

Arab Documentary Landscapes: Transnational Flow of Solidarity at Festivals

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In response to the global commodification of culture and neoliberal, capitalist tendencies, political filmmaking and specifically documentary have taken on an increasing urgency with creative as well as political ideas and idealism central to the form. Documentary and political cinema is also increasingly present in the world on television, cinema and smaller screens. In the Arab world, the audiences' growing attachment to the non-fiction form is reflected in the establishment of new documentary TV channels, the introduction of extra documentary slots on existing channels and in the increasing amount of specialized documentary film festivals.

Likewise, festivals often did not accept documentaries on their programs, or if they did these films were part of a sidebar: cheaper to program due to lower screening fees, screened in smaller or off-site venues, not accompanied by director or producer but by local activists or specialists in a topic, screened to smaller audiences, and awarded fewer and less valuable prizes. This has changed dramatically over the last decade, as even the biggest festivals in the world generally,ⁱ and in the Arab world specifically, are increasingly awarding top prizes to creative documentaries.ⁱⁱ

For a long time documentary was the overlooked relative of fiction film, often seen as a training ground for the 'real' work in fiction feature filmmaking. But documentary's long dip in popularity was remedied with the Digital Revolution and its increased democratization of the medium of film, and now, in the age of fake news and reporters under pressure (physically and morally), creative documentaries gain traction. Likewise, the Arab Revolutions have seen a rapid change in attitude towards Arab documentary both in and beyond the Arab world. This urgency and change are reflected in film festivals' programs and their missions. Festivals are first and foremost celebrations of an art form, but documentary festivals dedicate themselves entirely to a form, as an act of resistance to the underrepresentation of the form, with ideas and ideals serving as inspirations for a gender, generation or ethnic group.

In this global growth of documentary appreciation and the urgency with which the form is increasingly regarded, this chapter will bring together some of the rare scholarship on Arab documentary and festivals, on the increasing ability of a global audience to see and listen to politically relevant documentaries from the Arab world, and draw an overview of documentary festivals located throughout the MENA. In this chapter I address questions like: How and when were documentary festivals established in the MENA region and what has their development been? If historically documentaries may have been more keenly suppressed or censored, which are the institutions and individuals dedicated to screening documentaries at festivals now? How do Arab documentaries feature on the global festival circuit? Has the changing global flow of culture had an influence on the increasing production of documentary?

Looking at and comparing six festivals in the MENA dedicated entirely or mainly to the documentary form, this chapter reveals a lively circuit that runs counter to the glamour of the Arab world's most established international film festivals. International festivals such as those in Marrakech, Carthage, Cairo, Doha and Dubai are perhaps more widely known for their star-studded atmosphere and the big-budget markets, red carpets and production networking events, but the documentary festivals in the region, like DoxBox in Damascus (Syria), Doc à Tunis (Tunisia), Fidadoc in Agadir (Morocco), Docudays in Beirut (Lebanon),

Ismailia Documentary Festival (Egypt) and the Al Jazeera International Documentary Festival in Doha (Qatar), show how a strongly congenial and collaborative nature can stand up against these larger festivals that are gobbling up budgets and markets. Fostering transnational co-productions, collaboration and solidarity movements in film, networked (not for working) events shape documentary communities that are concrete, creative and often nomadic hubs on the global festival circuit.

Film festivals and film festival studies have long outgrown their European cradle and are now a world phenomenon. Some of the largest and most respected film festivals are no longer located in the so-called 'West' but in previously marginalized places such as Eastern Europe (Karlovy Vary), East Asia (Busan), Africa (FESPACO) and the Arab world (Carthage). Similarly, the significance of the international festival circuit in being an outlet for Arab documentary and independent cinema is growing exponentially, as some of the largest documentary festivals in the world like IDFA in Amsterdam in the Netherlands, CPH:DOC in Copenhagen in Denmark and the Sheffield Documentary Festival in the UK are embracing more and more Arab films for their expanding audiences. The study of festivals must be central to understanding the socio-cultural dynamics of global cinema and international cultural exchanges at large, especially in a study of Arab documentary. No longer a marginal region or a marginal film form, Arab documentary needs to be inscribed in its region and history, as festivals that are sustained moments where time and space are condensed and intensified and where audiences expand.

Documentary film festival studies: scoping a field

In their pioneering work on film festivals, Marijke De Valck and Dina Iordanova both theorize the global circuit of film festivals, and festivals' roles as alternative distribution channels for cinema. They propose that festivals act as 'special' occasions or nodes in the transnational circuit in which films circulate. Anderson's understanding of 'imagined communities' is central to Iordanova's ideas. While I am not, as Iordanova is, looking at migrant communities, or, as De Valck is, discussing globally central red carpet events, I do regard the documentary festival as a strong and increasingly confident transnational moment dedicated to a specific audience in and of itself. Indeed, in my view, through the convergence of documentary and its audience, a documentary festival creates a momentary unity among a diverse audience that comes together in the spirit of a shared experience, a moment of solidarity in the cinema, where time and space on the screen construct that shared experience. In an explosively globalizing world, especially when we speak of media like cinema, perhaps a more useful term than 'imagined community' is 'imagined world', as Appadurai theorizes it through various 'landscapes'.ⁱⁱⁱ In particular, the ideoscape and the mediascape are relevant here, as a film festival is a space where diverse individualities from a myriad of landscapes converge in the spirit of solidarity with a mode of filmmaking (in the case of documentary festivals), and with the attitude of shared experiences that such a space provides.

Indeed, Appadurai's extension of Anderson's imagined community into an overlap of imagined worlds might be more useful in looking at festivals as moments of networks of kinship, of friendship, of work and leisure. Festivals as part of the global cultural economy flow are 'mediascapes': metaphors by which people live, that subvert center-periphery models and instead blur the lines between nations and cultures. They bring together the 'multiple worlds, which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe'.^{iv} Likewise, documentary is not a genre, but a form of filmmaking and as such does not carry (strong) implications of state or nationhood. Rather, it is a transnational (aspirational) form of filmmaking that encourages cross-border and supra-

national thinking and also creates a more obvious opportunity for solidarity, for seeing and hearing beyond the border and for transnational understanding of humanity. This idealistic element crosses boundaries and creates imagined worlds at festivals, between the international audiences, in ideoscapes rather than an ethnoscape. As people come together and cross boundaries in communicative mediums like cinema, hearing and seeing one another become increasingly central to the globalization of culture.^v In my approach to documentary festivals especially, this idea of an approximation through a medium that enables a more democratic ‘hearing’ and ‘seeing’ is central in the conceptualization of a networked, collaborative platform for solidarity. Documentary festivals offer a sense of place through communication, media and shared responsibilities.

As stated, festivals act as celebrations of a film or a theme, as alternative circuits for distribution, and as showcases for ideas and ideals, for or in the service of an audience and a group of practitioners and professionals part of a shared experience. Audiences and programmers involved with the festival are invited to experience themselves, by an ‘undisguised act of imagination, as an extension of a community [. . .] to which they, by virtue of their very attendance at the festival, now relate through a mental image of affinity and through the act of their very real togetherness.’^{vi} My interpretation of this imagined world shaped through documentary flows is perhaps more specific: I want to show that it is not only the screening but also the making of documentaries that conjure up a specific atmosphere, a particular abstract experience that is enacted within an imagined world of festivals. Any film festival provides a suitable context for causes that thrive on solidarity and togetherness. A documentary festival does this even more so, as it brings together diverse audiences to experience an imagined togetherness, in the spirit of acceptance of a reality on screen that seeks empowerment, and to benefit from exchanging images, narratives and especially ideologies.

Events that focus on documentaries, and where documentary makers, documentary subjects, professionals and docuphiles gather, create a very specific idea of imagined togetherness, a mix of people and topics that are interested in the same ideals and ideas: the shaping of a platform for ‘real’ voices – i.e. people who are perhaps more concerned with the reality of the socio-political world than with red carpet events and star-studded shows, in films that pose moral dilemmas and ethical questions that consider the ‘real’ world and a lived experience. In the live space of the festival, organizers and audiences form an identity that comes alive in the act of watching a film and imagining fellow human beings becoming part of one’s own lived experience. Thus, the festival’s set-up extends an invitation to engage in what is essentially a political act of imagined belonging, with the films’ subjects and with fellow audience members: a shared experience that considers a lived experience, and where those who share it can progress to a newly lived experience. Perhaps then we can consider that the ‘imagined’ turns into a ‘concrete’ documentary world at documentary festivals.

Marking documentary festivals as networked events and as platforms for workshops, meetings and opportunities, is both an inherently idealist/ethical part of the festivals’ missions and visions, but also crucially relevant for the business structure of the festival. Likewise, the business proposition is directly linked to the creation of an ephemeral ‘imagined world’ or a fluid mediascape that becomes the fan base niche for transnational film distribution of special interest material.^{vii} This concrete togetherness is also always already related to funding streams: often, documentary festivals are funded or sponsored with official and/or grassroots money, and ultimately do serve specific business purposes if they wish to become sustainable. A festival is a part of the film business and industry, and is run by managers, CEOs, producers: people that need to manage large sums of money in order to keep the festival going. However much the artistic directors aim to visualize their ideals and

their aspirational approach to film, ultimately a festival cannot exist or run without a financial structure.

If documentary is often associated with ideals and activism, so are social and digital media, in particular since 2011, the year of the Revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and across the MENA region. As I have argued elsewhere,^{viii} the interest since 2011 in the Middle East carried the potential to open up opportunities for Arab voices to be heard elsewhere, and documentary did emerge as a tool to confront the media with its limitations and prejudices. Documentary festivals around the world have taken the images that emerged from the Revolutions (both the digital one and the socio-political ones) seriously and offer them as alternatives to the media. Documentary from the Arab world has become producer and product of these progressive social movements, and has paved a path for itself within worldwide documentary and other film festivals. Likewise, within the Arab world, documentary festivals have gained confidence and increasing relevance, as I will show.

Documentary and digital and social media thrive on one another: more and more of the content on social media consists of non-fiction, documentary content, as documentary makers increasingly use social media to spread their subjects. The global trend of an increasing interest in ‘causes’, and the trendiness of activism online has, next to the increased global awareness of larger groups of people, given shape to online shared experiences as well. This awareness of preaching to the converted has led to some critical studies of commodified activism, or ‘slacktivism’. The commodification of culture and the increasing immateriality of the body are by-products of the exponential rise of social and digital media. As Klausen argues: organizations ‘strategically use the visually mediated body as an effective tool on social media to both commodify the imaginary and create ‘spreadability’ as well as to channel followers’ engagement’.^{ix} Likewise, a festival of documentary film interested in the ethical side of filmmaking and the engagement of audiences, uses the medium as a commodity in order to create a tool that inspires. The contemporary commodification of culture and of activism have been shown to be a struggle over representation^x: image is everything – and part of a very strong and increasingly ‘imagined’ and ‘real’ identity.

As such it is useful, if not always practicable, to distinguish between festivals that enjoy the endorsement of official policy bodies and those organized by (grassroots) activists committed to specific causes. The divide between ‘official’ and ‘activist’ agendas links to different funding streams and sponsorship arrangements where public and private interests intersect or diverge. But these streams often overlap and certainly influence each other, as they commodify one another. Commitment and commodification increasingly become partners in the furthering of social and cultural engagement and sustainable projections, in particular with documentary festivals (or all festivals that focus on non-mainstream forms of filmmaking for that matter, like short film festivals, animation festivals, themed film festivals etc.). Each festival devoted to the particular cinematic form of documentary encapsulates its vision through various event details, either through their film programmers, the festival’s title or in their mission statement. Often devoted, as we shall see, to solidarity and engagement through documentary, festivals explicitly phrase an agenda of ideals in their ambitions and initiatives, where they almost without exception mention concepts like solidarity, collaboration, meeting place, networked events, etc., in other words, in the space where the documentary ‘landscape’ brings people together. It is in the ideas and ideals behind documentary festivals, conceptualized by their directors or programmers, where personal political stances and priorities shape the festival and the audiences’ expectations and contributions.

This chapter looks at film festivals that specialize in documentary and that over the last two decades have come to represent an important regional (and international) cinematic

phenomenon. I will show how newer Arab documentary film festivals as well as the ones that have been established for a while, are growing in size and ambition in parallel with the world opening up towards individual voices, subjective points of view and increasingly shared (social media) stance towards politics. Social media and mobile technology have undoubtedly contributed to the opening up of the Middle East and its documentaries to the rest of the world, but also to itself, through fluid landscapes of film and documentary. The question remains of course whether documentaries and festivals can actually change sensibilities, and how sustainable these political and financial ambitions are. Some of the festivals under discussion are more successful at mediating between the local and the global and in negotiating national and transnational interests than others. And that is often also where the nexus of their success is located. Ultimately I hope to show that the congenial atmosphere or the aim to share and open up subjective voices to the collective ear is a particular strength of documentary festivals in the Arab world, and that here we have platforms for change, for ideology, for solidarity rather than for stars, glamour and the myth of the individual.

Arab Documentary Festivals

1. DoxBox, Damascus, Syria

One of the most activist and aspirational documentary organizations from the Arab world is DoxBox, established in Syria in 2008 as an annual documentary film festival organized by two Syrian filmmakers, Diana El Jeiroudi and Orwa Nyrabia from production company Proaction Film. It was a non-profit, free-admission event that aimed to spread awareness and increase interest in documentaries, a form of filmmaking that had been practiced by few but very important and widely respected documentary makers like Omar Amiralay, who had been and continues to be highly appreciated outside of Syria. With its free admission for local audiences and an audience award, it was the first festival in Syria to highlight audience participation.

2012 marked the first anniversary of the uprising in Syria, and would have seen the fifth year of the DoxBox festival. All over the Arab world, filmmakers have documented their uprisings and are paying for it with their freedom and lives. So in 2012 the DoxBox organizers decided to make a statement against the Bashar Al-Assad regime by not holding the festival in Syria; instead, they planned a DoxBox Global Day to be held in 12 countries, from Sudan to the UK to Kosovo, as a gesture of continued support for these filmmakers amid fears that media interest in the conflict was waning. In 2012 and 2013, DoxBox Global Day for Syria was the festival's international showcase of Syrian documentary films, organized in solidarity with the festival at venues around the world. In 2014, the festival transitioned into the DoxBox Association, a non-profit association registered in Berlin, aiming to support and train documentary filmmakers from the Arab World.

In another oppressive context (i.e. China), Tit Leung points out that, for documentary and political films, regional cultural and political conditions can mean 'run-ins with authorities' and having one's festival 'shut down' in one place, only to be 'regrouped and quietly moved to an unobtrusive location' elsewhere.^{xi} Nornes describes this resilience as independent documentary filmmakers playing a 'cat-and-mouse game with the government'.^{xii} This is exactly what happened with DoxBox: the festival could not take place in 2012 due to the Syrian government's disregard for human rights, which ran counter to the festival's ideals. Instead, these shared ideals – along with urgent Syrian films – found another, global audience. As such, the festival's ideals have become even more central to the

Commented [SV1]: He now runs IDFA!

association's core values that have become increasingly important in documentary making worldwide.

Before this, Syrian cinema had been known for its 'refined and sophisticated system of metaphors and symbols,'^{xiii} as Charlotte Bank explains, and described as a culture of paradoxes.^{xiv} The Revolution and then War in Syria became a manifestation of the government's failed suppression of a popular will for change, expressed more and more urgently in a changed visual language, as observed in documentaries by older as well as younger generations, like Amiralay's own work but also in work by people he had trained or collaborated with like Reem Ali and Hala al-Abdallah. Banks describes this as a 'freer language', where artists first became activists and then evolved towards different kinds of artists with a new identity.

As a festival before and as an association now DoxBox aims to nurture a community, or a landscape of filmmakers that make impactful films. It now wants to

re-build an active and independent community of filmmakers from the Arab World based on mutual solidarity and trust; to empower this community through various avenues of networking and support, including completion and promotion of films; to celebrate and acknowledge the achievements of community members at both regional and international levels.^{xv}

The Association supports documentary filmmakers in and from the Arab World, promoting the values and principles of justice, dignity, and human rights. It does this through seven avenues: education (the academy); resources (a library); publications (a catalogue); a residency; funding; by influencing policy; and through an award called The Amiralay. It is evident that the ideals and structure of the association are positioned around ideals like solidarity, support, sustainable networks and development or education. This spirit is inspired not only by the production company that originally set up the festival, but also by Omar Amiralay. His personal, subjective, almost testimonial documentary films laid the groundwork for what Syrian documentary has become since 2011-2012: a collaborative, aspirational and transnational example of documentary solidarity. Civil Society was central to Amiralay's understanding of the future of Syria and the road towards a democratization of the country and its arts, reflected in the prize awarded by DoxBox in his name, awarded to those making documentaries that illustrate direct, active and lasting impacts on, and for, their societies.

As is the case with other documentary film festivals and organizations, DoxBox works in close collaboration with other festivals: for example, the director of FIDADOC in Agadir in Morocco sits on the board for DoxBox. DoxBox also works closely with IDFA and CPH:DOC and the European Documentary Network. Support and grants for DoxBox come from The Netherlands' Prince Claus Fund, Denmark's KVINFO, Germany's Goethe Institute and Heinrich Boell Foundation, and The Arab Fund for Art and Culture (AFAC), among others. Significantly, DoxBox runs a fund for documentary production, specifically for those documentary makers working in dangerous conditions. Like some of the more established international film festivals, such as IDFA, DoxBox is developing its ability to support more documentary production.

2. Doc à Tunis, Tunisia, Tunisia

Revolution has had an enormous impact on the cultural flow in Tunisia. But documentary has not been very popular in the past in the country. Tunisian film history emphasizes its Golden Age of filmmaking in the late 1980s and 1990s, with filmmakers like Nouri Bouzid, Férid Boughedir and Moufida Tlatli. Hédi Khélil notes that because documentary making has political implications and consists of unavoidable subject choices,^{xvi} its long absence in Tunisia, he says, is due to the fact that no individuals have dedicated themselves completely to documentaries. Documentary filmmaking, if it exists, is mainly seen as a prelude to a more sustainable and profitable career in fiction. Tunisia, he claims, as a land of fictions and myths, has not been comfortable with documentary presentation. Hillauer agrees that documentaries have had a bad reputation, as Tunisians are not accustomed to discussing their problems in public.^{xvii} Boughédir adds to this that in Tunisia there is a ruling ‘tendency to synthesize influences, [...] transforming them in a nice, happy, moderated way. It’s a culture that smoothes off the sharp edges’.^{xviii} But Tahar Chikhaoui notes the growing importance of documentary:

[p]artly as a result of their freedom from many of the social and political concerns which were so vital to their elders, the newcomers have shown more confidence in the camera and in reality, from which stems the place accorded to the suggestive force of the image, liberated from the process of narration, and the growing interest in the documentary.^{xix}

Nowadays the country is one of the most prolific documentary producers in the region, with production houses like Nomadis really engaging with the pre- as well as the post-Revolution realities. These filmmakers, their films but also their ideals, which had to be hidden or censored until recently, grew out of the collaborative spirit of the cine clubs.

While in most Tunisian films, there was a tendency to move away from social realism into pure fiction and magic, the amateur movement moved in the opposite direction in the late 1960s. Amateur cinema contributed to the development of documentary in Tunisian film culture. The FTCA – Fédération Tunisienne des Cinéastes Amateurs – was set up in 1962. There was no greater plan for the federation than to bring together amateurs in order to enable them to make films. The amateurs reacted against the system, fashioning militant films and mobilizing a cultural and intellectual environment or ‘landscape’ for artists.^{xx} The result was a body of films that engaged with the reality of the present and opposed it to the hagiography of the past. It is, then, with the continued efforts of particular individuals and amateur organizations dedicated to the documentary that the form has steadily become a more appreciated and respected art.

Doc à Tunis was established in 2006 by the cultural organization Nass el Fen (‘People of the Arts’), and the first festival director was François Niney, a French philosopher, and writer for *Cahiers du Cinema* specialized in documentaries. The main vision of the founding organizers was to develop the dialogue between cultures and peoples; to link artistic and pedagogical dimensions by highlighting in their program education, creation and dissemination through workshops and specialized training; to become part of a global conversation on the world and its reality, the present and the future of encounter and exchange. Indeed, the mission statement of the organization emphasizes that the festival’s goal is to form a view of the world through inclusion and exchange: ‘we cannot develop a relevant point of view on the world on our own; it is shaped by putting it to the test with other points of view, by encounter and exchange.’^{xxi} Likewise, Niney has said about documentaries that they ‘show the real from a point of view born not of submission but of analysis and

change, initiation, encounter and reflection.^{xxii} Documentary, for him, opens up the dimension, artistic as well as political, of our freedom. As such, he meant to create an awareness of the heritage of a documentary tradition from Africa and Europe at the first edition of the festival: he did not focus only on the newest releases in 2006, but programmed a panorama of documentaries through an international selection, as well as a retrospective of Tunisian documentaries.

From 2007 until 2017 Hichem Ben Ammar was the festival's artistic director. He is a teacher of cinema and audiovisual culture, a cine-club organizer, a film critic, and a festival organizer. He is, as a critic, in his filmmaking and also in his programming, interested in promoting creative documentaries that are relevant to the present moment, in the particular contexts of the southern Mediterranean countries, that are, he said, handicapped by the absence of a production and dissemination framework. He also states there is a real urgency to preserve a Northern African / Southern Mediterranean identity, to focus on local and independent filmmaking. Ben Ammar is interested in the ethics of the documentary, and sees Doc à Tunis playing a central role: with the festival he wishes to remind the audience, filmmakers as well as politicians that the documentary is 'dissident, dissonant and discordant.'^{xxiii} That the documentary unveils, denounces and distils ideas, defends diversity, demolishes dogmas. As such, Doc à Tunis – located at the heart of the Mediterranean – is to be the link of solidarity and dialogue between east and west. Once again, this reminds us of the idea of bringing together, for a brief and specific moment in time, a space for artists and admirers of documentary, in a landscape of likeminded, open and fluidly linked metaphoric networks.

With Ben Ammar, Doc à Tunis became a non-competitive festival that focuses on young people and students. It is thus not only a dissident but also a very inclusive festival, where the development of the form and its growing confidence take center stage. Throughout the years, Ben Ammar's director statements, with which he opens the festival, emphasize ideals such as justice and democracy and a fervent belief in young people. In 2009, the festival included, for example, a workshop that introduced children from the ages of 10 to 15 to shooting techniques. In 2010, Ben Ammar stressed the importance of locating Tunisia and its documentary making within the Arab world, by reflecting on its membership of the Mediterranean. From this flowed an interest in the idea of a Documentary Caravan, which saw the light of day in 2011, with the aim to disseminate the values of citizenship through documentaries in Tunisia's rural cinema regions.^{xxiv} He recognized how 'the real' was becoming increasingly important in 2011 with the statement that 'the urgency is tangible' as it is, according to him, 'through art that we collectively learn how to build an identity.' This became even more the case in 2012, and at this edition of Doc à Tunis, he noted that

Documentary cinema will never have had the importance it has had this past year. With the historical upheavals that the world has witnessed, a new dimension of the documentary is outlined. The documentary is the art of making visible the complexities of the human, to discover its hidden facets at the bend of a glance stolen by the camera lens. A new breath is given to the documentary which not only captures the real and transmits the truth but also acts on it. (Director's editorial)

With the changes brought about by the Tunisian Revolution being set in motion in 2011 and 2012, the 2013 edition of the festival downsized, as it wanted to 'break with the profusion of screens and titles of previous years' in order to concentrate on what it considered essential: decoding reality and developing debates with filmmakers, interest in students and sessions

with professors from FEMIS at l'Ecole des Arts et du Cinéma (EDAC). The program as such revealed a focus on documentaries from and about countries like Syria and Algeria, and with an interest in the consequences of terrorism globally, but most specifically and urgently in the Arab region.

In June 2017, the Tunisian Ministry of Cultural Affairs announced that Hichem Ben Ammar had been named the director of the new Tunisian Cinémathèque.^{xxv} Ben Ammar thus expands his interest in documentary, having developed the art form into a respected and valued way of filmmaking and guiding the festival successfully through the Jasmine Revolution. With documentary festivals, young people are given the opportunity to finally express themselves on political issues and to criticize previous generations for not doing so. Documentary cinema in Tunisia allows young filmmakers to give their views on their environment and to question the historical period with their own vision.

3. Fidadoc, Agadir, Morocco

Like Tunisia, historically Morocco has produced comparatively few documentaries, as financial, political and social limitations as well as a lack of producers interested in the form hampered the development of a viable documentary culture. The CCM's influence on cinema in the country has resulted in a very lively filmmaking scene, to the detriment of documentaries. But this is rapidly changing. Documentary makers like Leila Kilani^{xxvi}, Dalila Ennadre, and Jawad Rhalib are making their mark on the global documentary scene. Farida Benlyazid, one of Morocco's most important female filmmakers, also increasingly focuses on documentary films. Simultaneously, a new generation of young documentary makers with strong activist tendencies is also finding its feet with anti-establishment and independent films and practices, see for example the work of Nadir Bouhmouch, Saïda Janjague and Mahassine Massi.

Since 2008, Fidadoc, a film festival in Agadir that is entirely dedicated to documentary, also plays a significant role in the popularization and appreciation of the form. In collaboration with TV channel 2M and several regional and international partners, this festival is putting all its efforts into stimulating new national production. Due to a lack of experienced producers in the country in general, documentary production is very often a matter of co-productions with European producers, and in order to remedy this situation, Fidadoc develops and encourages local and regional work, focusing on a pan-Arab and pan-African inspired approach. As such, their programming and events envisage the development of a real documentary industry in Morocco, positioning themselves at the helm of south-south collaboration.

Fidadoc was founded by producer Nouzha Drissi, who specialized in documentaries. With Drissi's vision, Fidadoc's vocation has always been fundamentally plural: educational, developmental, cultural and professional. She wanted to develop a culture in Morocco that was more open to documentary^{xxvii}, to introduce to a wider audience a cinematographic form of writing rooted in reality. The festival still emphasizes her words:

We believe there is no economic development without a social and cultural one. An ideal channel to raise awareness among the citizens about humanist values, documentary filmmaking meets this need to build and assert an identity. (Nouzha Drissi)

The general manager of the festival is Hicham Falah, who is also artistic director of the international Women's Film Festival in Salé and sits on the general assembly of DoxBox. Fallah has held on to Drissi's ideals for the festival. Since Drissi passed away in 2011, the festival is run by ACEA, Association de Culture et d'Éducation par l'Audiovisuel and like Drissi, ACEA runs on the idea that documentary cinema constitutes an ideal means for education and development.

The educational focus is not only on young people and children watching educational films, but also on developing new talent in documentary filmmaking. Since 2012, the festival boasts the Documentary Hive, a series of workshops that help develop young people's capacities and projects. The Hive invites 50 young documentary makers from the many film schools around Morocco, thus contributing to a 'landscape' of Moroccan documentary professionals. During the festival they attend workshops and film screenings, and present their work to professionals who critique their projects. 15 of these young people are then selected for more intensive, 30-minute one-on-one meetings with professionals. At the end of the festival, a few of these are invited to a Writing Workshop in Safi. ACEA is also associated with the 'Rencontres Tënk de coproduction de Saint-Louis' (Senegal), organized in the context of the AFRICADOC network. The best young filmmakers from the Hive get to attend 'Tënk' (or 'pitch' in Wolof) in Senegal, with aspiring sub-Saharan documentary filmmakers. However, while these intentions are certainly admirable, a young filmmaker told me anonymously that its usefulness is limited, and that the vision and discourse sounds better than the practice: Moroccan mentors are not as interested in the new talent as they could be.

In line with its founder's ideals, next to education, the festival is also interested in humanistic values such as mutual respect and tolerance. As part of a much larger effort to revitalize film production and reception in Morocco, Fidadoc deploys digital cine-mobile units to local communities. The festival's mission is to 'remain faithful to the spirit of sharing and openness that characterizes its focus and identity, and to continue to create a congenial atmosphere',^{xxviii} something we see returning in the missions and visions of most of the documentary festivals under discussion here.

While the educational developments focus on young Moroccan filmmakers and the cine-mobile units emphasize the national distribution of film, the festival also has an interest in wider pan-Arab and pan-African collaborations and outreach projects. MenaDoc is a program of film screenings that focuses on creating a network for Maghreb producers. Ideally located at the crossroads of Africa, the Arab world and the Euro-Mediterranean area, the Fidadoc platform of exchanges aims to become the central rendezvous for creative documentary makers in the region. The festival's wider interest lies in its pan-African associations with sub-Saharan countries like Senegal, Mali and Niger. AfricaDoc organizes a coproduction workshop 'Produire au sud Agadir-Sahara' and is the festival's newest step in establishing itself as a platform for collaborations across the Sahara. In fact, Fidadoc is the only north-Saharan member of AfricaDoc, a network for documentary professionals from more than fifteen countries in Central and West Africa.^{xxix}

In the wake of the popular uprisings of the Arab Spring, there has been an explosion of interest in documentary filmmaking in the Maghreb and the Middle East. In some countries, this has stimulated a documentary renaissance, while in others a documentary impulse has newly emerged. This bears on festival programming, and in 2012 and 2013, Fidadoc's program focused on Tunisia's new wave of documentary and paid homage to Syrian filmmakers. In 2013 Syrian producer Orwa Nyrabia attended Fidadoc: he co-founded DoxBox and won the 2014 Grand Prix of the Sundance Festival for his production *Return to Homs*. A contingent of young Algerian documentarists contributed to the Hive, and in 2014

the selection highlighted the originality of documentary filmmaking in Lebanon and Palestine.

With its focus on expanding the affiliations with other Arab and African countries and documentary organizations, Fidadoc is one of the most active, creative and expansive festivals today. Its emphasis on regional transnational landscapes and its negotiation of different shifting audiences makes it one of the most interesting festivals. With Falah at its helm, who is richly connected as well, this festival reveals in its structure the strength of a transnationally networked experience for documentaries and their makers. The central support for Fidadoc comes from Moroccan TV channel 2M. Since Fidadoc's first edition, 2M has offered a prize for the International Competition and ensures complete media coverage of the festival. This collaboration has resulted in an active partnership that encourages the screening and promotion of documentary on national TV. For example, 2M's weekly documentary program, *Des histoires et des hommes* (Men and their Histories) offers films screened during Fidadoc the chance to reach bigger audiences on TV. This television program has been known to set new audience records. 2M and Fidadoc work together to develop Moroccan documentaries and their audiences by contributing to a successful model for partnering on increasing the visibility of documentary, aspiring to raise a national interest in the form.

Fidadoc is an important local player, working towards making documentary more popular in the growing Moroccan film industry, developing an interest in the form with producers, directors and audiences in Morocco. At the same time the festival is of crucial importance regionally, in the Maghreb, the MENA and in Africa at large, with a focus moving away from Europe, away from the (past) 'center' and towards a pan-African and pan-Arab network of collaborations and co-productions, both while working with very young and aspiring filmmakers on the African continent, and with professionals who are developing increased confidence and establishing a regional transnational circuit of documentary aficionados.

4. Docudays, Beirut, Lebanon

Docudays was founded in 2001 in Beirut by siblings Mohamed and Abir Hashem, after they started up their documentary production company Solo Films. Solo Films specializes in producing television and corporate documentaries in and about the Arab world, and has offices in Doha and Beirut. At the head of the company is Mohamed Hashem, who also assisted with the launch of the Al-Jazeera Documentary Festival in Qatar in 2005 as Senior Consultant. In parallel with DocuDays, Hashem launched the Beirut Documentary Encounter, a networking event where filmmakers, producers and funders meet, and Beirut Documentary Forum, a more 'more theoretical space, aimed at both the study of and the contribution to the advancement of the industry in the region.' His sister Abir is a filmmaker, teacher, producer and film festival director. She acted as the managing director of DocuDays Beirut International Documentary Film Festival for 5 years. In 2011 they ~~aimed-wanted~~ to create the Arab Documentary Network, an online portal that aims to serve the Arab documentary world by creating an online network for films, filmmakers and film professionals. But this never materialized, so far, and the festival has in fact not taken place since 2011.

Again, in the Arab world in general and in Lebanon specifically, the years 2011-2012 changed the face of the arts and cinema. In Lebanon, several festivals were suspended in 2012 due to the threat of the Syrian conflict spilling over into Lebanon, and so 2011 was the last edition of the festival. For the manager and director of the festival, filmmaking and producing became more important and perhaps because of the increased democratization of

the digital age and the expansion of storytelling methods and storytellers due to the Revolutions and the war in Syria, there are simply more films to make: films that are increasingly being coveted by film festivals around the world. Ambitious as they were with DocuDays, the Hashems' Encounter and Forum as well as the festival folded due to external, political pressures, due to their personal ambitions in more corporate filmmaking, as evidenced by their interest in the Qatar office expansion. Mohamed runs his company in Doha and Abir is focusing on making films rather than running the festival in a volatile and vulnerable city. While visions and missions, and the Revolutionary moments are crucial to the impetus to create urgent documentaries, festivals as events that are condensed in time and space, remain subject to outside factors beyond the control of the organizers and their individual ambitions. Nevertheless, workshops and forums like the Documentary Encounter and the Documentary Forum in Lebanon seem more urgent and relevant than ever, especially as some of the Arab world's most active and exciting documentary makers, such as Soudade Kaadan, are now [active-working](#) in Beirut.

5. Ismailia International Film Festival for Documentaries and Shorts, Ismailia, Egypt

Egypt was the first country on the African continent and in the Arab world to establish a film industry that remains popular. While documentary was long regarded a minor form of filmmaking next to the hugely popular melodrama and the realist turn in the late 1960s and early 1970s, since the Revolutionary year of 2011, realism in film and documentary has become increasingly important for Egyptian film's international reputation. It was in the 1980s that Egypt's first festival entirely dedicated to documentary was established: the Ismailia Festival for Documentaries and Short Film.^{xxx}

Since 1988, the Ismailia festival celebrates documentary and short film; forms of filmmaking that can be described as non-mainstream, especially in Egypt. The first edition of this new national film festival saw, in addition to the films participating in the official competition, the screening of a selection of classical films from the national archive, to commemorate documentary filmmakers from the past, with discussion panels. From originally being a festival dedicated to national documentary production, in 1991 it was transformed into an international film festival and expanded from a three-day festival into a celebration of film that lasts 6 days.

From its very beginnings, the festival's founder – Hashim El Nahas, then-director of the National Cinema Centre – was very clear in phrasing the festival's mission and vision. He did not want to add another event to the busy calendar in Cairo but 'to promote dialogue between cultures [through] films that deepen the understanding of others' social visions, values, and thoughts.'^{xxxi} He found Luxor uninterested but the governor of Ismailia showed an interest in developing the appeal of his city and province, and thus El Nahas set up a competitive festival.

Until 1993 the festival had Hashim El Nahas at the helm, but in 1994 Samir Gharib, Director of the Culture Development Fund, took over for the fourth international film festival and appointed film analyst Samir Farid as the Festival Director. Gharib merged the festival with the National Film Festival in Cairo. As such the Ismailia Film Festival was not held until Ali Abu Shadi was selected as Director of the National Cinema Center; he brought the festival back into action in 2001 at Ismailia, where it was first launched. The festival became better organized and bigger as it gained wider recognition and the number of guests, audiences and films grew. The current director is Essam Zakarea, a Cairo journalist, and its central program is based on an international competition for long and short documentaries.

The festival noticeably suffers from the constant changing of directors and the obligatory collaboration with the Ministry of Culture.

In addition to the film screenings and competitions, the festival also organizes networking events and debates between filmmakers and the audience, journalists and professional, film workshops in collaboration with other film festivals and professionals that provide opportunity for young filmmakers to advance their experience and knowledge. Again, we see an emphasis on the development of networks, on the learning process and encounters between established filmmakers and other professionals with younger, newer directors and students. This is also reflected in the non-competitive strands of the festival, where tributes to film personalities and distinguished filmmakers from around the world aim to feed the historical and formal knowledge and context within which younger up and coming documentary directors work. This educational aspect of the festival confirms, again, that documentary festivals often tend to focus their efforts on development and training, in a context of congenial events.

In this respect, 2013 was a significant year in the history of the festival, run then by writer and producer Mohamed Hefzy, as the Ismailia Co-Production Platform was inaugurated. It was the first co-production forum in the MENA region dedicated entirely to documentaries. The collaborative nature of documentary is emphasized in the exchange process and germination of ideas where, as the festival says, 'it is best not to walk alone.' The Platform was expanded in 2014, when Beirut DC Lab and the Screen Institute Beirut collaborated to develop the workshops. These workshops focused on storytelling and writing techniques, pitching, and production, run by pioneering Arab documentary makers Hala Alabdallah and Viola Shafik, both in group sessions and in one-on-one meetings. Simultaneously, Shafik also ran a one-time pitching workshop for the German Documentary Campus. The years when the festival was run by Hefzy's Film Clinic were very productive in their collaborative approach and educational focus, where young people were central to their view for the development of documentary in the region.

But funding and space have become an issue for the festival, as Zakarea admits:^{xxxii} 'the lack of budget and lack of space is sufficient to present an important obstacle for the festival management.' Having been launched in 1988 under the jurisdiction of the National Cinema Center, it continues as one of three film festivals coordinated by Egypt's Ministry of Culture but even presenting itself as the oldest focused festival in Egypt and in the region, this festival struggles to maintain its ambitions. Having been merged with the Cairo Festival and returned to Ismailia, and now continuing to struggle with financial and spatial demands, its outlook is increasingly international and establishment rather than what the two editions in 2013 and 2014 promised with their focus on young people and the development of local talent. Perhaps then the many switches at the director's level, the dependence on the Ministry and the competition aspect, with substantial money-prizes, become too heavy a burden for relatively small festivals. These obstacles, combined, are becoming increasingly complex and prohibitive for the festival to continue running confidently as part of the regional and transnational flow of global cultures.

6. Al Jazeera International Documentary Film Festival, Doha, Qatar

2005 marked the inauguration of the Al Jazeera International Documentary Film Festival. The festival has managed to carve out a name for itself within the Middle East and North Africa region, and globally, perhaps mostly due to its association with the Al Jazeera Media Network and its growing reputation. The festival was developed and is still mainly supported by the government-funded news broadcaster Al Jazeera 'to add a cultural aspect' to

the organization's heavy news substance. Al Jazeera also established a documentary channel in 2007 and has really carved out a niche for itself as a globally respected news and documentary network. Since the start, the festival has been run by Abbas Arnaout, its founder and director. A Jordanian TV drama producer and documentary director, he joined Dubai TV in the United Arab Emirates. In 1996, Arnaout moved to Al Jazeera where he established the production department for the then-infant Al Jazeera Satellite Channel.

The first edition included participants from Arab countries only. Participation included TV productions, such as news programs and documentary films. After the success of the first edition, it was decided to expand the festival and make it an international event where Arab and non-Arab participants were allowed to take part. This was in line with the orientation of Aljazeera Network, as are Arnaout's values of neutrality and honesty in his festival's journey to credibility. He sees the festival as a 'window' that works both ways: for locals to open their eyes to foreign productions, and foreign filmmakers to discover local productions and local culture while they visit. This touristic and marketing aspect of the festival (and other festivals in the area) is often criticized: Qatar being such an expat-rich community, the festival is seen as too 'international' and not open or receptive enough to local productions. This limitation, in addition to some other taboos and indirect censorship issues, have been the main restrictions to the festival's growth and directly caused its limited international reputation. Arnaout himself admits that 'there are some topics that we cannot pursue in the festival; for example, a topic that verbally attacks celestial religions, or a specific religion or a specific race or nationality'.^{xxxiii}

The festival sets a special theme every year. The first theme was 'Welcome', and later editions have been organized around themes and concepts such as 'Communication', 'Peace', 'Together', 'Hope', 'Freedom', 'Dialogue' for 2011, then 'Future', 'Windows', 'Steps' and the latest edition of the Al Jazeera International Documentary Film Festival in 2016 was themed 'Horizons' to express the progressiveness of Al Jazeera. All these themes are highly idealistic but also very broad concepts that can be interpreted in a variety of ways and that are flexible enough to encompass all types of documentaries. They are also, notably, optimistic terms that emphasize once again the congenial nature of documentary festivals, or, as the festival's critics would have it, vague ideals. Trying to fit in on a global festival circuit and remaining conservative at the same time have not provided the festival with a clear vision or agenda for the future. Perhaps then, due to that insecurity, it has not taken place in 2016. Indeed, Mostefa Souag, acting Director General of Al Jazeera Media Network, announced that the 12th edition of Al Jazeera International Documentary Film Festival would be postponed to 2017, due to heavy activities on celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Network itself. In a year where some other big festivals have been cancelled, interrupted or postponed (e.g. Cairo, Marrakech), this is a remarkable, if not a worrying development.

Conclusion

What I have highlighted in this paper is the particularly democratic nature of documentary film festivals, with values like solidarity, collaboration, education and training at the forefront of their programs. I have also emphasized the nature of documentary festivals as collaborative, and as spaces and moments in time where documentary professionals come together in order to embody and develop the worldwide documentary landscape as part of a global cultural flow. This is evident in the visions by the directors or founders, and in the programs of the festivals, where ideas of solidarity and flexibility are highlighted. Likewise, I have painted a broad picture of documentary festivals in the Arab world as spaces for collaboration and networked events, where the emphasis lies on hearing and seeing one

another in light of these sensibilities, in a congenial atmosphere where young as well as established filmmakers interact with democratic and common goals; working towards a better world and an adequate, truthful representation of that better world. This ambitious, and aspirational nature of Arab documentary in my description and analysis of Arab documentary festivals, aims to highlight the intensified moments within which festivals take place, and the space they construct for competing flows of ideas, culture, media and finance. That transnational flows of different constructs of congeniality are not homogenizing but rather shifting over space and time is a consequence of human creativity and its priorities. And while the idea of the congenial nature of documentary film festivals is hard to use as 'evidence', it is experienced at the festivals in the sense one gets as an audience member or invitee, and as part of the flowing circuit of the documentary festivals.

Likewise, the people at the helm of these organizations and festivals embody these ideals with their own presence at their festivals and at others. Hicham Falah from Fidadoc in Morocco for example also works with DoxBBox as a member of the Board. Mohamed Hashem from the Beirut DocuDays is involved with the Al Jazeera Documentary festival as a senior consultant. Indeed, almost all founders, directors or presidents of the festivals discussed in this chapter are closely affiliated in particular with three central transnational organizations: IDFA, AFAC and/or DoxBBox, not only relying on one another for funding or sponsorship but also for exchange, training and networking. This in itself beautifully illustrates the shifting flows of transnational culture and the global landscape of documentary festivals.

Overlaps in visions and missions are very clearly rooted in solidarity, learning, dialogue, in a sense of idealism to topics and approaches, in a dedication to a regional transnationalism, either with a special interest in pan-African collaborations and co-productions (for example Agadir) or pan-Arab networked opportunities (for example DoxBBox). The congenial nature of documentary festivals is a transnational characteristic, and in the Arab film festivals under discussion I have highlighted specifically the focus on training, networking and the fast-paced development of confidence in young people and the support they receive from those better established in the field. All this, combined with the general tenor of documentary production, distribution and exhibition as being less preoccupied with glamour, corporate interests or escapism, combines to reveal a transnational circuit of support and solidarity between documentaries, documentary makers, and those who manage, through documentary, to really 'see' and 'listen' to one another. Even if the flows and connections between documentary events can at times also be regarded as hierarchic, the success and sustainability of the smaller, non-competitive festivals is remarkable. Perhaps this more democratic approach to festival celebrations of the documentary is also reflected in the fact that some of these festivals are supported not by national interests but by television stations, independent production companies or by cultural organizations: Agadir works with TV5 and Qatar with Al Jazeera; Doc a Tunis is supported by a cultural organization; DoxBBox and DocuDays are or were supported by independent producers and developed into different organizations; and Ismailia has undergone many different incarnations under different Ministries and the Ismailia Governorate depending on their focus, but has been most consistently supported by the National Centre for Cinema. Another factor might be the non-competitive nature of the most productive and sustainable of the festivals: Ismailia and Al Jazeera, the two competitive festivals that award monetary prizes are struggling to keep going.

There is no doubt that 2011-2012 has been an absolutely crucial sea-change in the documentary world. Even more, arguably, than the digital Revolution, the 2011 Revolutions have marked a considerable switch in focus on the MENA region and in its attitude towards documentary. In addition, and likely because of this, since 2013, most of the films, festivals

and organizations under discussion here have benefited from a new type of support, the AFAC (Arab Fund for Arts and Culture) Documentary Program. This program supports and funds creative documentary films that address social realities in the Arab region. AFAC recognizes the changing reality and shifting socio-political circumstances for filmmakers in the Arab world. These changes and shifts are unlocking and creating new creativity throughout the region. Where oppressive governments have in the past challenged filmmakers to be creative within their permissible circumstances, newfound freedoms and the turning point of 2011-2012 across the Arab region have opened international festivals' and audiences' eyes and ears to welcome these new creatives and their films at [global](#) documentary festivals. In particular, documentaries from the MENA have outperformed their counterparts at global players like IDFA (International Documentary Festival Amsterdam) and CPH:DOC (The Copenhagen Documentary Festival). While there is no space here to engage deeply with how Arab documentaries have performed, these European festivals certainly benefit from increasingly programming the many innovative and Revolutionary documentaries coming out of the Arab world since 2011-2012.

As AFAC points out: 'documentaries from the Arab region address critical topics, and yet they continue to suffer from limited funding, underexposure, and alienation from regional and worldwide audiences.'^{xxxiv} But the digital revolution and evolution, and the Arab Revolutions and wars, as well as the depositions of a number of dictators, have also opened up routes to a freer self-expression. Due to the explosions of digital media, revolutionary minds and citizen journalism and the democratization of technology to access and distribution, far more content is available. While it remains a challenge for documentary filmmakers from the Arab world to find financial support for their work, the increasing creativity and the persistent presence of Arab documentaries at international festivals around the globe and in the Arab world certainly challenge that.

NOTES

ⁱ See for example Wang Bing's win the Golden Leopard with his documentary *Mrs. Fang* at the 70th Locarno Film Festival in 2017. In Berlin in 2016, *Fire at Sea* by Gianfranco Rose won top prize. Venice awarded *Sacro Gra* by Gianfranco Rosi in 2013. The Berlinale also included a prize for Best Documentary for the first time in 2017, and the award went to Palestinian Raed Andoni for *Ghost Hunting*.

ⁱⁱ See for example Yasmin Fedda's *Queens of Syria* (2014) winning at festivals like Abu Dhabi, the Human Screen Festival in Tunis, the International Festival of Women's Film in Salé, Morocco, and at Carthage in 2014 and 2015; or Kaouter Ben Hania's first feature-length documentary *Zineb Hates the Snow* winning the top prize at Carthage in 2016.

ⁱⁱⁱ Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy", in *Theory, Culture and Society* 7 (1990): 295-310.

^{iv} *Idem*: 297.

^v *Idem*: 300.

^{vi} Dina Jordanova, "Mediating Diaspora: Film Festivals and 'Imagined Communities'," in Dina Jordanova and Ruby Cheung, eds., *Film Festival Yearbook 2: Film Festivals and Imagined Communities* (St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2010), p. 13.

^{vii} Alex Fischer, *Sustainable Projections: Concepts in Film Festival Management* (St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2013).

^{viii} Stefanie Van de Peer, "The Moderation of Creative Dissidence in Syria: Reem Ali's Documentary *Zabad*," *Journal for Cultural Research* 16, no. 2-3 (2012): 297-317.

^{ix} Maja Klausen, "The Urban Exploration Imaginary: Mediatization, Commodification, and Affect" in *Space and Culture* 20, no 4 (2017): 372-384.

^x George E Markus, *Connected: Engagements with Media* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 10.

- ^{xi} Tit Leung, "Extending the Local: Documentary Film Festivals in East Asia as Sites of Connection and Communication", (Doctoral dissertation, Lingnan University, Hong Kong, 2012). Available online: http://commons.ln.edu.hk/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1004&context=vs_etd (accessed October 2017).
- ^{xii} Mark Normes, "Bulldozers, bibles and very sharp knives: The Chinese independent documentary scene," in D. Jordanova & R. Cheung (eds.), *Film Festival Yearbook 3: Film Festivals and East Asia* (St. Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2011), 105.
- ^{xiii} Malu Halassa, "Syrian Art Comes of Age," in *Ibraaz.com*, 21 November 2012. Available online: <http://www.ibraaz.org/news/42> (accessed July 2017).
- ^{xiv} Rasha Salti, *Insights into Syrian Cinema. Essays and Conversations with Contemporary Filmmakers* (New York: ArteEast, 2006), 30.
- ^{xv} DoxBox, "Our Story", Available online: <http://dox-box.org/about-us/?lang=en> (accessed July 2017).
- ^{xvi} Hedi Khélil, *Abécédaire du Cinéma Tunisien* (Tunis: Simfact, 2007), 80.
- ^{xvii} Rebecca Hillauer, *Encyclopedia of Arab Women Filmmakers* (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 2005), 363.
- ^{xviii} Barlet, O. (1998). Interview with Férid Boughédir, 'The Forbidden Windows of Black African Film', *Africultures*, No. 5327, available online: http://www.africultures.com/php/index.php?nav=article&no=5327&texte_recherche=Boughédir (accessed 2014).
- ^{xix} Roy Armes, *African Filmmaking North and South of the Sahara* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 156.
- ^{xx} Khélil, *Abécédaire du Cinéma Tunisien*, 26.
- ^{xxi} Translated from: 'On ne développe pas un point de vue pertinent sur le monde seul dans son coin; on le forme en le mettant à l'épreuve d'autres points de vue, par la rencontre et par l'échange', taken from the Ness el Fen website: http://nesselfen.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=40:doc-2006&catid=10:les-editions-precedentes-de-doc-a-tunis&Itemid=195&lang=en (accessed September 2017).
- ^{xxii} *Idem*.
- ^{xxiii} Hichem Ban Ammar, 'Editorial 2007', available online: http://www.nesselfen.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=39:doc-2007&catid=10:les-editions-precedentes-de-doc-a-tunis&Itemid=195&lang=en 9 accessed 03/12/17.
- ^{xxiv} Compare this with the cine-mobile units in Morocco.
- ^{xxv} Anissa Mahdaoui, 'Hichem Ben Ammar nommé à la tête de la Cinémathèque tunisienne', in *HuffpostMaghreb*, 14/06/2017. Available online: http://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2017/06/13/hichem-ben-ammam-cinemath_n_17083886.html (retrieved September 2017).
- ^{xxvi} Kilani's film *Nos Lieux Interdits* won the Etalon de Yennenga at FESPACO in 2009 and was nominated for the Muhr Arab Documentary Award.
- ^{xxvii} See the chapter on Morocco in S. Van de Peer, *Negotiating Dissidence: The Pioneering Women of Arab Documentary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 168–193.
- ^{xxviii} Fidadoc, 'Presentation 2014', available online: <http://www.fidadoc.org/presentation> (accessed 05/12/17).
- ^{xxix} The AfricaDoc network also collaborates with other partners on the African continent, a.o.: the Digital Mobile Cinema (Senegal and Tunisia); the Master's Program in Documentary Filmmaking at Gaston Berger University in Saint-Louis (Senegal); and the Cine Guimbi Theater in Bobo Dioulasso (Burkina Faso).
- ^{xxx} An earlier festival, that ran 1971 – 1980, was also dedicated to documentary, but ceased to exist. In honor of this festival, run by Ahmed Al Hadary, Hashem El Nahas referred to the first edition of the Ismailia festival as the 11th, even if the two festivals were not the same.
- ^{xxxi} Hashem El Nahas, 'A Word from Hashem El Nahas', available online: http://ismailiafilmfest.com/ismailia2018/ismailiaFestival_En.aspx (accessed 11/01/17).
- ^{xxxii} Newsletter of the Film Festival, "Essam Zakarea – No change in the competitions of Ismailia Film Festival," 27/02/2017. Available online: http://ismailiafilmfest.com/ismailia2017/20170227_En.aspx (accessed August 2017).
- ^{xxxiii} Asma Ajroudi & Zena Al Tahhan, "'Our Festival is our Window onto Others': An Interview with Abbas Arnaout, Director of the Al Jazeera International Documentary Film Festival," in D. Jordanova & S. Van de Peer, eds., *Film Festival Yearbook 6: Film Festivals and the Middle East* (St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2014), 287.

^{xxxiv} AFAC, 'Special Programs: AFAC's Documentary Program', available online:
<https://www.arabculturefund.org/grants/special.php?id=4> (accessed 11/01/18).