

A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Role of Government in the Decolonisation of the Creative Industry

Fred Joshua Mwilima¹ Joel Haikali²

*Senior lecturer, Department of Information and Communication Studies
University of Namibia. Private Bag 13301, Pionierspark, Windhoek, Namibia*
*Graduate, Department of Information and Communication Studies
University of Namibia. Private bag 3301, Pionierspark, Windhoek, Namibia.*
Corresponding Author: Fred Joshua Mwilima

ABSTRACT: A functioning film industry is an integral part of national development and as developing nation states transit into developed nations, advances and investment in this sector should become more pronounced as the film industry has the potential to stimulate the economy by creating jobs and accelerate human resource development (Cuff, 2013). It has the potential to promote nation healing, reconciliation and nation building. This study analyses the role of the creative industry in the decolonisation of the Africa states using Namibia as a case study and the role government can play in promoting this industry.

KEY WORDS: creative industry, film makers, national healing, reconciliation, nation building, domination, decolonisation, cultural diversity, cultural consciousness.

Date of Submission: 08-06-2018

Date of acceptance: 23-06-2018

I. INTRODUCTION

Most developing countries have pronounced visions for transition towards becoming developed countries. In 2004, the Namibian government launched Vision 2030 document that clearly articulates the need to create jobs, provide infrastructure, develop human resources, change patterns of ownership and reduce income inequality through poverty reduction by the year 2030 (Government of Namibia, 2004). Studies elsewhere show that real assets for modern economies come out of the heads of countries' nationals including the creative industry (Devon and Torbay Council et al, 2006). This research further extrapolates that imagination, knowledge, skills, talent and creativity are key to economic development. The creative industry, as Bomba (2010) suggests is critical to national healing, reconciliation and nation building.

II. DISCUSSION

Creative industries have the potential to not only contribute to the economy, but they can also play a key role as nation-building tools that ensure due respect for cultural diversity, traditions, national values and heritage" (Thiec, 2009, p.1). Cultural industries are therefore essential to influencing cultural identities that enable economic growth through the establishment of a sustainable industry that can meaningfully contribute to economic and human development. The USA cultural industries, for example, contributed an estimated revenue of more than US\$1 trillion to the economy in 2012 (Bond, 2013). Another good example is the Nigerian film industry, which according to Abraham (2014) has generated estimated revenue of US\$800 million between 2011 and 2013. These are two very different countries and different industry models, which suggests that there might be different ways of transforming an industry into a sector that can meaningfully contribute to a country's economy.

Despite the importance of cultural industries and the contribution that such industries, including filmmaking, could make to the development and cultural consciousness of a country, most film industries in developing countries still seem to be struggling. There are different reasons for this: (1) lack of funds (2) lack of market and distribution channels, (3) unfair competition with big foreign films as discussed by Gugler (2003) and Kamara (2004).

Cultural industries, including filmmaking, are given low priority in most developing countries, thus practitioners often do not attain economic viability, failing to ensure a decent living for creators and other actors involved in the enterprise (Kamara, 2004). This seems to be the case in most African countries, where the "cultural sector- film in particular- is neglected and ignored resulting in cultural practitioners being forced to operate in an unregulated environment as their sector rarely appears in public policies" (Bomba 2010 p.2).

This argument presumes that the low importance governments attach to the cultural sector, film included, is the main reason why the industry is struggling. However, the largely unregulated but seemingly

flourishing Nigerian film industry “Nollywood” would challenge that argument. As in most African countries, Namibian filmmakers and video production companies have been struggling to produce films and the few that manage to make films are further struggling to get their films seen by audiences, possibly due to the absence of cinema culture, a small population and lack of distribution channels (Haikali, 2006). One consequence of such circumstances is that filmmakers compete for limited corporate and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) funding to produce films to earn a living. What that means for the development of the industry especially in terms of content production and identity would be an interesting angle for further in-depth analysis.

Decolonising imperialism

Theoretically, the study is situated within the framework of post-colonial theory and cultural imperialism theory. Cultural imperialism, as a theory, emerged in the 60s to describe the global economic and cultural domination of western countries, especially the United States. Schiller (1976) describes it as “the sum of the processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced, and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominating center of the system” (p.9).

In other words, based on the fact that the west produced most of the media content and other products, if not all at that time, Schiller concluded that by exporting their culture and cultural products among others, the cultures of the receiving developing countries were dominated and slowly disappeared. Edward Said (1994), argues that colonialism left a cultural legacy that replicates the justification for superiority of the imperial culture over the ‘native’ culture in need of being ‘civilized’. This legacy requires nation states to put measures in place to support and promote their nascent cultural industries.

Similarly, postcolonial theory investigates consequences of colonialism from many different angles and the ways in which knowledge was or is constructed (Hayward, 2013). Critics question whether this does not then analyze everything through the lens of colonialism (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2013) and ignore human agency as an important factor that allows, for instance, for appropriation or hybridity (Sarikakis, 2004). It should, however, not be misunderstood as a single or totalitarian theory but rather as a framework that can help uncover the overt and hidden binary relations or versions of colonizer and colonized (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2013). In fact, post-colonial theory is “the domain of overlap between these imperial binary oppositions, the area in which ambivalence, hybridity and complexity continually disrupt the certainties of imperial logic” (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2013, p. 20). Therefore, Murphey (2000) asserts that ‘the post-colonial’ if not oversimplified can be a “useful and extremely strategic critical term in the analysis of contemporary African cultures” (p. 248).

The discourses around the first films by African filmmakers such as Sembene Ousmane and the formation of organizations such as the Federation of African Filmmakers FEPACI, were greatly concerned about how to redress the consequences of colonialism (Murphy, 2000; Armes, 2006). In that same vein, Bomba (2010) argues that in post-colonial Africa, governments should actively try to address the distorted images and narratives about local culture that were created and multiplied due to colonialism, and she particularly investigates cultural policy and Namibian film policy infrastructure in that regard. Post-colonial theory can help ‘read’ films and structural relations in that context (Hayward, 2013) while cultural imperialism theory informed by post-colonial theorists acknowledges the continuation and consequences of imperial logic that continue to “reproduce processes of domination” (Sarikakis, 2004, p.81).

Over the past decades, a number of studies on African cinema have been undertaken, mostly about its historical development with critical reflections on the political and social content of films produced in post-colonial Africa and what that meant for identity formation (Tomaselli, 2002; Armes, 2006; Diawara, 2010) as well as the role film can play in the society, especially with regards to nation-building (Diawara, 1992; Gugler, 2003; Bomba, 2010). Franz Fanon, who was one of the most influential writers of the postcolonial theory, describes the role of the native poet in relation to national culture that such must negotiate both the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial period and negotiate a new way “until he has found the seething pot out of which the learning of the future will emerge” (Fanon 1958, p. 225). According to Fanon “national consciousness will both disrupt literary styles and themes, and also create a completely new public (pp.239-240)”. This will be achieved by the native writer “addressing his own people” (p.240). In the case of films, the filmmaker would have to start making films for local audiences.

Cinema arrived in African countries with former colonizers and its primary role was as such, to justify and multiply supremacy and exploitation (Armes, 2006; Haynes, 2011).

Mostly, the films had French producers attached to them and editing happened in France, and no filmmaking infrastructure was created in the country. Hence one could question how far these films were made for local audiences or their relevance for these audiences if one was to see film or poetry in the way Fanon described it, that is as a way of creating new consciousness. Films were however still critical in reflecting on colonial realities and their legacy in creating new identities. They were often discussed within the framework of

postcolonial theory. On the whole, however, the majorities of films accessible were and still are Hollywood films. The assumption that such 'cultural domination' has negative consequences as pointed out by Said (1994), is in a way echoed in the efforts of UNESCO working towards the protection of cultural diversity culminating in the adoption of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Cultural Expression, and the Convention on Safeguarding Cultural Heritage (Brooks, 2006). The former was ratified by Namibia in 2006 and the latter in 2007.

While on the one hand, the Namibian government does not explicitly mention redressing colonial inequalities in its development goals such as 'the Vision 2030 and the Namibia Film Commission Act', one could argue that the government implicitly acknowledges the need to address the consequences of the country's recent history in its strategies by specifically mentioning issues such as nation-building in its constitution (Government of Namibia 1990) and the goal of uniting people in its vision 2030. The Namibia Film Commission (NFC) could be understood as a conduit for creating infrastructures that facilitate nation building, amongst others. Bomba (2010) reached the conclusion that despite political will, the overemphasis of the Namibia Film Commission on attracting international productions to film in Namibia will not be able to address the legacy of colonialism.

Nowadays, however, filmmakers are more concerned with how to create popular cinema and build a viable industry rather than post-colonial discourse (Murphey, 2000). In that regard, it should also be considered that in Namibia and South Africa, which both achieved independence much later than West-African countries, one will find so called born-free filmmakers that never had a colonial experience and as such might have a different agenda.

However, partly due to the insufficiency of such approaches to build sustainable industries (which is something they do not set out to achieve) and some success stories such as in Morocco, there have been renewed calls for state intervention in national cinema development in Africa (Sanogo, 2015). In most African countries, nationalized approaches have failed to create a viable national cinema (Armes, 2006) and African states in the 80s and 90s were discouraged by international financial institutions from intervening directly in the cultural sector (Mhando, 2009; Sanogo, 2015). To a certain degree, the absence of the state stimulated the establishment and growth of the video industry in Ghana and Nigeria, the latter now commonly known as Nollywood (Mhando, 2009; Haynes, 2011; Sanogo, 2015). However, due to the infrastructure as well as capital which are needed to establish a film industry, the government has a role to play (Armes, 2006; Haynes, 2011). Even in commercialized industries such as Hollywood, the state creates an enabling environment with tax breaks and incentives that heavily subsidize the industry, and in Europe, states get directly involved in film funding (Sanogo, 2015). Therefore, the question might not be whether the state gets involved but "the question at hand remains the modalities of such intervention" (Sanogo, 2015, p. 144).

Development of the local industry

The history of the Namibian film industry before the country's independence in 1990 is one of colonial cinema and anthropological movies that were made about the different "exotic" tribes of the country by foreign filmmakers (Haikali, 2006). It took the Namibian government over a decade after independence to focus attention on the development of the local film industry with the establishment of the Namibia Film Commission (NFC) in 2000. The period after the 80s was marked by the withdrawal of other African states from their cultural sectors and by market liberalisation (Mhando, 2009; Sanogo 2015) and this might have influenced the way the Namibia Film Commission was set up.

The NFC was established as a statutory body by an Act of Parliament in 2000 with the mandate to develop the Namibian film industry (Government of Namibia 2000). However, according to Bomba (2010), it was not until 2002 that the Namibia Film Commission commenced operations with very limited resources. The Namibia Film Commission's Act of 2000 specified the board's composition of representatives from various sectors to ensure diversity and representation at different levels (NFC Act 2000).

In line with the amended Act of 2001, three of the Commissioners would be government appointees from the following institutions: (1) Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, (1) Ministry of Home Affairs & Immigration and (1) Ministry of Environment and Tourism. In addition, the Minister of Information and Communication Technology would appoint two representatives nominated by a recognized body that represent the film industry such as the Filmmakers Association of Namibia (Government of Namibia, 2001). The Filmmakers Association of Namibia (FAN) was established with the aim to lobby the government on both, funding and the formulation of policies that are favourable to the development of the local film industry (FAN 2015).

According to the Namibia Film Commission Act of 2000, the NFC's objectives are to: (a) Promote Namibia as a film location for film production on the international market, (b) attract film producers and facilitate their initiatives to carry out film productions in Namibia, (c) Encourage producers to employ or make use of Namibian personnel and facilitate for film production, and (d) establish relationships with any local or

international person who may contribute to the development and promotion of the film industry in Namibia (Government of Namibia 2000, p. 4).

Based on the assumption that attracting foreign productions to come to Namibia could further help promote the growth of the local film industry, the NFC has been investing money in sending representatives, mostly board members, to different international film festivals and location fares to market Namibia as a potential filming location. There are also efforts by the Namibia Film Commission to lobby the government's approval of the "Namibia Film Incentive Programme" with the aim to increase the number of foreign productions coming to Namibia (Cuff, 2013).

One might argue that the NFC's approach in attracting foreign productions is working. For instance, some of the high profile productions that used Namibia as a filming location were "Hollywood blockbusters such as Mad Max Fury Road- with a local spending of over \$350 million, 10,000 BC, Flight of the Phoenix, The Cell, Steel Dawn and Red Dragon" (Cuff, 2013, p. 8). This phenomenon is believed by stakeholders to have the potential of bringing revenue into Namibia and promoting the country as a tourist destination. For instance, Hartenstein (2010) asserts that more efforts should be made to present Namibia as a young prospering country to the rest of the world, and as a suitable filming destination that bears substantial economic potential for local small to medium sized corporate enterprises in a variety of business sectors. Both, the travelling to festivals as well as the above listed proposed incentive programs focus on attracting foreign productions to film in the country.

It is important to note however, that an appropriate and flexible support system appears necessary to help businesses in the film industry to develop the talent, innovation, entrepreneurship and skills they require to flourish at all stages in their development (Devon & Torbay Council et al., 2006).

REFERENCES

- [1]. Abraham, A. (2014). Nigeria: *How entertainment contributes to Nigeria's GDP*. Retrieved from <http://allafrica.com/stories/201404090290.html>
- [2]. Arnes, R. (2006). *African filmmaking: North and South of the Sahara*. Indiana, IN: University Press.
- [3]. Ashcroft, B. Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. (2000). *Post-colonial studies_ the key concepts*. New York, NY: Routledge
- [4]. Bomba, M. (2010). *Driving on an unpaved road: The case of the arts and film industry in the Republic of Namibia*. Washington, D.C: Howard University.
- [5]. Bond, P. (2013). *Hollywood, Creative Industries Add \$504 Billion to U.S. GDP*. Retrieved from <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/film-tv-copyright-industries-add-657544>
- [6]. Brooks, E. (2006). Cultural imperialism vs. cultural protectionism: Hollywood's response to UNESCO efforts to promote cultural diversity. *Journal of International Business and Law*. 5 (1): 5.
- [7]. Available at: <http://scholarlycommons.law.hofstra.edu/jibl/vol5/iss1/5>
- [8]. Cuff, M. (2009). *Economic impact assessment of the film sector in Durban and KZN* retrieved from <http://durbanportal.net/sectors/Film/Shared%20Documents/Report%204%20-%20KZN%20DFO%20EIA.pdf>
- [9]. Cuff, M. (2013). *Film incentives for Namibia*. Windhoek, Namibia:
- [10]. Namibia Film Commission. Devon County Council, Torbay Council, Arts Council England South West and European Social Fund. (2006). *Creative industries economic & skills research*. Retrieved from http://www.devon.gov.uk/creative_industries_research_skills.pdf
- [11]. Diawara M. (2010). *African Film: New forms of aesthetics and politics*.
- [12]. New York NY: Prestel.
- [13]. Diawara, M. (1992). *African Cinema. Politics and Culture*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press
- [14]. Fanon, F. (1967). *The wretched of the earth*, (C. Farrington, Trans.). London, Britain.
- [15]. Government of Namibia (2004). *Vision 2030: Prosperity, harmony, peace and political stability*. Windhoek, Namibia: National Planning Commission Secretariat, 2004.
- [16]. Government of the Republic of Namibia (2000, 5 May). *Namibia Film Commission Act 6 of 2000*: Windhoek, Namibia.
- [17]. Government of the Republic of Namibia (2001). *Namibia Film Commission amendment Act 11 of 2001*: Windhoek. Government Gazette of the Republic of Namibia.
- [18]. Gugler, J. (2003). *African Film: re-imagining a continent*.
- [19]. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- [20]. Haikali, J. K. (2006). *The structure of the Namibian film and video industry*.
- [21]. Windhoek: (Unpublished BA Dissertation, University of Namibia).
- [22]. Hartenstein, F. (2010, 9 March) *Impact assessment: The economic dimension of the Namibian film industry*: Windhoek, Namibia. DED
- [23]. Haynes, J. (2011). African cinema and Nollywood: contradictions. *Situations: project of the radical imagination*, 4(1).
- [24]. Hayward, S. (2013). *Cinema studies: the key concepts*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- [25]. Kamara, Y. (2004). *Keys to successful cultural enterprise development in developing countries: prepared for UNESCO arts and cultural enterprise division*. Retrieved from <http://www.acpcultures.eu/>
- [26]. Mhando, M. (2009). Globalization and African cinema: Distribution and reception in the anglophone region. *Journal of African Cinemas*, 1 (1). Retrieved from <http://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/11274/>
- [27]. Murphey, D (2000). Africans filming Africa: questioning theories of an authentic African cinema, *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 13(2), 239-249.
- [28]. National Film and Video Censors Board. 2000. *6-Year report: 1994-2000*.
- [29]. Lagos, Nigeria: George Print.
- [30]. Said, E. (1994) *Culture and Imperialism*. New York, NY: Vintage.
- [31]. Sarikakis, K. (2004) Legitimizing domination: notes on the changing faces of cultural imperialism. In H. Bernd & S. Russell. (Eds). *Cultural imperialism: Essays in the political economy of cultural domination*. (pp. 80-92) Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press.

- [32]. Schiller, H. J. (1973). *Communication and cultural domination*. New York, NY: International Arts and Sciences Press.
- [33]. Thiec, Y. (2009). *Worldwidebest practices in legislation, regulatory regimes and incentives for the audio-visual Industry*. Retrieved from http://www.cnm.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task
- [34]. UNESCO. (2012). *Measuring the economic contribution of cultural industries: a review and assessment of current methodological*. UNESCO Institutes for Statistics.
- [35]. Retrieved April 25, 2015 from <http://www.uis.unesco.org/>

Fred Joshua Mwilima." A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Role of Government in the Decolonisation of the Creative Industry."."International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI) 7.06 (2018): 29-33.