



**Exploring the Dynamics Between Non-State Cinema,
Audiences, and the Future of the Industry: Contemporary
Kazakhstani Independent Arthouse Cinema from the
Perspectives of the Filmmakers**

CEERES Master's Thesis

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Abstract

Recently, the Kazakhstani film industry as a whole has been experiencing many significant changes. Rising numbers of independent and arthouse filmmakers are financed by the government with fewer restrictions and now the government supports greater competition amongst film companies and individuals.

Yet, there continues to exist a complex inter-relationship between auteur filmmakers, the commercial film and state establishments of Kazakhstan, and the domestic viewing audience. This research sought to gain insight into two categories: 1) Where is the Kazakhstani film industry (particularly arthouse and independent) today? 2) What is the current relationship between the different sub-categories and with the Kazakh audiences, from the viewpoints of filmmakers and industry professionals (and how has it changed)?

To seek an explanation for the change in the aforementioned inter-relationship, this cultural studies-based inductive study seeks to contextualize the role of: the international film festival, the auteur Kazakhstani filmmakers who mostly lack an established domestic audience and habitually compete in these festivals, and the Kazakh government that does not censor or artistically suppress them and in fact occasionally finances them. Applying Bourdieu's theory of Cultural Capital to the film festival, the research sought to explain the desire of the filmmaker to gain recognition there in the absence of local popularity. Additionally, from Bourdieu's theory, the research sought to examine the role of the film festival (and participation therein) as a venue for nation branding on part of regime and filmmaker. And lastly, examining nation branding via the film festival as a potential tool for political legitimacy for the government of Kazakhstan.

The exploratory, descriptive research consisted of qualitative, semi-structured interviews with 12 Kazakhstani filmmakers and film industry professionals. Participants were selected via the snowballing method stemming from contacts suggested by the researcher's supervisor. The results illustrate that audiences are becoming more interested in Kazakh arthouse, but this may be a result of the growing international accolades these films are receiving. Additionally, there remain sentiments that the Kazakhstan government, though making themselves available to these auteur and independent filmmakers, are still not doing enough to assist – especially financial support.

This research provides both updated survey of the Kazakhstani film industry, and new developments upon which future scholarship can examine. Despite the promising changes in landscape, the filmmakers still see problems in changing the attitudes of the Kazakhstani audiences, and reinforcing their escalating relationship with the Kazakh state regarding financing.

Key Words: Kazakh film industry, arthouse film, cultural capital, international film festival, film finance, audience, nation branding, political legitimacy, cultural studies

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Introduction:

“We don’t need a Kazakh Netflix to show Kazakh content. And if Kazakh people look at Netflix, they won’t watch the Kazakh content.” – Serik Abishev

Problem Statement

The generation of filmmakers born in Kazakhstan during the 1960s would grow up to form the Kazakh New Wave of the 80s, making provocative films during the leadup to Soviet dissolution and Kazakhstan’s independence. What of the generation of filmmakers born during the New Wave that grew up on their works and legacy? As a forerunner of that new generation, Adilkhan Yerzhanov articulated, per Rico Isaacs’ 2018 book *Film and Identity in Kazakhstan*: “‘Kazakh New Wave’ have become conservative, ‘right wing and make films that follow the politics of the state’. ...they have become co-opted by the government” (Isaacs, 2018, p. 234-5). So there appears to be not just a divergence between generations of filmmakers, but a rejection. Is that the case? Do these filmmakers still hold this view?

A subgroup has emerged within the new guard, making films that renounce the establishment. Stylistically and substantively serious films not made for profit/commercialism and unconcerned with mass appeal/approval – arthouse cinema.

But can we really speak of a movement here? Most of them refuse the name of ‘New New Wave’, even though several young directors claim common aesthetic positions and interests. It is not useful to force them into a group that they themselves do not feel exists...The first words of their motto are worthwhile remembering: ‘Nobody sees us, nobody hears us, but we do exist.’ Today, these films are ‘seen’ and ‘heard’: Turebaev's *Little Men* and Kulbai's *Swift* have travelled the world from festival to festival; most of Nurmukhambetov's short films were shown in Oberhausen; Utepbergenov's *Mute Coolness* was shown in France and in Italy; Bektursunov's *113th* was screened in Locarno; and Issabaeva's *Karoy* was selected for the Horizons competition in Venice. (Zvonkine, 2013, p. 183-4)

Referring to them as the New New Wave does serve a useful function for describing the filmmakers that immediately followed the Kazakh New Wave – They defy the state, and produce

arthouse cinema on minimal to no-budget or through alternative sources of funding to capture realistic stories of human struggle in Kazakhstan that gain international attention, but which most Kazakhstanis will not see. As such, the research puzzle that underpins this research can best be described as follows: what motivates these auteur and independent filmmakers? What enables them to persist in producing their quality films despite all indications domestically that suggest otherwise? What component does an increasing international recognition have domestically?

Research Question(s)

A study presented by Isaacs finds that average Kazakh audiences are still largely lukewarm to arthouse: "...the people whose lives the film sought to represent would not be interested in seeing these types of films and would perhaps prefer the escapist films that Yerzhanov and Abishev have rallied against..." (Isaacs, 2018, p. 220). On the rare occasions when Kazakh arthouse is screened domestically to the general public, there is an intense, discomforted reaction because of how bluntly relatable or because of how metaphorically abstract the content is.

Yerzhanov has spoken of the country not possessing the 'culture of the viewer,' but he has also gone further in suggesting that he has 'no concept of the audience'. What he is interested in, therefore, is making films that correspond to his own vision and interpretation of society...He is interested in constructing his own original cinematic language. It is a language which within its text offers a critique of the social reality of ordinary lives, but does so by expressing the absurdity of the current political and economic system. However, that there is such a limited distribution of the films brings to light the partial reach of their scope in shaping domestic attitudes... The reaction of Kazakhfilm and the Ministry of Culture to the work of Yerzhanov also demonstrated that even if film does provide a space for dissent...and the state is unable to control the production of such narratives, it can and does control and limit official domestic distribution, although not informal online distribution. (Isaacs, 2018, p. 221)

Even films made with no regard for an audience exist to serve some broader purpose. This is confirmed by the efforts of Yerzhanov and his peers successfully entering international film

festivals such as Busan or Cannes. And notably, the dissemination of these arthouse films abroad has not been suppressed by the state.

So, if the state is continuing to deliberately suffocate the means of domestic distribution, why continue to make these types of films? If local audiences still are uninterested in viewing these types of films, for whom are these filmmakers now making their films for? What do these auteur filmmakers envision for the future of Kazakh arthouse cinema, and how do they propose to overcome the dilemma of distribution and audience interest, if at all?

Justification

To start with, independent, arthouse cinema was a summation of two definitions. First, independent cinema was defined as: “[...] any type of filmmaking that takes place outside the mainstream commercial film industry or films or filmmaking practices that claim a degree of autonomy in relation variously to industrial practices, filmmaking conventions, or political context” (Film Genres: Independent Film, 2015). Second, arthouse/art films as a concept were defined as: “made primarily for aesthetic reasons rather than commercial profit, often of an experimental nature or having an unconventional or highly symbolic content, aimed typically at a limited audience” (Art film definition and meaning, 2021). However, it is important to acknowledge that these definitions conform to a very established, and very-Western/Hollywood conception of the demarcation between studio blockbusters, independent filmmaking and arthouse which can also be summarized as follows: “Generally speaking, U.S. cinema can be divided into two groups: mainstream, Hollywood studio films and independent cinema. The distinction is crucial. The latter, though less widely seen, has a great influence on the former and significantly shapes and defines its contours. Thus, the independent cinema indirectly defines our

cultural heritage” (Kauffman, 1999, p. 772). As such, there emerges an interesting observation: how similarly is the film industry of Kazakhstan also demarcated? Are the motivations similar?

The following cultural studies research will venture to link the auteur filmmakers and their present dynamic with the Kazakhstani state. Upon analyzing the interviews, the recurring reference to and consideration of the film festival presented a conceptual basis to relate and re-evaluate the dynamic of the modern Kazakhstani auteur filmmaker with the rest of Kazakhstan. This inductive research will utilize Bourdieu’s theory of Cultural Capital to analyze the role of the international film festival as a desirable institutionalized capital. For the filmmakers, the festivals offer occupational mobility. The international film festivals also provide a venue for nation-branding and political legitimacy in Kazakhstan though the narratives being presented at these festivals may not be in the state’s best interests. Thus, continued participation in international film festivals pose a substantial objective for both the non-state auteurs and the state itself.

This text will first explore the concepts which informed the research questions, as well as the literature that comprises the inductive theoretical framework the results of the interviews identified. Then detail methodology employed in this study. Present results of the interviews as divided into sub-sections each exploring the trends that have emerged within the film industry. The points raised in the results will then be further evaluated in the analysis chapter applying and assessing the results within context of the aforementioned theoretical framework. Finally, a recapitulation of the results and exploration of limitations and future research.

I. Literature Review

“If I have to, I want to at least be like a modern Grandpa.” – Berik Zhakhanov

There is not a large volume of pre-existing literature devoted to the topic of independent and arthouse Kazakhstani cinema, especially when looking at contemporary independent Kazakh cinema. Yet, overall, in Kazakhstan, the film and entertainment industries continue to grow.

“Given 2012 broke box office records for Kazakh films in domestic cinemas, we can at the very least conclude that Kazakh cinema is on an upward trajectory in terms of the finances being invested and the importance it holds for both government agencies and independent studios in terms of furthering cultural development and offering a forum for broad debates and imaginaries regarding notions of nationhood and identity” (Isaacs, 2015, p. 403-4). From this limited body of work in English-language on contemporary Kazakh independent and art cinema, the largest tenet of the literature review concepts emerges. Zvonkine has shown light to the growing number of Kazakh independent filmmakers are attaining accolades and success disseminating their works and message abroad. What are the implications of this?

While the pre-existing literature on the film industry of Kazakhstan acknowledges the presence of film festivals, of which a larger body of literature exists, it was only through analysis of the interviews that the significant role the festival on the artistic and professional trajectory of these Kazakhstani filmmakers became apparent. To try and untangle the complex interplay between filmmaker, audience, and government with consideration of these foreign international film festivals, Pierre Bourdieu’s Cultural Capital theory provides a comprehensive explanation and the originating basis of this research’s inductive conceptual framework. The theory broadly posits that people can attain different degrees of social mobility depending on the cultural knowledge, norms, and skills they acquire or are exposed to. Bourdieu first coined the term in

1973 before exploring it in-depth in the 1979 book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. While its most overt applicability is in socio-economic inequalities and education, can it be applied to the film industry and filmmakers?

Bourdieu identifies three categories/states of cultural capital: embodied, objectified, institutionalized. Applying cultural capital theory to film, while the physical film as a product can serve as an objectified form, the most social utility and value intrinsic to established international film festivals holds a broader more valuable institutionalized capital. “By conferring institutional recognition on the cultural capital possessed by any given agent, the academic qualification also makes it possible to compare qualification holders and even to exchange them (by substituting one for another in succession). Furthermore, it makes it possible to establish conversion rates between cultural capital and economic capital by guaranteeing the monetary value of a given academic capital. [...] Because the material and symbolic profits which the academic qualification guarantees also depend on its scarcity, the investments made (in time and effort) may turn out to be less profitable than was anticipated when they were made [...]” (Richardson and Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). While film schools serve a literal academic institutional barrier to socio-cultural entry, for the professional filmmaker regardless of their pedigree, the film festival serves an additional and perhaps even more valuable institutional capital.

De Valck connects culture capital and film festivals. It is understood that only filmmakers with a demonstrated understanding of the art can be accepted to participate in festivals like Cannes.

It is the prizes and recognition bestowed on them at festivals that confirm the status of these filmmakers [...] From a Bourdieuan logic, it follows that festivals have a vested interest in sustaining the discourse of autonomous art, because their position of power depends on it. Festivals are the brokers of symbolic capital. By applying Bourdieu's

autonomous and heteronomous poles, one can understand the festival as a site of struggle between the two modes of organization. Festivals function, on the one hand, as the quintessential cultural gatekeepers for what is called global art cinema. As an exhibition network, festivals exist by virtue of people believing that there are films worthy to be screened even when their commercial value may be contested. (de Valck, 2014, p. 78)

To be recognized or earn a prize not only provides an objectified cultural capital, but also presents further opportunities for these individuals to advance their own artistry. In the case of these Kazakhstani filmmakers, they routinely are admitted into and receive accolades in long-established European film festivals. Therefore, within the cinematic artistic landscape these individuals are possessing institutionalized cultural capital. Instead of (or perhaps in addition to) social mobility, there is an occupational and artistic mobility at a global level.

The argument persists that film festivals seek prestige in their own right in parallel with the commercial possibility. To participate in these international, multinational and multicultural events is not only a high recognition (and indicative of high institutionalized cultural capital within the film industry) but indicative of higher cultural capital which gives rise to further occupational opportunities. Likewise, nations that can organize such internationally recognized events demonstrate their own high standing as producers and possessors of cultural capital which presents opportunities to attain greater legitimacy. “In other festival venues around the world, festival organizers and city fathers are also well aware that the glitz and the glamour that comes with Tinseltown’s products easily translates into ticket sales, press coverage, tourism dollars, and boosts for local economies” (Hozic, 2014, p. 233). While the cities and countries that host film festivals do so for usually the economic benefits, there is a parallel cultural benefit as cultural industries and artistically-oriented young people will start to migrate towards these cities.

The international film festival, in turn, relates cultural capital to nation branding by providing an opportunity to showcase and represent national values to foreigners. “Film festivals

emerged in the early 20th century with an objective similar to that of world fairs, to represent nation, culture and technological advancements on an international stage (de Valck, 2010) [...] Today, film festivals are an important part of cultural diplomacy and bilateral relations between countries and have become a major force for nation branding (Ooi and Pedersen, 2010). When reading film as a virtual journey, film festivals are comparable to a travelogue, displaying the many aspects of the country to potential visitors” (Herrschner and Cheer, 2018, p. 196). Film festivals as international and multinational showcases provide participants chances to present an audio-visual presentation or representation of the nation of which these individuals belong. While most notions of nation branding (as produced and conceived by the nation) seek positive aphorisms rather than negative ones as tools of cultural diplomacy (Hurn, 2016, p. 81), in the case of the overwhelming majority of Kazakhstani films routinely selected to compete in these international showcases tends to be overwhelmingly negative and real. For these successful filmmakers the nation branding is largely independent of the state’s approval or authorization and is inherently negative. The intricacy emerges when it is the well-made but real product that is recognized over the sanitized state-approved one.

The final component of the conceptual framework relates a supposed negative nation branding at film festivals with political legitimacy for Kazakhstan which the state can benefit from. Varga describes nation branding as embodying three trajectories: conservative, transformative, and transferring. The dispelling of glamorous narratives by these independent and auteur filmmakers who pursue the contemporary and gritty realism rather than overt glorification of historicized national values coincides with transformative nation branding. “This aspect will be referred to as the transformative aspect of Nation Branding, which – as it will be argued – consists in a radical alteration of the very concept of national identity, its decoupling

from history and cultural context and its reiteration in the framework of neoliberal thought” (Varga, 2013, p. 831). This explanation is particularly compelling as the nation branding is being undertaken by local populace of their own volition, and the state is not interfering in or preventing the dissemination of the branding abroad.

Varga and Marat both underscore the role of the public in advancing a successful nation branding campaign undertaken by a state. However, in Kazakhstan, as much of Central Asia, there is an aversion between the majority of the public to serve the interests of the state and advancing any nationalizing or unrealistic values would only happen under coercion. Instead, what exists is a national initiative advocated by the state that is not wholly supported by the people, and a contrasting gritty nation branding advocated by independent filmmakers that is not entirely supported by the people either.

Whereas national ideologies are often imposed coercively through education and public events, governments and businesses cannot manipulate or coerce foreign audiences. International competition for tourists and investment takes place in an uncontrolled space, and therefore governments must use considerably greater resources and be more creative in promulgating their images, whereas at home governments are able to control mass media, holiday celebrations, and public institutions such as education, culture and the military. Ruling elites have limited leverage as to how they present their country for an international audience, as those narratives are much more transparent and will be scrutinised by sceptical tourists and investors. (Marat, 2009, p. 1127)

That is, at the international level, the monetary and cultural returns are exponential in potential however this is at the cost of controlling the narratives that captivate foreign audiences. As will be examined further, the establishment of the Kazakhcinema state fund, and the gradual thawing relationship over the last few years between state funding sources and these arthouse filmmakers suggests that this negative nation branding possesses a beneficial utility towards overall political legitimacy in Kazakhstan. Arthouse filmmakers receiving funding from the state via Kazakhfilm studio but not being overtly censored or artistically repressed in exchange for receiving the

funding indicates this trajectory. Therefore, more entrants into film festivals (instead of local recognition and regardless of content as positive or negative) leads to increased nation-branding/political legitimacy. In fact, Kazakhfilm studio productions, and more state-backed commercial projects are being entered into film festivals. While most of these festivals are not at the level of the prestigious ones the arthouse and independent filmmakers routinely compete in and are recognized at, this indicates an understanding of the cultural capital value of the film festival and the perceived legitimacy recognition this brings on the nation.

Having established the literature informing the inductive conceptual framework, what of the literature that informed the preliminary research questions? There emerge a few concepts which, in place of the body of directly related material, can tangentially be compounded upon. Examining alternatives to independent film distribution when auteurs are uninterested or looking beyond domestic audiences – in particular the implications and recourses of global film distribution and finance and circulation in the internet era.

The ease with which filmmakers can upload their films to the Internet, though, leads to a situation where sheer quantity becomes an obstacle for viewers trying to find anything of quality, whatever their definition of ‘quality.’ This proliferation of films, Walker contends, has led to a somewhat paradoxical (and not all bad) redefinition of ‘success’: while many people find many of the films boring or unwatchable, filmmakers have the luxury of not having to measure success by the size of the audience they reach but by their ability to reach a select, niche audience of their own design. (Conway, 2004, p. 45)

If these independent arthouse filmmakers are seeking to use their works to promote social change, the internet is a great asset they could utilize further. The question is whether these independent, arthouse Kazakhstani filmmakers subscribe to this potential or not, in particular internet as a tool for raising funds especially when the government and most corporations would otherwise refuse to. Most pervasive is Fernández Labayan and Souto’s 2017 exploration of film activism and art collective spearheaded by Helena Lumbreras during Francoist Spain.

Critics have noted the effect of film collectives on the production and circulation of militant cinema in the 1960s and 1970s in countries including France, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, and Greece. Lumbreras's cinematic work, both with and without the CCC [Colectivo de Cine de Clase], went beyond the films themselves and sought to establish a network between film-makers, the films' subjects, and civil society. Building this network implied working and collaborating outside the legal framework of late Francoism, and included those who assisted with production, projection, and distribution in myriad forms, from the supply of information and technical materials to arranging screenings in unofficial venues. Within the shifting legal framework of the time, the collective's production was precarious, and the films could not be legally screened in national exhibition spaces. (Fernández Labayan and Souto, 2017, p. 339)

While it is difficult to quantify how much of a role the CCC had in dismantling the Francoist regime, scholastic analyses of film collectives provide a robust alternative view to how independent cinematic movements can operate and thrive as cultural entities. While the overall compatibility of this historical film movement upon developments in Kazakhstan remains to be seen, the so-called "Partisan film" movement in Kazakhstan presents an opportunity for Kazakhstani arthouse filmmakers to work under a unified principle governed by realism and disregard of commercialism. However, what has become of this movement? And is it still viable in Kazakhstan today?

The consumption of films domestic and foreign, becomes one of cross-cultural and cross-ideological exchange. Christie cites the supposed "Britishness" of films made or featuring the UK (Christie, 2012, p. 227), but the same metric can be applied to Kazakhstani films, especially the demarcation between state and independent Kazakh film and its content portrayals of "Kazakhness." The supposed rejection of the independent art cinema by the public suggests an aversion to precisely how they are depicted, but also might glean some insight into what the Kazakhstani filmmakers consider to be audio and visual metrics which represent the modern Kazakh people, the state and by extension modern Kazakhness in film.

Also of note is the role of international organizations or entities in shaping and influencing the production of independent cinema. Christina Klein's entry *Public Culture* examines the history of post-Korean War cinema and its subsequent fostering of a "public culture":

Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge coined the term *public culture* to characterize the arena in which this happens and to call attention to the diversity of players, which include mass media industries, the state, and individual cultural producers. Their concept of public culture makes room for a critical engagement with consumption as a powerful imaginative act, one that can expand the horizons of possibility with sometimes emancipatory effects. It also makes room for foreign actors, who often exert an outsize influence in postcolonial societies. Public cultures outside the West thus frequently become incubators of what Appadurai and Breckenridge call a 'new cosmopolitanism,' as national, transnational, mass, and folk cultures interact with and cannibalize each other. (Klein, 2020, p. 56)

In the dictatorial republics of South Korea, the revitalization of its cinema industry was greatly aided by the intervention of Hollywood, Japanese, foreign industries, as well as foreign-based organizations such as The Asia Foundation actively investing in the development of this cinematic industry in post-war South Korea. With foundations such as the Soros Foundation being active sources of independent film financing in Kazakhstan, there emerges interesting nodes to follow and try to identify and ascertain how much overlap exists with these parallels from the bottom-up, or individual creator's perspective.

Finally, through the establishment of platforms such as YouTube, and social networks with international userbases such as Facebook, independently or self-financed filmmakers are able to circulate and promote their works with greater artistic freedom and control. While this does not assure or correlate to greater success, the internet does not only offer alternative aid in the realms of access and promotion, but also in providing a compelling alternative to financing and production. This is particularly evident with the prominence of crowdfunding as a more established method of funding a film. "Crowdfunding can be seen as an open call to provide

financial resources. Crowdfunding mostly takes place on crowdfunding platforms (CFPs), i.e., Internet-based platforms that link fundraisers to funders with the aim of funding a particular campaign by typically many funders” (Belleflamme et al, 2015, p. 12). This is promising when considering independent and especially arthouse filmmakers in Kazakhstan. These filmmakers have a strained relationship with their largest and most prominent source of funding: the government. Likewise, these individuals do not have a long-standing or well-established working relationship with the domestic audience so the concept of local crowdfunding seems tenuous. However, this complicated internal relationship is counter-balanced by the popularity these Kazakhstani filmmakers’ works are seeing abroad via their inclusion in and accomplishments at international film festivals. Therefore, if these Kazakhstani filmmakers could pursue crowdfunding via the internet, it is not inconceivable that their international audience could contribute.

II. Methodology

“Right now, not many people know about Kazakhstan. Like once our local stories are interesting for other people as well, then maybe also we will be able to go out of post-Soviet countries and into international markets. That's a VERY optimistic way of thinking.” – Baurzhan Shukenov

The research conformed to a descriptive, exploratory study design. This research study was exploratory because it sought to not only assess and observe the ongoing nature of the Kazakhstani film industry, but also to better ascertain the factors underpinning the inter-relationship between filmmakers and audience (especially of independent and arthouse filmmakers and the rest of Kazakhstan), but not necessarily to seek to identify a solution to this problem. Especially at the onset of this research study, it was unclear if the intricate inter-relationship between non-governmental, and arthouse Kazakhstani filmmakers, Kazakhstani state and commercial establishments, and domestic viewing audiences still exists today. “A more exploratory stance may be preferable, and, in this connection, qualitative research may serve the researcher’s needs better, since it is typically associated with the generation rather than the testing of theory [...] and with a relatively unstructured approach to the research process [...]” (Bryman, 2012, p. 41). In tandem with the exploratory research, the research was also descriptive in nature because it sought to describe what the status, condition and characteristics of the Kazakhstani film industry are.

This research was qualitative because its results were exclusively the personal thoughts and opinions of industry insiders. Additionally, independent filmmakers constitute a minority of the nation’s film industry, and of that small percentage it cannot be guaranteed that all of them would be available for an interview. To pursue a more diverse interview pool, and to optimize the few interviews expected to be granted, the research utilized a purposive non-random snowball sampling implemented in the networking and communicative phases. “From a research

perspective, the informed decision to recruit certain participants based on certain criteria or reasons narrows the sample and targets it to specific people that have the characteristics or traits for which the researcher is seeking. This type of research can come at a high cost because as researchers specifically look for information from a certain group, other perspectives are left out of the conversation” (Allen, 2017, p. 3). On the latter portion of Allen’s assessment, consequential challenges associated with snowballing were encountered, and will be further addressed in the challenges and limitations section of the dissertation.

This research sought to focus on the viewpoints of film industry professionals and insiders rather than the Kazakhstani movie viewing audiences because, as was initially suggested by Isaacs, there does not appear to be much domestic popular interest in Kazakhstani independent or arthouse films. Gaining insight into the model the arthouse Kazakhstani filmmakers take in making their films and sending them to compete abroad can really only be ascertained and substantially analyzed through directly conversing with the people who adhere to this model. While there are pocket communities within the Kazakhstani movie viewing public that are aware of and supportive of local independent and arthouse cinema, identifying this minority itself poses its own challenges. As such, it is of the view of the researcher that seeking analysis of public opinion is best reserved for a separate or larger research project.

The interview questions when broken down by theme as follows: 1) determining influences and preferences, 2) independent and arthouse Kazakhstani cinema and its place within modern Kazakhstan, 3) independent and arthouse Kazakhstani cinema and its place outside of Kazakhstan, 4) challenges the filmmakers perceive in their industry, and finally 5) considerations of the future. Within the broader category of considerations for the future, specific questions such as perceptions between older and younger generations of Kazakhstani filmmakers,

considerations of film collectives where individuals can collaborate and share their resources, and finally the viability of the internet and crowdfunding in Kazakhstan.

The interviewees were contacted through several means – initially, participants were cold-called/contacted via Facebook or WhatsApp messengers as they were already social media connections with one of the researcher’s supervisors or because the supervisor already possessed the prospective participant’s phone number. Thereafter, when additional phone numbers were acquired (usually from a research participant following their interview), all participants were contacted via cold-call message on Telegram and WhatsApp messengers. In instances where phone numbers were unavailable, the researcher would cold-call via Facebook messenger.

However, even before the interviews began, it became very clear just in communicating with the Kazakhstani film industry professionals, whether in asking for access to their works or to pursue an interview, that a supplementary official proof of identification and intention would have to be provided or else they would not respond and engage further. Even asking local industry professionals questions about their works, and how to access them, would only be answered upon presentation of a letter signed by thesis supervisor and adorned with University of Glasgow letterheading (Appendix A). This letter would prove invaluable throughout the research process. Every prospective participant contacted thereafter was pre-emptively supplied a copy of the letter. The inclusion of this letter early in the outreach phase enabled the participants to be more receptive and willing to partake in the research interview process as they knew that the interviews would only be for academic purposes.

Per the requirements of the University of Glasgow, approval from the ethics committee was required in order to conduct interviews. The researcher submitted an application, and was approved by the committee on July 12, 2021 (Appendix B). The overall process of devising

questions, verifying ethics, establishing contact, conducting the interviews, and examining and coding the interview contents occurred over a period of 5 months. The period to conduct interviews and analyze the data, as approved by the University of Glasgow occurred from July 12, 2021 to December 31, 2021.

Once contact and interest was established, the interviewees were provided the interview questions for their review in the days leading up to the interview. These questions were provided in both English and Russian languages regardless of the language the participant preferred to communicate in (Appendix C). For interviews with film critics, a slightly modified list of interview questions was also produced (Appendix D). The interviewees were informed of their rights, the purposes of the research, that they would be recorded for transcription, and for what period of time the recordings would be stored and later destroyed via the University of Glasgow's Participant Information Sheet/Plain Language Statement (Appendix E). And the interviewees were provided a consent form to complete and sign (Appendix F). Lastly, the execution of data collection was met with numerous challenges associated with the COVID pandemic.

Though few in occurrence, interviews conducted with such film industry professionals as career film critics and other ranking industry insiders proved equally fruitful. Interviews with figures such as critics provided their observations in a professional capacity regarding contemporary developments in the nation's film industry. These critics also demonstrated to be well-integrated within the film industry network and proved equally viable candidates for not only participating in interview but offering further sampling assistance by providing contact information for additional participants.

The main method for data collection for this research was elite interviews. The most authoritative and updated information was the information and insight presented by the content producers themselves. The planned interviews were semi-structured in format. The emphasis was on enabling the interviewee to interpret the questions and provide unrestrained answers. “[...] the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in how to reply. Questions may not follow on exactly in the way outlined on the schedule. Questions that are not included in the guide may be asked as the interviewer picks up on things said by interviewees. But, by and large, all the questions will be asked and a similar wording will be used from interviewee to interviewee” (Bryman, 2012, p. 471). While these subjects: filmmakers, industry professionals, and critics, had previously made clear their attitudes about their government, the aim of this research was to not discuss the condition and quality of the Kazakhstani government. Instead, the questions they were asked pertained to their own professional observations on the current condition of their industry, and commentary about the inter-relationship between themselves, audiences, and the Kazakhstani government and state establishments. They were asked about any changes in prioritization of foreign audiences over domestic ones, and to comment on ways the independent and arthouse filmmakers can improve their working conditions in the absence of financial and steady state support.

If the participants wished to (re-)articulate their viewpoints vis-à-vis their opinions and relationship with the Kazakhstani state, they were not discouraged or stopped. While the interview questions allude to the state and its establishments, one of the top priorities in compiling the final interview questions and pursuing interviews was to mitigate explicit discussion about the government. The unspoken understanding is that while these filmmakers have been critical of the government in the past, it was neither theirs nor the researcher’s desire

to require an explicit and direct criticism from the participants of their country and government. In formulating this research and the specific questions, it is difficult to navigate approaches to anonymity when the purpose of the interviews from the very beginning was to code personalized answers. As such, the consent being sought explicitly asked participants if being named was permissible. And all participants agreed to be recorded and named.

The interviews were conducted across several weeks, each was recorded for the purposes of transcribing, the transcriptions and recordings were only shared with translator/interpreters when their assistance was required. The analysis of the interview transcripts occurred using the coding tools of qualitative research software. The interview transcripts were manually coded through the NVivo 12 Pro software (released in March 2018). Through analysis of the interview transcripts, a codebook emerged (Appendix G). The nodes were generated initially according to the topics which informed the interview questions. From these preliminary nodes, additional nodes were created according to concepts that emerged across the transcriptions. This element of the coding process was made substantially easier because during the initial transcription of the interviews from the original audio, notable answers and passages in the responses were highlighted and marked. In total, data has been collected from recorded interviews with 12 Kazakhstani film industry professionals (Appendix H) such as writer-directors (7 narrative and 1 documentary), 2 producers, 1 film industrialist/movie theater chain owner and 1 critic. Of these various conversations, which totaled approximately 14.3 hours, several conclusions have emerged.

To conclude, throughout the data collection process, there were numerous limitations that also emerged. Early on in the outreach and communication phases, the unexpected need for a supplementary letter verifying the academic nature of the research underscored the local attitudes

and the associative anxieties felt by these industry professionals about the ownership and protection of their works, why not only an interview with them was being sought, but what would be done with their comments and statements afterward.

Regarding the data collection, the largest problem was the difficulty of maintaining a diverse, well-represented sample of interviewees. While twelve interviews were conducted, in total twenty individuals related to the film industry were contacted. Of the eight that were unable to participate, two who were contacted on Facebook did not reply at all (and no other means of contact was available), and one individual chose not to reply to the cold call message on WhatsApp. Two prospective interviewees expressed interest but were unable because of scheduling conflicts. And the remaining three declined on the grounds that they felt professionally unqualified to speak on independent/arthouse cinema in Kazakhstan because they did not identify as independent or arthouse filmmakers but rather as commercial and governmental filmmakers. Overall, older/senior filmmakers declined to be interviewed – this included independent, and commercial filmmakers. Those who were subsequently recommended for interview via the snowballing recruitment method were also at the discretion of the interviewee who recommended and provided contact information for other prospective interviewees. This resulted in a limited sampling selection according to those who were willing to be interviewed – the researcher was unable to dictate the parameters of the interview pool. For future research of this particular nature, the researcher would advise interviewing more critics, female filmmakers, and documentarians.

On the basis of interviews, there arises several challenges which underscored the process. During the course of this research, several different interpreter/translators were consulted out of necessity due to the researcher's own Russian language limitations. The lack of Russian fluency

required the researcher to seek interpretive and translational services when conducting the majority (9 out of 12) of the interviews. This is understandable and reflective of the present linguistic conditions of modern Kazakhstan, where the common daily languages of communication continue to be Russian (particularly in Almaty) or Kazakh languages. In having to consult outside assistance, the researcher creates openings for the qualitative data to potentially be compromised. The consulting of numerous different interpreter/translators was itself due to varying issues ranging from the interpreter/translator's personal availability, scheduling conflicts of either the interpreter/translator or the interviewee, and issues pertaining to access as in one instance the interviewee only agreed to participate because their contact person would be the one offering translation.

In addition, issues also arose pertaining to the varying degree of skill and prior professional experience in the field of translation and interpretation amongst the various interpreter/translators. This diversity of prior experience led to varying degrees of quality interpretation and translation. Some of the interpreter/translators the researcher consulted did not ask the participant to pause during their responses. Some interviewees spoke for lengthy periods of time, and in trying to translate such voluminous answers, the interpreter/translator would forget to include details such as names of people and films when translating the interviewee's response into English. In some situations when this occurred, the interpreter/translator would have no other choice but to ask the participant to repeat their response, which the interviewees themselves sometimes also forgot. This required an ex post facto re-listen to the interview recording, and eventually a separate individual was consulted to listen to select portions of some interview recordings to identify the names and details that were not included.

However, beyond the language limitations between researcher and interviewee, in one instance there also arose a language limitation between interviewee and interpreter/translator. One interview was conducted with a participant whose native language is Kazakh, not Russian. Both the researcher and interpreter possess limited Kazakh language knowledge, yet the interviewee insisted on conducting the interview in Russian, a language they by their own admission happened to not know very well. As a result, the interview was difficult to conduct and interpret. The interpreter/translator struggled considerably and often offered words in Russian to the interviewee when they appeared at a loss. When translating the Russian answers into English, the researcher's interpreter/translator would often and increasingly embellish and add additional details to the response which the interviewee did not necessarily provide in the original Russian. This was done in effort to generate more coherent thoughts, however in this one interview it considerably elevated the risk of compromising or outright altering the content of the interviewee's response. To address this, the researcher first re-listened to the interview recording with the interpreter/translator who originally assisted, and the individual provided details that they did not include in their original translation of the responses from the original Russian responses. And secondly, the researcher consulted a separate individual to only refer to the original Russian answers, ignore the English translations, and provide as literal a translation as possible regardless of how grammatically inconsistent or unrefined the response was. Ultimately the latter served as the basis of the official interview transcript.

III. Results

“It's a completely industrial pipeline. And YOU need to fucking know how it works!” – Katerina Suvorova

To begin with, one trend that emerged across multiple interviews is that the terms independent and arthouse in Kazakhstan must be re-examined, especially as it pertains to the inter-relationship within the Kazakhstani film industry between commercial and auteur film. Referring back to the Introduction, independent and arthouse filmmakers, as conceptualized per Western film history are not as mutually exclusive as otherwise suggested. Instead, in terms of content, both independent and arthouse film have limited but ongoing engagement with the Kazakh state. While independent filmmakers seek to make broader-appeal films; a large factor being commercial profits, arthouse filmmakers still artistic expression but are keenly aware of the importance of generating profit. The personal career identification as only independent or only arthouse is not fixed. As local filmmaker Farkhat Sharipov describes: “To know the industry here, you have to understand that the term ‘independent’ is not quite the same as in America. Because we don't have big studios here, like in America, really, we just have the one [Kazakhfilm], so this term ‘independent’ it's not really appropriate because in Hollywood or wherever, you have multiple studios and you can be independent. But here it's a different story” (Interview with Farkhat Sharipov, 2021). This is reinforced across other interviews as American-based Kazakh filmmaker Tolegen Baitukenov reiterates: “[...] you cannot just separate independent from commercial. In Kazakhstan they all...work with each other all the time” (Interview with Tolegen Baitukenov, 2021). Filmmaking when examined as strictly a profession is not bound by financial-artistic parameters which would otherwise label or compartmentalize work on the grounds of personal preference, political stances, ethical or artistic values.

The independent and arthouse film career trajectory is one of inter-industrial mobility. Working on different projects financed by different means (private backers, independent companies, the Kazakhfilm studio, etc.) and producing quality films enables a rise in reputation locally which merits an increased budget for the next project. This is the only way to establish a reputation, and eventually that reputation should compel audiences to consume the filmmaker's products. Local independent and arthouse film producer Serik Abishev explains that at its core, this demarcation occurs on the basis of funding availability rather than as a result of artistic interests:

We have difficulties because the directors don't only do one thing – don't only do government films, don't only do commercial films. Financially, actually we don't have this separation of funding because, when we first started, I was working with Kazakhfilm and we had 3 films financed by them and the government. We made 3 films. Between these projects, we were also making our own separately funded films. Those films had a very small budget, and these 3 with Kazakhfilm of course had a much bigger budget. And also, we had some different projects with private companies who funded us, so our experience can be broken down into roughly thirds: we had 30% of our projects funded by the government, 30% was privately funded, and 30% was funded with money from abroad, from here and there. So that's why it's difficult to separate them. Each producer has the same view on this matter, we are mixing our sources of funding. (Interview with Serik Abishev, 2021)

This is the general model that most auteurs strive for regardless of nationality. In the Kazakhstani context, most filmmakers regardless of whether they identify as independent or arthouse also strive for a career path which enables retention of artistic autonomy. “The main thing which we are trying to reach is to become free from financial dependence. Ideally, it would be in our best interests to find a steady, sustainable income source abroad. And also, what helps us is because during these years, as we made creative films and have established our name, sure that helps to get a budget. We already have an established point of view, and its supportable for those abroad” (Interview with Serik Abishev, 2021). This overlapping and mutually inclusive nature of the

Kazakhstani film industry poses not only a useful illustration of the artistic motivations, but also the financial incentives which drive the local filmmakers.

This dichotomy also reflects the relationship akin to a patron and client found in patronage systems that are prevalent throughout the arts. However, in place of a church or royal court as has been the convention of patronage, the Kazakhstani state and Kazakhfilm studio represent the most prominent patrons. Nevertheless, there persists the same issues artists face between financial needs and the ability to maintain artistic autonomy and integrity:

But we must question the extent to which the interests and values of the individual and her community expressed through alternative cultural loci are spontaneous and free of manipulation and control by economic and political elites. The more unqualified the imperative to ‘provide viewers with the opportunity to explore their own aesthetic knowledge,’ the greater the challenge for aesthetic pragmatism or constructivism to justify in what sense and on what conditions one's aesthetic knowledge is her own and self-legitimizing. (Papastephanou, 2006, p. 84)

When there appears to be no sustainable relationship between creator and consumer, the ability to have an aesthetic discourse is considerably constrained. And for the art creator and producer the end result may be more self-serving rather than a meaningful contribution to the arts, or “self-affirmation” (Papastephanou, 2006, p. 84). The socially-conscious films of the Kazakh independent and arthouse industry may be vulnerable to the criticism that they are more self-indulgent than thought-provoking. Most of the self-identifying arthouse filmmakers interviewed have expressed a unified desire to capture the truth of Kazakhstan through their works. However, when acknowledging that the local filmmaker is not too occupied with the preferences of the audience, nor is the audience actively consuming these works, for whom is the negotiation of aesthetic knowledge occurring?

I mean, there's this one thing that actually annoys me. In Kazakh auteur films most of them show just how bad the life in Kazakhstan [is] or some particular ridiculous case just to attract some attention from the European festivals. Because I think that it's time to grow up and put more, maybe it was well if you see some European or American movies,

there's always something you can take away. Quotes, points of views. But Kazakh auteur films are mostly nothing new. That said, I still really respect like Adil Khan Yerzhanov, or Emir Baigazin because they are able to carry their own style and especially Yerzhanov, most of his films are pretty smart in terms of this. If you watch European movies, you get work of the brain. Most Kazakh films it's a total non-existence of hope, something depressing or bleak. I wish Kazakh filmmakers were more open to playing in different fields, examine bigger questions about life in general, or about mid-life crises. Relationships between men and women, generational questions. Not just about cutting off a sheep's head and showing something that's actually happening in the middle of nowhere. I always seek for something new, something thoughtful in films. And as for Kazakh films it is just consultation of reality. (Interview with Tolegen Baitukenov, 2021)

The tendency of these arthouse filmmakers to fairly consistently compete abroad may also serve the interpretation that the filmmaker is cultivating a bleak image of Kazakhstan in pursuit of self-affirmation on foreign stages rather than the advancement of the art and the elevation of the country and its national image.

3.1 - Influences, Preferences, and Audiences

When considering the fact that the current film industry model in Kazakhstan favors competition abroad it is conceivable that these independent and arthouse filmmakers might be letting the success of this model influence their creative decision-making. “[...] I don't think they keep in mind Kazakh audiences when they shoot their films. They probably keep in mind especially film festival critics just to show” (Interview with Tolegen Baitukenov, 2021). This is particularly compelling when, as local film critic Gulnara Abikeyeva states of the average domestic filmgoer “General audience want to see surely commercial films” (Interview with Gulnara Abikeyeva, 2021). Therefore, what influence does the international audience have on the Kazakhstani filmmaker? What considerations would be made for the international audience?

Local producer and head of independent film company MG Productions, Yernar Malikov places consideration on who the audience is especially foreign ones. “I think we should think about the audience. If it's for an American audience, what do the Americans want? What do the

Turks want? And obviously there needs to be a good synopsis; good idea. And after that, producers from America and England will read them and see that it's a good product to market in America" (Interview with Yernar Malikov, 2021). In the long-term, foreign interest will generate larger profit if their market can be penetrated into. If a Kazakhstani producer can make a high-quality product sufficient to western/foreign audience standards then it would be good enough quality for the local population.

While Yernar Malikov is a producer of narrative films and positioned to execute ideas and dispense finances, there is a slight deviation in viewpoint from the writer-directors who are themselves dependent on producers for employment and financial investment. Alisher Jadigerov, a local younger generation filmmaker noticed that audiences are welcoming of instantly accessible, short-length content like most videos available on YouTube where there is no universally established quality threshold, and of the oversaturated availability the overall quality can drop substantially (Interview with Alisher Jadigerov, 2021). The challenge remains for the independent and arthouse filmmaker to decipher the interests of the locals. And it is justifiable that they would not want to invest the effort when there is a more flourishing interest coming from abroad.

Local independent documentarian Katerina Suvorova presents an interesting observation that while ascertaining taste, interest and preference is itself a complex process regardless of nationality or location, it is easier to produce content that appeals to the foreign palette:

Why do people like films from Kazakhstan by like Emir Baigazin, or Adilkhan or mine? They really want to see new voices from some unknown territory. 'Where is Kazakhstan? Who are living there? What do they care about?' These people don't know before they go and see the film. And for many voices that exist and tell their story from the countryside from this huge country of Kazakhstan. [...] And then more auteurs will tell these stories, then more we will represent our group portrait. (Interview with Katerina Suvorova, 2021)

Though it is not simpler to ascertain a foreign audiences' interests over the domestic one despite the apparent interest from the foreign audiences, it is presently easier to consider making films for the foreign audience as there is established interest.

3.2 - Independent & Arthouse Kazakhstani Cinema Within Modern Kazakhstan

Among the interviewees, different interpretations emerged around rather how to sub-categorize the Kazakhstani audiences.

Now I can say that our audience is divided into 2 parts: people who are living in towns, and people who live in the cities. Like in big cities. So, I think those 2 different audiences are both more focused now [...] No I don't think there is commonality between them. The people in the countryside they don't have access to cinemas. They cannot watch Hollywood films, maybe only through internet or YouTube. They mostly love to watch TV shows: Turkish shows or Korean dramas. They really enjoy those. But people in the city can go to cinemas, watch Hollywood films. But they love Korean dramas and Turkish shows as well. (Interview with Yernar Malikov, 2021)

Demographically there is a discrepancy between rural and urban movie-goers but not in terms of televised and web-serial content. Speaking broadly of the majority of the population, there is an inverse relationship in terms of consuming realist cinema of Kazakh arthouse. "I don't think audiences in Kazakhstan, the majority of Kazakhstani people tend to see Kazakh arthouse. Not interested, they see it out their windows." (Interview with Tolegen Baitukenov, 2021). Perhaps globally-minded Kazakhs (such as those who have been aboard), those who belong to privilege or born and raised only in the cities are inclined to watch their local arthouse cinema. But the vast majority have some connection to rural living or systemic problems befalling modern Kazakhstan.

There is evidence that the relationship between local audiences and the independent and arthouse filmmakers remains cold to non-existent. Even the global-minded, local cultural elites are inclined to avoid their nation's cinema. "Referring back to that 'cold relationship' between the audience and the arthouse, independent film industry, it's just because, looking at the history,

Hollywood was the first to come here and distribute their films here. And at that time, they were the most popular. [...] Here the mood and preference [were] taken by Hollywood. Now it comes to the point of why we have a cold relationship. People have a different taste based on Hollywood movies” (Interview with Farkhat Sharipov, 2021). Baurzhan Shukenov, the executive director of the “Arman” movie theater chain, and Deputy Chairman of the Board for Production at the State Center “Kazakhcinema” supports this conclusion. “The Kazakh audience is well-educated. We watch a lot of foreign content: American films, European films. But the thing is, Kazakh audiences don't like the Kazakh films – it's not because of the content, it's because of the quality. Because we are so much used to Hollywood-level high-quality films that we may not always like the quality of the films. So, we may not always go to see our films. It's not because we don't like the content” (Interview with Baurzhan Shukenov, 2021). This suggests that the local audience, if they choose to attend the cinema at all, are only going to see a specific genre of local films or to see Russian or Hollywood productions. Local young filmmaker Darkhan Tulegenov argues that for arthouse audiences – cinephiles – the dynamic is also amorphous.

Generally, if you're talking about general audiences, it's people who are consuming quality things. But if you're talking about a special group, students of cinema schools, or artistic people, those who are already interested and connected to the film industry in some way, those are the arthouse film audience. And it's growing everywhere. [...] It's a very difficult questions because one person can consider themselves a mass mainstream movie watcher but also like something different. But we have people who have consume comedies, another arthouse. (Interview with Darkhan Tulegenov, 2021)

The people who appreciate film as art, and consume it for that purpose are also open to seeing mainstream blockbusters. Darkhan’s peer filmmaker Berik Zhakhanov reiterates that globally the interest in arthouse continues to rise. “We're all coming to this point. The spectator is getting interested in what the auteur and film director is doing” (Interview with Berik Zhakhanov,

2021). While it remains unclear what direction the local audiences are moving in regarding arthouse and independent cinema, the local filmmakers especially the young ones are more optimistic that their audience exists in Kazakhstan.

3.3 - Independent & Arthouse Kazakhstani Cinema Outside of Modern Kazakhstan

As New New Wave filmmaker (and self-identified Partisan Movement member) Sharipa Urazbayeva noted, the ongoing interest in Kazakhstan and its arthouse films from abroad keep them in business. “A good thing about arthouse cinema and filmmaking is that you can go from the border of Kazakhstan. All our films which were made with no money, budget, or funding. They always spread somewhere else except Kazakhstan. And they will always show elsewhere, and the rest of the world is always searching for these types of films. Always curious and want to watch it” (Interview with Sharipa Urazbayeva, 2021).

All three younger generation filmmakers interviewed – Darkhan Tulegenov, Alisher Jadigerov, and Berik Zhakhanov – acknowledge different aspects associated with interest from the international audience. “It's kind of a mutual interest. The audience here are interested in the lives of poor and rich people in, say, Romania or Korea. It's the same that the outsiders feel for our life. The modern life. They're interested in, not necessarily cultural content, but how we live and the style of how the people live.” (Interview with Darkhan Tulegenov, 2021). However, the benefits of this interest naturally are not limited to curiosity.

Berik identifies the career-based advantages of the international film festival space. “Of course, I'm trying to work to the international audience, because this is kind of the high-level. And these are my ambitions that I'm trying to achieve. And of course, if you're recognized out there by them, then you're automatically recognized here. You become accepted. [...] So, I cannot say about this old generation. They're also trying to go abroad. They're not like sitting

here and waiting. Every person would be happy to be recognized somewhere else” (Interview with Berik Zhakhanov, 2021). For him, Alisher and Katerina Suvorova, there is an explicit urgency to exporting their works abroad.

The international audiences appreciate these films [...] The main thing for our filmmakers, that saves us from starvation and repressions is film festivals abroad. All filmmakers need to know how to participate in these international film festivals. [...] it's like Dimash Kudaibergenov. Nobody knew him but when he started signing in China, he became famous here. When I talk to my friends, we all say the only way to become famous is to participate in another country and then come back. So, if people know me abroad, the government won't have a choice but to accept me and maybe even give me some money. (Interview with Alisher Jadigerov, 2021)

The exporting of films abroad is not enough if the end goal is to contribute or engage with the local audience. “I need to go abroad, get recognized far away, screen for a wide international audience. And then return sharing these international articles and news coverages.” (Interview with Katerina Suvorova, 2021). The filmmaker must single-handedly undertake promoting themselves upon return to Kazakhstan. This identifies what may be interpreted as an exceptionally complex process which might deter some filmmakers from utilizing this model of exporting their works abroad first in effort to (re)inject their art cinema back into Kazakhstan.

3.4 - Challenges in Their Industry

Across the various interviews conducted, several different challenges were identified. “Critics [...] The critics can be rough. They can attack us here in Kazakhstan. They use some really bad language and words and attack us. They're trying to fight us over this reality” (Interview with Sharipa Urazbayeva, 2021). Sharipa's comments suggest an inherent nationalist-based politicization of film critics as mouthpieces/extensions of the state which actively work to suppress the realist cinema of Kazakh arthouse. Whether this is motivated by a cultural-based prioritization of reputation or other factors is unclear. However, in the development of any

artistic industry, the importance of the critic is undeniable especially for a section of the film industry that is trying to relate back to the public.

Farkhat identifies distribution as his main challenge. “Local distribution. [...] For distribution now, its money made by Hollywood movies. And of course, it's shared with people who own cinemas. So, they make money only from American films. And they're only open now because of American films. And to get off from this needle, it's hard. This is a franchise. Given the tools, you can make money. To me, our own distribution it's a matter of time and lots of effort to be done” (Interview with Farkhat Sharipov, 2021). Farkhat's comments connect to Gulnara's as both acknowledge an apparent lack of knowledgeable local distributors:

Kazakh filmmakers in general are arthouse, commercial, is they are not incorporated into the world system of film sales. For example, let's say French film. What's going with French films? I don't know, it's successful. A successful French film. It's going to market. For example, to Cannes. And they're selling their film to, I don't know, to Russia. If Ukrainian distributor wants to buy this film, he is going directly to Cannes Film Festival and buying this French Festival. What are the Kazakh film distributors doing? They're going to Russia. In the best way: to Moscow market. In best case, buying film from Russia. [...] They have no habit first of all, and then specialist with knowledge of language. We aren't going directly to Cannes' market to buy American, French, films. We are going through Russia because it's very comfortable. Russia gives us not only films, but subtitles, dubbing into Russian and so on. But in this case, 50% is going to Kazakh distributors, 50% is staying in Russia. As I understand it, it is less than is going through. But the same concerns present in films in Kazakhstan there is no companies that are going to Cannes or American film market, or Busan film market to sell their films. I don't speak about festivals. As for festivals, arthouse directors manage to know how to promote there. I speak only about the market. For example, [neither] Nurtas Adambai, nor Koyanbayev, are going to Cannes' market to sell their film. Because there is no specialist in this sphere. (Interview with Gulnara Abikeyeva, 2021)

This draws allusion to a larger, systemic issue: one concerning quality of film education in Kazakhstan. Crucial positions within the local film industry are either not being filled or are helmed by supposedly under-qualified individuals. “It's about the people. And I wish there were more young, smart filmmakers who would say: 'You, Tolegen, go to Hell! And I'm going to shoot something fresh!' I would be more than happy to see that. That is the biggest problem. Not

enough creative, smart people working in that industry.” (Interview with Tolegen Baitukenov, 2021). This relates directly to Baurzhan who listed two equivalent problems.

[...] first, its piracy. People, our audience, because there's so much pirated content, why pay for tickets to see movies in the cinemas if everything is available online? The second problem is, since our industry is really small... you know how I said there's big competition in Hollywood. In Kazakhstan, there's really little competition. So, people, they make it to this level and they don't try to go out of their level. Go out of their comfort zone. They reach it, and then go: 'oh, okay, that's enough for us.' They don't try to be better. If we had higher competition in Kazakhstan, then people would be motivated. They'd say: 'oh I need to make this better. I need to work on myself, work on my professional skills.' But right now, it's just: 'Oh this is our level. We don't want to go higher. We don't want to try to push ourselves.' That's the second problem (Interview with Baurzhan Shukenov, 2021)

For a film industry that continues to invest further internationally, the losses could potentially outpace the benefits unless this issue is addressed.

Katerina corroborates this in a very real and practical way. The lack of qualified film professionals who contribute professionally to the independent documentary field is an evident challenge, and its intensity is symptomatic of the larger issue of film education.

It's that not every cinematographer knows how to work in a documentary setting. Most of them are operating in fiction or advertising with big money. They don't know how to spend one month in a small village living with only cold water and knowing why they're there doing that. For me, the rareness of people working in the documentary field is a big problem. For many, many different levels. Producers going to the shoot should know and feel that their relationship with the protagonist is important. You're not just some big name from the city going 'okay, do this. Take that the fuck away.' You can't speak like that. You just really need to be super respectable. We're not shooting a movie. People need to learn it through working on many projects. Not just one project per 5 years. I think that low amount of colleagues is a big problem for me. Someone would say: 'yes, you are the star of the documentary.' But it's hard to be isolated outside of creative documentaries. (Interview with Katerina Suvorova, 2021)

While on the surface it may seem obvious that narrative fiction filmmaking and documentary filmmaking are largely different formats within the larger arts, for Katerina this poses a very close and present issue.

The young filmmakers each stated finance as a core challenge. For Darkhan the issue arises when securing sufficient finance overtakes one's ability to sustain interest in completing the project. However, he acknowledged: "If you don't have the money, you'll find a way. I experienced this myself. I saw this myself. I realized that when the film has this kind of difficulties of financing and when you're going through all stages of this, the film becomes very good." (Interview with Darkhan Tulegenov, 2021). Berik diverges, noting that the longer a project takes it may suffer in quality or loss of interest from the creator. However, to overcome this corresponding challenge, he identifies the challenge as being overcome through constantly working regardless of format or who the employer is; the urgency is on the filmmaker to be flexible.

I'm trying to do every niche. I'm doing serials. Not stopping. But I think it's very important in the work of these filmmakers. So, to make an ideal film you have to shoot and shoot and do it a lot. Ridley Scott, before his first feature-film he made something like 250 commercials. So, he did a lot before he moved onto bigger things. He kept exploring and experimenting. [...] Of course, it's an art, but you have to make money somehow. You have to make something in all genres, then the producers will pay attention to you. Some producers already know my style and they know I'm not going to be dictated by commercial interests, but I have my own style and can't be dictated. To get permission, you have to be good at every kind of style and genre. (Interview with Berik Zhakhanov, 2021)

Ultimately, to survive in the arts, it benefits to be occupationally flexible. Especially when financial constraints are as present as they are in the film industry. But in addition to finance, Alisher notes that he believes the biggest challenge is internalized fear within his generation (Interview with Alisher Jadigerov, 2021). Even before securing finance, the young generation must not be afraid to make their films.

3.5 - Perceptions Between Generations of Kazakhstani Filmmakers

The generation heralded by the 30-something year old Kazakhstani filmmakers – the so-called New New Wave – is a category that serves largely a film history function. The logical

successors to the New Wave would be a New New Wave. However, a concept that emerged from the research is that within Kazakhstan, a sub-section of this group is also considered the “Children of Independence.” The local film critics assign the label Children of Independence to the generation of Adilkhan Yerzhanov, Emir Baigazin, and Farkhat Sharipov (people in their mid- to late-30s) as they were alive to see the fall of Soviet Union but too young to participate in the transition.

And surely, one of the characteristics of the children of Independence is that they have no censorship. They have no ‘inner censorship.’ You know, we people who were growing up in Soviet system we have a very strong inner censorship. Even writing articles or doing something now. We think ‘oh. Somebody wrote something. Did something. It's not correct! It's too grave.’ But this generation they don't have it. And I think in terms of comparison to other countries: maybe, Uzbekistan, with Tatarstan inside Russia, but in general in comparison with other post-Soviet countries, I think that our side of outside censorship, not inner censorship, was not strong in Kazakhstan. There is a whole generation of independence. Because you know these arthouse films, wasn't really popular or known by general audience. Somebody wrote about them, people read about it, but it wasn't really distributed and they haven't really influenced society. Who knows [about] Adilkhan Yerzhanov? Me, other ten critics, and maybe another ten journalists in general. I don't know, maybe some intellectuals. There are [a] very small amount of people. And as for foreign spectators, it's absolutely amazing thing that these young generation made their image on international level through international film festivals. Because Adilkhan Yerzhanov I think all by himself made his promotions, connections with co-producers in France, others and it's amazing how he reached Cannes, Venice, other festivals; its only because of his own efforts. Or Emir Baigazin -- he's the same. You can say that in comparison, for example Kazakh New Wave it appeared in the moment of crashing Soviet Union. And this is why it was very popular. This Kazakh New Wave was very popular in festivals because the whole Soviet Union is crashing and it's a new face. New Asian faces appeared in Kazakhstan. Beforehand, Kazakh cinema was absolutely unknown. As for this new generation, they have not so strong support system of publicity. Critics or something else. They do it by their own efforts. But surely their success at festivals is going through their social scenes, artistic language. (Interview with Gulnara Abikeyeva, 2021)

The important distinction is that the Children of Independence belong to the New New Wave. But the rising generation of 20-something year old Kazakhstani filmmakers do not necessarily classify as Children of Independence. And incidentally the people who are considered Children of Independence consider their generation as separate from the 20-somethings. There is

essentially what Serik Abishev identifies as three generations of working filmmakers currently in Kazakhstan: 1) the old generation, 2) the middle generation, and 3) the new, young generation (Interview with Serik Abishev, 2021). The old generation now includes the original Kazakh New Wave. The middle generation which includes the Children of Independence/New New Wave. And the new generation which includes Generation Z filmmakers who can still be classified as New New Wave.

The middle and new generations recognize a perceived contention with some of the old generation. The main source of this tension lies in distribution and reception of finances especially from the government.

The ones that do receive money. They're the 'Aqsaqal,' very valuable, old seniors – for us, they're directors who have the authority from Soviet times, creating historical films, governmental films. They established a name for themselves. [...] The young generation will not be satisfied with the older generation, and the older generation will want to keep what they have, their successes. They don't want to share the budget. And then the young will become the new Aqsaqal. And then they will want to keep their money. And that will anger the new generation. And this system has been existing already for a long time. [...] Just on its own, it won't disappear. (Interview with Serik Abishev, 2021)

While Serik identifies a negative relationship between the older Aqsaqal and the younger, not all Aqsaqal dynamics impose this intrinsically poor hierarchy. However, even beyond the realm of financial remuneration, there persists an apparent asymmetry in representation of the young on most film boards or other authoritative or governing industrial bodies.

The factors which cause this asymmetry may run far deeper than convention or finance might dictate. While there is some degree of intra-generational cooperation at least with the middle/Children of Independence generation this progress may be stalled because of socio-political factors.

The same in Kyrgyzstan, there is very strong cinema community. Older generation supports younger generation. And if somebody writes a script, he is giving it to somebody else to realize the idea. Like, Adilkhan wrote the script to *Shlagbaum* and even

they have some national award, I speak about Kyrgyz filmmakers, and they discuss a lot about whom to do and they prefer very often to give prize to younger directors because it is necessary to support them. Sometimes they support commercial film and so on and so on. And we see outside of the cinema movement, their deep cinematic connections are very strong. In Kazakhstan, cinema connections, cinema society as I understand it is very weak. Maybe I'm wrong. If I'm wrong, it's very good. Maybe if you'll speak with younger filmmakers, maybe they will say 'oh we are together'. As I understand, everybody is going separately. Even commercial filmmakers, arthouse filmmakers and they might say maybe it's a characteristic of Kazakhstan society in general. We have no civil society. Civil society in Kyrgyzstan is strong, maybe because it's smaller. Not just among filmmakers, but among artists, among journalists, etc. In Kazakhstan, maybe because society is more rich, in general because we speak about people living in cities. Maybe they're more independent. Maybe everybody is looking for foreign investors. And one of the examples that our cinematic civil society is weak is our Union of Filmmakers. It's not really working. Not 10 years ago, 5 years ago, now. Only one person Akhat Ibrayev, a young film director, tried to connect young filmmakers several years ago. But he failed. [...] For 2-3 years, he was an official leader of the Union of Filmmakers. And it's very interesting figures. For example, in this union, they have about 328 members from 2014-2017. During these 3 years, Akhat Ibrayev he led the union. He counted that only 17 people were under 50 years old. Over 300 people were over 50. What he wanted to do, he wanted to do in these 3 years, around 2016. He wanted to invite young filmmakers into this union. He didn't manage to do it. (Interview with Gulnara Abikeyeva, 2021)

Intra-generational cooperation is not impossible. Gulnara's observation pertains to the middle generation which Serik identified. Of equal importance is identifying if the new, younger generation is continuing this pattern.

Inter-generational tensions continue to persist. As Alisher notes, “[The older and younger generations] don't really get along with each other either. There were moments we all sat together, discussing movies, then everyone started arguing and shouting about the movies. That's why I'm telling to the younger generation, we need to get together. We need to create a new Hollywood: Spielberg, Scorsese they were friendly, got along really well. That's why they created their successful Hollywood. I don't know if we can make the old and new generations get along” (Interview with Alisher Jadigerov, 2021). Within their generation, the general consensus among the young generation is that they interact and engage well with each other. They collaborate and support each other. However, their attitudes towards their relationship with

the older generation start to diverge. While Alisher Jadigerov confirms Serik Abishev's assertion of cyclical animosity amongst the generations, Berik Zhakhanov disagrees:

We as filmmakers are communicating. We are not competitive with each other. I just came out of a conversation with another film director, so we wrote a screenplay together and we're sharing. We're not putting our names all over it saying: 'Oh, I'm the filmmaker, or you're the filmmaker!' There's no tension. Even when applying to the older generation, when we come to them for advice, they're quite open-hearted. They help with ideas. They help us. So, there's no case like: 'Oh, I won't help you.' [...] I'm not independent to them. If they ask me for advice, I always give them advice. Or I offer criticism. Because it helps me to grow. But I'm also young and I don't think I've done that many things myself, but if I can be any help to someone else, then I will. (Interview with Berik Zhakhanov, 2021)

However, both Berik and Alisher agree that the relationship between peers in the young generation is strong. "We gather at least once a month to see each other and discuss our plans" (Interview with Alisher Jadigerov, 2021). Darkhan Tulegenov argues that there are some positives. "I think that the previous generation is always pushed by the next one. While you have this idea and are pushed by the next generation it's hard to become conservative. So, what we can say about the older generation and conservatives: you can't really hold your ideas inside. Either realize them or move on. That's what the new generation is really trying to do, while the older ones are holding onto them because they aren't as open. There's no time where you can think about an idea for 10 years and then try to make it..." (Interview with Darkhan Tulegenov, 2021). The inevitable outcome is that with time people belonging to their generation will advance to the next, but interviews with the new generation suggest that they collectively are more aware of this than perhaps their predecessors and are actively working to mitigate the outcome.

3.6 - Film Collectives and Collaborations

The most prominent recent film collective in Kazakhstan is widely recognized to be the Partisan Movement. As one of its founding members, Serik Abishev best defines the work he, Adilkhan Yerzhanov and other Partisan Movement members set out to accomplish:

The first thing is, when we were young, we were angry that the government was only filming fake things, not the reality. We were disagreeing with that, so we created the movement on 3 points: 1) we were against censorship. We wanted to show the reality. 2) We wanted to create our own industry language, 3) to make our works without finance. And these were linked. If you make work with small or no budget, that money isn't linked to somebody, there's less pressure from those investors. You can film whatever you want. Because there's no censorship you can show reality itself. So, at that time we were yelling ourselves: 'Give way to the young generation! We are not asking for money, or anything, just to film what we see.' Our films then weren't art. Even if we wanted to film something about how people are living here, it can be considered less historical but more like documentary. But even then, we never considered what we were doing as making a documentary, as documenting real lives. We aren't showing the actual lives of poor people living in bad slums and districts. What we were doing was difficult for others to understand, but we always knew that it would be difficult to realize but also difficult for others to take in. Try to find the industry language. (Interview with Serik Abishev, 2021)

The principles of the movement uphold a similar spirit of an underground, anti-establishment film collective. But its current status remains unclear. "We used to have the Partisan movement, it's a special term. This term describes the people that are creating films on their own budget, with no help from the government or corporations. Adilkhan Yerzhanov was the first to take part in it, he was creating films with this movement. But when he started receiving money from the state, he quit. I can kind of identify myself as a partisan filmmaker, now I'm still not financed by anybody. Now there are lots of films made without a budget" (Interview with Sharipa Urazbayeva, 2021). Partisan Movement is recognized by the younger generation for its efforts, but its members appear to have been limited to the middle generation which Yerzhanov, Abishev, Urazbayeva and company belong.

Regarding if an alternative group is viable to emerge in contemporary Kazakhstan, Tolegen Baitukenov was unsure. "In general, there isn't really a prominent group, because to assemble all these filmmakers you either need to have an great idea that would attract them to collaborate on something unusual. Or you need to have lots of money [...] I'm not sure if Kazakhstani filmmakers need that group. Maybe they don't" (Interview with Tolegen

Baitukenov, 2021). Regarding either reviving the Partisan Movement or creating a new group, Alisher notes: “We already have this sort of bond. [...] When we need help, we’re there to help each other. Usually, the main aid in a capitalistic world is money, and that’s what not everyone has nowadays. Someone could help with a plot or story. Authors want to create something. Somebody could physically help: a cameraman, lighting.” (Interview with Alisher Jadigerov, 2021). Therefore, it is promising that while there is no explicit organized entity, the young generation appear to be organizing.

3.7 - The Internet and Crowdfunding in Kazakhstan

The role of the internet has been acknowledged as a vital utility in exponentially expanding the reach of films. “I've been working in this industry already for 11 years with Adilkhan. In the beginning, audiences didn't really accept our film outside of Cannes, but today with the help of the internet all of us have more access” (Interview with Serik Abishev, 2021). Across the interviews, considerations of the internet have posed a more benevolent social development than a malevolent one.

These filmmakers are cultivating a captive international fanbase. So why not turn to the known denominator for financial assistance when other recognized funding channels are not as reliable? Tolegen is largely skeptical, “Because most crowdfunding projects that I was seeing in Kazakhstan was just: ‘give me money, and I'll shoot a great movie.’ No concept, no teaser, no understanding of what filmmaking is” (Interview with Tolegen Baitukenov, 2021). Pertaining to the potential of the internet to crowdfunding, the results across interviews have been sporadic.

Within Kazakhstan, there simply has not been enough data to suggest it’s a reliably useable resource. “In Kazakhstan, this industry in general isn't developed enough yet. So basically, Kazakh filmmakers used to earn from the box office. They're not used to earning

through streaming. The whole idea in general isn't very... We're only now starting to learn more about it. It's really problematic because we haven't shifted to that idea yet. For instance, in Russia, crowdfunding projects are very successful. [...] We tried [crowdfunding], but we couldn't. Because filmmakers would know, but the people they wouldn't know.” (Interview with Baurzhan Shukenov, 2021). Alternatively, as Farkhat explains, a lack of experience accounts for why he cannot speak on its utility. (Interview with Farkhat Sharipov, 2021). This is indicative of most of the local filmmakers’ interviews. However, this does not mean that services are not available. As Darkhan notes, within Kazakhstan there exist banking services which could be used to raise some funds. “[...] within our community, it's possible with services like Kaspi Gold, where like young generation of filmmakers – we get this kind of support from people. But it's a very, very small budget for short films we can do” (Interview with Darkhan Tulegenov, 2021). In the case of Kaspi, limitations are largely due to financial restrictions put in place by the bank or the number of users.

In some cases, the internet-funded projects similar to the turning to international organizations for financial assistance, have their own inhibiting conditions. “Where I applied to: Project Links, there was a rule that they will give me only 30% of main amount raised. That means that I have to raise 70%, and that's a huge amount of money. I can't raise it. For me, personally, I don't have it. I have no idea how I'd raise that much money. Where can I find that? And usually, they are giving it for when you have made the film already, and you have to correct the color, improve some sound, light, edit. Usually for the post-production process.” (Interview with Sharipa Urazbayeva, 2021). In similar fashion to resorting to international organizations for external funding, some internet-based services have their own internal restrictions and guidelines which may deter the filmmaker entirely.

IV. Analysis and Discussion

“That the biggest mistake every young filmmaker makes is to think that after participating in Cannes they'd wake up famous and rich, but no. You wake up in your apartment, everything is the same. No one is calling.” – Tolegen Baitukenov

This section will explore in further detail the results of the interviews and the trends that emerged, but within context of the conceptual framework. To start with, the inter-relationship between independent and auteur filmmakers, the commercial establishment, the Kazakh state establishment, and the Kazakhstani viewing audience has significantly changed. In 2019, the government of Kazakhstan passed a law “On Cinematography” which led to the establishment of the State Center for Support of National Cinema, also called Kazakhcinema. The Center’s administration is comprised of various industry insiders such as Baurzhan Shukenov who comprise the Board of Directors as well as an Expert Council. The Expert Council is comprised of film industry professionals who possess the career experience and knowledge to evaluate the numerous pitches sent to Kazakhcinema and determine which ones are worth investing in. Filmmakers such as Farkhat Sharipov have sat on the Expert Council.

This government-financed Center signaled two changes: first, that the Kazakhstan government would no longer solely finance the Kazakhfilm company. And second, any filmmaker (commercial, government-backed, independent, and auteur) could pitch their ideas and if successful receive funding from the government. “Now if they have certain financing coming from the government every year, they try to finance more films, as opposed to having few high-budget films we now try to finance more film. Not only productions, but also development stages; production stage. Now we want to give more chances to other people as well. Since the situation; since we got this law, also because of private money, now we can say 'oh, the private company, investors can come in and invest their parts as well.' In general, it’s

getting better for more filmmakers to receive financing.” (Interview with Baurzhan Shukenov, 2021). Regarding the Kazakhstani audience, these auteur and independent filmmakers acknowledge that the prestige of success internationally has become a necessary prerequisite. Only when these films earn praise and prizes in recognizable international film festivals, and the filmmakers promote their accomplishments back in Kazakhstan, does the Kazakhstani audience become interested. Therefore, given the comments provided by Sharipa, Berik, Darkhan, and Alisher concerning the desirability of competing in international film festivals, it is logical that Kazakhcinema is, among other considerations, seeking to replicate the success of these auteurs in a mutually beneficial way. However, the question persists about what receiving state money means for the messaging of these auteurs and what criteria the government applies when deciding who to fund.

Conversely, on the issue of financing for these independent and auteur filmmakers, while they are largely in agreement that the creation of the state Center is a positive step, more needs to be done. This includes more transparency in terms of who is approving funding, and why the Center chooses which projects it does and the amount of money to give to each project it selects. Ultimately the decision is made, as Katerina argues, by a government dignitary not by an artist (Interview with Katerina Suvorova, 2021). Of the 12 interviews conducted, 3 filmmakers identified that the largest challenge facing them and their industry pertained to challenges associated with financing. “The situation is exactly like this. The young generation and independent filmmakers are looking for financial support from foreign countries, or putting their own money into what they do” (Interview with Yernar Malikov, 2021). While there is now a new prominent source of film finance, and it boasts more transparency than was previously offered when Kazakhfilm was the primary recipient of government funding, it is clear that more must be

done. Katerina goes even further, by arguing that the establishment of the Kazakhcinema center could usher in the establishment of other similar financial entities which not only directly fund the films but also account for the festival-first model.

We need a more proper system. An annual or twice annual application system, etc. And of course, now we need to go internationally, but then you need to proof your work in English, find ad support or someone who can present your film not just on a stage but in a networking sense. It's also money to build, translate. Not everyone can. But it would be more productive if an artist can present their idea, in their native language, in their native country. Not every project situation can provide you the funds to travel. So yes, we have international foundations, but they also take more established applicants from more established countries. These people also studied English like for example in Singapore, Germany, Sweden: they study their arts in English and its easier for them to present. But they also study how to pitch and how to present their projects in their studies. But here we just study arts as it is. Art out of the blue. That's what we have here in our schools. And it's really hard to find people who get this knowledge from first, second, or third course of their education. Not 10 days before a program, where you need to know how to present your idea: 'Okay, I see the plan. So, what then do I do? 3-minute presentation -- Okay!' It's completely different when you're taught what the best pitch is, and you can practice and refine it. It's a huge difference. It's really hard. That's why I believe we have to have a local foundation" (Interview with Katerina Suvorova, 2021).

Katerina's concerns correlate the quality of film education with financial constraints. And the proposed foundation she argues should be established would complement the role of Kazakhcinema. However, for now the continued operations of Kazakhfilm studio, and more importantly the emergence of Kazakhcinema are sufficient starting points for funding and support. "[The Kazakh state] can't not give us money – to independent and arthouse filmmakers. Because everyone says these people represent Kazakhstan. And these people are taxpayers, and their tax money is given to these filmmakers so that Kazakhstan is represented well abroad. That's why they have to support the other filmmakers too, somehow. And so, then the government can say, 'yeah, we're supporting each filmmaker.' But the reality is the amount they set aside and are willing to give is still really small" (Interview with Serik Abishev, 2021).

4.1 – Kazakhstani Films & Film Festivals as Cultural Capital

What does this new Kazakhcinema center mean within the conceptual framework?

Though they do not outright state this purpose, the inclusion of auteur and independent filmmakers as candidates eligible for government funding signals the most explicit acknowledgment of the significance of film festivals as cultural capital. Per the founding law, the center's purpose is to fund and support national cinema. The decision to be indiscriminate and field applications from all types of filmmakers and treat all types of films they fund, regardless of tone and content, as national cinema also suggests an acknowledgement that should these films compete or circulate abroad, they are representing the nation and therefore serve as a form of nation branding. This also highlights a legitimization from the government upon the arthouse films that are approved for funding. These filmmakers and their products that are established as routinely competing abroad in turn provides a more mainstream route for nation branding on part of the filmmakers and a more expeditious and reliable method of nation branding on part of the state.

What is happening in Kazakhstan's arthouse and independent film industries can best be described as a festival-first model of filmmaking. In examining the concept of the film festival, as de Valck explains: "Film festivals are important sites for the consecration of art films. Prestigious competitions, like the ones in Cannes, Venice, and Berlin, bring cultural recognition to their participants and prizewinners, and such acknowledgement is considered more valuable than the commercial potential of a film (Baumann, 2001; De Valck, 2007; Elsaesser, 2005)" (de Valck, 2013, p. 41). Film festivals, especially for the ambitious Kazakhstani arthouse filmmaker, serve as the pinnacle objective. However, as is also the case in Kazakhstan, the emphasis must be on international film festival, not domestic ones. Why? As Chan notes, "While there are

apparently between five hundred and one thousand film festivals in any given year, the typology is complex and there is no real consensus on what an ‘international film festival’ actually is, though there seems to be a general understanding that film festivals exist as ‘an alternative distribution network...providing audiences with opportunities to enjoy commercially unviable films projected in a communal space – films that most communities, even the most cosmopolitan, otherwise would not have the opportunity to see’ (Chan, 2011, p. 253). While it is one facet of the film festival as curated space to provide the aforementioned cultural recognition and subsequent value and prestige, it is another for local Kazakhstani filmmakers to achieve accolade at as foreign – not just a local or even post-Soviet/CIS – stage as possible. Therefore, the concept of the film festival and its role in affirming legitimacy to films merits examination and application.

Discussion of film festivals is significant especially recently as the film festivals themselves either serve to reinvent themselves or grapple with a changing cultural, artistic and business landscape.

Traditional classifications of film festivals include a category for the ‘business’ type of festival—or the festival with a ‘business agenda’ (as opposed to an ‘audience’ festival, or a festival that has a ‘geopolitical agenda,’ for example). The quintessential ‘business’ festival is Cannes. This festival is so excessively industry oriented—it excludes the audience almost entirely—that many have argued that it should be classified as an industry event rather than a film festival. Indeed, a group of international scholars have proposed that there should be a separate subfield of ‘Cannes studies.’ ‘Business agenda’ festivals also include all those that, over the years, have built up markets and industry networking forums: festivals like Berlinale, Venice International Film Festival (IFF), Toronto IFF, Busan IFF, International Documentary Film Festival, and Amsterdam (IDFA), as well as events in Karlovy Vary, Thessaloniki, Rotterdam, and many more (Iordanova, 2015, p. 7-8)

The film festival in a more contemporaneous sense exists as a background for networking and deal-making especially within the realm of distribution. Another significant element which relates the filmmaker, their product, and even the film festival is the audience. There emerges a

dichotomous exploration to be made regarding to the power of national representation in a foreign space but also the ease of accessibility in the international or foreign-based film festival.

In their exploration of the film festival audience as it relates to the emerging continental film market of African cinema, Dovey best explains this intricacy as follows:

However, we must not forget that other side of the curatorial coin: spectatorship. As media ethnographers have emphasized, films are material objects that have social lives, and their meanings constantly change as they circulate through distinct contexts. If we are serious about incorporating broader publics into our scholarship, then we need to include a 'distribution-centred model of film studies' that asks, 'Who is the audience? How are they constructed as such? What are the material limits that determine which texts are available to which audiences?' And, as Karin Barber has asked, what are the interpretive repertoires of these audiences, and how do they refashion the meanings of films? African screen media scholarship remains relatively impoverished on the question of spectatorship. Furthermore, as Harrow has pointed out, the 'irony . . . is that when popular critical approaches are employed, audience perspectives are recorded that would be considered naïve by academic or scholarly critics.' Such 'naïve' perspectives are not necessarily the case, however, and film festivals are one of those sites at which scholars can directly access the diverse ways in which spectators negotiate the meanings of films—through observing Q&As or through more directed control-group discussions and interviews (Dovey, 2015, p. 130)

While the festival provides a unique glimpse into a more cosmopolitan, international cultural exchange and awareness, the events are largely very exclusive affairs. Perhaps with time more festivals will continue to embrace the online mode moving into the future. It is arguably too early to make any conclusive statement in that regard, however, prior to the pandemic-led need to re-program film festivals to the online format, the prestige and fanfare of the event was rather closely linked to the location, the fashion, and at its core: the exclusivity of the event.

More than a decade ago, the late cultural critic Paul Willemen claimed that although festivals may seem to open up pathways to global exposure and circulation, in fact, they only produce a 'bottleneck effect' and ensure that noncommercial films remain outside formal circulation channels. Traditional circulation channels, meanwhile, remain reserved for blockbuster-type mainstream cinema. Festivals, Willemen claimed, do not bring cinema closer to the people. On the contrary, they encapsulate and isolate cinema, shielding it from wider audiences, and thus effectively shrink all chances of proper exposure. Other authors who study the festival galaxy, however, do not feel that festivals play such a restrictive function. In order to balance multiple opinions, one should say

that, like most cultural phenomena, film festivals are multifaceted and riddled with inherent contradictions. Festivals enhance the exposure of films, but they also disrupt the traditional distribution process; they may appear networked, but there is also evidence to the contrary. Most importantly, the importance of the film festival as a node in the cinema production and distribution cycle is becoming increasingly recognized by all stakeholders involved in the festival operation, from board members to filmmakers, producers, and critics. (Iordanova, 2015, p. 9)

In the Kazakhstani context, the most efficient solution would be to create an engaging film festival locally which can foster greater domestic participation, then regionally to the rest of Central Asia/Eurasia, and finally to attain broader appeal across continents. However, if the purpose is to promote local cinema, then the solution is arguably even simpler: make these films accessible in local theaters or on television channels despite the potential financial losses that may incur due to perceived lack of demand. Otherwise, any efforts to establish a local film festival cannot stop at the stage of courting participation from the local populace but must in turn pursue the same international global standard as the more esteemed international film festivals.

In the case of Kazakhstan, it is clear that the country's relative youth and independence from the Soviet Union indisputably categorizes them as late adopters to the international cultural and arts festival scene: "[...] at the field level of international film festivals, how early adopters, like the festivals of Venice, Cannes and Berlin, together with other field actors, like FIAPF [The International Federation of Film Producers Associations], seemingly have managed over many years to invent a tradition (Ranger and Hobsbawn, 1983) and create and institutionalize a model for international film festivals that appears to have become an 'unchallenged given' (Zucker, 1983) and thus, provides a prominent example of institutional work (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006)" (Mazza and Pedersen, 2008, p. 25). Despite this, an industry-recognized international film festival not only provides another venue for the propagation of local cinema, but also in turn yields a new opportunity for greater international cultural diffusion via cinema.

The lack of access is consistent with the issues of audience and film festival exclusivity that exists between the markets that can regularly access prestigious international film festivals and smaller, more emerging film markets such as the African film market. For the Central Asian/Eurasian film market, it currently falls somewhere in-between the former and the latter. The metaphorical street remains two-way in that the outside world (in this case comprised of the cultured and privileged who are able to attend the film festival) can gain a particular insight into the lives and cultures of people and places they would otherwise never peer into. And while the particular work and particular filmmaker serve as the connective tissue between their home country and the outside world, the fact especially in the Kazakhstan context is that the masses largely do not have access to the international film festivals nor are these films regularly accessible domestically. This very succinctly identifies the largest challenge associated with the current model of exporting national cinema primarily to foreign festivals in order to attain legitimacy in a professional and artistic way domestically. In Kazakhstan, it is no longer exclusively a matter of disinterest, but an increasingly nuanced argument of availability and awareness. As opportunities for foreign auteur cinema to import into Kazakhstan are already quite low, and the primary cinematic export out of Kazakhstan is its own, largely domestically inaccessible, arthouse the sole country missing out from international cinematic exchange is Kazakhstan.

There also arises additional challenges with this festival-first model, especially as the overall Kazakhstani film industry continues to grow. Each year, more sectors of the Kazakhstani film industry are entering their films into foreign film festivals. While this increase in competitiveness and output is a net positive, there also persists a simple yet difficult truth: not all film festivals are created equal.

Ironically, the hierarchy of festivals and festival competitions within the international circuit sometimes means that the best of these third-world films may make their debut at the major European festivals, while the festivals in third-world countries themselves have to contend with debuting second- or third-tier films. So, what do the higher-ranked festivals confer and who ranks them? European and North American festivals, according to de Valck, ‘offer more benefits in return for a première (prestige, network opportunities, etc.) and are therefore capable of attracting the most successful and established directors and films. (Chan, 2011, p. 259)

Alisher anecdotally illustrates the social drive behind name-brand festival affiliation. “These people taking part a month or two at the same time as Cannes, in Russia there was a festival called Kan. And there, our Kazakh actor won a prize. So, all Kazakh audience thought that he had won at Cannes, but it wasn’t France, it was a village in Russia” (Interview with Alisher Jadigerov, 2021). This is a testament to both the lack of knowledgeable critics but also speaks to the social preference the Kazakh film industry and audiences are placing on the recognizable international festival names. However, the number of festivals continues to rise each year, which provides the Kazakhstani film industry more opportunities to compete. Yet this also means that the filmmakers the world-over will have to adapt to make their product stand out from a quickly oversaturated field.

A rising saturation throughout the industry is leading to less discrimination of the content and institutional reputation of any particular film festival as it exists amidst other festivals. “Indeed, that this is a global phenomenon can be seen by the fact that film festivals around the globe receive increasing numbers of entries every year. [...] The cut in production cost due to video and electronic postproduction facilities has allowed film-makers to produce art house film for competitive budgets. However, the new circumstances have forced the established art house directors in Europe to get more and more involved in international coproduction” (Hick, 2010, p. 36). In the case of Kazakhstan, concerns of a lack of qualitative scrutiny in favor of a robust quantitative entrance into the film festival circuit hinders the overall qualitative and reputational

progress of the national film industry. Katerina voices the underlying concern of the festival-first model most succinctly: “The local attitude towards anything foreign! Just because it's foreign doesn't make it more legitimate” (Interview with Katerina Suvorova, 2021). However, in the absence of a vibrant and esteemed international level film festival organized and annually held in Kazakhstan, the local cinema remains compelled to export its brand and image abroad. Thus, it is demonstrable that the film festival both for participant and host/organizer bears potency not only as venues of cultural capital but also intrinsically for providing legitimacy.

Relating to Sharipa Urazbayeva’s comment about critics, there is an intersection between reporting on film festival hierarchy and the motivations and industry literacy of local critics. The coverage provided by critics is intended to offer a locally reputable nexus informing the public of the cultural capital being bestowed upon these filmmakers at these festivals. Presently, there is an occupational challenge wherein nationalist critics would launch ad hominem attacks on arthouse filmmakers. For nationalists, the realist content at the heart of arthouse cinema is diametrically incompatible with the reputation-based and cultural image the country wants to present. And for some of these critics, there is little incentive to promote arthouse and independent films to the public over the accomplishments of the national or topically optimistic cinema regardless of the hierarchical prestige.

Sometimes it's just bullshit. A prize given out at some unknown film festival at the end of the world. There is a festival world also. Strange moments happen. Because when organizations realized they can make money at these festivals, and with so many names you can't understand how it works. And a local organization – the government – like to have that line [of accolade] even from nothing. From anywhere. Some first-time festival in some small place. Or some corporate backed event looking for sponsors. It's actually a good idea. These events show some cinema for local people. And then someone wins and they use the title of the event like it's the same as Berlinale or the Oscars. And it's all so messy. That's also why we need better art critics. People who work with this information and be able to report on the hierarchy accurately. Maybe just because I can see what happens to independent entrepreneurs and independent auteurs, and I probably cannot just answer for us. Like the line of Sharipa Urazbaeva. She made her first film on very

little money and with very short amount of time. Independent auteurs know what to do with government money. That's definitely true. The other side, maybe not. (Interview with Katerina Suvorova, 2021)

Between the establishment filmmakers and the independent and arthouse, the latter are more knowledgeable and experienced with navigating the international film festival network. For the local film critics, it is more beneficial to cover the accomplishments of the independent and arthouse filmmakers and not just favor the establishment and commercial filmmakers.

What I am expecting from art criticism sphere also from government is greater works. I don't feel that when I read their articles. People now who try to make cinematic observation are just passing judgment. It's not enough to say you like it or not. Being an art entrepreneur, I need to have more analytical information. Something deeper. That's what I see from a few authors in Russia. And through them I can just see international sphere of cinema. But I would like to have much more creator-friendly attitude from all local decision makers and speakers as critics. Be more creative, find new names. To do this work, not decide if they're buying or not buying the film. C'mon, fuck you! I don't need you to buy anything from me. But I see in some other countries. In Kyrgyzstan, their critic, closer in age to Gulnara [Abikeyeva]. She's working hard to super careful work for local filmmakers. Representing new names. And I have super respect for her. I'm waiting for someone to do that here. Gulnara is too huge for us. Her stage is international. It's not enough to just judge. In some newspaper line, do it. But where is the proper work? Without that I have no reason to care. (Interview with Katerina Suvorova, 2021)

The local film critics must be able to report back to the public and to the local film industry on the trends, developments and changes happening in foreign cinema as well. More local film critics ought to attend international film events and cover the event as a whole beyond the success of Kazakhstani films.

4.2 – Nation Branding & Political Legitimacy Potential of Kazakhstani Films

As such, the film festival where these auteurs most consistently thrive takes on a more overt role as a venue for nation branding. This is also consistent with the understanding that accolades from these festivals signals a cultural capital. As Mezias et al detail, two particular systems exist of judging and appraising competing films that possess particular industrial value.

The first is the peer system where industry workers of equal standing judge and reward films, and the expert system wherein recognized industry leaders and respected experts judge and reward entrants. “It could be hypothesized that if a peer or expert system confines value by giving an award to a movie, then it may have implications on the market system, in which consumers are the selectors. Hence, winning a prize as peer/expert selection may translate into a consumer selection, which means that the film is consumed, hence admissions influenced and box office increased” (Mezias et al., 2008, p. 6-7). It has increasingly been in Kazakhstan’s interests to export as many films to reputable festivals where prizes are awarded by peers and/or experts. The larger quantity accumulated of these prizes which bear optimal institutional capital offers a more fortified national legitimacy as the awards were presented at an internationally recognized institution presided by globally-respected industry insiders. There is a tacit impression that the awards were presented on basis of artistic merit rather than commercial or political agency. And in equal measure, the competitiveness of Kazakh films abroad possesses its own nation branding power in tandem with the cultural value. If Kazakhstani filmmakers habitually compete at premiere film festivals, it bodes well for the entire nation in terms of its artistry and output.

While the formation of Kazakhcinema indicates a very promising new direction, the establishment of the center is itself not a sudden new change. As Gulnara Abikeyeva noted, the rise of commercial independent cinema in Kazakhstan is a considerably recent development dating from 2015, with the first major independent, local blockbuster being released circa 2018. There is also a rise in independent films produced per year which now eclipses the number of films produced by Kazakhfilm in any given year (Interview with Gulnara Abikeyeva, 2021). While less accessible, there is already an existing potential of overlap and cross-over appeal for

the arthouse filmmaker via the independent industry. However, particularly when governments and large governing and financial bodies are concerned, very seldom are proactive policies enacted. Typically, executive and creative decisions are more reactionary and responsive only to unexpected changes. To that end, film production is much like a government. And when it is the government involved in the production of film, the pace is comparable. From a nation branding and political legitimacy standpoint, for the Kazakhstani state this delayed response is not new. Trying to course-correct against the narrative association following the release of *Borat* in 2004, Schatz noted: “Moreover, whereas authorities initially believed that Baron Cohen’s version was an affront to Kazakhstan, they now attempted to redescribe it as a satire about the American public [...] but Kazakhstani authorities were slow to recognize the preemptive possibilities of such a discursive moment” (Schatz, 2008, p. 59-60). However, it is important to note that Hollywood, though not a government entity, also embodies the same monolithic and delayed reaction. The pursuit of trends is very similar to pursuit of political legitimacy and crafting a product of good reputation. And Farkhat Sharipov explicitly noted that sometimes trying to identify the consumer interests via focus groups in Kazakhstan is not as effective, citing the inconsistent quality from Hollywood as an example (Interview with Farkhat Sharipov, 2021). As a result, there is a credible argument to be made that exporting films abroad to film festivals is more reliable than trying to ascertain what the local audiences want.

Yet, in pursuing broader international appeal through nation branding, states that seek to replicate success may only see limited results. “This is because originality intersects with a desirable feature in nation branding—authenticity—especially when increasingly popular transnational coproductions problematise the definition of the ‘original’ source of the motion picture. Hendrykowski believes that it is better to assume the film will be a surprise rather than

attempt to exert artificial control over its creative process” (Hess and Najbor, 2020, p. 10). Therefore, the challenge especially when surveying the arts is how does one achieve similar success. Katerina Suvorova’s first documentary *Sea Tomorrow* (2016) was selected in 2021 by Netflix and is the first film from Kazakhstan to be featured on the streaming platform. Following this news, she explained that many local producers and politicians consulted her seeking to learn exactly how much money she spent producing *Sea Tomorrow* hoping to replicate a Netflix-worthy film/documentary with minimal financial loss and risk. (Interview with Katerina Suvorova, 2021). When venturing further into the territory of the art film or passion project, affixing a set budget becomes decreasingly feasible.

An additional intersection between artistry, nation branding and political legitimacy lies in the potentially conflicting approaches to a national film language and content. For the interviewed filmmakers, one challenge which emerged across interviews was the desire to create a distinctly-Kazakh cinematic language (in tandem with producing content in the Kazakh language): in effect, how to create “Kazakhness” through arthouse cinema. Understandably, the initial perception particularly from the Kazakh state was that the concept of Kazakhness in film must be strictly sanitized and positive not only to console the popular conception of nationalism and pride, but to maintain a positive reputation and national brand. Among the young generation filmmakers, there is optimism that the wider audiences are starting to broaden their cinematic palette to include arthouse, and experimental cinema.

It's like the Korean film *Parasite* (2019). You see they could find the middle between the arthouse and ordinary film sections, but everyone could understand it. But here in Kazakhstan we still can't find that merge between these two. [...] Same applies to not only in Kazakhstan, but in Central Asia: Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan. They also have the same problem. And I think we're moving in this direction. We're making more arthouse films. We already have these comedies that don't make sense. We're trying to find that balance. Not just making comedies. Making something legitimate. But the new generation right now who are growing. I think they will find this merger. And they're

trying. And maybe soon they will find how to do it properly. (Interview with Sharipa Urazbayeva, 2021)

The concept of Britishness as argued by Christie accounts for the audience consuming the film and the transmissibility of associative national signals via film. And for the Kazakhstani filmmakers, the pursuit of this Kazakhness is borne from the filmmakers, not from the audiences. “And the thing that we create on our own, in the future, it will be called ours. – So now what the young directors make feels bizarre and not really Kazakh, but in the future, it will be Kazakh to others” (Interview with Alisher Jadigerov, 2021). Alisher’s comment suggests an occupational self-awareness that could be uniting these independent and auteur filmmakers. They invest in these unpopular films now understanding that the only immediate gratification would come from abroad, but that the delayed gratification or even social benefit internally would be a longer-term investment which openly defies the immediacy, return-on-investment mindset most local producers are governed by. The challenge is not only to capture an authentic Kazakhness in their film, but to convert it into an audio-visual language which is understandable to foreign audiences and domestic ones.

And also, we wanted to research, conduct a study: we want to create our own Kazakh film language, a cinematic signature that is specific to our country, to our identity. That was our goal. Our Partisan Movement. Something that, if anyone saw it, they'd instantly recognize it as belonging to Kazakhstan. A cinematic, stylistic trademark for our country and people through our cinematography. This is what we're trying to find and create. And still we're searching. Looking for something new [...] For example, Tarantino and these other auteur filmmakers. Why do we look up to them? Because they've created something different, something absolutely unusual, something that deviated completely from the mainstream at that time. Here in Kazakhstan, we don't have a very wide or robust film industry, so its relatively easy to create something new, but still we're trying to create something new not just in a local market, but also abroad [...] So, yes, I think its possible [to make a film that is both mainstream and auteur]. As Adilkhan's producer, I'm trying to reach this. *Parasite* is a nice example, but there are others too, like Tarantino's works. Audiences and cinephiles love. (Interview with Serik Abishev, 2021)

Ultimately, this pursuit of the new cinematic language of Kazakhness is a long and ongoing

process, but the people pursuing such content fully embrace that if they have in fact already achieved this, it will not be appreciated or understood right away by the very audience they are trying to reach.

Referring back to the 2019 Korean film *Parasite*, the 21st century ushered in an ongoing wave of Korean expressionism in film which Kazakhstan's arthouse filmmakers are starting to recreate within their borders. And the contemporary integration of artistic expressions (even those critical of Korean government and society) as not only a form of nation branding but also of political legitimacy as approved by and in increasing cases even financed by the Korean Ministry of Culture signals a compelling and promising model for the Kazakh case. As Lee notes, however, the Korean film industry nation branding and legitimacy success-story may owe its present successes on other factors that may not be as prominent in the Kazakh case. In particular, the globally popular Korean Wave propelled by K-Pop music, and of substantial note: the governmental departments in Korea established solely for nation branding working in tandem with other ministries such as Foreign Affairs, and Culture, Sports, and Tourism actively utilizing all national products as exportable and advancing the political-cultural image (Lee, 2021, Governmental efforts section para. 1-2). Otherwise, factors such as technological access, language barriers, private-sector efforts, and economic incentives are equally present in both states. "But you know, filmmaking isn't like cooking, there isn't an exact recipe. If you make a film there isn't a guarantee that all audiences will love it. If you discuss the producers and director of *Parasite*, Bong Joon-ho, he was making films before, and after too, and those films all had different kinds of reception. If this particular film hadn't been released exactly when it was, who knows? Maybe the outcome would have been entirely different. Maybe it might not have reached this level of success" (Interview with Serik Abishev, 2021). However, it is unclear if the

national effort to promote *Parasite* only emerged following its Best Picture win at the year's Academy Awards. Identifying the precise precondition is unclear. The recent success of *Parasite*, and its representation as a popular and marketable product that, despite its criticism of Korean society could offer longer-term benefits.

Considering the newness of Kazakhcinema, what is developing now is an alternative method towards nation branding and legitimacy. A transition towards a Bordieuan legitimate culture where national policies on cinema are made with consideration of the benefits of auteur. The independent and auteur filmmakers interviewed still have a measured view of state authority. However, the dichotomy "auteur" and "official" is no longer diametrically opposed and is instead a transitional hybrid is emerging where more official policies issued by the state possess reconciliatory qualities regarding otherwise subversive film content (Coladonato and Garofalo, 2018, p. 114). In the case of France, the persistence of the mid-20th century French New Wave eventually yielded greater autonomy of the entire French film industry from the French state. This in turn allowed foreign filmmakers such as Italian auteur Nanni Moretti to contribute to the develop of French cinema decades later. Relating back to Kazakhstan, the role of the Kazakhcinema center signals an equivalency to one of these preliminary policies. While the aims of the center highly value the interests of the nation, the inclusion of auteurs not only legitimizes those otherwise fringe filmmakers, but legitimizes the Kazakh state. And if Kazakhstan follows this sequence as France did previously, the nation bears the potential of hosting and prospering from the creative contributions of foreign/international auteurs whose works resonate with a politically-supported growing audience of cinephiles.

4.3 – Additional Comments

First, regarding film distribution, film literacy and education: the establishment of a sustainable and robust domestic film distribution system also aids in the broadcasting a carefully curated image of the nation that has region-wide benefits as well as international-level benefits. As Fauve notes, nation branding and political legitimacy is a simultaneous process wherein the local populace has an active role in propagating the narrative the state wants to project globally. “The process of nation-state self-legitimation thus results from an on-going performative politics (Heathershaw 2014) that is enacted both domestically and internationally by both elites and citizens, all of whom are connected together via the economic flows and political networks [...]” (Fauve, 2015, p. 121). In addition to the absence of a robust distribution system from the Kazakhstani-side, there appears to be a lack of individuals who can represent Kazakhstan internationally to push for distribution deals.

Basically, distribution of funds is so low, and it should be part of the one system of production. The production was kind of good, but at the same time the distribution was not at the same level that it was supposed to be. And it almost killed the industry. However, since the film *Titanic* (1997), we started to increase the number of cinemas and auditoriums where people can watch. It didn't even occur in the post-Soviet time, the idea that people could make money this way because distribution was owned by the government. That was the mindset. But what happened with *Titanic* and with [James] Cameron was he wanted to represent his film in one city in Russia, because a Russian fleet had helped with filming underwater and he realized that there wasn't enough equipment to show the film. So, he brought this equipment to Russia, in one of these cities. And that kicked off everything. And people realized they could make money on distribution. That was the start for all post-Soviet countries to distribute. (Interview with Farkhat Sharipov, 2021)

However, while entering into distribution could prove financially valuable, there are associative challenges. Geopolitically, how much investment potential does Kazakhstan have when surrounded by the Russian and Chinese film markets? Currently the Kazakhstani film industry relies on the Russian market for distribution deals. To break through the Eurasian/Russian sphere

is for the Kazakhstanis to independently pitch their films for distribution. Unless the Kazakhstanis aggressively undertake this, most film markets will continue to associate them with and only access their films through the Russian market. “[...] But I think that it's possible. In some universities who are teaching business people. Teach not only producing films, but also distribution. And then these students learn English and so on and so on” (Interview with Gulnara Abikeyeva, 2021). From the artistic side, there is a historical precedent especially for arthouse and independent filmmakers of losing their creative autonomy in order to secure distribution. In Hollywood and the American film industry, the independent and art films are also made for the art over the profit.

[...] the fact that production of independent films goes forward without pre-determined distribution, underscores the independent producer's more personal relationship with the project. While financial gain is certainly a relevant factor in spurring an independent producer to proceed with a project, it cannot be the sole determinant. If it were, these producers would not devote the time, energy, and money to creating films without first being assured that the works will find distribution. Rather, these producers create films for something more than financial return. Indeed, given the dire chances of achieving any meaningful distribution and return on investment (of time, energy, and money), it is striking how many independently produced films are made each year. (Kauffman, 1999, p. 778)

Therefore, whether it is the limitations on creativity in production or distribution, the arthouse filmmaker is going to face challenges to the vision and the need to defend style and content decisions.

Gulnara is optimistic that local film professionals can be trained to be competitive internationally to pursue Kazakhstani distribution deals. This links to the challenge of addressing and proliferating local film education.

The film industry in Kazakhstan (both from the commercial, state establishment side, but also the independent and auteur side) admits that their ability to compete is hindered by both an inconsistency in the quality of their productions, but also by a lack of international film industry language for Kazakhstani producers. To address this, better education should be pursued and particularly upcoming Kazakhstani film producers

should consider viewing film distribution beyond the Russian-language sphere, but internationally. [...] So, yeah, that's one of our goals to achieve because the problem in Kazakhstan is that the industry is very small, and there are very few number of top professionals in Kazakhstan. So, we still need to work on educating filmmakers. We have very few good actors, good camera people. The administrative level is still needing more work. Yes, we have certain companies good at certain aspects. At this point we need in general more professional training. The skills are not at the level where we can see a boost in quality. And that's one of the goals of Kazakh Cinema: to grow more professionals. We need more D.P.s [Directors of Photography], technicians. (Interview with Baurzhan Shukenov, 2021)

In addition to seeking skilled distributors and more educated producers, there must be improved film education across the board. The filmmaking process as a collaborative effort insists on having a full staff, not just the more recognizable positions. For Katerina, as documentary filmmaking in Kazakhstan is even more niche than arthouse, there is a substantial shortage of staff.

I'd like to have more qualified professionals around me. [...] I can only choose from 5. And sometimes they're busy, or not interested in the topic. And also, maybe sometimes I want to work with a woman D.P. It's hard to find that right one that won't ruin your project or vision with their own style. It's my first check. I just need to always test and work with any D.P. I want to work with. I invite them first to make like a commercial and to see if they're able to go deeper. And usually, they can't and I have to try again. [...] Teaching. At least inspiring. I don't want to become a teacher, but I do as much as I can. When someone invites me to talk, I say yes. I try to minimize it. Online is better, but that's why I created the Telegram channel 'DOCUstan' I just need to advance people, inspire people: 'Yeah, that's great! Let's work! Yeah, that's super great! Let's work! Let's see!'. (Interview with Katerina Suvorova, 2021)

While the Netflix news makes Katerina a more sought-after filmmaker, the lack of available or qualified people to work with has placed the responsibility increasingly upon her to become an educator in order to broaden interest in documentarian filmmaking for future generations.

As a result, there is a long-term incentive to continue to export independent and arthouse films abroad first as it is at these festivals that more stable and wider-reaching distribution deals can be secured. "Participation in such events increases the probability that a film will be noticed by a distributor from another country who might offer distribution abroad in order to generate

profits for themselves. In order to be able to independently select motion pictures that, according to producers and film financing institutions, are worthy of a wider audience, the PISF [Polish Film Institute] has been gradually increasing its budget for foreign distribution” (Hess & Najbor, 2020, p. 7). In the Kazakhstani case, the absence of a non-Russophone distribution system or a system with more assured economic potential than an inter-Eurasian distribution system, necessitate a more assertive push into the Western sphere. However, intertwined with the internal perception of Western recognition being more lucrative as identified by the filmmakers, this pivot is justifiable because it implies quality assurance and international-level recognized standards.

Secondly, what happened to the Partisan Movement and what of the underground movement in Kazakhstan? “Our generation, our idea is, at least when we started, was to make films about social problems, capture real life – reality. And on these points we were fighting for. At that time, Adilkhan and I, we were younger, we had tons of principles, we were hot blooded but after a while with the years passing, we calmed down, we became more flexible. And we try not to criticize as much as before. We still do a bit, but not like we used to.” (Interview with Serik Abishev, 2021). The passage of time, and age are a logical explanation for not only why the Partisan Movement has been difficult to maintain, however are they the only or best explanation?

A prominent alternate explanation is financial. “I don’t know why, but he stopped. But we always need finances to make and promote our films. Of course, we would like to let government support us.” (Interview with Sharipa Urazbayeva, 2021). This is particularly the case when studio or government money finally became accessible. It undeniably and fundamentally

changes the relationship not only between the filmmaker as artist with the establishment, but also challenges the veracity of the art.

And actually, about Adilkhan's Partisan movement community. I think it is exactly what you asked about what happened. From independence going towards a more established statement. Because guerilla cinema was exactly non-money cinema. And these filmmakers thought they were doing something great. But after a few films, Adilkhan got governmental money and then you just build a professional relationship. You can't invite your friends and share the money. With this money it has to go into the higher quality: pay more to hire that professional cinematographer from Russia because he's now affordable. It's not about friendship. And as I know, it's not gossip, looking at it anthropologically as you establish yourself the need to fight for your art ceases to exist. But I know that some people who are part of this guerilla filmmaking society, they feel annoyed because they see he's taken this role of going to international festivals saying 'We here in Kazakhstan are making guerilla cinema, we're not supported by anyone.' And then he returns to Kazakhstan and has money from Kazakhfilm. And people who are younger or maybe are not as established feel hurt by this. Some of them just felt this Partisan Movement doesn't exist anymore. (Interview with Katerina Suvorova, 2021)

Following the logic that more access to funds directly correlates to increased quality and subsequently increases the quality of the art, the filmmaker would naturally be tested. An artist can continue to struggle for the sake of the art, or receive patronage to continue to make art.

Alternatively, Gulnara Abikeyeva speculates "But then I think they understood it was better to go alone. Emir Baigazin understood. He just makes his films, then sits somewhere very calm and then going to festivals with news about his new film." (Interview with Gulnara Abikeyeva, 2021). Tolegen Baitukenov agrees, concluding that the requirements of such a movement are just not tenable in the long-run. "But as the time shows, it didn't stay for long. It's not really doable. But I think positively about this kind of movement, and if I am able to be included and support I would. But history shows these things don't exist long. They're good for the short-term for realizing an idea, but in the long run it doesn't seem doable." (Interview with Darkhan Tulegenov, 2021). While it is justifiable that the filmmakers would adopt a more pessimistic interpretation where the injection of state money compromises the artistry and vision,

however, the same argument can be made that the willingness of the state to fund these projects could indicate their willingness to promote and acknowledge criticism which underscores a broader transition towards a state that is more reputable and legitimate.

While the likelihood of a domestic film collective presently appears tenuous, there appears to be potential for a region-wide cooperative.

I can tell you that I don't feel this collective emerging in Kazakhstan, but I feel it forming in Central Asia. It's not much of my friends here, documentarians here in Kazakhstan, but I know 1 or 2 in Tajikistan, 1 or 2 in Uzbekistan, 1 or 2 in Kyrgyzstan. And it makes me quite strong. And now we want to set up a Central Asian Documentary Union, to be able to support ourselves, to be able to invite tutors who are not here and don't understand to whom they need to speak with in Tajikistan but definitely have audiences in all of Central Asia. For me, it's the only answer. [...] That's why we're uniting. Because we all feel we need those close comrades. People next to you. And we understood we had the same questions, and we're already here near to each other. (Interview with Katerina Suvorova, 2021)

It is equally uncertain if such a union is more likely to succeed because it involves documentarians as opposed to narrative filmmakers. Perhaps if this proposed union succeeds it could also serve as the basis for independent narrative filmmakers to collaborate more closely within the region as well. Regardless, with the promise of the Kazakhcinema center, an existential need for an underground film collective is significantly diminished. While the original movement's origins hybridized artistic expression, freedom from government and establishment demands with the ability to multi- and micro-task under immense financial restrictions the potentiality of more opportunities for substantial funding as well as funding and support from the government conclude that any revival or reincarnation of the Partisan Movement would only be in pursuit of the technical and stylist challenges rather than borne from a strict necessity. However, understandably perhaps for the rising generations the Partisan-experience may serve as an artistic rite of passage, but like Yerzhanov et al even they understood that a career-spanning commitment to the tenets of Partisan Movement would produce more losses that results

especially when considering the need to generate some revenue in addition to cultivating a loyal fanbase.

Lastly, the internet has been useful in changing the preferential landscape of audiences and for providing various new opportunities for the local filmmakers to broaden their audience. The internet is becoming a promising platform on its own for filmmakers to produce and circulate their own content. “It's in general, it's evident that... what we have now? We have lots of young filmmakers, 4 cinema schools, and many film production companies. I think that now, at least, 80 studios are working in Kazakhstan because we mostly know about Almaty, Astana, but also Shymkent, but a lot of studios are now, according to pandemic are moving to make TV serials, but they are studios – real studios, and I think there will be more. I predict they will move their product to the internet more” (Interview with Gulnara Abikeyeva, 2021). The internet via web-series can pose not only an alternative to collaboration but also a new avenue for filmmakers to gain employment.

The results suggest that many of the interviewees are aware of crowdfunding, and some have considered it, but very few know if it is something that can be done in a meaningful, consistent way in Kazakhstan. “They do a lot of crowdfunding campaigns [abroad], whereas in Kazakhstan, the Kazakh filmmakers should understand that they should go outside of Kazakhstan. Because in Kazakhstan you won't make much. Going outside of Kazakhstan will broaden and open up that world. People should understand that idea now. We have a lot of work to be done with the industry in general. But at this point, it's only at the very beginning stage” (Interview with Baurzhan Shukenov, 2021). Even considering the internet crowdfunding, for the Kazakhstani film industry it leads back to the need to enter into the international film stage. For

most interviewees, it appears unfeasible to fundraise from the local populace. If the funds can be raised online, it would best be sought from abroad.

About crowdfunding, it is possible. The main thing is not where you're looking for funding, it's about the topic. If it's an interesting project and idea, it's easier to find investors and backers. Before I haven't done it myself. When I tried, at that time, I was researching and trying to understand how it worked, but it wasn't doable. If you're in Kazakhstan, one of the producers had to be located elsewhere, UK, Europe. Another point, here in Kazakhstan, we tried to create a similar platform but it was not popular here and not a lot of money could be raised. So, you're not as likely to find something here. [...] first of all, it will not become popular in Kazakhstan. If we talk about China. They have vChat, it's an absolutely closed app unlike Facebook, WhatsApp. Closely monitored by their government. Crowdfunding will not be popular if it's closed from the world, but Kazakhstan doesn't have enough people. We could create something like that here, sure. But it would be absolutely useless. Ours is a small country, with comparatively far less people. [...] On global internet and Kickstarters, our platforms that we're creating now don't have the goals because if you want to find things, raise money, and become famous abroad, you can just share the link [to the campaign] and then make that connection between Kazakhstan and abroad. (Interview with Serik Abishev, 2021)

As the current industry models exist now, the perception is that it is more feasible to adhere to the festival-first model, and scavenge together funds privately from foreigner audience or through grants given by international organizations and foundations than to turn to the local populace for crowdfunding. Outside of Kazakhstan, international organizations also are beginning to impose their own restrictions and limitations on what the film or documentary must address.

And then also some of the comments I received from international foundations about local topics not being interesting enough. When I heard this, I thought: 'Oh my gosh, well I don't want to play this international game anymore.' I don't want to be buyable. I would like to have many different directions. Where I can support different topics. It's okay. It's common. Here you wouldn't support this topic, but maybe that topic. And then internationally for independent filmmakers you always need to have several ideas in your pocket when going to meet an international investor or producer, because it's never sure that they'd support whatever you want, but maybe your different ideas would branch and appeal to something particular in their organization. (Interview with Katerina Suvorova, 2021)

Therefore, it is conceivable that there will become a rising necessity for these filmmakers to attempt to solicit funding via the internet, where the likelihood of raising sufficient funds is less stable but there is greater autonomy.

Most of the interviewees acknowledge crowdfunding in the abstract, with most not having tried it. This does not mean that the method has not been tried before, or has not been successful. In fact, there was a successful crowdfunding campaign conducted domestically. “So, there's one case that's interesting, where one group of filmmakers were able to crowd-fund for their film talking about the oppression. When our grandparents were killed during the famine. They got money from the people of Kazakhstan. They got money to make a film [*The Crying Steppe*] about this past [...] So I think that we'll get to that point [for other projects to get crowdfunded]. It depends on the idea, and how appealing it is to the audience.” (Interview with Berik Zhakhanov, 2021). The case of the film *The Crying Steppe* (2020), produced by Yernar Malikov and directed by Marina Kunarova, was aided in the finance process by a successful local crowdfunding campaign because the topic was societally relevant.

I cannot say about other filmmakers or other films. But in my case, for *The Crying Steppe*, I raised a good amount of money through crowdfunding. It was a top-secret topic. Every person, every family in this country knows about it, and were already so interested in it. [...] I asked the government for help, but didn't receive any funds. So that's why I made the crowdfunding campaign. And about 10,000 people helped me with it, because every person sees their personal family history in this story. I raised about 15 million tenge this way. For Kazakhstan that's the biggest result ever, because it's a historical film. It was harsh, but true. (Interview with Yernar Malikov, 2021)

The public had immense incentive to contribute to the fundraising efforts because practically every Kazakh citizen could relate to the historical event as they were personally impacted. However, beyond this exceptional circumstance, it is presently uncertain how viable this method is when the topic is not as relatable. Therefore, especially for the auteur filmmakers, the most consistent form of financial stability and support would come from the state. And therein, given

the often-unflattering content, most starkly unearths the implications of an officialdom patronizing a project which openly implicates their shortcomings. However, as the recent developments (both independently and at least partially beholden to the state) by these filmmakers have shown, in the longer-run any international recognition is better than no recognition at all.

In closing, upon closer analysis of the interviews it becomes evident that the results affirm that Kazakhstani filmmakers perceive a wide range of challenges and developments in their collective artistry and industry. However, many of these comments do begin to consolidate around the related concepts of film festivals as avenues of greater cultural capital (and by proxy artistic achievement), and that these festival-level recognized films are being noticed by the government that previously offered sparse support. This is in turn being addressed by more open endorsement and indicates a thaw. The Kazakhstani state is at least openly beginning to view all their films as opportunities for accolade which in turn could be (re)purposed as nation branding and a cultural-led push towards internationally recognized legitimization.

Conclusion

**“If I were President [...], I would’ve just left the candies on the fucking table [...]”
– Alisher Jadigerov**

Beginning with answering the research puzzle – What motivates these auteur and independent filmmakers? What enables them to persist in producing their quality films despite all indications domestically that suggest otherwise? What component does an increasing international recognition have domestically? – The research suggests that the answer to these questions is interlinked. First, these filmmakers are circumventing largely absent financial and popular support from the people and state establishments, turning to foreign finance and partnership, and favoring finding success first at international film festivals. Second, while resorting to foreign funds bears its own challenges, it also provides a degree of autonomy from state restrictions. However, the emergence of the state Kazakhcinema center signals a significant new direction.

The research conducted herein concludes that, overall, the growth and development of the Kazakhstani film industry is trending positively. However, during their interviews, filmmakers Yernar Malikov, Marina Kunarova, Sharipa Urazbayeva, Alisher Jadigerov, Darkhan Tulegenov, Berik Zhakhanov, and Katerina Suvorova all acknowledged the significant role of the government in financing and the potential of supporting and promoting their projects. Yet they all commented that while the establishment of entities such as Kazakhcinema indicate upward development, there can always be more the government can do.

Expanding upon the results some implications and limitations emerge. Namely, the path to success and motivation for these independent and auteur filmmakers has changed now that there are more domestic sources of funding via Kazakhcinema. But otherwise, they continue with the festival-first model of sending their films abroad because success there will improve

their chances of success at-home. Based upon these initial findings, the case of Kazakhstan provides an interesting study towards the role of international organization and foundations in global cosmopolitanism as they provide funding to filmmakers on increasingly specific terms. And the establishment of the Kazakhcinema center has interesting implications on how Kazakhstani auteur cinema can contribute to state development. Practically speaking, the new changes in the film industry from the government are still early enough in development that it is too early to form any concrete conclusions.

Based on the conclusions and explorations undertaken above, there emerges a few avenues for future research and scholarship to expand upon further. For starters, simply compiling a more concise, exhaustive list and analysis of the specific independent film studios and companies that operate in Kazakhstan: the number, their location and degree of audience engagement merits its own study. This would also be expanded upon to include provincial, local studios that cater to and operate out of specific areas such as Almaty-based, Shymkent-based, Nur-Sultan-based production companies, etc. “And if you want to find information, how many independent film studios there exist in Kazakhstan, I think you will not find the information because there is no place or organization or site or structure or something else who really count all these independent studios, filmmakers” (Interview with Gulnara Abikeyeva, 2021). While the initial aim of this research was to explore the contemporary condition of the Kazakhstani film industry, especially as it pertains to independent and arthouse film, the cultivation of such a specific, quantifiable resource had not emerged.

Another prominent node of research is the continued observation on the gender-based dynamics of the Kazakhstani film industry. On this point, there is a pre-existing basis to investigate this issue further. In a positive light, the 2019 blurb by *The Hollywood Reporter*

noted: “There were increasing numbers of women coming into the film industry, not only as crew but directors, too, [Anna Katchko] said, citing as an example Sharipa Urazbayeva’s film *Mariam* about a woman who explores her femininity after her husband disappears” (Holdsworth, 2019). However, two of the three female independent filmmakers that were interviewed for this research – Sharipa Urazbayeva and Marina Kunarova – both acknowledged what they perceived as an ongoing industry-wide and professional asymmetry happening on the basis of gender. Tracing the progress to rectify this issue, as well as identifying the underlying causes of this phenomena, and any additional developments made hereafter to address the issue merit further study.

An added node of exploration for future research would be the development of Kazakh language films. Baurzhan Shukenov and Serik Abishev both touched briefly upon this as matters of not just personal concern but nationalism. Complementing this is also the regional hierarchies of film industry, distribution, and interaction. This includes re-assessing the level of influence the Russian film market has on the Kazakhstani film market, and exploring the bi-lateral (or potentially unilateral) business component but also the political implications of this relationship. This research has illustrated developments in Kazakhstan, even in a general sense, are happening continually. Even monitoring the film industry of the country must happen not just periodically, but rather frequently as annually there emerges new and largely unexpected changes. Given the conclusions outlined above, future scholarship can consider conducting mass audience surveys in Kazakhstan to confirm from the public side if this changing dynamic (the reputation abroad) is influencing local attitudes or does it risk becoming another tool of nation branding utilized by the government contrary to the interests of the majority?

Additional recurring comment across multiple interviews was the various views towards Kazakhstani commercial comedy films. For the independent and arthouse filmmakers, the comedy represents the pinnacle of mainstream and commercial filmmaking. While several of these successful comedies are produced by independent companies, the interviewed filmmakers had various views of the comedies and their social utility. At its worst, the interviewees suggest that the commercial comedy stands in diametric opposition to what the arthouse film seeks to achieve. Therefore, future research could more closely analyze the social impact the comedy films have on Kazakhstani society per the concept of the culture industry as conceived by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer.

While some of the interviewed filmmakers have growingly mixed opinion about the socio-cultural implications of this festival-first model and the supposed dependence on the institutional cultural capital of the festival, these filmmakers are incentivized to stick to this model both out of lack of better alternatives but also because they are noticing with time that foreign prestige is increasing domestic interest; it is a prerequisite for the local audience's interest. Therefore, on the part of the filmmaker, this festival-first mentality is yielding a cultural legitimacy vis-à-vis a negative/realism-based nation branding. In fact, more commercial and even government-backed films are beginning to pursue this model as well. And this festival-first model is not indigenous to the Kazakhstani context. The art versus profit dilemma and the ebb and flow of international-level recognition as form of nation branding and political legitimacy is universal in all arts in all countries' film industries. More time is needed to observe which direction the inter-relationship between government, audience, and independent and arthouse Kazakhstani cinema will take. The decision of the Kazakh government to at least partially fund filmmakers and film works that possess anti-government rhetoric indicates an acknowledgment

towards greater liberalization of ideas and narratives. This development is particularly potent when it is understood that the majority of the receiving audience are foreigners. Thus far, the results have been very promising.

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Appendix A: Verification Letter for Academic Purposes



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27.01.2021

To Whom It May Concern,

This document is to certify that **Eric Song** is a Master's Student enrolled on the International Master's in Central and East European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies (IMCEERES) with the University of Glasgow. Mr. Song is currently studying at KIMEP University in Almaty to complete his M.A. dissertation, under the supervision of Professor Nygmet Ibadildin.


Mr. Song's research is a qualitative analysis of contemporary independent and auteur films in Kazakhstan. For his field research, and the substance of his dissertation, he will be requesting access to films for the purpose of developing a catalogue of material from a variety of filmmakers. By being able to view a large diversity of films, Mr. Song intends to identify specific qualities shared across multiple films which will become the focus of his dissertation.

Additionally, Mr. Song may impose upon your time for an interview to discuss your career, creative processes in developing your work, and thoughts with regards to the qualitative basis of his dissertation.

We stress that any and all of Mr. Song's requests upon your time and resources are for research purposes only.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding Mr. Song or his academic pursuits in Kazakhstan, please do not hesitate to contact me (ammon.cheskin@glasgow.ac.uk) or Professor Ibadildin (nygmet@kimep.kz).

Kind Regards,

X 

Ammon Cheskin

Dr Ammon Cheskin (Senior Lecturer and IMCEERES programme coordinator)



X

Nygmet Ibadildin

Prof. Nygmet Ibadildin (Assistant Professor, KIMEP University)

Appendix B: University of Glasgow Ethics Committee Approval to Conduct Interviews



School of Social &
Political Sciences

School Ethics Forum for Non-Clinical Research Involving

Human Subjects

Notification of Ethics Application Outcome – UG and PGT Student Applications

Application Details

Undergraduate Student Research Ethics Application Postgraduate Student Research Ethics Application

Application Number: PGT/SPS/2021/099/IMCEERES

Applicant's Name: Eric Ilsoo Song

Project Title: Exploring the Dynamics Between Non-State Cinema, Audiences, and the Future of the Industry: Contemporary Kazakhstani Independent Arthouse Cinema from the Perspectives of the Filmmakers

Application Status: Fully Approved

Date of Review: 12/07/2021

Start Date of Approval 12/07/2021 End Date of Approval 31/12/2021

NB: Only if the applicant has been given approval can they proceed with their data collection from the date of approval.

Fully approved

Means that the applicant can proceed with data collection with effect from the date of approval.

Amendments required

Where amendments are required by reviewers, applicants must respond in the relevant boxes below to the recommendations of the School Ethics Forum and provide this as an 'Amendments Response' document to explain the changes made to the application as well as amending the documents, as relevant. Changes to the application form or supporting documents should be highlighted either in **block highlight** or **in red coloured text** to assist the reviewers. All amended application documents should then be sent to the ethics administrator by the Supervisor for the approval of the SEF before data collection can proceed.

Rejected

If your application is Rejected a new application must be submitted to the School Ethics Forum. The reviewer feedback below will indicate whether a similar future project is likely to be supported. Where recommendations are provided, they should be responded to and this document provided as part of the new application. A new reference number will be generated. The new application forms should be signed off and submitted to the ethics administrator by the Supervisor.

REVIEWER MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS	APPLICANT RESPONSE

REVIEWER MINOR RECOMMENDATIONS	APPLICANT RESPONSE

ADDITIONAL REVIEWER COMMENTS RESPONSE	APPLICANT RESPONSE

School Ethics Forum for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

Request for Amendments - Reviewer Feedback

Application Details

Undergraduate Student Research Ethics Application Postgraduate Student Research Ethics Application

Application Number: PGT/SPS/2021/099/IMCEERES

Applicant's Name: Eric Ilsoo Song

Project Title: Exploring the Dynamics Between Non-State Cinema, Audiences, and the Future of the Industry:
Contemporary Kazakhstani Independent Arthouse Cinema from the Perspectives of the Filmmakers

Original **Start** Date of Application Approval: 12/07/2021

Original **End** Date of Application Approval: 31/12/2021

Date of Amendments Approved: 10/11/2021

Outcome: Amendments Approved

Reviewer Comments

School Ethics Forum for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects
Request for Amendments - Reviewer Feedback

Application Details

Undergraduate Student Research Ethics Application Postgraduate Student Research Ethics Application

Application Number: PGT/SPS/2021/099/IMCEERES

Applicant's Name: Eric Song

Project Title: Exploring the Dynamics Between Non-State Cinema, Audiences, and the Future of the Industry: Contemporary Kazakhstani Independent Arthouse Cinema from the Perspectives of the Filmmakers

Original **Start** Date of Application Approval: 12/07/2021

Original **End** Date of Application Approval: 31/12/2021

Date of Amendments Approved:

22/11/2021

Outcome:

Amendments Approved

Reviewer Comments

Appendix C: Interview Questions (English + Russian)

ENG:

Questions and topics for interviewees for research project “**Exploring the Dynamics Between Cinema, Audiences, and the Future of the Industry: Contemporary Kazakhstani Independent Arthouse Cinema from the Perspectives of the Filmmakers**”
Eric Song 2459947

Influences (domestic, foreign, historic, contemporary)

- 1) Do you consider who will watch your films when making them? (Does considering the audience influence your decisions?)
 - a. Have you noticed any recent changes in the preferences of movie audiences (what is causing these changes)? Do you find that over time, the films you make are reflecting those newer preferences?
 - b. What are the different groups of viewers that exist within Kazakhstan?

Independent Kazakhstani cinema and its place in modern Kazakhstan

- 2) How would you characterize the relationship between independent auteur filmmakers and the rest of Kazakhstan (government, establishment, and public)?
 - a. Do you think this relationship is changing? How so?

Independent Kazakhstani cinema and its place outside modern Kazakhstan

- 3) How has the international film landscape changed for you professionally?
 - a. In your opinion, is it now easier to produce films for a global audience than a local one? Why or why not?

Exploring the Future

- 4) As the Kazakh state (1), Kazakhfilm (2) also begins to produce character-driven, more intimate (maybe even socially critical) dramatic films that are also beginning to earn global praise, do you feel your work and the states are beginning to converge?
 - a. What do you think of the idea that, with time, even the new generation of independent or counter-culture arthouse filmmakers will eventually join the state establishment?
 - b. Filmmakers such as Yerzhanov have suggested that the successful first New Wave filmmakers have since become conservative filmmakers for the state. Are there fears that the next generation (the New New Wave) will also become members of the establishment?
- 5) Support systems: In your opinion, would an independent film collective (or independently financed film school) be a suitable pursuit in Kazakhstan? [A collection of independent filmmakers pooling their resources to create a separate network of support and production]
- 6) Promotion and education for future generations: And do you think the independent film movement is doing enough to encourage and recruit young filmmakers? What more can be done?
- 7) Alternative funding: What are your thoughts on internet-based crowdfunding options? Kickstarter, Indiegogo, etc.? How viable is its use in Kazakhstan?

8) Where do you predict the industry of independent cinema in Kazakhstan will be in 5, 10, 15 years?

Challenges:

9) What are the biggest challenges facing independent cinema in Kazakhstan?

РУС:

Вопросы и темы для интервьюируемых в рамках исследовательского проекта
“Изучение динамики между негосударственным кинематографом, аудиторией и будущим Индустрии: современное казахстанское независимое артхаусное кино глазами кинематографистов”

Эрик Сонг 2459947

Влияние (отечественное, зарубежное, историческое, современное)

1) Вы учитываете, кто будет смотреть ваши фильмы при их создании? (Влияет ли внимание аудитории на ваши решения?)

a. Заметили ли вы какие-либо недавние изменения в предпочтениях киноаудитории (что вызывает эти изменения)? Считаете ли вы, что со временем снимаемые вами фильмы будут отражать эти новые предпочтения?

b. Какие различные группы зрителей существуют в Казахстане?

Независимое казахстанское кино и его место в современном Казахстане

2) Как бы Вы охарактеризовали отношения между независимыми режиссерами авторами и остальной частью Казахстана (правительством и общественностью)? a. Как вы думаете, меняются ли эти отношения? Как?

Независимое казахстанское кино и его место за пределами современного Казахстана

3) Как изменился международный кинематографический “ландшафт” для вас в профессиональном плане?

a. На Ваш взгляд, сейчас легче снимать фильмы для мировой аудитории, чем для местной? Почему или почему нет?

Изучение будущего

4) Поскольку (1) казахский государственный, (2) “Казахфильм” также начинает инвестировать в более интимные (возможно, даже социально значимые) драматические фильмы, которые также начинают получать всемирную похвалу, чувствуете ли вы, что ваша работа и работа государства начинают сближаться?

a. Что вы думаете об идее о том, что со временем даже новое поколение независимых или контркультурных кинематографистов артхауса в конечном итоге присоединится к государственному введению в Учреждения?

b. Такие режиссеры, как Ержанов, предположили, что первые успешные кинематографисты “Новой волны” с тех пор стали консервативными режиссерами для государства. Есть ли опасения, что следующее поколение (“Новой Новой волны») также станет членами этого учреждения?

5) Системы поддержки: по вашему мнению, был бы ли независимый кинематографический коллектив (или независимо финансируемая киношкола) подходящим занятием в Казахстане? [Коллекция независимых кинематографистов, объединяющих свои ресурсы для создания отдельной сети поддержки и производства]

6) Продвижение и образование для будущих поколений: и как вы думаете, движение за независимое кино делает достаточно, чтобы поощрять и привлекать молодых режиссеров? Что еще можно сделать?

7) Альтернативное финансирование: что вы думаете о вариантах пожертвования в Интернете? Kickstarter, Indiegogo и т. д.? (сайты для пожертвования). Насколько целесообразно его использование в Казахстане?

8) Как Вы прогнозируете, какой будет индустрия независимого кино в Казахстане через 5, 10, 15 лет?

Проблемы

9) Каковы самые большие проблемы, с которыми сталкивается независимое кино в Казахстане?

Appendix D: Interview Questions for Critics (Eng + Rus)

ENG:

Preliminary Questions and topics for interviewees for research project “**Exploring the Dynamics Between Cinema, Audiences, and the Future of the Industry: Contemporary Kazakhstani Independent Arthouse Cinema from the Perspectives of the Filmmakers**” [Eric Song 2459947](#)

Influences (domestic, foreign, historic, contemporary)

1) Based on your observations and conversations, do you think Kazakh filmmakers consider who will watch their films when they make them? (Does considering the audience influence their decisions?) Should they?

a. Have you noticed any recent changes in the preferences of movie audiences (what is causing these changes)? Do you find that recently, the independent films being made are reflecting those newer preferences?

b. What are the different groups of viewers that exist within Kazakhstan?

Independent Kazakhstani cinema and its place in modern Kazakhstan 2) How would you characterize the relationship between independent auteur filmmakers and the rest of Kazakhstan (government, establishment, and public)?

a. Do you think this relationship is changing? How so?

Independent Kazakhstani cinema and its place outside modern Kazakhstan 3) How has the international film landscape changed in recent years and what impacts does it have on the independent film industry in Kazakhstan?

a. In your opinion, is it now easier to produce films for a global audience than a local one? Why or why not?

4) Have you noticed local filmmakers are now thinking more about circulating their films outside of Kazakhstan?

Exploring the Future

5) As the Kazakh state (1), Kazakhfilm (2) also begins to produce character-driven, more intimate (maybe even socially critical) dramatic films that are also beginning to earn global praise, do you think that independent arthouse film work and the states are beginning to converge?

a. What do you think of the idea that, with time, even the new generation of independent or counter-culture arthouse filmmakers will eventually join the state establishment?

b. Filmmakers such as Yerzhanov have suggested that the successful first New Wave filmmakers have since become conservative filmmakers for the state. Are there fears that the next generation (the New New Wave) will also become members of the establishment?

6) Given the complex relationship between independent auteurs, Kazakh viewing public and the state, should future Kazakhstani independent filmmakers increase their consideration of foreign viewers, cultures, when producing their films?

a. When there are difficulties of access, and in turn challenges of sustaining public interest in socially critical art films, how can young Kazakhs and future generations of filmmakers be reached and encouraged to pursue independent arthouse cinema (either with state support or without)?

- 7) Support systems: In your opinion, would an independent film collective (or independently financed film school) be a suitable pursuit in Kazakhstan? [A collection of independent filmmakers pooling their resources to create a separate network of support and production]
- 8) Promotion and education for future generations: And do you think the independent film movement is doing enough to encourage and recruit young filmmakers? What more can be done?
- 9) Alternative funding: What are your thoughts on internet-based crowdfunding options? Kickstarter, Indiegogo, etc.? How viable is its use in Kazakhstan? 10) Where do you predict the industry of independent cinema in Kazakhstan will be in 5, 10, 15 years?

Challenges:

- 11) What are the biggest challenges facing independent cinema in Kazakhstan?

РУС:

Предварительные вопросы и темы для интервьюируемых в рамках исследовательского проекта: **“Изучение динамики между негосударственным кинематографом, аудиторией и будущим Индустрии: современное казахстанское независимое артхаусное кино глазами кинематографистов”**

Эрик Сонг 2459947

Влияние (отечественное, зарубежное, историческое, современное) 1) Вы думаете, кинематографисты учитывают кто будет смотреть их фильмы при их создании? (Влияет ли внимание аудитории на ваши решения?)

- а. Заметили ли вы какие-либо недавние изменения в предпочтениях киноаудитории (что вызывает эти изменения)?
Считаете ли вы что со временем снимаемые их фильмы будут отражать эти новые предпочтения?

б. Какие различные группы зрителей существуют в Казахстане?

Независимое казахстанское кино и его место в современном Казахстане 2)

Как бы Вы охарактеризовали отношения между независимыми режиссерами авторами и остальной частью Казахстана (правительством и общественностью)? а. Как вы думаете, меняются ли эти отношения? Как?

Независимое казахстанское кино и его место за пределами современного Казахстана

3) Как изменился международный кинематографический “ландшафт”? а. На Ваш взгляд, сейчас легче снимать фильмы для мировой аудитории, чем для местной? Почему или почему нет?

- 4) Вы заметили, что местные кинематографисты теперь больше думают о распространении своих фильмов за пределами Казахстана?

Изучение будущего

5) Поскольку (1) казахский государственный, (2) “Казахфильм” также начинает инвестировать в более интимные (возможно, даже социально значимые) драматические фильмы, которые также начинают получать всемирную похвалу, чувствуете ли вы, что независимая артхаусная работа и работа государства начинают сближаться?

- а. Что вы думаете об идее о том, что со временем даже новое поколение независимых или контркультурных кинематографистов артхауса в конечном итоге присоединится к государственному введению в учреждения?

б. Такие режиссеры, как Ержанов, предположили, что первые успешные кинематографисты “Новой волны” с тех пор стали консервативными режиссерами для государства. Есть ли опасения, что следующее поколение (“Новой Новой волны») также станет членами этого учреждения?

б) Учитывая сложные отношения между независимыми авторами, казахстанской зрительской общественностью и государством, должны ли будущие казахстанские независимые кинематографисты уделять больше внимания иностранным зрителям и культурам при создании своих фильмов?

а. Когда есть трудности с доступом и, в свою очередь, проблемы с поддержанием общественного интереса к социально-критическим художественным фильмам, как можно привлечь и побудить молодых казахстанцев и будущее поколение кинематографистов заниматься независимым артхаусным кинематографом (с государственной поддержкой или без)?

7) Системы поддержки: по вашему мнению, был бы ли независимый кинематографический коллектив (или независимо финансируемая киношкола) подходящим занятием в Казахстане? [Коллекция независимых кинематографистов, объединяющих свои ресурсы для создания отдельной сети поддержки и производства]

8) Продвижение и образование для будущих поколений: и как вы думаете, движение за независимое кино делает достаточно, чтобы поощрять и привлекать молодых режиссеров? Что еще можно сделать?

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11) Каковы самые большие проблемы, с которыми сталкивается независимое кино в Казахстане?

Appendix E: Plain Language Statement



College of Social
Sciences

Participant Information Sheet

Study Title:

Exploring the Dynamics Between Non-State Cinema, Audiences, and the Future of the Industry: Contemporary Kazakhstani Independent Arthouse Cinema from the Perspectives of the Filmmakers

Researcher:

Eric Ilsoo Song, 2459947S@student.gla.ac.uk

Supervisors:

Professor Nygmet Ibadildin (nygmet@kimep.kz)

Professor Heiko Pääbo (heiko.paabo@ut.ee)

Degree:

International MA Central and East European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies (IMCEERES)

Invitation:

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to examine the developing independent film industry in Kazakhstan. In particular, non-state sponsored filmmakers whose works critically portray and comment on Kazakh life and culture, and are **not** produced for a mass audience. The study seeks to offer insight from the perspective of the filmmakers into how this specific, niche industry has developed in recent years, offer some views on which direction it might follow in the future,

what efforts are being/can be done to support and reinforce independent creative filmmaking in Kazakhstan, and lastly to discuss the relationship these independent arthouse films have with the people of Kazakhstan and foreign audiences. In acquiring the current viewpoints of industry insiders, I intend to offer a portrait of a particular, emerging sector of a medium within Kazakhstani and Central Asian film studies.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to partake in this research study because of your career making films with minimal to no financial and promotional assistance from the government of Kazakhstan, and which pertain to commenting and documenting social problems in Kazakhstan through the medium of narrative drama in film. For these reasons I believe your experiences will greatly contribute to the study I am conducting.

Do I have to take part?

Your involvement in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to take part if you do not want to, and you will not be pressured to participate if you do not wish to. If you do choose to take part, you can change your mind at any time and stop. You can make this decision for any reason you wish, and are not required to present your reasons to me. During the interview, you do not have to answer any interview questions that you do not want to. If you decide after your interview that you no longer want to be part of the project, you can say so and all records of your interview will be destroyed.

What will happen to me if I take part?

I am inviting you to participate in a standard interview. The primary interview would be approximately one hour in length, and would cover the majority of all the important information. As a participant during the interview, you will simply be asked questions. You are welcome to answer or decline to answer.

The interviews will be recorded, either in audio recording in-person or audio-visual recording conducted over video conference medium such as Skype or Zoom.

As I am a native English speaker not fluent in the Russian language, I would prefer to conduct the interview in English. However, you have the option to choose to conduct the interview in Russian. If you would like to be interviewed in Russian, I will be consulting a translator who will be sitting-in during the entire interview.

I know you are very busy, so I would like to avoid conducting multiple full-length interviews. However, upon conducting a first round of interviews with all intended participants, I may contact you again for some clarification or your thoughts on a point that emerged across multiple interviews.

If you decide to be interviewed in person, we will both take steps to keep safe from COVID-19: we will wear masks (I can provide one for you); we will stay 2m apart at all times; we will

meet outside if possible; if we meet indoors, the room will be well ventilated and I will clean the surfaces before and after the interview; I will ask you to avoid public transport where possible.

If you are at increased risk of harm from COVID-19, we will carry out the interview on Zoom instead. The Ministry of Health has published information on who is at increased risk of harm, and you can read this information by clicking [here](#). If you are over 60 or have any of the conditions described in the Ministry's information, we will carry out the interview on Zoom and not in person.

If you have any symptoms of COVID-19 we will postpone the interview or use Zoom instead. At the interview, we will use the Ashyq app in test mode to check the risk of transmission of COVID. Using the test QR code with the app doesn't record that you were with me. You can find information about how to protect yourself and others from COVID, how to get tested and what to do if you feel unwell at www.coronavirus2020.kz

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

As all participants are well-known public figures with an established body of work in the public sphere, it is my intention to name participants in the research and attribute quotes to them. However, if you prefer, I can remove your name from some or all of the thoughts and quotes that you give.

If you at any time before, during, or after the interview process request that I remove or censor certain details given during the interview, I will comply by removing it from the transcript and recording, and it will not be included in the final dissertation. Also, if at any time you decide to be anonymized, you can inform me and I will respect your request. You will be identified by an ID number (ex: Participant no. 1, 2, etc.) and any information about you will have your personal details removed so that you cannot be recognised from it.

However, there are limitations to the promise of confidentiality. Some details like locations or specific important details pertaining to occupation may make it possible to identify you.

Should you request confidentiality, please note that all assurances will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

At this time, the study will be used as the foundation for my master's dissertation. However, I also intend to use this research in external academic publications (journal articles, research papers, conference presentations, etc.). I will ask your consent – not just to participate in an interview, but also to include information from your interview in publications. You can decline to have information from your interview included in external publications. You can also request to be unnamed in these external publications, but allow information from your interview to be included in these external publications.

All identifying data collected during this research will be destroyed at the end of the project. This is expected to be in January 2022. You can contact me to ask for a copy of the final dissertation.

As this research examines your career and works, you will be identified in the research unless you explicitly instruct otherwise. The entirety of the interview transcripts will not be included in the final dissertation, only select relevant portions will be cited for context or supporting argumentation. I will personally carry-out the analysis of the text of the interviews and provide that data.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is not sponsored or funded externally by any other organizations or individuals. This project is completely self-funded and self-organized with additional guidance and assistance from my supervisors and the University.

Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been reviewed by the School of Social and Political Sciences Ethics Forum at the University of Glasgow.

Contact for Further Information

If you have any questions, if there is something you do not understand or if you need more information, please do not hesitate to contact me, Mr. Eric Ilsoo Song, at the email address above. You can also contact my academic supervisors, Professors Nygmet Ibadildin (residing in Kazakhstan) and Heiko Paabo (residing in Estonia) at the email addresses provided above.

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project you can contact the School of Social and Political Sciences Ethics Officer at socpol-pgt-ethicsglasgow.ac.uk



College of Social
Sciences

Информационный Лист Участника

Название исследования:

Изучение динамики между негосударственным кинематографом, аудиторией и будущим индустрии: современное казахстанское независимое артхаусное кино глазами кинематографистов

Исследователь:

Эрик Илсу Сонг, 2459947S@student.gla.ac.uk

Супервайзер:

Профессор Ныгмет Ибадильдин (nygmet@kimep.kz)

Профессор Хейко Паабо (heiko.paabo@ut.ee)

Степень:

Международный магистр исследований Центральной и Восточной Европы, России и Евразии (IMCEERES)

Приглашение:

Вам предлагается принять участие в научном исследовании. Прежде чем принять решение, вам важно понять, зачем проводится исследование и что оно будет включать в себя.

Пожалуйста внимательно прочитайте следующую информацию и обсудите ее с другими, если хотите. Спросите меня, если что-то непонятно или если вы хотите получить дополнительную информацию. Не торопитесь с ответом, и подумайте хотите ли вы принять участие.

Спасибо за чтение этого.

Какова цель исследования?

Цель исследования - изучить развивающуюся независимую киноиндустрию в Казахстане. В частности, кинематографистов, не спонсируемых государством, чьи работы критически изображают и комментируют казахстанскую жизнь и культуру и **не** предназначены для массовой аудитории. Исследование призвано дать представление о том, как с точки зрения

кинематографистов развивалась эта конкретная отрасль в последние годы, предложить некоторые взгляды на то, в каком направлении она может развиваться в будущем, какие усилия предпринимаются / могут быть предприняты для поддержки и укрепления независимого творческого кино в Казахстане и, наконец, обсудить отношения этих независимых артхаусных фильмов с казахстанцами и зарубежной аудиторией. Изучая текущие точки зрения членов общества данной отрасли, я намерен описать портрет конкретного развивающегося медиа сектора в казахстанских центральноазиатских кинематографических исследованиях.

Почему меня выбрали?

Вы были выбраны для участия в этом исследовании, из-за вашей карьеры в создании фильмов с минимальной финансовой и рекламной помощью со стороны правительства Казахстана или без нее, а также комментирования и документирования социальных проблем в Казахстане посредством повествовательной драмы в кино. По этим причинам я считаю, что ваш опыт внесет большой вклад в проводимое мной исследование.

Обязательно ли мне участвовать?

Ваше участие в этом исследовании полностью добровольно. Вы не обязаны принимать участие и вас не заставят участвовать, если вы этого не хотите. Если вы все же решите принять участие, вы можете в любой момент передумать и остановиться. Вы можете принять это решение по любой причине, по вашему желанию, и от вас не требуется сообщать мне свои причины. Во время интервью вам не нужно отвечать на вопросы, на которые вы не хотите отвечать. Если после интервью вы решите, что больше не хотите участвовать в проекте, вы можете сказать об этом, и все записи с вашим участием будут уничтожены.

Что будет со мной, если я приму участие?

Приглашаю вас принять участие в стандартном интервью. Первичное интервью будет длиться примерно один час и будет охватывать большую часть всей важной информации. Вам, как участнику интервью, будут просто задавать вопросы. Вы можете ответить или отказаться от ответа.

Интервью будут записаны либо в аудиозаписи лично, либо в аудиовизуальной записи, проводимой на носителе видеоконференции, таком как Skype или Zoom.

Поскольку я являюсь носителем английского языка, но не владею русским языком, я бы предпочел проводить собеседование на английском языке. Однако, у вас есть возможность провести собеседование на русском языке. Если вы хотите пройти собеседование на

русском языке, я проконсультируюсь с переводчиком, который будет присутствовать на протяжении всего собеседования.

Я знаю, что вы очень заняты, поэтому я бы не хотел проводить несколько полнометражных интервью. Однако после проведения первого интервью со всеми предполагаемыми участниками, я могу снова связаться с вами для уточнения информации или ваших мыслей по вопросу, который возник в ходе нескольких интервью.

Если вы решите пройти личное интервью, мы оба предпримем меры по защите от COVID-19: мы наденем маски (я могу предоставить вам одну); мы будем постоянно находиться на расстоянии 2 м друг друга; мы встретимся на открытом воздухе, если это возможно; если мы встретимся в помещении, комната будет хорошо проветриваться, и я буду очищать поверхности до и после интервью; я попрошу вас по возможности избегать общественного транспорта.

Если вы подвергаетесь повышенному риску причинения вреда от COVID-19, мы проведем интервью на Zoom. Министерство здравоохранения опубликовало информацию о том, кто подвергается повышенному риску причинения вреда, и вы можете ознакомиться с ней, нажав [здесь](#). Если вам больше 60 лет или у вас есть какие-либо заболевания, описанные в информации министерства, мы проведем собеседование в Zoom, а не лично.

Если у вас есть какие-либо симптомы COVID-19, мы отложим интервью или проведем его с помощью Zoom. На интервью мы будем использовать приложение Ashyq в тестовом режиме, чтобы проверить риск передачи COVID. Использование тестового QR-кода в приложении не фиксирует, что вы были со мной. Информацию о том, как защитить себя и других от COVID, как пройти тестирование и что делать, если вы почувствовали себя плохо, вы можете найти на сайте www.coronavirus2020.kz

Будет ли сохраняться конфиденциальность моего участия в этом исследовании?

Поскольку все участники являются известными общественными деятелями с устоявшейся работой в публичной сфере, я намерен не скрывать имена участников исследования и использовать их цитаты из интервью. Однако, если вы предпочитаете, я могу скрыть ваше имя из некоторых или всех ваших высказываний и цитат.

Если вы в любое время до/во время/после интервью попросите меня удалить или подвергнуть цензуре определенные данные полученные в ходе интервью, я не стану возражать, удалив их из стенограммы и записи, и они не будут включены в окончательную диссертацию. Кроме того, если в какой-то момент вы решите сохранить анонимность, вы можете сообщить мне об этом, и я выполню вашу просьбу. Вы будете идентифицированы по идентификационному номеру (например, участник № 1, 2 и т. д.), и любая информация о вас будет удалена, чтобы вы не могли быть опознаны по ней.

Однако, есть ограничения на обещание конфиденциальности. Некоторые детали, такие как местоположение или конкретные важные детали, относящиеся к профессии, могут позволить идентифицировать вас.

Если вы запрашиваете конфиденциальность, обратите внимание, что все гарантии будут строго соблюдаться, если не будут обнаружены доказательства правонарушений или потенциального вреда. В таких случаях Университет обязуется связаться с соответствующими установленными законом органами/агентствами.

Что будет с результатами исследования?

В настоящее время это исследование будет использовано в качестве основы для моей магистерской диссертации. Однако я также намерен использовать это исследование во внешних академических публикациях (журнальные статьи, исследовательские работы, презентации на конференциях и т.д.). Я попрошу вашего согласия – не только на участие в интервью, но и на включение информации из вашего интервью в публикации. Вы можете отказаться от включения информации из вашего интервью во внешние публикации. Вы также можете запросить, чтобы вас не называли в этих внешних публикациях, но разрешите включить информацию из вашего интервью в эти внешние публикации.

Все идентифицирующие данные, собранные в ходе этого исследования, будут уничтожены в конце проекта. Ожидается, что это произойдет в январе 2022 года. Вы можете связаться со мной, чтобы запросить копию окончательной диссертации.

Поскольку это исследование описывает вашу карьеру и работу, вы будете идентифицированы в исследовании, если вы явно не укажете иное. Стенограммы интервью не будут включены в окончательную диссертацию, только отдельные соответствующие части будут цитироваться для контекста или вспомогательной аргументации. Я лично проведу анализ текста интервью и предоставлю эти данные.

Кто организует и финансирует исследование?

Это исследование не спонсируется и не финансируется какими-либо другими организациями или частными лицами. Этот проект полностью самофинансируется и самоорганизуется, при дополнительном руководстве и помощи со стороны моих руководителей и Университета.

Кто просмотрел исследование?

Этот проект был рассмотрен Форумом этики Школы социальных и политических наук Университета Глазго.

Контакт для получения дополнительной информации

Если у вас есть какие-либо вопросы, если вы чего-то не понимаете или вам нужна дополнительная информация, пожалуйста, не стесняйтесь обращаться ко мне, г-ну Эрику

Илсу Сонгу, по указанному выше адресу электронной почты. Вы также можете связаться с моими научными руководителями, профессорами Ныгметом Ибадильдином (проживающими в Казахстане) и Хейко Паабо (проживающими в Эстонии) по адресам электронной почты, указанным выше.

Если у вас есть какие-либо сомнения относительно проведения исследовательского проекта, вы можете обратиться к специалисту по этике Школы социальных и политических наук по адресу socpol-pgt-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk

Appendix F: Consent Form



College of Social
Sciences

Consent Form

Title of Project: **Exploring the Dynamics Between Non-State Cinema, Audiences, and the Future of the Industry: Contemporary Kazakhstani Independent Arthouse Cinema from the Perspectives of the Filmmakers**

Researcher: Eric Ilsoo Song

Supervisors: Prof. Nygmet Ibadildin, KIMEP University & Prof. Heiko Paabo, University of Tartu

Please Mark Your Choice as Appropriate

Yes No I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information for this study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

Yes No I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

Yes No I consent to my responses being included in any publications arising from the research **in addition** to the Researcher's Dissertation.

Yes No I consent to interviews being audio-recorded, or a written record being made for interviews conducted through text.

Yes No I am comfortable conducting the interview primarily in the English language.

Yes No I consent to having a translator present during the entire interview if the interview will not be in English, but Russian language.

Yes No Are you comfortable **not** being anonymized for this interview? (Are you comfortable being named in the interview?)

I hereby acknowledge that:

Yes No Participants have the right to be anonymized and can request anonymity at any point during the interview.

Yes No Research data will be securely stored at all times during this project.

Yes No All identifiable material, such as interview records, will be destroyed when the project is completed.

Yes No I waive my copyright to any data collected during this project.

Yes No Participants will be identified by name in any publications arising from the research.

Yes No I have received a Privacy Notice in relation to this research project.

I hereby consent to:

Yes No I agree to take part in the above study.

Name _____ Signature Date



College of Social
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Форма Согласия

Название исследования: **Изучение динамики между негосударственным кинематографом, аудиторией и будущим индустрии: современное казахстанское независимое артхаусное кино глазами кинематографистов**

Исследователь: Эрик Илсу Сонг

Супервайзор: Профессор Ныгмет Ибадильдин (Университет КИМЕП), Профессор Хейко Паабо (Университет Тарту)

Пожалуйста отметьте свой вариант ответа

Да Нет Я подтверждаю, что я прочитал и понял Информационный лист участника для

данного исследования и готов отвечать на вопросы.

Да Нет Я понимаю, что мое участие является добровольным и что я могу отказаться от участия в любой время, без объяснения причин.

Да Нет Я даю согласие на включение моих ответов в любые публикации, связанные с

исследованием, **в дополнение** к диссертации Исследователя.

Да Нет Я даю согласие на аудиозапись интервью или создание письменной записи интервью, проводимых с помощью текста.

Да Нет Мне комфортно принимать участие в интервью в первую очередь на английском языке.

Да Нет Я даю согласие на присутствие переводчика на протяжении всего интервью, если интервью будет не на английском, а на русском языке.

Да Нет Вам комфортно **не** быть анонимным во время интервью. (Вам удобно, что ваше имя включено в диссертацию?)

Я подтверждаю, что:

Да Нет Участники имеют право на анонимность и могут запросить анонимность в любой момент во время интервью.

Да Нет Данные исследований будут надежно храниться в любое время в течение этого проекта.

Да Нет Все идентифицируемые материалы, такие как записи интервью, будут уничтожены, когда проект будет завершен.

Да Нет Я отказываюсь от своих авторских прав на любые данные, собранные во время этого проекта.

Да Нет Участники будут указаны по именам в любых публикациях, вытекающих из исследования.

Да Нет Я получил Уведомление о конфиденциальности в отношении этого исследовательского проекта.

Настоящим я даю согласие на:

Да Нет Я соглашаюсь принять участие в вышеуказанном исследовании.

ФИО Подпись

..... Дата.....

Appendix G: Codebook**Master's Dissertation****Nodes**

Name
Access and Transparency
Animation
Aqsaqal
Arthouse
Independent
Artistry
Expression
Audience
Domestic
Foreign
Preference
Region
Civil Society
Condition of the KZ film industry
Culture industry escapism
Development
Diversity of product
Diversity of style
Regional Cooperation

Name
Distribution
Documentary
Dynamic
Film education in KZ
Film Festival
International festivals and success in KZ
Potential challenges of this method
Financing
Funding
producer - filmmaker relationship
Future
Gender
Generation
Conservative
New groups and collectives
Partisan
Status of Partisan movement
Problems with critics
Relationship between generations
Internet

Name
KZ film market
Promotion
Quality
New Cinematic and Film Language
Recruitment
Relationship
Independent and auteur with state
Independent and auteur and audience
Relationship within generations
Role of government

Appendix H: Interview List

Interview 1: Tolegen Baitukenov, September 12, 2021, Almaty (interviewee based in USA)

Interview 2: Yernar Malikov, October 1, 2021, Almaty

Interview 3: Marina Kunarova, October 1, 2021, Almaty

Interview 4: Sharipa Urazbayeva, October 2, 2021, Almaty

Interview 5: Baurzhan Shukenov, October 8, 2021, Almaty

Interview 6: Gulnara Abikeyeva, October 13, 2021, Almaty

Interview 7: Alisher Jadigerov, October 14, 2021, Almaty

Interview 8: Serik Abishev, November 1, 2021, Almaty

Interview 9: Farkhat Sharipov, November 10, 2021, Almaty

Interview 10: Darkhan Tulegenov, November 11, 2021, Almaty

Interview 11: Berik Zhakhanov, November 12, 2021, Almaty

Interview 12: Katerina Suvorova, November 17, 2021, Almaty

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of:

Master of Arts (MA) in Political Science (Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies):
KIMEP University, Kazakhstan

International Master's (IntM) in Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies: University of
Glasgow, UK

Master of Arts in Social Sciences (MA) in Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies:
University of Tartu, Estonia

Word count: 24,797

Author's declaration: I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors,
literary sources and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

/Signature/

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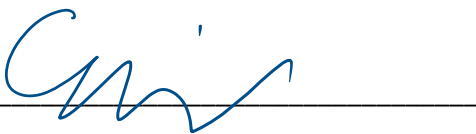
Eric Song

10/08/1995

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supervised by Professor Nygmet Ibadildin and Professor Heiko Pääbo

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