured, and many of these early companies only survived for a short time. Of course, we need to consider that cinema at the time was only a small part of the entertainment and photographic commerce industry. As the film business was heavily taxed from the first public screening in Finland onwards, it was clear that film was considered entertainment, comparable to the circus or variety theatre.

The value chain was simple: all the expenses were covered by admission fees from the screenings. Initially, the ticket prices were high and cinema owners were the main players in this ecosystem. The film prints were sold to cinemas by film production companies and not rented out, as in later periods. Distributors, agents and the more complicated economic system only appeared later, as at this point, screening films was the main activity, not filmmaking. Cinemas and touring entrepreneurs screened both non-fiction and fiction films, though this division was not yet fully established. As early cinema owners needed material to screen, they and their employees were also filmmakers. In addition, they imported films from abroad, usually buying them directly when visiting Europe.

The chart in Figure 2.1 illustrates the simplicity of the value chain and the ecosystemic constitution of Finnish documentary film in this early phase.

Figure 2.1: Finnish documentary film ecosystem 1896–1917. In the early years, the ecosystem was simple and direct. Cinema owners and touring entrepreneurs sold tickets, paid heavy taxes and covered all the costs (as exemplified by the arrows in the chart, which illustrate how money moves in the value chain). They bought films from abroad or produced them themselves. Yet, running film theatres dominated the business, and filmmaking was subordinated to these activities.

Karl Emil Ståhlberg (1862–1919) was a pioneer in the history of Finnish photography and cinema. He founded photo ateliers in the largest towns in Finland and published a magazine and a textbook on photography. During his honeymoon in Paris, he developed an enthusiasm for the cinematograph and bought an expensive Pathé projector and ten short films, which he started screening at the Helsinki Studenthouse in January 1897. Later, he ran several cinema houses in Helsinki, screening local productions, films documenting celebrations, official events, funerals as well as everyday life in the city. Ståhlberg produced thirty-one short films, among them the first Finnish fiction film (*The Moonshiners, Salaviinanpolttajat*, 1907). Altogether, Atelier Apollo produced around one hundred titles. As a reflection of this, the most important documentary film festival in Finland, DocPoint, has named an award rewarding the promotion of the Finnish documentary film industry the Apollo Award.

Finland (1911) is a travelogue and compilation film based on Atelier Apollo's short items that was filmed in different parts of Finland. It was commissioned by the Finnish Tourist and Travel Office (Suomen Turisti- ja matkatoimisto) for a travel exhibition in Berlin. Although tickets were sold for the film in Finland, it was financed by the state via the Travel Office. *Finland* is like an album of living postcards with intertitles, which mostly focus on place names. Ahead of its time, the film was a huge

success and can be understood as part of the Finnish nationalistic project, which received heavy promotion in the field of culture and politics.

<H2>Rise of the studios (1917–1939)</H2>

As a consequence of the seismic events of the Russian Revolution, Finland declared its independence in December 1917. A bloody civil war broke out in 1918 between the ‘Whites’ and the ‘Reds’, reflecting the polarisation of society along socio-economic and political lines (the Whites were supported by Germany, the Reds by revolutionary Russians). The Finnish Civil War divided the nation and left a strong and long shadow in Finnish society that was especially prominent in the 1920s and 1930s, but also later. The Civil War, thus, is an important part of the history of Finnish documentary (and fiction) film. Up to the 1960s, documentaries were pure propaganda for the winners of the conflict (the Whites). They constructed a so-called ‘white truth’, a myth that understood the Civil War as a necessary war of liberation led by the Whites and their ideological project for society. Later, new critical interpretations appeared, which also extended to the field of documentary film.

In the 1920s, cinema started to play an increasingly important role in structuring and strengthening the identity of the young independent nation. As part of these developments, the division between fiction and documentary (although that word was not used at the time) became clearer. Non-fiction was often educational, whereas fiction was amusement, entertainment, but also much better business. A studio system started to develop with the foundation in 1919 of the (eventually largest) studio, Suomi-Filmi, by Erkki Karu (1887–1935). It dominated production, the import of foreign films and the cinema business on the whole in 1920s Finland. Income for the studios came from the box office, but the industry was also heavily taxed, as it was considered entertainment, not art.

In this context, non-fiction film occupied a distinctly complex ecosystemic position. A key deciding factor influencing its development was that it was considered, at best, educational and useful. However, most often, non-fiction films consisted of advertising, news, corporate films or propaganda (before the Second World War, the term 'propaganda' was understood positively as a means to influence and impact). Although non-fiction films were screened in cinemas and people paid for their tickets, they were never the main attraction, as most of the films were ordered or commissioned by industry, business, associations, authorities, the state or other organisations. These sources paid the bills, as the value chain of non-fiction film was different from mainstream fiction, which was a lucrative business at the time. In the context of the Finnish film/media ecosystem of the 1920s and 1930s, documentary (or non-fiction) films were often considered as additions to the main text – if not quite as paratexts (seeking to extend the main feature), then as additional features.

Here, an ecosystemic perspective is helpful in understanding the role these films occupied – there was certainly no real documentary industry to speak of (as the economic rationale for these films was not very strong), nor were there clear innovative or artistic patterns that would give rise to a specifically Finnish documentary aesthetic or style. At the same time, we must remember that the largest studios had their own departments to make documentary films, which often consisted of corporate promotion.

Documentaries focused on industrial development, nature and folklore. Such approaches were connected to narratives of national identity espoused in literature and the arts, especially by evoking a connection with Finnish nature (see Kääpä 2014). Simultaneously, as film was a new innovation, it was natural that it was proclaiming the gospel of the modern world, exemplified, for example, by the burgeoning genre of industrial documentaries.

The production company Aho & Soldan specialised in visions of building the Finnish industry (Sedergren & Kippola 2009: 293–307) with moving wheels, machine arms and conveyor belts – that is, the rhythm of modern life and industry – filling the silver screen. Influences from German New Objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*) as well as the Russian avant-garde can be seen in the company's films, especially as they

were one of the few companies who prioritised non-fiction films over the more lucrative fiction business. If there was a Finnish speciality, it was films about the wood and paper industry, where representations of nature, forests and industrial processes united in harmony. Aho & Soldan's films were ambitious both professionally and aesthetically, and the studio also produced films that were not commissioned or ordered by external parties, which included, for instance, the first Finnish full-length nature film, *Among the Wild Birds* (*Villilintujen parissa*, 1927).

The transition from silent to sound film led to substantial economic and ecosystemic changes in the film business. The first experiments with sound film were made in 1929 by Lahyn Filmi, and the first feature-length film, *Say it in Finnish* (*Sano se suomeksi*), was distributed in 1931. It consisted of several musical and dance performances, but also some 'documentary' parts, including an interview with the Finnish athlete Paavo Nurmi. Sound film demanded more capital investment both for production and exhibition, and while it was expensive to make, spoken Finnish was a major attraction at the box office. Yet, the arrival of sound also affected documentaries negatively, as this led to a heavy reliance on voiceover, and many documentaries started to look like lectures with pictures.

The early 1930s saw cultural and industry figures suggest a tax reduction system to promote the production of Finnish documentaries and short films. The model was inspired by Germany, where a similar system led to extensive production of 'culture films' (Kulturfilm). The move was supported by the authorities and parliament, which led to changes such as a 5 per cent tax reduction when theatres screened Finnish short films before the main picture. This decision led to a burst of short film production that increased the volume tenfold to an average of 150 short films per annum from 1933 to 1964. These were mostly non-fiction films.

While newsreel and short film production flourished, there were also several more artistically ambitious documentaries, including *Wake Up, Helsinki!* (*Herää Helsinki!*, 1939), an impressionist study of a morning on the town. It was produced by Suomi-Filmi, directed by Valentin Vaala (1909–1976) and photographed by French-born cinematographer Charles Bauer. The feature-length film *Karelian Wedding*

in the Land of the Kalevala (*Häiden vietto Karjalan runomailla*, 1921) is another significant example, as it was one of the first ethnographic documentaries in Finland. Ethnography was, at the time, considered one of the ‘national sciences’, and provided important identity work for the young nation. Ethnographic films consequently had a key role in Finnish documentary culture of the 1930s, as scientists and cultural authorities established Kansatieteellinen Filmi Oy (Ethnographic Film Ltd) in 1936. Topics of these ethnographic films varied from Karelian culture to the life of the northern Sami people. They also documented disappearing rural ways of life, including work processes, rituals and other activities. Although the starting point for many of these productions was scientific, several of them maintained high aesthetic values, especially in the dynamic compositions and strong visual style of cinematographer Eino Mäkinen (1908–1987).

Kansatieteellinen Filmi Oy’s approach combined scientific and cultural approaches and provided an important public service. Yet, as the National Museum was unwilling to support and organise its film production activities, it became a private enterprise. Its shares were bought by cultural organisations and private individuals, and also general fundraising was organised. Furthermore, the company co-operated with other film companies and produced shorter versions of its films for cinema distribution, which entitled theatres to apply for tax reduction. Its role was unique in the film ecosystem, as culturally it was more part of the academic and cultural world of knowledge production, but structurally it worked in the field of film, including collaborating with the exhibition chain. Kansatieteellinen Filmi Oy’s operations illustrate some of the complex connections documentary film has occupied throughout its history, where its place in the domestic film ecosystem has, firstly, been compromised by the increasingly commercial mindset of the industry, and secondly, its role as ‘valuable’ media has ensured it continues to have an educational cultural-political function (and hence a distinct status in film economic and politics).

While documentary films were a sideline in the studio system, they were still sound business, especially as the tax reduction system guaranteed the profitable production of short films throughout the decades. For film companies, these short films were good business: often they were corporate films paid for by the

customer, and then sold to the distributors or cinema owners to allow them to apply for the tax reduction. For the corporate customers commissioning these films it was important that they received the widest possible distribution in cinemas, which they often did due to the tax reduction system. In practice, the tax reduction films transformed increasingly into advertising for commercial fairs and new products. The system finally shut down in the 1960s when the arrival of television changed everything. Yet, from an aesthetic point of view, several of these tax reduction films are remarkable, and many of them continue to be important cinematic documentations of the nation throughout the decades.

Figure 2.2: Finnish documentary film ecosystem 1917–1939. After the Finnish Civil War and the Second World War, a new actor appeared in the ecosystem – agents and distributors – as it was not effective that cinemas had to invest in their own film prints. As audiences constantly demanded new films, it made sense to hire them. Distributors took care of the supply and cinemas were able to fluently receive new films to be shown to the rapidly expanding audiences. After the First World War, American companies secured a large market share in Europe, including in Finland. Besides screening imported films, domestic productions – both fiction and documentary – were exhibited. A Finnish speciality was the tax reduction system, which allowed for domestic non-fiction production to flourish. We can see all these developments in the chart, where distributors now take up an important function between production companies and cinemas, and tax reductions indicate that the relationship between cinemas and the state was now reciprocal. The flow of capital in the value chain in this variation of the ecosystem is captured by the direction of the arrows.

The film company **Aho & Soldan** was founded in 1924 by half-brothers **Heikki Aho** (1895–1961) and **Björn Soldan** (1902–1953), the sons of the renowned novelist Juhani Aho. The brothers were pioneers in

the field of photography and cinematography. They filmed around Finland, producing more than 400 films, including industrial, cultural and ethnographic films. The DocPoint Film Festival's Lifetime Achievement Award is named after Aho & Soldan.

Travelling in the Arctic (*Arktisia matkakuvia*, 1917) is an important milestone in the history of international ethnographic film. In it, archaeologist, ethnographer and novelist **Sakari Pälsi** (1882–1965) travelled to the Bering Strait in far eastern Russia between 1917 and 1919. During this trip he captured the life of the Chukchi indigenous minority. In the 1930s Pälsi was one of the active ethnographic filmmakers at Kansatieteellinen Filmi Oy.

Winterlife in Suonikylä (*Suonikylän talvielämää*, 1938) is one of the most interesting films by Kansatieteellinen Filmi Oy. It depicts the life and activities of the Sami people in the Finnish Lapland, and showcases the influence of Robert Flaherty. The ethnographer **Kustaa Vilkuna** (1902–1980), one of the leading directors of the company, formed a creative team with cinematographer **Eino Mäkinen** (1908–1987), where Mäkinen's aesthetic eye complemented Vilkuna's scientific ideas of functional culture.

Finland Calling (*Suomi kutsuu*, 1932, 1936, 1940) was commissioned by the State Department of Finland for propaganda purposes. The Department was open-minded and modern and invested successfully in film to make Finland, its industry, nature and travelling opportunities known throughout the world. Over the years Aho & Soldan made different versions of the film, often accompanied by the music of composer Jean Sibelius. The final version from 1940 has a dramatic ending: after idyllic scenes of Finnish nature and industry, the last minutes of the film show Russian aeroplanes bombing civilians in Helsinki. Finland was at war, and documentary film accompanied the war efforts.

<H2>War propaganda years (1939–1944)</H2>

The 1940 Summer Olympics were to be held in Helsinki and a brand-new Olympic stadium had been inaugurated in 1938 (all captured in newsreels), but when the Winter War (1939–1940) broke out, the Games were cancelled. However, Suomi-Filmi and its director Risto Orko (1899–2001) had acquired new film equipment in preparation for documenting the Olympics. Orko had intended to produce newsreels and a feature-length documentary film and had negotiated contracts with several European and American newsreel agencies. The international network built for the Games became the network for Finnish propaganda as the war broke out. Small Finland was fighting alone against the gigantic and aggressive Soviet Union, and films chronicling the struggle were distributed all over the world, thanks to effective networks.

Domestic audiences were informed about the events before, during and after the war by a series of *Newsreels of Suomi-Filmi (Suomi-Filmin uutiskuvia)*, *Suomi Newsreels (Suomi-katsaus)* by Aho & Soldan and *Army Newsreels (Puolustusvoimien uutiskatsaus)*. Wartime production continued, as after the Winter War, there was a short period of peace before the so-called Continuation War (1941–1944), in which Finland was allied with Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union. The State Information Unit (Valtion tiedotuslaitos) had already been established before the war for propaganda purposes, but now the headquarters consisted of nine military information companies hosting journalists, photographers and cinematographers. However, unlike German and Russian war cinematographers, their Finnish counterparts did not have combat training and avoided significant risks. Thus, there is less authentic material about real fights, and the tone is slightly less aggressive and pompous than in German and Russian material. However, the enemy is denigrated and presented in an often racist manner.

Army Newsreels also depicted life on the home front. During the long period of trench warfare, the topics became more diversified and ethnographic material was filmed in Soviet Karelia and Ingria, where a Finnish population continued to live. The Defence Ministry and Propaganda Brothers-in-arms

Association (Propaganda-Aseveljet ry) founded Finlandia-Kuva, which started to make *Finlandia Newsreels* in 1943, focusing on civilian life (Sedergren & Kippola 2009: 188).

While the films produced during this period were obviously predicated on their wartime conditions, they showcase evidence of ecosystemic evolution, including integration between technology, state funding, newsreel production and commercial film culture. During the war years the whole system was heavily state-centred, although there was a pragmatic approach combining input from different actors, including private companies, associations and state organisations. While fiction production continued despite the lack of production resources and other facilities, as it was considered important as both motivational propaganda and escapist entertainment, documentary performed a more explicitly public service function, especially through the *Army Newsreels*, which were arguably the most important propaganda tool in the field of film.

The heavy war years affected the social, psychological and political situation of the country strongly, which were eventually reflected in documentaries, but with a delay. While a handful of compilation films about the Second World War were produced in the post-war years, it became a major focus for documentary filmmakers of the next generation – that is, the children of the war generation, who, in the 1970s, started to deal with the traumas of war with a very critical attitude. Furthermore, the next generation of filmmakers, the grandchildren of the war generation, in the 2000s, found new angles on the conflict by focusing on family histories and the experiences of women.

Figure 2.3: Finnish documentary film ecosystem 1939–1945. During the war years, the roles of the state and the army were prominent in non-fiction filmmaking, with the public sector playing an especially large part in the ecosystem. Both the army and the studios produced newsreels and other short films for the home front and the soldiers. Almost all professional directors and cinematographers were enrolled in the war efforts. From an ecosystemic point of view, censorship and the role of documentary as war

propaganda had an important part to play throughout the war years. Instead of being heavily structured on the basis of the industrial logic of business and commerce, documentary production was effectively a semi-governmental effort, as illustrated by the chart, where the state and the army override most other functions of the ecosystem. The arrows in the chart illustrate the flow of influence (especially of money and capital) as it moves in the value chain. Other relationships (such as recruitment or moderation of content) are illustrated with dashed lines.

The Road of War (Taistelun tie, 1940) is a full-length compilation film based on newsreels from the Winter War. It was directed and produced by **Risto Orko**, who was the head of Suomi-Filmi. While it premiered soon after the Second World War, this patriotic film was censored following Finland's consolidation of a peace agreement with the Soviet Union.

Mannerheim 75 Years (Mannerheim 75 vuotta [Army Newsreel Number 49]) celebrated the birthday of Marshal Carl Gustaf Mannerheim, commander of the Finnish army. To commemorate the event, Adolf Hitler flew to Finland. Information concerning the visit was only made available a few days before, and **Felix Forsman** (1917–2005), a skilful cinematographer who filmed both documentaries and fiction, was ordered to capture the event. During the same occasion, the Finnish intelligence service secretly recorded a private conversation between Hitler and Mannerheim. It is one of the few recordings of Hitler outside his public speeches.

<H2>Documentary films focusing on recovery and rebuilding society (1945–1960)</H2>

The Second World War was followed by an era of recovery and rebuilding. Taxation levels were kept high to collect capital for public investments and, consequently, economic growth was rapid, though one has to remember that the starting point was also very low. Power plants and paper and metal factories were built around the country and labour poured from the countryside into towns. During the 1950s and 1960s, over one million (out of four million) Finns moved to towns as the country transformed from an agricultural society to a modern industrial state founded on the principles of an all-encompassing welfare society (Uljas 2012: 129; Vartiainen 2012: 135).

Documentary film had a role to play in rebuilding the country. Cameramen returning from the war were mobilised to document the reconstruction of social infrastructure and the recovery of industry, business and commerce. Cameras witnessed economic and social activities, but they also highlighted and glorified the efforts of the nation. The state, towns, business organisations and different associations produced propaganda to strengthen the myth of a united, monolithic nation. In this era before television, the significance of these documentary films was vital, as newsreels and industrial and corporate films were screened theatrically to recruit the population in the collective building project through the repetitive rhetoric of building, struggle and effort (Sedergren & Kippola 2015: 141–149). As capital was needed for society-wide investments, banks and other financial players were actively commissioning films to get citizens, for instance, to save money for their own flat or education (Sedergren & Kippola 2015: 123).

In addition to documentary films contributing to societal rebuilding efforts, social and other problems were also dealt with through the documentary form, reflecting the idea of joint responsibility and the ideological constitution of the Nordic welfare state. Mostly in the spirit of enlightenment and pedagogy, Finnish documentaries and short films in the 1950s dealt with housing problems, taxation, inflation and co-operation between different groups (Lammi 2006: 191). These films capture well the harshness of Finnish society, as besides being didactic, they would often attempt to frighten or even threaten audiences – for instance, when depicting the consequences of youth criminality (Sedergren & Kippola 2015: 288). Many of these topics were characteristic of this period, but some themes are repeated decade after decade

in different forms, including poverty, unemployment, housing problems and alcoholism, all of which continue to be relevant for contemporary Finnish documentary filmmakers.

After the war, Finland was a politically divided nation. The Communist Party was one of the strongest in the Western world, and the Social Democratic Party and the workers' movement were strong. On the other side were the patriotic conservative right-wing parties, employers and their organisations. In most areas of society two competitive organisations catered for the divided population. For instance, there were both left-wing and right-wing co-operative shops and sport organisations, and these divisions extended into both the cultural realm and the arts. There were also leftist documentary production companies and distributors, which were, in turn, favoured by leftist organisations: for instance, *Kansan Elokuva* ('People's Cinema'), which produced documentary films.

Despite the constant societal upheaval, the ecosystem of the film industry was basically similar to before the Second World War, even as the scope of the business had expanded. Three large companies (*Suomi-Filmi*, *Suomen Filmitoimisto (SF)* and *Fennada Filmi*) dominated the business by producing fiction films for cinemas on a constant loop, and they all had their own departments or own sub-companies for producing documentaries. The most renowned short and documentary film producer was still *Suomi-Filmi*. In addition to commercial customers, towns and municipal authorities also commissioned PR films from the company. Even the trade unions affiliated with the Communist Party, which were the political opponents of the patriotic *Suomi-Filmi*, ordered films from the company, because they sought quality and realised that audiences were accustomed to the style of the company (Sedergren & Kippola 2015: 159).

The tax reduction system was still valid and guaranteed that short documentaries were ordered and distributed (Sedergren & Kippola 2015: 12). And as the market grew, films were also distributed on 16 mm prints in schools, libraries and meetings. While war censorship had ended in 1947, state censorship remained an important part of the ecosystem, as film was the only art form where it continued (Sedergren & Kippola 2015: 17). Reasons for censoring ranged from sex to politics, as foreign policy, in particular, was a sensitive area. The State Censor (*Valtion elokuvataarkastamo*) could introduce a total ban, order

some parts to be removed or prohibit a film from being screened publicly. Significantly, the censors also set taxation levels for a film, and as there were different categories of tax, producers engaged in all kinds of wrangling to be eligible for the tax reduction for short films, showcasing how the censorship board acted not only as an ideological or moral ‘guardian’ but also had a significant economic role in the ecosystem, which, by extension, also influenced the content produced by documentary filmmakers.

While it was popular to make new versions of the same short films and use the same material over and over in these and more substantial documentary films, the tax reduction system also generated artistically ambitious films such as Jörn Donner’s early short films. Documentary film was not highly respected in the large film companies, as it was not a very ambitious business strategy, yet some outstanding fiction filmmakers also directed documentary films, including Matti Kassila and Valentin Vaala. Aside from these established large companies, many small entrepreneurs set up their own companies for making short films, including experienced war cinematographers Felix Forsman and Veikko Itkonen (1919–1990) (Sedergren & Kippola 2015: 18).

Figure 2.4: Finnish documentary film ecosystem 1945–1960. After the wars, the Finnish film industry operated at the height of the studio system. There were three major studios: Suomi-Filmi, Suomen Filmiteollisuus (SF) and Fennada Filmi, which had their own short and documentary film departments. Studios (except SF) also owned theatres, so they were also able to offer a full house service, including production, distribution and screening, for documentary films. In addition, small production companies were able to capitalise on the lucrative film business. As illustrated in the chart, the addition of these commercial operators into the ecosystem comprises the largest and most significant transformation that took place during the era. Furthermore, the tax reduction system guaranteed that the production of short documentaries for cinemas was voluminous. The arrows in the chart illustrate the flow of capital in the value chain for this period, signifying a more commercial shift in comparison to the state-organised operations that characterised the war years of the previous era.

Day of Peace (Rauhanpäivä Rautatientorilla, 1945) documented the euphoria of 30,000 citizens gathered at the Helsinki railway station square in May 1945 to dance and celebrate peace, finally possible after the wartime prohibition of public dancing. The film was shot by **Armas Jokinen** (1911–1989) and produced by Oy Filmiseppo, which was one of the most active short film production companies of the era, producing over a hundred short films up to 1948.

With the Reindeer (Porojen parissa, 1947), directed by **Erik Blomberg** (1913–1996) and **Eino Mäkinen**, captures reindeer round-ups in Lapland. Both directors were outstanding and experienced cinematographers, and the film is dynamic and visually impressive, and was awarded the best short film Jussi statuette, the Finnish equivalent of the Oscars.

Where the Worlds Meet (Maaillat kohtaavat, 1952) and *Gold and Glory (Kultaa ja kunniaa, 1953)*, directed by **Hannu Leminen** (1910–1997) and produced by **Risto Orko** and **T. J. Särkkä** (1890–1975) for Olympia-filmi Oy, provide an official two-part representation of the Helsinki Olympic Games of 1952. Leni Riefenstahl was initially considered for director, but that was not possible because of her reputation. However, some outstanding German cinematographers took part in the project and the resulting film is both ambitious and visually impressive. Different versions of Leminen's film were made for the Nordic countries, Switzerland, Australia, Italy and Japan (Sedergren & Kippola 2015: 174).

Morning in the City (Aamua kaupungissa, 1954) is the debut film of **Jörn Donner**. It is an impressionist, urban short film about Helsinki, where its aesthetic harmony is deliberately ruptured several times. Donner was an important journalist, novelist, diplomat and parliament member, but also a film director, producer and documentary filmmaker. During his long career he made documentaries about Ingmar Bergman, Finland, Sweden, his father and his home town Helsinki.

<H2>Political and social documentary of the 1960s and 1970s</H2>

A new generation emerged in the 1960s as young people moved from the countryside to the cities. The economy flourished and wages and the standard of living increased as social security improved and new infrastructure and suburbs were built. Educational possibilities were enlarged for the middle and lower classes, and new universities were founded. Altogether, it was a time for building a modern Nordic welfare state in Finland.

In the film industry, the 1960s was an era characterised by disruption and the collapse of the old studio system. Key among these was television, which started regular daily broadcasting in 1958 by the state-owned Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE). In 1955, when television broadcasting commenced, 33 million cinema tickets were sold, equating to seven tickets for every citizen in what was the top year ever for Finnish cinema (Keto 1974: 64; Uusitalo 1965: 94, 158). After the Second World War, Finnish fiction films averaged 400,000 viewers, but by 1955 this had decreased to 210,000, and by 1963 to 126,000. At the time, a film required a minimum of 300,000 viewers to be profitable (Keto 1974: 34). As a consequence, the whole system from box office to production collapsed. From 1962 to 1969 more than 40 per cent, in total 260 cinemas, closed (Sedergren & Kippola 2015: 34).

Underpinning this transformation is the fact that the whole way of life in Finland changed. While competition for leisure time expenditure increased, the inflation rate was high, wages rose and the state devalued the Finnish mark. Hence, the costs of film material, equipment and other imported necessities exploded, and in total, the costs of film production rose heavily. Yet, television was a key part of the picture (and a key instance of punctuated equilibrium in the film ecosystem) as already by the beginning of 1964 there were half a million television licences in Finland (Kortti 2016: 251–253). One of the three

largest companies, Suomen Filmitölkki (SF), was the first in 1963 to sell all of its fiction feature films and short films to YLE, against the will of the industry. Television was now able to broadcast these films without limits. Suomi-Filmi followed and sold television rights for its fiction films to YLE in 1965 but kept the rights to short and documentary films until 1995. Suomi-Filmi and Fennada Filmi persevered by making mainly corporate films and occasional fiction productions. Yet, SF was bankrupted in 1965 and Fennada Filmi later in 1980. All of Fennada's films, both fiction and documentaries, were sold, unsurprisingly, to YLE, which also picked up films by minor companies. For instance, in 1965 Veikko Itkonen sold all films by Filmi-Kuva Oy to YLE (Sedergren & Kippola 2015: 37–40).

The collapse of the studio system meant disaster for documentary filmmaking, as the studio system was, after all, an essential part of the wider economic ecosystem of the fiction film industry. The state tried to react to the crises and in 1958 ended the policy of collecting taxes from cinema tickets for domestic fiction films, except for immoral, promiscuous or artistically low-quality films (Sedergren & Kippola 2015: 35). This affected documentaries and short films negatively, as cinema owners and distributors could no longer receive a reduction for screening short films before the main feature. As the tax reduction system for short films ended in 1964, this had a dramatic influence on the continued evolution of documentary production. During the period 1956–1963 there were ninety-seven companies making documentary and short films, averaging 381 films per year. During the five-year period from 1965 to 1970 only sixty-three documentary and short films were produced annually (Sedergren & Kippola 2015: 35). This amount did not include 16 mm films, which were considered amateurish and non-professional, though this was about to change as the production costs for 35 mm film increased. More and more documentary films were filmed with 16 mm material, and television only used 16 mm in their own documentary production. Thus, the end of the studio era was also marked by a technological change for Finnish documentary film.

Accordingly, the end of the studio era resulted in fundamental ecosystemic transformations in Finnish documentary culture. The challenges faced by film workers illustrate the momentous impact this punctuated equilibrium had as they used to have permanent jobs in the companies, sometimes even for decades. However, with the downturn, many of them were left unemployed, some leaving filmmaking, but also many choosing to work in television. Television offered both permanent and freelance work, especially as 1958 saw the establishment of the commercial television company Oy Mainos-TV-Reklam Ab (MTV), which also needed labour. MTV relied on a sustainable business model whereby programmes would be financed by advertisements. The company also produced and bought documentaries, and even had its own documentary department. Simultaneously, there were several small production houses specialised in the advertising business, offering work for professionals who had lost their jobs.

Thus, it is not surprising that outstanding documentary filmmakers moved to television, including Erik Blomberg and Olavi Puusaari (1928–2017). Harry Lewing (born 1923), who had worked in the short film department of Suomi-Filmi, became the manager of the YLE documentary department. This facilitated a clear continuation of the traditions of documentary production from the studio era to television, including modifying documentary genres such as travel documentaries, educational films and ethnographic films for television. Here, the format of cinema newsreels was used in the programme *Travelling Camera* (*Kamera kiertää*), which showed actual events around the country, only now the material was the despised 16 mm film. Sometimes working in television meant more artistic and journalistic freedom, yet initially, television work was not highly valued among the generation of the studio era, reflecting persisting elitist attitudes in the Finnish film ecosystem.

Values, politics and even the whole national culture changed in the 1960s. The new generation challenged the conservative, protestant and patriotic monoculture, including critical re-evaluation of studio-era films and short documentaries. Finnish producers were inspired by the New Waves, both fiction and documentary, from France, Czechoslovakia and other countries. Finnish film critics adapted their ideals from Europe, especially from French approaches to auteurism. Importantly, in these circles, film was not

considered as industrial mass production but as creative art. As a consequence of the often experimental, and hence uncommercial, mode of film production, they were organised into very small companies, founded and run by film enthusiasts and filmmakers. Thus, they were ‘workshops’ for producing creative work, not for facilitating profitable business. Some of the active film critics – for example, Jörn Donner, Aito Mäkinen (1927–2017) and Peter von Bagh (1943–2014) – became directors themselves. Von Bagh’s work in Finnish documentary film was essential over the coming decades but he also directed the fiction film *Count* (*Kreivi*, 1971), which was half documentary. This embodies wider techno-cultural developments, where the strict division between fiction and documentary was challenged by filmmakers, critics and a new generation of audiences moving away from the artifice of the studio era into real-world locations.

A good example of these practices is Filminor, a company founded in 1962 by Jaakko Pakkasvirta (1934–2018), a director of student theatre, and Risto Jarva (1934–1977), a film club activist. The main interest of the company was in fiction film, but an important part of its economic foundations came from corporate and industrial films. Here, Filminor produced and Jarva mostly directed an important series of social documentaries financed by a bank called Postisäästöpankki (Toiviainen 1983: 115–127). Jari Sedergren and Ilkka Kippola call these ‘sponsored films’ to distinguish them from commissioned or ordered films (Sedergren & Kippola 2015: 377). Filmmakers were given free rein in terms of content, with the bank stamping its logo at the end. These films were often of high quality as research work was done carefully and best available social scientists were consulted, resulting in the films that functioned as audiovisual pamphlets providing new perspectives on current social and political concerns. While the argumentation was often polemic, the visuals, camera movements and compositions by cinematographer Antti Peippo (1934–1989) were impressive. Topics ranged from housing (*Housing and Nature/Asuminen ja luonto*, 1965) to feminism (*Woman and Society/Nainen ja yhteiskunta*, 1968) and environmental protection (*Economy of Nature/Luonnontalous*, 1971). A particularly interesting reflection on the time of its production is the film *Future is in Towns* (*Kaupungissa on tulevaisuus*, 1967) and its continuation, *The*

Future of the Countryside? (*Maaseudun tulevaisuus?*, 1970). While society had transitioned from the countryside to the city, the value systems and ways of thinking were – and still in many ways continue to be – traditional and conservative. In these films Jarva presented a new, radical and urban point of view, where the future is going to be in towns and especially in Helsinki.

Industry, commerce and other businesses actively commissioned more films than earlier. Business organisations such as the Association of Employers established its own information office, Taloudellinen tiedotustoimisto, which financed filmmaking. Topics were not always strictly connected to business; ambitious and artistically high-quality films were also produced, for example, about history and social issues. Aito Mäkinen and Virke Lehtinen (born 1940) operated the Filmiryhmä company, which produced films for the information office and specialised in modern Finnish design. For instance, the clothing company Marimekko was one of their customers. Tuure A. Korhonen (born 1928) was another successful and internationally awarded corporate filmmaker, whose company made films mainly for heavy industry, shipyards, and the wood and paper industry.

Some documentary filmmakers were not pleased about this business-friendly approach. The 1960s generation was becoming ever more radical, which started as general dissent against conservative society and values but developed into cultural radicalism and later, in the 1970s, into political radicalism and activism. This change is clearly reflected in Finnish documentary films of the time. At the turn of the 1960s to the 1970s documentary films became openly political. It was no longer sufficient just to faze and rage. Now it was time to fight for a better society, which in this radical atmosphere meant bringing socialist principles into documentary film.

In his analysis of Jean-Luc Godard's political films, Peter Wollen has developed the term *counter-cinema* to describe filmmaking based on revolutionary values that resist hegemonic mainstream forms of 'Hollywood-Mosfilm' cinema (Wollen 1972: 6–17). A period of counter-cinema can also be identified in Finnish documentary film inspired by the Finnish underground movement, including key figures such as M. A. Numminen (born 1940), Markku Into (1945–2018), Matti-Juhani Koponen (born 1941) and Peter

Widén (born 1946). In their challenge to bourgeoisie norms, they sought to irritate, ridicule and shake up Finnish society and what they perceived to be its capitalistic hegemony in several fields: arts, literature and also film production (Sedergren & Kippola 2015: 492–495). In a case of ecosystemic co-evolution, Finnish counter-cinema's revolutionary aims transcended the general radical and leftist orientation and adopted principles from Marxist–Leninist ideology and Soviet-styled class struggle, despite the fact that the majority of the Finnish Communist Party were Euro-communist.

The transition from general leftism to Marxist–Leninism can be seen, for instance, in the films of Lasse Naukkarinen (born 1942), one of the most important Finnish documentary filmmakers. His debut, *Solidarity (Solidaarisuus, 1970)*, is a pamphlet film that calls for a united front from all workers and students. His second film, *Diary of the Republic (Tasavallan päiväkirja, 1972)*, is another strong cinematic manifest clearly committed to Marxism–Leninism. In this, Naukkarinen challenges the central institutions of Finnish society, from the army to the police, from consumerism to the capitalist information machinery. His influences are from Cuban and Soviet documentaries, and the combination of political activism and visual language in both films is highly effective (Aaltonen 2014: 28–30).

Although some progressive filmmakers had their own small companies, the purpose was not to make a profit from producing films. The goals were, rather, ideological, social and artistic. Some filmmakers went even further and made films via collectives or groups working in co-operation with trade unions or leftist political groups. For instance, *Black Alliance (Musta liitto, 1975)*, about housing in Helsinki, was co-produced with the Helsinki City Workers' Committee. Another example of a group-made film, *Struggle of a City (Taistelu kaupungista, 1972)*, was credited to Kari Karmasalo (born 1943), one of the leading documentary filmmakers of this period. The film criticised the unequal living conditions of the rich and the poor and the ways that private developers hoarded money in the construction business.

As these examples illustrate, by the 1970s, Finnish documentary film had moved far away from the unifying and glorifying spirit of the films that focused on rebuilding society in the previous decades. These changes manifest transformations in the wider cultural and political ecosystem of the times, reflecting the idea of co-evolution, where films and filmmakers respond and contribute to systemic transitions. The traditional economic and cultural systems had broken down as new actors, a new generation of filmmakers and new financiers challenged established wisdom and conventions. The key change in many ways centred on the development of film from pure business to culture and art, especially when the state started to take an active supporting role, though this mainly concerned fiction, but with some small crumbs left for documentary films. Support primarily consisted of state grants for individual filmmakers and working groups. Lasse Naukkarinen, for instance, received small grants for his above-mentioned films even if these were not sufficient, as he had to borrow a camera and film material from his workplace, the Filminor film company.

Furthermore, Finland's small language area, and thus the domestic film industry's potential market reach, made it obvious that both private and public support was required. While public support for the arts and culture is an essential part of the idea of the Nordic welfare state, the problem up until the 1960s was that many decision-makers did not consider cinema – not to mention documentary film – as art. The state reacted to the crises of the Finnish film industry in 1961 when it began to seem inevitable that without state subsidies most of the film industry would be decimated. The solution was to deliver State Film Awards for the best fiction films of the year, which the industry hoped would help or at least slow down the disaster. It did not achieve this, as instead of propping up the traditional studio structures, most of the awards went to new filmmakers and their new, small and cost-effective companies.

With the establishment of State Art Councils in 1967, including the Council for Camera Art (Valtion Kamerataidetoimikunta), film became part of governmental cultural and art policy. The major change in the film ecosystem occurred in 1969, with the establishment of the Finnish Film Foundation (SES) by a range of private associations operating in the film industry. SES collected 4 per cent of the box-office

sales and delivered loans and grants for production companies, but mainly for fiction films, of course. In 1977, SES started receiving public funding from the government and became effectively a private foundation delivering public state money to film producers (Mäkelä 2017: 36). This change in its status is significant, as it indicates how private and public interests operate in the ecosystem, often intermingling in complex ways that reflect the intimate confines of small nation film cultures. SES has been described as an ‘invisible hand’ that exerts tremendous power over the kind of films that are made in Finland (Mäkelä 2017: 37). This new financier changed the whole ecosystem, especially for documentary films, which had, at the best of times, minor expectations for income from the box office.

In addition to funding, distribution also changed in the 1960s and 1970s. Television became the most important platform for documentaries, indicating the shifting power balances in the evolution of the ecosystem. YLE and MTV broadcast documentaries produced both externally and in-house, and recruited many young journalists and other programme workers, some of whom were also skilful and ambitious documentary filmmakers. In-house filmmakers at YLE enjoyed relative artistic and political freedom, leading to films that were as radical as more independent ones. While some were unhappy about this politicised content, reflecting tensions between conservative and radical ideas, YLE’s struggles mirrored those in wider society. However, while from the point of view of fostering a sustainable documentary production culture, YLE’s in-house productions are important, they are less so from an ecosystemic point of view, as these films were fully commissioned, produced, financed and broadcast inside the YLE system and thus had limited influence on other forms of documentary culture.

Meanwhile, Finnish documentary film culture became increasingly visible. The Tampere Short Film and Documentary Film Festival launched in 1970. Its programming reflected the cultural-political atmosphere of the radical generation as the first Grand Prix in international competition went to *79 Springs* (*79 Primavera*, 1969), a film about the North Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh made by Cuban revolutionary filmmaker Santiago Álvarez. In the second year the Grand Prix was awarded to Hannu Peltomaa’s (born

1941) *The Shadow of a City* (*Rantojen miehet*, 1971), a rough and direct film about meths drinkers in Helsinki that constitutes a landmark in Finnish social documentary history.

In 1970 progressive young filmmakers established a new alternative distributor called Finnish Film Contact (Suomen Elokuvakontakti), which distributed films as 16 mm copies, a large share of them documentaries. Customers for these films included associations, clubs, libraries and schools. As 35 mm documentaries had almost totally disappeared from cinemas, Finnish Film Contact's activities reflect the general flourishing of 16 mm distribution. Even established companies like Suomi-Filmi had a large catalogue of 16 mm films, as this form of film distribution was commercially profitable for them. The films were also effective tools for PR work and propaganda. The Employer's Information Centre lent out their 16 mm prints free of charge, as did larger companies, banks, embassies and cultural centres of the US, Soviet Union, the UK and France. Furthermore, film was an effective tool in education, and consequently, in 1976, the state founded the Audiovisual Center (Valtion AV-keskus), which lent prints to schools. Finnish independent filmmakers could sell their films to the Centre, which also pre-bought films.

The 1960s and 1970s was an era of disruption for Finnish documentary film, its structures and its ecosystem, but it was also an era that fostered the rise of a new documentary culture, characterised by the emergence of small companies, modest resources, even poverty for some filmmakers, but also an increased sense of idealism, freedom and artistic expression. In short, this punctuated equilibrium led to the evolution or, indeed, the real beginning of the Finnish independent creative documentary tradition.

Figure 2.5: The Finnish documentary film ecosystem 1960s–1970s. The era is a good example of a punctuated equilibrium, as after the relatively steady 1950s nearly everything changed. The breakthrough of television challenged the traditional film industry, and as we can see from the chart, the state's reciprocal role via the tax reduction system was decimated. Instead, broadcasters like YLE and MTV took

significant roles, accompanied by an increased sense of diversification of sources of support as the state started to deliver art grants and subsidies, reflecting developments whereby film became part of public art policy. When the SES was founded in 1969, it took on a central role in the film industry, becoming a key mediator between production companies and the state. If anything, the chart illustrates the increasing complexity of the newly formulated ecosystem, where the proliferation of arrows illustrates the increasing complexity of how capital moved in the value chain of the era.

Hooray for Youth! (Eläköön nuoruus!, 1968) captures the feelings and experiences of young adults in the crazy year 1968 by documenting the underground movement in Finland. The flexible, dynamic camerawork by young **Lasse Naukkarinen** captures the spirit of the time, led by the director **Jaakko Pakkasvirta**. It is surprising to realise that this experimental and liberated film was sponsored by the Postisäästöpankki bank.

Fuck Off! Images of Finland (Perkele! Kuvia Suomesta, 1971) is a feature-length documentary about Finland. Jörn Donner and his team (Erkki Seiro [born 1944] and Jaakko Talaskivi [1945–1998] are also credited as directors) travel around Finland, meeting people, poor and rich, unemployed, drunken, politicians and top leaders. As Donner says, the Finnish nation has the leading role in this film. The material is complemented by songs by M. A. Numminen, the leading underground artist in the country. The film is very unconventional and provocative, and several sex scenes were censored before it was released theatrically. It was a box-office flop, but retrospectively remains an important statement and an example of documentary film art.

Sounds of the Northern Forests (Pohjoisten metsien äännet, 1973) and *Tapiola (Tapiola, 1974)* by Markku Lehmuskallio (born 1938) are short documentaries about northern nature and civilisation. However, they are not traditional nature films, as Lehmuskallio was educated as a forester and had

worked in small companies making corporate films for several years. He became one of the leading documentarists in Finland and concentrated on films about nature and indigenous people.

Age Class (Ikäluokka, 1976) is a cinematic portrait of two craftsmen, a blacksmith and a shoemaker. It was the debut documentary film of directors **Pirjo Honkasalo** (born 1947) and **Pekka Lehto** (born 1948), who continued their collaboration, making both fiction and documentaries. Later, both established separate careers, producing outstanding fiction and documentary films.

13 Days of Life (13 päivää elämästä, 1978) focuses on unemployed young men in northeast Finland, documenting the fractures of the countryside via the means of direct cinema. The sparse black-and-white film captures a taste of life without too much explanation. The directors and also cinematographers of the film were **Hannu Eerikäinen** (born 1947) and **Heikki Partanen** (1942–1990). The film received awards at the Tampere and Oberhausen film festivals as well as a Finnish State Award.

The **Epidem** ('Epidemic') film company was founded in 1969 by young filmmakers and journalists **Mikael Wahlforss** (born 1944) and **Kai Salminen** (born 1946). From the very beginning, the company was focused on international conflicts and topics, with Wahlforss, in particular, producing several films about South America, including *The Enemy Within (Sisäinen vihollinen, 1978)*, an analysis of South American dictatorships and resistance movements. They made films in collaboration with YLE, and the company also had good international connections and networks. Altogether, the company produced 130 documentary films. -----

<H2>The interlude of the 1980s</H2>

The 1980s was a decade of economic growth and higher consumption as the Finnish economy became more international and open. Financial markets had been heavily regulated, but now they were opened up

(arguably, too quickly), leading to a decade of (borrowed) money for businesses, companies and individuals. Consequently, the 1980s was an era of consumption, individualism and hedonism, an 'ethos' also reflected in Finnish documentaries. While feature-length documentaries were not very common in Finland during the 1980s, three examples can be used to illustrate how Finnish society was depicted during this era: *Chronicle of a Finnish Summer* (*Suomalainen päiväkirja*, 1984), *No Comments* (*No Comments*, 1984) and *Song* (*Laulu*, 1986). These films aspired to capture the spirit of the society just at the moment of their production by using a cinéma-vérité or direct cinema aesthetics and approach. As such, they provide fine examples of the ways in which the documentary ecosystem functions as a process of co-evolution with international forms of documentary practice.

Chronicle of a Finnish Summer is inspired by Jean Rouch's *Chronicle of a Summer* (*Chronique d'un été*, 1961), in which a group of Parisians are observed during one summer, turning an anthropological eye on modern Western citizens. Director Heimo Lappalainen (1944–1994) was an anthropologist and ethnographic filmmaker who knew Rouch personally. There were plans to make similar films in several countries, for instance in Canada and Czechoslovakia, but only the Finnish version was realised. The film was not well received by critics, but the method of documenting Finnish society in a free-flowing manner without too much advance planning captures the wide-ranging societal changes that were still influencing Finnish culture and society. On one hand, there are scenes in which leftist intellectuals discuss capitalism and revolution, as they used to do in the 1970s; while on the other, there is extensive material about the rising environmental movement of the 1980s, reflecting the backdrop of capitalist hyper-consumption and rebellion still persisting in Finnish society.

Lasse Naukkarinen was the cinematographer on *Chronicle of a Finnish Summer*, and as he had free rein on the film, one can see the joy and curiousness of his flexible moving camera. Naukkarinen was already an established documentary filmmaker but his style of making films changed in the 1980s. These transformations are evident in his own film *No Comments*, where there is no voiceover commentary, only observations of small and often strange slices of reality. The filmmaker's 'voice' is heard through the way

he looks at the world through his camera and organises the materials. Through this, the film captures the decade of hedonism and consumerism, but also how international commercialism is invading Finland. Consequently, several critics regard *No Comments* as one of the best and most important films of the 1980s.

Song is an exploration of Helsinki city culture by fiction and theatre director Janne Kuusi (born 1954), in collaboration with Grouptheatre (Ryhmäteatteri) and director Arto af Hällström (born 1952), that provides another vibrant capture of the era. The film is a free-floating and associative evocation of a night in Helsinki, capturing, among others, the host of the commercial radio channel Radio City talking with listeners. The film also observes several new theatre performances, discusses drugs and generally captures the feelings of anxiety in the 1980s. A loose backbone of the film comes from a piece of music titled 'Song', performed by Ismo Alanko and Brothers of Soul (Sielun Veljet), a popular band established in 1982, known for its strong and shamanistic style.

During the 1980s the most important financier of documentary films was the SES. In addition, filmmakers would try to pre-sell their films to YLE, or do so post-release, but no established or coherent system was in place for these arrangements and filmmakers had to negotiate with different departments and abide by their often complex requirements. YLE's main input was in services – for instance, in laboratory or sound mix services and the supply of 16 mm negative material. The State Council for Cinema (Valtion elokuvataidetoimikunta) delivered state quality awards for production companies and state awards for filmmakers following the premiere of a film. Some amounts could be notable, but only a few films were awarded and the personal financial risk involved in making documentaries was high during the decade. Some filmmakers were financed through private capital or mortgaged their – and even their parents' – flats to be able to make films. Consequently, the number of active documentary filmmakers was small, and of those producing films, most had debuted in the 1970s or even the 1960s. Lasse Naukkarinen and Antti Peippo were active, as was the Epidem film company, which specialised in

international topics, including wars in Latin America. Some seminal documentary filmmakers, such as Pirjo Honkasalo and Pekka Lehto, continued their filmmaking practice in fiction.

During the 1980s there was a lot of discussion about the crisis facing the Finnish documentary film. In 1982, in a public debate at the Tampere Film Festival, film critic and documentary filmmaker Mikko Piela (born 1956) outlined the reasons for the crisis, which included the following factors: a thin tradition of documentary production in the country (with which we disagree); a negative attitude from the SES; indifference from film critics; and the general lack of cinema distribution for documentary films (Sedergren & Kippola 2015: 574). The discussion also reflected a more general confusion about the nature or essence of documentary film, as the key questions were no longer focused on ‘documenting reality’, nor teaching or making propaganda. Documentary film was thus presented as something complex, polymorphic and challenging. In the spirit of postmodernism, not only documentary film but also the whole concept of reality was to be reconsidered. As someone exclaimed during the debate: ‘Documentary is not in crisis – reality is!’ (Sedergren & Kippola 2015: 575).

The SES reacted to the challenges facing Finnish documentary film in the late 1980s by establishing the Documentary Project (Dokumenttiprojekti) in 1988. Its artistic director was Peter von Bagh, who maintained that the Finnish documentary film was close to extinction and required life support. Among the selected filmmakers were leading documentarists such as Lasse Naukkarinen and Antti Peippo, but also some new names: Esa Illi (born 1962) and Kaisa Rastimo (born 1961). All the selected filmmakers received a reasonable budget of 100,000 Finnish marks to make films about the Finnish reality. Some – but not all – of the results were promising and indicated the creative potential of Finnish documentary film.

Figure 2.6: Finnish documentary film ecosystem of the 1980s. As the chart illustrates, television became an increasingly important distributor for documentary films throughout this era. In addition to the

public service broadcaster YLE, the commercial channel MTV also broadcast Finnish documentaries. Only a few received theatrical releases, however, as the exhibition circuit encountered another crisis following the arrival of videotape recorders. Consequently, corporate films were an important source of income for the few small production companies operating in the ecosystem. The main support for film, as well as other arts, came from the National Lottery Company (Veikkaus Oy). The arrows in the chart illustrate how capital moves in the value chain, indicating an increasingly complex support infrastructure providing various means of public and private finance.

Year 1952 (Vuosi 1952, 1980) is a film produced by YLE about Finland's seminal year, 1952. This was the year when Helsinki celebrated the postponed Olympic Games, the final war reparation bills were paid to the Soviet Union, Coca-Cola arrived in Finland and Armi Kuusela, 'a girl next door' from the Finnish countryside, was selected as Miss Universe. Director **Peter von Bagh** studies the mental history of the nation by combining interviews and archive footage. Yet, he is more interested in discarded and unofficial material than the official version. Von Bagh, besides being one of the leading film critics and film historians in Finland, became the master of the compilation film following this example.

The Good Life (Hyvä elämä, 1984) represents a rare example of satire and irony in Finnish documentary. Director **Marja Pensala** (1944–2015) allows the main character, Kyllikki Virolainen, a prominent celebrity figure, to convey her life philosophy and show off her wardrobe. The film is exceptional, as there have only been a few films about rich people in comparison to a long tradition of focusing on poverty. Pensala continued to make ironic documentaries – for instance, about the Soviet Union.

Slaves of the System (Ajatusrikolliset, 1989) is **Kaisa Rastimo**'s film about two young and poor punksters who live at the margins of the consumer society. Despite their marginalised socio-economic position, they offer intellectual perspectives on the state of society. It was one of the films supported by

the SES's Documentary Project, but it received a very contradictory critical response. Rastimo later concentrated on fiction film.

Proxy (Sijainen, 1989) is **Antti Peippo's** most important film, which deals with his relationship with his mother and reflects his generation's relationship to the previous nationalistic generation. The director was dying of cancer, and this becomes a metaphor for the relationship. The film is short, intense and ruthless. *Proxy* is very different from Peippo's other films, or films of its time generally. It is the first real Finnish personal documentary, foreshadowing the next decade.

<H2>New Finnish documentary film (1990s–2010s)</H2>

By the beginning of the 1990s it was apparent that something had to be done about Finnish documentary film. Several actors, especially the financiers AVEK (The Promotion Centre for Audiovisual Culture), YLE and SES, started to react to the dire situation. This section will cover the ways these actors made separate changes to their policy without much co-ordination and how they eventually joined forces to form the 'triangle' system underpinning Finnish documentary film culture.

AVEK was founded in 1987 as part of Kopiosto (the joint copyright revenue organisation in the fields of arts, culture and communications). It represents writers, composers, actors and filmmakers and delivers direct remunerations to them from private copying levies. A vital part of the income from these levies is directed into production support via AVEK, forming an essential facet in the sustainability of the documentary ecosystem. In the 1980s VHS had become a popular medium and by 1990, 54 per cent of Finnish households had a video recorder (Statistics Finland 1991). Copying levies were paid for blank video cassettes as compensation for copying films and programmes from television and elsewhere. Thanks to the popularity of video, the amounts gathered from these activities were notable at the

beginning of the 1990s. Part of these funds was then used by AVEK to finance documentaries, short films and media art (at that time: video art). Feature fiction film was and still is excluded from this support, which is an important point to consider in view of the distinct position documentary film holds in the Finnish media ecosystem.

YLE also transformed its approach to documentary production in the 1980s. Earlier YLE had been self-sufficient, as documentaries, as with all programme genres, were produced in-house. Both the YLE1 and YLE2 channels had their own documentary departments featuring several outstanding documentary filmmakers. ‘Outsiders’ were not needed. However, this policy changed in 1990. Jarmo Jääskeläinen (1932–2022), who had worked in Poland as YLE’s correspondent and also as a documentary filmmaker, had a fresh point of view when coming back to Finland. He founded the Dokumenttiprojekti (Documentary Project)¹ inside YLE, with the idea of utilising the potential and talent of freelance documentary filmmakers. At the same time, Eila Werning (now Eila Ranta, born 1943) was nominated as the head of the co-productions department at YLE1. Her approach was similar to Dokumenttiprojekti: to work with independent filmmakers and companies. Thus, there were now two avenues of opportunity for independent documentary filmmakers, both of which aimed to produce high-quality documentary films and had excellent primetime slots. This was a major, if not uncontroversial, strategic change at YLE, as it allocated more resources and support to external producers, and in the process signified a fundamental reorientation of Finnish documentary filmmaking and documentary culture.

While YLE had invested substantial funds to secure support for documentary film, this was not sufficient on its own to facilitate a cultural transformation. As small budgets and limited resources had been a major problem for Finnish documentary filmmaking, collaboration between the three key players was required. SES had been concerned about the situation of Finnish documentary film, but not much action had been taken besides the Documentary Project in 1988. Production consultant Petri Jokiranta, who started at the

¹ Jarmo Jääskeläinen’s Documentary Project is different from Peter von Bagh’s 1988 project of the same name, which was financed by the Finnish Film Foundation.

SES in 1996, suggests that the Film Foundation had by that time almost totally forgotten about documentary films, while AVEK and YLE were much more active players. For Jokiranta, the importance of co-operation and the necessity to concentrate limited resources on common projects was paramount (Kinnunen 2019: 99). Thus, as a consequence of these strategic transformations, SES took a more active role in financing documentaries.

These collaborative foundations paved the way for the Finnish three-agency financing system (or the triangular financing model). All three financiers would actively co-ordinate their decisions with the ‘triangle’, although everyone made their final decisions independently. It was also possible to make films by a so-called two-agency model, where YLE would be one of the financiers and AVEK or SES the other. The financiers would also negotiate together in cases of two-agency financing. These co-operative practices between the financiers were both official and unofficial and indicate the ways the documentary ‘industry’ functions as an ecosystem of interacting dynamics and participants.

To illustrate this, filmmaker and scholar Antti Haase has studied the financing of Finnish documentary films from 1999 to 2003. Of all the Finnish documentaries supported by SES, YLE or AVEK, 27 per cent were three-agency financed, 54 per cent were financed by AVEK and YLE together, and 17 per cent by SES and YLE jointly (Haase 2016: 118). Although the three-agency system was not the most common, it was used in producing the most outstanding and successful examples of Finnish documentary film. As Finnish documentary budgets were – and still are – much more modest than in most European countries, or even in the other Nordic countries, this collaborative model was essential in allowing Finnish producers access to bigger budgets.

As a consequence, new filmmakers, new production companies, new topics and even new genres appeared. More opportunities for creativity led to new, interesting films, which further snowballed into audience interest and international success. During the 1990s and 2000s, people started to talk about the Golden Age of Finnish documentary film (for instance, Toiviainen 2002: 258), which in many ways was a consequence of this reorganisation. Facilitated by these infrastructural transformations, new means of

documentary expression also emerged. The personal documentary film was a new genre in Finland. After decades of social, political and other traditional documentaries, the filmmaker's own experience and, for example, their family history or family life were now considered interesting. Often the filmmaker would also be present in the film, at least through the provision of a personal voiceover.

Importantly, many of the new filmmakers were women, who now had the opportunity to make films that challenged some of the established conventions of the industry. Kiti Luostarinen's (born 1951) *Tell Me What You Saw* (*Sanokaa mitä näitte*, 1993) is a good example of these fresh female-directed films. The filmmaker and her siblings recount their family history, often disagreeing on what really happened. At the same time, the filmmaker's mother suffers from dementia and is losing her memory. This essayistic and very personal approach, whereby she problematises events and memories, is typical of Luostarinen. As the film concludes, we remain uncertain about what really happened. With such an open culmination, the film's fresh style provided a new creative approach for many new Finnish documentary filmmakers.

Similar approaches were also taken up by Anu Kuivalainen (born 1964), who made her debut film, *Christmas in the Distance* (*Orpojen joulukuukuu*, 1994), when she was still studying at film school. Her uniquely black-and-white film chronicles the director's journey to a strange city in search of her father, whom she has never met. Other directors such as Kristina Schulgin (born 1945) had already been making political documentaries in the 1970s, but for the film *I Don't Speak Russian, Why?* (*Miksi en puhu venäjää*, 1993) she focuses on the personal multifaceted story of her family and the history of Russian minorities in Finland. Similarly, Kanerva Cederström (born 1949) had previously made films in the 1980s, including *Uncle Lenin Lives in Russia* (*Lenin-setä asuu Venäjällä*, 1988), which deconstructs the experiences of the 1970s extreme leftist generation, with Cederström herself appearing as one of the characters. In her film *Two Uncles* (*Kaksi enoa*, 1991) she recounts the story of her uncle, who disappeared during the Second World War. As in many films of this era, postmodern questions over the uncertainty of truth are centralised, as perhaps there were two uncles, one real and one who lives in these stories and memories?

Male documentary filmmakers also made personal documentaries, but much later than their female counterparts. Pekka Uotila's (born 1958) *Eino and I* (*Eino ja mä*, 1998) and Visa Koiso-Kanttila's (born 1970) *Father to Son* (2004) address the filmmakers' relationships with their fathers. Each film is narrated by the filmmaker himself, the first with intensive whispering, the latter through a recording captured in therapy sessions. Jaakko Virtanen (born 1961) goes even further with his family tragedy *I Am Writing to You Here on the Earth* (*Kirjoitan teille täältä maan päältä*, 2002), in which he uses his own voice recorded while under hypnosis.

The invisible filmmaker, so common in earlier Finnish documentaries, became visible in the 1990s. The personal element, the filmmaker's presence, or personality has even appeared in films that are not personal or autobiographical. The filmmaker is present and reads the voiceover, for instance, in Arto Halonen's (born 1964) *Shadow of the Holy Book* (*Pyhän kirjan varjo*, 2008), about the co-operation between multinational companies and the Turkmenistan dictatorship, and *When Heroes Lie* (*Sinivalkoinen valhe*, 2012), a film focusing on a doping scandal in Finnish skiing. The tactic is similar to that successfully used by Michael Moore in his films. Gradually, the personal approach has emerged as a general strategy of representation shaping the practice of creative documentaries.

The new Finnish documentary films also sought new aesthetic approaches. Susanna Helke (born 1967) and Virpi Suutari's (born 1967) *Sin – A Documentary on Daily Offences* (*Synti, dokumentti jokapäiväisistä rikoksista*, 1996) was one of the key films of this new era. In this film ordinary Finnish men, women and children confess small everyday sins directly to the camera in strong compositional pictures resembling still-life images. The compendium of all these voices creates an effect that resembles music built on harmony and disharmony. Veli Granö (born 1960) directed *Meet You in Finland Angel* (*Tähteläiset*, 2003), in which the main characters of the film believe that their family has arrived on Planet Earth from outer space. The film does not take a stand on this claim, but instead constructs the experience of these people in a respectful way, staging the paranormal events as 'true'. Its aesthetic choices reflect the tendency of challenging the boundaries of documentary and fiction, which is one of the constituting

features of these new documentary approaches. Other more experimental documentary filmmakers of the era include Ilppo Pohjola (born 1957), Mika Taanila (born 1965) and Jan Ijäs (born 1975).

While these new trends dominated, the tradition of social documentary also continued, but now produced by a new generation. The beginning of the 1990s was catastrophic for Finnish society, as the casino economy of the 1980s collapsed and trade with the Soviet Union ended after its dissolution. Several banks went bankrupt and unemployment rates were high. This societal depression is captured in John Webster's (born 1967) *Vacuum-Cleaner Salesmen (Pölynimurikauppiat, 1993)*, a tragi-comic film about three door-to-door salespersons trying to sell vacuum cleaners in different parts of Finland. The economic reality also forms the background for Heikki Ahola (born 1956) and workteam's *Symphony of the City (Kaupunkisinfonia, 1995)*. The film is an impressionistic and poetic city symphony about Helsinki, combining slices of life with Tuomas Kantelinen's symphonic music.

Documentary films received more publicity and serious discussion than in earlier decades. Similarly, documentary directors attained a stronger position in the industry. Documentary film was explicitly considered art and a generation of young filmmakers, concentrating only on documentary films, exhibited a strong sense of artistic identity (Aaltonen 2006: 238). Compared to fiction film, which had rather strict conventions and formats, documentary was perceived as an area where the director had more artistic freedom. These forms of artistic experimentation and integrity, alongside the transformations in the support infrastructure, led to the Golden Age of Finnish documentary film. A key part was played by international film festival successes. For instance, Pirjo Honkasalo's film about children in the Chechnya conflict, *The Three Rooms of Melancholy (Melancholian 3 huonetta, 2004)*, was awarded main prizes at IDFA in Amsterdam, CPH:DOX in Copenhagen, ZagrebDox in Croatia, Prix Italia in Milano as well as several other prizes. Joonas Berghäll (born 1977) and Mika Hotakainen's (born 1977) *Steam of Life (Miesten vuoro, 2010)*, about Finnish men making confessions in the sauna, was screened at over a hundred film festivals, sold to several countries and received cinema distribution, for instance, in Germany. Films by John Webster, Virpi Suutari, Susanna Helke, Arto Halonen, Katja Gauriloff (born

1972), Selma Vilhunen (born 1976) and Tonislav Hristov (born 1978) have been awarded at several international festivals.

Finland and the Finnish economy and culture became more international in the 1990s. The country joined the European Union [EU] in 1995, together with Sweden and Austria, and was later one of the founders of the eurozone. At the same time, the scope of Finnish documentary film became more international.

Although there were already a handful of filmmakers producing documentaries on international topics in the 1970s, the international boom started in the 1990s and grew in the 2000s. More and more documentaries, still financed by the triangle, were made outside Finland. For instance, Susanna Helke's *American Vagabond* (2013) and Aleksi Salmenperä's (born 1973) road movie *Alcan Highway* (*Alaska Highway*, 2013) were shot in the US, Amir Escandar's (born 1979) *The Wind Catchers* (*Tuulensiippajat*, 2014) in Brazil, and Mohamed El Aboudi's (born 1961) *Dance of Outlaws* (*Häätanssi*, 2012) in Morocco. Pirjo Honkasalo has shot almost all of her documentary films abroad, for instance in India, Estonia, Russia, Chechnya and Japan.

Many of these films, as well as several films shot in Finland, were international co-productions. They were important from an ecosystemic point of view, as they meant new financing possibilities. Finnish documentaries were considered interesting, original and artistically ambitious. Intriguingly, Finnish documentary was at that time much more international than Finnish fiction, where only a few names, mainly Aki Kaurismäki, dominated. As the reputation of these documentaries spread, it made it easier for Finnish producers to network and co-operate with external producers and financiers. Producers were not only working with the three financiers in the Finnish three-agency financing system, but with a whole network of television channels, distributors, co-producers, film institutes and organisations. On one hand, it made things much more complex, as international financing requires a more complicated support structure than was available domestically, but on the other hand, these arrangements enabled bigger budgets and a much larger scope for the productions. However, the three-agency financing system was an

essential foundation during this whole period, because international financing was invariably built on top of domestic support.

The Golden Age is also a wider film cultural phenomenon and a domesticised version of a new documentary culture that appeared widely in Europe and North America in the 1990s and later globally elsewhere. New approaches and filmmakers stepped up, new financing possibilities appeared and independent documentary film production got stronger. Creative documentaries were supported by state and European institutions, and the artistic identity of filmmakers strengthened. The EU's MEDIA Programmes supported creative documentary filmmaking and new festivals, and associations of documentary filmmakers and magazines appeared. In the US, a substantial documentary boom meant that some documentaries – for instance, Michael Moore's films – were huge commercial successes all over the world. In addition, academic interest and scholarly research on documentary film also increased through seminars, publications and discussions, as well as the inauguration of professional production courses. Film critics and researchers started to use the term 'new documentary' (for instance, Bruzzi 2006: 9; Hongisto 2011: 37) to refer to the international variation of this phenomenon of documentaries connecting with multiple audience and cultural segments.

This success was also reflected in Finland. Before 2000, few documentaries had cinema distribution, but little by little the total has risen, aided by digital prints and the digitalisation of cinemas, and more demand for documentary films from audiences. Annually, between two and five documentaries were screened in cinemas during the 2000s, rising to between six and seventeen during the 2010s. The top year was 2010, when nine documentaries were released in theatres. Three of them were massive hits: Joonas Neuvonen's (born 1979) *Reindeerspotting* sold 66,000 tickets, Joonas Berghäll and Mika Hotakainen's *Steam of Life* 50,000, and Mika Kaurismäki's (born 1955) *Vesku from Finland* 37,000. The most amazing achievement at the domestic box office was Marko Röhr's (born 1960) nature documentary *Tale of a Lake* (*Järven tarina*, 2016), which sold an astonishing 187,000 tickets. However, these figures are exceptions, as the average total for a Finnish documentary film in cinemas is around 1,000 viewers. The

amount is so low that cinema distribution does not have much economic significance in the documentary film ecosystem, but it does hold substantial cultural importance. Cinema distribution guarantees general reviews and other forms of publicity, and many of the more ambitious large-scale films are made for big screens. Furthermore, a theatrical release often means that documentary films generate good audience figures when broadcast on television,

The increased interest in documentary film had various positive effects on Finnish documentary culture. The University of Art and Design Helsinki (now part of Aalto University) started a programme for documentary filmmakers in 1989 and inaugurated a professorship in documentary film in 2001. An association of documentary filmmakers, the Finnish Documentary Guild, was established in 1996 and the DocPoint Film Festival started in Helsinki in 2002. With over 30,000 annual visitors it has become one of the largest documentary film festivals in the Nordic countries. After extensive lobbying by Finnish documentary filmmakers, Filmiaura, the association responsible for the Finnish Oscars, the Jussi Awards, established the best documentary award in 2002.

During the Golden Age, financiers and other cultural players had a clear policy to strengthen the sustainability of the production infrastructure. From the 1960s to 1980s, it was very common for a film director to have a one-person company for realising their films. It was all rather unprofessional, as these companies were too small and did not have much capital. Thus, personal risks were considerable, production lacked continuity and international networks were non-existent. Filmmakers lived from hand to mouth, depending too much on the success or failure of single productions. Both filmmakers and financiers agreed that documentary filmmaking needed stronger structures, and that the roles of the director and the producer should be separate. However, any structural changes concerning financing did not happen but, in practice, a few middle-sized production companies emerged. As the role of the producer gathered prominence, these transformations had an important part to play in the Finnish documentary film ecosystem.

Figure 7: The Finnish documentary film ecosystem 1990s–2010s. Essential for the Golden Era of Finnish documentary film was the triangle financing system (SES, AVEK and YLE), as illustrated in the chart. AVEK's establishment in 1987 and YLE's decision to start pre-purchasing and co-producing documentaries had a significant influence in changing the patterns of this ecosystem and, especially, in bringing the role of film agencies to the fore. At the same time, documentaries started to be screened with more frequency in cinemas – and the audience was also interested in them. Commercial success strengthened the position of directors, but also production companies, and foreign sales brought in extra income. While the chart for this era may seem more complex, with the arrows illustrating the flow of capital in the value chain, it is also one where there are more opportunities for sustainable documentary production.

Pirjo Honkasalo is one of the most awarded Finnish documentary filmmakers. In the 1990s she made three films dealing with religious phenomena that form a trilogy of the sacred and evil. *Mysterion* (*Mysterion*, 1991), directed together with Eira Mollberg (born 1957), is a meditative film about the spirituality of the orthodox monastery Pyhtitsa in eastern Estonia. *Tanjuska and the 7 Devils* (*Tanjuska ja 7 perkettä*, 1993) also takes place in Estonia. Honkasalo follows 12-year-old Tanjuska, who is said to be possessed by devils. Priest Vasili tries to exorcise the spirits. It is an expressive film that asks a lot of questions but does not give definite answers. In her next film, *Atman* (*Atman*, 1996), the director continues her search for the mystery of the human being, both holy and evil, this time in India. The main character, Jamana Lal Balai, is from a low caste and disabled, but also deeply religious. He undertakes a pilgrimage to the fountainheads of the holy River Ganges. Honkasalo's most famous and awarded documentary film is *The 3 Rooms of Melancholy* (*Melancholian 3 huonetta*, 2004), a film about the Chechen war from the point of view of children. There is no main character, no plot or story. The film consists of three parts, like a triptych, in which the first 'painting' or room shows how children are

educated to become soldiers at the military academy in Kronstadt in Russia. The second room comprises secretly filmed material from the Chechen war zone, while the third room follows war orphans in Ingush, a neighbouring country of Chechnya. All these children are victims of war.

Screaming Men (Huutajat, 2003) by **Mika Ronkainen** (born 1970) is a humorous portrait of a northern Finland men's choir, which performs by shouting. They exemplify Nordic madness at its best, with a repertoire that extends from legal texts to national anthems. The film chronicles the choir practising, planning its programme and touring around, for instance, Iceland, Japan and France, drawing attention and awakening joy and condemnation everywhere. Ronkainen also directed *Freetime Machos* (2010) about the most northern rugby team in the world, the film noteworthy for its humorous approach.

Ronkainen's *Finnish Blood, Swedish Heart (Laulu koti-ikävästä*, 2013) is a film about homesickness among different generations of immigrants from Finland to Sweden in the 1960s and the 1970s.

Ronkainen deals with the scars and rootlessness of immigration by combining a trip a father and son undertake, accompanied by music from a band consisting of said immigrants. Ronkainen is one of the few documentary filmmakers living in northern Finland, but nowadays he has moved from documentary filmmaking to fiction.

Markku Lehmuskallio (born 1938) specialises in films from the Arctic, especially those he makes in collaboration with his companion **Anastasia Lapsui** (born 1944). The couple made three films about Nenets living in northern Russia, in an area that is Lapsui's motherland. The first of this so-called Nenets trilogy, *In the Shape of a Reindeer Across the Canopy of Heaven (Poron hahmossa pitkin taivaankaarta ...*, 1993), follows the life of nomads moving from the tundra to the Arctic Ocean coast, with Lapsui's songs about her family's life playing an important role in the film. The second film, *Paradise Lost (Kadonnut paratiisi*, 1994), examines the traditional life of the Sayisi-Dene in Canada and the Nenets in Siberia. The third in the trilogy, *A Farewell Chronicle (Jäähvyäisten kronikka*, 1995), captures how the Nenets are losing their lands and traditional way of life due to the encroachment of the oil and gas industry. For these nomads, life in a village is very different compared to their earlier freedom.

Lehmuskallio and Lapsui's films are much more than just ethnography. Their personal style and strong visual approach to looking at the world, nature, culture and human beings make these films artistically remarkable and philosophically universal.

The Idle Ones (*Joutilaat*, 2001) by **Virpi Suutari** and **Susanna Helke** continues the Finnish tradition of documentaries about the unemployed by following the idle life of youngsters in eastern Finland. By chronicling these lives through distanced observation, the film takes on a strong sense of social commentary, while making space for the voices of the main characters. The regional scenery plays an important role in the film and reflects the mindset of its protagonists.

Paper Promises (*Kone 17*, 2005) is an important documentary film about globalisation. The wood and paper industry has been the flagship of Finnish industry since the nineteenth century, and has been covered in earlier documentary films. The industry has created wealth and welfare for the country, but by the beginning of the twenty-first century, globalisation meant it was cheaper to produce paper in Asia and South America. Consequently, companies started to close factories in Finland, which resulted in massive socio-economic shocks. The film documents the closing of the paper machine number 17 in Kuusankoski, one of the lively paper industry communities, resulting in collective worry and anxiety. The film is unusual, as it was produced by a collective, with seven directors credited.

Recipes for Disaster (*Katastrofin aineksia*, 2008) by John Webster is a humorous film about a serious topic, climate change. The director and his family try to live without oil and oil products, including plastic, for one year. The challenges threaten the family harmony as the father's idealism collides with the complications of everyday life and the common sense of the mother. Webster skilfully combines different traditions: family comedy, personal documentary, and the politics of a rhetorical lesson or sermon.

<H2>Disruption in the ecosystem (2010s-)</H2>

Some would argue that the Golden Age of Finnish documentary film has come to a close. For instance, Kalle Kinnunen's book on the fiftieth anniversary of the Finnish Film Foundation discusses the Golden Age explicitly in the past tense and suggests that the cuts to YLE financing signified its end (Kinnunen 2019: 100). Similarly, film critic and researcher Tytti Rantanen situates the Golden Age in the 1990s and 2000s (Rantanen 2020: 4–8). These perspectives are also reflected in the opinions of several agents in the ecosystem, including documentary film producers, directors and some of the financiers interviewed for this study (see the chapters on panel discussions in this book).

There are several reasons for these transformations in the Finnish documentary ecosystem, including technological, global, economical and political factors. The global economic crisis of 2008 affected the Finnish economy substantially, but unlike other European economies, recovery was very slow. This led to reductions in the state budget, which eventually impacted culture, arts and film. As a consequence, the constitution of the Finnish documentary culture and the three-agency financing system started to crumble. Central to these challenges was the severe crisis facing YLE in 2009–2010. The Finnish government proposed to change YLE's financing system from a licence fee to a tax-based structure, where every citizen, with only a few exceptions, would have to pay regardless of whether they used these services. The changes would have meant more stable financing and stronger continuity for YLE, at least in principle. However, this legislation was delayed, as right-wing and conservative parties wanted to support more commercial television and media companies, arguing that the new regulations would provide unfair competitive benefits for YLE. As the new legislation was processed over several years, income from licence fees decreased heavily. Consequently, YLE had to cut its film and programme acquisitions from independent production companies and in 2010–2012, financing for indies was reduced by half. In 2013 the legislation came into effect, and the level of financing restabilised after a few years (Haase 2016: 124–125). In any case, this constituted a severe disruption to the stability of the documentary ecosystem.

AVEK, another key cornerstone of the triangle, experienced financial problems that also rested on political decisions. The Copying Levy was not expanded from VHS tapes, CD and DVD discs to new

devices like computers, hard discs and mobile phones. Representatives of ICT and telecommunications businesses such as the Nokia corporation – at the time a very important power player – strongly lobbied against the Levy. When consumers abandoned tapes and discs and started to copy content on hard discs and servers (with digital disruption providing a prime example of a punctuated technological equilibrium), AVEK's income collapsed. From 2005 to 2011 its support for documentary and short film decreased by half to €700,000, which is the same amount AVEK delivered in its first year in 1987. At the same time inflation increased by 74 per cent, while wages had risen by 174 per cent (Haase 2016: 124). From summer 2014 to summer 2015, AVEK was only able to support scriptwriting and development, but had no funds left over for production. In the late 2010s AVEK started to receive financing from the state budget, but it has never achieved the figures it was able to distribute in the Golden Age.

As crises engulfed YLE and AVEK, more pressure was put on the Finnish Film Foundation. During the Golden Age, for instance, between 1994 and 2003, AVEK clearly held more importance as the key financier (Haase 2016: 110). Yet, the centrality of the Finnish Film Foundation as a key pillar in the documentary ecosystem has become increasingly more evident. By 2019, the share of the Film Foundation was, on average, 45 per cent of the total budget of a documentary film it was involved in, whereas AVEK's share was only 7.7 per cent (Finnish Film Foundation, Facts and Figures 2019: 10). The balance between the three financiers has fundamentally changed. If earlier, there were three approximately equal pillars – AVEK, YLE, SES – that supported and financed Finnish documentary film, this balance was now upended in favour of SES. Such transformations led to fundamental questions over the three-agency financing system and the ways the documentary ecosystem operated in this context.

A key factor behind all these transformations is the internationalisation of the documentary environment, including its production, distribution and consumption. Already during the Golden Age, there were more possibilities for Finnish production companies and filmmakers to operate in a new, more globalised marketplace. Transcending the limitations of the Finnish language, with only about 5.5 million speakers domestically, Finnish documentary film was intuitively more international than fiction by virtue of the

themes they covered, the aesthetic and generic patterns they followed, the ways the films and filmmakers networked through festivals and other exhibition platforms, and how they were financed. At the same time, increased competition, new, well-educated generations of domestic audiences no longer restricted by linguistic thresholds for consuming international material, digitalisation and the general volume of available content facilitated by the internet, transformed the ecosystem fundamentally. Here, the position of a national full-service television broadcasting company was no longer self-evident, especially as international streaming services disrupted established distribution patterns (another instance of a punctured equilibrium).

Yet, despite all the challenges and the end of the Golden Age, Finnish documentary culture has not collapsed. The institutions continue to work; there are still outstanding Finnish documentaries and talented filmmakers, though perhaps not quite as much success at international festivals as in the early 2000s. Aesthetic and thematic innovation also continues, with a new generation of filmmakers tackling questions of identity politics, race and ethnicity, climate change and environmental issues. This transition can be understood as a natural shift from an older generation to a new generation, as also happened in the previous decades, facilitated by societal, technological, political and artistic transitions.

To conclude this overview of Finnish documentary history, what is certain is that the Finnish documentary film ecosystem is currently undergoing a massive transition. It is unclear where the next steps are heading or what effects, challenges and possibilities for this small nation documentary culture they will bring. These transformations can be heard in the materials and viewpoints contained in this book, especially in capturing the sometimes conflicting, sometimes harmonious voices from the panel discussions featuring producers, directors and financiers embedded in this documentary ecosystem. At the same time, as this history testifies, film culture ecosystems are constantly in transition, whether this be motivated by artistic or financial aims, or spurred on by wider technological and political disruptions. As suggested by our ecosystemic approach, which emphasises the dynamics of co-evolution along long-term historical patterns, such transformations are never instantaneous or inculcated by single agents or factors.

Instead, they are often complex and overlapping, moving simultaneously in contradicting and complementary directions and evincing a vibrant and organic ecosystem. Finnish documentary, from its early years as commercial short films, newsreels or outright propaganda, to its socially committed and participatory role, from its neglected status as art to the currently prevailing understanding of its constitution as a dynamic internationalised creative practice, thus requires appropriately complex ‘ecological’ evaluation.

Figure 8: Finnish documentary film ecosystem, 2010s onwards. As illustrated in the chart, new digital devices and distribution forms have become more and more important, although income from these is not yet very significant. Simultaneously, traditional broadcasting is losing audiences, although YLE has coped well in this changing environment by establishing and promoting its bespoke digital platform. Film festivals continue to have an important role in the documentary film culture. In the 2010s the seminal role of the triangle system has been challenged, with the position of AVEK and YLE presenting big question marks for the future. The system has become more centralised around the Finnish Film Foundation and there is increased emphasis on new modes of financing and collaboration, as illustrated by the arrows indicating the flow of capital in the value chain.

Joonas Neuvonen’s *Reindeerspotting* (*Reindeerspotting*, 2010) is a film about drug addicts in Rovaniemi, the ‘home town’ of Santa Claus. The filmmaker is one of the members of this subculture and the main character, Jani, is his friend. The community’s despairing life is seen from the inside through the film’s very rough and bare aesthetic approach. Neuvonen and **Sadri Cetinkaya** made a second film about the topic ten years later, ***Lost Boys*** (2020), which follows Jani’s sad fate after the conclusion of the first film, as he spent a foggy life full of drugs in the Far East, where he was eventually murdered. Neuvonen tries to chronicle the mystery of his friend in this intensive doc noir.

Steam of Life (*Miesten vuoro*, 2010) by **Joonas Berghäll** and **Mika Hotakainen** was a huge festival hit internationally. Stereotypically, Finnish men are considered to be inhibited and shy, even emotionally cold. This is not true, at least according to this film, where the filmmakers take us to saunas in different parts of Finland and let us listen to the naked confessions (literal and emotional) of Finnish men. The touching and humorous film is also beautifully filmed. Berghäll continued to deal with themes of gender roles and identity in his next films *Mother's Wish* (*Äidin toive*, 2015) and *The Happiest Man on Earth* (*Miehiä ja poikia*, 2019)

Selma Vilhunen's *Hobbyhorse Revolution* (2017) is a brisk film about three teenage girls who are passionate hobbyhorse enthusiasts, practising alone and together to take part in competitions. A sense of community is essential in this hobby, which the director chronicles respectfully, while also revealing the difficulties the main characters face in life outside this rewarding pursuit. Vilhunen has continued her career with successful fiction films.

The Good Postman (*Hyvä postimies*, 2017), directed by **Tonislav Hristov**, focuses on Ivan, who lives in the small village of Golym Dervent in Bulgaria. The village is just on the border with Turkey, where border guards are constantly searching for refugees. The postman, Ivan, wants to keep the village alive by allowing refugees to live there. The personal lives of the village's inhabitants are observed with an understanding perspective, although the context – the refugee crisis – is a most serious topic. The film was screened at both the IDFA and Sundance film festivals and subsequently, the Bulgarian-born Hristov has established a strong career as a Finnish documentary filmmaker, filming both in Finland and abroad.

Entrepreneur (*Yrittäjä*, 2018) is **Virpi Suutari's** documentary film about two very different kinds of entrepreneurs. The Laine family runs a funfair and sells meat from a small delivery van. The whole family takes part in the business, which is for them a way of life, with all the challenges and joys this entails. The other story unfolding simultaneously focuses on an innovative start-up company, which is developing protein products from oats, providing vegan and healthier alternatives to meat products. The

company is very successful and ultimately sold to a food industry giant. Suutari explores her characters with warmth and humour, while at the same time understanding the merciless laws of business.

Gods of Molenbeek (*Aatos ja Amine*, 2019) looks at the world from the point of view of 6-year-old boys Aatos and Amine. They live in Brussels in multicultural Molenbeek, which has a bad reputation as a location for terrorists. For the boys the neighbourhood looks very different. They play around and look at different people and different religions without prejudice. Director **Reetta Huhtanen** (born 1981) has specialised in interesting political documentaries with unique perspectives, as embodied in this film.

Elina Talvensaari's (born 1978) *Lady Time* (*Neiti Aika*, 2020) is a personal documentary about a woman who happened to live in the director's apartment before her. Talvensaari traces the ordinary life of this ordinary lady by skilfully using photos, amateur film and items she left behind. Although the woman died alone, she seems to have lived a happy, full and meaningful life, concludes the filmmaker.

<H1>Chapter 3: The Current Finnish Documentary Scene</H1>

<H2>Methodological introductions</H2>

In Chapters 4–6 we provide a voice to the key actors of the Finnish documentary ecosystem. To enable a multivocal perspective to emerge, we organised three separate panel discussions with three groups of professionals – financiers, producers and directors – representing different layers in this ecosystem. The sessions were held in the meeting room of the Finnish Film Foundation (producers 5.12.2017, financiers 9.9.2019 and directors 10.9.2019). The method was tested in the first session in 2017 with producers, where it appeared to function well, fulfilling our goal of capturing a dialogic perspective on Finnish documentary culture. It is worth noting that the constitution of this culture was already different a year and a half later, when the other two other panels were recorded. For example, debates concerning the position of the Finnish Film Foundation and new incoming film legislation were already vivid in 2017. Such discussions continued in 2019, especially as the law had come into effect at the beginning of that year. The historical discrepancy means that the producers’ comments are not all directly comparable to the comments of financiers and directors which were made a year and a half later in a different context. This discrepancy has been taken into account in the text.

Participants were selected for their outstanding qualities among the leading established professionals in the field. We also emphasised sampling that captures the diversity of people involved in the Finnish documentary scene, including different generations and artistic approaches to documentary. Discussions were informal, although moderator Dafydd Sills-Jones had prepared questions to provide a certain structure to the discussions. The other authors of this book also observed the discussions and interactions between the participants. Panels were recorded, filmed and transcribed. The discussions were then analysed on the basis of what was said, the manners in which communication took place, as well as the

differences, interactions and tensions that emerged between the participants and the different panel groups.

In the following chapters, these panel discussions are presented as they took place, although we have edited them for clarity. In some parts we also summarised comments by participants without direct citations. We also provide running commentary and analysis of the material, where we reflect on how the panellists represent the current ecosystem of the Finnish documentary cinema and how these actors position themselves and their respective professions in relation to the dynamics of the system (echoing Caldwell's industrial self-reflexivity). By organising these discussions into thematic panels, our intention was to capture as much as possible of the natural flow of discursive dynamics through the panellists' conversation. Altogether, the material exposes interesting features of this small national film culture ecosystem: it captures its shared resources and collaborative structures, but also its tensions and conflicts, especially as technological developments, transformations in the public financing for documentary, a changing international landscape and new generations of filmmakers disrupt the ecosystem.

<H2>Historical context</H2>

To place these panel discussions in the context of the Finnish documentary ecosystem and to establish a general overview of the size and features of this documentary culture, it is worth presenting some recent facts and figures. There are 260 members in the Finnish Documentary Guild, but only some of these are currently active. In addition, many work simultaneously in other areas of filmmaking. In any case, the Documentary Guild suggests that when calculating all direct or indirect labour input involved in sustaining the documentary film ecosystem, around 500 individuals receive a livelihood from the documentary sector (ProDok 2019). However, filmmakers (directors, cinematographers, editors, etc.) mainly work as freelancers. There are only a few permanent job positions, and they are mainly producers or production assistants running small companies. There are over 700 film companies in the country, but

only a few hundred are active and only a small number produce documentaries. All of these concerns play a role in the panel discussions and testify to the complex dynamics of the ecosystem.

As has been previously established, a new film law¹ came into effect from the beginning of 2019. The new law changed the position of the Finnish Film Foundation so that it was more clearly a public authority delivering public support – taxpayer money in other words. Originally, it was a formally private foundation, publicly mandated to take care of delivering public funding. Now, as a public body, the Finnish Film Foundation has to operate in line with general administrative laws and procedures. In practice, this has meant more bureaucracy. Other significant changes include the position and constitution of the board, which is appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Earlier, producers and directors were representative members of the board. Now, they were excluded, following suggestions of potential conflicts of interest, as board members could benefit due to their position at the Film Foundation.

Members of the new board are more distant, general experts in administration, without a direct interest in the outcome of any funding decisions. There is an advisory board that includes representatives of producers and directors, but it does not have any power. The ‘support handlers’ (i.e. film consultants) and the CEO of the Finnish Film Foundation are ‘the presenters’ on the board, which makes all the decisions about every single production that receives support and letters of commitment. Previously, the CEO made decisions based on presentations by film consultants, who were, in turn, able to write letters of commitment independently. Now, this is not the case, and decision-making board meetings only take place four times a year, which means that processing periods for applications are slower and more bureaucratic than before. Furthermore, many feel that the change of title from ‘film consultant’ (tuotantoneuvoja) to ‘support handler’ (tukiesittelijä) is indicative of a greater bureaucratisation of the Film Foundation.

¹ <<https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2018/20181174>>.

<H2>2019: The year before COVID-19</H2>

2019 was the last complete and ‘normal’ year before the COVID-19 crisis, an external threat that fundamentally disrupted the constitution of the ecosystem. As this was also the year when the main body of our material was obtained, most of our analysis focuses on Finnish documentary history up to this disruption. Hence, it is useful to provide more context on the position of the industry in 2019, as this will provide an impression of the ecosystem in times of relative normality.

As outlined in the previous chapters, the Finnish Film Foundation (SES) is a key part of the triangle of film organisations providing support for documentary production. In 2019 they awarded production support to sixteen feature-length and eight short documentaries. Altogether, when summing up production support, development support and grants for scriptwriting, SES provided documentary filmmaking with €2.76 million, which is 14 per cent of their total support budget. The average budget of a feature documentary film supported by SES was €280,000 (SES statistics, 2019). During the first half of the 2010s the average was higher, especially between 2013 and 2015, when it was over €300,000. However, when compared to other Nordic countries, the Finnish average budget is much smaller. For example, in 2016 it was €357,283 in Sweden, in Denmark €388,320 and in Norway a remarkable €627,641 (ProDok).

AVEK (The Promotion Centre for Audiovisual Culture), another key part of the institutional triangle, supported documentary and short films with €1.2 million (part of which also went to short fiction and animation). In 2019 AVEK awarded eleven grants for documentary scriptwriting, pre-production support to twenty films, production support to twenty-three and post-production support to seven documentary films. In addition, it supported five co-productions where a Finnish company was operating as a minority producer. As a film can receive both pre-production and production support from AVEK, these figures do not directly reflect the amount of documentaries produced in Finland. At the same time, a large percentage of the films they supported have also received funds from SES.

The Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE forms the final part of the institutional support network for documentary production. They are a significant buyer of documentary films (and in practice almost the only broadcasting company buying creative documentaries). In 2019 YLE bought the domestic television rights for twenty-seven feature-length and seven short domestic documentaries (YLE statistics). Annually, YLE allocates about €1.1 million to the documentary business (ProDok). It also buys documentary films from producers who do not receive subsidies from SES or AVEK.

In addition, there are also other minor financiers, such as the Art Councils, The Finnish Cultural Foundation, The Swedish Cultural Foundation, The Church Media Foundation, The Finnish Music Foundation and several private foundations, but their role in the big picture is modest. Business Finland is a new investor in the field, delivering production incentives for the audiovisual industry. Their main aim is to build awareness and attract international fiction film and TV industry to shoot on location in Finland. An incoming producer can get a 25 per cent cash rebate on production costs in Finland. The programme is also open to Finnish and other documentary films whose budgets exceed €325,000. In 2019, one documentary film was awarded a total production incentive of €12,457.

These organisations form the infrastructure of the documentary ecosystem. It is estimated that the total annual support from different sources for Finnish documentary film has varied in the 2010s between €3.5 million and €6.0 million, with an average of €4.5 million (ProDok 2019). In this ecosystem, the role of the Finnish Film Foundation is fundamental, as roughly half of the money allocated to independent creative documentary production comes from SES. The financial structure of documentary films in 2019 is as follows (SES statistics, film year 2019):

Finnish Film Foundation	45.0 %
Television companies (mainly YLE)	22.7 %
AVEK	7.7 %
Distribution company	4.2 %
Other domestic funding	2.5 %

Foreign funding	9.7 %
Media, Eurimages, Nordic Film och TV-fond	4.2 %
Production company's own investment	4.0 %

Ten documentary films received cinema distribution in 2019, and only two were produced without support from SES. In the 2010s the average number of films receiving a theatrical release was eleven, but in 2017, for instance, the amount of feature-length Finnish documentary films in cinemas was as high as seventeen. However, the box office for documentaries in cinemas continues to be very modest. In 2019 half of the documentaries only attracted less than 1,000 viewers into cinemas, with an average of 4,977 viewers. With viewing figures as low as these, it is perhaps obvious that any sort of sustained revenue from a domestic theatrical release is not feasible. The biggest 'hit' of 2019 was Marko Röhr's nature documentary *Nature Symphony* with 28,576 viewers, but the viewing figures for this film had decreased from the commercial heights of the films he had produced in the same genre.

As these figures and developments testify, the Finnish documentary industry has been undergoing upheaval and disruption even in advance of the pandemic. The next three chapters will feature panel discussions addressing these challenges in the following order: financiers, producers and directors. The order reflects the layered approach we take to the ecosystem as we seek to understand its dynamics and capture many of its nuances and complexities.

<H1>Chapter 4: Financiers' Panel</H1>

<H2>Introduction</H2>

This chapter is based on a panel discussion featuring key Finnish financiers. The discussion took place on 9 September 2019 in the conference room of the Finnish Film Foundation (SES) with representatives from the three major financing and supporting institutions: the Finnish Film Foundation, The Promotion Centre for Audio-visual Culture (AVEK) and Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE). Together these institutions have had and continue to have a central role in financing the Finnish documentary ecosystem. The historical development of the triangle co-ordinating documentary financing has been discussed in Chapter 2, and in this chapter, we hear the perspectives of financiers (real individuals making real decisions) on these developments and the current (2019) situation of the documentary ecosystem.

Questions we seek to address include the following: How does the Finnish documentary film ecosystem work in practice? How are decisions made in real life? How much do these decision-makers communicate? Are there conflicting interests, or are decisions made in consensus, even as all the institutions officially make their decisions independently? Who makes the first decision? How do the financiers communicate and work together with other ecosystemic actors such as producers and directors? We are especially interested in the challenges, possibilities and threats faced by both the documentary culture and the industry; hence, the panel addressed the following questions: What type of changes and transformations take place in the ecosystem? How do the financiers see the future of Finnish documentary film and its ecosystem?

Participants:

Pekka Uotila (born 1958) worked at the Finnish Film Foundation as a film commissioner from 2016 to 2020. Before that he was a well-known cinematographer and documentary filmmaker. A film commissioner is hired through a public call for the position with the Director of SES selecting the commissioner for two years. After that they can be re-elected for another two years. There are five commissioners in total at SES, two of whom deal with applications for documentary films. The commissioner makes proposals about support for films and submits these to the SES board, which is responsible for the final decisions.

Outi Rousu (born 1958) worked as a film commissioner at AVEK from 2014 to 2019. Before that she had a long career as a producer in both her own and external companies. As with SES, the length of a term for an AVEK film commissioner is two years but can extend to two successive terms. As AVEK is a much smaller financier than SES, there are only two consultants, one for short films and documentaries, and one for media art. They make their decisions independently of one another and without taking them to the director or the AVEK board.

Erkko Lyytinen (born 1973) is a commissioning editor at YLE. He started his career as a documentary director and also held the position of artistic director of the DocPoint Film Festival from 2008 to 2011. He started as a commissioning editor at YLE in 2010, where he is responsible for feature-length documentaries, mainly as part of the programme slot Documentary Project (Dokumenttiprojekti). He has also directed and produced programmes and series directly for television. Lyytinen continues to be the key individual responsible for feature documentaries at YLE.

Sari Volanen (born 1962) has had a long career at YLE. She started as a production assistant in 1991 and was nominated to take on the role of producer in 1996. Currently, she is commissioning editor for short

documentaries and short fiction films and commissions her own programme slot ‘New Cinema’ (Uusi Kino), which specialises in ambitious and experimental short films.

Jenny Westergård (born 1959) is a commissioning editor for the Swedish-speaking unit of the YLE.

Although she specialises in Swedish-language documentaries, filmmakers can also submit Finnish-language films over 30 minutes in length. She has had a long career at YLE as, among other things, the director of the Department of Factual Programmes in the Swedish-speaking department.

Lyytinen, Volanen and Westergård are part of YLE’s Film Team (which also includes two commissioning editors for fiction). The team deals with proposals by filmmakers, but as Jenny Westergård suggests, the right expression describing the actions of YLE’s commissioning editors should be that they finance documentary films, rather than they act as commissioners in the sense of initiating the projects. These three commissioning editors enter into so-called ‘co-production’ agreements, whereby they purchase the national television rights for specific films, as well as those films’ streaming rights on behalf of the YLE Areena streaming platform. As commissioning editors they can also influence the project during this process. Their task is to act in accordance with YLE’s mandate to support national art and culture: that is, ‘to produce, create, develop and preserve domestic culture, art and active entertainment, as formulated in legislation regarding YLE’.

While all of our five panellists use the title ‘film commissioner’ or ‘commissioning editor’, their position and role varies depending on the institution, indicating both the ways the documentary ecosystem relies on collaboration among the triangle as well as the diverse roles these organisations (and individuals working for them) hold. In reality, these individuals are not involved in commissioning, as Westergård explains at the start of the panel discussion:

Jenny Westergård, YLE:

We are called commissioning editors, but we don't commission projects really. We receive film projects but do not commission them like other commissioning editors within the company. So, the Film Team is different in that sense.

Outi Rousu, AVEK:

I was just thinking the same as Westergård, that we as film commissioners don't commission anything. We just receive applications, and we meet people and make decisions. Everything is based on unsolicited offers.

Erkko Lyytinen, YLE:

Our institutions more or less define our approaches to the financing landscape. We all have quite strict and distinct roles, but of course we all support Finnish filmmakers. For example, we try to identify potential audiences. Who is the target audience for the film? Actually, the Finnish Film Foundation is the main financier, as they have a bigger budget and in most of the cases they have the biggest involvement. AVEK has a different role, which, to me, is a little bit more about supporting individual filmmakers.

Rousu:

In a way, yes, even though most of the money goes to the production companies, as we consider the producer as a filmmaker, too. Basically, we work in a very similar way as SES but on a smaller scale.

The panellists unanimously understand their position in the ecosystem as being a passive one, in the sense that filmmakers, both producers and directors, initiate and produce ideas, films and projects. The financiers operate in responsive mode, answering to the supply of projects by these other actors in the

ecosystem. However, there have been several cases where financiers have joined forces to organise special projects to develop documentaries for children, for example. In such instances, the financiers can be considered proactive in shaping of the artistic and thematic directions of documentary film culture on the ecosystemic level. Yet, in conventional decision-making, these institutions rely on supply patterns dictated by other actors and hence provide more 'infrastructural' support.

Lyytinen's understanding of the roles of different financiers is also vital in capturing these wider patterns (with which the other panellists seem to agree). Technically, YLE purchases the rights to a project, which is an act of commerce, while SES and AVEK deliver money without remuneration. Keeping this in mind, it is interesting that YLE's role is presented in the panel discussion as more of a supporter than an active buyer. Some personnel at YLE (and also, and especially, at commercial TV companies) are much more straightforward about attracting audiences and high rates. As they often emphasise, YLE is looking for programmes for audiences, not audiences for films. From the point of view of legitimising their role, audience rates are becoming more and more important, even for YLE, yet the economic priorities underlining YLE's operations are downplayed in favour of rhetoric that frames it as a supporter of documentary culture.

<H2>Formal and informal co-ordination</H2>

All three main financiers have slightly different mechanisms for decision-making. The SES approach is the most formal. Submissions are processed in board meetings four times a year, and applications must be submitted through the SES electronic application system approximately eight to nine weeks before the meeting (corresponding to set deadlines). Access to the system is only for professionals via registration. During the process the applicant cannot contact the film commissioner. Only the commissioner can

communicate with the applicant to request more information about the application. This is rationalised on the basis that it ensures all the applicants are treated equally.

The system used by AVEK is much more flexible. Applications are on a rolling deadline and decisions are normally made within four to six weeks. During the process, the applicant can freely contact the film commissioner, who does not go through an elaborate board or the director of AVEK, but makes the decision themselves. The difference between AVEK and SES is based on the legislative position of these institutions. SES support is based on delivering public funds from the state budget. AVEK's money used to come from a levy on copies but, currently, comes from the state budget as compensation for private copying. AVEK is part of the private copyright association KOPIOSTO and thus occupies a distinct position in the ecosystem. The funds allocated by SES and AVEK are in the form of grants – they are not loans or investments. Thus, the producer does not have to pay any part of it back. Furthermore, the producer does not have to compensate for income they receive from international sales or other distribution.

The position of YLE is different from both a judicial and business point of view. YLE is offered the rights for broadcasting and distributing the film via internet platforms in Finland. The production company makes a proposal or a tender directed to one of the commissioning editors at YLE, usually first with an informal email and after that via the electronic system. Once the offer has been made, members of the YLE's Film Team discuss it together. The final decision to co-produce – meaning pre-purchasing rights – is made by the YLE's commissioning editor, but their supervisor has to approve the arrangement. The supervisor is also the one who signs the agreement with the production company. A deal involves a commercial transaction and means that VAT has to be paid.

The different levels of formality required by the financiers are indicative of the complexity of the triangle. Here, we can see how the documentary production culture operates as an ecosystem in which two of the

financiers (SES and AVEK) provide production support and the third party (YLE) basically enforces a commercial transaction. To satisfy all three, a production must meet their particular requirements for artistic, social and commercial credibility and also deal with the individuals in charge of the decisions at these organisations. There are also other ways in which the dynamics co-ordinating the ecosystem influence film production. Although financiers formally make decisions independently and separately from one another, they do meet unofficially every now and then to co-ordinate their decisions and exchange information. According to Uotila at SES, there are four of these meetings per year. In addition, they often maintain short informal contact.

Volanen:

We do have meetings, but I would not say they are official, it's just us telling each other what's on our table. We might say these ones are applying, for example, for money from SES. Then Uotila would ask, do you also have this project under consideration?

Uotila:

It varies, it can be a phone call that lasts three minutes or it can be a half-an-hour general discussion. It is really informal, a lot of discussions. These four meetings between us financiers normally follow the SES board meeting schedule. Before we have our decision meetings, we try to meet to discuss the projects and discuss how different people see the projects. It's also interesting because sometimes, for example, in the development process, the producer has thought that the financing for developing the project would come from AVEK as well as from SES. So we have to evaluate whether that is realistic. All the financing has to be planned normally by the time the decision is made. Otherwise, it will be a problem.

Lyytinen:

We have all read the same papers, the same proposals, and the updated information has been given to all of us. And it's interesting because our different backgrounds, different approaches, different kinds of bags on our shoulders, provide a different perspective for a fruitful conversation based on our different opinions on the films.

Uotila:

But I would say that this meeting is not as important as it might sound. I think it's more like a culmination that puts all our perspectives together in one place. In general, it's more like gathering all the information into a very compact form; it's not very deep, we don't have time for that.

Volanen:

It's more about giving out information about the status of the project, but not trying to make the other decision-maker come to a positive decision.

Rousu:

It's not lobbying. It's sharing information and updating each other on where we stand now.

All of the panel members emphasise that this communication is only about sharing information. Both Volanen and Rousu strongly deny any kind of lobbying of favourite projects. However, in a small documentary culture with limited resources, it is obvious that financiers have to work together and concentrate resources. Is this informal communication and meeting strategy actually the way to reach a consensus between the financiers? This discourse suggests a measure of pressure to achieve consensus, although each of the panellists is an independent institutional decision-maker. In any case, this discussion emphasises the ecosystemic constitution of the financing structure, as each component of the triangle partakes in at least a level of informal dialogue.

Afterwards, when commenting on this chapter, Outi Rousu from AVEK wanted to emphasise that decision-making does not happen jointly and decision-makers do not influence each other's decisions. For example, Rousu may make decisions about projects that do not involve SES or YLE: 'Decision-making processes are developing and changing – not always in a positive direction – but altogether my experience as a decision-maker has been positive; I realised how challenging it is to find the balance between different styles, stories and filmmakers,' Rousu writes in her feedback. Based on this discussion, we can suggest that in this small ecosystem, the personal choices of the consultant can affect the system. Every consultant forms their own practices concerning decisions and communications with other financiers.

Indeed, changes have happened in the co-ordination and communication between financiers. During the Golden Age of Finnish documentary in the 1990s and early 2000s, the co-operation between financiers was much tighter, at least according to the participants in this discussion, especially Volanen, who has worked at YLE since 1991. Also, meetings with filmmakers were more straightforward, as sometimes filmmakers could meet all the financiers at the same time.

Volanen:

It was really about planning together. And this was, I think, one of the reasons why I got into the documentary circuits in the 1990s, because there was a common plan. That was the power of these meetings, but we don't do it anymore in the same way.

Rousu:

I remember when I was a young producer in the early 1990s, there was a meeting where the filmmakers met all the financiers at the same time.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, financiers co-ordinated their support much more through frequent personal meetings. Yet, when the ecosystem of Finnish documentaries expanded and the whole scene became more international, the complexity of the financing arrangements became similarly more complicated. At a certain point in the late 2000s, these unofficial meetings stopped, yet they resumed again in the 2010s.

Rousu:

When I came to AVEK in 2014, there was no policy for financiers to meet, but then these informal meetings started again. It was Elina Kivihalme¹, Lyytinen and I who started that and then Uotila and Piia Nokelainen² came along, as well as Volanen and Westergård. I had a need to talk about the projects and that's how we started discussions again.

Uotila:

All in all, I think that the world was much simpler twenty years ago than today. The decision-maker in those days was able to say immediately in the meeting that I'm in, I will provide the money. Now we have no chance to say anything like that because we have to take our suggestion to the decision meeting.

Westergård:

Those were the times when all films were basically financed by the triangle, YLE, SES and AVEK, and they would receive no money from elsewhere. Nowadays producers pitch internationally; that's also why Lyytinen and I are travelling constantly to these international pitching forums. Usually, it's a much harder process to finance a film today.

Lyytinen:

¹ Elina Kivihalme was a film commissioner at SES from 2007 to 2008 and 2011 to 2015.

² Piia Nokelainen, a film consultant dealing with documentary applications at SES. The other consultant is Uotila.

It has become more and more formal. Nowadays there are all kinds of variations concerning financing, as they are not on the same phase on the production line. Everything depends on the case and the project; it also depends on international financing as well as the progress of development. Sometimes it's very simple. It's all about the timing, and we need to make rapid decisions. We also follow our own process at YLE.

Westergård:

Maybe the pressure twenty years ago was much harder, as they couldn't invest in films that didn't have distribution.

Volanen:

Which meant YLE. SES used to need us as a distributor, but that's not necessarily the case anymore. We don't need each other in a way.

Volanen is exaggerating here. Finnish financiers might feel that their role is no longer so central because the landscape for financing has become more complicated and demanding, but that is not the case. While there are new financing and distribution possibilities in the international documentary market, this does not necessarily decrease the significance of the domestic financiers in the ecosystem. In fact, filmmakers and producers might be even more dependent on domestic financiers as international financing is almost always built on top of domestic financing. If a producer doesn't have SES and YLE on board the production, it is almost impossible to convince international financiers about the feasibility of the project. In addition, the budgets for documentary films are much higher nowadays, requiring more intense reliance on domestic subsidies and international financing from multiple sources.

Thus, the ecosystem is much more complicated than in the previous decade and consequently needs a more formalised approach than the ad hoc personal networks-based structures of the Golden Age.

Accordingly, Finnish documentaries have become part of the European financing ecosystem and thus require professional experts able to navigate these competitive structures. Furthermore, new domestic financing and distribution possibilities – for instance, streaming services and other internet platforms – have disrupted the traditional distribution model reliant on public service broadcasting and theatrical releases. Hence, YLE is no longer the only possible Finnish distributor for a film – at least in theory. Subsequently, the role of Elisa Oyj and its streaming service Elisa Viihde and other large telecommunications companies is increasingly important in financing television content and feature fiction films. Even if this does not yet apply to documentaries, it likely will do in the future.

This part of the panel discussion about decision-making leads to a range of relevant observations that are essential for understanding the Finnish documentary ecosystem. Financiers communicate actively and share information about the productions applying for funding. This has been the case since the 1990s and the beginning of the Golden Age of Finnish documentaries, although there have been periods when mutual meetings did not take place. Decisions are made independently, but in practice the financiers influence each other's decisions. The rationale for this is obvious, because in a small nation film industry, a producer needs all three financiers on board the film. Thus, these informal discussions create a sense of common consensus. Yet, it is intriguing to note that the financiers repeatedly emphasise that this is not a question of lobbying or influencing each other. This is expressed so frequently and so strongly that there seems to be a special need to highlight the point, almost to emphasise that the system is unbiased and objective. While the Finnish triangle funding has been very effective and the financing system is relatively liberal and versatile concerning different topics, opinions and styles, does it offer sufficient possibilities for alternative types of filmmaking, especially for those who are outside the system? Occasionally, there has been discussion among filmmakers about alternative ways to finance and make documentaries, but such practices do not exist in this ecosystem, at least not on a professional level.

The discussion also testifies to the transformations that have taken place throughout the last three decades. In the 1990s, Finnish documentaries were funded mainly by domestic financiers. As outlined in the previous chapters, the Golden Age started, at least partly, due to financiers combining limited resources to support selected documentaries. The budgets were modest compared to, for instance, documentary funding in the other Nordic countries. Although budgets rose gradually and international financing opportunities appeared, financing was based mainly on the domestic triangle funding system. In the 2010s the ecosystem underwent a change as international financing became more important and the Finnish documentary culture became more international. Other factors disrupting the ecosystem involve new distribution and financing possibilities (more on this below). The position of YLE, SES and AVEK has also changed, as the triangle financing model is not so central anymore, which affects the way financiers communicate and make decisions.

<H2>Financing the development and production of films</H2>

Having identified and explored the macro-patterns in the transformations of the documentary culture, the panel discussion turns to exploring the particularities of financing, especially the roles that the key financing institutions play in providing development and production support: SES delivers grants for scriptwriting, development and production. Scriptwriting grants are for individual filmmakers, and other grants can only be applied for by production companies. Recently, development phase support has become more important, as preliminary or even parts of the actual shoot of a documentary film are financed by one or several successive development support subsidies. As AVEK has had its funding cut substantially, they have decided to concentrate more on development support and less on delivering production support. YLE also provides development money, but its role is not as significant as those of SES and AVEK.

Westergård:

YLE's role in investing in development has become smaller during the last ten years. The filmmakers usually inform us when they send their applications for development to SES or AVEK. Even if YLE isn't investing at that point, the filmmakers want to inform us that they are developing a project. So usually, we are aware of what's on the other institutions' tables.

Rousu:

Development is such an important phase of the production. Development support is a message to the filmmakers that here's the money, please go out and develop your project, and come back to us to show what you have gained.

Volanen:

I have a different approach to my colleagues, as I don't want to develop any films. I always want the filmmakers to do it, as they have the vision, and my only job – even in the development phase – is to indicate if I understand their thoughts and how they resonate with other films on the same topic. I just want to keep my hands out of the process as much as possible.

The rules and practices at SES have changed substantially in 2019. Earlier, decisions were made in a much shorter time, reflecting the sometimes impulsive nature of documentary film production. The fact that decision-making is slower and less predictable from the producers' point of view is especially problematic concerning the development phase, which is when the documentary filmmaker should be able to react and start filming quickly.

Lyytinen:

Quick reactions are part of the DNA of documentary, as the core of documentary filmmaking is closely related to observation. Sometimes if I don't get to participate in the very early stage,

something may already be lost. In some cases we immediately invest substantial money into the development, as we know that we should be filming already or we are about to lose the key angle that is really significant for the film. So, occasionally we have invested from a few thousand euros to ten thousand euros in the early stage, but not very often.

Rousu:

It is still much more flexible at AVEK compared to SES. We can actually react quite fast.

Uotila:

Before it was the CEO of SES who made the official decision, but from the beginning of 2019 it is the board. The new process means that the board has to have time to make the decision and it takes at least two more weeks. The new law forced us to co-operate more with the Ministry of Education and Culture and discuss how we do things. Now we have to all be in line and follow the same regulations as other state administrators. Some of them are very difficult for us, and difficult for the producers, because we cannot say anything during the process. We can't give any promises nor any secret signs. Producers don't know what the final decision will be. It is much slower and less predictable.

Lyytinen:

We can gather 20,000–30,000 euros if it's needed immediately. This is a reaction to the challenges of the Finnish Film Foundation's system. The filmmakers call me with a very desperate tone – 'if you don't give us the money, we will lose the film'. Of course, this sort of contact affects me. There are a lot of films that can wait. And sometimes waiting is actually better for the film. But sometimes you cannot wait. So you just have to find the balance.

According to the panellists, the organisation of the ecosystem is premised on AVEK often functioning as the first institution to provide development money for a project. Here, it is vital that producers know that AVEK can make fast decisions. YLE can also operate at speed, but it is investing much less in development. Finally, the problem with SES is that a producer will have to wait for the next decision meeting of the board, and there are only four meetings a year. Such institutional challenges structure the ecosystem in ways that necessitate careful planning on behalf of a producer seeking funding, but at the same time these requirements introduce a level of inflexibility that can be challenging in terms of creativity:

Uotila:

Let's say that the producer calls me and starts to tell me about their idea. The SES way to answer is: 'please send in an application'. I can help them by advising whether they should look for script funding, or if they are already in a more advanced stage, then apply for development or production support. That's the kind of discussion that I can have when the producer is asking for advice on what to apply for. I can say that this subject has already been done, but you can always apply, especially if you have a different kind of angle. We try to be positive and optimistic about sending in an application.

Rousu:

Our policy is that I don't read scripts sent by email. I need to have an application in the system and then I will discuss it with the applicant or meet them. The work has to be organised somehow, as otherwise we have loads of emails and it's not good policy to forget to read emails. So it's better to send an application first. And you can always update the application later with updated documents or the script or whatever. So, the initial stage is just getting into the system by sending an application.

Volanen:

From the beginning of 2019 we decided that films have to be offered to us through our own electronic system. Everybody has to use the same documents to make it equal for everyone.

Uotila:

The good thing about this formal system is that I don't get told anymore that I have promised something to somebody who has understood on the phone that I am supporting them. It's become clearer now for everyone who is applying that discussions are discussions and they are not the place for promises.

During the Golden Age, relationships between the financiers and producers were much more personal. A producer or filmmaker could phone the financier and ask them whether it was worth making an official application. At that time, the number of filmmakers was smaller and thus the amount of applications was equally manageable, especially as projects that did not have any chance of securing funding did not apply. Nowadays, all financiers need an official application before discussing the project, which means a lot of work for producers. For YLE, the producer has to first make a presentation and in the second phase provide an official tender consisting of budget, financing plan, production plan and all other necessary documents. Because several appendices are required, the producers have to complete extensive administrative work.

If a production company is granted development support, it can use this for several purposes. For example, it can facilitate the script to be rewritten (sometimes with the help of a dramaturg), the artistic style can be planned, technical and artistic approaches can be tested, and in general the film production prepared. It has also become standard practice that development support is used to start shooting, either by test filming, preliminary filming or even actual shooting – for instance, in the case of follow-up films on urgent topics.

After the development phase the final decision concerning production support is made at each of these institutions. How does this happen? Who makes the first move?

Lyytinen:

Actually, it's not possible to say who makes the first move, because all of us can make an independent decision. But at the same time, we are all following the same budget for the film. If I don't see that the budget is funded or there's a risk that the funding is insufficient for the film, I don't make a positive decision. Also, do the producers have the collaborations they have intended? These kinds of elements are very crucial for my decision. And, of course, there has to be an audience for the film.

Westergård:

You make a decision by supporting the project, but if the other ones don't believe in it, it might be turned down. The budget has to be fully financed. This can be different compared to some other countries, which is why it's so hard to work with the Americans, because they finance their film along the way and just start doing it even if it is only partly financed. In that sense we are more European, as the MEDIA Programme also requires proof that the film is fully financed. You're actually collecting the commitments along the way and then you can release them when you know that there is enough financing. Perhaps earlier in the development phase everybody can decide for themselves whether they will take a risk and start supporting a project. But when it comes to production, you have to get the full body of funding together.

Rousu:

For AVEK, the letter of commitment [LOC] has been a saviour, because we cannot make the final production decision before the film is fully financed. But I can provide a LOC which is

conditional, whereby if the production is fully financed, then AVEK will pay this and this amount.

Uotila:

SES can be the first or the last decision-maker in the process. After the decision the producer has six months to find the rest of the budget as planned. We can understand that some of the financing comes from different sources than planned, but it has to be the same amount of money. If it varies more than ten percent, we re-estimate the whole project. Is the artistic plan still possible to do and do we get what is promised? It is rare that SES would back down on the agreement, it hasn't happened often, actually quite seldom, but anyway it's possible. Every application, every project is different, and the needs are different. There is no simple rule.

Co-operation and co-ordination concerning decision-making appears to be well established in this ecosystem, although some changes have taken place in recent times, leading to increased formalisation of these relations. Even the financiers suggest that these changes are more formal and bureaucratic compared to preceding practices (a concern frequently noted by producers and directors; see Chapters 4 and 5). These changes indicate a wider cultural transformation where the personal connections and relationships of the Golden Age are increasingly part of a much stricter and disassociated culture that testifies to a general emphasis on managerialism and the professionalisation of production cultures (see Kääpä 2018). Such arguments have often been used to counter the accusations of backroom dealing and inefficiency that especially apply to the closeness of small nation film cultures. Yet at the same time, such managerialism can also add an extra layer of complexity, especially when it comes to procedural elements. This is precisely reflected in the comments by the financiers (and producers and directors in the next chapters), as they increase individual workloads and can also make the ecosystem counterproductive to creativity and artistic expression.

The triangle model of the Finnish ecosystem does however necessitate clear collaborative structures. This is especially crucial when considering the development phase, as there are differences in how the financiers deliver development money for productions. SES is the most important financier concerning development money, but it is also the most rigid and slow. AVEK is the most flexible and nowadays they concentrate more and more on development support. YLE is not very active on this front and tends to follow how others grant developing support. The final decision regarding production support is premised on the European way, where the whole budget has to be covered before the final decisions are made and the agreements are signed. In this sense the financiers are also dependent on each other and need established collaborative structures. As decisions are often conditional, LOCs are instruments that can help the producer to move forward with the project planning. Yet, the new system established by SES, where the film consultant cannot write LOCs without the decision of the SES board, is making the whole system more rigid.

<H2>From shooting to rough cut</H2>

During the development and preparation phase, financiers are usually very active. They are consulted on the budget, financing and production plans but also the script, approach, style and form of the film. Yet, it is worth asking how intensively the financiers follow the shooting of the films they are financing once the decisions are made and agreements signed. How do they use their visible and invisible power?

Lyytinen:

The production itself is very much a free run. If there are issues or difficulties with the production, they ask for a delay, because the delivery date is in our contract, as well as the length of the film.

Volanen:

No, who cares about the length? I mean, nobody really cares. And I don't care if the film is good, of course.

Volanen's attitude reflects her position, which is different compared to the other commissioning editors at YLE. She deals with more experimental and artistic short films and is thus less tied to the politics of slots and policy at the company. Compared to the much more bureaucratic approach from Lyytinen, she appears in this discussion as someone who is a cinema enthusiast dedicated to film art, again highlighting how the personalities of commissioners play a role in the financing of documentaries.

Westergård:

There is room for risks at the development stage, but once the film is in production, which usually takes a long time, we already know quite well what's going to happen. It's up to the producer to decide whether there are any large concerns that they need to inform us about. Some do inform us very thoroughly all the way throughout the production, and others don't. One can, of course, be a little bit surprised when you watch the rough cut. But otherwise, it's supposed to go like that, that we don't really interfere when the production is ongoing.

After the agreement has been signed, the role of financiers during the shooting seems to be remarkably passive. However, they do become active again when the rough-cut version of the film has been completed, as any required changes can still be made. Usually, the rough cut is screened in an editing or conference room, often on the financiers' premises. Sometimes it is shown on the big screen at a screening lot, accompanied by the director, producer, and often the editor and at least one or more financiers. The rough-cut screening is obligated by the agreements and any subsequent payments made to the producer are connected to the financiers' acceptance of the rough cut.

Uotila:

At SES we have to see the rough cut before you get the fourth part of the money. My advice for new filmmakers is to try to schedule the rough-cut screening so that they have edited 60 per cent of the film. That is ideal, but it doesn't always happen like that.

Rousu:

I have always stressed to the producers that once you are in the rough-cut stage, please be early and book at least two rough-cut screenings. And prepare time for feedback and changes. Most of the producers do that, but not all.

Volanen:

Financiers still often watch and discuss the rough cuts together.

Westergård:

Sometimes just to save time, everybody watches them separately.

Rousu:

It's also very fruitful when you discuss the film together, and not only show it to us one by one to get individual feedback. It's a good discussion, usually.

Volanen:

Sometimes I'm worried for the filmmakers because they might get really different opinions.

The financiers show a clear preference to view and discuss the rough cut together, as this saves time and is also practical for the producer. Yet, it also increases a sense of consensus, which seems to be

characteristic of Finnish documentary culture. If the financiers have one common opinion, it is more difficult for the director and producer to offer alternative solutions. Some producers prefer separate screenings, because then they can get different opinions. This consensus-building is a key function in shaping the documentary culture and indicates again the level of power financiers have in the ecosystem, especially in shaping its directions through dialogue conducted among themselves.

After one or several rough-cut screenings, the editing is locked down. This means that the final edit of the film will not undergo any more changes, and sound editing and technical post-production work (for instance, colour grading) can start. These rough-cut screenings can have very vivid discussions, but who makes the final decisions about the edit? Is it the financier, producer or director?

Westergård:

The producer or the production house. We do have to consider regulations and the law. We are the ones actually distributing the film, so we have to check that it doesn't offend any laws or ethical rules of the company. Of course, if we're not satisfied with the rough cut, then we can discuss it. But in the end, it's the filmmaker's film. Thus, they have to make the decisions based on the feedback they get, but they have to bear the artistic responsibility over the content. They own the film in the end anyway, it's their film.

Uotila:

In principle we respect the filmmaker. But sometimes I have to go back to the script and check what has been promised. And then I can state that the film I'm seeing is not the same as was promised. Sometimes it can be better, and it can be deeper. But if it's totally something else or if it's going down the wrong path, then I cannot accept it. In the end it always goes back to the fact that the film is the filmmaker's and that is what SES should respect.

Westergård:

It doesn't happen very often that we have to suggest a cut.

Volanen:

And that would only be for the YLE version.

Westergård:

They can do, of course, different versions.

The director and producer can receive two kinds of feedback based on the rough-cut version. The first is advice on how to improve the film. After all, the financiers are very experienced cinema viewers and often skilful in providing dramaturgical guidance, and they also have a strong ambition to contribute to the film as much as possible. The other type of feedback is more akin to explicit requirements regarding legislation, regulations and ethical concerns by YLE, for example, or aspects included in the agreements – for instance, the running time, topic or other issues. Yet, the financiers are unanimous that in the Finnish documentary culture, the filmmaker, usually meaning the director, decides the final form of the film. This reflects the idea that documentaries are artistic works and the filmmaker is an artist who has to have artistic freedom. When there is disagreement or conflict, the financiers negotiate with the filmmakers and, in any case, there seems to be a strong urge to try to reach consensus in these discussions. There are very few serious conflicts.

Rousu:

I remember only two cases where we had to talk through the problems together, considering everyone's perspectives on the situation.

Volanen:

So we'd be along the same lines.

Westergård:

It depends of course on what has changed during filming. If you are aware of the changes during the process and the producer and filmmaker have informed you of them, then you know that you will not get the film that you had discussed in the beginning. In the end we all want a good film. And maybe you can work together and get a good film in the end anyway, even if it's not the film you planned to do. But I would say it's worse if you get a film that is not good and there is nothing that can be done about it.

Volanen:

Then you just don't show it on television. That's one possibility.

Westergård:

Or you show it in the middle of the night, or you hide it in the schedule on Midsummer's Eve³ or something else. Now everything's online so it's more difficult. Or you don't put much promotion effort into it. But in the end, there is not much we can do in one sense, as if we get a film that is not good and it's not what we agreed on, we will just have to sit there with the film we get. But that is the risk in this business, but simultaneously it's not something I would stress too much.

The financiers use 'soft power' to negotiate with, appeal to or even constrain the filmmakers, but they do so in a suggestive and supportive way. This tendency to conduct dialogue is so strong that the financiers do not even mention juristic agreements or financial incentives (such as not paying the rest of the money).

³ A national holiday when Finns tend to go to their summer cottages, with only a few watching television.

Yet, the power of the financiers is highly suggestive and invisible, especially as if the filmmakers would strongly protest or refuse to make any changes, the financiers would probably remember it when dealing with the next applications or proposals from the same filmmakers. This is something so obvious that it needs not be said aloud, which is why such tactics might be invisible even for the financiers themselves. This last point is especially explicit in Volanen's and Westergård's comments, which indicate that they do not approach these interactions like a business exchange. Even though they are buyers who have ordered something, and even paid a substantial part of it in advance, they accept the possibility of artistic or other failure. They see their role as more like that of a supporter or even sponsor, which shows a very different attitude compared to, for instance, commercial television. In this small nation context, financiers respect the filmmakers' artistic freedom. Such an approach adheres to the pervasive 'arm's length' policies in place in most Nordic countries, which limit the power of public authorities to influence creative decisions.

Finally, it is interesting to note that there is some uncertainty about the meaning of the term 'filmmaker', as some (Westergård) seem to be discussing producers, others (Uotila) directors. From a financier's point of view the term might mean the same thing: the producer represents both juridical and artistic elements, while the director's artistic impact is in a way delegated to the producer, who operates in between the financier and the director. The Finnish documentary culture, in general, follows the European tradition, which is very director-centred, compared to, for instance, the US, where the position of the producer is central to any decisions on both the final cut and the film rights. Yet, the Finnish financiers' confusion over the creative input of these roles indicates the fluidity of an ecosystem where individuals may occupy multiple roles.

<H2>Distribution</H2>

Despite all the discussion about the livelihoods of documentary professionals and the politics involved in sustaining production, it is worthwhile remembering that films are made for an audience. Hence, distribution is an important part of the filmmaking process, as it is the last link in the chain from the idea and development to the eyeballs of the viewers. As consumption practices dictate the economic success and feasibility of a production, providing creatives with their ultimate artistic rewards, distribution plays an important part in the ecosystem of Finnish documentary film. Considering distribution is thus essential for both financing and decision-making. In practice, the main distributor of documentary films in Finland is YLE, which provides filmmakers with both financial and artistic support, though it also co-produces – actually pre-buys – almost all professionally made Finnish documentaries. As part of the financing triangle, YLE occupies a double role: it is both a financier and a distributor, and thus it has substantial power in deciding key directions in the documentary ecosystem; but it is no longer the only possible distributor.

Uotila:

The Finnish Film Foundation's web pages mention that we demand professional distribution. This can include channels that we are not aware of, and we are also open to platforms. For example, the distributor can be a science centre like Heureka, or the distribution can be at an art exhibition. But this qualification always depends on the size of the whole budget and what our share is in that budget. There are no specific rules, but we compare our decisions with past ones and then we discuss with our CEO.

Rousu:

In the development phase we don't need to have a distributor, but when I make a production decision, the applicant has to have secured professional domestic distribution. That can be something else than YLE but very seldom is. Nowadays, for example, for children's content, School Cinema (Koulukino) has a VOD platform for schools and for children's programming. I

have accepted VOD platforms under our requirements because there is no one in Finland in broadcasting who commissions children's content outside YLE.

Westergård:

We demand a distribution plan, even if we are sometimes just one of the distributors.

These perspectives outline how vital it is that producers negotiate a firm distribution plan in advance when funding is sought and identify the various avenues available to them. Festival distribution both enhances and complicates these plans, as it is becoming more and more important as a distribution form for documentaries all over the world. The DocPoint documentary film festival in Helsinki in late January is the most prestigious festival in the Finnish documentary ecosystem, with venues like the Tampere Short and Documentary Film Festival in March providing another key showcase. For filmmakers it is important to get your premiere at these festivals, as one can get more publicity that way, which is essential if a film is going to secure cinema distribution. Usually, the selection for the DocPoint Film Festival is announced very late in the autumn. Yet, what happens if a film is selected and it is already scheduled for broadcasting with YLE?

Volanen:

We always postpone our broadcast.

Westergård:

There is of course a deadline when you can't do it anymore, when the whole system is already up and running. If it is close to Christmas, then it might be too late because all the information is published. From YLE's point of view there should be a bigger reason than a film festival to pull a film. But if we get the information early on a film chosen for DocPoint, then we can still make changes.

Uotila:

But it's not a problem for DocPoint if the film has been shown on TV before.

Westergård:

They think so.

Lyytinen, Volanen, Westergård:

Yeah.

Our interview with DocPoint staff (Juurus & Riihimäki 2019) confirms that television distribution and DocPoint screenings are a problem. If the film has been on television, it will not attract audiences in cinemas. YLE has been notably flexible with DocPoint screenings, as they often co-operate with the festival. Festival screenings are also a way to get publicity for a television release later. In the documentary ecosystem, festivals thus maintain an important role, not so much moneywise, but from generating prestige, publicity, and enhancing the viability and visibility of the Finnish documentary culture. Yet, with a few exceptions, commercial cinema distribution has not been as successful in recent years, presenting a problem for financiers.

Uotila:

It seems that people are going to see documentary films less and less in cinemas. Of course, it's always about the topic and so on, but it used to be better five years ago. The audience is changing, the competition is getting harder and one can see so many good documentaries through Netflix and YLE Areena.

But you need a theatrical release to have a chance to get the film to the Jussi Awards competition⁴. It is important that once a year the Jussi Awards gala audience hears that we are making documentary films in Finland. Perhaps there should be another set of rules on how to nominate documentaries for the Jussi Award.⁵ It's often the case that the box office is less than what we have provided for distribution. Theatrical distribution doesn't make sense from an economic perspective. There are cultural and other reasons to bring documentary films into cinemas, but when we support cinema distribution with twenty euros per ticket, it's more and more difficult to explain it to the board. We need to discuss the situation, but we haven't found a way to renew the system.

Lyytinen:

Nowadays, there are so many different audiences. There are some people who want to see the film in cinemas but not actually more than, on average, about a thousand per film. At the same time, there are a lot of people who seek films on different platforms. It is a strange combination of different requirements where one of them concerns the needs of the filmmakers. Their need to have a film in cinemas is often about the Jussi Awards, but if that is the only reason for theatrical distribution, it's a strange combination of using public money for a platform which does not have that much response from the audience. That audience is somewhere else. I don't mean that our platform is the only place, but I'm saying that generally the audiences are somewhere else, not in cinemas. When it comes to theatrical distribution, a thousand would be a dream, but the figures are actually closer to five hundred.

Uotila:

⁴ Finnish 'Oscars', including best documentary. To get your documentary into the competition, it must run for two weeks in theatres.

⁵ Rules for documentaries running for Jussi Awards were made more flexible in autumn 2021.

It can be over a thousand. And in some nature subjects it can be forty thousand.

It is important to note that Finnish fiction films enjoy good box-office results. The market share of tickets sold for domestic films is one of the best in Europe considering the size of the population (in 2019 the share of Finnish films was 17 per cent). Compared to this, documentaries have done poorly in the last few years. Reflecting this, both Uotila and Lyytinen seem to be suggesting that cinema distribution is a waste of money. The fact that they prioritise economic arguments reflects the positions they hold, but it mostly indicates a sense of pessimism on behalf of the financiers about the future of traditional documentary cinema distribution in Finland.

Westergård:

Like Lyytinen suggests, if you do events and festivals, then you might succeed.

Uotila:

The total viewing figures a film gets during its theatrical release is not our number one criteria when we make our documentary funding decisions. We don't have to think so much about the box office compared to the feature fiction film commissioners. They have to think that 'okay, we should get at least two million viewers in total per year for all Finnish films'. This means that they have to prioritise support for films that attract large audiences. But we don't have to think about that; we are more explicitly culture-based.

Volanen:

Many documentary films in theatres don't have the theatrical quality. That is the problem.

Uotila:

Yeah, Finland is a boring country, we are a boring welfare country.

Volanen:

Boring country, boring country.

Uotila:

We don't have interesting stories in that theatrical story way. I mean, we just don't have them.

Although this discussion harkens to a form of self-deprecating Finnish humour, it also illustrates a feeling of inferiority, which is a stereotypical characteristic often associated with the Finns. It is particularly intriguing to see this approach appear in comments by the financiers, who are leading the development of Finnish film culture. They clearly signify taste preferences as well as the need to constantly compare Finnish documentaries with international competitors.

Uotila:

All in all, documentaries struggle in Europe, and here, Finland is like other European countries.

Rousu:

It's also a matter of distribution because some of the main distributor chains in Finland are not very interested in documentaries, at least if they are not about celebrities or ice hockey players. They get maybe one week in the cinemas and then they are kicked out and that's it. It's not just up to the filmmakers or us financiers, but also depends on the distributors. In Norway, documentaries work very well in cinemas because they have a municipal cinema chain that covers the whole country. Thus, a documentary can easily get forty, fifty thousand viewers in Norway. And they are as small a country as we are.

Uotila:

Naturally, but they have oil.

Rousu:

But their policy is different. We don't have distributors for documentaries. Or we have small players, who don't have much power to negotiate with big cinema chains. If we want to get audiences in cinemas for documentaries, we need to rethink the whole idea of how we distribute documentaries in Finland.

Volanen:

I think Finnish films should be seen on the big screen. For me it's important, including also for short films.

Rousu:

But as Lyytinen said, audiences are not always in cinemas.

Uotila:

The culture of making Finnish documentary is more focused on art-house documentary films and very few want to make films that work for big audiences. The culture is more like that of artists; documentaries are art. Documentary film is sometimes more art than documentary.

Documentaries getting released in cinemas showcases a surprisingly negative and submissive spirit. Notably, Uotila, who is the only one formally responsible for supporting such release strategies, is especially doubtful. For him, documentary film is too often perceived as art, which can't be successful and thus maybe not even worth distributing in commercial cinemas.

Volanen:

Cinema distribution is a problem for us as well. Sometimes we make the deal, and the film is finished, but they want to have it in theatres. Even though we have the deal signed to show it on YLE channels and platforms, the producer gets concerned and asks us to postpone our screening.

Uotila:

The release window is three months for documentaries.

Lyytinen:

There has been a lot of turbulence in the past few years, but how I see it is YLE should have the film within half a year of completion, as if you delay further, we will more or less lose the audience's attention on television. I call the time it's in cinemas 'the valley of death'. How many months can we have holdback when we are not able to broadcast the film? Nowadays, the cycle of new films is so fast that nobody really remembers what blockbusters we had half a year ago. Maybe something like Marvel? The problem is that if you have a very niche, very small film in theatres in a few cities, that is very bad timing, as it might only get a very poor public press release, which doesn't help the film. They don't get the audience in the theatres, and at the same time we don't get the audience on our platforms.

Westergård:

A strange way of killing your film.

The time window between cinema and television premieres (known as holdback time) for feature fiction films is currently two years. For documentaries it is three to six months. If it is less than four months, Finnkino, the largest cinema chain, refuses to screen the film, which means that it can only be shown at small indie theatres. According to cinema distributor Juha Elomäki, who works for the small but vital distributor of documentaries PEK, this is, at the moment, a real problem. There is a clear conflict of

interest here between cinema distributors and television distributors. SES has not been very active in solving the problem. While SES does support cinema distribution and marketing, according to Elomäki, the amounts are very modest (interview with Elomäki 2019).

Uotila:

The Finnish Film Foundation supports theatrical releases for documentary films based on applications. When the film is completed, the filmmakers send an application for distribution support. We discuss internally whether we need this film, what the marketing plan and target audience is, what kind of strategy they have. We hope to find new ideas, which we find very seldom in the applications, on how to distribute this particular documentary film. And we support some of the projects.

Rousu:

AVEK doesn't fund domestic cinema distribution. But we do give funding for international export. The company or the filmmaker applies for funding, for example, if they want to participate in co-production markets to finance their film or show their film. So, they can apply for funding for travel and participation fees and produce international materials like trailers and flyers. In addition to this distribution funding, in the past three years we have provided support for impact work⁶ for documentaries, which is a boost for distribution as well, even though it's not really meant directly for distribution.

The role of distribution in the Finnish documentary ecosystem is very different to the fictional theatrical ecosystem. In the latter, a substantial part of the income comes from box-office revenues (Mäkelä 2017) and the distributors also pay in advance a minimum guarantee (MG) in exchange for future box-office

⁶ There have been several impact campaigns to distribute documentary films in connection with different social issues. Campaigns have been funded by SES and AVEK.

income. The expectation of securing revenue through sold tickets steers the whole process of financing and producing theatrical fiction films. As a consequence, the role of distributors and cinemas is essential for these films (Mäkelä 2017).

For documentary films the situation is substantially different. In practice, the main distributor of documentaries is YLE – as said many times – and cinema distribution is only of minor importance. It is natural that YLE and their representatives prefer television and YLE’s own platform distribution to other distribution formats. Theatrical distribution of documentaries is a hot potato for Finnish financiers, as documentaries are not doing well in cinemas at the moment. The financiers propose several explanations for this lack of audience interest, ranging from wrong topics (Uotila), insufficient cinematic quality (Volanen) to the lack of interest from distributors (Rousu). In general, all these factors contribute to the challenges facing documentary distribution, with financiers even questioning whether conventional commercial theatrical distribution is at all suitable for documentaries. The fact that this is even discussed suggests a huge difference compared to the discourses circulating in feature fiction film culture, both blockbusters and the art house, where theatrical distribution is still the cornerstone of the whole ecosystem. If documentaries now belong only to broadcast slots or streaming platforms, what would their status be in film culture?

While the financiers refer to alternative distribution possibilities (websites, events, platforms, science centres, impact work), so far their approaches to these distribution possibilities are largely hypothetical and suggestive, with no clear plans to capitalise on their potential and reach. At the same time, there is a clear indication that such mechanisms will increasingly play a much more important role in the ecosystem in the future.

<H2>Relationships with producers</H2>

Financiers and producers are mutually dependent on each other in the Finnish documentary ecosystem, yet the dynamics of these relationships can be complex. How official or unofficial are these relationships? How actively do the parties communicate with one another? How do the financiers view the role of the producers, and vice versa? What are the dynamics of influence between the two?

Uotila:

These relationships are very human. They can be everything that human relations can be, but we try to keep them concentrated on the business. Personally, when I started this work, I felt that I stepped into a cage. I don't deal with or meet very many people in the film circles, old friends or whatever. I felt that this was the best way. Or maybe I just wanted to be alone more, I don't know. But anyway, I am trying to be neutral and trying to behave the same way with everyone. That's the key to my perspective on dealing with these relationships.

Uotila's comments are revealing about how small the circles are in this ecosystem. Most professionals working in Finland have already become acquainted during film school, and many have worked on common projects. As a former cinematographer and documentary filmmaker, Uotila is a good example of the cross-pollination of roles in the ecosystem.

Lyytinen:

This is a creative business and we are dealing with creative people. I think we can always find excuses or hide behind the bureaucratic methods that we have to follow, but at the end of the day, we are actually dealing with very sensitive people. And you have to encourage these sensitive people. We can increase this kind of insecurity, but there are also moments where we can reassure them that we can finance your film or help you with the production, and this will lead to a good

outcome. But generally we have to consider that we are dealing with very sensitive and passionate people.

Westergård:

You're talking about the filmmakers.

Lyytinen:

Yeah, but also the producers.

Uotila:

Sometimes they are the same.

Lyytinen:

Sometimes they are, maybe even too often they are the same.

This discussion of the roles of directors and producers is another indication of how the small nation ecosystem functions. Such fluctuations and cross-pollinations, where professionals may frequently change their roles from director to producer and from producer to financier, and finally the other way round, indicate the consensus-based view on documentary film culture.

Volanen:

To me, the producer is the most important partner. If you work with directors who are also producers, there has been no one before the financier to discuss the content. So, I really appreciate producers and I expect them to operate with a high level of professionalism. They are really the ones that I need the most on a daily basis. They normally know the filmmaker better

than me. They can also interpret what I'm saying – because I'm not the clearest person – and thus I would normally expect the producer to clarify to the director what I may have meant.

Rousu:

I also appreciate producers and would like to encourage a system whereby the producer doesn't have a dual role. They can be a filter between decision-making or the person who gives feedback and the filmmaker. Because they can handle the director, and we can handle the producer. And they can handle us!

Uotila:

Filter in good and bad.

Rousu:

It's professional not to have dual roles. But there are some producer-directors in Finland who are stuck in that role and that's fine. It's their decision.

Westergård:

Yeah, we still have a few. If you go back twenty years, you had a lot more of these one-man bands who did both producing and directing. The Finnish community has become more professional in that sense. Maybe it goes hand in hand with internationalisation, because it doesn't work to be a one-man band if you're supposed to finance your film internationally.

Rousu:

Comparing Finland to the other Nordic countries, there are very seldom producers who also direct. Very seldom. It's a mark of professionalism that the roles are separated. And that's what I would like to strongly encourage for Finnish producers and directors.

Westergård:

Finland developed this model early, as we had good production companies long before Sweden, who were at least five, six years behind establishing really good producers and production companies. Before that, very often the filmmaker was the one working very closely with the financiers, SVT⁷ and with the Swedish Film Institute.

For the financiers, there is a clear division of labour: they deal with producers, who have a direct relationship with the directors. This structure works in theory, but not always in practice due to the particularities of the ecosystem. The financiers repeatedly emphasise that the roles of the producer and the director should be separate, yet nowadays several directors also work as producers, especially well-established middle-aged directors (see discussion with directors). The realities of industrial development seem to have gone in the opposite direction to what the financiers hoped for. Yet, at the same time, it is worth remembering that Finnish production companies have always been small, without capital or resources, especially ones concentrating on documentaries.

Lyytinen:

There's always the question of cash flow, as you have to make do with what you get, and there's no chance to make any kind of risk investment. There are no buffers on production companies' budgets. This is a pity, as risks should be taken when you make films in the documentary business. You should be able to have films in development and you should be able to film at least something, and not only just wait for the pre-production investment from the financiers. I am not able to solve the problem alone, but I can easily see that the problem is cash flow. And the number of productions undertaken by a production company.

⁷ SVT, Sveriges Television, national Swedish broadcasting company.

Uotila:

And the number of production companies.

Westergård:

Those production companies that actually survive have a broader palette of projects. Surviving on doing only creative, feature-length documentaries can be quite hard.

Uotila:

In the early 1990s, Kai Salminen, a well-known film commissioner, said very clearly that the Finnish ecosystem can hold five documentary film companies. Of course, this made most people very angry, as we have more than a hundred documentary film companies. For many young filmmakers the only way to get into the business is to start their own company, which is complicated. We cannot control the situation, we cannot advise on it, we cannot even discuss it. We can see that there is a problem, that the only way for young filmmakers is to start their own company, which is important for maintaining diversity and a rich ecosystem – we need young filmmakers.

While the producer is the key person from the financiers' point of view, there is a clear preference on their part to work with professional production companies, not a set of 'one-man band' operations, as they label director/producer-led companies. However, it is interesting to note that some directors prefer to have direct contact with financiers (see the directors' panel discussion), which indicates a certain conflict between structured, formalised types of communication and the more interpersonal approach that characterised the documentary film culture of past decades.

<H2>Going international</H2>

Earlier, in the 1990s, at the start of the Golden Age, financing was based on the three domestic financiers, SES, AVEK and YLE. As Finnish documentary film became more international in the 2000s and 2010s, financing became more complicated, but also led to the possibility of increased budgets. These international patterns raised fundamental questions about the constitution of Finnish documentary: What is the relationship between domestic and international aspects in the production of Finnish documentary today? Are there pressures to commission films that will have a life outside Finland, or ones that aim at domestic audiences? Are there tensions between the international and the national, or even the local?

Westergård:

From YLE's point of view, we need really local films that are very Finnish and produced here. But to keep the quality of documentary films high, we need to have successes abroad and continue to make such films – these really good international films – that work outside domestic confines. And of course, that's part of our job, to push for those films and also to find them. Yet, we also need other types of films, as not everybody can go abroad and get financed and make an IDFA⁸ winner. We have been trying to generate more international attention on Finnish documentary films, but this needs a push right now.

Rousu:

In our informal meetings, if there is a project with international potential, we might allocate a bit more money into that production to give it a chance to travel abroad. Maybe put more effort into the shooting and facilitate a longer editing period, and so on. That's one of the issues we talk about during our informal meetings.

⁸ International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, the most prestigious documentary film festival in Europe <<https://www.idfa.nl>>.

Uotila:

We never allocate more money than people have applied for, but there's been a few times I've suggested more time for editing or using a dramaturg, and have asked them to update the application.

Westergård:

Or you can apply for one of these international rough-cut workshops.

Volanen:

We have always had a double role at YLE, in the sense that we're doing programmes for audiences, but one of the roles is to support Finnish filmmakers. We try to support trips to the financing forums, as by doing that they will get their money back at some point. That's part of our role.

Westergård:

Of course, every producer needs international networks to succeed out there. In that sense we all support them.

Volanen:

And that's why we do international pre-buys as well – to establish connections between Finnish and other producers.

Commissioning editors at YLE perceive their role to be very much about supporting filmmakers and film projects internationally. In the above discussion, such concerns seem to be even more important than acquiring good films and programmes for YLE's audiences. While Finnish financiers support Finnish

productions financially in their development or production by issuing Letters of Commitment (LOC), they also, crucially, announce their support publicly at international financing forums. They also support and pre-buy projects from other countries. Such support can be leveraged, as the system is based on mutuality, with national financiers taking part in projects from other countries. There are no strict rules for this, but strong social pressure means productions accumulate support from other countries where LOCs act as important indicators of the viability of each film project. Often a Finnish producer is involved in these productions as a minority producer, and YLE may purchase films for the sake of mutuality. As Volanen puts it:

Volanen:

We are trying to establish co-operation so that the next time a Finnish filmmaker is looking for an international partner, they can help us. It's effectively an exchange of people.

Rousu:

Sometimes I even provide money for the sake of networking, as it might strengthen the Finnish co-producer's skills and their international network. But of course, the film needs to be distributed in Finland, which is one of the key reasons why we support Finnish minor co-productions.

Usually, YLE pre-buys the rights for non-Finnish productions for a few thousand euros, and if there is a Finnish co-producer involved, along with some artistic Finnish input in the production, SES and AVEK can also take part in the production. Amounts can vary from five to tens of thousands of euros. The YLE brand also benefits from being involved in successful international productions even as the production benefits from association with YLE's positive brand.

Lyytinen:

I have found that if our brand is part of the early stages of a film production, it increases attention on the film. When YLE is involved with the film, it feels that it's not just one of a thousand of films. It provides more possibilities, courage to travel with the film and feel that, yes, it could work in the international markets in a meaningful sense. If I participate in seven to ten international co-productions annually, it's good to reflect on how many of these co-productions travel. If I see them in the Sundance⁹ or the IDFA catalogue, I can easily see how successful we have been in our financing practices. The total range of films we have been able to pick up that are actually strong films provides a commendation for your work.

Finnish documentaries have enjoyed a lot of international recognition over the years, especially during the Golden Age when these films were celebrated as genuine and artistic. They received prizes at several festivals, with, for instance, Pirjo Honkasalo's *Atman* winning the main prize at IDFA in 1997 and *Hobbyhorse Revolution* the main award at the Cinekid Festival in 2017. However, during the last few years there have not been many big festival hits. Clearly, international success opens up opportunities for directors and producers, but how important are these awards and festival success for financiers?

Lyytinen:

For most of our audiences it doesn't really matter. They don't even know where IDFA is or they have never heard of Sundance, or probably even Cannes. Even my wife doesn't remember where IDFA is, so it doesn't really matter in that sense.

Westergård:

⁹ The Sundance Film Festival in Utah is the biggest and most important film festival for independent films in the US. The festival screens both art-house fiction films and documentaries
<<https://www.sundance.org/festivals/sundance-film-festival/>>.

It's important for the filmmakers to be taken seriously in promoting the idea that Finland can deliver good films to the industry, especially being a small country.

Rousu:

It's encouraging to see a colleague's film at IDFA or Sundance – wow! If they can do it, I can do it too.

Lyytinen:

Finnish films actually travel quite a lot. They might not win the main prize or even the second prize, but they do actually travel a lot around the world.

We were lacking financing and all kinds of everyday connections with Europe, just ten, fifteen years ago. Yet, something changed. The new generation of about 40-year-old producers are well connected, their films travel around the world, they probably get international financing quite easily.

It is worth remembering that YLE buys many international films about international topics and screens them for Finnish audiences in addition to co-producing Finnish films. While YLE broadcasts a range of documentaries, both domestic and international, they are under pressure to follow, respect and react to audience rates, which is becoming increasingly important even for public service broadcasters. It is noteworthy that the financiers do not discuss this theme much, despite the fact that documentaries are competing with reality shows and other non-fiction entertainment. It is often asked whether YLE should finance films produced primarily abroad, or whether they ought to concentrate on Finnish topics for Finnish audiences. This reflects a wider tension between the national and the international that emerges in this discussion.

Westergård:

In Finland, audiences are very used to viewing international documentaries, because YLE has been very strong in distributing them. The audience also has expectations on what makes a good documentary. Thus, it's very important to support Finnish filmmakers to keep to the same standards.

Rousu:

Exactly. That might also provide more chances for Finnish films to get shown abroad.

Lyytinen:

International co-production finance has always been important when it comes to the development of Finnish documentary films, as one has to be involved with and also influenced by other nations. On the political level, the tendency is totally the opposite as we are getting more and more embedded in our national identities. You can sense that, for example, our audiences really want to see Finnish films, hear the Finnish language and see Finnish life. But when it comes to third world countries, there's not that much interest. People don't want to know. I can see from the viewing numbers that people don't want to see rainforests burning; they want to see happy life in the suburbs. But it's also our obligation to inform the people.

Rousu:

I think the bigger, bigger picture behind this discussion is how we Finns and Finland are as a country and a nation. Going back in our history, we have been such a marginal remote country, with a language that nobody understands except the Finns. In addition, we have been quite a closed country, with people who live in the forests. Dark forests! So it's only maybe the last ten, fifteen years when we have been participating and opening up. This is a very short history, unlike

the UK or France or Germany, or even Sweden, Norway and Denmark. I mean, we haven't been part of Europe, really.¹⁰

Westergård:

Another positive consideration is that the Finnish producers have the courage to bring out stories from Finland as well. If you go back a short time in history, very often films focused on stories from Himalaya or Tibet; one did these foreign stories to succeed. But now there is more courage to come up with unique stories from our part of the world and do them well.

The discussion illustrates how, because the ecosystem of Finnish documentary has had to expand, it can no longer be considered a purely national industry. Although Finnish documentary films have been frequently distributed internationally since the 1990s, these arrangements have now clearly become a part of European documentary culture.

<H2>Concern for the future</H2>

The final part of the panel discussion focuses on how financiers see the future of Finnish documentary film. What might the ecosystem and the position of their institutions look like in the near future – for instance, in the next five years?

Uotila:

I believe that the Film Foundation will still exist.

¹⁰ Finland joined the European Free Trade Association in 1961 and the EU in 1995. In the 1990s the country opened up in many ways, especially culturally and mentally.

Westergård:

We believe that YLE will also still exist.

Rousu:

I'm not sure if AVEK will exist.

Confidence in these institutions appears to be strong, with the exception of AVEK, whose financing has been reduced substantially. As these funds consist of compensation for private copying levies that are currently allocated from the state budget, cuts can be expected, as user patterns have transitioned from analogue to digital and industrial circuits are unwilling to widen the subject remit of copying levies. Consequently, there have been discussions about the role and position of AVEK, yet similar concerns do not apply to the Finnish Film Foundation, perhaps as its position and role is considered so strong and self-evident. Despite this sense of confidence, Lyytinen – from YLE – is pessimistic about the size of its budgets:

Lyytinen:

I think it's challenging to convince the taxpayers or the institutions, which are financing the Finnish Film Foundation, that they should actually support more filmmaking through this old method. I cannot see a future where we could have a bigger budget than what we have right now. So maybe we are all actually struggling with the level of financing? The rise of expenses is a challenge where the only option is to actually support fewer films. That's the only thing which I see as the inevitable consequences of these two factors.

The official strategy of SES is based on a vision whereby the total support for Finnish film production will rise to the same level as the other Nordic countries in the coming years. Perhaps Lyytinen's comments – and the lack of discussion of them – reflect the resigned atmosphere among the financiers

due to a chronic instability in the ecosystem that will not improve without substantial infrastructural transformations.

Even as these concerns persist, YLE's position looks solid for the moment, not necessarily as a traditional broadcaster with fixed slots, but as a full public service multi-platform media company.

Westergård:

YLE's online platform Areena is very successful at the moment. We're not competing so much with Netflix or other commercial streaming companies, but we are competing for people's time, all the time. People don't have time for all these opportunities to view content. So we are working on how well we perform in this new scene, and how often people choose our platform.

Lyytinen:

And how much are they willing to use their time? How many minutes? It's not so much a question of what should I do this evening, but more about how I should use my time while waiting for the bus at the bus station. Those are the new slots where we have to compete.

Westergård:

If they don't want to watch feature documentary films on that platform, then you will start seeing them disappear. Maybe the board decides that this is a genre we do not need, that people are consuming feature films somewhere else and not on our platform. That's the only threat I can see, because we need the audiences.

Lyytinen:

Maybe the films will be there, but the quantity of films decreases. Perhaps in the short term we will just finance fewer films, but we will have long-tail films that will be on our platforms for years.

When it comes to our distribution, we need to know how long audiences actually use our platform. That's a really interesting question because the younger audience is not using our platform. They are on TikTok and YouTube, and they have never even heard of YLE Arena. Or they have seen that their parents or grandparents are watching films on our platform. So the tough question is how to encourage them to stay on our platform. Of course, we are also using YouTube as much as possible, but the question for the next five years is what is our platform?

Westergård:

We live in an era where everybody is a filmmaker in one sense. The way people distribute their stories, tell their stories and where that will happen in the future is an important question. Will we see the division between professional and non-professional filmmakers disappear?

Lyytinen:

It's also very positive that there's a young generation who doesn't need or know the system. It's always healthy when you are not dependent on the system or care about the system. I mean, they have never heard about the Finnish Film Foundation and yet they are still making their own films. And that is all positive and if we can support them in some other way, we will do it. Furthermore, it's also a part of the democratic system that you should not be so dependent on these kinds of institutions.

The panellists understand that the media environment is rapidly changing, with new generations, new technology and new ways of consuming audiovisual material, including documentary films. Digitalisation

has changed things on many levels, including production, distribution and patterns of consumption. The documentary ecosystem was built in an era when the borders between the different actors were much clearer. For instance, the division between professionals and amateurs was sharply defined, as amateurs were totally excluded from the ecosystem, yet the situation could fundamentally change soon or in the near future, as Lyytinen suggests. It is also noticeable that, as a representative of one of the main institutions in this ecosystem, he fantasises about life outside institutions and established structures.

The discussion also presents some substantial evidence of a generational perspective, as all panellists represent roughly the same generation. Even so, there are differences between the age of participants as, for instance, Volanen is the oldest of the panellists.

Volanen:

I feel like a dinosaur in the sense that film is disappearing. The only thing I know is that the topics film students are offering to me are so unimportant. I'm a little bit worried about the whole idea of film. Maybe I should retire before we change the name of our film department into some kind of Arena-development-whatever-department. This is personal, so do not be too concerned about my comments. I see the future differently in the sense that I am concerned about how audiences look at films and what they look for in these films.

Westergård:

I wouldn't worry because this is how the world works. It's more of a question of where we are positioned in the changing scene.

Lyytinen:

Generally, I think we should relax and wait for our pension, because film itself is an art form that has survived 120 years.

Westergård:

Art history changes, including the means of telling a story.

Volanen:

Film as an art form is disappearing.

Westergård:

Don't say that! It's changed; there is a new way of understanding film as art.

The extensive discussion on the nature of art, especially from the representatives of the broadcasting company YLE, positions them as supporters of artistic practices. There is no talk about media policy, journalism, communication or the role of commercial mass media. Instead, film is positioned as a meaningful, 'worthy', creative or political practice requiring financial support. Volanen, in particular, understands herself strongly as a cinema and film art aficionado. Simultaneously, she sees YLE as a supporter of Finnish film and documentary culture, and she does not even mention their role in purchasing films and programmes for YLE's broadcast audiences and the need to react to their demands. As Lyytinen puts it, cinema has a lengthy and versatile development as art, and forms of watching, distributing and consumption have changed significantly, from travelling shows to cinema houses, from television to the internet and mobiles. Documentary practices have not disappeared but evolved along these technological and formative transformations. Yet, despite all these changes, the core of documentary film seems to have survived and will, as Rousu suggests, continue to exist into the future:

Rousu:

All in all, I'm idealistic as always. I trust that people will want to see films. I believe this need will not disappear anywhere.

The discussion is revealing about the uncertainty felt across the sector and suggests that the whole financing system will undergo some major changes in the future. However, for now, the system continues to function basically the same as it has from the beginning of the Golden Age in the 1990s. While larger media ecosystemic transformations have had major impacts on the role and constitution of media in general and documentary production in particular, the overall constitution of the documentary ecosystem remains very similar, even if there are now a few more financing possibilities.

It is worth remembering that the panel consists of decision-makers and representatives from major institutions. Yet, it is notable how reactive the discussion is. According to the panel, financiers consider their role as reacting to the changes in the environment, and not so much on changing them themselves. Such an absence of proactivity raises the question that if there is a need for change, who should or could be the actor to initiate and institutionalise this, who should take the initiative under these circumstances? Is it the financiers, producers or the directors, or someone else – for instance, the Ministry of Education and Culture? Uotila, a representative from SES and a former filmmaker himself, sees the future of documentary film as follows:

Uotila:

It's in the hands of the filmmakers.

<H1>Chapter 5: Producers' Panel</H1>

<H2>Introduction</H2>

Producers are key actors in the Finnish documentary ecosystem. Yet, the professional identity of a documentary producer and the dynamics between them can be very incoherent. Untangling these complex relations will be the focus of this chapter. In the previous chapter, a panel of financiers outlined some of the key challenges facing the industry, among which was the suggestion that there are too many production companies in the Finnish film ecosystem. The Finnish Film Foundation's website (2020) lists 271 professional production companies, including those making fiction, documentaries and both. Furthermore, the list is mostly made up of very small companies, which is typical of the size of the company that produces documentaries. Some of these companies are limited to making films by the owner-director and consequently have unsteady work and cash flows. Several large fiction production companies (in Finnish terms) also produce documentaries, although their main business remains the making of feature-length fiction films for theatrical release. There are therefore only a few companies that exclusively produce documentaries for more than one director, where those directors are not the owners of the company.

For this panel we recruited experienced documentary producers with diverse experience of working in the industry: Ulla Simonen and Markku Tuurna have mainly produced documentaries, whereas Elina Pohjola and Elli Toivoniemi produce both fiction and documentaries, recently concentrating more on fiction for the cinema and television. The discussion took place on 5 December 2017 in the conference room of the Finnish Film Foundation.

Participants:

Elina Pohjola (born 1981) has produced a number of internationally awarded feature-length documentaries. She has also produced several feature films, the latest cinema release being *Girl Picture* (*Tytöt tytöt tytöt*, 2022) by Alli Haapasalo. She worked on the production of several Finnish feature films before starting her own production company, Pohjola-filmi, in 2009 with screenwriter Mike Pohjola. In 2018 Leila Lyytikäinen became a partner and the company changed its name to Citizen Jane Productions. Elina Pohjola's credits as a documentary producer include *Maiden of the Lake* (*Vedenneito*, 2019) by Petteri Saario and *Cross-Country* (2018) by Einari Paakkanen. In February 2021 she took up a role as a commissioner in YLE Draama's film team.

Ulla Simonen (born 1965) was, at the time this discussion took place, the producer for her own production company, MADE Oy, where she has produced, for instance, the documentaries *Alcan Highway* (2013) by Aleksi Salmenperä and *Garden Lovers* (*Eedenistä pohjoiseen*, 2014)¹ by Virpi Suutari. Altogether, she has produced over twenty documentaries at different production companies, among them *Joutilaat* (*The Idle Ones*, 2001) by Susanna Helke and Virpi Suutari and *Laulu koti-ikävästä* (*Finnish Blood, Swedish Heart*, 2013)² by Mika Ronkainen. She has also worked as the artistic director of the DocPoint Film Festival and as a tutor in various international education programmes, such as Berlinale Talents and Dok.Incubator. Currently (2022), she works as the director of AVEK, the Promotion Centre for Audiovisual Culture.

Elli Toivoniemi (born 1984) is one of the co-founder-owners and the producer of Tuffi Films. She has produced about forty films in all forms and lengths, both fiction and documentaries, among them the Academy Award-nominated short fiction *Do I Have to Take Care of Everything?* (*Pitääkö mun kaikki*

¹ *Garden Lovers* is a film about enthusiastic couples who have a passion for gardening.

² *Finnish Blood, Swedish Heart* focuses on a father and son visiting their former home in Sweden. The national trauma of immigration is processed via family relationships.

hoitaa?, 2014). As a documentary producer, her credits include *Hobbyhorse Revolution* (2017) by Selma Vilhunen, *Just Animals (Eläinoikeusjuttu, 2022)* by Saila Kivelä and Vesa Kuosmanen, and *Once I Was a Dragonfly (Kesäni sudenkorentona, 2016)*, which she also directed.

Markku Tuurna (born 1962) is a producer and director, and co-founder of the independent production company Filmimaa Oy, which has so far concentrated on documentaries and short fiction films. As a producer, his credits include, for instance, Timo Korhonen's *The Wages of War (Sodan murtamat, 2016)* and *Colombia in My Arms* (2020) by Jenni Kivistö and Jussi Rastas. The latter film won the award for the best Nordic documentary at the Göteborg Film Festival in 2020. Tuurna has also directed several documentaries – for instance, *One Hundred Generations (Sata sukupolvea, 1999)* and *Salla: Selling the Silence* (2010).

<H2>The career of the documentary producer</H2>

The present-day generation of Finnish documentary producers, which our panellists represent, are well educated in general filmmaking terms but tend to lack any specialist training for the role of a documentary producer. A producer's career is premised on gaining education through one of the country's several film schools, with Aalto University's ELO being the only one that has a specialised documentary department. After film school many producers then gain experience in the field of filmmaking in general, by working in various jobs in the film industry, which can be the spark that makes them take up documentary production. It is also emblematic of how our panellists started their careers.

Ulla Simonen:

I started as an editor and then moved into production in the early 1990s. I produced my first documentary in 1998 and was a producer until 2004. Then I worked as a production consultant for AVEK for four years. At that same time, I started to work as a tutor at

different types of workshops. In 2010 I established my own production company, MADE, which produces both documentary and fiction. In between, I was also the artistic director of the documentary film festival DocPoint.

Markku Tuurna:

I started making documentaries at the documentary department of the film school ELO, but there was no specific guidance about producing documentaries. So, soon after film school, I worked as production manager for some fiction feature films, and that's where I received my producer training. In 2007, I founded my company, Filmimaa, where I have mainly produced documentaries, but I also direct them – for example, *Salla: Selling the Silence*. Besides I have produced feature fiction films in other companies.

Elli Toivoniemi:

I studied producing at the Arts Academy of Turku University of Applied Sciences with Elina Pohjola from 2005 to 2009. I took part in location shootings as a boom operator or a sound recordist, making films without being in charge, but it was a good learning experience for the whole production process. I established the production company Tuffi Films and have finally ended up directing a documentary even though I wasn't educated in the field. Maybe documentaries have actually found me, in a professional sense, more than I have found them.

The panellists emphasise 'smallness' and intimate connections as a feature of the industry, both in terms of positive and negative factors: It is vital to secure guidance from a mentor who can teach these aspiring producers the ropes. There is a strong sense of a 'cottage industry' at work, where individuals are closely connected to one another or find their footing in similar ways through similar connections.

Elina Pohjola:

They are very fiction orientated at ELO, but they have a separate documentary department. When I started working as a producer at my own production company and when we did our first documentary production, I asked for a more experienced producer or director. This is how John Webster became our production mentor, telling us about how the budget should look, and how the script ought to be prepared, and when to apply for funding. So, there is an education that you get from the film school, but it's mainly for works of fiction. If you are interested in documentaries you have to receive the knowledge and practice from somewhere else. I have also participated at many workshops, such as Twelve for the Future³ and the Summer Academia, and that's how I learned how to be a documentary film producer.

Toivoniemi:

My mentor was Sami Jahnukainen, who helped me to understand the production industry, and who was also a close and honest advisor. I think this kind of knowledge sharing is done more in the documentary world than in fiction. It's somehow easier to talk about the content of a film in the documentary community than in the fiction world.

Simonen:

My teacher at film school⁴ revealed the world of documentary to me. As a producer, I'm totally self-taught. I got into the industry and found out fast that this is what I wanted to do. There was an absolutely huge hole in the industry, and somebody needed to drive the documentary production within it. I joined the production

³ Co-production workshop organised by EDN, European Documentary Network.

⁴ Film department at LAB University of Applied Sciences in Lahti.

company Kinotar⁵ in 1997 as a production assistant and half a year later I was producing almost all of the company's documentaries. I found my calling very fast over there, but I had practically no experience and as everybody else was hugely experienced, it was a huge learning curve for me.

It is interesting to note that several of the producers had a mentor guiding them at the beginning of their careers. The atmosphere of the documentary community is collegial, seemingly much more so than in the fiction world, where competition is harder. Personal relationships are essential, the same names pop up several times and the networking circles are very small. This theme, of the closeness and smallness of the documentary community in Finland, and the implications of that size, is repeated throughout this book, as it will be throughout this chapter.

<H2>The world of documentary and the world of fiction</H2>

All the panellists have experience producing both documentaries and fiction, often in tandem, because small production companies have to be flexible to survive. However, for producers such as our panellists, the worlds – and ecosystems – of fiction and documentary are very different. Budget sizes, commercial risk and audience appreciation are markedly different, as documentary tends to live in the shadow of fiction. But, on the other hand, in the constant comparison between fiction and documentary in the discourse of these producers, documentary does seem to offer some unique freedoms:

Simonen:

I actually come from the arts world. For me it was a revelation that in documentary film I could do the things that I would do in the arts. But I have the feeling that the documentary

⁵ Kinotar, founded in 1994, was one of the five big production companies in Finland. It was run by producer Lasse Saarinen, who is now the CEO of the Finnish Film Foundation. The company is not currently active.

producer's profession is not valued by the film establishment – such as the Finnish Film Foundation. It's with colleagues that you actually get any appreciation. It made me very upset when, in this very same room last year, I was told by officials that Finnish documentary was finally going international. I have had an identity as a documentary producer involved in international co-productions from the very beginning. Finnish documentary has been international for years. Their comment revealed how little they knew and appreciated what I did. I've also produced fiction but producing documentaries, and especially getting a living out of it, is way more difficult.

Toivoniemi:

I definitely agree. It's hard finding a good project, getting the access and trying to make a living out of it. I'm trying to find an audience for projects. At the same time, I'm trying to run a business. I think there is a lack of respect for documentary producers and documentary productions in our culture.

Simonen:

When I founded my company, my idea was that we'd work with young talents and filmmakers in the fiction side of things, whilst with documentaries we'd concentrate only on directors who have proven themselves. Then we'd go international and try to make very high-end documentaries. In a way we did it, but financially it was so difficult that I haven't entered production on a documentary since 2013. I have used my company as a Finnish minor partner in international co-productions.⁶

I have also tried to produce documentaries by young filmmakers. I would go to financiers with a young filmmaker that I trusted, a person that I believed was able to do this big project that we are doing. I hoped that the financiers would know my experience, and if

⁶ After this panel was recorded in 2017, Simonen has continued to produce documentaries.

they don't trust that person, they trust me, trust that I'll bring the project to a successful conclusion. And I found out that it doesn't work like that. I come along with my twenty-plus years of experience and I put that on the table, I'm told that 'well we don't trust the filmmaker'. It's very disappointing, and I haven't felt the same kind of attitude when it comes to fiction films. I feel that it also has something to do with how difficult it is for new people to enter the documentary industry.

Toivoniemi:

At the same time, there is an atmosphere where financiers ask aloud, 'where are all the under-35-year-old documentary filmmakers?' That situation is not going to change unless they are given the opportunities. Yet, giving opportunities also means making mistakes. There is a conversation, and a worry at the moment, that Finnish documentaries are not succeeding internationally as well as they once did. There aren't as many Finnish projects in the important international financing forums. So where are the producers who are actually producing the debut documentary films? Films that have a medium or lower budget, but find something new to tell? However, you can't really sustain yourself by only producing documentaries, you just can't do it.

Pohjola:

Producing fiction films is always easier, and it is easier to teach how to produce them. Documentaries are special. Established producers are members of the Finnish Film Producers Association⁷, but we talk more about fiction films there. They are two completely different worlds – the world of fiction films, the markets and the financing forums, and the world of documentary films. The question that I have been asked quite a few times is 'why are you doing both?' I like producing documentary films so much that I

⁷ Audiovisual Producers Finland – APFI ry <<https://apfi.fi/en/home/>>.

don't want to give them up. I like the financing forums more, and I like the atmosphere with documentary filmmakers more than with fiction films. Maybe because we avoid the millions, the heroes, and the red carpets of Cannes and Berlin, it feels different. But I can only produce documentary films because I also produce fiction. I finance making documentaries through making fiction films. We, and quite a few other producers that I've talked with, are wondering whether we should make documentaries at all, which is sad. But if you don't pay the bills and the salaries, it just doesn't make sense.

Simonen:

It is an expensive hobby.

Pohjola:

That is the very sad situation we are experiencing right now, because the financing isn't increasing, but it hasn't been totally cut either.

Simonen:

The financing has not been cut, but the costs have, simply, gone up. The only item where you can cut expenses is your own salary. I've had a very slow two years but it was my decision not to produce much. If you want to exclusively produce documentary projects, then you need to have money. And then you start to need more staff. I can operate the way I can because my overheads are extremely low, because it's only me, and we have joint offices with other companies. I'm basically paying for one desk. So, it doesn't cost pretty much anything to keep the company going, so I can afford to do so.

The question of trust between financiers and producers emerges between the lines in this discussion.

Financiers are always dealing with a single application and a single film at a time, whereas producers

have to constantly plan further ahead. Financiers evaluate projects on the basis of three things: the script (idea), the director and the producer. For Ulla Simonen, the main criteria should be the producer as, in a way, they have already evaluated the director and the idea when they decided to go ahead with the production, and thus the producer bears the majority of the risk in any production project.

In this discussion a continuous comparison is made between fiction and documentary. While the ecosystem of documentary film and the ecosystem of fiction film are different, this is not consistently reflected in the increasingly bureaucratized financing structure, leading to some fundamental differences of opinion and challenges to the identity of documentary producers.

<H2>'The good old times have gone'</H2>

One clear consensus emerging in the above discussion concerns the current situation in documentary financing. According to the panellists, the budgets are too low and the producers cannot survive only by producing documentary films. They constantly refer to earlier, better times, which are now in the past. Thus, the Golden Age of Finnish documentary filmmaking (Haase 2016) seems to be a part of history, at least in the minds of the panellists. As analysed in other sections of this book, the triangle financing system encountered several disturbances from the late 2000s onwards. The financial crises at YLE affected the amounts of money the corporation invested in documentaries, with funding levels only reaching half of those awarded in previous years. At the same time, AVEK was suffering a funding shortage because of a decrease in the revenue from the private copying levies on which their funding depends. The following discussion probes further into the notion of a lapsed Golden Age, and asks what may be different now in comparison to those halcyon days:

Simonen:

It was a situation where you could really pre-finance something to a reasonable level. That ended probably somewhere between 2009 and 2010. After that, things changed a lot, and that had an effect on us. Co-operation with YLE wasn't as good anymore.

Tuurna:

In 2007 I was at EAVE,⁸ where they introduced a rule that stipulated that if you had six projects, you could get one through. If I had produced these documentaries in Finland, I felt that I could have got all of them through. Of course, I also thought that they are very good documentaries and they should be done. Naturally it didn't actually happen as easily as that. But I think nowadays I really have to have at least six productions in preparation to get one through.

Simonen:

The ratio was that you would have six films in development, and five of them would be made. In my case it was nine out of ten. That was the case, until now.

Pohjola:

There were also fewer production companies and producers doing documentaries. When I started the company in 2009 there weren't many young producers, and I felt very warmly welcomed by the financiers as a new producer. They were all very supportive and encouraging – the Finnish Film Foundation, AVEK and YLE. Nowadays there are more production companies, more applications and more projects in the field. You can't establish a continuity in your flow of documentary production when there is so little

⁸ EAVE, European Audiovisual Entrepreneurs, is a professional training, project development and networking organisation for audiovisual producers. It organises workshops and education programmes for producers.

money.

Toivoniemi:

My experiences were that back then all proposals had value, they were not discriminated against or personalised.

Simonen:

My production *Finnish Blood Swedish Heart* premiered in 2013. After that, things changed. We started financing the film in 2009. I remember that negotiating and signing all the agreements took eight months, but we were able to fully finance it before we started shooting. We also had some extremely good luck, as I happened to run into some people and received extra financing. It was a really well-financed film with a suitable budget. I already knew at that time that 'this is it', this is never going to happen to me again, that I'm not able to do this anymore with documentary. And I was right.

Nowadays you shoot with development money. *Garden Lovers* was finalised somewhere at the end of 2013, and I got the last deals signed the month before that. Altogether we had eight financing partners, and the budget was a 'horrendous' three hundred thousand euros. You have to run around the world for a really small budget. Everybody needs these domestic decisions. If they are delayed and not in place, you can't get international funding and then you have no production.

I had to cut the budget heavily as late as the editing stage. When you need to cut the budget, you have to make a decision, and of course you end up cutting your own salary.

Pohjola:

It was almost the same with *Marzia, My Friend*⁹ and *The Salesman of Happiness*¹⁰, which were both released theatrically in 2015. Both films were financed in 2013 at successive meetings. Domestic funding altogether was around €170,000 per film and the budgets¹¹ were reasonable, and it made sense to make them. Now, when I compare that to the budgets that we have to work with, it's half or two thirds of the amount. We've been told that the days when budgets were that high are gone, those were the old times, and they're not coming back. Of course, it makes everything much harder.

For example, we were pitching at the IDFA forum¹², and we just needed to get an answer from Finnish financiers before that event. I had received €50,000 less in production funding from the Finnish Film Foundation than I applied for. When you go to your co-producers and they see that you've got quite a small amount from your domestic financiers, they also offer a lower amount from their country. I may have a very interesting project that has international potential, but I can't get it launched.

Simonen:

For comparison, I'm working with a Swedish project that has over €100,000 for development. It had a challenging shoot, but nothing exceptional. I'm also developing a Finnish film, and we want to shoot it in the Arab Emirates. We only received €12,000 in development funding, which doesn't cover the costs. The permits to shoot there alone will cost more than €10,000. How do I say to my director that you can't actually go to shoot in

⁹ *Marzia, My Friend* (*Marzia, ystäväni*, 2015), directed by Kirsi Mattila, is the story of a young Afghan woman and her dreams of love, freedom and a job.

¹⁰ *The Salesmen of Happiness* (*Onnelliset*, 2015) follows the director Wille Hyvönen as he searches for happiness in his own life.

¹¹ The final budget for *Marzia* was €314,000 and for *Salesman* €425,000.

¹² Financing forum for documentaries organised in connection with IDFA, the International Documentary Film Festival of Amsterdam.

the Arab Emirates? I can send you over there to take photos! The application explained that we needed to do that one shoot in order to know if we had a film, so why didn't the financiers award enough money, when they really appreciated the proposal? I applied for the money that I needed, and not a cent more. I already invested my own salary, of course, as I always do.

While it might be supposed that producers will always want more money for their productions, and that the nature of their jobs focuses their attention on problems, the financial situation for documentary producers in Finland compares unfavourably with those in neighbouring countries, as was suggested in Chapter 3. In addition, budgets for documentaries produced without support from national film institutes are far lower.

It seems, in budgetary terms at least, there is evidence to support the claim that the 1990s and 2000s were a Golden Age for Finnish documentaries, and that this age has now passed. Contemporary producers feel that they live in the remnants of the ecosystem that brought that Golden Age about, which in turn tests the bonds of trust between the different actors within the contemporary version of that ecosystem.

Pohjola:

There is no trust. I tell the Film Foundation why this film needs what it needs. The Foundation then only gives a little more than half of what I asked for, but you still have to provide outputs for the money.

Toivoniemi:

It begs the question, why do we need a producer community? Do the financiers, who sit here making decisions and calculations, know better? What type of a game is that?

Pohjola:

When they give you money, but not as much as you ask for, the answer might be that if you are a good producer, you should then refuse to take it. But it doesn't work like that. If you have a project that you have been developing for three years, especially if it has some production funding, and you have the option to quit or take the money offered and just try, you take the latter option.

Simonen:

You try to shoot something with which you might get some more money. This is still a production that we have to do and try to sell, and bring it to audiences, not forgetting that we have something to say that we believe in, for God's sake!

Toivoniemi:

You should say no. But if they are giving us some money, of course we'll take it. We have administration costs that have to be met, whatever happens.

These concerns over realising a project on an inadequate budget already start at one of the main sticking points for producers, which is the development phase of a film. In earlier times the whole process was simpler. Producers negotiated with three financiers (Finnish Film Foundation, AVEK and YLE) and received quick decisions about production support often directly. Although development support was also occasionally issued, it was not entirely essential for production to commence. The producer can use development money in principle to prepare a project for production, to test access to contributors and locations, and to test the project's premise. In practice, development money is used for shooting. Nowadays, the financing process is more complicated and takes place in several phases, which often do not correspond to the pace of real-world production schedules and can cause a serious delay. As a consequence, projects collapse. Often producers have to apply for development money several times for

the same project. This can obviously be very frustrating for producers, and the development phase has become a difficult and important area to negotiate:

Tuurna:

In earlier times it was easier. I produced Anu Kuivalainen's film *Aranda*¹³. It came to us from another production company. The director was very experienced. I called various financiers and said we need some development money to show you how we'll proceed with this project. Within a couple of weeks, I got answers from every financier. They were not large amounts, but we boarded the ship *Aranda* and used the development money to shoot. Now I have two young filmmakers making short 30-minute documentary films. They have already been in development for two years.

Simonen:

Earlier you would have received a small amount of development funding, and then you would have gone into production much earlier. But then came the era when you had to show ready-filmed material to financiers in order to receive development money. The result was less production money and more development funding so that you could actually use it to shoot a demo. At the same time there were crises at YLE,¹⁴ and we shot a lot of films using only development funding from the Film Foundation. You had already got most of your budget, with pretty much all the funding coming from the Film Foundation, before the commencement of 'production'.

Toivoniemi:

¹³ *Aranda* (2011) is a film about a marine research vessel working in the Baltic Sea.

¹⁴ The Finnish parliament considered new legislation for public broadcasting for several years. During that time YLE's financing fell behind. Also, the amount of pre-purchased documentaries was heavily cut down.

The first documentaries I produced received twice or even three times more development money in the beginning, even though the shape of the film wasn't really clear. It provided the opportunity to find out what the documentary was about, and gave the directors access to really create something extraordinary.

Tuurna:

Earlier we had larger sums of development money. I remember, for instance, with *Hilton!*¹⁵ we received a good level of development money. When I discussed the project with YLE, I said that we had shot 80 or 90 per cent of the film, and now we wanted an agreement about pre-buying it. We got a good deal, it didn't matter when we signed the contract. At that time, it was easy for a production company to take a risk. We could safely invest our own money in production when we knew that the financiers wanted it. I don't think this is something that happens nowadays.

Simonen:

You would have a letter of commitment, and you could work with your other funding. This is something you can't trust at the moment. It is a big change right now, because it is typical that you develop things for two years, without really knowing whether it'll go further.

Toivoniemi:

I think the development process is now, creatively, really different. I feel that I no longer know how to develop projects. I'm made to play a game and be strategic, so it ends up that my only goal is to get the film into production. That is not the job I want to do. I want to

¹⁵ *Hilton!* (2013), directed by Virpi Suutari, is a film about youngsters living in an apartment house called Hilton.

create something that's worth making.

Pohjola:

Earlier the amount for development was usually €25,000 or €30,000. With a sum like that you can actually do something. Nowadays, the amounts for developing documentaries are getting smaller. I remember that for one documentary, I applied for €12,000 and received €6,500. You can't really do anything with that. And you are also blocked from applying again for a certain period of time.

Simonen:

You can't apply before you report on the earlier money, and sometimes you're in-between those applications. So that means you can't apply when you actually need the money.

Pohjola:

There is a tendency from the financiers to test the waters. In the earlier era, when you started to really work on something and received development money, you were aiming to go into production. The train was moving, and you knew where you were and what the financier wanted. Now I can't trust that the process will continue because the funding might suddenly stop.

In this discussion there seems to be a common and strongly shared experience that there has been an earlier version of a sustaining ecosystem or an environment characterised by equilibrium, where the number of producers – that is, competitors – was limited. There was a certain amount of money, enough to develop productions and enough to produce, enough to sustain producers and enough to create a community. While aspects of this narrative ring true, we need to approach such projections with a measure of critical interrogation. Certainly, there were fewer producers and less competition in the

Golden Age, but the total amount invested in documentaries was not substantially larger (see Chapters 2 and 3). At the same time, these producers seem to feel there is a disturbance or imbalance in the ecosystem at present, especially compared to the earlier situation. During that earlier period a producer could trust that serious and well-prepared projects would proceed from script grant to development support, and then to production in the majority of, if not, all cases. Budgets were also reasonable, although not necessarily bigger, but expenses were lower. Overheads were better, so producers could survive by producing documentaries.

Now, producers are seeking to strengthen the continuity of funding by asking for more commitment from financiers to ensure that once a film does receive financing, for instance for development, this would signal a credible financing path towards completing the project. From the producer's point of view, this kind of stable financing system would provide an ideal environment for making documentary films. To contrast the present with an idealised past, the producers claim that this environment existed in an earlier era of documentary financing, in 'the good old days' when relationships between different constituents of the ecosystem were more informal and flexible, and where commitment to documentary film was on a much more established and respectful level. Discussion of such concerns has only intensified in the 2010s and 2020s.

<H2>Changing regulations</H2>

When this discussion took place in 2017, there were wide-ranging and active debates about the position and organisation of SES. Although the new legislation concerning SES came into effect later, at the beginning of 2019, certain changes in the practices had already happened. Many filmmakers suggested that SES had become more bureaucratic, with the level of interaction the SES consultants had with filmmakers decreasing. Here, concerns were expressed about the new film consultants, who now had less

time to discuss and consult with the applicants.

Pohjola:

The things that have been happening in the last two years have a lot to do with individuals and personnel changes. The new financiers or commissioning editors are not necessarily very well trained by the previous ones, who had their own vision and strategy. There has been no continuity from the previous personnel to the present ones. There have been changes in the Film Foundation, and they have wanted to try their own way of giving money out. Now it turns out that producers in the field and filmmakers in general are not very satisfied or pleased with the new system, and many stakeholders are complaining about the new situation, but I don't think they will change it back.

Simonen:

Everybody is super scared and cautious. I feel that these changes are totally unnecessary, but they still happened. There was a debate at the government level as to whether the Film Foundation, the Film Archive and so forth, were going to be combined.¹⁶ All this has made the decision-makers much more cautious.

Toivoniemi:

There's the governmental-institutional part, and then there's the personal level between applicants and consultants. But there is also a middle management level that has changed as well. Management should talk to the commissioning editors and consultants, who should talk to the applicants. They should have straight communication. Institutions are in the

¹⁶ This refers to a plan to combine the Finnish Film Foundation, the Finnish Film Archive and possibly the Art Council into one agency. The reason was the general administrative principle that no state institutions should have fewer than 100 workers. This did not happen, partly because these institutions and filmmakers did not support it.

midst of change, they need strong and strict management to dictate the way things are run, to indicate that these are the rules, these are the reasons, these are the strategies. At the moment this communication is lacking.

Simonen:

Now everything is slower, because you can only get an answer from the Film Foundation four times a year. It makes the system much more inflexible. Earlier, I spoke with the financiers at least once a month. We old farts remember the time when you sent in your application, and there were meetings every month and a half. You didn't have to wait a long time, and you didn't have the paperwork deadlines we have now. I can understand that when there's more work you need to have some kind of structure, I totally get it. But now there is no discussion. When you get a 'no', you don't have any idea why.¹⁷ And when you don't know whether it's going to be 'yes' or 'no', it makes it difficult to gather the rest of the financing.

Here, the producers clearly have the impression, based on personal experience, that earlier communication was far more transparent and uncomplicated and the decisions could be very much foreseen, leading to far less complicated planning for each production.

Simonen:

Basically, you never got a 'no', because you knew beforehand, so you wouldn't even apply.

¹⁷ This has changed. Now (2022), you can have discussions with the support handler and enquire about the reasons for a rejection after the decision has been made. During the process, from submitting the application to the final decision, you are not allowed to contact the support handler.

Pohjola:

And we knew why the ‘no’ came. But now we get an email saying ‘after comparing all the applications for this meeting, your project didn’t manage to go through, but the situation might be different in the next meeting’. This means that we have absolutely no idea why we didn’t get the funding. The Media¹⁸ Development Funding has a very good points-based system. They simply show you’ve got these points, and for this reason you didn’t get the money. For instance, a treatment might not have been ready. It’s very good to know that for the future of the project.¹⁹

Toivoniemi:

It’s also a fair use of money. They have no rules that you can’t have a meeting and talk about the quota and other things. They do pre-selections. It’s a much bigger industry, but they still want to organise a call or other forms of communication.

Simonen:

I had a ‘no’ from the Danish Film Institute, and you get an actual list of what works and what doesn’t. I thought that was fair and I really understood the rationale; such and such was not good enough, and that’s it. In Denmark or Sweden, the industry is so small that everybody really knows each other. They have transparency by talking to each other. And there are more upcoming young people, there’s always a new generation, and it takes a few films to get them established. Yet, we’re not getting that at the moment in Finland.

¹⁸ The EU MEDIA Programme for supporting audiovisual industry and culture.

¹⁹ The point system is clear and transparent. It is also used in the EU (MEDIA, Eurimages) and in several countries – for instance, in Estonia.

Toivoniemi:

What has changed at the Film Foundation is understanding the concrete process of production work, and how the industry and market works. Some of the earlier consultants and commissioning editors had better knowledge and gave straighter and quicker answers. They knew that even if you got a 'no', it was much more convenient to get it six weeks in advance than six weeks later. It reflects badly on your project when you don't get an answer for over a year, even if it's a good project. Our timeline is much quicker than the institutional calendar, because we need to do business daily, and weekly, and monthly, but at the Film Foundation they do business four times a year.

Pohjola:

When we look back, there was openness, discussion and trust.

Toivoniemi:

The whole filmmaking atmosphere, I think, is important. Financiers are really the most important co-operators.

Simonen:

Co-operators, yes. That's what it felt at the time, it was a co-operation, it was something that we did together.

Tuurna:

Sometimes you had all the financiers at the same table, and you could talk about the project, and you could get an answer from everybody at the same time. Not nowadays, it's impossible to do it now.

Simonen:

Now the only place where you can meet the Finnish financiers is when you go to the international forums, for instance the Nordisk Forum, and book a meeting with them over there. You can try to get them together if you're trying to run a minority co-production, as the filmmaker will also be present.

The comments emphasise a strong sense of uncertainty and discontinuity that cannot only be seen as a question of resistance to change. As the networks between different players are very limited in this small ecosystem, the role of any individual actor can be important, in both a positive and negative sense. Decisions made regarding individual projects, and the decisions concerning regulations, are easily personalised, which is exemplified in how the panellists emphasise their personal relationships with financiers throughout this discussion. These relationships have represented a form of social capital for producers that they could exploit in securing production development. The earlier systems and practices of funding were easier to navigate and manage. This was complemented by the established presence on the panel of the producers, who provided a more informal sense of connection between creative aspirations and industry co-ordination. Yet, according to the above conversation, the transformation from flexible and unofficial procedures to a stricter and more bureaucratic system has been perceived as a threat to the professional existence of the producers.

On the other hand, this discussion also raises questions over the desirability of the older system, which was based on a more personal and limited network of contacts. How open and transparent can a system like that be, and to what extent might it exclude new entrants from entering the documentary ecosystem? How difficult would it be to gain entry from outside when the network is premised on established contacts? If the networks are very small and based on personal relationships, they are open to the risk of corruption. Viewed from the outside, the flexibility of the older system could be considered a form of cronyism. Simultaneously, it is worth asking how to establish a balanced documentary ecosystem that

renews itself without endangering its most established figures.

<H2>Technological transformations</H2>

The technology facilitating documentary production, like all media technology, has been transformed over the past two decades. Now, all phases of production, including cinematography, editing and sound work, are conducted digitally, as are distribution and the screening of content. Cameras, as well as other equipment, have been in a constant state of change for some years, and new technology, including VR, AR and 360-degree cameras, as well as lightweight equipment, offer new possibilities for documentary filmmakers. But how has that change affected work practices, and the general business of producing documentary films? To what extent has technological change also affected the ecosystemic structure of documentary filmmaking in Finland?

Simonen:

For me this question of technology is totally absurd. Nothing that was promised has ever materialised. When I started out in documentary film, I was still a visual artist, and I was waiting for a digital revolution that would make everything cheap and accessible to everybody, so that we could do stuff, even with our mobile phones. To this day, as I'm doing production work, this digital revolution does not matter. Things cost more and processes are more difficult. Every time when I'm sort of happy – that now we have a reasonable camera, that price to quality ratio is good – I talk with the Director of Photography (DOP), and they want the next thing and then the next. So, it's a never-ending story. It's like consumerism all over, and it's always something that I can't say no to because we need to keep up. I just wish technology would be cheap, fast and easy, but for

me every single step that we take with it is a challenge. Anyhow, basically my production budget looks about the same as it did in the era of film. It hasn't changed the slightest bit.

Tuurna:

We have a current production that was filmed in Columbia.²⁰ There are two Finnish directors who actually live there, and they have plenty of camera and sound equipment, because it is so cheap. It makes things easier, or should I say, possible.

Pohjola:

My relationship with technology is slightly more optimistic. We don't own cameras in our production company. That's a decision that I made very early on. We own our editing system of course, but we don't want to own anything else because there are so many different options, and the director and cinematographer always have the freedom to choose what to rent. I am happy that there are so many options; it's a sign that things are moving forward.

Toivoniemi:

Unlike you we do own some equipment. We do have a camera, we do have lenses and we do have a full sound kit. We have invested in these because in some documentaries it's the only way to lower the risk, and also a way to ensure that we don't lose moments that are crucial for the film. And that has paid off quite a bit, and actually made a difference.

Pohjola:

Regarding technology, things have been running quite smoothly. The delivery lists are

²⁰ *Columbia in My Arms* (2020), directed by Jenni Kivistö and Jussi Rastas.

complex, but even when I started producing, it's always been like that. I haven't experienced a big change because I came in so late, so that's the way it has been. We deliver different formats and versions to different partners.

Simonen:

It was the same when it was tape material. Now a positive aspect of the technology is that we can just send files; that's the best development that has happened. Technical requirements have increased and continue to do so. We have to show more and more material, more completed stuff every time.

Pohjola:

I realise that I'm not a very technical producer, I'm never going to be, and I am not very interested in that either, so I can hire people to take care of that. I have one person at the production company who takes care of technical issues. Emails come saying that we need this and that in different formats, and I don't always understand what they are asking for. I just forward the email to this person and she takes care of it, which is perfect.

Toivoniemi:

I am interested in technology, how it works and what it makes possible, what it costs and how to use it as a resource in itself, but also as a tool for different types of storytelling. It's fascinating to me, because it's changing production quite a bit, especially in documentaries. It can open new doors for filmmaking and storytelling. You can make some types of film with really cheap and minimal technology. This changes things. For instance, people are nowadays so used to cameras and they are acutely aware that they are filmed. If anyone in the film is not making some sort of contact with the camera, the director or someone else behind the camera, it feels staged. If a character looked at the

camera ten years ago, that would be a problem and was cut out. Now everything is just raw material in the editing room.

Toivoniemi's case is an illustrative example of how changes in technology transform social behaviour (awareness of cameras in everyday life) but also the aesthetics and style of filmmaking, especially in documentary production. Previously, some Finnish documentary filmmakers would aspire to an illusion of the fourth wall akin to fiction, as if cameras were not present in these social situations. Characters were asked not to look at the camera, but this has now all changed to reflect the ways documentary subjects perceive their role in the diegesis to be almost automatically mediated, in a way that gestures to much contemporary academic scholarship (see Grainge 2011) about the pervasive presence of mediation.

As technology continues to constantly develop, with 3D, i-docs, web docs, interactive docs, VR, AR, 360-degree material and other new forms challenging Finnish producers, how do they react to these new inventions and formats?

Simonen:

I don't work with very new technology like VR or 3D at all.

Pohjola:

I'm not doing VR or 3D either, but we just produced our first documentary that has an element of interactivity. It's also going to be a feature film and a TV series. The rise of the documentary series genre is a huge change as well.

Simonen:

Interactive documentaries and short formats for other platforms are two different things, but very often they are included as part of the same package. In the last documentary

development forum I moderated in Bali, pretty much every financier or buyer would ask: ‘could this be a short format, could this be a web series or would it be suitable for online platform distribution?’ So basically, whatever you do, you have to have your extra content for different online platforms. Sometimes that can be planned throughout the project, but sometimes you just have to make it up in order to get that bigger fish that you want. I’m sure there are great projects that can really work in these new modes, but a lot of this discussion remains rather aspirational. It’s not yet fully integrated into the thinking of the filmmakers, nor the producers.

The discussion showcases generational differences in documentary production, reflecting the fact that on the panel there are representatives from two generations. Simonen and Tuurna were born in the 1960s and Pohjola and Toivoniemi in the 1980s. Simonen and Tuurna began their careers during the period when film (the tangible material, not the concept) was prevalent, and they were both already established in the business in the 1990s when the Golden Age of Finnish documentaries started. As a consequence, their attitude towards new technology is clearly more reserved in comparison to those who began their careers later. This is exemplified by the most positive comments on the possibilities of technology emerging from Toivoniemi, who is also the youngest of the panellists.

It is also obvious that new formats and inventions are having a minimal role in the ecosystem and culture of Finnish documentary film, at least for now. Simultaneously, the Finnish game industry is growing and expanding internationally, both businesswise and creatively. However, there does not seem to be any interaction between the game industry and documentary filmmaking; at least, there is no hint of such collaborations in this panel discussion.

<H2>Changing distribution and markets</H2>

In this section, we focus on distribution from the producer's point of view, starting with cinema and television distribution, moving to grass-root level distribution, and finally concentrating on global digital distribution markets. Traditionally, television distribution has been the most important channel for Finnish documentaries. While documentaries have been distributed in cinemas in Finland, even if cinema audiences have not necessarily been sizeable, this mode of distribution has had a massive level of importance from a cultural point of view. Cinema distribution creates a vital space for publicity, especially as reviews for theatrically distributed Finnish documentary films are much more likely to appear in newspapers and other media than are documentaries exhibited through a single TV broadcast. The status the theatrical platform provides Finnish documentary cinema and the attention garnered through newspaper reviews has been an important part of the phenomena of the Golden Age of Finnish documentary, especially as feature-length documentaries have been a flagship for Finnish documentary culture.

Simonen:

Cinema distribution for feature-length documentaries has been very limited, but YLE broadcasts a lot of feature-length documentaries. That is why Finland is a desirable partner for co-productions. Currently, there are five or so TV broadcasters in Europe, and fewer than ten slots that produce or broadcast feature-length documentaries. The amount that they can take in annually is really limited. You can, of course, try cinema distribution. We are again really lucky in Finland, in that we can actually do that to a reasonable level, and that we don't lose too much money when we distribute a film theatrically. We might even get Swedish cinema distribution, as they might not be deterred by us just because we speak Finnish. In the 2000s, I felt that we were on the brink of doing all kinds of cinema events,

there were a lot of things happening, and somehow that just faded away. Doc Lounge²¹ is a fantastic initiative, especially in Scandinavia, but it never really got on in Finland. The project accepts films from elsewhere, but looks down on Finnish content, I would say.

I've also done distribution myself as a producer. At Kinotar at the end of 1990s and early 2000s, I sent out VHS cassettes and later DVDs very successfully, including Mika Taanila's²² stuff. I went to the post office and sent a box of DVDs around the world. There was a niche audience who wanted to see this really experimental stuff that Mika did at the time. It actually paid half of my salary at the time, when I did have a salary, which is fantastic. It was such a specific approach, but in general, nowadays it is really tough to push through the clutter because the markets are super competitive.

Toivoniemi:

The market is so fragmented, as short fiction films and documentaries are super niche products. Even if there is a successful market, it is so saturated. You have to distribute everything bit by bit, but after six or seven years you may still get some revenue, which may be small but still relevant. However, what production company can afford to be that interested in all those small revenues? If you have someone who sells and calls prospective clients full time, the revenues will be ten times bigger, because it takes time and personal contact to establish these synergies.

Simonen:

Monetising from VOD and SVOD is demanding, although everybody tries to do it. You

²¹ Doc Lounge is an event that screens documentaries in restaurants. Doc Lounge Nights started in Denmark, and are now also organised in Helsinki and other large Finnish cities.

²² Mika Taanila is a filmmaker and visual artist, well known outside Finland for his experimental films. Taanila is one of the participants in the documentary film directors' panel featured in this book.

need to land on a platform that already has content on it. If you're sending out films one by one, it's really a lot of work. Our earnings from SVOD platforms in the last three years were somewhere around two hundred euros.

Toivoniemi:

I've been thinking about this massive digital change that no one can really predict. We have been talking about it ever since I went to film school, it was already on the cards then, and we still don't have a funding model for it.

Pohjola:

Broadcasters say 'we want this story, film, documentary and the TV series', but the financiers can't handle the project. It's nearly impossible to fund projects that are more than just one film.

Despite the pervasive sense of scepticism from the panel over the feasibility of documentary production in an age of proliferating digital production and distribution, several possibilities exist for financing new digital forms and formats. For example, AVEK provides the CreaDemo, CreMa and DigiDemo support forms. In addition, Business Finland has also devoted funds to supporting a new digital audiovisual industry. However, support is often dedicated to pilot projects, which does not benefit documentary producers who rely on the traditional film financing system. The latter has been very slow to develop appropriate support structures for these new forms. As a consequence, there are basically two different fields, cultures and ecosystems at play, both of which operate according to their own logic and speed: the traditional film industry and the IT industry. Both systems would benefit from an interface between them, but that is currently elusive, as appropriate policies and infrastructural developments continue to be lacking.

With digital distribution potentially opening up new markets for Finnish documentary content, wider transformations are becoming more apparent in the ways Finnish documentary producers profile their audiences. Previously, a small language area was both a protection and a restriction for media-makers. At this time, there was self-evident demand for Finnish-speaking documentaries, even as language acted as an obstacle to Finnish films reaching international markets. While almost all Finns understand English and are more and more used to international supply, the Finnish language does not protect the market as effectively as before.

However, streaming services are showing more material from small language areas nowadays, although in large language areas they often come with the option of viewing a dubbed version. Nordic noir and other Nordic television series are good examples of small language area content that succeeds internationally, but these developments have not expanded into non-English-speaking documentaries, indicating that they may get lost in the proliferation of content on major international platforms like Netflix, HBO and others.

Hence, despite these opportunities in new forms of distribution, traditional broadcasting is still the cornerstone of the documentary ecosystem in Finland, in Europe and globally. As the market is changing rapidly, Finland's documentary ecosystem is increasingly keen to be part of the EU's markets. Finnish financiers also demand that international financing be included in projects. Such arrangements mean bigger budgets, but also a lot more work for producers. So far the system has worked, and several domestic production companies from different countries work together, so that each is able to obtain financing from their domestic financiers for co-produced films. Sometimes funding can come from several separate market areas and the films are then sold separately to each country. However, this might not work anymore in the near future, because there is a strong tendency towards concentration in larger continental and even global markets, where rights are sold together. As a consequence, separate national or smaller market areas might disappear. There are two reasons for this. First, the competition from large international streaming companies like Netflix, HBO, Amazon and Disney means that small-scale

productions are increasingly marginalised. Second, the general policy of the EU, which aims to establish a digital common market inside the Union, means that national enclaves and subsidy policies may undergo substantial transformation. What will this single European market mean for national documentary film production, especially from the point of view of small nations and language areas? How do Finnish documentary producers see this situation?

Simonen:

There's this massive number of new platforms, but it doesn't mean that there's any new money for documentary production. Of course, there is Netflix and Amazon, and we know that they can occasionally save someone's career, but Netflix and Amazon are not very interested in regular Finnish productions. While the Finnish language protects us against the big players like Amazon and Netflix, we also don't expect them to be running out and paying us a million dollars for our domestic Finnish-language documentaries. So, we producers end up with the same players as before – the public broadcasters – and they want more with less money.

Toivoniemi:

Most of the biggest players consider the Nordic territory as homogeneous. What I've been facing, not that much in the documentary side but in the fiction side, is that the old way of financing by trying to get something from every country is already in the past. Those national territories are already taken. If you are making one good deal with one distributor, it's most likely to be for a wide area – for instance, the old Nordic territories. Perhaps that's due to the probability that the film will find a bigger audience there with more established players.

Simonen:

What I have encountered quite a lot is that broadcasters want films for wide audiences, and demand rights for large territories, because they are all preparing for the single European market²³. They all want to have their own platforms to be as strong and lucrative as possible. They can ask whatever they want, but they don't pay what they used to pay. Broadcasters ask for more rights, VOD rights, they ask for exclusivity, and you have to negotiate your rights at each stage. EU legislation is changing, and soon the whole of Europe will be considered as one single market in the field of audiovisual production. Earlier, buyers and television companies used to ask only for certain territories, but now they ask VOD for the whole of Europe or the world on an exclusive basis. And they do not pay any more for that. I haven't heard whether the national or European film institutes have any kind of strategy for this situation. How are they going to deal with it? What is going to happen to production in this single market?

The film institutes are not going to vanish or disappear overnight. What I see as a positive thing here is that public funding for co-productions can actually be stronger. And it should be stronger, because then they would come from those territories that we actually use. Film institutes need to emphasise that we need this type of artistic input from these countries, and we are willing to pay for that, but at the moment the regulations in different countries demand these local territorial distribution patterns.

Toivoniemi:

We are the weird kid on the block when compared to the large territories. I think that the basic Finnish financing model feels quite unsafe to be honest.

²³ See <<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/infographs/ict/bloc-4.html>>.

Toivoniemi:

Finland has very few people, and the industry is very small. We have the resources to protect it so it's not a huge, massively complicated matter. It doesn't have anything to do with language whatsoever.

As may be evident from this discussion, the smallness of the domestic film culture and the unusual qualities of the Finnish language have protected Finnish producers. At the same time, Finnish audiences continue to consume international and especially Anglo-American films and TV programmes, including documentaries. Finns are also very used to reading subtitles, as dubbing has never been mainstreamed in this context. Thus, language by itself is not sufficient to protect the market anymore and more investment and support is required to make sure Finnish documentaries are able to survive in a cluttered digital marketplace.

While there has been strong lobbying for Finnish fiction films to become international throughout the past few decades, this success has been limited, especially compared to Sweden and Denmark. In comparison, Finnish documentaries had already achieved a significant reputation and won awards at international festivals in the 1990s and early 2000s. As Finnish documentary producers were involved in many international co-productions, it was often said that Finnish documentaries were more international than Finnish fiction films. Our panellists, especially the older ones, have experienced this phase in the Finnish documentary culture, but now there seems to be an even stronger ecosystemic change from a national market to a wide European, or even a global, market. This provides a major challenge for Finnish documentary producers who are still reliant on 'traditional' domestic funding systems.

<H2>Future challenges for Finnish producers</H2>

Considering how this discussion with Finnish producers indicates a rupture in Finnish documentary culture, how do they see the future of Finnish documentary film? What kind of possibilities are there in the future for documentary production in this small country and language area? How do producers react to the changes in the ecosystem as they relate to their own and their company's future?

Pohjola:

We have a new strategy for my company that concentrates more on fiction and TV series, not documentaries. This is due to financial reasons, as it's difficult to get docs financed and to get any salary, or any returns for the production company. I want to continue producing documentaries, hopefully one per year or one every second year, but the business cannot solely rely on that, as it would not lead anywhere. I want to do it because it's fun, interesting and satisfying, and I really like the documentary community, and the festivals and the financing forums, and the people. But it's an expensive hobby. I refuse to quit it, but I'm not counting on documentaries for the company's survival.

Tuurna:

It's not nice to hear that, but I have to confess that during the last year I have been thinking of, maybe not cutting off documentaries, but at least that we should only do one documentary a year, a big one; so, not so many, and not with young filmmakers. It's not what we actually want to do but it's all so uncertain, and it takes so long to develop them.

Toivoniemi:

We have revised a strategy based on decisions we received from the financiers that still includes documentaries,²⁴ so far. A really good question to ask is, 'what type of film are

²⁴ Tuffi Films has been very successful with fiction, which is increasingly their primary concentration.

you making, and for what audience?' We are aiming for a younger audience, from 7 years old up to young adults. That is an important part of our company strategy, because we think they are the future. What is the next generation actually doing? What will they want to watch, and how will they pay for that, or will they? It's also a matter of finding new ways of storytelling.

The business model should envisage films or content that have a long shelf life, that aren't disposable. At least I would like to think that. That was one of the reasons to have a company in the first place: to own the rights and to make things that will have a longer-term future. Another aim would be to sell as much as possible, in order to have some income for the years that are not that successful. Because you can't release highly successful films every year, that's impossible.

Simonen:

We needed a company strategy that we followed for productions. There are things that we planned but didn't do because the funding did not go as planned. The rate of gathering funding is falling behind, and therefore what will happen within a year or even the next five years is difficult to say.

Pohjola:

It helps to have a model that involves more financiers than the traditional model. We are now doing a documentary series²⁵ for Viaplay, a commercial platform that operates a completely different approach than the usual financiers. With a single documentary, collecting money from twenty-five small sources is not sustainable business, but with a

²⁵ Pohjola is referring to the doc series *EVA* (dir. Mikko Peltonen, 2019) about boxer Eva Wahlström, which was made exclusively for Viaplay.

series, it works.

Tuurna:

At least from the broadcaster's point of view. We don't have as many documentary series in Finland yet. There are obviously successful international documentary series on Netflix, and we know that the audience loves them. So, we need to find out how to finance and make them in Finland.

Toivoniemi:

It's interesting what's happening now with series, in terms of good-quality drama and documentaries. So many series are dealing with pretty similar topics. And then we also have Netflix, but is Netflix only a bubble? I don't know how it is for the next generation or how things will change, the single market system or the more commercial market orientated system?

Simonen:

Right now, we are coming to the end of the year, so it is always a personal crisis for me: what to do when I grow up? This is a moment when I find myself thinking about my strategy, keeping up with producing documentary films and doing all these other things that I do on the side. I watch films for festivals and film institutions, I consult on productions and I tutor at different workshops. Maybe it frees up my appetite for documentaries. But it also means I find it difficult to get involved in new productions. I will be working with documentaries in the future, but it might be that I'll find a totally, completely different way to work with them. I'm not much of an entrepreneur, so I'm not

sure if this was ever the right thing for me. But what else could I have done?²⁶

Toivoniemi:

Why am I investing a lot of time and energy in documentary production? It's been going on like this for five years. Does this make any sense? Is this even a job? Or is this just a lifestyle? I feel that we can't really change the reality of the situation, I just need to give myself that illusion. We have some other values that make this line of work important; it's not a question of creating a really successful business model – that's one goal – but my goal is something else.

In addition to general anxiety over the prospects of a sustainable career in documentary production, the panellists express concern over the move to a European single market and the implications this commercial market has for their films. As the single market means that domestic productions would need to compete in an open commercial market area, which is the principle of the EU, the limitations of small national film culture may become even more explicit. So far, culture has been exempted from these unification principles and individual EU countries have been able to protect their domestic industries. Yet, to combine and co-ordinate these two approaches will be a real challenge in the future.

This discussion also extends into questions over the identity of the Finnish documentary producer. The panellists repeatedly state that they are not engaged in doing business, at least not good business. Instead, their motivation comes from a love of documentaries and the important content of the films. Intriguingly, this professes that producers also identify as artists, a notion more obviously connected with directors. Yet, despite this personal connection, there is a clear tendency to move away from documentary production. Considering that these documentary producers are all well established, experienced and successful, such indications are extremely concerning. While producing fiction, both cinema and TV

²⁶ Ulla Simonen was nominated as the director of AVEK and took up the post on 1 March 2019.

series, is nowadays (2022) even more lucrative, documentaries are no longer as fashionable as they used to be. For these producers the earlier financing system and practices were more stable, as they could trust that most of their projects would progress from ideation to final production. Budgets and overheads appeared more reasonable than today, although expenses were also lower.

On the other hand, from the financiers' point of view the system works much like it should do in an open market economy system. With open, constant competition, the best ideas, filmmakers and producers will triumph. Through this process, the very best films are sieved in stages, with institutions financing them one film at a time. Thus, the economic and artistic risk of failure is transferred as much as possible to the producer. The principle underlying this approach is that an open field of filmmakers suggests projects to the producers, who pick up the best ones and develop them before approaching financiers. From all these projects, only a small number receive development support, with which the producer shoots some material and continues other development work. Again, only some of these developed projects gets final production support, as a project can be terminated at every step if there are more interesting or better competitive projects. From the producers' point of view, this system can be very frustrating, as reflected in the panel conversation.

For directors, the situation can be even more frustrating (see the next chapter). Directors are absolutely necessary for the system, as they are the creative force behind everything. At the same time, they are the lowest factor in the food chain. They refine the ideas and films, but they are also totally dependent on producers, who, in turn, are totally dependent on financiers. From the directors' point of view there are several obstacles and gatekeepers who complicate their creative process. Producers are the first set of gatekeepers, as they choose only the best projects according to their experience, taste and economic realism. Acceptance by a producer foreshadows the possibility of receiving financing for the project. The next set of gatekeepers are the financiers and even the distributors, who can be considered as a third level of gatekeepers. While this systemic structure may appear constrictive of creative freedom, it can also act

as a necessary reality check in a media ecosystem where there is too much competition and risks are taken too often, resulting in circumstances where the producers are no longer able to make a living by producing documentaries. This is where the ecosystem breaks down, as producers are forced to leave the business and start focusing on fiction and TV series instead.

<H1>Chapter 6: Directors' Panel</H1>

<H2>Introduction</H2>

The following chapter features a roundtable panel discussion conducted with a representative group of Finnish documentary directors to outline and excavate some of the most pressing issues in Finnish documentary film culture. The session took place on 10 September 2019 and was recorded on the premises of the Finnish Film Foundation.

This chapter intends to capture the ecosystemic transformations in Finnish documentary culture (including patterns of evolution and punctured equilibria) from the perspective of documentary directors. Here, the focus is on the ways these directors, as artistically minded creatives and committed socio-political commentators, act and react in the ecosystem and how they face the challenges of a changing global media environment. As documentary authors, all the panellists espouse an independent and complex point of view on these transformations and contribute to a perception of the richness of the Finnish documentary film culture. The following alphabetical line-up of directors represents a cross-section of industrial, stylistic and thematic approaches.

Participants

Mia Halme (born 1968) made her first short documentary film, *Erotica Vivica* (1999), at film school. She has concentrated on matters of human relations and family life in films such as *Big Boy* (*Iso poika*, 2007), which follows her own son as he starts school. *Forever Yours* (*Ikuisesti sinun*, 2011) is a strong and emotionally convincing documentary about children taken into custody, while *Every Other Couple* (2017)

tells the stories of divorced couples. Her latest film, *People We Come Across* (*Missä tiet kohtaavat*, 2021), deals with a vaccine study in which Finnish tourists visiting Benin take part. At the same time, the film ponders the relationships between North and South, Europe and Africa.

Anu Kuivalainen (born 1964) started her career in 1994 with a small personal documentary film, *Christmas in the Distance* (*Orpojen joulu*), which was a festival hit. She has directed a wide range of films including *A Black Cat on the Snow* (*Musta kissa lumihangella*, 1999), also a festival hit) about an ex-criminal mother and her small daughter; *Aranda* (2011), following life on a research vessel; *Into the Forest I Go* (*Sielunmetsä*, 2017), an essay film about forests; and *Still into You* (*Lauluja rakkaudesta*, 2020), dealing with old people's love stories. Kuivalainen usually eschews 'subject-driven' films, instead making films that are focused on atmosphere.

Petteri Saario (born 1961) is well known for his nature films. He is interested in the connection between humanity and nature, and has directed TV series and shorts but also feature-length creative documentaries. His latest films include a portrait of an environmental activist, *The Activist* (2017), and the feature-length documentary *Vedenneito* (*Maiden of the Lake*, 2019), which gained theatrical distribution. He has a middle-sized production company and is able to afford to continuously employ four people, a luxury for most independent directors. Due to his preference on genre and the size of his company, he has a novel take on the industry that is distinct from his colleagues.

Virpi Suutari (born 1967) broke through with the film *Sin – A Documentary on Daily Offences* (1996), made in partnership with Susanna Helke. The duo directed a number of other films together, including *Saippukauppiiaan sunnuntai* (*Soapdealer's Sunday*, 1998), *Valkoinen taivas* (*The White Sky*, 1998) and the very successful *The Idle Ones* (2001), about unemployed youngsters in northern Finland. Later Suutari continued her career alone, directing, among other films, *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* (2010), *Garden Lovers* (2013), *Hilton! – Here for Life* (2013), *Entrepreneur* (2018) and *Aalto* (*Aalto – Architect*

of *Emotions* (2020).] Suutari studied photography, which influenced her earlier films heavily. She freely explores the borderline between factual and fictional storytelling. She is not interested in subject-driven films, but rather the atmosphere of the story.

Mika Taanila (born 1965) combines the traditions of documentary filmmaking and experimental film. Taanila started his career by making music videos, but in 1999 his film *Futuro – A New Stance for Tomorrow* won the main prize at the Tampere Short Film Festival. His films often deal with themes of technology and the future, like *RoboCup99 – We Have a Dream* (2000) and *The Future Is Not What It Used to Be* (2002). His latest feature-length documentary, *Atomin paluu (Return of the Atom, 2015)*, directed with Jussi Eerola, chronicles the long construction process of the Olkiluoto nuclear power plant. Taanila is also an award-winning visual artist. His works have been exhibited at the Documenta in Kassel and the Venice Biennale, among others. According to him, he divides his time equally between making films and visual art.

John Webster's (born 1967) documentary *Vacuum-Cleaner Salesmen* (1993), a humorous film about salesmen in the middle of the 1990s economic depression, has a strong cult reputation. He continued with films *Tissit ja tango (Don't Tell Daddy, 1994)*, *Sukkien euroelämää (Losing It, 1999)* and *Sen edestään löytää (What Comes Around, 2005)*. Since these initial productions, he has concentrated on films about climate change, with *Recipes for Disaster* (2008) and *Tulevilla rannoilla (Little Yellow Boots, 2017)*. His last film is *Donner – Private* (2021), an intimate portrait of Jörn Donner. John Webster explains that he makes films with strong central characters who always find themselves in an environment they are unfamiliar with, or who encounter unexpected circumstances.

<H2>Ideation</H2>

This first section of the panel discussion deals with the mysterious, almost mythical process of ideation. It ponders some of the following questions, central to documentary studies: where do documentary filmmakers get their ideas from? To what extent are these ideas fully formed film outlines? How do these ideas develop over a long collaborative process? What role does the documentary ‘author’ hold in this ongoing collaborative process? The initial stages of the discussion, therefore, evaluate whether documentary production in the Finnish documentary ecosystem is an author-led process, and to what extent documentary directors are logistical directors rather than aesthetic auteurs.

Another theme addressed in this section is the nature of the discourse and the cultural/artistic context from which documentary ideas emanate. Even the most spontaneous wellspring of subconscious artistic inspiration will have a grounding in some form of ‘habitus’ or pre-existing sensibility.

One side to this theme is the deliberate pursuit of a political or aesthetic end: directors may have a body of work behind them that propels them forwards, or they may have developed aesthetic methods that they are especially wedded to. They might have particular views on how a documentary should operate within Finnish society.

What brings these ideas together is the way the documentary director sees themselves – as an expressive individual, as a cog in an industrial process, as a citizen in a state with specific communication abilities and privileges. In any case, their self-perception reveals much about both their role in the Finnish documentary ecosystem and the constitution of this ecosystem, as witnessed in their responses to a question concerning the origins of their ideas:

Anu Kuivalainen:

I always start out from strong personal concern, if something is just bothering me, and I can't ignore it. This can be fear, or something that I need to think about and process further. Concern over the subject will lead me to think about how to turn it into a film.

Mika Taanila:

I'm inspired or puzzled by something concrete. Robots playing football; reading a sports or science article about that and then thinking about what this means, then slowly building towards the idea that this could be a film. It all starts from observing or noticing something concrete. I like the fact that documentary filmmaking, or any filmmaking for that matter, is the art of the concrete. Something that you shoot with the camera from the real world and not your imagination.

Petteri Saario:

I used to work as a journalist at the Finnish Broadcasting Company in a special investigative unit focusing on environmental issues. In my work at the weekly current affairs programme *Environment News*, the process went from the brain to the heart, but that was often quite tiring and nowadays I try to find an alternative way, from the heart to the brain. When you have made hundreds of reports and portraits about fact-oriented subjects and realised that it doesn't influence others as much as you wish, you try to find other ways of telling stories or sharing emotions. So from my point of view, I just try to find interesting, important, inspiring ways to tell stories and share emotions with the audience.

Virpi Suutari:

One thing that I've learned over the years is that it's really important to have that inner motive, as filmmaking processes are so long. They might take at least two years, maybe even more.

Sometimes I try to do something where I have been commissioned by somebody else. I do some research and pre-shooting and realise I can make the film, but something is lacking. There needs

to be something that is disturbing, something that is bothering me. There has to be an inner motive, and sometimes you don't even know what it actually is. But something is tempting you or throwing you towards something.

I was a journalist in my earlier life, where I had to make observations of topical concerns dictated by the publisher. Why I'm not working as a journalist, but as a creative filmmaker, is to find a surprising angle on what I observe.

Mia Halme:

How do I get my ideas? It depends on the specific film. Usually, they come from my own life or people near me. The current film I'm working on came from the news. Initially, I'm passionate and happy if I feel something creative is going on.

John Webster:

Choosing the subject is not just about choosing what I will do next. It's about how I am going to spend the next three to four years of my life. So, whatever subject you choose, you know that it has to really resonate on a personal level, as there's going to be a lot of hardships and frustrations. You need to have a view of the world inside you, or something that you want to say about the world that you cannot express in any other way. And so you try and narrow that thing down, what you want to say, through film.

Taanila:

What is very often said about painting and sculpture, especially traditional painting, is that every painting is a self-portrait of the artist, even if it's a landscape or an abstract. I really believe that this also applies to documentary filmmaking. Even if we make films about social issues and spend a long time doing it honestly, then it's bound to be a self-portrait in a quite strange way.

Anu Kuivalainen, Mika Taanila and Virpi Suutari suggest that the ideation for documentary films emerges from an artistic, individual point of view. For them, personal interest and investment in a topic motivates them to develop or take a project on board, as it will occupy a substantial amount of their time, as John Webster suggests. Petteri Saario expresses a slightly different viewpoint based on a career spent on environmental reports and documentaries produced in specific institutional contexts. He signals the desire to break free from some of these constraints – which, as an independent producer, he has succeeded in doing.

Quite often, for instance, in some textbooks (Aaltonen 2018A: 34–35) there are two categories that concern the origin of an idea or topic. It either comes from the author/artist, who has an inner need to express something, or there is an external need, a request for a certain topic or film, as is often the case in industrial or social processes. Our panellists clearly represent the first approach. As Virpi Suutari puts it, it's difficult for her to make commissioned films. However, slight differences arise in the discourse between our panel members. Most of the panellists think there is an intrinsic idea, something that emerges as an experiential kernel and provides the 'inner motive', as Suutari puts it, for further exploration. This might be something puzzling, as with Mika Taanila, or something that 'bothers' the director, as with Anu Kuivalainen.

It is fascinating to observe how the different comments modulate across the directors' responses. Halme switches back and forth between a keen eye on the emerging form and the need to preserve an artistic soul. Petteri Saario and John Webster talk in terms of industrial practice in established genres, but both also talk about extending towards the personal and the affective. These distinctions between artistic and industrial practice continue in the next section on development, and further elaborate on the distinctive viewpoints each of the directors holds. How do those who seek to begin their work from a personalised position encounter the industrial frameworks they have to work through? To what extent are those who

are from the very beginning thinking about ideas in the context of industrial practice able to be flexible throughout the development period, especially in relation to constraints established by industrial structures?

<H2>Development</H2>

This section moves from the ideation stage to the development stage, which is especially vital to understand, as this is where the ideas of the artist first begin to confront and be confronted by industrial and market elements. It might be the case, as with Petteri Saario and John Webster, that this is already internalised in the director's mind, but in other cases industry realities form an existential crisis point at which the embryonic project either survives or dies. The documentary form is not alone in having to grapple with this moment – all popular forms of cultural production have to play a Bourdieuan game where cultural and economic capital are balanced against each other. Depending on the ecosystemic specifics of particular film cultures, the results can lead to very different traditions of making and consuming cultural artefacts.

In the Finnish documentary ecology, the evolutionary period of the 1990s and 2000s has been characterised as a stable Golden Age. These two decades have allowed sufficient time for entrenched practices to form, and the aesthetic affordances of these practices to become a tradition of style. This may be described as the 'accessible art' style of Finnish documentary film that flourished in the era of the funding triangle and at the height of the public service broadcast-based European co-production system. But lately, the dynamics of this ecosystem have begun to change, as chronicled in Chapter 2 and the panel discussions with financiers and producers, resulting in challenges to the stability of the system, which in turn endangers both practices and aesthetic traditions. This can also be seen in the development phase of productions. The next set of responses begins from an analysis of the development stage. What are the

first practical steps after ideation? Who do you initially approach with an idea? How do your intentions encounter established artistic and commercial practices? How does the fluctuating stability of the industry influence the development of your project?

Webster:

If I'd known back in 1988 when I was starting film school how much writing filmmaking involves, I mean, it's endless, treatments and synopses, versions of treatments. There's so much writing. So, the first step would be to contact AVEK or the Finnish Film Foundation for funding a script. The Film Foundation gives 1,600 euros for a documentary script, which is absolutely ridiculous. But the rate is based on the assumption that it's a month's work.

Kuivalainen:

It used to be more money. It used to be six thousand.

Saario:

Even ten thousand!

Webster:

It's ridiculous, you can't research and develop a film with so little – to start on the first of September and work all through September and have a script by October first. It actually takes several months – I would say, three months minimum – to have some sort of a script and treatment in place.

Saario:

I always put a lot of effort into research. Actually, I have two permanent researchers because of all of our research and development. Every single production takes a minimum of three years. From

three to five, six years. If you want to get enough resources for making a good film or documentary series, you really have to do a lot of research work beforehand. There is no bypass. You just have to do that. In Finland it's nearly impossible to get any money for that kind of work. So, it's a risky business in our case. But I have done this work for thirty years.

Suutari:

But are you financing it with just your business, or are you applying for grants?

Saario:

Both.

Kuivalainen:

What about art grants, that kind of stuff?

Saario:

Well, this is a complicated question. Of course, when you have a company with four workers, you have to have cash flow, but we do many things.

Suutari:

The usual way to start research work is to apply to a foundation. Whether it's the cultural foundations, AVEK or the Finnish Film Foundation.

You are not going to get a lot, but you can apply for a grant for one year, or three years. If you're lucky, you get that. But it's always tough in the beginning and you still have to conduct your own research. I think what is more problematic nowadays than it was ten years ago, or twenty years ago, is that the financiers want demos at an earlier and earlier stage.

Kuivalainen:

So you have to use your script money to make the demo.

Suutari:

Yes, and that is quite problematic. Because even before they have given any money, they want you to have something to show them.

Webster:

Over the years I've spent a lot of money on cameras and stuff just because you need to shoot something and you can't get any money if you haven't shot anything.

Suutari:

It is very important to have equipment if you have a small company and you are trying to move forward. This Marxist idea of having the tools of production and the means of production is quite important.

At this point in the conversation, the panel rehearses territory that is a familiar discussion point for Finnish documentary directors. It is one thing to ideate, research and elaborate them into full scripts, but such processes are invariably challenged by the limitations of the ecosystem. On one hand, the quality of these ideas needs to be calibrated to leverage finance according to the standards set by the funding organisations (thus evidencing normative values and standards for Finnish documentary culture). On the other hand, this work phase is supposed to be done on a freelance basis, where directors are expected to support themselves even as they apply for minimum-wage-level support from the funding organisations. Such challenges indicate that the ecosystem does not provide sufficient support for creatives, a notion that underlines the

precarious position of documentary directors, and also gestures at the idea that being a director is not a 'real job'.

It is interesting to note that in a system that seems to have been a haven for creative documentary since the mid-1990s, questions of finance dominate the conversation. In contrast to the smooth narrative of the Golden Age, the processes by which ideation moves to research, scriptwriting and further on to development seems to be the kind of labour conducted as part of a freelance or, at best, the gig economy, where directors receive minimal and often only temporary financial support for their work. As this work is not sufficiently supported, these directors have to be active in carving out their own means of support in the wider ecosystem. In many ways, this means that they have already, to some extent, internalised the role of a producer – that is, someone who cannot only focus on creative or innovative ideas, but who has to constantly pay attention to how such ideas can be financed and, by extension, how they fit with prevailing expectations and standards in the film culture.

These discussions continue with the panel exploring the delicate moment when ideas become stories, or even tangible project proposals. What is the process from progressing an idea from an instinct to actualising it as a story?

Suutari:

I think one should, at the earliest stage, let the financiers know that you are working on a certain subject. Even though you don't have a script, let them know that it's going to land on their table.

Kuivalainen:

Nowadays you have to have the script to apply for the script money. You have to know so much at the stage that you go to the financiers. You can't just say to them, 'I have this little idea which I would like to develop, can I get some money?' Nobody will give it to you.

Suutari:

You have to be a little bit like a fiction writer in the beginning. You dream about and imagine your film. You might do a little bit of research, get a little bit of meat on the bones, and write something that looks like a script of sorts.

Webster:

With international projects, you have to sell the idea of what the film is. On a smaller scale this is also true in Finland too, but you don't have to prepare as much material. It's been my experience with just about every project I've worked on that there's this one person who is the key to the whole thing. Somebody who really shares your passion that this story needs to be told; that person becomes your guide and opens doors for you. I think a lot of the research, at least for me, has been trying to find that person.

Saario:

Yeah, it's the same with me.

Suutari's strategy of announcing a project to the financiers is risky, and perhaps works best in a small nation film culture context, where actors know each other personally and an ethos of social trust is a given. At least in larger, more marketised documentary cultures there is the risk that alerting the funders to your idea may lead to it being appropriated and disseminated to the funders' preferred supplier. This is not very common in Finnish documentary culture, but can still be possible. The more considerable risk is that another competitor, a filmmaker, may steal the idea. By discussing it with the financier, they are made aware that someone is working on the topic before someone else suggests it.

Yet, the differing perspectives emerging from the panel regarding how much contact should and can be had with financiers, and what level of support can be expected, are a sign of the shifting nature of the evolution of the Finnish documentary ecosystem. On one hand, the idea must be protected. On the other, the funding system's changing attitude towards 'proof of concept' militates against the organic development of an idea. It is also interesting to note the mention of scripting processes for fiction film – where the narrative is to some extent fully known well before the production period begins – being applied to documentary. The need to envision the structure and narrative of a documentary could, of course, have a significant effect on the form of the documentaries produced.

A sense of consensus is established here, suggesting that the research and development process has changed, or at least the funding structure that supports it has changed. In this encounter, the directors also seem to be pointing back to a specific time and set of arrangements where the process was much more responsive, but also provided the monetary resources required to maintain sustainable working patterns. Despite changes to the flow of funding, the directors seem intent to stay with their established practices, despite the difficulties such persistence presents for creative practice in the contemporary circumstances. At times there is even a hint of nostalgia for a recent past that might possibly return, when idea and script development was better funded.

Research and scriptwriting is almost always financed with grants directed to individuals, in this case to scriptwriters and directors. When the script is ready – and sometimes even earlier – directors approach production companies and producers. If the production company accepts the project, the company can apply for project development support from financiers. This support can include the salary of the director, dramaturgical support for rewriting the script and resources to carry out preliminary filming. It is symptomatic that directors hardly mention the role of producers when talking about research and development. This is an indication of how the processes coalesce in the minds of the directors. It also reflects how directors experience their own role: from their perspective, they are the initiators in the process.

The new reality is more complex, yet the importance of the development phase has increased dramatically. There can now be several financing decisions providing support for development, and after each it is still possible that they might lead to the discontinuation of a project. Such uncertainty only increases the precarity of directors, who may end up working on a project for years and then see it dissolve. However, Taanila provides a slightly different take, coming at these questions from a micro-perspective, as he produces experimental documentaries with very small budgets. His comments also move the discussion further to explore the relationship between the director and producer:

Taanila:

What happens after the initial idea before applying for money is a discussion with the producer. And sometimes there is no producer. I've made many works that are very cheap to make, or on a very low budget, where there is no need for traditional film production. As I'm producing it myself, it's my inner struggle to evaluate whether it's worth carrying on or trying to apply for money. In general, dialogue and discussion with the producer is important at the beginning. To have somebody, even though they might not bring new ideas, to bounce your ideas with.

Kuivalainen:

I would confidently say that this function could also be fulfilled by other directors. We have created a collective group called the Elefantti ('Elephant') group¹, and have been sharing our ideas for years and years, although we are not as active nowadays. We started by consulting with each other: 'I have this very small idea, could it lead to anything?' And then going to a producer.

Webster:

¹ The Elefantti group consists of well-known Finnish documentary filmmakers Georg Grotenfeldt, Timo Korhonen, Visa Koiso-Kanttila, Anu Kuivalainen and John Webster.

We founded Elefantti in 2001 because all of us had bad experiences of working with production companies. Our idea was we'd get together and then we'd hire the producer, someone who had a similar energy to us. We never actually had the same producer working for us all, but we did always share the projects at different stages. So, at first it would be the idea, then the finished script, followed by the rough cut or rushes and so on. We even shared an office. Now, actually four of us are sharing an office again. It's good just to have that, because it's very lonely making documentaries.

Kuivalainen:

Loneliness is a big thing.

As more directors set up their own companies in search of greater control of the development and filmmaking processes, Elefantti is a collective that pools resources. This does not include the funding process itself, as such collectives have no capital except for the capital individual companies invest themselves, but such co-operation is important editorially in developing the idea into a finished film. While there have been examples of similar collectives in the Finnish documentary ecosystem before, especially in the more political environment of the 1970s, these have often been relatively unsuccessful and have not sustained collaboration on film projects.

<H2>Directors and producers</H2>

The main 'partnership' that the documentary process relies on is the one between the director and the producer, as these two roles have very different functions in the documentary ecosystem. In general, the director ideates and develops the content of the film to fit their personal preoccupations and motivations,

and the producer navigates the complexity of the ecosystem, acting as an intermediary between the artistic side and the economic necessities of the film industry:

Suutari:

I'm currently directing a big-budget documentary film² and hired myself as producer, which has worked wonderfully. I've had a very difficult experience with producers and production companies. I think this is a more common phenomenon right now, that more of us are forming our small companies. We either produce or we hire producers for our productions, so we can decide on the money and the process.

Webster:

Right now I'm developing a project with Yellow Film & TV, who are, like, the biggest independent in the Nordic countries. So far it's been wonderful. I'm working with Marko Talli, who is very professional as a producer. He's really good with the story that I'm also passionate about. What's great is because they are such a big production company, I don't have to spend a year scrounging to get the money to shoot even a little bit. I can just fast-forward to okay, let's go and shoot.

If Elefantti is one solution to the lack of dialogue and collegial support that directors face in the new situation, then Webster's proposal to work with companies primarily known for their fiction and television serial work is another. This is an interesting echo of Suutari's earlier allusion to the working processes of fiction film being introduced into the documentary environment in Finland. Accordingly, the small scope of the market poses consistent problems for all types of film productions, but these are exacerbated in the case of documentary production where any substantial return on personal investment in

² *Aalto – Architect of Emotions* (2020).

the production is very unlikely. For the directors, economic problems are a fundamental challenge they face, especially if they try to traverse the boundary between a creative director and a managerial producer.

The relationship between directors and producers, as outlined here, shows how close the two roles are. The development process, and the successful transition of the idea to the screen, is dependent on the 'producer' function, whether that role is held by the director or a producer hired on a bespoke basis for a specific production or working permanently in a production company. Some directors have to (or are forced to) internalise the producer's role, especially in their need to negotiate and contract funding for idea development. But it is also obvious from the discussion that directors still require a protective layer between themselves as guardians of an idea and the financiers. This is where the significance of the producer lies, and the stakes are high. This multilayered approach to key roles in the ecosystem may explain how the autonomy of an artist meets the metrics of the market. In between are the exigencies of the documentary form. Whatever the case, such dynamics often comprise a fraught relationship from the director's point of view.

It's worth noting here how producers are viewed by directors, as opposed to how directors are viewed by producers, as chronicled in the previous chapter. While directors have internalised some aspects of the producer role, there are still some aspects that directors prefer to distance themselves from, some activities that are either logistically or psychologically unsuited to the director role. Such complexities lead to the search for practitioners who can navigate both roles as a 'creative producer', but who, at least according to this conversation, seem to be rare. Clearly, the choice of producer is key, with the ability to know the difference between shielding the director and misleading them being of utmost importance. The conversation starts with a question as to how directors see their relationship with producers:

Suutari:

Very complicated. Good and bad, let's put it that way.

Webster:

I've just spent two and a half years in a legal battle with my former producer.

Kuivalainen:

I don't have such complicated dealings, as I have worked with two producers and really enjoyed working with them, the last of whom produced two of my films. When I introduced my recent film about old people³ to him, he didn't feel that it was not quite his cup of tea. So, I opened my own company and considered producing it myself. But as it was going to be an international film, I didn't have the skills to produce it. So, I hired a producer, who has been very professional, and creative as a producer.

Webster:

In general I think it's really important to have a good producer, it's a key creative element. It's exactly like Mika Taanila said, it should be someone you can bounce ideas off. And the relationship shouldn't be where you're afraid of saying something because that person will shoot it down.

Kuivalainen:

I have a feeling we are making the film together.

Webster:

Yeah, that's what it should be like.

³ *Lauluja rakkaudesta (Still into You, 2020)*. Five different couples create an image of old age and love, with all its different facets. Selected for competition at Nordisk Panorama 2020.

This exchange is interesting in that the directors, in terms of the dynamics of the conversation, all share an understanding of the vital supportive and creative role of the producer. They often feel the temptation to act as director-producers, but they also see the benefit of separating the logistical and other production work from the artistic work. The discussion also gestures towards a tension between a loss of control and a loss of opportunity. If the chemistry between the director and the producer is not correct, it is often up to the director to manage this relationship. If the dynamics work out as well as possible, the producer can be an essential means for the director to position their film in relation to both the artistic and financial pressures generated by the ecosystem. However, sometimes these negotiations can be challenging, as indicated by the panel's conflicted response to outlining how directors and producers interact on the issue of project budgets:

Suutari:

I think it's very important when you are pitching your project internationally that you have that duo of director and producer on the platform for the sake of influencing the broadcasters and the pre-buyers. The producer is the one they rely on. One of the main problems with many producers – I've worked with many different producers, good and bad ones – is a lack of transparency in the process. I think I'm a very sensible person. I think I can talk honestly to the producer, and I want the producer to talk honestly to me and to be transparent about money. I understand that there has to be a certain amount of the budget, for example, that has to stay in the firm in order to keep the firm going. Yet, most producers are very secretive about the budget and how the money is spent.

Kuivalainen:

But are we not allowed to see the budget?

Suutari:

We are allowed to see a little part of it. There has to be more transparency in the process. Because as a director, you tell the producer where you are going, where your script is, what stage you are in. But the producers don't necessarily reciprocate. And you have to make the decisions on how to spend the money; in order to do so, you have to understand the process and how the money is spent.

Kuivalainen:

That's true! I agree that this is generally the case, even though I have had good experiences with producers.

Suutari:

There is perhaps some paranoia in the minds of the producers.

Kuivalainen:

This is a problem. Also concerning marketing and all those other things, you don't know what they are actually doing.

Halme:

Or are they doing anything?

Suutari:

Exactly! And that's when the paranoia goes both ways.

Kuivalainen:

What's important is that producers form a buffer between the directors and the financiers. I don't want to hear everything the financiers have to say, and it's good to have a producer there who is

talking with them and listening to them, protecting me and telling me the good points, but not telling everything. Because this little artist inside me, as you said (to Halme), could be destroyed.

Saario:

I know my producer quite well, because I have produced most of my own documentaries. I have also worked for many independent production houses in Finland, and for YLE. I haven't had this kind of experience. But I have heard this very often, after one or two beers.

Suutari:

There are some terrible cases, really.

The discussion highlights conflicts in the way directors perceive producers, and vice versa, this time on the issue of trust. The rhetoric implies that producers are profligate and duplicitous, and that the problem is widespread. It is interesting that only one specific case of serious financial mishandling or lack of transparency is raised, which for legal reasons is not reproduced here. So these comments attest to instances that are on the edge of impropriety or incompetence, rather than deliberate fraud. It remains the case that producers are a necessary evil; they can protect the 'little artist' from the financier, but they can also trick the artist. Moreover, producers also seem to be viewed, by some directors at least, as a separate category in terms of their connection to moral questions such as the public good. The producers are business people, not creatives, at least according to most of our directors. In media ecology terms, this can be seen as two species co-existing within an environment, with a relationship that is co-dependent, although the relationship might well be asymmetrical in its power balance.

To evaluate these asymmetries further, the discussion continues around the lack of transparency from producers regarding the use of funds, and the usual reasons given of the need for producer secrecy, as well as the vexed matter of the 'commercial confidentiality' of the producers' own companies:

Suutari:

The question of public money is relevant because it's not the firm's money. It's a collection of money from different public sources. And I think sometimes there is a temptation in those firms to use it, a little bit, you know ...

Webster:

I absolutely agree, transparency in finance is absolutely crucial. The argument that it's a business secret is ridiculous, because it's all public funding. I think it's more an emotional thing, because without transparency, you won't have the feeling that you're making this film together. You share what you're doing, and the producer shares where we are with the finances and what's our cash flow, etc., and it should proceed like that. A professional director should also be very interested in where one is with the finances and understand when the producer says 'we can't have a scene with a hundred horsemen'. A lot of the good creative discussions are to do with how money is spent: 'okay, we really can't do this ... could we do this in some other way?' And then it's a discussion. It has to be a discussion.

Saario:

I think it's impossible to make a good documentary film without trust between the director and the producer. I also look for transparency; it's a crucial thing.

Halme:

Trust takes time. I was so happy when I made the decision to place my current film⁴ outside my own company. I really tried to act simply as a director, that I'm just the artist, and I don't want to

⁴ *People We Come Across* (2021).

know anything more. But this did not work out, as part of me wants to know about the budget, the timetable, what's being planned and in which time frame. It took a really long time before me and my current producer started to trust each other. The producer was irritated that I was asking things or that I was trying to say 'I think we should do this and this'. Her response was: 'you really should start trusting me'. Now it's fine, we are in flow, and we are working really well together. But it took half a year.

Suutari:

That is really a field that we, as the producers and directors, should work on. How to communicate; there is such a lack of communication in our field.

In the most optimal circumstances the dynamic between the director and producer is not only about securing and managing funding, but can lead to a truly collaborative spirit and joint mission to fulfil both artistic and financial requirements. Yet, these seem to be the exceptions to the rule, with the lack of trust coming through as a dominant theme. For the directors, the tension lies between the need for project control and distancing the creative impulse from the technicalities of financial issues. While producers are often a necessary shield for the director, the panel recounts disastrous circumstances and examples of a lack of transparency, where some producers are accused of using production cash flow to support their production companies instead of spending the money on the screen. Yet, what are the causes of this lack of trust?

Halme:

Everybody's paid so badly.

Suutari:

Production companies are trying to hide their own money problems ...

Webster:

Or cash flow between projects. Companies can have several simultaneous projects, as well as your project. If you just got the funding but there's this other one that really needs the money, then your money goes to that project first.

Kuivalainen:

This lack of trust also emerges when the film is finished; somehow producers disappear. I have THAT feeling because my latest films just weren't distributed very well. Perhaps it's because distribution doesn't really contribute money to the production company. It's very hard work to get money that way. I doubt if my producers have ever managed it. It's something that's really hard to get information about.

Webster:

I made three films with my previous producer and with two films our system worked very well. So, we co-produced the films ourselves and we would both be responsible fifty-fifty for any overspend. For any underspend and income, we would share the profits fifty-fifty. We also had transparency in bookkeeping. So, it wasn't just trust, but there was also a formula so I couldn't do something extravagant as a director and blow the budget; or I could, but then I'm responsible for it fifty-fifty, and I'll feel the pain as well. It worked really well until the point when I was no longer allowed to see the bookkeeping, and then that took two and a half years of legal wrangling to sort out. One has to wonder what are good reasons for not showing your business partner, with whom you share 50 per cent, the bookkeeping?

Suutari:

I had a similar experience.

From a director's perspective, the producer's priorities often conflict with their role as shepherds guiding the creative impetus driving their film. The realities of being a producer in this small nation environment means that they must juggle multiple projects, and it is understood that a certain level of cross-subsidisation is inevitable at times. Yet, while such concerns may arise on the level of production companies managing equity, when one production is prioritised over another, this can appear unfair to directors who have secured the funds for their projects in the first place and who have a more personalised sense of ownership than a producer juggling multiple projects. The director will prioritise their own project, but how do they deal with a producer's almost inevitable difference of emphasis across projects?

Taanila:

The time span for working on a project is important. I'm always impatient with projects and want to proceed very quickly, especially if there's a good flow to the work. One can get a little frustrated if the producer acts slower, for many different reasons. And that creates a situation; it's not distrust, but a feeling that matters could and should happen more rapidly.

Suutari:

Especially for documentary filmmaking. That urge to move onwards, it's real. Because you might have found the reality that you immediately want to start documenting.

Taanila:

Of course, there are rational, practical reasons for delaying. For example, if the production company is applying for money from the Film Foundation for three documentaries to be shot at the same time, the producer will inevitably put them in some order of preference, and your film might not be the first one. Nevertheless, you are more impatient than the producer.

Webster:

I think it's harder for the independent producers, who have to have several projects on at the same time. And they love them all as much as each other. And each director wants all the love from the producer.

Kuivalainen:

Directors stay with one of these projects for four years; it's all they have. But the producer can feel that you are too anxious all the time. They say: 'I can feel it, you're so anxious, don't be'. But I am! It's my film! And it's my only film at the moment. But still I would say that my producer and I are now – and we have been for the last few years – on the same side and we are friends.

Saario:

It's also a question of who carries the economic risk: the director or the producer. Because I'm both, I know that it's very complicated. In my case we also have very, very expensive camera equipment, because I do a lot of wildlife and underwater filming; we have a boat and everything. So, we really need quite a lot of money in order to carry on. And I have come to understand that nobody else is really willing to take the economic risk. So, the key question is if we can attract more money into this business.

The difference between Saario and the other members of the panel becomes clear at this point.

As indicated earlier, Saario is not only a director, but also a producer who owns and runs his own medium-sized company, which entails having several employees and a significant amount of his own equipment. This is in contrast to the other panel members, who are mainly sole traders with no, or limited, equipment of their own. While other panel members have also recently occupied this dual role, the company in question here sustains much of its activities by producing a wide range of wildlife and nature

programming that can be more commercially lucrative and stable than producing only artistic or creative documentaries. Such concerns emphasise the notion that in a small film culture ecosystem, the business side of film production is at best precarious unless it is supported by other media forms with more profitable and consistent revenue streams to exploit. Without this secure safety net, the director has to rely on the producer, resulting in uneven power dynamics.

Halme:

How to find a producer who is ready to take a risk for my film is an important question. Because I suspect they always want to be on safe ground. For example, when we started up our own company, it was the only possibility. I had to make two shooting trips to Africa and we only had a little bit of development money. As it was at our own risk, I know another company wouldn't have done that. I only went to the financiers when I already had something, and we knew this was going to be a film. That's a very big reason why we have our own companies, why we have our own equipment, and why we try to do producing, though it's really frustrating.

In summary, the relationship with the producer is the most important one for a director. The levels of trust are crucial, and directors understand the situation producers find themselves in, as many directors either work as both, or have internalised the producer role to some extent in their working life as a director. But problems still exist, especially around the differing worlds both directors and producers inhabit. The director must deliver a story with artistic merit, and/or a compelling narrative – something that will speak to their desire to communicate and the audience's desire to know. The director's present and future success relies on this ability and focus. From the director's perspective, the producer inhabits the other side of a boundary, where the realities of mercantile transaction and institutional politics often run contrary to the aims and processes of the filmmaking itself. There is a great degree of respect for the producer role, but some serious concerns about how that role is fulfilled in terms of creativity, transparency, equity, professionalism and competence.

<H2>Directors and financiers</H2>

As noted earlier, producers are often the layer that protects directors from financiers. But as we have already seen, many directors have either acted as producers at times, and/or have internalised the producer role in their professional identities as directors. How do directors view their relationship with financiers, and how do those views differ from the way producers view financiers? Is the directors' relationship with financiers to some extent mediated by producers? How much direct communication is there between financiers and directors?

Suutari:

When I started filmmaking, there was much more communication between the financiers and us. We talked, we met many times. Now, you send the papers into the system and then they send you a decision. Perhaps you will never get to meet the financiers. This is a very big problem, as documentary films are not made on paper, in the scripts. Some people are very good at writing, some are not. It's a very bad system.

Kuivalainen:

I haven't met with the financiers to discuss the film I'm making at the moment.

Saario:

There are too many players, too many independent companies in this small country. The financiers just don't have enough time. It's not their fault. It's a lack of money and resources.

Webster:

In general, I think we're very lucky with the financiers we have. They are knowledgeable, most of them are filmmakers with at least some experience, so one could have a pretty decent conversation with them. The problem is, one often doesn't get to have a decent conversation with them. I think it's very harmful in filmmaking, because we're filmmakers, we are not writers. And your work and the project can't be judged only based on what you write in your treatment.

Halme:

I have trouble meeting the financiers here in Finland, but then I go to international pitch meetings, where I do meet them. And then they are suddenly interested in my project, 'oh, that's what you're going to do!' Or when, for example, Danish TV says, 'I'm interested', then the Finnish financier follows this opinion.

Webster:

I think there's a difference between financiers from AVEK and the Finnish Film Foundation because the Finnish Film Foundation is directly under the control of the Ministry of Education. They're public servants, with all the bureaucracy and responsibility that comes with that.

Suutari:

I think it's good that the decision-makers at the Film Foundation have four-year terms, because obviously there are always some filmmakers who feel that they are left out and thus they will have another chance. But when it comes to YLE, or public broadcasting, the system is more problematic, as there might be one person who has a lot of power for a long period.

The nature of doing business in a small country is characterised by the likelihood that everyone within a given sector knows each other personally, or at least is aware of their work and reputations. While a positive aspect of the ecosystem is that the financing bodies, such as SES, change their personnel more

often so as to avoid favouritism, YLE employs the same decision-makers for permanent positions, in some cases for decades. In any case, established directors feel that they have lost the opportunity to describe and advocate their projects in detail and do not have enough access to the financiers.

These accounts clearly diverge from any simplistic notion of the Finnish documentary ecosystem being a smooth-running operation built solely on collaboration and knowledge-sharing. Directors compete for resources, and changes within the process by which resources are allocated affect their working environments, practices and their filmic output. The changing development process is reflected in some of the contradictions in the directors' positions. On one hand, directors want producers to take the lead in managing financiers, perhaps following the logical implications of the funding work flows and systems, but simultaneously they also want direct personal communication with financiers.

The next section develops some of these themes around access to financiers, and the financiers' abilities and dispositions. The panel raises a number of concerns, including the demeanour of the financiers, their practice of communication ('how they reply'), and their predilection for certain subjects, genres and approaches ('they're just subject-driven').

Webster:

These challenges are to do with government bureaucracy. Just like Petteri Saario said, there are too many production companies and too many applications. They've taken the line, which I don't agree with, that every project has to be treated equally.

Halme:

What, you don't agree?

Webster:

I don't agree with the policy that you have to give each one as much time, which means that there's not enough time to really discuss anything with anybody. And I don't see why, if they get a hundred applications, they don't shortlist thirty of them, and then from this meet with fifteen.

The number of production companies, and therefore the reason for the number of proposals, is clearly a problem, reflecting an inherent imbalance in this small nation documentary ecosystem. While there seems to be abundant creativity, the resources to support such practices – whether financial or bureaucratic – are not in place. Yet, some of the panellists identify other means to raise funds:

Saario:

When we talk about financiers, we tend to only discuss the Finnish Film Foundation, AVEK and the YLE. But there are many other financiers available, including ministries, lots of different funds, the European Union ... I don't only mean MEDIA⁵. We have two current productions funded by the European Union. We should all look in the mirror and try to find creative ways to build our business, because this is a co-operative sector, this is meant to be teamwork. I totally agree that everything must be very transparent, but whether we are directors, producers or financiers, we are all on the same side, in the same business. We can't solve this problem until we can get more resources into the business.

Suutari:

One problem with public funding is that if you are making a production for YLE, or if you are making a creative documentary, it's considered a journalistic product. And then you can't add

⁵ The MEDIA Programme of the EU supports the European film and audiovisual industries. It provides support for the development, promotion and distribution of European works in Europe and beyond.

private investment, especially from the sources you are filming. So, inside this country you can't be inventive with how to get more money.⁶

Taanila:

I get money for my work from the Film Foundation, AVEK, YLE, but also foundations like Kone, The Finnish Cultural Foundation and Kordelin Foundation. A little bit of money here and there, and Frame Contemporary Art Finland supports travel or moving-image installations in an international exhibition context. But the structure and the problems are the same. It's basically very anonymous; you send an application to Kordelin and you get a result. But there's no dialogue whatsoever. It used to be different, a very long time ago, in the late 1990s, early 2000s. Back then there was often dialogue with financiers.

The problems of the ecosystem from the directors' perspective are multifold and interconnected: lack of communication; lack of attention to the creative process; too many independent companies vying for the time and attention of the financiers at YLE, SES and AVEK; changes in attitude, legal position and practices, at SES in particular, about giving equal priority to all the film ideas submitted. In many ways, the problems are circular. There are too many applicants and not enough support from financiers, which in practice inhibits SES and other production consultants in their discussion of projects with applicants, which in turn means that directors have to work with production companies or set up their own to deal with these bureaucratic machinations, which then increases the total of players in the field. One way forward here would be a more effective shortlisting system, though that would inevitably raise questions about the decision-making process. Saario and Taanila wonder whether other funders should be sought out with greater enthusiasm, as perhaps directors have become too dependent on the YLE–AVEK–SES

⁶ YLE does not accept that the company or organisation that is the topic of the film is financing the film.

funding triangle. While YLE and AVEK still allow a personal advocacy approach, SES – the main funder for creative documentaries – has taken a more distant role.

So, as earlier, there is disquiet in the face of the gradual collapse of the funding triangle as directors wait for other forms of funding to emerge. The focus of the directors is on the films themselves, and due to this, there is a certain disassociation from the changing funding structures, despite the directors spending considerable time worrying about this level of detail, and hence involving the producer in the process.

After the financing decision has been made, there is even less communication between the director and financier during the shooting period. The next meaningful stage in the engagement between financiers and directors is the rough cut. The panel agrees that the rough-cut stage has changed over time.

Previously, it was an extension of a closer relationship with the financier, another example of ‘making the film together’. But that situation seems to have changed in recent years, with a growing distance between directors and financiers at this important stage.

There seems to be remarkable distrust between directors and financiers in this discourse.

Halme:

I feel that our producers are more professional than our financiers, who seem to learn as they work. When a new financier takes up a post, I’m not sure whether they are professional or whether they are just some producer who doesn’t have any other work.

For example, in the last few meetings I’ve had with a YLE financier, at least a third of that valuable time was devoted to discussing distribution; how distribution has changed. They seem to want to pass the problem to us. I know we also have to deal with it, but they have their monthly salary in

order to solve those things. That's their work. That's how I feel. That's why I say they should be more professional and then develop themselves in their profession.

Kuivalainen:

Yeah. I don't know how they are trained.

Saario:

I agree, but it's very difficult to be trained, because everything is changing so fast. I have worked for the Finnish Broadcasting Company for over ten years, and for me it's difficult to see things in terms of bad guys and good guys, with the producers as bad guys. I think most of them at least try to find the best possible way to solve everything. It's a complicated situation.

Webster:

But I think all public service television, everywhere and certainly in Europe, is under incredible pressure. And I do think that from within our companies we don't see the political pressure that a lot of the commissioners are under.

Suutari:

Isn't it kind of funny that a few years ago we wouldn't have even thought of making a film without YLE? But now, the mutual respect and the marriage between the Finnish Film Foundation and YLE is diminished. Nowadays we are wondering whether ...

Halme:

... they should have a divorce?

Suutari:

... do we need YLE?

This erosion of trust between financiers and directors comes through clearly in this panel. It leads to questions being asked about financiers' professional standards, but also a recognition that the system puts them in a difficult position. Such practices differ from one funding institution to another. Discussions with YLE depend on the specific person being dealt with there. At SES the changes to the commissioning editor's role also erode trust.⁷ Such concerns add to a developing theme: a once collaborative system is changing due to a number of circumstances. In terms of directors and financiers, communication is more strained, as financiers try to deal with a plethora of possible new entrants into the directorial array. This dilutes the traditional editorial role of financiers, whereby, traditionally, the directors' advocational pitches did not merely constitute a sales pitch but were one half of a creative discussion. It also increases the ecosystemic importance of the producer, who acts as a necessary managerial/bureaucratic liaison between these layers, but whose preoccupation with financial concerns can be challenging for the creative director. However, the directors continue to have faith in the triangle system and its funders, as alternatives have not yet emerged fully formed. For the time being directors are – in the main – tied to these funders and continue to struggle with existing in a context that is seemingly about to change but whose main players (AVEK/SES/YLE) are holding onto their power.

<H2>International finance</H2>

The problems that directors have with financiers are, in general, tied up with the problems that financiers themselves face in the digital financing landscape all over Europe. Public service broadcasters and

⁷ Even the title has changed from 'tuotantoneuvoja' (production advisor or consultant) to 'tukiesittelijä' (support referendary). However, SES continues to use 'film commissioner' as their English translation. See previous chapters and discussions with financiers and producers about this change.

government funders have lost audiences and political strength over the last twenty years, leading to inevitable reductions in the scope of available finance, although in Finland YLE has kept its audiences and position despite intense competition.

It has long been the practice in Finland to seek international financing for documentaries, but this has now become almost a necessity for most documentary projects. As this contributes added complexity to project financing, more problems are created in navigating the director–producer–financier relationship. In the following discussion, we see how directors negotiate the added pressure that the internationalisation of financing brings to their work. Included in this is a discussion of the importance of international finance, and the implications this has on the director’s work, either logistically, or aesthetically and editorially, as directors walk the line between addressing Finnish and international audiences.

Halme:

Our financiers and producers want us to be more international. They arrange a form of education for us, how to pitch, how to market, how to reveal our ideas ...

Webster:

The concerns with Finnish financing are taken to the next level with international financing. That is largely to do with the length of time that it takes to finance your project. It takes a fairly long time here in Finland, around eight months maybe? In international financing, you’re talking about at least a year and a half, maybe two, to finance a project. That has a huge implication on what kind of films are being made. You can’t make so many ‘fly on the wall’ documentaries, where you find great characters, and say ‘let’s go and let’s shoot this stuff’, unless you have your own big production company, your own equipment. So what happens is that more and more films are being made with dead people, because they’re not so unpredictable.

An essay film, a personal film, a film with the director as the main protagonist works well, because the director can start the film and be the protagonist the moment you get the financing. That's changed a lot of the kind of films that are being made, including this push towards international financing. It's just gotten worse and worse and you really have to think about what the project is you're making. For instance, can it really wait two years?

The other way to go about it is to make little demos, small and slightly longer clips, about the kind of film you want to make. You're selling the film by saying, 'Well, okay, kind of like that. You know. But it's not actually the film.'

Webster is known for making films featuring himself as the main figure. While such creative decisions have shaped his practice, financial considerations may have also been part of the reason why he stopped temporarily making observational films. The difficulty of raising money for unpredictably unfolding narratives, and the inherent work- and cash-flow advantages of having himself as the main character, have enabled demos and different cuts to be made for various broadcast and theatrical distribution formats, again indicating the ways creative decisions are, in one way or another, managed by ecosystemic constraints. Such concerns are amplified when the Finnish roots of these productions encounter international markets:

Suutari:

The Finnish language is a really big issue.

Saario:

Especially when we talk about documentaries for children. Because, in many countries, everything must be dubbed.

Kuivalainen:

Not only for children, but also for adults. A year ago, when I was pitching the film I'm now editing, everybody was really interested, but two things were brought up all the time: is it too poetic; do they speak Finnish? What finally happened was that financiers refused the deal, so it's a totally Finnish film now, and because of that we made a loss.

Saario:

During my career I have produced seven feature-length documentaries together with Germans. When you make a documentary film for the Finnish audience, you have to make a very different film than when you're making a version for a German audience. If you make, let's say, a 80 or 90 minute long, feature-length documentary for Finnish cinemas and Doc Project YLE broadcasting, you may have to recut it for a 45-minute slot in Germany. Or, alternatively, as when I spoke to the commissioning editor in Germany, he said, 'Okay, you can keep this 80-minute version but it will be broadcast at four o'clock in the morning.' Sometimes I really felt that I didn't recognise the film anymore. But making international versions is a way to get international money.

Suutari:

It's more difficult to sell a subject internationally if it's totally Finnish, and in the Finnish language. Still, it's very important that we also tell the stories of our own country. I received international money easily for the first time because I am doing a film about a dead person, about a famous Finnish architect. All the broadcasters were interested in it because of the theme.

Webster:

You made a film about Alvar Aalto, who is not a dead person. He's an immortal person.

Suutari:

Yeah, he's alive! Alive like Elvis, you know. Anyways, it was amazingly different from when I've been trying to market films – creative, poetic Finnish documentaries about ordinary Finnish people – in the Finnish language.

Kuivalainen:

International financiers can love the film, and they can be very inspiring with their encouragement, but in the final stage they say no. Because they can make those films in their own country.

Suutari:

There is a saying – life is too short for Finnish documentaries.

Internationalisation places substantial demands on these directors. Financiers and producers are increasingly placing directors under more pressure to work with international finance in order to sustain budget levels. But this has a knock-on effect on the production process, where the wait for funding can be doubled or trebled from around eight months to two years. This in turn affects the kind of films made, with observational and unfolding narratives sidelined in favour of films set firmly in the past, or essay films in which the director is the protagonist and can therefore control the story's flow. Added to this is the type of subject that will attract international funding. Finland is neither exotic nor important enough to gather international attention, and the language presents a problem in terms of bringing international funds and domestic money together in the same project budget. While domestic funding will often require a visible connection with Finland, especially through the use of the Finnish language, international co-production arrangements often lead to pressure towards multilingualism, or the use of English.

The particularities of the Finnish documentary production ecosystem seem to be currently asymmetrically balanced with the international documentary market, and perhaps require a new approach. Some of the

directors urge for the creation of a culture of co-production in Finland, as it is very expensive and time-consuming to seek international money, especially as such efforts can all be in vain if there are no adequate support structures. Even if these applications are successful, international co-production can have a drastic effect on the constitution of the final film. The directors' comments suggest that there is some mistrust between directors and financiers; that financiers use this new market system to control productions, pushing Finnish filmmakers towards co-productions because of their ability to leverage new funds. It is suggested that one way forward could be international financing, with Finnish financiers acting as minority financiers, but this brings us back to the problem of name recognition and language as most 'ordinary' Finnish subjects do not have sufficient cultural capital to attract majority funding from international sources. To navigate these complexities, the additional protective layer of a producer with international experience would be essential, but, as indicated earlier in the panel discussion, there are also substantial frictions in achieving these dynamics.

<H2>Distribution</H2>

Underlying the discussion of international finance, and leading on from discussions regarding the fraught director–producer–financier relationship, is the vexed question of distribution. In the recent past, the funding triangle also acted to a large extent as a distribution triangle, with YLE's broadcasting ensuring an audience, and SES funds requiring a cinematic release in many cases. While distribution and financing have always been connected, in the digital age they have collapsed into each other, with the decision of where and how to distribute being intimately connected with how much money can be raised for a specific project, and ultimately, what can be included within the specific film project.

The panel discussion starts with teasing out the role of distribution in the director's frame of reference, asking specifically about the kind of distribution directors prefer, and what the obstacles are to getting that type and level of distribution:

Suutari:

As directors, we start to think about distribution from the beginning of the process. Most of the production companies are very small, and they get tired along the way. They don't have enough energy at the end of the production process to think about distribution properly. And they don't start it early enough to really plan it. After the marathon of the production, when the film is finished and they are awaiting their next project, they don't have any cash flow.

Webster:

That is also because all the money that a film makes consists of upfront pre-sales. It's difficult to finance a Finnish film, but it's even more difficult to sell it afterwards. And the money you get is so small, if you're a small company, you'd rather put the effort into the next project, into the next film.

The challenge of securing appropriate distribution is a point of agreement for the panel. There is a clear tension here; on one hand, there is a need to consider distribution strategically from the very beginning, but all levels of the ecosystem – directors, producers, financiers – struggle with inadequate resources both in terms of money and time. Furthermore, different priorities shape responses to distribution challenges. For a producer or production company, the question is one of prioritising projects in their work flows. The panel's comments suggest that production companies do not afford appropriate support for the films once they are completed. From the directors' perspectives, this is insufficient, but they in turn do not have the time or the capital to organise distribution themselves. This does not mean that directors do not have a

very good idea of the kind of distribution they would like. Thus, the discussion moves to addressing the kind of distribution they would ideally like :

Kuivalainen:

Everything!

Suutari:

For example, right now, we're working on this architectural documentary. I'm in the editing process. Yesterday we had a big meeting about how to distribute the film. When to put it out theatrically, the timing of the broadcast on YLE, and in between, what are the ideal festivals where we would like to present our film to the rest of the world. And what blogs we should contact and where; how to make as much noise about the film and to sell it to Netflix or something. I think we should dream bigger, because these things are possible.

Webster:

It's become more like with fiction film, in that making the film is only half the job. Generating attention is now increasingly significant here. Film festivals receive thousands of applications and they have one or two people to watch them all. The horror. I was talking to a film director at CinemAmbiente, and he said they had 3,000 applications.

Saario:

3,400.

Webster:

They have two, three staff? And then the rest are interns. So, the festival directors will look through the list for any names they recognise, or any projects they recognise. They'll watch those films, and the rest will go to interns.

Kuivalainen:

That's true, the film festival submission system doesn't work.

The film festival system for documentaries has emerged over the last two decades, coinciding with the return of documentaries to the cinema. Until recently, distribution was mostly organised by national public broadcasters and film foundations, involving a complex network of co-operation across different funds and commissioning departments. At this point film festivals were 'shop windows' for broadcast work, and the awards won on the international circuit became an important part of the armature of the director (and producer), a way to prove quality and establish track records, important in turn for winning the next commission. Even as early as the 1990s – for example, at IDFA – film festivals became places where international broadcasting and film foundation financiers and commissioners would meet to discuss upcoming projects with a view to arranging co-production deals. This remains so today as more and more financing forums and development events have appeared:

Webster:

So actually, the real attraction of film festivals is the rough-cut labs, which are actually financing forums, and a big part of the financing forums is not just to get the money. It's to create the expectation of a work; get the film out on the radar.

Kuivalainen:

And all directors want a big audience. We are not targeting our films at our own ‘boxes’; we want to show them to people and communicate with the people. That’s the reason we are making the films. So, we want any distribution we can get.

Suutari:

Perhaps VOD platforms are the best place to get your film shown?

Kuivalainen:

We are already working towards that. I’m at the beginning of the editing stage at the moment, and I have discussed with my producer that we should really start the distribution process now, but she’s too busy.

Webster:

But it’s not enough to have it on VOD. It’s just going to drown there.

As public service broadcaster budgets have waned and the importance of securing a cinema release has grown, film festivals function as a quasi-distribution network. The significance of these networks has only strengthened, albeit in a much less predictable way than the older public service funding systems. Due to the effort required to have a film accepted at a festival and the general unpredictability of any impacts from such screenings, other forms of distribution are always being sought. This includes a variety of VOD services, and also ad hoc local theatrical distribution made up of event-based screenings arranged by the producers or directors themselves. All such attempts are there to try and sell the film, either directly (VOD), or through generating attention, which is especially vital in the saturated attention economy of contemporary film commerce, even for documentaries that may not subscribe to such categories explicitly.

Saario:

We could be more creative in this respect. With *Maiden of the Lake* we had conventional theatrical distribution, forty-nine copies in theatres in Finland. With *Aktivisti*⁸, which was selected for CinemAmbiente, we arranged a lot of our own event-based performances everywhere in Finland and other places that were quite successful.

Webster:

Domestic theatrical does pretty well for Finnish documentary. It's certainly not about the money and it's not about the number of tickets sold, but the media write about your film in a totally different way if you have a theatrical release than if you only receive a TV release. A big bonus of that theatrical release is to get that media attention.

Saario:

Speaking about the competence of producers, I have to say that this is a real lack with producers.

Kuivalainen:

That's what I meant in the beginning, that I never really know whether producers have marketed my films effectively.

Webster:

But it's because these alternative forms of marketing are new developments.

Taanila:

⁸ *The Activist* (2017), a documentary film about a young environmental activist.

As I work quite a lot with short-form filmmaking, making short documentary films or short experimental films and installations, the distribution question is a little different. I work with a good agency and media art centre called AV-Arkki.⁹ It's the Finnish distribution centre for media arts. So it's not for feature-length, cinematic documentaries, but for artist films, for experimental stuff and video art. All my works are distributed there, especially the short works, and they get shown a lot. I get rather good royalties every year from that distribution. It's an alternative distribution method. While VOD is very interesting, it's not really happening with my works yet. What would be ideal for my works would be something like MUBI¹⁰. It's for a niche audience, it's really well curated, it's international. There's a little bit of money ... Something like that would be ideal.

Suutari:

Yes! MUBI is a very good platform.

There is a clear consensus among the panel that Finland needs a centralised funding system for distribution, and that there is a clear gap in the ecosystem at the present time in this regard. While there are some support mechanisms in place, these are insufficient, especially in the context of the digital disruption of traditional forms of distribution and monetisation across established A/V entertainment networks:

Suutari:

You can apply for distribution money from the Finnish Film Foundation ...

Webster:

⁹ <<https://www.av-arkki.fi/>>

¹⁰ <<https://mubi.com/>> – a platform for art-house films and film classics.

I think it's a bit stuck in the past. The theatrical distribution money from the Film Foundation is pretty much the only money – apart from the marketing – you can get as far as I'm aware. It's just for theatrical distribution. So there isn't really any money to assist with distribution or different forms of marketing.

Suutari:

Most of the bigger film distribution companies don't take documentaries. Then they end up being distributed by small companies, which is not so efficient.

Halme:

There are two companies that distribute documentaries and they spend almost no money on them.

Suutari:

I would be able to get wider distribution for my next film, but then there is the question over YLE's broadcasting period. They request a year in between the broadcast and any other distribution. This rule comes from fiction, and they stupidly apply it to documentaries. Those kinds of things create a very difficult situation for us.

Halme:

And it's there because we're such a small country, and we don't play together.

The power imbalances of the documentary ecosystem are laid bare here as, in addition to the complex dynamics between different film professionals, the relationship between SES and YLE also complicates the picture. As discussed in earlier chapters, cinema distributors demand screening windows between the cinema premiere and the broadcasting slot that are long enough to garner a profit, while YLE wants to broadcast documentaries when they are fresh, without a theatrical screening window or with a very short

window. In these complex dynamics, individual productions can be sidelined or at least not exploited in full. The need for a national broker of distribution, and the role that film festivals have taken up in recent decades, naturally brings the conversation round to DocPoint, the Helsinki-based international documentary film festival, referred to earlier by the directors as a crucial platform for Finnish documentaries, both in terms of speaking back to Finland itself, and showing the best Finland has to offer to the world. Could DocPoint evolve from a film festival into a more fully formed distribution hub for Finnish feature documentary? How important is DocPoint to Finnish documentary?

Kuivalainen:

In Finland it's really important. If you are at DocPoint you are seen and noticed.

Suutari:

It enhances the general profile of Finnish documentaries, to promote the perception that they are important and worth watching.

Halme:

But DocPoint is not a distributor.

Suutari:

No, it's just creating more of an atmosphere around this business and serving the public.

There have been some discussions – also in the other panels – about how to synchronise festival distribution, possible theatrical distribution, television and other distribution. DocPoint is a good example of circumstances where distributors can sometimes be flexible. For instance, YLE has postponed broadcasting when the film has been selected for DocPoint. Yet, this is not always the case.

Halme:

The discussion about the broadcast window has always been difficult. YLE contributes to it, as they show a film on TV, perhaps a week before DocPoint.

Webster:

I'm trying things out with my next film.¹¹ We're hoping for a premiere at DocPoint – that'll be February or January – and then having the YLE screening after mid-March. Maybe a small theatrical in between.

Suutari:

But aren't you afraid then that you might miss some international film festival because you already have domestic distribution? That's also problematic! It's like a puzzle. In what order to put everything together.

Webster:

It depends on the film. My new film is a form of trauma therapy for the family members of victims of violent crime. So, under certain circumstances, it's therapy for them to meet the perpetrator face to face. We've got an impact campaign, where we're trying to help the family members who are really left alone in Finland. So, should I wait around a year just to see what festivals might take the film?

The puzzle metaphor used by Virpi Suutari illustrates well the complex dynamics directors have to navigate in the Finnish documentary ecosystem, which is increasingly integrated into wider international networks. In such networks, attention is capital. Hence, it is not surprising that the panel next turns to

¹¹ *Eye to Eye* (2020).

impact, and how this has also become a nascent tool in facilitating distribution and, to some extent, raising funds for documentary filmmaking. The basic idea of documentaries leveraging the impact they might make within a specific community of interest is double-edged. Most often these involve an impact campaign allied to a film's initial release that can make use of extensive real-world and online events, where the film acts as a means of raising awareness around its topic. It can provide co-operation with NGOs, different associations and state or communal authorities, including early funding, either directly by these partners or in a crowd-funding mode. AVEK, SES and DocPoint have organised special education programmes to help filmmakers find these operators, and usually impact work is conducted in sync with cinema distribution, or immediately before, as early test audiences can generate attention for the eventual general release of the film. However, impact work is not of equal importance to the panellists:

Taanila:

Not for me.

Suutari:

Not for me either. I mean, I understand it has become significant, and I really respect such campaigns.

Halme:

I would like to say that the notion of impact is from hell. Because for our financiers now, impact is everything. We are artists. We are not journalists, we don't have to try to change the world. And there are films that try to change the world and I totally respect that, but if all documentary films are like that, it would be really boring. So I think we should have different kinds of films, and they are not all appropriate for impact campaigns.

Kuivalainen:

And also with 'impact', it's a lot of work afterwards when you are already involved in your next film. It's not a good time to be working on an impact campaign

Halme:

I wonder if it's something that has been made up in order to get a bit more money from SES. And it's often not real impact, but something that only exists on paper.

Webster:

It depends. If there are absolutely concrete things that you can do, you can change the reality around something.

Halme:

Finnish filmmaking often works like that. We take something from abroad without questioning it. Oh, now impact is something we must emulate here in an absolute way! So, we are sometimes blind to our own culture of filmmaking.

International influences or even pressures thus impose different metrics and expectations on the role of the creative director, but it is also clear that for directors, distribution is considered from the moment money is applied for. Yet they are confronted with an immediate problem, as the Finnish ecosystem involves only a few small distribution companies who are interested in documentaries and thus, it is hard to secure a cinema distribution in Finland. Domestic rights for broadcasting are bought beforehand by YLE, and producers try to pre-sell the film to as many countries as possible. After the film has been released, it is very hard to get more income from sales. To further complicate the situation, the distribution type – cinema, TV, online – depends on the project. Small companies would rather put their time and money into the next production than chase small returns in post-sales.

However, distribution is, from a director's perspective, not only about production funds or company sustainability. It is also about raising audience awareness of the film and its director. Film festivals are hit-and-miss, but they do attract attention to a film and could be helpful in securing a distributor. Film financing forums and rough-cut meetings have a similar function; they are about getting a film on the radar. John Webster notes that even in the official theatrical Finnish distribution system, distribution is not so much about making money but about spreading the word.

Some solutions are offered: Petteri Saario favours creating bespoke distribution in the form of screening tours and events to raise awareness, while Mika Taanila advocates a national distributor for art films and a specific VOD platform for documentaries, with MUBI discussed as a possible model. Distribution is a considerable challenge, not only because of the conflicting interests of YLE and cinema distributors concerning screening windows, but also because of new technological challenges. There are distribution possibilities other than TV or cinema – for instance at film festivals, and DocPoint in Helsinki seems to be an important platform and also forum for discussions. Yet, even here, distribution arrangements create unease and mistrust.

<H2>Film form and the future</H2>

A key challenge occupying directors is the interconnection between finance, distribution and film form.

Are directors able to make the films they want to make in the existing system, and what is likely to happen to documentary due to transformations in the ecosystem? With the possibility of new distribution systems, does this challenge the primacy of the creative documentary in the Finnish media ecosystem?

What about iDocs, reality-TV and documentary series? What effect will these transformations have on the directors' work?

Saario:

The Film Foundation has started to finance documentary series such as *Eva Wahlström*¹² on Viaplay.

Webster:

I think we get a bit blinded by Netflix and HBO series. There are still standalone films that are very successful, such as *Communion*¹³, which is a fantastic film. It travelled everywhere and got picked up by HBO. We were talking earlier about language, and small stories and ordinary things. But *Communion*, what could be more ordinary than that? And in Polish.

Suutari:

Locality will probably be more important in the future. I think we should just stay here in Finland, Finnish stories, Finnish language.

Saario:

I just finished my last film, *Arvokas metsämme*,¹⁴ an 80-minute, feature-length film about the values of the forest. And we also produced an online multimedia platform by using the same material, background work and research. And we got extra money for that. Now we will produce shorts about this same theme.

Halme:

¹² *Eva* (2019), an eight-part series about boxer and women's world champion Eva Wahlström, directed by Mikko Peltonen.

¹³ *Communion* (2016), a Polish documentary directed by Anna Zamecka.

¹⁴ *Arvokas metsämme* ('Our valuable forest', 2019), directed by Petteri Saario, produced by DocArt.

Everything is more specialised nowadays. All films have to find their own audiences.

Specialisation has already happened with film theatres. For example, years ago we only had Finnkino¹⁵ and we were all really scared as to what was going to happen, that there'd be no place for the theatrical release of documentaries. And now we have documentaries in Kino Regina in the new Helsinki main library building Oodi¹⁶, we have different kinds of theatrical releases. We may lose TV to VOD. This all means different kinds of films can be made: wildlife, nature films and old-fashioned Finnish documentaries. The days when everyone in Finland watched Dokumenttiprojekti¹⁷ are gone.

Kuivalainen:

But then you are limited to making films about war, or maybe nature films, which are also very popular?

For some of these directors, technological multiplicity restricts thematic diversity. One option that arises in the conversation is to sidestep the present industrial structures, with its insistence on a specific form of narrative formation, in order to rethink technological and viewing practices. Because of Finnish documentary's self-identification with artistic expression, this shift towards artistic video practice is tempting, but comes with risk.

Taanila:

I think there's a really big space in the realm of visual arts. It's totally different from VOD, or the mode of buying tickets to go to a cinema, or to TV culture. It's already been happening for quite a

¹⁵ The largest cinema chain in Finland and the Baltic countries, owned by the US-based AMC Entertainment Holdings, which is owned by the Chinese Wanda Group. Finnkino's market share in Finland is about 70 per cent of all cinema tickets sold.

¹⁶ Kino Regina is run by the Finnish film archive National Audiovisual Institute (Kansallinen audiovisuaalinen instituutti).

¹⁷ 'Documentary Project', the main primetime slot for documentaries on YLE.

few years and can increase the screening of documentary-based works. For example, if you look at the works presented at huge international group exhibitions, like Kassel Documenta, Venice Biennale and Sydney Biennale, there's a large number of works that are documentary-based. It's mostly works made by visual artists. Young, upcoming or established visual artists who use documentary methods, or are very heavily influenced by the tradition of documentary filmmaking.

Kuivalainen:

It's really, really hard to break from documentary to art. If you are an old Finnish documentary filmmaker, and you say I want to show this film in your museum, it won't happen.

Taanila:

It's very hard. But I wanted to mention that because there's a big audience, and there's quite a lot of money involved in the production, especially if the works are sold at collections and museums. My biggest experience in that sense is a three-channel video installation, based on the same material we shot for our cinematic, feature-length documentary about the construction of a nuclear power plant. The installation was at Kassel Documenta, and it's been sold to a couple of museum collections. In terms of art or storytelling, these films are usually quite short. You don't often see very long, feature-length documentaries in exhibitions, but rather short, 10-minute, 15-, 20-minute pieces. And you have looping structures and installation specifics – whether it's a single screen or multi-screen – to consider as well. I think that's going to expand and increase. Because people want the 'real world', and not just the kind of connection to a real world you get from 'abstract films'.

Kuivalainen:

I started filmmaking that way, maybe I should go back to it?

Suutari:

You should do that, there's more money in that field.

Halme:

We need a sales agent for our films. Even in Finland.

The discussion here is interesting, as a question ostensibly about style and directorial approach is interpreted almost wholly as a question about new distribution spaces. It seems, again, that the directors are thinking as producers and even as distributors, and not about their creative practice with the documentary form as such. The adaptations mentioned above are to do with the format of the film, dictated by the viewing affordances of new technologies of distributive spaces and practices. There are no artistic questions or challenges driving these distributive changes; Kuivalainen's nostalgia for her artist background is the only sign of this, with her oeuvre – especially *Aranda*¹⁸ – already well suited to the gallery. So, the question is reiterated: with the disintegration of the funding triangle, and TV converging with the internet, with installations as an established form for decades, and short forms such as TikTok being wildly popular, crucially with a younger generation, what happens to the form that most of the panel are wedded to, and that still holds a position of prestige within documentary circles – the feature documentary?

Halme:

I think it's going to stay around. With all these new formats emerging, people are tired of fast information and faster images. Maybe we directors need to modify it more.

Kuivalainen:

¹⁸ *Aranda* (2011), an atmospheric, even poetic study of a research vessel working in the Baltic Sea.

I think the visual language is going to change. While we see documentaries with talking heads and so on, I want to make films that tell stories with images and emotions. But I'm not sure what will be popular, because people now have big televisions and they are also watching on computers.

Halme:

The TV is almost like being in a theatre.

Suutari:

My children and teenagers are watching TV series on their phones.

Kuivalainen:

So are mine. And due to that, film language has to change.

Suutari:

Maybe we are the wrong people to answer that. Because we are too old. We will keep doing what we do. The next generation can do it differently!

Halme:

I trust, at some point, that people will try to slow their lives down a little bit. And then we will be valuable again.

Webster:

I think that being part of a discussion becomes more and more important. If everybody's talking about *Mindhunter*, people will watch it. They'll watch it on a small screen or watch it on a huge screen. They'll watch it to be part of that discussion. I think storytelling is not going to change. I just think we need to be more aware that films are what create the discussion. Or at least they create

a promise of discussion. So it's not enough just to make the film. Whether it's impact or whether it's through a festival win or whatever, you know that part of filmmaking is about generating discussion. I think that there has to be a specialist in that area. I don't know what the business model for those specialists would be: you can't be the producer, you can't be the director, it's not the film distribution companies. We're missing somebody who can create that discussion. And there has to be a business model for creating a discussion.

Kuivalainen:

Well, that's hard ... I miss the time when a film was a film. And you can just enjoy the film. And that is enough. I don't want to be part of a discussion!

Webster:

No, no. But that's not your job. It can't be your job.

Saario:

I'm a grandfather, and most likely the oldest one on this panel. I truly hope that there will be room for feature-length creative documentaries in the future. But also more platforms for shorts, and for different, still artistic, creative documentaries.

The predictions are interesting; it is possible that the financing triangle might break, and new distributors will bring in new opportunities. Documentary series could provide a new means of sustaining production and distribution. There might be a renegotiation of the scale of stories – where more localised stories could reach larger audiences over the heads of national funders and distributors. This in turn could mean sustaining local production capacity and language representation, even in the face of global digital gateways such as Netflix. The experience of viewing media also provides an opportunity. Bigger TV screens can change the documentary language, for example, by moving towards a more visual language.

While the older generation are likely to remain loyal to longer-form documentaries, youngsters might view them via their mobile devices, and as a consequence, new shorter forms will emerge. There seems to be a paradoxical need for diversification and specialisation that presents the director with a specific quandary – how to update the documentary film form without losing your core audience. Finally, there is the seed of a debate here about the function of documentary within a wider media ecosystem. John Webster sees film as entwined in other texts, as part of a conversation. Anu Kuivalainen sees it as a stand-alone object of contemplation. Yet, what is clear is that the role of the creative director is in flux in this changing ecosystem.

<H1>Chapter 7

Conclusion: Finnish Documentary Beyond the Golden Age</H1>

This book has analysed the complex structures of the evolving Finnish documentary film ecosystem. As the ecosystem of Finnish documentary culture is small, in a way it functions as a laboratory for observing wider phenomena, transformations and trends in global documentary film cultures. Although the Finnish model, based on the triangulation between the three main financiers, has many unique features, similar structures premised on the heavy reliance on state subsidies exist in other Nordic countries and elsewhere in Europe. Yet, these unique features deserve unpacking, and in this final chapter, we start by exploring the discourses conveyed by the actors (financiers, producers, directors) to address their perceptions of the power dynamics in the ecosystem, followed by analysis of structural issues in the industry and concluding with remarks on some of the latest evolutions in this system.

<H2>Discourses</H2>

The majority of material in this book comes from our three industry panels, which showcase a rich and diverse impression of Finnish documentary culture. At the same time, when analysing the discourses expressed in the panel discussions, it is vital to consider the context of their enunciation and how the statements made by participants reflect their positions of power in the ecosystem. We have to remember that these panels took place as peer-to-peer, equal discussions among each profession group. If we had organised panels combining financiers, producers and directors, the results would have been completely different. Accordingly, the discussions are premised on what John Caldwell has called industrial self-reflexivity that is premised on context-specific subjective statements from the participants that reflect

their place in the documentary ecosystem. Hence, they are not objective data, but analytical perspectives that indicate particular approaches that position these professionals in the dynamics of industry structures.

The discussions also capture some of the ruptures of the ecosystem, as the Finnish Film Foundation had just changed its regulations and practices, which led to strong critique among the directors and the producers, but obviously much less among the financiers. These changes strengthened and concretised the experience of rupture and the sense of crisis in Finnish documentary filmmaking. Furthermore, the discussions were largely very open and critical, which was surprising because our hypothesis was that one of the virtues of the Finnish documentary culture is its emphasis on harmony and consensus. While consensus had been essential when limited resources were redirected at the beginning of the Golden Age of Finnish documentary film, it clearly does not apply on the micro-level of the different actors in the present-day ecosystem. On the macro-level, a sense of consensus may still be the aspiration, but on the ground, among the conflicting dynamics of the ecosystemic players, the impression of rupture is much more prominent.

The statements made by our panellists reflect unconscious perceptions of their own identities or, in many cases, constitute instances where the participants actively reconstruct their identities. These discourses can be used to analyse the respective self-identification of the different professional layers in the ecosystem. Financiers, producers and especially directors observe and understand the ecosystem from their own point of view, although all have a common interest in maintaining an operational system. Financiers represent institutions, producers companies, and directors themselves. There are differences in how internalised their identities are. Comments from directors mostly evoke notions of artistic identity. In contrast, the financiers are hired for a certain period to work as decision-makers (although they seldom make decisions independently), and thus their identity is based on perfunctory role descriptors. Yet, very often, especially in SES and AVEK, their background is in filmmaking, which reflects the notion that it is typical for this small documentary film ecosystem to have actors change positions often and easily. For example, a

director can become a producer and a producer a financier. They adopt new roles fluently, which may also be reflected in the way they see their professional identities.

Power relationships are another key factor in the panel discussions. In theory, especially from an economic point of view, the hierarchy of the food chain is clear: the financiers (institutions) finance producers (production companies), who hire directors. Here, money flows from the top to the bottom. Yet, from an economic and commercial point of view, the Finnish documentary ecosystem holds particular characteristics. Here, financiers are not traditional investors because they do not have expectations of economic profit. Instead, one can say that they get symbolic value from their investment: fame, positive reviews, festival success, social appreciation, legitimisation for their work and for their institutions. Producers could be more traditional investors if they had capital, but they often do not. In principle, the customer is the one who purchases something. Yet, both SES and AVEK refer to customers when they speak about directors and producers (see the SES and AVEK websites), although the relationship is reciprocal from an economic point of view: SES and AVEK are the customers to whom the producers try to sell their products and services.

The conclusion we draw from these panel discussions is that the economic and symbolic value chains should be separated. This becomes especially obvious when analysing the directors' panel. Directors talk about producers as if they were the ones who are buying services from producers. Sometimes this is concretely the case when directors hire a freelance producer. According to our material, directors are the initiators, the primus motors, who get the ideas and push the projects forward. Not one of the panellists mentions that producers can be the initiators and look for directors for certain projects. This does happen in the day-to-day practice of the industry, of course, but the discussions, more than anything, reflect the strong position of the director in Finnish documentary culture. The director is at the top of the symbolic value chain of the documentary culture, reflecting Finland's strong auteurist and director-centred documentary ecosystem.

<H2>Infrastructures</H2>

To further understand the ways that Finnish documentary culture functions, it is vital to acknowledge that since the beginning of the Golden Age, the ecosystem has been built on a model where three main financiers, SES, AVEK and YLE, finance documentaries and work together in practice. The discussion of the identities and power dynamics of the different actors in the Finnish documentary ecosystem provides insight into the lived-in realities of film professionals who have to base their creative and professional practices on this triangle model. Here, analysing the funding structures of Finland's documentary production cultures provides insight into the realities of the synergies between artistic aspirations and economic realities. The way in which money flows through a system of symbol creation and symbol creators (Hesmondhalgh 2018) is a good starting point for descriptions of the system itself, and can be helpful in outlining some basic preconditions for creative labour, technological deployment and symbolic meaning-making. However, it is also worth noting that funding infrastructures are not permanent and stable, even though their rhetorical representations may present them as being so. Such concerns are reflected in the Finnish case, especially as the role of tax and state subsidies has been and remains of paramount importance. The legislation and regulations that govern the way in which state support and commercial incentives are apportioned to various institutions morph over time, be it in the form of a direct governmental grant to filmmakers (Art Promotion Centre Finland, Art Councils), direct production subsidy via the Finnish Film Foundation and AVEK (the Promotion Centre for Audiovisual Culture) or pre-buying of Finnish documentaries by The Finnish Broadcasting Company, YLE. These institutions collect their financing in different ways: The Finnish Film Foundation gets its money directly from the state budget, YLE collects a direct taxation levy from every citizen, and AVEK used to receive money from the levy on the technology for media storage and copying. The position and resources of each of these institutions affect the ecosystem of Finnish documentary culture directly.

Here, approaches from production studies have allowed us to critically analyse triangle players and their funding mandates. Such a perspective is useful when attempting to rationalise and explore the wider transformations confronting the industry, including digital disruption and convergence. The key organisations supporting screen media in Finland are SES and YLE. SES is the biggest financier of Finnish documentary films. Väinö Mäkelä (2017) has studied the ecosystem of Finnish film, concentrating on fiction and cinema distribution. His conclusion is that SES has been the focal organisation in the Finnish film ecosystem. Its role has been and remains to actively guide the development of the ecosystem through smart power, leading to SES being credited as the initiator behind the success of Finnish cinema from the late 1990s onwards. Although the role of SES has become more important in the documentary film ecosystem, there are some major differences when comparing fiction and documentary ecosystems. Triangle financing is characteristic only for documentary film, with the three focal actors substantially affecting the development of Finnish documentary film. Another difference is that the importance of theatrical box office, so essential for fiction, has only minimal importance in the documentary ecosystem. Instead, the role of YLE is much more central due to the ways its financing and distribution strategies run. Although some small independent documentary film companies did exist before the 1990s, changes in YLE's policy arguably created the independent sector in the documentary ecosystem.

YLE conceptualises itself as performing a double role in the sense that 'we're doing programmes for the audiences, [and] one of the roles is to support the Finnish filmmakers' (Volanen 2019). These comments from the financiers' panel comprise typical industry-speak to explain the mandate of such cultural organisations to operate in the interests of the public. Yet, when producers discuss the situation, it is much more complicated. For producer Elina Pohjola, the situation is 'all over the place at the current stage, whereas in 2009 and 2010 it was much more controlled and supportive' (2017). These comments express frustration at a level where producers face mounting uncertainty in comparison to the past, where there

was, at least from their viewpoint, constant discussion and dialogue, which is missing now. The proliferation of production companies is a frequently cited challenge, as it is difficult to maintain a sustainable production volume in such a small film economy.

It appears that much of the Finnish documentary ecosystem, especially SES, is stuck in an outdated model predicated on cinematic releases, a problem exacerbated by YLE's role as the first point of call for funding, as this creates difficulties around their and the distributors' rules on broadcasting windows. DocPoint provides a useful space and forum for Finnish documentary film. Yet, even here, distribution arrangements create unease and mistrust. Many of these concerns arise out of the financing infrastructure and concern the bureaucratic management of the industry and its lack of transparency. These concerns, effectively to do with managing the film industry as a business, collide especially problematically with how industry professionals see their roles. For them, this is not a sustainable business – if it is even a business in the first place – as it takes an extensive period of time to produce a documentary film. Approaching documentary production as an economic enterprise seems largely alien when the realities of production limitations mean that to keep a company running with a set of employees is impossible in an industry with such a restrictive scope for economic profit or even sustainable production planning. Thus, these companies and their activities are best described as a creative-led enterprise focused on individual motivations. Documentary director Virpi Suutari encapsulates this well: 'one thing that I've learned over the years is that it's really important to have that inner motive. Because these processes are so long. They might take at least two years, maybe even more.' For directors, film production is a labour of love, as the economics of the small national film culture simply do not provide conditions where it would be a lucrative business opportunity. The commitment of these professionals to the art of documentary is encapsulated well by experimental documentary director Mika Taanila: 'documentary is so important, which provides a rationale for doing it' (Taanila 2019). Judging by these comments from Finnish documentary practitioners, to understand the ways the Finnish documentary culture functions, we have

explored the perspectives of practitioners through the prism of media ecology and evaluate how these demands manifest in a small national media ecosystem.

The balancing of the economic realities against the individual need to express oneself and take part in these wider political debates is a constant concern, as documentary production is not only a 'business exercise'. For director John Webster, these ideas come to a head when embarking on new film projects, as for him, such decisions are tantamount to a life choice: 'choosing the subject is not just about choosing what will I do next, it's about how I am going to spend the next three years' (Webster 2019).

Furthermore, the collision is one between artistic realities and practical necessities and being able to function according to the logistics of a business where one can just turn a tap on and off to generate material: 'it's ridiculous, you can't research and develop a film like : I'm going to start on the first of September and I'm going to work all through September and by October first I'll have a script. You need to get hold of people and ... you say can we meet, let's sit down and they say well this week's a little bit busy but maybe next week or something'. According to this argument, the demands of a business schedule do not correspond to the realities of creative work.

As many of the producers urgently point out, this even works on the level of an individual production company that may be set up only to produce the director's own films or even sometimes for a particular production. In such a situation, the professional faces yet more penetrating challenges in terms of securing work and a sustainable income from documentary production. As Finnish documentary creatives emit often different concerns for critical scholarly analysis than the industries studied by Caldwell et al., as well as the idea that there is very little concern in our case for below-the-line labour due to the economic circumstances of the Finnish documentary industry, the ideological critiques in this book shift to the 'creative class'. As a consequence, such an angle suggests that small nation film cultures may necessitate a rethinking of some of the critical practices of media production cultures studies that focus on bigger film industries and cultures. The scale of the Finnish documentary film ecosystem is very small, and may

be even best described as handicraft or artisanal workshops instead of ‘industry’. Accordingly, it might be more appropriate to use the concept of ‘artisan studies’ when dealing with this ecosystem. After all, each product is unique, financed, developed and manufactured one at a time.

While there certainly are industrial and commercial elements in the Finnish fiction film and commercial television industry, documentary filmmaking is often considered a part of the public service production culture, a concept developed by James Bennett: ‘Public service production culture must be understood as a network of interlinked and overlapping production cultures, operating inside and outside of the broadcasters, and across diverse production modes’ (Bennett 2015: 126). Documentary culture needs to be thus considered as an overlapping production culture where both artistic and commercial motivations entwine. Bennett remarks that in the UK, people move easily across networks and spheres of production, from public service channels like BBC and Channel 4 to the indie sector, and vice versa (Bennett 2015: 127). As we have seen, this is also the case among the Finnish actors in the documentary film ecosystem, reinforcing the notion that the Finnish documentary ecosystem resembles public service broadcasting more than a form of commercial industry.

<H2>Working together</H2>

We have unpacked the complex agencies and dynamics that exist between the different layers of the ecosystem to understand how organisations, production companies, bureaucrats, producers and creatives contribute to a system where each component has to correlate with one another to allow other aspects of the industry to work. A novel perspective is provided by this levelled approach to understanding the constitution of the industry. On the level of the financiers, their main roles focus on operating according to institutional policy and making sector-level decisions about the projects that receive funding. The panel

discussions highlight the relevance of frequent meetings with the three organisations to consolidate decisions on what is ultimately supported.

Decisions are individual to each organisation, but they must correlate with one another to allow the system to work. Thus, decisions need to be considered as interactive, in the sense that the economic realities of this small film culture necessitate careful co-ordination, even if this co-ordination often operates on an informal basis. The financiers' panel downplays the importance of the meetings, which may sound more important but are more of a formality for a few hours. Due to the large volume of projects to be evaluated, there is comparatively little discussion of critical responses to content. An illuminating reply from one of the financiers highlights the process, as they all emphasise that there needs to be a real formal application and unofficial discussions or phone calls are not sufficient to get money, as used to be the case earlier. The implications of this transition of dynamics are intriguing, as they indicate a formalisation of the process as well as the idea that such arrangements were more informal in the past. Financiers explain they do not develop a production but act as a sounding board and act as guidance for developing a project further. In terms of co-ordination, they point out that 'All of us can make an independent decision but at the same time there is some level of correlation that makes sure that the project is feasible and supported through international or other means.'

On the level of directors, this bureaucratic structure clashes with their precarious position. We see complex agencies that often revolve around arguments that documentary production is more akin to a hobby than a full-time profession. As explained, these roles often blur with that of producers. From a more creative perspective, these circumstances are ideal, as they provide maximum creative freedom, but when considered from the perspective of the whole media environment, restrictions emerge. Precarity is among the most significant issue to consider, as it influences not so much the content but documentary work cultures, including both the producers and the directors. As a consequence, many of the restrictions and limitations discussed above will invariably influence the final product and shape its content.

Some of the arguments made by industry professionals focus on the suggestion of reducing the total number of documentary films per year, as there seems to be oversupply in the industry. International co-production is often considered as a significant survival mechanism for small film cultures. The Finnish scene is particularly focused on European co-productions, but again the question of limited resources makes this very difficult. When international connections are established, they tend to be on an equal power level based on artistic affinities, but such arrangements can also be established as a necessity to facilitate production arrangements. From the perspective of policy, co-production arrangements make a lot of sense, as they indicate both an artistic and financial approach that focuses on expanding the field of documentary production.

The lack of clear policy interventions to plan for new models of distribution and even production is thus seen as a particularly glaring fallacy. In some intriguing ways the balance that media research strikes between describing media workers as the creators of popular culture and as functionaries in a commercial industry plays out explicitly in relation to Finnish documentary film culture, as there is now testimony that economic realities are increasingly impeding on creative concerns: for example, in 2017, documentary film support was cut by €470,000 even though thirty-five productions received funding, the same number as previously. This means that the total amount for each film will be less, which invariably influences the final product.

The contextual evaluation of Finnish documentary history up to 2019 is vital, as it gives, firstly, an impression of a particular small nation film culture developing in relation to cultural, political, economic, social and technological developments; and secondly, shows how media management and creativity intertwine in this particular film cultural context. While the narrative constructed by the chapters provides an often distressing picture of disruption, the developments up to 2019 show evidence of relatively

stabilised development, and especially resilience, as creatives and media managers adapt to an increasingly complex situation.

<H2>Evolution of Finnish documentary culture: Competition or co-operation?</H2>

We have used the metaphors of the ecosystem and of evolution throughout the book to describe the Finnish documentary film ecosystem. They provide a productive perspective on the contesting imperatives of artistic creativity and industry commerce, as, according to the traditional Darwinian model, competition is the driving force behind evolution. Yet, biologists such as Lynn Margulis (1967) have criticised this view. For Margulis, symbiosis is a remarkable driving force in evolution. Life has spread all over the globe by connecting, networking and collaborating. If this happens on the level of bacteria and primitive animals, maybe it could be the case also on the level of the more complicated human and cultural systems?

The Finnish documentary film ecosystem is an outstanding example of symbiosis on the system level. In biology, this kind of symbiosis is called *mutualism*. Both parties benefit from it, be it fungi and a tree, or a single Finnish documentary filmmaker and a national broadcasting company. However, from the point of view of single actors, the system is less than harmonious. As witnessed by our panel discussions, it is clear how complex these tensions and dynamics can be.

Evolution is a complicated process where several elements are changing at different paces. Technology is a good example. Often the effect of technology is oversimplified, especially concerning digitalisation, technological innovations are theorised to have a direct effect on the system level. This is very seldom the case in documentary production. As Ulla Simonen points out: 'For me this question of technology is totally absurd. Nothing that was promised has ever materialised ... To this day, as I'm doing production work, this digital revolution does not matter. Things cost more and processes are more difficult.' The

effects of technology are strongly mediated through a delay on the systemic level. Although the whole production, distribution and screening chain is now digitised, the budgets, practices and, most importantly, the institutions have not – yet – changed. The financing model of Finnish documentary film – that is, triangle financing – has not experienced major institutional changes since the beginning of the Golden Age of Finnish documentary film in the 1990s. Finland still has the same institutions and the same structures that existed in the era of analogue film. The Finnish Film Foundation celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2019 and its position has become even stronger. There has been debate about the position and legitimacy of YLE, but its basic role in relation to public service and documentary culture has not changed. Despite all the technological and international challenges, documentary culture in Finland is thoroughly institutionalised, even protected, and changes are very slow – especially when actors (according to our panels) tend to hold on to old structures. But the environment is changing as people's behaviour and consumption changes, which in turn impacts the economic structures, ecosystem and culture. Pressure is also generated by a demand for institutional changes and a strong feeling of rupture among our panellists. A transformation of the Finnish documentary culture is inevitable.

In the history of Finnish documentary film, there have been several examples of a punctuated equilibrium. The inception of the tax reduction system in the 1930s, the transformation of the state art policy in the 1960s and the beginning of the Golden Age in the 1990s were all clear and rapid ecological changes in the documentary ecosystem. There was a relatively long and fruitful period of steady development until the 2010s, but since then the balance of the triangle financing system has been disturbed. Maybe this small ecosystem is going through a new punctuated equilibrium? In addition to the changes in major trends relating to distribution and consumption of documentary films, the economic and cultural policy of the EU impacts directly and indirectly on this ecosystem. These trends can be contradictory as, for instance, the EU is aiming to consolidate a digital common market to compete with large global competitors. At the same time, the principle of protecting national and local cultures is a major concern. How this contradiction is going to be handled will directly influence the Finnish documentary film

ecosystem. There are threats and possibilities. Perhaps a local documentary film production from a small nation like Finland might also find new audiences in the European and the global markets?

<H2>The futures of Finnish documentary culture</H2>

Since we held the panels for this book in 2017 and late 2019, COVID-19 has been one of the most serious disruptions to confront the Finnish documentary film culture. Its fraught development in the years from 2020 has been a tale of even further and massive disruption. While we don't have space to go into these developments here (not to mention that they are also too recent to analyse properly), the pandemic certainly makes the future even more uncertain. At the time of writing, we are still on the precipice of substantial transformations. Diverse and even discordant points of view are to be expected when we are discussing fundamentally transformative technological, cultural, political and economic disruptions.

Our book presents one version (consisting of a multitude of perspectives) on these developments. In the panel discussions, a generational point of view comes through strongly, especially when analysing the history of Finnish documentary film. Consequently, we have to be critical of our material and even our own position as researchers. Our panellists are representatives of two generations: the generation who started their careers in the 1990s and those who began in the 2000s, but both still in the Golden Age. Although this difference is evident in the material, they share a nostalgic longing for the earlier times when the system seemed to work more fluently. These panellists were selected because we wanted well-established, experienced and successful actors from the field of Finnish documentary film. They were obviously mostly middle-aged. The writers of this book are also middle-aged or older, with their professional or educational experiences reflecting the rise of new international and national documentary cultures in Europe starting in the 1990s. This can resonate in or even distort our interpretations. As a consequence, this book is our analysis of one small nation documentary ecosystem. Only the future can

show how this culture develops and, furthermore, help us to understand retrospectively where this culture is now. The next generation of researchers are conducting their analysis and, most importantly, the next generation of filmmakers are making their films. Despite these tales of disruption, there is space for optimism as new talents, new films and new possibilities emerge. With further technological innovations, more international collaboration and distribution, educational programmes and institutional support, perhaps this small and peculiar documentary culture will eventually enter the next Golden Age?

<H1>Sources and References</H1>

Panel discussion of producers, 5 December 2017

Panel discussion of financiers, 9 September 2019

Panel discussion of directors, 10 September 2019

Interview with distributor Juha Elomäki, 6 September 2019

Interview with DocPoint Film Festival directors Kati Juurus and Tapio Riihimäki, 9 September 2019

Interview with film journalist Harri Römpötti, 10 September 2019

Interview with producer Iikka Vehkalahti, 10 September 2019

Personal communication and discussions with Jouko Aaltonen

Bibliography

Aaltonen, J. (2006). *Todellisuuden vangit vapauden valtakunnassa: Dokumenttielokuva ja sen tekoprosessi*. Helsinki: LIKE and Taideteollinen korkeakoulu Helsinki.

— (2011). *Seikkailu todellisuuteen: Dokumenttielokuvan tekijän opas*. Helsinki: LIKE.

— (2014). *Dokumentaristi: Lasse Naukkarisen elokuvat ja niiden synty*. Helsinki: Aalto ARTS Books: Helsinki.

Anderson, J. (2014). *Armoton kauneus: Pirjo Honkasalon elokuvataide*. Helsinki: Siltala.

- Anttila, E. (ed.) (2000). *Lyhyttä ja pitkää: Kotimaisia elokuvantekijöitä*. Helsinki: BTJ Kirjastopalvelu.
- Astala, E. (1985). 'Image of a Nation: A View of Finnish Independent Documentary Film 1904–1984'. In *7th Nordic Anthropological Film Festival Jyväskylä 21.–25.5.1985*, festival publication. Helsinki: Nordic Anthropological Film Association.
- Austin, T., and De Jong, W. (2008). *Rethinking Documentary: New Perspectives and Practices: New Perspectives and Practices*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Bacon, H. (2016). 'Introduction to the Study of Transnational Small Nation Cinema'. In H. Bacon (ed.), *Finnish Cinema*, pp. 1–19. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Battaglia, G. (2018). *Documentary Film in India: An Anthropological History*. New York: Routledge.
- Bennett, J. (2015). 'Public Service as Production Cultures: A Contingent, Conjunctural Compact'. In Miranda Banks, Bridget Conor and Vicky Mayer (eds), *Production Studies: The Sequel! Cultural Studies of Global Media Industries*, pp. 123–137. London: Routledge.
- Biressi, A., and Nunn, H. (2005). *Reality TV: Realism and Revelation*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bondebjerg, I. (2014). *Engaging with Reality: Documentary and Globalisation*. Bristol: Intellect.
- Bruzzi, S. (2006). *New Documentary*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Caldwell, J. (2008). *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Corner, J. (2008). *Rethinking Documentary: New Perspectives, New Practices*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Curtin, M., and Sanson, K. (2016). *Precarious Creativity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Dover, C. (2004). “‘Crisis’ in British Documentary Television: The End of a Genre?’, *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 1(2).

Dovey, J. (2000). *Freakshow: First Person Media and Factual Television*. London: Pluto Press.

—— (2014). ‘Documentary Ecosystems: Collaboration and Exploitation’. In K. Nash, C. Hight and C. Summerhayes (eds), *New Documentary Ecologies: Emerging Platforms, Practices and Discourses*, pp. 11–32. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dubois, F. (2017). ‘Interactivity as a Key Feature Redefining Documentary Reality’, *Images: The International Journal of European Film, Performing Arts and Audiovisual Communication*, 21(30), 31–44.

Foucault, M. (1969). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge.

Furtado, G. P. (2019). *Documentary Filmmaking in Contemporary Brazil: Cinematic Archives of the Present*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grainge, P. (ed.) (2011). *Ephemeral Media: Transitory Screen Culture from Television to YouTube*. London: British Film Institute.

Haase, A. (2016). ‘The Golden Era of Finnish Documentary Film Financing and Production’, *Studies in Documentary Film*, 10(2), 106–129.

Hesmondhalgh, D. (2018). *The Cultural Industries*. London: Sage Publishing.

Hilapieli, U. A. (2021). *Kino-Suomi: Elokuvan esittämisen historia 1896–2021*. Helsinki: Teos.

Hill, A. (2014). *Reality TV*. London: Routledge.

Hirn, S. (1981). *Kuvat kulkevat: Kuvallisten esitysten perinne ja elävien kuvien 12 ensimmäistä vuotta Suomessa*. Suomen elokuvasäätiön julkaisusarja 11. Helsinki: Finnish Film Foundation.

- Hjort, M., and Petrie, D. (2007). *The Cinema of Small Nations*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Hongisto, I. (2011). *Soul of the Documentary: Expression and the Capture of the Real*. Turku: University of Turku.
- Kääpä, P. (2010). *The National and Beyond*. New York and London: Peter Lang.
- (2014). *Ecology and Contemporary Nordic Cinema*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Keto, J. (1974). *Elokuvalippujen kysyntä ja siihen vaikuttaneet tekijät Suomessa 1915–1972*. Helsinki.
- Kinnunen, K. (2019). *Elokuvasäätien tuella: Suomalaista elokuvaa tekemässä 1969–2019*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.
- Kortti, J. (2016). *Mediahistoria: Viestinnän merkityksiä ja muodonmuutoksia puheesta bitteihin*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.
- Lammi, M. (2006). *Ett' varttuisi Suomenmaa: Suomalaisten kasvattaminen kulutusyhteiskuntaan kotimaisissa lyhytelokuvissa 1920–1969*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.
- , and Timonen, P. (2013). 'Imagining Economy: Finlandia Newsreels Building up Shared Imaginary in the 1950s and Early 1960s'. In Visa Heinonen and Matti Peltonen (eds), *Finnish Consumption: An Emerging Consumer Society between East and West*, pp. 104–121. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.
- Mäkelä, V. (2017). *The Re-Birth of Finnish Film: An Ecosystem Point of View*, MA thesis. Helsinki: Aalto University School of Business.
- Mayer, V., Banks, M., and Caldwell, J. (eds), (2009). *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*. London: Routledge.

- Mickwitz, J. (1995). *Folkbildning, företag, propaganda – Den finska icke-fictiva filmen på det fält där nationellt symbolgods skapades under mellankrigstiden*. Historiallisia Tutkimuksia 190. Helsinki: Suomen historiallinen seura.
- Miller, T. et al. (2002). *Global Hollywood*. London: BFI.
- Nichols, B. (2017). *Introduction to Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- O’Sullivan, S. (2017). *DVD, Blu-ray and Beyond*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Päivärinta, P. (1980). *Esittelevä Elokuvaluettelo 1980*. Helsinki: Suomen Elokuvasäätiö.
- Pavlik, J. V., and Pavlik, J. O. (2017). *Digital Transformation in Journalism and News Media*. Cham: Springer.
- Pietikäinen, Sari, and Mäntynen, Anne (2019). *Uusi kurssi kohti diskurssia*. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Postman, N. (2008). ‘What is Media Ecology?’, *Media Ecology Association*, <<https://www.media-ecology.org/What-Is-Media-Ecology>>
- Rantanen, T. (2020). Suomalainen dokumentaarinen elokuva nyt: haastattelussa Reetta Huhtanen ja Elina Talvensaari, *Filmihullu* 5, 4–8.
- Römpötti, H. (2018). *Sanokaa mitä näitte: Suomalaiset dokumenttielokuvan tekijät kertovat*. Helsinki: Arthouse.
- Rose, M. (2018). ‘The Immersive Turn: Hype and Hope in the Emergence of Virtual Reality as a Nonfiction Platform’, *Studies in Documentary Film*, 12(2), 132–149.
- Sagan, Lynn (1967). ‘On the Origin of Mitosing Cells’, *Journal of Theoretical Biology*, 14(3), 225–274.
- Scolari, C. A. (2012). ‘Media Ecology: Exploring the Metaphor to Expand the Theory’,

Communication Theory, 22(2) (May), 204–225.

Sedergren, J., and Kippola, I. (2009). *Dokumentin ytimessä: Suomalaisen dokumentti- ja lyhytelokuvan historia 1904–1944*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

—— (2015). *Dokumentin utopiat: Suomalaisen dokumenttielokuvan historia 1944–1989*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Sills-Jones, D., and Kääpä P. (eds) (2016). Finnish Documentary Film, special issue of *Studies in Documentary Film*, 10(2).

Stahl, M. (2009). 'Privilege and Distinction in Production Worlds: Copyright, Collective Bargaining, and Working Conditions in Media Making'. In Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks and John T. Caldwell (eds), *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*, pp. 54–67. New York: Routledge.

Strate, L. (2008). 'Studying Media AS Media: McLuhan and the Media Ecology Approach', *MediaTropes*, 1(1), 127–142.

Sweeney, M., and Conlan, T. (2010). 'BBC Licence Fee Frozen at £145.50 for Six Years', *Guardian*, 19 October.

Taanila, M. (2007). 'Seitsemännen taiteen sivullisia: Kokeellinen elokuva Suomessa 1933–1985'. In Kirsi Väkiparta and Perttu Rastas (eds), *Sähkömetsä: Videotaiteen ja kokeellisen elokuvan historiaa Suomessa 1933–1998*. Helsinki: Valtion Taidemuseo.

Thobani, S. (2017). 'Alt-Right with the Hindu-right: Long-distance Nationalism and the Perfection of Hindutva', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42(5), 745–762.

Toiviainen, S. (1983). *Risto Jarva*. Helsinki: Suomen elokuva-arkisto and Valtion painatuskeskus.

— (2002). *Levottomat sukupolvet: Uusin suomalainen elokuva*. Helsinki: Suomen elokuva-arkisto and Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seura.

— (2009). *Kadonnutta paratiisia etsimässä: Markku Lehmuskallion ja Anastasia Lapsuin elokuvat*. Helsinki: Suomalaiseen kirjallisuuden seura and Kansallinen audiovisuaalinen arkisto.

Uljas, P. (2012). *Hyvinvointivaltion läpimurto: Pienviljelyhegemonian rapautumisen, kansalaisliikehännän ja poliittisen murroksen keskinäiset suhteet suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa 1950–luvun loppuvuosina*. Helsinki: Into Kustannus.

Uusitalo, K. (1965). *Suomalaisen elokuvan vuosikymmenet: Johdatus kotimaisen elokuvan ja elokuva-alan historiaan 1896–1963*. Helsinki: Otava.

Vartiainen, J. (2012). 'Tyytymätön voittaja'. In Anu Koivunen (ed.), *Maailman paras maa*, pp. 131–149. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Williams, R. (2004). *Television*. London: Routledge.

Winston, B. (2008). *Claiming the Real II: Documentary: Grierson and Beyond*. London: BFI.

Wollen, P. (1972). 'Godard and Counter Cinema: Vent d'Est', *Afterimage*, 4 (Autumn), 6–17.

Websites and other sources

<www.ses.fi>

<<https://www.ses.fi/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Elokuvavuosi-Facts-Figures-2019.pdf>>, p. 10 (accessed 2 May 2021)

<www.yle.fi>

<<https://yle.fi/aihe/yleisradio/tuotantoyhtiaille>>

Documentaries commissioned by YLE: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1u_9Q-VSYmKRTzf8cMiF-KjNODIHQmT1irwpZnEunxvg/edit#gid=0>

<www.kopioisto.fi/avek>

<<https://www.kopioisto.fi/app/uploads/2018/09/12161240/AVEK-Toimintakertomus-2019.pdf>>

National Audiovisual Institute Finland, Elonet database: <www.elonet.fi>

Business Finland: <<https://www.businessfinland.fi/en/for-finnish-customers/services/funding/cash-rebate>>

International Movie Data Base: <<http://www.imdb.com>> (accessed 19 March 2020)

October. <<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2010/oct/19/bbc-licence-fee-frozen>> (accessed 20 November 2019)

Finnish Documentary Guild: <<https://www.dokumenttikilta.fi/fi/pageen>>

Materials of ProDoc campaign by the Finnish Documentary Guild

Statistics Finland, Joukkoviestintätilasto 1991, SVT Kulttuuri ja viestintä 1991:2, Tilastokeskus.

Notes on contributors

Jouko Aaltonen (born 1956) is a researcher and documentary filmmaker. He defended his doctoral degree (Doctor of Arts) on the process of documentary filmmaking at Aalto University, Helsinki, in 2006. Before and since, he has taken part in scientific seminars and published several articles. He is a docent (adjunct professor) and visiting researcher at Aalto University, but has also been a popular lecturer at several

different universities and has published eight books, on both scientific and mainstream subjects. He has directed about twenty-five documentary films for national and international distribution, several of which have received awards. Among them are *Taiga Nomads* (1991, together with Heimo Lappalainen), *Kusum* (2000), *Revolution* (2006), *Punksters and Youngsters* (2008), *Battle for the City* (2011), *Leap* (2012), *Songs of Utopia* (2017) and *Little Red Bunch* (2020). He has also worked as a producer for other directors via the production company Illume Ltd (<www.illumefi.fi>).

Pietari Kääpä is a Reader in Media and Communications at the University of Warwick. He works in the field of environmental media studies, with a specific focus on media management and industry studies. His monograph *Environmental Management of the Media: Industry, Policy, Practice* (Routledge, 2018) explores the ecological footprint of media production and the policies and strategies developed in the media sector to curtail these impacts. He is Principal Investigator (with Hunter Vaughan, University of Cambridge) of the AHRC Global Green Media Network (<www.globalgreenmedianetwork.com>). In addition, he has published several articles and books on both Nordic and Finnish film culture, including *Ecology and Contemporary Nordic Film* (Bloomsbury, 2014).

Dafydd Sills-Jones is Associate Professor and Deputy Head of School at Te Kura Whakapāho, e Te Wānanga Aronui O Tamaki Makau Rau (School of Communication Studies, Auckland University of Technology). Dafydd publishes in both 'traditional' scholarly mode (on history in the media, minority language media, documentary culture) and in 'screen practice as research' mode, making installations and films that have been screened in several countries and at major international festivals. Dafydd is co-editor of Peter Lang's 'Documentary Film Cultures' book series, and is on the editorial board of *Media History* (Taylor & Francis), the *Journal of Media Practice and Education* (Taylor & Francis) and the *International Journal of Creative Media Research* (Bath Spa University). He is a member of the International Association for Minority Language Media Research (IAMLMR).

Index

9 Primaveras

Aalto – Architect of Emotions

Aalto University

Aaltonen, Jouko

Aamua kaupungissa

Aatos ja Amine

af Hällström, Arto

Aho & Soldan

Aho, Heikki

Ahola, Heikki

Ajatusrikolliset

Aktivisti

Alaska Highway

Alvarez, Santiago

AMC Entertainment

American Vagabond

Anderson, Benedict

Aktiebolaget Finlandia Film

Apollo Atelier

Aranda

Arktisia matkakuvia

Art Promotion Centre Finland (TAIKE)

Arvokas metsämme

Astala, Erkki

Asuminen ja luonto

Audiovisuaalisen kulttuuri edistämiskeskus (AVEK)

Auf Wiedersehen Finnland

AV-Arkki

Bacon, Henry

~~Baltic Sea, The~~

Banks, Miranda

Bauer, Charles

Bennett, James

Berghäll, Joonas

Berlinale Talents

Big Boy

Biressi, Anita

Blomberg, Erik

Bondebjerg, Ib

British Film Institute, The

Bruzzi, Stella

Business Finland

Caldwell, John Thornton

Cederström, Kanerva

Cetinkaya, Sadri

Chronique d'un été

Citizen Jane Productions

Colombia in My Arms

Communion

Corner, John

CPH: DOX

Creative documentary

Cross-Country

Do I Have to Take Care of Everything?

DocPoint

Dok.incubator

Dokumenttikilta (Finnish Documentary Guild)

Dokumenttiprojekti

Donner – Private

Donner, Jörn

Don't Tell Daddy

Dover, Caroline

Dovey, Jon

Eläköön nuoruus!

Eino ja mä

El Aboudi, Mohamed

Elisa Viihde

Elomäki, Juha

Environment News

Erotica Vivica

Escandar, Amir

Estlander, Erik

European Audiovisual Entrepreneurs (EAVE)

European Documentary Network, The

Eva

Every Other Couple

Eye to Eye

Fennada Filmi

Filmi-kuva Oy

Filmiaura

Filmimaa Oy

Filminor

Filmiryhmä

Finland Kinematograph International

Finlandia

Finlandia Newsreels

Finnkino

Flaherty, Robert

Forsman, Felix

Foucault, Michel

Frame Contemporary Art Finland

Fraser, Nick

Freetime Machos

Futuro – A New Stance for Tomorrow

Gauriloff, Katja

Girl Picture

Godard, Jean-Luc

Granö, Veli

Grierson, John

Grotenfeld, Georg

Grönroos, Johan Abraham Walfrid

Göteborg Film Festival

Haapasalo, Alli

Haase, Antti

Halme, Mia

Halonen, Arto

HBO

Helke, Susanna

Herää Helsinki!

Hesmondhalgh, David

Hill, Annette

~~Hilapieli~~, (probably Hilapieli, which is in literature, away from this index)

Hitler, Adolf

Hjort, Mette

Hobbyhorse Revolution

Hongisto, Ilona

Honkasalo, Pirjo

Hotakainen, Mika

Hristov, Tonislav

Huhtanen, Reetta

Huutajat

Hyvä elämä

Hyvä postimies

Häiden vietto Karjalan runomailla

Häätanssi

Ijäs, Jan

Ikuisesti sinun

Ikäluokka

Illi, Esa

International Documentary Film Festival of Amsterdam, The (IDFA)

Into, Markku

Itkonen, Veikko

Jahnukainen, Sami

Jarva, Risto

Jokinen, Armas

Jokiranta, Petri

Joutilaat

Jussi awards

Just Animals

Järven tarina

Jäähvyäisten kronikka

Jääskeläinen, Jarmo

Kadonnut paratiisi

Kaksi enoa

Kamera kiertää

Kansallinen audiovisuaalinen instituutti (KAVI)

Kansan Elokuva

Kansatieteellinen Filmi Oy

Kantelinen, Tuomas

Karmasalo, Kari

Karu, Erkki

Kassila, Matti

Katastrofin aineksia

Kaupungissa on tulevaisuus

Kaupunkisinfonia

Kaurismäki, Aki

Kaurismäki, Mika

~~Keto,~~

-references

Kinnunen, Kalle

Kino Regina

Kinotar

Kippola, Ilkka

Kirjoitan teille täältä maan päältä

Kivelä, Saila

Kivihalme, Elina

Kivistö, Jenni

Koiso-Kanttila, Visa

Kone Foundation, The

Kone 17

Kopioisto

Koponen, Matti-Juhani

Kordelin Foundation, The

Korhonen, Timo

Korhonen, Tuure A.

~~Kortti, Jukka~~ references

Kreivi

Kuivalainen, Anu

Kultaa ja kunniaa

Kuosmanen, Vesa

Kurkvaara, Maunu

Kuusela, Armi

Kuusi, Janne

Lahyn Filmi

~~Lammi~~, references

Lappalainen, Heimo

Lapsui, Anastasia

Laulu koti-ikävästä

Lauluja rakkaudesta

Lehmuskallio, Markku

Lehtinen, Virke

Lehto, Pekka

Leminen, Hannu

Lenin-setä asuu Venäjällä

Lewing, Harry

Losing It

Luonnontalous

Luostarinen, Kiti

Lyytinen, Erkkö

Lyytikäinen, Leila

Maaailmat kohtaavat

Maaseudun tulevaisuus?

MADE

Maiden of the Lake

Mannerheim 75 vuotta

Mannerheim, Karl Gustaf

Margulis, Lynn

Marimekko

Marzia My Friend

Mayer, Vicki

Melancholian 3 huonetta

~~Mickwitz~~, references

Miehiä ja poikia

Miesten vuoro

Miksi en puhu venäjää

Mindhunter

Minh-ha, Trin T.

Moore, Michael

MUBI

Musta kissa lumihangella

Musta liitto

Mäkelä, Väinö

Mäkinen, Aito

Mäkinen, Eino

Nainen ja yhteiskunta

Naukkarinen, Lasse

Neiti Aika

Neue Sachlichkeit

Neuvonen, Joonas

Nichols, Bill

Niskanen, Mikko

No Comments

Nokelainen, Pii

Nokia

Nordin, Gustaf

Nordisk Panorama

Numminen, M.A.

Nurmi, Paavo

O'Sullivan, S.

Olympia-Filmi Oy

Once I Was a Dragonfly

One Hundred Generations

Oodi

Orko, Risto

Orpojen joulu

Oy Filmiseppo

Oy Mainos-TV-reklam AB (MTV)

Paakkanen, Einari

Pathé Feres

Peippo, Antti

Peltomaa, Hannu

Peltonen, Mikko

Pensala, Marja

People We Come Across

Petrie, Duncan

Picturehouse

Pirkanmaan elokuvakeskus (PEK)

Pohjoisten metsien äänet

Pohjola, Elina

Pohjola, Ilppo

Pohjola, Mike

Pohjola-Filmi

Porojen parissa

Poron hahmossa pitkin taivaankaarta ...

Postman, Neil

Postisäästöpankki

Propaganda-Aseveljet r y

Puolustusvoimien uutiskatsaus

Puusaari, Olavi

Pyhän kirjan varjo

Pölynimurikauppiaat

Pälsi, Sakari

Rantanen, Tytti

Rantojen miehet

Rastas, Jussi

Rastimo, Kaisa

Rauhanpäivä Rautatientorilla

Renov, Michael

Return of the Atom

Riefenstahl, Leni

RoboCup99 – We Have a Dream

Ronkainen, Mika

Rouch, Jean

Rough Cut

Rousu, Outi

Ryhmäteatteri

Röhr, Marko

Saarinen, Lasse

Saario, Petteri

Saippukauppiaan sunnuntai

Salaviinanpolttajat

Salesman of Happiness, The

Salla: Selling the Silence

Salmenperä, Aleksi

Salminen, Kai

Sano se suomeksi

Sanokaa mitä näitte

Schulgin, Kristina

Scolari, Carlos

Sedergren, Jari

Seiro, Erkki

Sen edestään löytää

Sibelius, Jean

Sielun veljet

Sielunmetsä

Sijainen

Sills-Jones, Dafydd

Simonen, Ulla

Sinivalkoinen valhe

Sisäinen vihollinen

Soldan, Björn

Solidaarisuus

Song

Stahl, Matt

Ståhlberg, Kari Emil

Strate, Lance

Sukkien euroelämää

Sundance Film Festival

Suomalainen päiväkirja

Suomen elokuvasäätiö (SES)

Suomen Turisti- ja matkatoimisto

Suomi-katsaus

Suomi kutsuu

Suomi-Filmi

Suomi-Filmin uutiskuvia

Suonikylän talvielämää

Suutari, Virpi

Synti, dokumentti jokapäiväisistä rikoksista

Särkkä, T.J.

Taanila, Mika

Taistelu kaupungista

Taistelun tie

Talaskivi, Jaakko

Taloudellinen tiedotustoimisto

Talvensaari, Elina

Tampere Short Film and Documentary Film Festival, The

Tapiola

Tasavallan päiväkirja

The Future Is Not What It Used to Be

Tissit ja tango

~~Toiviainen, Sakari~~ references

Toivoniemi, Elli

Tuffi Films

Tuulensieppaajat

Tuurna, Markku

Tähteläiset

Yleisradio (YLE)

~~Ujas,~~ references

Uotila, Pekka

~~Uusitalo,~~ references

Vaala, Valentin

Valkoinen taivas

Valtion AV-keskus

Valtion elokuvataidetoimikunta

Valtion elokuvatarkastamo

Valtion Kamerataidetoimikunta

Valtion tiedotuslaitos

~~Vartiainen,~~ references

Vesku from Finland

Viaplay

Vilhunen, Selma

Villilintujen parissa

Vilkuna, Kustaa

Virtanen, Jaakko

Volanen, Sari

Von Bagh, Peter

Vuosi 1952

Wages of War, The

Wahlström, Eva

Webster, John

Werning, Eila (Ranta)

Westergård, Jenny

Widén, Peter

Williams, Raymond

Winston, Brian

Wollen, Peter

Yrittäjä

ZagrebDox

Zamecka, Anna

Äidin toive

