

Mapping Arab Documentary Landscape Report 2018

Data is
Beautiful



DOX BOX
دوكس بوكس

Mapping Arab Documentary Landscape **Report 2018**

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Foreword

The publication you hold in your hands has come together over an eventful decade-long journey.

In 2010, the enthusiastic team behind the DOX BOX International Documentary Film Festival – which took place in Syria from 2008 – embarked on another ambitious venture: to produce and publish a documentary magazine called TAFASEEL (*which translates as “details” in Arabic*).

TAFASEEL was conceived as a quarterly publication, featuring film reviews, festival reports and funding news as well as interviews with filmmakers, essays and translated material. Last but not least, the plan was also to include a section dedicated to mapping the documentary film scene in the Arab world.

The decision to launch the magazine and additionally monitor and gather information about Arab documentary was driven by a number of factors. Firstly, there was the absence of any sort of state institutions or support bodies dedicated to the documentary genre in the Arab world, gathering or publishing information that would have been useful to documentary professionals. There were no private or state-backed local or regional-wide trade magazines covering the sector either. In addition, the overall documentary scene was fragmented and

The first edition of TAFASEEL – photo © Proaction Film



fragile, production and distribution levels were low and there were few networks connecting documentary professionals either on a local or regional level.

DOX BOX team was keenly aware of this lack of resources and infrastructure – either state-backed or organic – and felt compelled to try to fill the gap.

That is when and how, the first and only edition of TAFASEEL was published in 2010. It included a first ever attempt to gather data and paint a picture of the documentary scene in the Arab world, entitled *Mapping Creative Documentary Cinema in the Arab World – Levant edition*, covering Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine.

This work was put on hold as protests swept the country, and the region, in 2011. Like millions of people in our country and the wider region, members of the DOX BOX team became caught up in these events and the immediate need to save lives and capture what was happening.

When we were forced to leave, eventually residing in Germany, we mustered the energy and force to continue the very necessary work we had begun back home in Syria, with the creation of a new Berlin-based DOX BOX.

But that lonely first and last edition of TAFASEEL still holds resonance for our work today. In one article, Algerian-French filmmaker Malek Bensmail describes documentary cinema as the “*barometer of democracy*” while respected critic and former Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF) artistic director Masoud Amrallah calls the genre “*the negative of the soul*”. Their words are probably the best to give some insight into our quest to study and understand the documentary film scene in the Arab world since then. Since the drive behind this work is not motivated by an obsession with statistics and numbers, but rather with learning about the reality of this world, which is our world. Numbers and statistics, to us, are not facts or sums of truths, they are instead a means to paint a picture of the landscape for documentary in the Arab world today.

This quest to research, to study and to document and publish, started years before we finally established DOX BOX in Berlin. The seeds of this publication were harvested in Damascus, we carried them with us to Berlin where they have finally been able to germinate and grow in this project “*Data is Beautiful*”.

Today, at a time when we witness the rise of documentary cinema across the Arab world, we hope that this panorama of its landscape is a helpful resource for those working in

documentary in the region, in Germany and all over the world. Our hope for this publication is that it will help documentary professionals as they forge careers and pull together their projects, whatever their scope.

Today, more than a decade into this journey, I cannot but share my utmost enthusiasm and delight over the launch of this publication, ***Mapping Arab Documentary***, and the way it encapsulates its entire geography. It was possible thanks to the generous contribution of writers, researchers, statisticians, and filmmakers from Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, Palestine, Germany, UK, the Netherlands, and Turkey.

This is the final publication of the first research conducted in this realm.

It is essential that this research is continued and developed to offer with each new publication a reference to practitioners in the Arab world and beyond, and to people who intend to work with them. Above all, it is important to commit to the effort to document and to analyse this undeniable civic, political, cultural and creative phenomenon, the documentary cinema, which is yet an organic part of our modern history not only in the Arab region but in the whole wide world.

I wish you a wonderful read.

Diana El Jeiroudi

Project Leader, General Director of DOX BOX

Introduction

Welcome to the latest edition of *Mapping Arab Documentary*.

It is the second publication in the multi-year study *Data is Beautiful* investigating the current state of the Arab documentary landscape.

The research was initiated by DOX BOX, the Berlin-based non-profit association set up in 2014 to support documentary professionals operating in the Arab region.

This study grew out of questions that arose as DOX BOX developed its various support programmes and the subsequent discovery that very little in-depth research had been done on the sector.

This second round of research, conducted over the course of 2018, comprised a quantitative survey, listings of Arab documentary films released between 2014 and 2017 inclusive, as well as key data on crew and production credits for each entry. It also included a qualitative line of inquiry to explore some of the trends and findings suggested by the quantitative research in greater depth.

The research hit stumbling blocks along the way and at times the team felt frustrated when data was unattainable for reasons beyond its control. The obstacles it encountered, however, would also prove to be revelatory about the current state of the Arab documentary scene.

Although many questions remained unanswered, this is still a landmark project, for the processes it has set in motion and connections it has made across the Arab world and beyond.

We regard this work as the foundation for further research into the current Arab documentary landscape. We also hope it will provoke discussion and debate on what can be done to better support documentary professionals operating in the Arab world in the future.

In the meantime, we would like to share these latest findings with professionals involved in the Arab documentary scene, online, in this publication and through live presentations at events around the Arab world and beyond.

Data is Beautiful Expert Group – Berlin October 2018

About *Data is Beautiful*

Data is Beautiful is an ambitious data-driven research project initiated by DOX BOX, in response to the challenges it was encountering as it carried out its day-to-day activities devoted to supporting documentary professionals operating across the Arab region.

The association runs an extensive programme of residencies, training events, online courses as well as networking and industry meetings.

In the course of developing and fine-tuning these initiatives, with the aim of making them as relevant to their participants' needs as possible, the DOX BOX team became increasingly aware of gaps in its own knowledge.

It also became apparent that there was no joined up, comprehensive research painting a complete and detailed picture of the reality facing documentary professionals in the Arab world.

As of 2017, the team initiated its own research, kicking off with a survey detailing all the Arab documentary films on release around the world in 2015 and 2016. It also gathered data on the gender and nationality of the director and key crew as well as the production and financing credits.

This initial quantitative study hinted at a number of trends and eye-opening findings, but the two-year time frame was too short a period from which to draw firm conclusions. Intrigued by these findings of this initial study, DOXBOX decided to embark on a wider, deeper research project.

This round of investigation was made possible through the support of the Transformation Partnership Programme, an initiative of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ford Foundation and Bertha Foundation.

This fresh research was carried out by an expert group, consisting of documentary film-makers, journalists, editors, statisticians and researchers, who met-up at four separate workshops over the course of 2018, and also worked autonomously on the various stages of the project.



From the presentation and debate during the Regional Conference for Arab Independent Cinema (RCAIC) in El Gouna Film Festival in September 2018 – photo © Noor Abed

The core group was complemented by local and international documentary experts who came on board as advisors, contributing their expertise as well as facilitating access to data.

The key elements of this round are a quantitative survey listing Arab documentary films over a four-year period from 2014 to 2017, and a qualitative questionnaire targeting some 110 decision-makers who play a key role in the Arab documentary landscape.

But the arc of the research was far wider in terms of the debates it provoked and connections it fostered throughout the Arab documentary world.

Regional Collaboration

A key aspect of the second instalment of the *Data is Beautiful* project has been the presentation of the findings from the initial and first film survey, covering 2015 and 2016, and the resulting first publication *Mapping Arab Documentary 2017*, which was launched at the beginning of 2018.

These presentations were not simply an occasion to showcase the study, but also an opportunity to open debate around the research project and its findings.

These discussions with the audiences, made up mainly of documentary professionals, also fed into and informed the second round of the research project, which began in earnest in March 2018.

The interactive presentations often led to lively debates around the factors impacting the Arab documentary scene as well as the challenges in trying to track them and often generated fresh perspectives on the data itself, transforming *Mapping Arab Documentary* into a living, organic document, with different implications for different audiences.

As well as presenting the first edition of *Mapping Arab Documentary 2017*, the core research team also attended these events to hold expert meetings in situ, where they were sometimes joined by other members via Skype if necessary.

The presentations took place at the following locations over the course of 2018:

- **Beirut, Lebanon (March 2018)**

on 23 March 2018, at Metropolis Empire Sofil Cinema, during the Beirut Cinema Platform

- **Leipzig, Germany (April 2018)**

on 14 April 2018, at the Medien-campus Villa Ida, during the arab.european Documentary Convention

Melanie Goodfellow presenting the project's interim findings during Fida Doc in Agadir, Morocco, in June 2018 | © photo by Elise Ortiou Campion





Marion Schmidt during the presentation in Film Lab Palestine, in Ramallah in October 2018 (c) photo by DOX BOX / NK-Media

- **Prato, Italy (June 2018)**

on 5 June 2018, during the EuroDoc Workshop

- **Agadir, Morocco (June 2018)**

on 21 June 2018, during the Fidadoc as part of debates programme.

- **El Gouna, Egypt (September 2018)**

on 22 September 2018, during the Gouna Film Festival industry platform, as part of the Regional Conference for Arab Independent Cinema (RCAIC)

- **Ramallah, Palestine (October 2018)**

on 18 October 2018, during Filmlab Palestine's Days of Cinema

- **Carthage, Tunisia (November 2018)**

in November 2018, during Carthage Film Festival

- **Amsterdam, Netherlands (November 2018)**

on 18 November 2018, during the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (IDFA)

Documentation

All expert group meetings were audio-recorded to support the researchers at the writing stage. Notes were taken at the major expert group meetings in Beirut and Leipzig and minutes were circulated among the researchers. Some of the expert group meetings were also videotaped for documentation and promotional purposes. A short presentation of the project can be viewed online: dox-box.org/mapping-arab-docs-downloads. →



The first presentation at Beirut Cinema Platform in March 2018 and at the Arab European Documentary Convention in Leipzig in April 2018 are accessible online for DOX BOX community members (community.dox-box.org).

Glossary

Arab Directors One of the first challenges of the *Data is Beautiful* project was defining what constitutes an Arab director. For a number of reasons, defining the nationality of filmmakers and crew members involved in the films in the survey was not always an easy task.

Many filmmakers whose works are featured in the study are based outside of their native countries, some in exile, others out of free choice. Others belong to second or third generations of diasporic families. Some directors are of mixed parentage with a mother of Jordanian, Lebanese, Iraqi or or Syrian nationality, cannot claim citizenship under discriminatory legislation allowing only fathers to pass on citizenship to their children.

For the purpose of the quantitative film survey, the researchers decided to define a director or supporting crew member as Arab when he or she is either a native or descendant of one of the 22 countries belonging to the League of Arab States, regardless of their country of residence, ethnicity or official nationality.

Arab Film It was near impossible to come up with a single set of criteria for what constitutes an “Arab film”. In some jurisdictions, the nationality of a film is determined on the basis of a points system, covering aspects such as the subject of the film, shooting location,

nationality of the key creative crew and production company.

In a majority of Arab countries, a film project qualifies for funds or competitions mainly based on the director’s nationality.

For the purpose of this study, an “Arab film” is a production directed or co-directed by an “Arab director”, as per the above-mentioned definition of “*Arab Directors*”.

Country of Production A film’s country of production can be attributed on the basis of a number of factors, but it is commonly determined by the home territories of the key producers and financing. Cultural elements as well as the nationality of the director and crew members can also come into play.

As the film survey progressed it became clear that it was impossible to consistently log data about a film’s country or countries of production due to the different ways producers and websites listed this information.

Because of this inconsistent data, researchers decided not to examine or use the information on the country of production provided by producers or on websites. Instead, the study examined the countries of residence of the key crew, the citizenship of crew members, the territorial base of key financiers, main shooting locations and operational bases of key production companies.

Operator For the purposes of this study, an operator is a body or organisation – which could range from a film fund to a school to a festival – which runs programmes supporting documentary in some shape or form.

Programme A programme is a defined activity run by an operator aimed at supporting documentary. It could be a post-production, a workshop or a fund or a screening event. A single operator, such as a festival, might run several programmes, with different aims, staffing and remits.

Topic The topics, or subject-matter, of the films in the survey were gathered from publicly available information such as film industry databases, operators' websites and the production companies websites.

Pilot Phase This refers to the first round of research that was undertaken in-house by the DOX BOX management and staff. The initial data collection, design and planning took place from 2014 to 2017. Its current format took shape towards the end of 2017 and the project was given the title *Data is Beautiful*. The pilot phase concluded in December 2017 with the inaugural publication Mapping Arab Documentary 2017.

Methodology

This project involved several parallel processes to achieve its results.

1. Assembly of project team

In early 2018, project leader Diana El Jeiroudi started recruiting members for the core project team, including researchers, writers, editors and statisticians, as well as advisors to guide the research process. The core team consisted of five researchers (see: *project team biographies*) and advisors with key expertise.

After the pilot phase, it was decided to add a specialised statistician to the team to eliminate the possibility of statistical mistakes and human error, and to ensure a scientific and realistic approach that would help prevent inconsistencies in the gathering of data and in the subsequent analysis.

Diana El Jeiroudi (left) and Khaled Saghie (right) during the Expert Group workshop in Beirut, March 2018 – photo © Amr Kokash



2. Collaborations and partnerships

Project leadership enlisted the collaboration with several events and platforms which allowed for this project to reach out to documentary filmmakers in the Arab region and Europe, specifically the MENA which included of hosting the expert group workshops and meetings, providing facilities and access and collaborated in promoting the project's interim outputs and discussions. Among whom are The Arab European Documentary Convention in Germany, the Beirut Cinema Platform in Lebanon, and FIDADoc the Agadir Documentary Film Festival in Morocco.

In addition thanks to the partnership with Film Lab Palestine, The Regional Conference for Independent Arab Cinema (RCAIC) in El Gouna, and Takmil of the Carthage Film Festival in Tunisia, the interim results were possible to reach further engaged communities from the arab-region and specifically MENA region.

Finally, the final output for the 2018 projects is launched in the Industry Talks during the International Documentary Film Festival of Amsterdam IDFA 2018.

3. Examining Previous Studies

As previously stated, the *Data is Beautiful* project was originally launched in response to the lack of hard data and research related to the current state of play in the Arab documentary scene. As part of the second round of research, the expert group investigated whether fresh studies had been published in the interim.

The team discovered that research investigating the documentary scene across the region remained scant. As a result, the team reviewed studies exploring the Middle East and North Africa media scene more generally, without a specific focus on documentary, as well as studies on gender and director employment trends within Europe (*references in the acknowledgement*).

Although these research papers were not directly related to documentary, they helped the expert group compare methodologies, gauge existing data and analysis and generated discussion over the direction and process of *Data is Beautiful*.

Two studies were of particular interest: the **European Women's Audiovisual Network (EWA) 2016 report** *Where Are The Women Directors in European Films?*, exploring female representation in European audiovisual industries, and a study on documentary filmmaker livelihoods by the **German Documentary Association AG DOK**.

The AG DOK Study

One of the areas of focus of the second round of *Data is Beautiful* is the livelihood of documentary filmmakers in the Arab world. With this in mind, the expert group reviewed the 2012 AG DOK study on the livelihood of German documentary filmmakers. Although focused on the situation in Germany, it provided the group with an example of a study investigating the sort of data it was trying to gather related to the Arab documentary scene.

AG DOK sent out a **questionnaire** to 893 members, 700 of whom were documentary directors and writers, with a four-month window in which to reply. A total of 94 respondents took the time to participate in the anonymous survey, and 92 of the responses were

validated for the purposes of the study. This yielded a response rate of **13 percent**.

The average age of directors and authors who replied to the questionnaire was **49 years old**, which was considerably higher than the average age of directors registered in the *Data is Beautiful* quantitative survey of Arab documentary filmmakers.

AG DOK'S findings showed that 85 percent of respondents did other work in order to secure their livelihood during the surveyed period. Respondents worked an average of 82 days annually without pay (on activities such as development and research), while 35 percent worked three to six months without pay.

The EWA Study

EWA's 2016 report *Where Are The Women Directors in European Films?*, investigating female representation in the European audiovisual sector, also provided the expert group with food for thought.

Not only did it provide comparative data for *Data is Beautiful*'s research into the representation of female professionals in the Arab documentary world, but it also provided pointers and inspiration for the team as the framework of its own research took shape.

The multi-year project, gathering data from seven European territories followed a similar methodology to the second round of *Data is Beautiful* in that it also combined desk research of publicly-available data with a guided questionnaire.

EWA's reasons for embarking on the study also resonated with the *Data is Beautiful* researchers. The main catalyst for the research had been to gather facts to back anecdotal evidence of gender inequality within Europe's film and TV industries.

According to the study, while women accounted for 44 percent of film school graduates, only one in five films in the period covered were directed by women (**21 percent**). It also revealed that 84 percent of financial resources went into films directed by men.

The data pulled together in the study has since been used as a lobbying tool to spur the film and TV industries to put in place

initiatives and mechanisms to tackle gender equality.

The report's suggestion that "gender equality is piecemeal and poorly monitored in most public institutions in the film and audio-visual industry, and many private stakeholders keep no statistics at all," chimed with the *Data is Beautiful* expert group as it attempted to collect data on Arab documentary.

4. Expert Group Workshops

Throughout the duration of the second stage of research, the researchers, project manager and advisors met at regular intervals to discuss the framework of the project, analyse their latest findings and set targets for the ongoing investigation.

Three of these expert meetings were held at industry events in different locations in Europe and the MENA region. These meetings would also be accompanied by 90-minute interactive presentations of the study-in process in most of the cases.

Copies of the pilot study publication "Mapping Arab Documentary 2017" and the "Film Listings" for 2015 and 2016 were also distributed during the presentations.

These presentations drew audiences of between 50 to 75 documentary professionals each, many of them stakeholders and operators representatives as well as filmmakers from the Arab Region.

The resulting feedback and open discussions at these presentations helped shape the research process and added an extra layer of local and regional knowledge. These events also gave the project greater visibility and helped to engage industry professionals in the study, which in turn increased accessibility to data and expanded the contact database.

Expert Group Workshop 1 – Beirut, Lebanon, March 2018

A group of six experts joined the first workshop in Beirut. It took the shape of an intensive workshop on the sideline of the Beirut Cinema Platform in March 2018.

At this first meeting the group re-appraised the pilot phase of the project and discussed what factors of the documentary chain needed to be researched in more depth in the second stage of the study. It also identified an initial list of influencers and operators, who are interchangeably referred to as "decision-makers" and "operators" throughout this report. The resulting list encompassed the following sectors:

- Formal and informal education such as training, schools and professionalisation workshops.

- Funds, grants, financing soft-loans and subsidies, both governmental and non-governmental.
- Documentary-focused and non-documentary focused programmes
- Commercial and non-commercial circulation venues and programmes such as TV broadcasters, VoD platforms, sales agents, and festivals
- Film interest groups such as unions, syndicates, and legislative bodies

A presentation was also held to showcase the pilot results and distribute the initial publications. The audience of this presentation was a mixture of filmmakers and operators from within the Arab region with some international documentary and film experts and operators.

Guevara Namer (left) and Khaled Saghie (right) during the Expert Group workshop in Beirut March 2018 – photo © Amr Kokash



Expert Group Workshop 2 – Leipzig, Germany April 2018

At the second workshop, held in Leipzig during the Arab European Documentary Convention in April 2018, the group identified which aspects of the documentary landscape it wanted to focus on in the second stage of research.

One of the initial motivations for this study had been to shape programmes that offer better support to professionals in the Arab documentary scene and encourage sustainable practices in the industry. This provoked a long discussion around what factors could be used to measure best practices, healthy working conditions and sustainable support infrastructure in the Arab documentary scene.

The group also discussed building the guided questionnaire and the size of the

sample that would be contacted for the study. The group consisted of the core researchers in addition to the statistician and two local experts.

On the basis of the expert group workshop, the final questionnaires were developed and sent out mid-May to the researchers who then started contacting the operators to request interviews.

A presentation was also held to discuss the pilot results and distribute the initial publications. The audience of this presentation was a mixture of highly experienced filmmakers and operators from within the Arab region and Europe.

Expert Group Workshop 3 – Agadir and Berlin, June 2018

The third workshop was supposed to take place during Fidadoc in Agadir in Morocco, but due to visa restrictions which prevented some members of the expert group from attending as well as other logistical constraints, the meeting was partly shifted to Berlin. One team member attended Fidadoc to do research on the ground and present the study-in-progress to participants.

Most of the audience at this presentation hailed from Morocco and were young filmmakers embarking on their first shorts and feature projects. The event prompted an interesting discussion on documentary trends in the country, as well as an exchange on potential sources of data for Morocco's documentary landscape.



From the expert group workshop during the arab.european Documentary Convention in Leipzig April 2018 - © Layla Abyad / DOX BOX

In Berlin, the rest of the expert group reviewed existing studies related to other sections of the film and TV industries. It attempted to analyse early results from the quantitative and qualitative surveys. It also discussed potential case studies and testimonials that could be used to supplement or illustrate some of the study's findings.

Finally, the group noted the difficulty it was having in fixing interviews and gathering full sets of data. The interview period was extended to the end of June and once the workshop was over the group went back to soliciting data and interviews.

Expert Group Workshop 4 – Berlin, July 2018

At a fourth workshop in Berlin, five project staff members conducted a comprehensive first analysis of all the data gathered from both qualitative and quantitative research and discussed preliminary data visualisations. They continued to research and scout for additional information that could bolster the analysis and to verify data entries.

Major observations were collected and noted in an initial draft of this report. The

basic report structure was concluded. The work was divided among researchers and writers of the expert group according to language skill-sets.

A brief for initial data visualisations to be commissioned was drawn up to guide the design of charts required for the final analysis.

5. The Film Survey

A quantitative film survey covering documentary films by Arab directors released between 2014 and 2017 was conducted

Sample Focus and Size

The film survey identified some 200 Arab documentaries that were released in the years 2014 to 2017.

Films included in the sample satisfied the following criteria. They were:

- independently-produced documentaries (i.e. neither commissioned by political, commercial or religious organisations, nor as corporate content nor works completed as part of educational

through desk research and was a key component of the research.

programmes, such as student and graduation films)

- from the documentary non-fiction genre.
- made by Arab directors or co-directors
- focused on social and/or political issues, but not for propaganda purposes
- first publicly released during the period between 2014 and 2017

Guevara Namer (left), Nihal Zaghloul (center), Emily Becker (right) during the Expert Group workshop in Berlin, June 2018 – photo © DOX BOX / Morgane Lincy Fercot



The quality of the documentaries was not taken into consideration because the study did not attempt to investigate this aspect of the films listed in the survey.

Instead, the study focused on objectively measurable criteria such as duration of a film, its topic as listed in the publicly available information accessed during the desk-research, topic, genre, shooting location, production company location,

nationality of director and key crew, awards, crew experience, year of release and the country of premiere and of financing.

A total of 225 documentary films were initially identified but **only 200 films** were included in the final study. Twenty-five films were excluded during a verification phase because they lacked one or more of the above-mentioned qualifying criteria.

Source and Processing of Data

The data was collected via desk research methods using publicly-shared material from the websites of festivals, funds, support organisations, as well as film-focused platforms, social media sites and publicly accessible industry-specific databases. The researchers and project supporting staff had clear instructions on how to collect and enter data.

The information was collected from resources in Arabic, English, German and French. Data was first entered by a freelance researcher and then revised by a freelance data-processor who also verified data entry and counting methods to ensure consistency. Finally, all data-sheets were examined by a different second unit researcher and by the project leader. They both eliminated any inconsistencies, provided corrections and sought missing information when necessary.

For the purposes of the study, the data reflects reality at the time of a film's release,

i.e. the age of the director and crew members when the film was released.

When information was not publicly available, the set of data was eliminated (marked as NI – No Information).

When the researchers had personal knowledge indicating that certain public information was inaccurate (e.g. the education of a director), the set of data was retained in order to reflect the public record and maintain a consistent set of measurements and verification.

In less than three percent of cases, the information obtained was contradictory. Verification was often impossible due to the scarcity of publicly available information and difficulty in getting a response from the filmmakers involved. In these cases, the decision was made to rely on the most credible source of information.

Film Survey Phases

The film survey took place over two stages. The preparatory stage was concluded in 2017, as a pilot phase and resulted in two separate Film Listings publications for 2015 and 2016, which were published and circulated in 2018 with visualisations from the findings and along side an initial report “Mapping Arab Documentary 2017”.

The second stage took place over 2018 and expanded the scope of the research on basis of the findings of the first stage. The investigation was expanded to include the financing territories and sources, where the

films screened and broadcast, additional key members and more data around the crews’ professionalisation, education, residency and nationality.

After collecting the publicly available information, the data sets for each film were sent to the respective producers or right holders to request additional information and verification. It was only possible to verify a fraction of the gathered information despite the relatively high response rate of 44 percent from producers or right holders.

Output

The overall film listing gathered 200 films and resulted in separate Film Listing publications for each of the four years covered, from 2014 to 2017, providing an overview of all the films in the survey. Three films were not included in these Film Listing publications at the request of the right-holders. The public data related to these films was included in the examination and study findings for scientific reasons.

Due to human error, 15 films were included in the 2015 and 2016 Film Listings that

should have been disregarded from the whole sample and one film should have been included but was not by mistake.

The findings of the film survey for 2015 and 2016 were reported in visualisations and presented to the public throughout 2018, as the project and study advanced and were discussed with audiences from within the documentary and cinema scene.

Digits and Numbers

For the purpose of printed publications, all percentages have been rounded-up as well for the visualisations and presentation slides.

6. The Operator Survey

Another component of the study was identifying and interviewing key influencers in

the Arab Documentary scene, referred to as operators and programmes.

Sample Focus and Size

One of the first tasks was to identify a list of key stakeholder bodies, or influencers with decision-making power in the Arab world’s documentary film landscape. The 107 key influencers identified by the research team included programmes ranging from film festivals and competitions, granting and supporting organisations, training and professionalisation programmes, TV channels, distribution platforms, as well as cinemas and screening facilities.

Some of these programmes were subsidiaries of the same larger umbrella organisation. This was common within festivals, which often run separate grant and training programmes as well as screening films. The subsidiary bodies were identified as separate entities on the basis that the primary contact, operational size, age, programme timeframe, focus and applications procedures

were distinct and therefore resulted in different data.

Conversely, with smaller organisations that ran several different support programmes but without separate departments (such as grants and training workshops), the data from these activities was treated as a single data set.

These influencer bodies can be broken into the following programmes:

- 32 festivals and competitions
- 21 support programmes and grant-giving organisations
- 15 training and professionalisation programmes
- 7 schools (covering audiovisual and film)
- 6 film commissions and film boards
- 6 TV channels

- 6 forums and film markets
- 5 sales agents and distributors
- 4 VoD platforms
- 4 screening facilities and cinematheques
- 1 interest group (union or syndicate)

For the purposes of the qualitative study, 84 influencer organisations were contacted, accounting for just under 80 percent

Data Sources

In the process of conducting these guided interviews, it became apparent that it was not going to be possible to gather the major part of the numeric data sought by the guided questionnaire.

This was due to a number of reasons. In some cases, the organisations had not registered or tracked the requested data related to their programmes. In others, they simply did not have the personnel available to process or locate the requested data in their databases in the allotted time frame. Sometimes, bodies were not able or willing to share the data under bureaucratic pretexts.

Researchers also spent a lot of time tracking down the person in a given body with the authority to allow or assign a representative lower down its hierarchy to collate and share the data.

of the list, and the researchers managed to interview representatives and compile deeper data from **32 bodies** within the given timeframe.

The interviews were based on a pre-designed guided-questionnaire prepared for researchers and interviewees and were conducted in English, Arabic, German, Kurdish and French.

The researchers sometimes met with reticence, at other times surprise, when they first approached some bodies, perhaps because this was the first time a survey of this scope had been conducted for data related to the Arab documentary scene.

A substantial portion of numeric data collected by this study was provided by the stakeholders as approximate numbers or estimates. Therefore, it was decided after deliberation to use testimonials and case studies gathered during the qualitative interviews to elucidate some of the trends hinted at by the data. These testimonials and case studies are being published subject to the consent of the interviewees.

Interview protocol

The qualitative research was done either in person or via skype using guided questionnaires. In one instance, the research was conducted via email because the subject was not available to do a face-to-face interview. This initial interview was often followed up with email exchanges to complete missing data when possible. The interview period ran from mid-May 2018 through the end of June 2018.

The questionnaire covered data from the years 2014 to 2017 inclusive and comprised 24 questions, some of which were

multi-part. Researchers sought to obtain information on the quantity of submissions and applications versus the acceptance or participation rate. They also investigated the aims and scope of the programmes, the application process, the geographic penetration or focus, quotas or consideration of gender, age or location, preferences for specific factors including topics and genres, and whether they encountered complaints or feedback. The interviews also investigated how programmes assess the success of their activities.

Response Rate

Out of the 107 programmes and organisations identified as having a visible and active influence on the Arab documentary landscape, the researchers contacted 84 heads of programmes.

Out of the 32 in-depth interviews conducted, 11 participants were representatives of documentary exclusive organisations and another nine ran documentary-specific programmes.

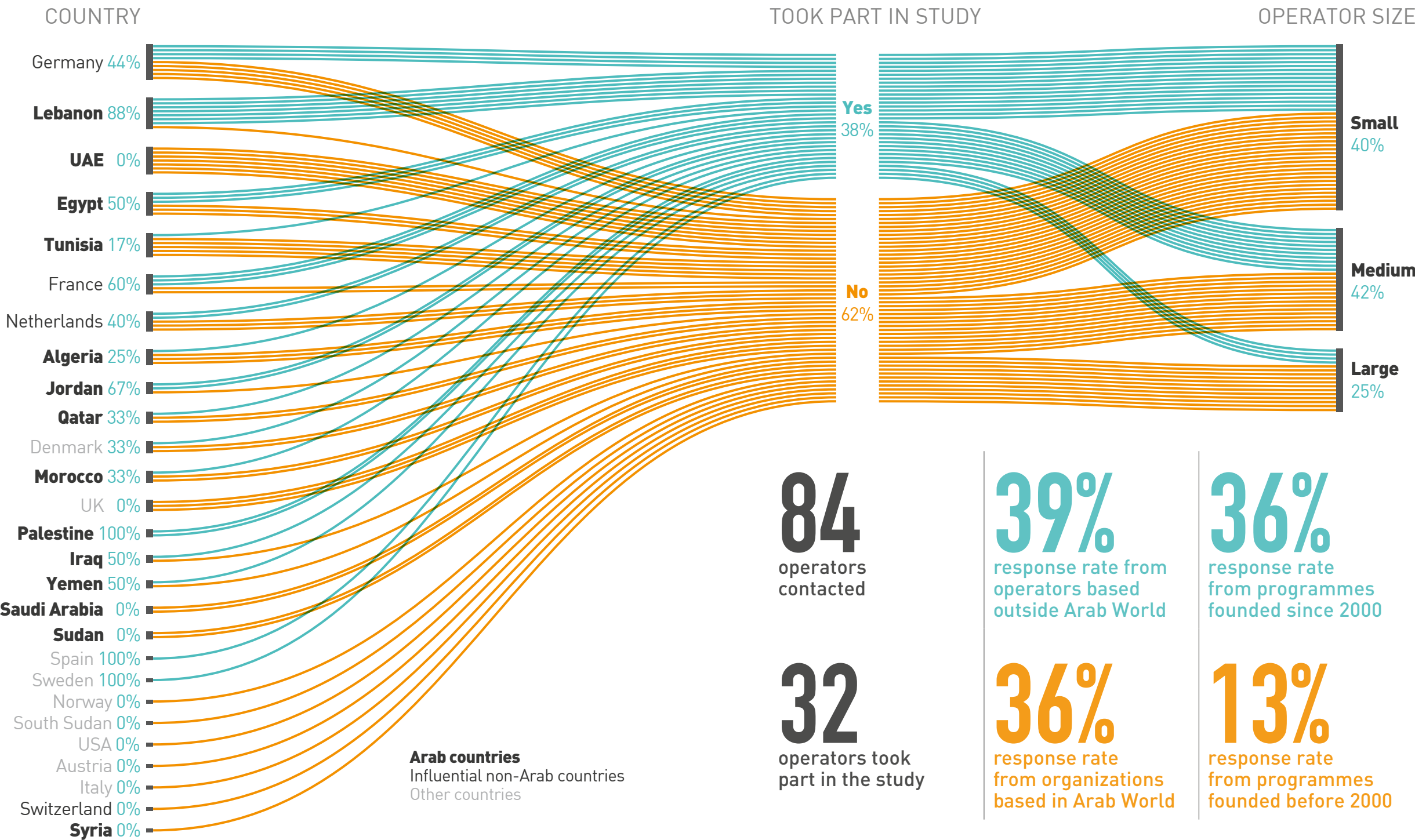
Twenty-seven interviewees ran at least one programme specific to the Arab world, while five had no specific programmes for Arab-region beneficiaries but filmmakers from Arab-region were eligible.

A further 12 bodies had no documentary-specific programming but were open to documentary films and filmmakers (as part of their programming).

The overall response rate was **38 percent**. This was relatively high in comparison with the response rates of comparable studies. The researchers, however, expressed regret that it was not higher because the resulting data pool was small. One major disappointment was the lack of participation by some major organisations actively influencing Arab documentaries.

Operators response rate

By country and operator size



Based on sub-set of 84 operators who were contacted for the study.

The following observations were made on the respondents:

- Forty one percent of respondents were female and 59 percent were male but there was no correlation between response rate and gender, nor was there any correlation between the size of organisation and the gender of programme heads.
- The average operation duration for the participating programmes was 14 years. For the larger organisations, the average years of operation was 23 years.
- Training and professionalisation programmes had the highest response rate at 58 percent, followed by screening facilities and cinematheques at 50 percent and support and granting programmes at 47 percent.

- The response rates for forums and markets as well as broadcasters was 40 percent, while festivals and competitions came in at 37 percent followed by schools at 33 percent.
- The response rate for VoD platforms was low at 25 percent, followed by sales agents and distributors at 20 percent, and film commissions at 17 percent. There was a 0 percent response rate from film interest groups.
- Small programmes measured by size of operation, budget and number of employees had the highest response rate of 54 percent, compared with 43 percent for medium-sized bodies, and only 13 percent for large organisations.

Further Observations on Response Rates

In organisations, which were younger and smaller in size, the percentage of those run by cultural activists who were themselves part of a local or regional community of filmmakers was high.

These smaller organisations also had smaller programmes and data pools. The head of the programme or body was also in the majority of cases the founder. It tended to be easier to contact and gather data from these smaller bodies.

For these smaller influencers, participating in the study was also an opportunity to register what they do and contribute to the improvement of the field.

On the other hand, a number of bigger and older organisations did not respond to requests for data. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, the timing of the study did not fit with their workflows, and, secondly, internal bureaucracy and hierarchies made it difficult to identify the best

person in the organisation who could locate the data and was permitted to hand it over.

A lot of the bigger organisations did not keep statistics relevant to the *Data is Beautiful* study and if they did, they did not want to invest time and resources gathering the requested data. Some of the bigger and more longer-established organisations did participate nonetheless.

Organisations that did not have MENA or Arab-specific programmes were less enthusiastic about participating in a study looking at the Arab documentary filmmaking scene. It was hard to get these bodies involved in the project, although there were some exceptions.

Some bodies felt overwhelmed by the breadth and depth of the data being sought. In other cases, the data had never been

requested before and registering such data was not a priority.

Some of the organisations, for reasons connected to the nature of their reporting structures, internal data transparency stipulations or size, had indeed access to statistics, although not tailored to the data sought for this study.

Some organisations were not able to maintain the level of data registration – this was particularly evident with smaller organisations or initiatives which lack the resources to collect, process and maintain data.

From the presentation and debate during Beirut Cinema Platform in Lebanon, in March 2018 – photo © Amr Kokash

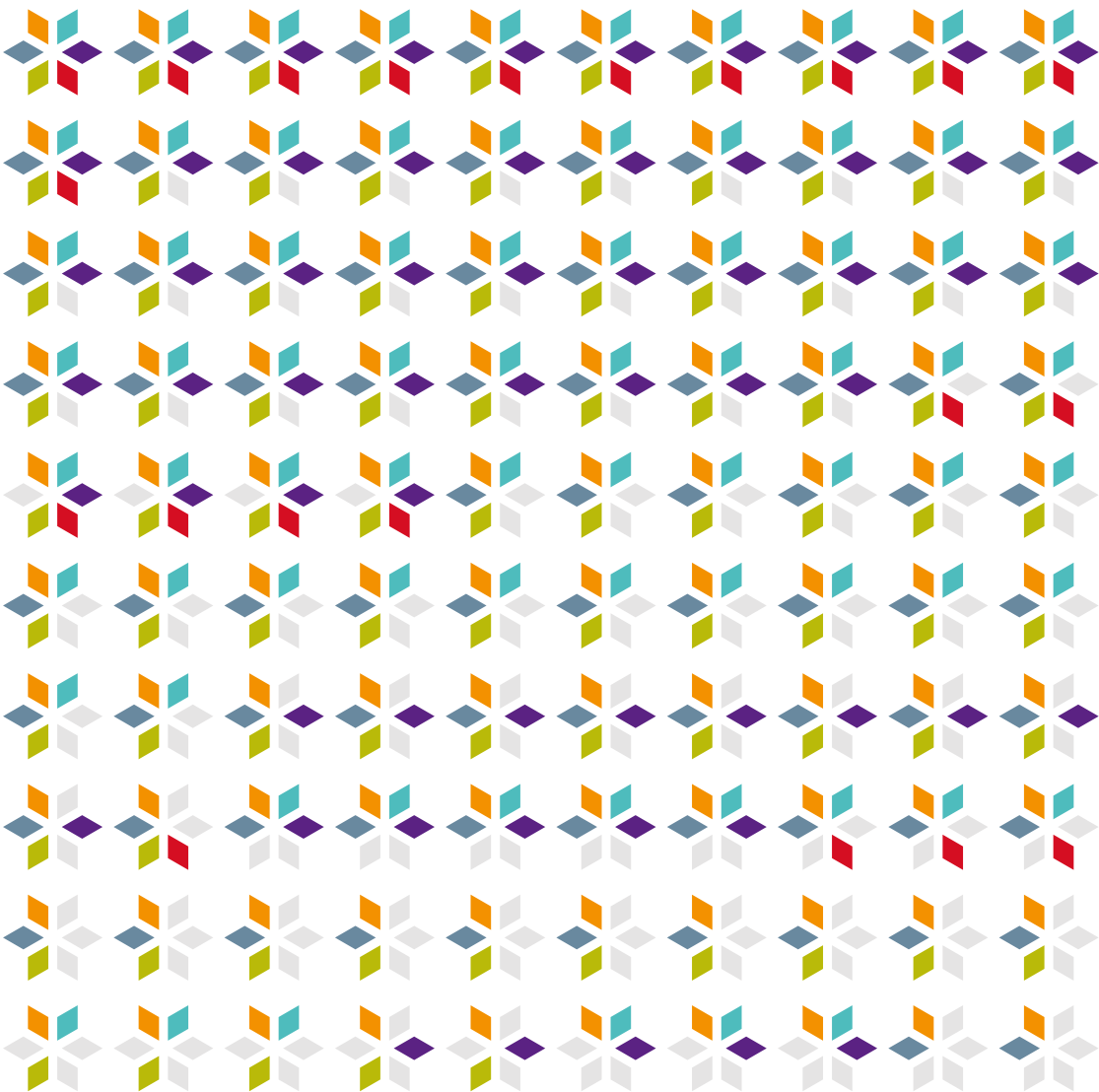


Chapter 1

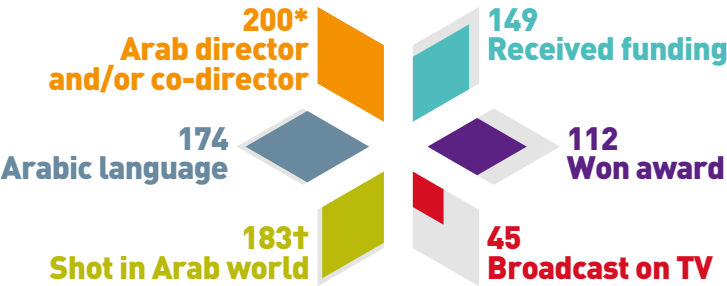
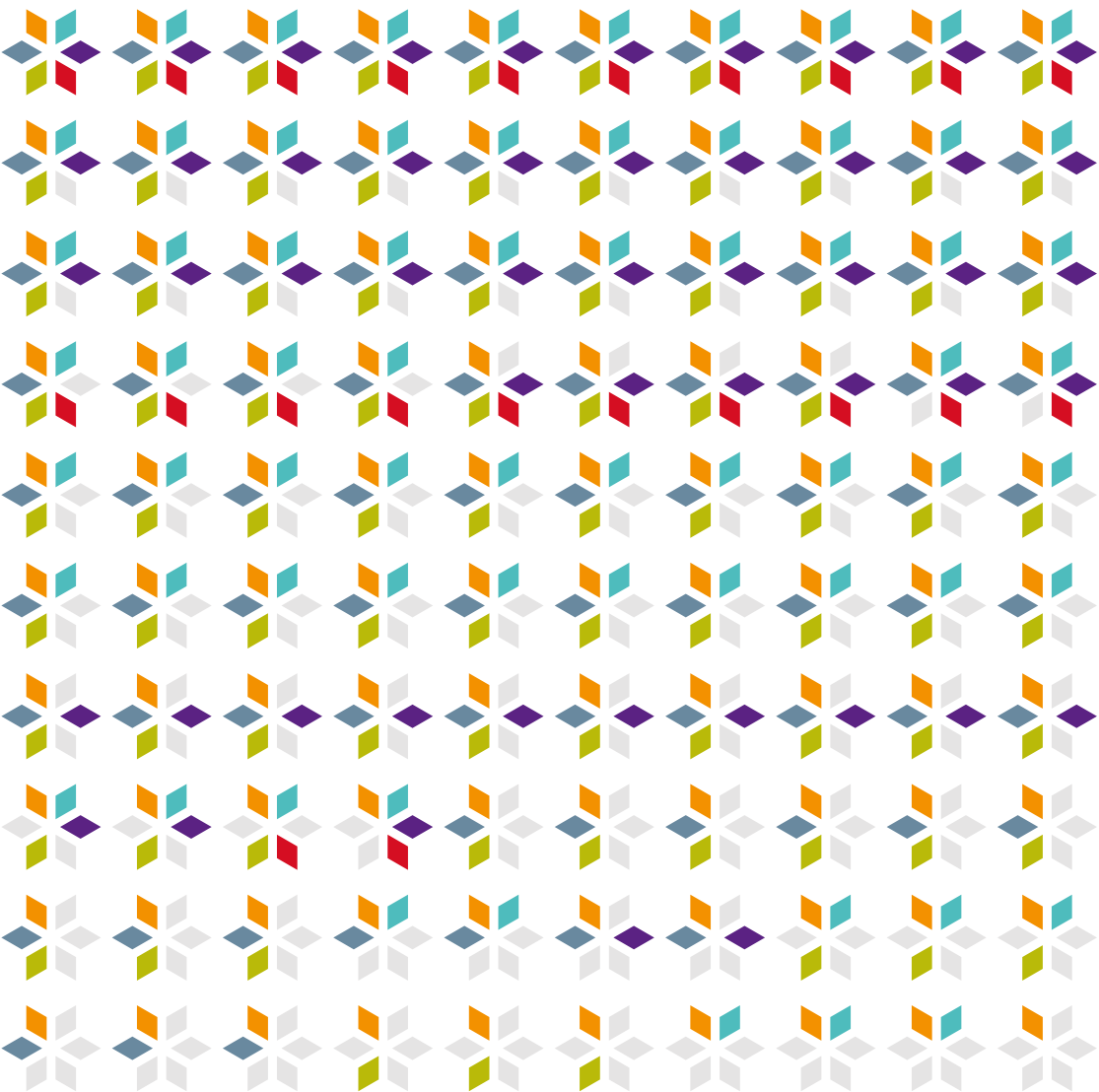
General Volume & Trends

200 Arab Documentary Films

Data on films released 2014-2017



Each flower represents one Arab documentary film, defined as a film with a director or co-director who identifies as being from an Arab country.



55
films funded by
operators based in
the Arab world

51
films won awards
from operators based
in the Arab world

17
films broadcast
on TV stations in
the Arab World

Based on all 200 films in sample, 2014-2017. *200 films directed and/or co-directed by decendent or national of an Arab country. †Shot primarily or partially in one or more Arab country.

The film survey was one of the first ever attempts to pull together a comprehensive overview of all the independent documentaries to come out of the Arab world, annually over a four-year period. Gathering all the productions together in one study threw up some interesting first facts.

Annual Release Figures

The survey revealed that 47 Arab documentaries were released in 2014, 42 in 2015, 52 in 2016, and 59 in 2017, pointing generally to an incremental increase in the number of productions during the period covered. However, the relatively short timeframe of four years, means it is too early to confirm a historical trend. The fact there was a decrease in 2015, followed by an increase of 25 percent in 2016, and then an increase of 12 percent in 2017, also muddied the waters and made it impossible to draw any long-term conclusions on the volume of documentaries from the Arab world.

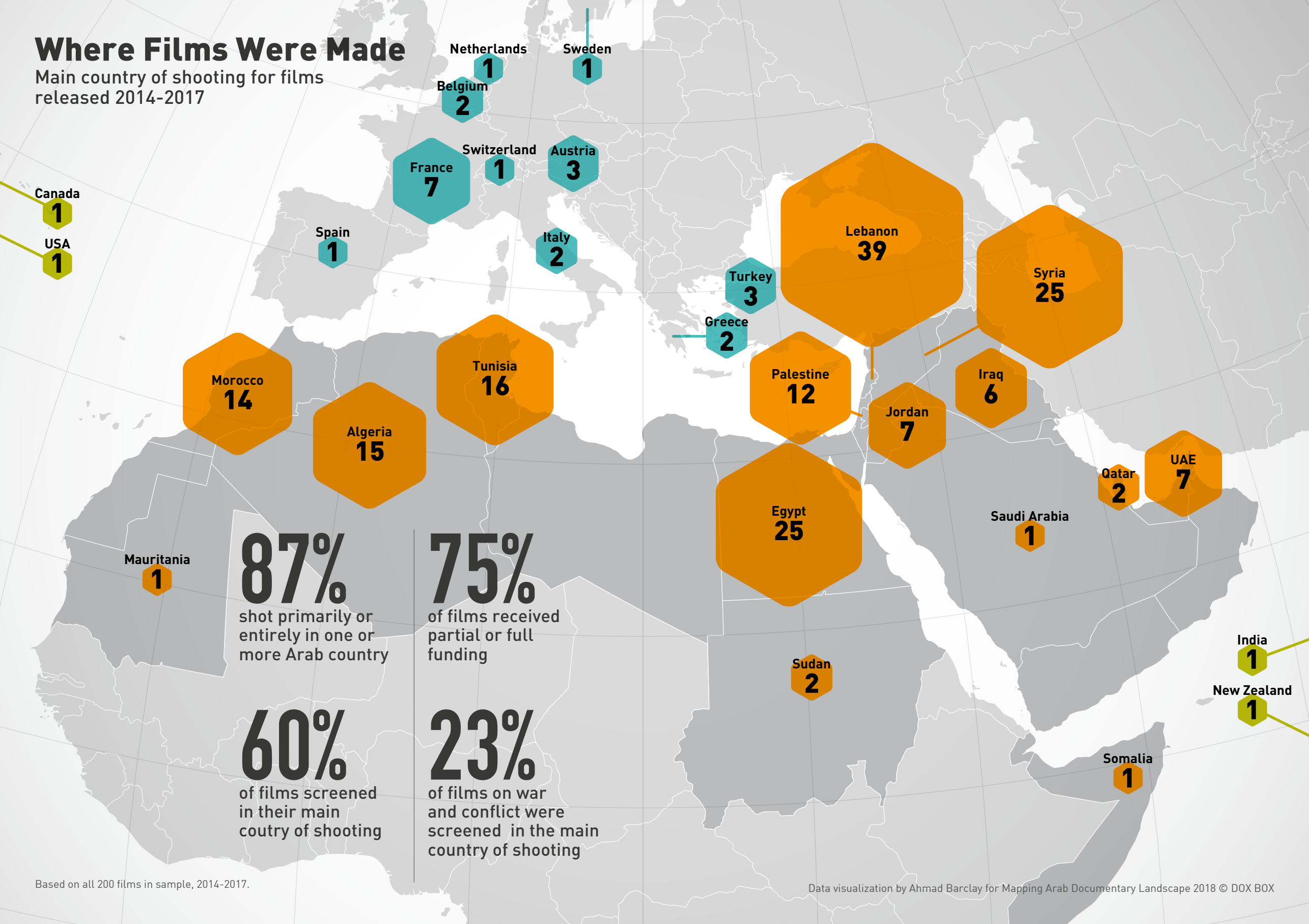
Case Study

The Higher Institute of Multimedia Arts – Tunisia: The Rise of Documentaries

The Higher Institute of Multimedia Arts which runs under the supervision of Manouba University in Tunisia has recently known an interesting rise in the rates of documentaries among graduation films as opposed to the usual fiction trend. In the year 2014, 7 out of the 10 graduation films were documentary films as opposed to the annual average at the time of 1 doc to 9 fiction. This was largely due to the collaboration with the HFF documentary department of the German Film school in Munich through an exchange program. The program that was supported by the Goethe Institute hosted 5 of the institute students in Germany during 2013 and vice versa.

Where Films Were Made

Main country of shooting for films released 2014-2017



87%

shot primarily or entirely in one or more Arab country

75%

of films received partial or full funding

60%

of films screened in their main country of shooting

23%

of films on war and conflict were screened in the main country of shooting

Key Shooting Locations

The majority of documentaries released during the timeframe of the survey were shot locally. The subject-matter of the film was often closely related to locations and situations close to the directors and co-directors' own spheres of experience. The survey revealed that roughly 20 percent of

the documentaries were shot in Lebanon, followed by 12.5 percent each in Syria and in Egypt, 8 percent in Tunisia, roughly 7.5 percent in Algeria and Morocco, respectively, and 6 percent in Palestine. Films in which the shoot took place outside of the Arab world accounted for 13.5 percent of all films.

International Co-Productions

Close to a third, or 31 percent of the films, did not have a production company attached. This figure also included the films for which there was no publicly collectible data.

Two thirds of the films were produced by a producer, working under the banner of a production company or a collective. The data also revealed that 32 companies based in the Arab world had entered into international co-productions for the films. This meant that **22.5 percent** of the companies working on the films included in the survey went into international co-production.

Out of these international co-productions, France was the number one co-producer territory, as partner on 47 percent of all co-productions. Germany was a partner on only three co-productions with the Arab world, that is less than 10%, followed by two each for Switzerland and Norway, and one each for Denmark, Belgium, and Canada.

Lebanon took the lead among Arab region-based companies entering international co-productions, accounting for 22 percent of co-producers, followed by Algeria with 16 percent, while Tunisia, Palestine, UAE, Syria, Morocco and Egypt each was cited in one or two co-productions between 2014 and 2017.

Feature-Length Most Popular Duration

In spite of the challenges linked to producing a feature-length documentary in the Arab world, directors appeared to favour this format. Out of the 200 films retained in the final survey, 104 films were feature-length

(longer than 70 minutes), 53 were medium-length (between 31 and 69 minutes), and 43 were short films (shorter than 30 minutes).

The Challenge of the Second Feature

Just over half of the 200 films released between 2014 and 2017, or 104 productions, were feature-length, running longer than 70 minutes.

More than half, or 53 percent, of these feature-length documentaries were debut features for the directors. This was a higher percentage than for the overall sample of 200 films, in which **27.5 percent** of the films were by first-time directors.

The expert group examined whether there was any correlation between first-time directors and factors such as the nationality of the director, subject-matter, education or production territory. None could be drawn.

A breakdown of the nationality of the 55 first-time feature-length directors with films in the survey, for example, revealed that 27 percent of them were Syrian, 16 percent were Lebanese, 12 percent Egyptian, and 10 percent Palestinian.

This high percentage of first-time directors tied in with some of the findings of the quantitative and qualitative operators' study. Notably, there was a relatively low bar in terms of the experience required to gain access to many of the initiatives surveyed as well as expectation in terms of what would happen to the documentaries once they were completed.

While many funding schemes in Europe require a partner like a broadcaster or a local distributor be attached, or a percentage of the funding be in place for a project to be taken into consideration, such requirements were rare among the initiatives working within the Arab region.

Another observation, pulled from the operators survey and linked to the high percentage of first-time documentary features, was that a large proportion of the training and professionalisation programmes were aimed at emerging, first-time filmmakers. There were very few programmes offering support to more experienced filmmakers.

A key challenge for filmmakers in the Arab documentary scene, it would appear, is making the transition from first feature to a second and then to a third feature. Experienced filmmakers with a track-record might be expected to find it easier as their career progressed to get films off the ground. But for

directors working in the Arab documentary scene this does not appear to be the case on the basis of the data gathered. This also highlights a big gap in the Arab documentary scene when it comes to programmes and policies supporting filmmakers with more than one film under their belt.

Conclusion

One of the most striking facts to come out of the film survey is the level of documentary production in the region over the four-year period encompassed by the research. Some 200 films over a four-year-period is a relatively low number, in comparison with other territories like France, for example, which produced between 40 to 55 feature-length documentaries alone a year during the same period.

Another key finding is dominance of first-time filmmakers and the difficulty directors have getting a second documentary off the ground.

The timeframe of four years, however, was still not long enough to track influences such as population change, political change, mass migration, economic upheaval or armed conflicts on documentary production. Expanding the timeframe further should be one of the priorities of a next phase of research.

Chapter 2

Circulation

Award Winners

% of films that won awards

Arab countries

Influential non-Arab countries

Other countries



56% of all films won at least one award



Based on all 200 films in sample, 2014-2017. Financing column based on sub-set of 149 films that received financing.

Width of bars represents 100% of films related to each country. It is not proportional to the number of films.

*According to the residence of the sole, or first credited, director on films.

Data visualization by Ahmad Barclay for Mapping Arab Documentary Landscape 2018 © DOX BOX

One question the expert team found itself asking time and time again during the meetings was: “What constitutes a successful film in the Arab documentary landscape?”

It was decided that this would be one of the areas of investigation within the quantitative and qualitative operators surveys, and questions around this topic were included in the guided questionnaire.

The answer that came back from the majority of the respondents was that “screening a film publicly internationally and achieving recognition” was a key measure of success – far outweighing sales, economic success and even fully-financing the budget.

On the basis of this response, the researchers decided to take a closer look at the circulation of Arab documentaries.

International Interest

The survey revealed that films shot in Egypt, Syria and Palestine drew the most international attention in terms of screenings, festival attendance and media coverage. Interestingly, more films were shot and produced in Lebanon, but these had less international reach. The expert group agreed that

international interest in Egyptian, Syrian and Palestinian-shot films was probably high because these territories were in the media spotlight due to conflict or political unrest. As this conclusion was reached on the basis of anecdotal evidence rather than from hard data, it was not included in the findings.

Where Arab Documentaries Premiere

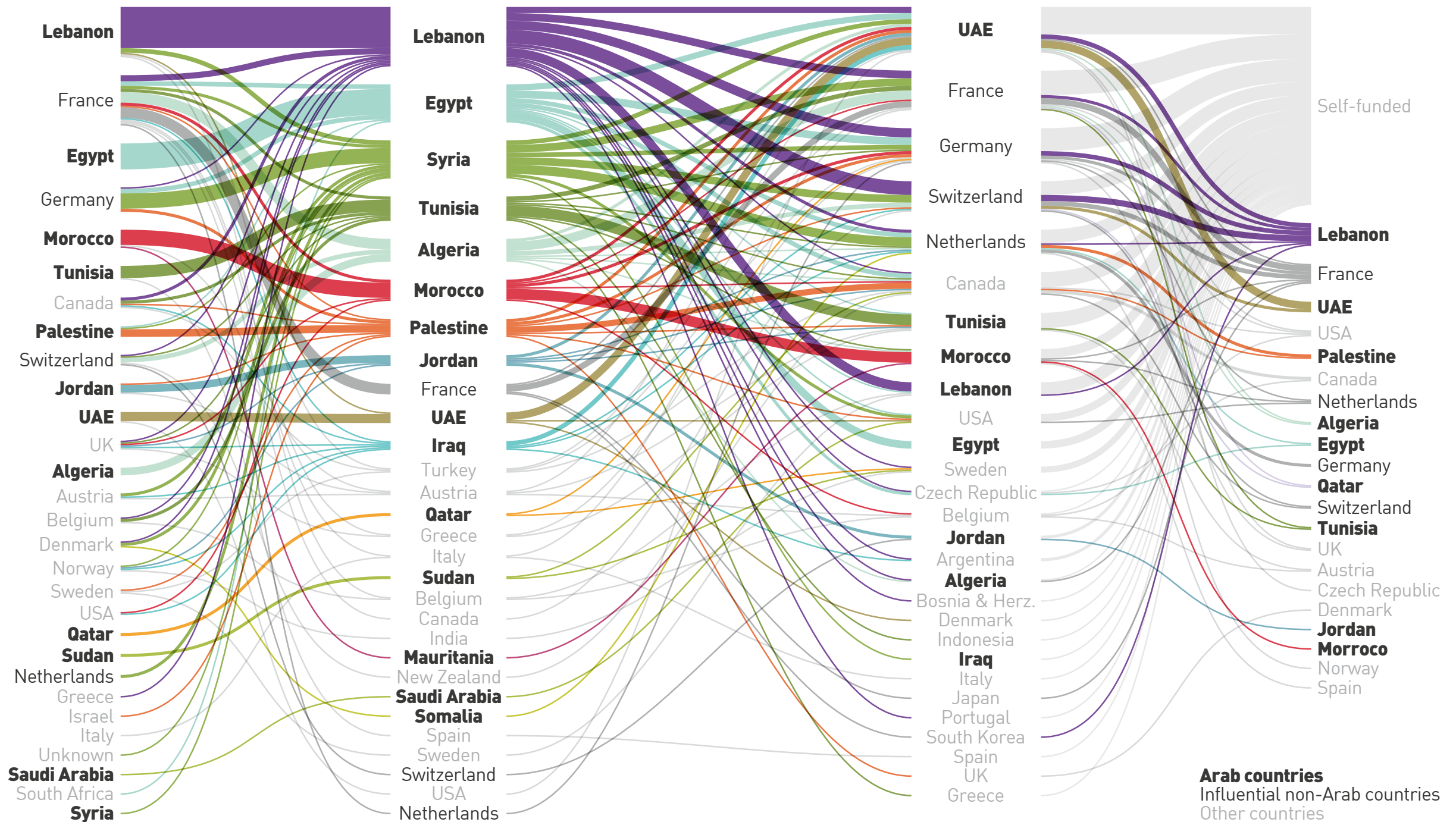
Connections between directors, filming, financing and premiere

DIRECTOR RESIDENCE*

COUNTRY OF SHOOTING

WORLD PREMIERE COUNTRY

FINANCING COUNTRY



Based on all 200 films in sample, 2014-2017.

*According to the residence of the sole, or first credited, director on films

Data visualization by Ahmad Barclay for Mapping Arab Documentary Landscape 2018 © DOX BOX

Where Do Independent Arab Documentaries Broadcast?

Out of 200 films surveyed, just 45 were broadcast on a TV channel – be it locally, regionally or internationally, that is 22.5 percent only. This means that 77.5 percent – a majority of the films – did not reach a mass audience. Furthermore, only 21 films, or 10.5 percent of the films, were broadcast on more than one TV channel.

France is the number one country in terms of broadcasting documentaries from the Arab world, accounting for a 26 percent share of

all the broadcasts, followed by Morocco's public broadcaster with a 14 percent share, Germany with 12 percent and Switzerland with nine percent. Qatar, Denmark, and Norway accounted for 7 percent of broadcasts, respectively.

Topic and Duration Trends

The expert group decided to investigate whether the data revealed any trends around what kind of Arab documentaries broadcasters acquired and aired.

A closer examination of the 45 films which were broadcast on TV suggested there were indeed certain topics that were more likely to be picked up. There were nine films on war and conflict; eight on immigration and five on history-related topics. These three topics together accounted for 49 percent of the films which had a public broadcast.

These films were shot in places associated with these hot topics and sometimes in more than one territory: nine of the films

broadcast on more than one channel were shot primarily in Syria; followed by eight in Algeria, while Lebanon and Palestine were the shooting locations for six films each, followed by Morocco, which was the backdrop for four films.

Another correlation was evident in the duration of films. The majority, or 67 percent, of films were feature-length documentaries while just over a quarter, or 27 percent were medium-length and only three films were very short (below 20 minutes).

It was impossible, however, to find any correlation between the broadcast of a film and its genre, year of release, country of

the producer, or experience of the crew, nor whether it had a sales agent, was fully financed, was a first-time director work, had

benefited from a premiere at a top festival, or won prizes.

The Challenge of Reaching Local Audiences

The data revealed that only 121 films out of the 200 productions included in the survey, or 60.5 percent, had screened in their shooting location, in the period of 2014 to 2017. This means that 39.5 percent of the films were never shown in the territories where they were shot, which were often the native countries of the directors. There are many reasons why some Arab documentaries do not officially show in the locations where they are shot. These include an absence of distribution opportunities

screened in their shooting locations, covered some 21 topic areas, with arts and culture (20 percent), immigration (15 percent) and history (9 percent) taking the lead. Films about war and conflict accounted for less than 12% of the films showing in their shooting location. Looking at this another way, 75% of films on arts and culture screened in the shooting location.

Testimonial

Filmmaker from Lebanon: Mary Jirmanus Saba

I self-distributed the film and didn't pay exhibition fees. I got the film into festivals by writing to programmers who might be interested. Then I talked with Metropolis [Cinema in Lebanon] and they said they'd show it for 3 days. I worked for 1.5 months before the premiere to communicate to a wide range of people who might not usually come to Metropolis. The premiere was extremely successful; they extended the film for a month. DIY distribution is surely possible, but it is double-edged. On the one hand it's nice to have independence, on the other, you're doing a million things alone.

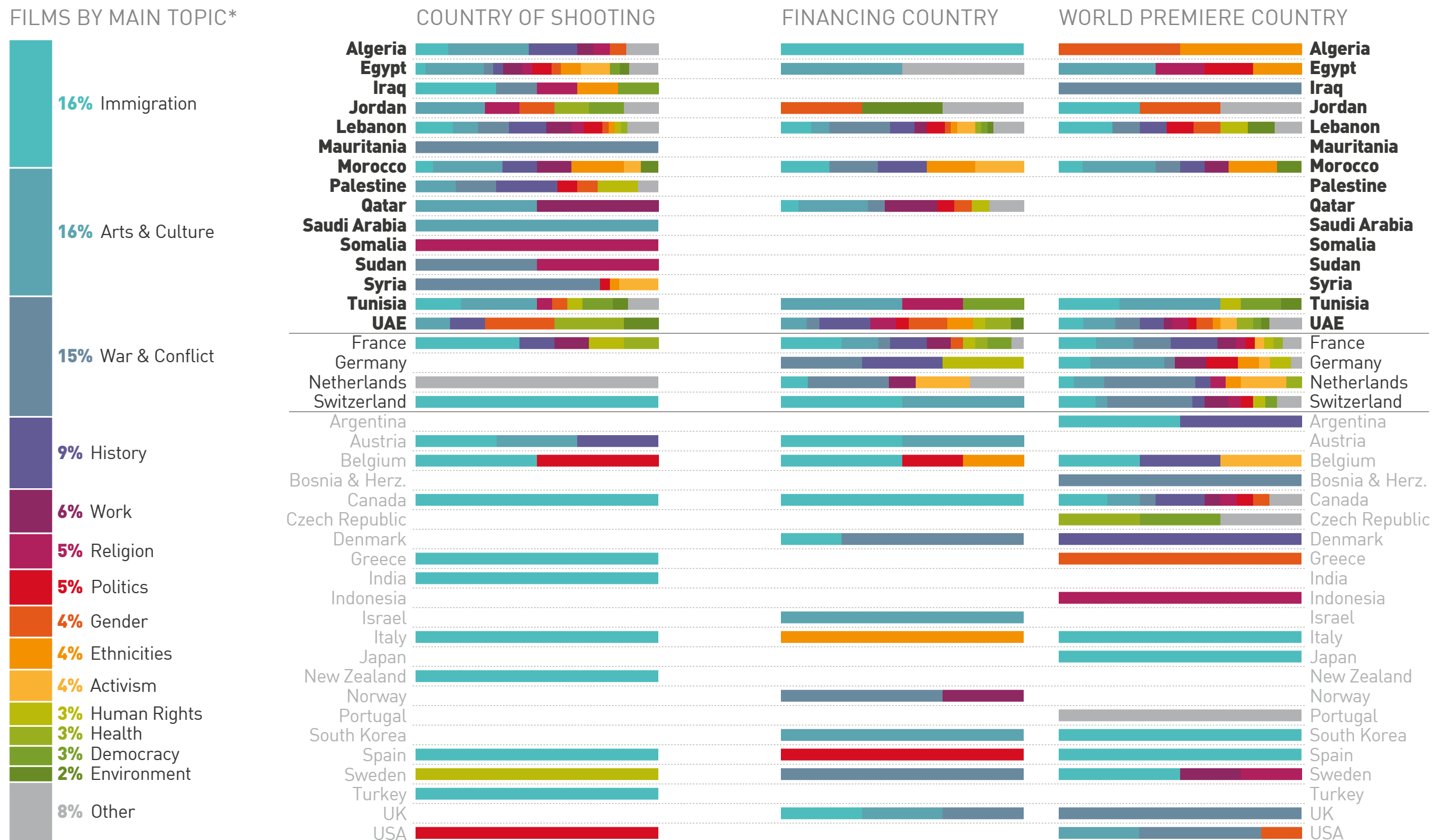


Photo © Mary Jirmanus Saba

By countries of shooting, financing and world premiere

Arab countries
Influential non-Arab countries
Other countries

FILMS BY MAIN TOPIC*



Based on all 200 films in sample, 2014-2017. Financing column based on sub-set of 149 films that received financing. Width of bars represents 100% of films related to each country. It is not proportional to the number of films.

*Percentages are rounded, so do not add up to exactly 100%

Data visualization by Ahmad Barclay for Mapping Arab Documentary Landscape 2018 © DOX BOX

Testimonial

Yemeni-Scottish filmmaker Sara Ishaq

"As a filmmaker, I've been in documentary for the last 10 years, but I'm now working on a fiction film. It was supposed to be a documentary, but evolved into a fiction film. There are issues with me making a documentary in Yemen now, because of self censorship: I feel I wouldn't be able to do the story justice now. Telling the story through fiction gives me freedom to tell things I want to say, express frustration and anger toward the situation in Yemen, without it being my voice. You can also utilize humor, and it's quite liberating."



Photo © Sara Ishaq

This trend is in stark contrast with Europe where films shot in a territory are very likely to screen there too. It was difficult to determine whether this lack of screenings in shooting locations in the Arab world was due to external factors like conflict or because there was no local support for

screening films. Looking at the 79 films which were not screened in the main country of shooting, accounting for 39.5 percent of the sample, 45 percent of the films were about two topics, war and conflict (23 films) and immigration (13 films).

The group also looked at the data to see if there were any trends around the country of residence of the producers and directors. The data

showed that 58 percent of all the films were screened in a producer's country of residence, irrespective of their topics, and 64 percent of all films were screened in the directors' country of residence regardless of their topics.

Impact of Nationality on Premieres

Our study suggested that films from certain territories tended to travel to a wider spread of countries than others.

Films by Lebanese and Syrian directors tend to premiere in the same pool of countries. Not a single Lebanese film premiered in the US, for example, over the four years of the survey. They tend to debut in France, Germany, or at home, and less frequently in

the United Arab Emirates. Jordanian films captured in the survey travelled to a more diverse set of territories. Films by directors from Algeria, Palestine, Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt were in the middle of the road.

The 45 films by Lebanese directors premiered in 14 different countries while 33 Syrian-directed documentaries debuted in eight different countries. The ratio of films to

premiere territories elsewhere was: Egypt, 21:7, Palestine, 19:9, Tunisia, 16:6, Morocco, 16:6, Algeria, 12:6, and Jordan, 6:5. The reasons why such trends exist are beyond the

study's parameters and measurements and could not be linked to residency, bi-nationality, or education.

Top Festivals for Arab documentaries

The top territories for premiering Arab documentary films in the survey were UAE, France and Germany.

The data showed that these top territories for premieres were also key financiers of Arab documentaries.

For the films surveyed in 2014-2017, the UAE contributed to the financing of 30 percent of the films that premiered in the UAE. France contributed to the financing of 24 percent of the films that premiered in France. Germany contributed to the financing of 26 percent of the films that premiered in Germany.

The financing came through a variety of soft and hard financing schemes including direct grants, in-kind support, and loans.

In the case of the UAE, two key festivals with funding programmes – the Abu Dhabi Film Festival and the Dubai International Film Festival – closed their doors in 2015 and 2018, respectively. This means there has been approximately 15 percent fewer premiering slots for Arab documentaries and 30 percent less financing since then.

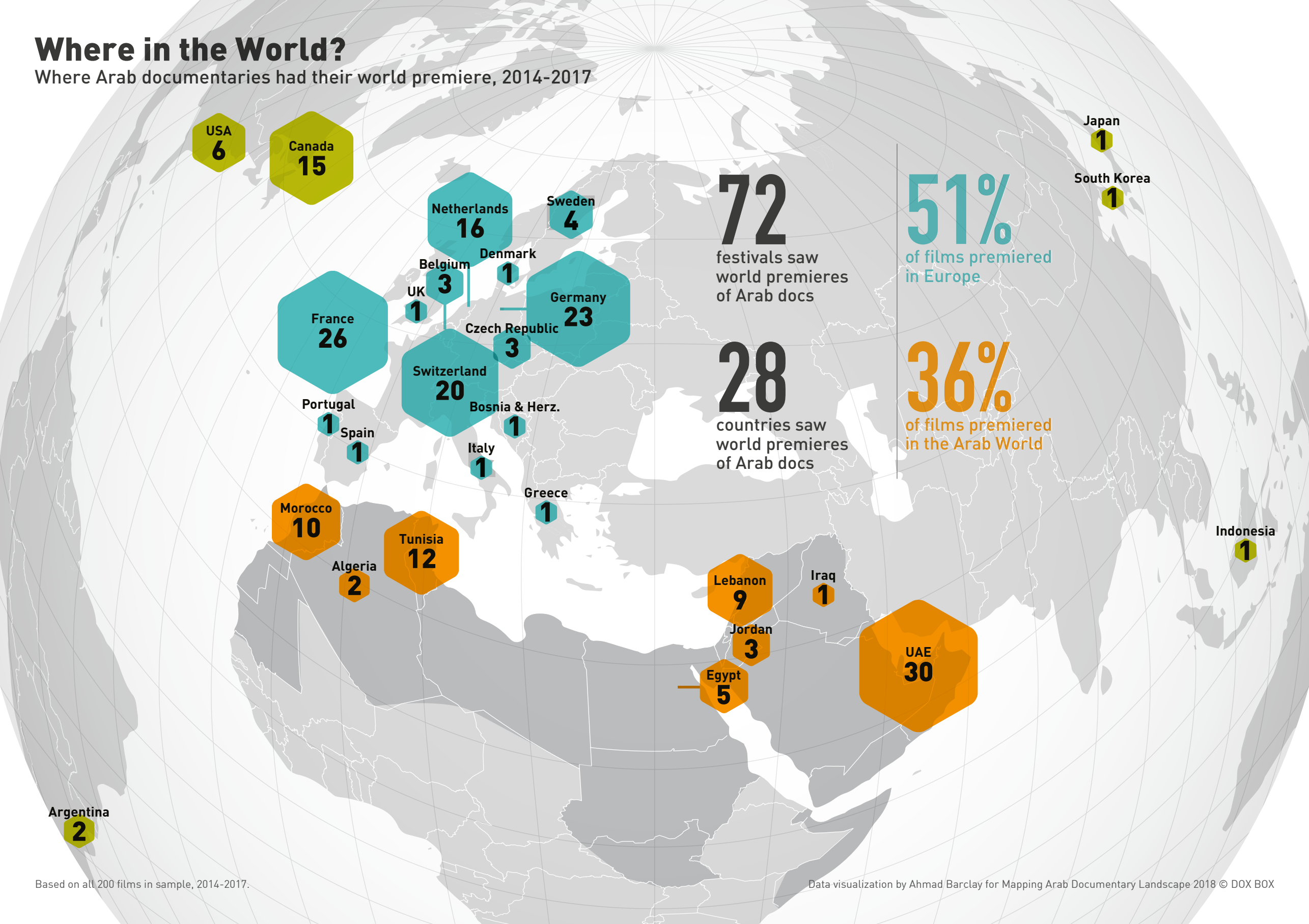
Figuring out which festival is the best event to premiere at is never easy, especially when programme curators change from year to year.

The survey showed that there are some countries with one or two major high-profile documentary festivals or festivals with a major documentary component and awards, while others countries have numerous festivals with documentary sidebars but less of an international profile. The decision of where to premiere a film is determined by a variety of factors – including distribution strategies and festival preferences, making it impossible to identify trends. However, there were festivals at which Arab documentaries played regularly. These include the Berlinale, specifically the Forum and Forum Expanded sections, with an onus on Lebanese-directed films, followed in second place by Vision Du Réel in Switzerland and IDFA in the Netherlands.

The only surviving festivals in Arab countries that frequently premiered documentaries during the survey period, were Carthage Film Festival in Tunisia, followed by Beirut Cinema Days (Ayyam Beirut AL-Cinama'iya)

Where in the World?

Where Arab documentaries had their world premiere, 2014-2017



in Lebanon and Fidadoc in Agadir, Morocco. These are the only festivals in the region making a significant contribution to the circulation of regional and local productions.

The Curse of Short Shelf-Life

A high proportion of the films included in the 2014-2017 survey had not been screened widely – either at festivals or on the small screen – nor had they picked up awards. Most had had very limited circulation. Fifty-four films had a maximum of three screenings and then had no further circulation. This means, that at least 27 percent of the 200 productions captured in the 2014-2017 survey failed to reach the public. Only 10 films, that is five percent of all films, had at least two public screenings, picked up two awards and also achieved at least one national or transnational broadcast.

In addition, the research revealed a dearth of sales agents and distributors with a strong focus on the documentary genre, suggesting there are few opportunities for documentary makers to commercialise their work.

This lack of commercial distribution channels makes the whole Arab documentary scene hugely dependent on festivals for visibility and reach. But many of the festivals based in the Arab world are themselves under pressure and shrinking in number, which in turn increases dependency on non-Arab visibility and distribution channels.

These circumstances perhaps help fuel a commonly held view that Arab films are not made for audiences in the Arab region, an observation that was recorded during several of the in-depth interviews, as well as during field presentations and debates with local filmmakers and operators.

Conclusion

The deeper research into the data around the circulation of Arab documentaries, confirmed a fact that most in the sector already knew: Arab documentaries have a tough time reaching audiences both at home and internationally.

Digging deeper, one of the most striking facts to be illuminated by the data was just how few documentaries were shown in their country of origin, for a variety of reasons from censorship to a lack of interest in the territory although this was not researched in depth.

The expert group noted that this was very different from the situation for documentaries financed out Europe, which are most likely to find an audience in the country of origin, ahead of finding an international market.

Setting up the framework of the research also revealed just how few support programmes there are focused on the distribution of Arab documentaries on any platform. This is an area that sector would do well to examine and strengthen in the future.

Chapter 3

Operators

One of the striking revelations to come out of the pilot phase of research was the extent to which the ecosystem around Arab documentary is both fragile and fragmented. This characteristic was further confirmed during the quantitative and qualitative research into the operators in the second phase of research.

One of the unexpected challenges faced by the researchers was the difficulty they had in obtaining precise information from the operators around simple questions like, “What is the location of your main office?”; “Over what timeframe do your programmes take place?”; or “Who are the organisation’s activities aimed at?”

The picture that finally emerged was of a mutating map of documentary programmes supporting the Arab documentary scene in terms of their locations, time-spans, regularity and remits.

Who are the Operators?

A key component of this fresh round of research involved investigating a sample of operators with influence in today’s Arab documentary landscape, looking at their locations (real and administrative), aims, practices and outcomes. This list consisted of 107 Arab and non-Arab decision-makers, some of which are no longer operational.

From the 107 operators identified, 30 are still active and directed at documentary films and filmmakers from the Arab world, including eight festivals or competitions, eight support and funding programs, seven training programs, four TV slots or channels, and even a market section, a sales agent, and a recently launched specialised VoD.

thirty out of the list of 107 operators had at least one activity aimed specifically or exclusively at one or more countries in the Arab region. As mentioned in the methodology, the researchers managed to interview 32 out of the 107 operators. Looking at the detail of the 32 programmes interviewed for our survey, the following observations can be made:

62.5 percent of the bodies interviewed ran documentary-eligible programmes. Out of those programmes, 55 percent specialised in documentary while 45 percent welcomed but were not specialised in documentary films. Eighty-four percent of these programmes had at least one Arab region-specific program. Sixteen percent of

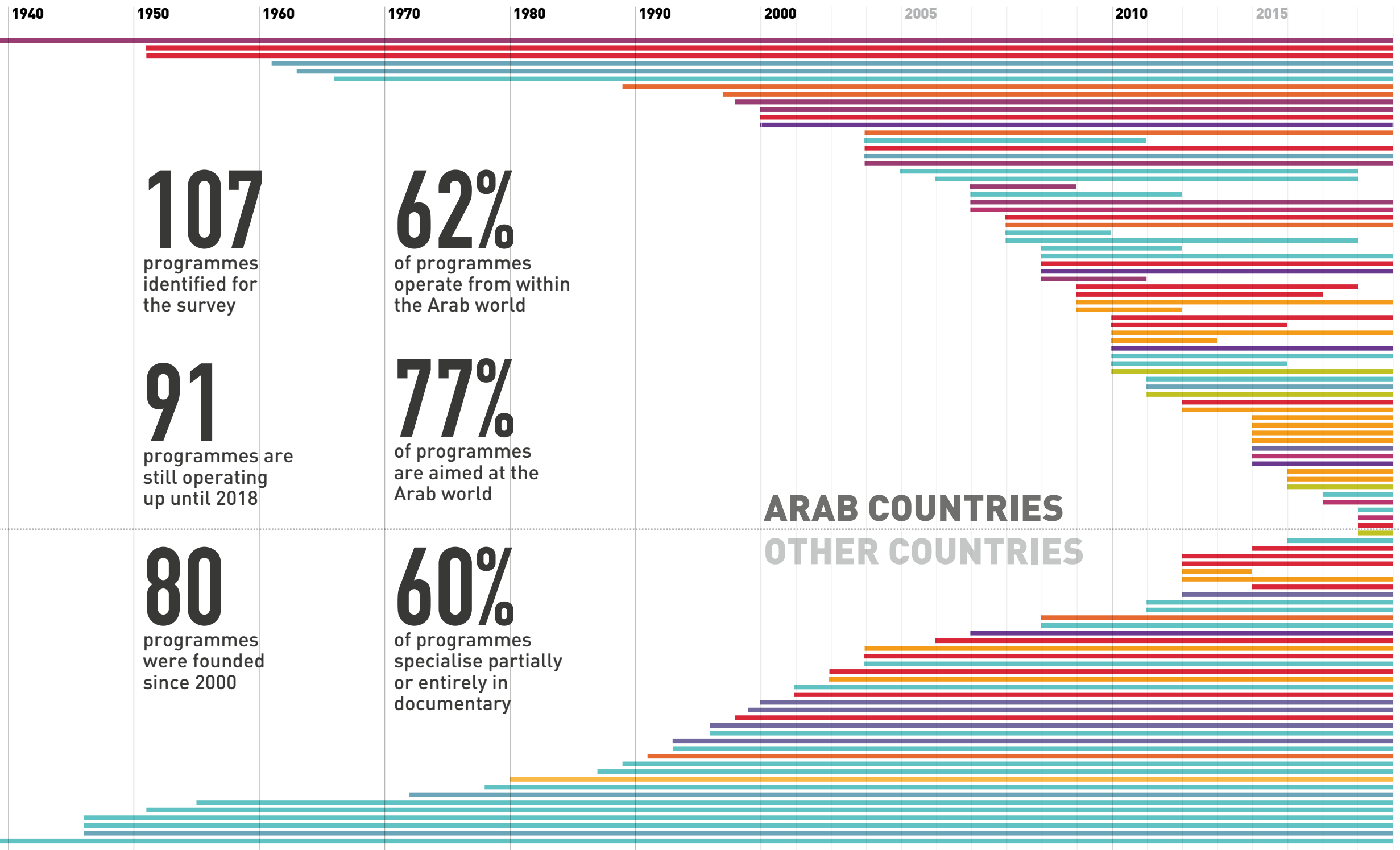
Programmes Over Time

Influencers* by active years of operation and specialisation

Festivals & Competitions
Film Commission
Forums & Markets
Sales Agents & Distributors

School
Screens & Cinemateque
Support & Grants
TV Station

Training/Education/Professionalisation
Union/Syndicate
Video on Demand



Based on data covering 107 organizations that have an influence on Arab documentary filmmaking industry.

*Defined as programmes influencing Arab documentary filmmaking.

Data visualization by Ahmad Barclay for Mapping Arab Documentary Landscape 2018 © DOX B0X

the bodies questioned had no specific Arab region focus or mandate. These latter programmes were, nevertheless, open to Arab

region filmmakers as well as documentary films and projects.

The Bigger Picture: Looking Outside the Timeframe

As previously stated, the second phase of the study consisted of an expanded film survey and deeper quantitative and qualitative research, confined to the four-year timeframe of 2014 to 2017 inclusive.

As the research progressed it became apparent that many of the films and findings coming to light were the result of developments and longer-term dynamics outside of the timeframe.

Lack of Longevity

As previously stated, a handful of the 107 organisations identified for the sample of operators and their programmes were no longer active at the time of the second phase of research or even during the 2014-2017 timeframe of the film survey. But due to the fact that these bodies had been involved in some of the productions captured in the film survey, it was decided to include them in the sample.

The research team decided it would be useful to draw a longer timeline, pinpointing the launch, and in some cases closure, of key operators.

This exercise further highlighted the mutating nature of the ecosystem around the Arab documentary scene because it was often impossible to pinpoint exactly when organisations or programmes started or finished.

Out of the 107 programmes in the sample, 45 were both documentary-specific programmes and targeted filmmakers from at least one Arab territory. Surprisingly, 15 out of these 45 operators closed between the years 2009 and 2017 while another 17 were launched or established between the years 2010 and 2018. Except for one programme that was reestablished in a new location, none of the 14 other programmes

had re-opened by the time this publication went to print. The 17 new programmes did not have links with the defunct ones. This means that only 29 percent of the programmes included in the sample existed continuously during the surveyed years.

The study did not examine the performance of these longer-running programmes during

the survey period from 2014 to 2017 to see whether they were thriving or not. Some operators appeared to function as pop-up structures which came together for an event or workshop. They did not have permanent offices and disappeared or went into hibernation once the event or workshop was completed.

Pivotal Years

There is a strong suggestion from insights and impressions derived from the qualitative research that the output of films in 2014 to 2017 period, is a result of developments during the pivotal years of 2004 to 2011, which saw the launch of several new film festival events and support programmes – such as the Dubai International Film Festival in the region. A handful of these have since disappeared.

However, the film survey data only partially confirmed this. This line of inquiry was further complicated by the fact that there was no access to data from programmes that had ceased to exist. This would merit further investigation in a third round of research.

The following organisations ceased to exist:

- Abu Dhabi Film Festival (originally Middle East International Film Festival), 2007 – 2015

- Al Jazeera International Documentary Film Festival, 2005 – 2015
- Anasy Documentary Awards UAE, 2007 – 2010
- Arab Institute of Film Amman, 2006 – 2008
- Red Sea Institute of Cinematic Arts, 2006 – 2009
- Doc a Tunis Film Festival, 2006 – 2012
- DocuDays – Beirut International Documentary Festival, 1999 – 2012
- Documentary Campus – MENA Program, 2012 – 2014
- DOX BOX International Documentary Film Festival, 2008 – 2012
- Dubai Film Connection, 2007 – 2017
- Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF), 2004 – 2018

- Enjaaz (DIFF's post-production fund), 2009 – 2018
- EURODOC/DOCMed, 2010 – 2013
- Sanad Abu Dhabi Film Fund, 2010 – 2016
- The Fund of Screen institute Beirut, 2010 – 2015

There was no investigation into why these programmes were discontinued or temporarily suspended. However, it is important to note that these programmes had

different set-ups, operational modes, sources of financing, and operated under different jurisdictions in different countries, some of which underwent massive political and economic changes. Many of the now defunct organisations and initiatives were made possible through European and US sources of funding (including the Ford Foundation, Open Society Foundation, and European Union). The exception was outfits in the Arab Gulf which were domestically or state-financed.

Operating Location

In addition to ascertaining the precise lifespans of the operators being investigated in the study, another challenge for the researchers was identifying their exact locations. Many programmes ran in multiple locations, sometimes out of different operational and head offices, and in some cases without any official base at

all (due to political, legislative or sometimes simply personal reasons). This often prevented the team from accurately identifying the precise nature and size of operators, on the one hand, as well as the finance countries for the films in the survey on the other.

Geography of Economy

Lebanon is home to the highest number of programmes that support Arab documentary. The film survey showed that bodies with offices in Lebanon have contributed (monetarily and non-monetarily) to the production of 40.5 percent of the films, or a total of 81 films in the survey. Remarkably, 59 of these 81 productions, or

29.5 percent of all films, received a monetary contribution.

This might seem surprising given the fact that Lebanon does not have any official state funding for film. However, a number of the Lebanese-based bodies meting out funds either locally or regionally are backed by

organisations based elsewhere, such as in Europe or the US.

The high amount of funding coming out of Lebanon does not reflect, therefore, a

developed domestic infrastructure for documentary making, but it does indicate that the country provides a welcoming base in which non-local organisations can function.

A Closer Look at Local Operators

Information gathered over the course of the study indicated that few Arab countries – apart from Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan – have state film funds

or support schemes. Even when state support does exist, documentary film development, production and circulation are rarely a priority.

Self-help models

Against this backdrop, the findings of the study suggested that filmmakers in the Arab documentary scene have taken matters into their own hands, launching and running support initiatives on their own.

A number of support programmes and initiatives – from companies, to collectives to training programmes – had been founded by filmmakers, who continued to play a major role in their functioning, while trying to continue work on their own films. This involvement came from a desire to foster a film culture, as well as build professional networks and infrastructure that would otherwise not exist. Interviewees from programmes in territories like Palestine, Yemen and Syria cited an “urgent need to tell stories”, or “showcase local

narratives” as a key motivation for launching their initiatives.

The career trajectories and professional profiles of the interviewees, who were often the heads of the programmes being investigated, was also revealing. Founders and directors of programmes in the Arab world frequently came from a filmmaking background. By contrast, the heads of bodies and initiatives created and based in Europe tended to come from a cultural management background.

In numbers, 59 percent of the interviewees came from a filmmaking background. Of these, 79 percent hailed from the Arab region and 41 percent were still active in the documentary scene, either as directors or

Case Study

The Royal Film Commission – Jordan: The Relaunch of the Film Fund

The Amman-based Royal Film Commission Jordan was founded in 2003 to foster a film industry in the country catering to both local and regional filmmakers working on their own projects as well as non-Arab international productions attracted to the territory for its iconic landscapes and architecture. In March 2018, it relaunched \$1.2m Jordan Film Fund – aimed at supporting the development, production and post-production of both fiction and non-fiction features as well as shorts, animated films and high-end TV series – after a five-year hiatus. Alongside this, it also runs a tax incentive scheme, offering cash rebates of between 10% to 20% for productions shooting in the kingdom. The fund supports documentary on a number of levels, across the different stages of development and production. “We work with local film-makers who tend to be less advanced in their careers, as part of our capacity building programmes. When it comes to the regional programmes we’re involved in, the filmmakers tend to further down the line in their careers,” explains regional training manager Areeb Zuaiter. “We train or mentor an average of 40 projects a year between our capacity building and regional departments.” Alongside its own in-house programmes, the institution is also a partner on the Project Market Amman with the Robert Bosch Stiftung aimed at connecting local filmmakers with German producers. Beyond this work, the institution shows some 18 documentary titles a year theatrically often inviting the filmmakers to the screenings when possible.

producers, or both. The upshot of this trend is that entities based in the Arab region often have a high level of documentary and film knowledge, as well as a strong grasp of what is going on locally and good access to professional networks, compared with the overall sample.

But the interviews also revealed that many of these filmmaker/ programme heads struggle to juggle their filmmaking careers alongside running the initiatives they have set up. This sometimes leads to breaks in continuity for either or both their work and the initiatives they have spearheaded.

No fixed abode

A “nuts and bolts” question in the preliminary stages of questionnaires on the interviewees’ base of operations was revelatory, as it proved complicated to answer.

In a number of cases, the officially registered location of a body’s office were different from its operational base. In other cases, some bodies ran operational offices in territories where it was impossible to officially register, such as in Palestine, Yemen and Syria.

Multitaskers

Another trend that came to light in the course of the interviews was that many operators fulfilled numerous roles. This was frequently the case with bodies based within the Arab world, as well as some international programmes primarily aimed at the Arab region.

A high proportion of the programmes surveyed had engaged in other roles outside their core remit. This sometimes happened in an official capacity with the creation of sub-programmes or additional programmes in response to the changing needs of the constituents a body served or supported. It also occurred unofficially, with staff and resources diverted into activities outside a body’s core remit, without the creation of any sort of official programme.

The researchers also came across a number of organisations which ran operational offices in the vicinity of the majority of the filmmakers they supported, in addition to their main offices. Several programmes had additional operational offices in countries like Yemen, Egypt, Turkey, Jordan, Tunisia and Lebanon. Some of these were sporadically operational and not running all-year-round. Juggling multiple bases seemed to expand the administrative burden for the programmes.

The trend was particularly prevalent in the area of training. The study revealed that many bodies ran training programmes alongside their key founding activities. Examples of this phenomenon included the Iraqi Independent Film Center, Comra Yemen and the Lebanon-based Bidayyat. These three entities are the only active ones to provide free programmes for Iraqi, Yemeni and Syrian filmmakers, respectively. The Iraqi Independent Film Center was set up as a production company, Comra Yemen is run as a collective, and Bidayyat is a non-profit company.

They all reported the need to wear multiple hats to serve their communities, due to a lack of existing local or regional infrastructure for documentary in their operational territories. Their multiple activities spanned pitching initiatives, awards, seedling grants,

Case Study

Bidayyat: Shifting the Focus

Bidayyat started as a production grant-giving body for emerging displaced Syrian documentary filmmakers in 2012 in Beirut. In 2015, they shifted their focus to training and capacity building, supporting filmmakers in the creation of short documentaries from A to Z through an intensive workshop process. They made the shift, according to director Ali Atassi, because there were already other institutions that gave grants – DFI, AFAC and Injaaz at the time – but little was being done on the training side. Bidayyat decided to use the production of short and long feature documentaries as a tool for capacity building and training. Every year, in six-month intensive workshops, eight emerging filmmakers begin by developing an idea and are accompanied through the entire process of making a film. After the trainings, Bidayyat continues with select artists to produce their films as an in-house production. Most of the films Bidayyat produces are short; on average, they also produce one long documentary film per year. The model for Bidayyat's work is similar to the Scottish Documentary Institute's and emphasizes that they are a civil and not a commercial production company, which affects the spirit of how they work. "We believe with this kind of production, we can focus more on our visual identity and on ethical issues of how we work," he says.

access to equipment and mentors, screening opportunities and promotional support for talents and projects.

Fluid programming

Another insight gleaned from the decision-maker interviews was that many

bodies were continuously adapting their programmes. The research revealed that it was not uncommon for organisations to change their programming every five or 10 years.

Looking at the data around this phenomenon we found a correlation between the age of the programmes and the frequency with which they changed. Programmes that were younger than five years old tended to be tweaked more frequently than programmes that had been in existence for more than 10 years.

There were a variety of reasons for this phenomenon, ranging from the experience of the staff to the evolving needs of a

filmmaking community, to funding fluctuations. For many smaller organisations, this need to constantly change or tweak their programmes was a natural consequence of the precarious environment they were operating in. Indeed, they even took some pride in their ability to keep supporting and responding to their beneficiaries' needs, in an unstable, ever-changing landscape.

This phenomenon was particularly prevalent with annual events such as festivals, pitching events or training programmes. These seemed most likely to experience

economic instability but found ways of adapting their activities to keep serving their beneficiary communities.

Grassroots models – no one size fits all

A number of different grassroots models emerged in the course of the research.

Comra, for example, was set up as collective body to support emerging Yemeni filmmakers in a time of conflict. It has been running the Comra Documentary Film Camp since 2015, which is aimed at equipping local filmmakers with the skills to document what is happening in Yemen. It is the only free training available to filmmakers in the country.

Filmlab Palestine, which was created in 2014 to empower young Palestinians to tell their stories, takes a multi-pronged approach. Its activities span production support (from equipment, development funds and hands-on support); training and educational programmes and festivals aimed at

fostering a film culture. It funds its activities through a combination of public money and private sponsorship. It does not have fixed monetary resources so some of its activities tend to run sporadically, rather than on a year-round or multi-year basis.

The Iraqi Independent Film Centre (IIFC) was set up in 2009 to nurture a new generation of filmmakers in Iraq. It has a wide range of activities including production, internship and mentorship programmes, and training workshops. It has helped a number of young filmmakers complete their first shorts and allows them to retain ownership of these works on their completion. As part of its remit to nurture a cinema culture in Iraq, the IIFC also coordinates screenings of these films and other short films in Iraq.

Conclusion

The in-depth research into the operators revealed a shifting landscape populated by a variety of players, ranging from medium to large Western-backed operations to smaller grassroots outfits, adapting to complex

environments. Both models were valid and yielded results but the piecemeal nature of the operator means a robust ecosystem offering sustained and consistent support is still a long way off.

Chapter 4

**Funding and
Resources**

The economics of mainstream commercial cinema rarely seem to apply to the Arab documentary landscape. Indeed, 26 percent of the 200 productions included in the film survey were not associated with any type of official or identifiable financing.

At presentations of the pilot study and film listings, professionals in attendance would regularly express their frustration about the lack of resources available to them, with complaints spanning funding, infrastructure, education and legal frameworks.

The researchers found themselves asking time and time again: “How do documentaries get made in the Arab World?” Given the landscape uncovered by the research, it seemed nothing short of a miracle that Arab documentaries ever saw the light of day.

This question became the bedrock for the second phase of research with the team attempting to understand how Arab documentaries are made and funded, from development to distribution, and also gauge whether documentary practitioners in the Arab world were able to build economically sustainable careers.

Testimonial

Filmmaker from Tunisia: Kawther Ben Hania

The story tells you in which way you can tell it: there are stories for which you want to go further with your imagination so you do fiction, and others for which you want to dig further into reality so you do documentary. With fiction filmmaking, however, language matters: when you make an Arabic film, you are automatically in the category of Southern, poor films and you'll have to get a mosaic of funding through smaller amounts, whereas if I made it in French, I'd have a bigger budget. Documentary is different, because it's already considered the “South of the cinema”.



Photo © Kawther Ben Hania

Where Does Funding Come From?

The irrelevance of mainstream financing cycles

The ideal film financing cycle of securing grants for the development phase, applying for production and post-production financing, as well as seeking co-production partners and TV deals, and then finally securing pre-sales to close the budget and potentially bring in some income, does not apply to most productions in the film survey.

On the contrary, one of the insights gleaned from the research was that many filmmakers operating in the Arab world do not

pursue or even attempt to access this model, as it does not relate to the reality of their film-making environment, to a far extent.

It is also important to note the role played by in-kind services and co-productions, despite the fact that these reflect only 1.9% of the total budgets uncovered in film survey. However, this percentage remains higher than the 1.3% achieved via pre-sale contracts with broadcasters.

Sources of funding

It was not always easy to ascertain with precision the source of funding. The financing data gathered during the desk research does not reflect actual total budgets. While the film survey showed that 22.5 percent of the titles included had a broadcaster, no conclusion can be drawn on whether broadcasters contributed to the budget, as such information is not public. The data did reveal, however, that two-thirds of the funding, or 68 percent, was provided by film support funding, such as grants and soft loans, while a further 19 percent came from international co-productions. Only a fraction of

the budgets, or 4.5 percent, came from commercial sources such as pre-sales.

There were a few films for which the researchers were able to gather complete data for the budget and financing. These productions were usually better documented due to the fact they had been relatively successful, both critically and commercially. However, even with more commercially successful productions, human endeavour and an entrepreneurial spirit had often been key drivers in these films reaching completion, rather than economic factors.

A number of testimonials suggested that in the face of a lack of proper state funding, adequate film circulation and sales, the Arab documentary scene turns to a large extent around human determination to tell a story, rather than commercial considerations.

Filmmakers need to be risk-takers, entrepreneurs and networkers – deferring their fees, endlessly seeking funding opportunities, and enlisting the services of long-term collaborators at a cut-price or deferred rate.

Case Study

Aljazeera Doc Channel: Adapting to Global Changes

After almost 10 years of commissioning and acquiring international and regional documentaries for the 24-hour broadcast, Aljazeera Doc Channel changed its model of production. In response to international forms of production and co-production, the Channel started in 2017 to have new online calls accepting proposals from producers, twice a year, to fill its 70 hours of yearly commissioning programming. Despite budget cuts, the Doha-based documentary channel that was established in 2007 as a sub-division of Aljazeera News channel, has nowadays a yearly average of almost 10 co-productions (with an average of 20.000\$ per project) while the rest relies on commissioning (with an average of 1.100\$ per minute).

Television

The pilot study showed very poor theatrical distribution rates for documentaries in the Arab world. The second study, therefore, focused on circulation on TV. As mentioned earlier in this report, Arab TV channels accounted for 24 percent of the broadcasts achieved by the 200 titles gathered in the film survey. Major broadcasters for documentary

in the Arab world are Morocco's M2 and Qatar's Al Jazeera Documentary Channel.

Both channels do pre-sales, co-productions and acquisitions and thus contribute to the production budgets of documentaries, albeit on a smaller scale than other TV channels or forms of financing outside of the region.

Regional Support – Funding Bottleneck

This lack of financing dedicated to documentary in the Arab world means competition for funding is high.

The only pan-Arab, documentary-specific grant in existence is the AFAC Documentary Programme (ADP), which was launched in 2013 to support creative documentaries of all lengths and at all stages of production.*

There are also a handful of bodies in the region, such as the Doha Film Institute (DFI)

and Tunisia's Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image (CNCI) which accept applications related to documentary projects within its wider funding initiatives. These bodies sometimes have restrictions related to the nationality of the applicant producer or director, or their level of experience, so they are not available to all documentary professionals working in the Arab region.

Incubation and Training as a Form of Support

The in-depth survey showed that festivals, training programmes (including capacity building and professionalisation services) and funds were the most active programmes. Their activities seem to fill some of the financing and support gaps left by the dearth of commercial opportunities for filmmakers, but often under the umbrella of training.

Nearly all the programmes canvassed offered training, regardless of whether it was part of their core remit. In fact, 92 percent of all the non-training programmes had offered some form of training and

consultancy to their grantees at least once over the period of the survey.

The interviewees said this was in response to a "need for training" and an "absence of other programmes". Their remarks suggest that most programmes seem burdened with the collective needs of the communities they serve. A high percentage of films that came to fruition during the survey period, were supported at some stage of their creation by training programmes.

It would seem that training programmes are filling a major gap in the ecosystem around

the region. On one level, training workshops and programmes are fostering active networks, connecting production and distribution entities inside and outside the region with creative and technical knowledge. On another level, 43 percent of training programmes offer a grant or in-kind service and thus contribute directly to the production or finishing of their grantees' films.

The remaining 57 percent of programmes run pitching

events or screenings around the projects they support, which in turn can contribute directly to the co-financing or circulation or both of the films. Last but not least, nearly all the training programmes cover the stage of development in film production, helping filmmakers to rethink their projects, get film-specific consultancies, and even a find co-producers, partners or financiers.

Indeed this training-based production model appears to be emerging across the Arab countries under which filmmakers with a documentary film in development apply to a development training programme, which

helps them incubate their projects. They then often go on to participate in pitching workshops, which provide them with the skills and contacts to raise production funds. This is then followed by a participation in editing or finishing training programme in which the film is guided to completion.

In this model, the filmmaker's need to perform or partner with a producer is minimal, as are the overhead costs of development and production. This model can be detected in several of the productions in the film survey. A fact that makes the model worth further investigation and exploration.

Testimonial

Head of Sales, Acquisitions and Theatrical Release – Zawya: Ahmed El Sobky



Photo © DOX BOX / Layla Abyad

"Zawya, as a sales agent, does not offer any minimum guarantee (MG) to right holders when taking on a film, especially a documentary film. In fact, the region has very few buyers when it comes to documentary, and they all have very specific editorial constraints, which is often frustrating to filmmakers who have in their turn very high and mostly unrealistic expectations from theatrical release. It is safe to say that documentary sales in the region mainly come from inflight and TV sales."

* ADP replaced AFAC's Arab Documentary Film Programme (ADFP), a partnership with the Sundance Documentary Institute, which ran from 2009 to 2013 and provided comparable support to Arab documentaries. The fund has recently allocated funds for the development stage..

Top Funding Locations

Lebanon-based funding contributed to the budgets of 59 films, or 29.5 percent of productions, in the film survey. The country is not the source of the funding, however, which comes rather from internationally-funded NGO bodies based in the country. For example, a significant portion of the grants contributed by the Beirut-based Arab Fund for Arts and Culture are in fact funded by Western foundations.

France contributed to 51 films, making it the top funder for Arab documentaries after Lebanon-based funders.

After Lebanon and France, UAE-based bodies supported 34 films, or 17 percent of

the films included in the survey, followed by Qatar with 25 films and the Netherlands with 19 films.

These figures are related to funding programmes offering grants, financing schemes and soft loans rather than commercial income related to sales or pre-sales.

The film survey revealed that beyond the bodies that officially fund films, a number of non-film organisations also play an important role in the production and circulation of documentary films such as cultural programmes attached to international organisations and development bodies both governmental and non-governmental.

Financing and Nationality

It would seem that funding support is rarely linked to the location or nationality of the director or producer. The data revealed no obvious link between the location of a financing organisation – for either grants or sales – and the country of residency of filmmakers or the film shooting locations of the projects successful in winning support.

The study revealed that even national funding bodies were prepared to award filmmakers or projects without strong links to their location.

Funding opportunities provided by local operators based in Tunisia, such as the post-production support in TAKMIL, for example, contributed to 10 documentary films, 20 percent of which were not directed by Tunisian directors or shot inside the country. This funding was awarded, however, within the context of a post-production prize for regional filmmakers.

Similarly, funders based in Morocco contributed to seven films by Moroccan filmmakers and three works by non-Moroccan filmmakers, via TV-sales. Jordan meanwhile

contributed to six films: two films made by Jordanian filmmakers received financing from five separate programmes operating within Jordan while one film by a non-Jordanian filmmaker received a production prize for regional filmmakers.

Finally in Egypt funding was mainly given to locally based producers or directors. Out of support for four films, three were by Egyptian filmmakers and one by a non-Egyptian, given in the context of a production prize for regional filmmakers.

Testimonial

Filmmaker from Syria: Avo Kaprealian

"AFAC gave me a development fund. I used that funds so I could start shooting. But now I am working alone because I don't want to wait for the funds – it's a very long process and a film can die if the money doesn't arise. This is a problem for so many independent filmmakers – there is no independent cinema, no neutral fund or organization. You have to buy and sell things. I'm against that but i can't afford not doing it. There is always a political approach in the fundraising – something ideological. You are not free one hundred percent."



Photo © Avo Kaprealian

Accessing Funding

Shifting Requirements of Funding Bodies

The interviews indicated that a number of support bodies had lowered their requirements and restrictions for applicants in response to the difficult landscape for filmmakers in recent years. This suggested that

in some cases support bodies were tailoring their programs to reflect the economic needs of the directors and producers in the region.

What Phase of Film is Funding Going To?

Interviews suggested that the lion's share of the funding pot went to projects during the stages of late production, and via pre-sales, often when the film was on the verge of completion. There appeared to be less support available for development, pre-production and the early production.

The majority of funds gave a set amount, rather than tailoring the awarded support to the financial needs of the projects.

At a time when broadcasters remain a key source of funding for documentary makers

Skiping Development

During interviews conducted with members of the Arab documentary community, it became apparent that filmmakers often skipped the vital development stage. Operators of support programmes, specifically those offering training, grants, and financing, corroborated that the practice was common. Several of these interviewees reported that filmmakers enter the production phase too soon and also get stuck for long periods in the post-production phase, mainly at the editing stage.

This lack of attention to development seemed to be further corroborated by the film survey data which showed that 47 percent of available financing was earmarked

in other regions, the research revealed that few documentarians in the Arab world are able to tap into this economic model. It is simply not open to them. Instead, filmmakers tend to take on the financial risk of producing their films themselves. They sometimes manage to access in-kind support programmes to get the films completed, but a TV deal or post-production funding remains rare. This landscape left the expert group to ask yet again: "How are these films being made?"

for the production stage and 53 percent for the post-production stage.

More research and data is required in order to further elucidate these early findings around development, such as the total value of available financing versus the total declared budgets of films. Such data is hard to gather, as financiers and filmmakers rarely make this information public.



Rasmus Steen from IMS (left), Marion Schmidt from DOX BOX (center) and Myriam Sassine from Abbout Productions (right) during Fida Doc in Agadir, Morocco June 2018 – photo © Elise Ortiou Campion

Applications

The number of applications to support bodies increased from 2014 to 2017, indicating that more people are trying to make documentaries.

As previously mentioned, a lot of available support for projects at the development stage, is often delivered via training programmes, with a high percentage of schemes aimed at emerging talents. These programmes tend to be free and require differing levels of experience and competence.

The data indicated that few of these development stage support/training schemes set a very high bar in terms of expected levels of competence or experience as well as hoped for outcomes.

Most the schemes investigated in the course of the study simply required the filling in of an application form as well as information on the synopsis, director's biography, (in some cases) visual treatment, followed by a producer's note.

A small percentage of the interviewees, just 8 percent, revealed that they do not run open application processes but rather approach or nominate candidates on the basis of their own networks and knowledge of the sector.

Few of the initiatives canvassed took into account commercial or financial viability, such as that part of the budget be in place, a broadcaster be attached, in order for a project to be taken into consideration. The most common restriction related to the director's

Case Study

International Media Support (IMS): Local Networks First

International Media Support (IMS) gradually developed its program to support documentary films in the MENA region by learning from close collaborations and partnerships with local activists and entrepreneurs. The initiative started with a twinning program between Denmark and the Arab world during which IMS supported the establishment of the Arab Institute of Film in Amman in 2006 and DOX BOX documentary film festival in Syria in 2007.

Established in Copenhagen in 2001, IMS is known for not communicating or advertising their program. Instead, they expand existing networks by approaching new partners and potential grantees. Out of their twenty staff members, eight speak Arabic, which facilitates the investigation of particular needs of each country in the Arab world through staff scouting trips.

This local knowledge has been crucial for IMS to keep a flexible design of their program while looking for projects and grantees, building partnerships, and supporting initiatives and film projects. For instance, they provided technical assistance to films from Jordan, fostered co-productions with Syria, and granted seed funds for films in Algeria. They even supported non DAC list projects from wealthier states, such as Bahrain or Saudi Arabia, in a context where film topics prevented filmmakers from accessing local funds and support.

country of origin, followed by film duration and theme.

Other findings regarding applications from the Operators' survey revealed that the average age of applicants was younger than those registered in comparable studies in Europe. More than half of Arab applicants were younger than 40. The gender of applicants revealed a higher proportion of males than reflected in the film survey. Finally, 74 percent of applicants to the surveyed programmes were first-time filmmakers.

In regards to the evaluation of applications, interviewees replied that artistic merit was a key consideration that far outweighed a project's potential economic success.

English is the lingua Franca

One of the unexpected findings of the in-depth study into programmes was that available online resources and application forms were predominantly in English, sometimes in French and less so in Arabic.

Interviews revealed that even when Arabic was offered as an option, institutions preferred to receive applications in the English language because many of their jury members did not read or speak Arabic.

The expert group discussed this prevalence of English at some length, surmising that while it might not pose a challenge for well-travelled filmmakers who have lived, studied or worked internationally and picked up English-language skills along the way, it could be an obstacle for many filmmakers based in the Arab region.

It was also suggested that this onus on English burdened a portion of filmmakers

with extra costs to get treatments, videos and files translated into correct English and that this in turn ballooned development costs. When filmmakers skimp on these costs it can result in a badly-written application, which could work against a project at the selection stage.

The group also discussed whether the use of languages other than Arabic unwittingly syphoned filmmakers into territorial funding streams along language lines.

Regardless of these linguistic concerns, the expert group also acknowledged that a number of films in the survey ended up being made as co-productions, in which English is a primary working language. The exception to the preference for English applications is of course in the Francophone countries.

Guerilla filmmaking

Another interesting phenomenon that came to light during debates and presentations in the region, was that there are filmmakers who have decided to opt out of the process of applying for funding or seeking a broadcast. They cited the lengthy and sometimes costly application processes involved as a deterrent, especially when neither the time

nor money could be recouped in the case of a non-successful application. These "guerilla-style" filmmakers said they preferred to spend their time and resources on actually making their films.

Looking to the Future

According to the financing data gathered around the 200 films featured in the 2014-2017 film survey, roughly 30 percent of the funding came from support programmes that no longer exist today.

It should be noted, however, that 44 percent of the funds linked to these defunct initiatives, were channelled through Lebanon-based programs, which were entirely dependent on international funders. It is still unknown whether this funding is being distributed through other initiatives.

Another 30 percent of the funding came from bodies situated in the Gulf, a number of which have since shut down, notably the Dubai International Film Festival Enjaaz Fund, Anasy Awards and the Abu Dhabi Sanad fund.

This trend is likely to put pressure on remaining funding programmes in the future and lead to a squeeze in available funding and broadcasting slots.

On a more positive note, It could also create new currents and change the dynamics and ecosystem of the Arab documentary scene. One possible dynamic that may evolve can already be glimpsed in countries that have an entire autonomous filmmaking ecology.

Morocco, for example, has its own national broadcasters, commissioning editors, festivals, schools, rental companies and services,

sales agents, cinemas, and transnational treaties with other countries of Europe but also North Africa. Tunisia comes second in terms of infrastructure, followed by Egypt.

In spite of the difficult terrain, the number of region-specific and documentary-specific programmes appears to be expanding throughout the Arab world.

Documentary as a cinematic form also appears to be extending its reach and documentary communities and initiatives are springing up across the region in ways that were not known a decade ago.

One particularly exciting development is the rise of more locally-focused programmes, offering tailored support to filmmakers in line with local conditions and challenges.

The Arab documentary scene remains in flux, however, as initiatives across the region continue to develop and grow and evolve their roles.

This ever-changing landscape also means strong networks between bodies in the region have yet to develop, which is an area that could merit attention for the good of the Arab documentary as a whole.

Chapter 5

Directors and Crews

One of the key drivers of this study was to investigate the practices of professionals working in the Arab documentary scene and probe whether it is possible for them to build long-term, economically sustainable careers.

For this reason, the researchers decided it would be helpful to look at the compositions, characteristics and roles of the crews involved in the 200 productions captured in the 2014 to 2017 film survey.

Although significant amounts of information were collected from various sources, the collated details on talent and crews remains incomplete due to a lack of available data.

This data facilitated preliminary analysis, which could pave the way for the next stage of research and investigation.

This chapter will present these findings and discuss some of the correlations that came to light.*

Testimonial

Syrian filmmaker based between Europe and the U.S: Feras Fayyad

"The filmmaker's relationship to the project is different from that of the distributor or television. The director could compromise his life to save his film. He might die or be banned from his own country. His career might also end in case his first or second film fails. It is a wild gamble!"



Photo © Stine Heilmann

* Whenever available, we have collected information on the age, country of residency, nationality, gender, previous experience and education of the key crew involved in each of the films listed. In some cases, the filmmakers and producers included in the survey have worked on more than one of the titles in the list.

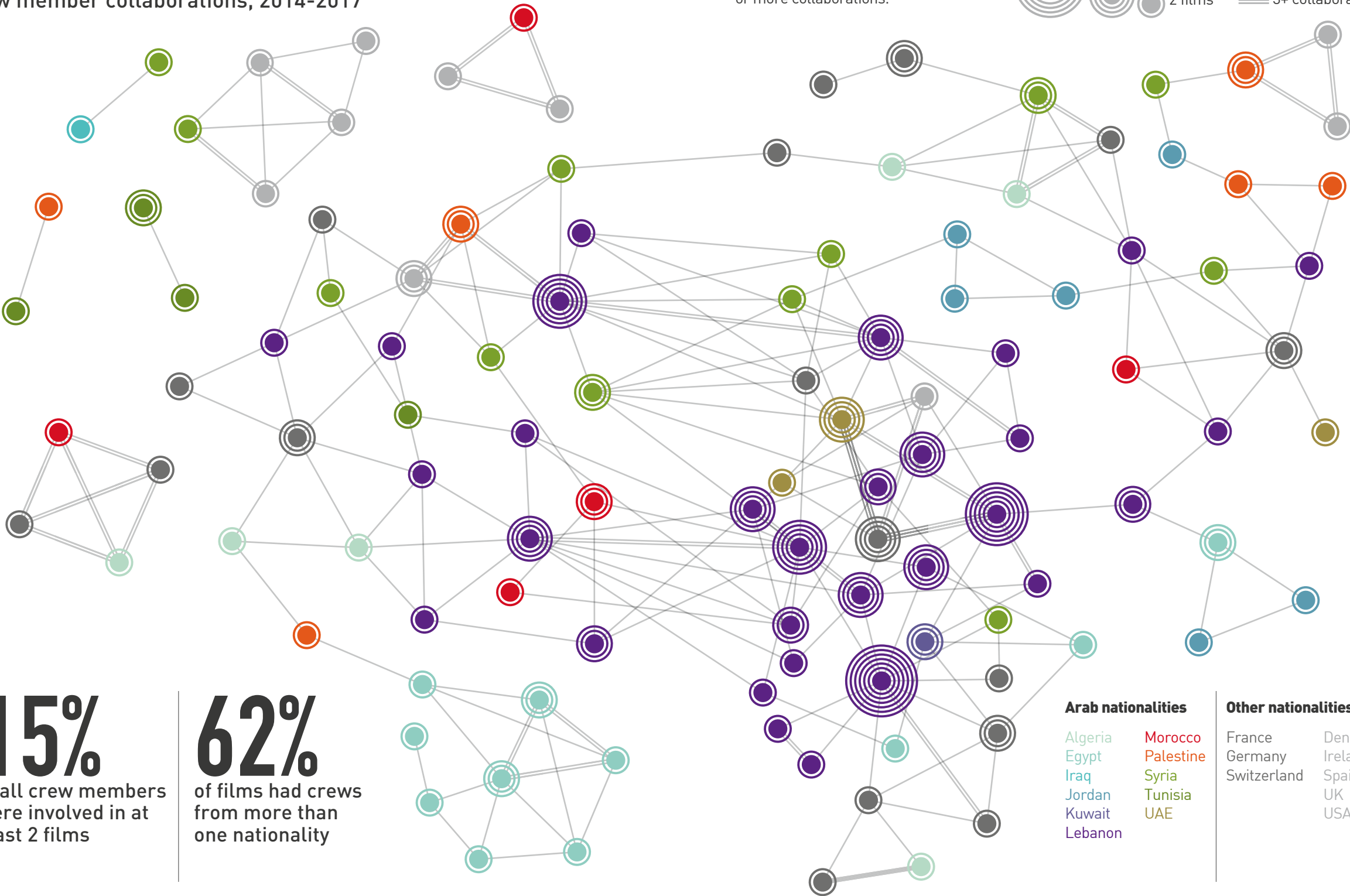
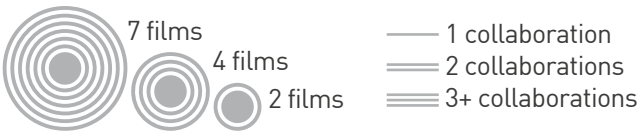
We collected information for up to two people per key crew role, meaning we listed a maximum of two co-directors, two co-producers, two camerapersons, two editors and two sound engineers.

It is important to note that crew roles are as publicly credited. There was no way to ascertain whether a crew member performed additional roles, unless publicly credited.

Who Worked With Whom?

Crew member collaborations, 2014-2017

Each circle represents one person,* and each connection represents one or more collaborations.



15%
of all crew members
were involved in at
least 2 films

62%
of films had crews
from more than
one nationality

Arab nationalities

- Algeria
- Egypt
- Iraq
- Jordan
- Kuwait
- Lebanon
- Morocco
- Palestine
- Syria
- Tunisia
- UAE

Other nationalities

- France
- Germany
- Switzerland
- Denmark
- Ireland
- Spain
- UK
- USA

Based on 730 filmmakers credited in any role on 200 films, 2014-2017. The study recorded up to 2 crew members for each of the key roles in directing, producing, cinematography, editing and sound recording/design

*Visual only shows collaborations between people involved in at least two films during the period 2014-2017.

A Closer Look at Directors

For the 200 films in the film survey, 222 directors and co-directors were involved. 45 percent were female directors and co-directors and 55 percent were made by male directors and co-directors. Looking specifically at film-educated directors, 54 percent were male and 46 percent were female. This proportion remains almost the same for non-film educated directors, with 57 percent male and 43 percent female.

It is interesting that the proportion of female-directed films was higher in the *Data is Beautiful* survey than in the European Women's Audiovisual Network (EWA) 2016 report *Where Are The Women Directors in European Film?*, which explored female representation in European industries and was used as reference study when setting up the framework for this research. That Europe-focused study found that just 34 percent of films were made by female directors.

The EWA study also found that although close to equal numbers of men and women were graduating from film schools, this parity waned in the professional world, where the proportion of female directors was far lower.

It is possible that similar trends could also be at play in the Arab documentary scene, but the researchers and expert group were unable to corroborate this as they had only limited access to data from film educational institutions. Anecdotally, the same trend was reported by Soumeiya Bouallegui, executive

director of Doc House, the Documentary Institute in Tunis. Her research found that women there graduated from film school in almost equal numbers to men but that far fewer remain in the field. According to her findings, the percentage of filmmakers making only one documentary film was very high and within that the female proportion was substantial.

Questions of gender equality aside, the film survey also revealed the following details about the directors whose work featured in the film survey.

Out of the 209 directors and co-directors involved in the 200 films captured in the survey, a total of 33 directors lived in France and Lebanon respectively, accounting for 16 percent each of the total. Egypt and Germany were home to 8 percent of directors, respectively. Another 6 percent lived in Morocco, followed by 4 percent in Tunisia.

The count of directors and co-directors nationalities show that Lebanese nationals make up the largest group at 21 percent of all credited directors, followed by Syrians at 15 percent and then Palestinians and Egyptians, with 9 percent each. Moroccans accounted for 7.5 percent of the pool captured in the film survey, followed by Tunisians with 7 percent, Jordanians with 3 percent and Iraqis at 2.5 percent.

In terms of residence, only 45 percent of Arab directors and co-directors credited in the film survey reside within the Arab world and the rest reside abroad.

Inside the Arab countries, the largest number of directors reside in Lebanon at 15 percent, Egypt at 9 percent, in Tunisia 4 percent, Palestine, Jordan and UAE each 3 percent, and less than 3 percent reside in Algeria. Whereas almost 6 percent of directors reside altogether in Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Syria and Sudan.

It was interesting to note that 55 percent of directors and co-directors reside in countries outside the Arab region. Breaking this down, 25 percent of all directors live in France, 12 percent in Germany and 7 percent in Canada, while the rest live in Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, UK and other European countries, as well as the US, India, Turkey and South Africa.

Co-Directing or Creative Collaboration

Twenty-two of the films surveyed (11 percent) were co-directed by two or more co-directors. Twenty-seven percent of co-directors were women and 73 percent were men. In 64 percent of cases, co-directors had previous directing experience.

It seems that co-directing between genders is more common, as 55 percent of co-directing is among male and female co-directors, followed by male-male co-directing at 33 percent and just under 10 percent of co-directing happening between female directors. While the remaining 2 percent is not possible to account for due to unidentified gender. Among Arab nationals, co-directing teams were made up exclusively of fellow nationals. Out of Syria, there were three films featuring Syrian co-directors: *Our Terrible Country*, *Silvered Water – Syria Self-Portrait* and *Lovers Notebooks*.

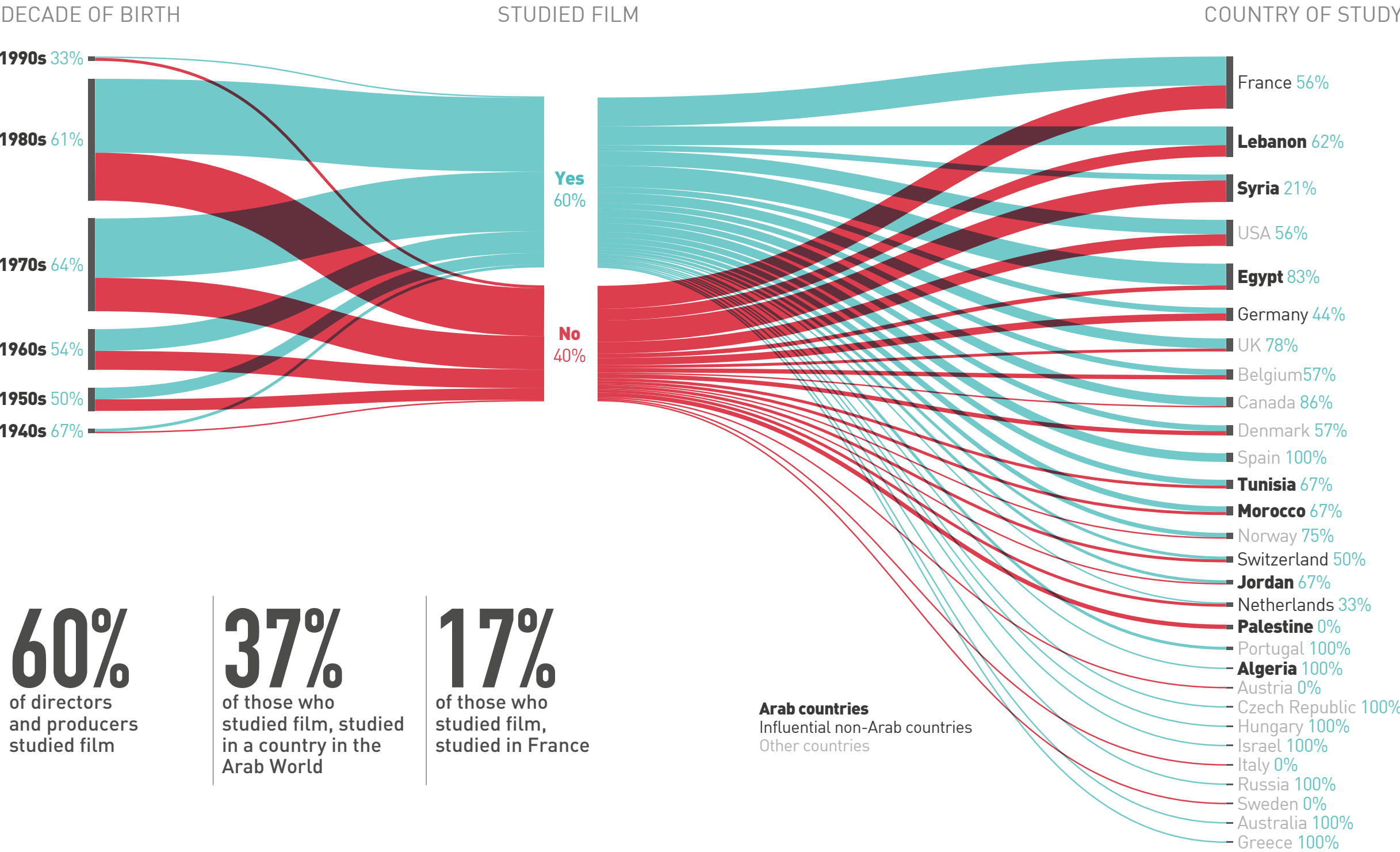
This was also the case for Egypt, with three features made by compatriot co-directors: *One Plus One Makes a Pharaoh's Chocolate Cake*, *The Visit* and *Happily Ever After*.

There were two compatriot co-directed Lebanese films: *A Certain Nasser* and *Ismyrna* and one such production out of Palestine, *Gaza By Her*.

The only cases of transnational co-directing teams involved non-Arab region nationals, mainly Europeans. Three films were co-directed by Syrians with two Danish and one Italian co-director, respectively. One Palestinian co-directed with a Canadian co-director, two Tunisians with a Swiss and a French, respectively, two Moroccans with a UK and a Turkish national, and two Somalis with a Danish national.

Education of Directors & Producers

Analysing film-education and generation of directors and producers



The figures indicated that the directors' and producers' country of residence had no bearing on the ability access to funding in that country. In Europe this may be down to the fact that funds work on points system where the main criteria is how the film relates to the interest of national broadcasters and distributors. In the Arab world, it can be explained by the fact that funding takes into account the director's nationality and sometime heritage, irrespective of the country of residence. For example, a number of funds in the Arab world exclusively target

Crew roles on Arab documentary films tend to overlap. Many directors perform additional roles on their films, with a large number also credited as producers or co-producers, followed by camera work, editing and sound recording, regardless of whether another crew member was credited alongside them for the same role or not.

Male directors were slightly more likely to do camera and editing work on their films than their female counterparts. In 55 percent of all films, directors and co-directors did some or all of the camera work in addition to directing. Among female directors, a total of 44 percent performed the camera work themselves, while 52 percent of male directors did the camera work.

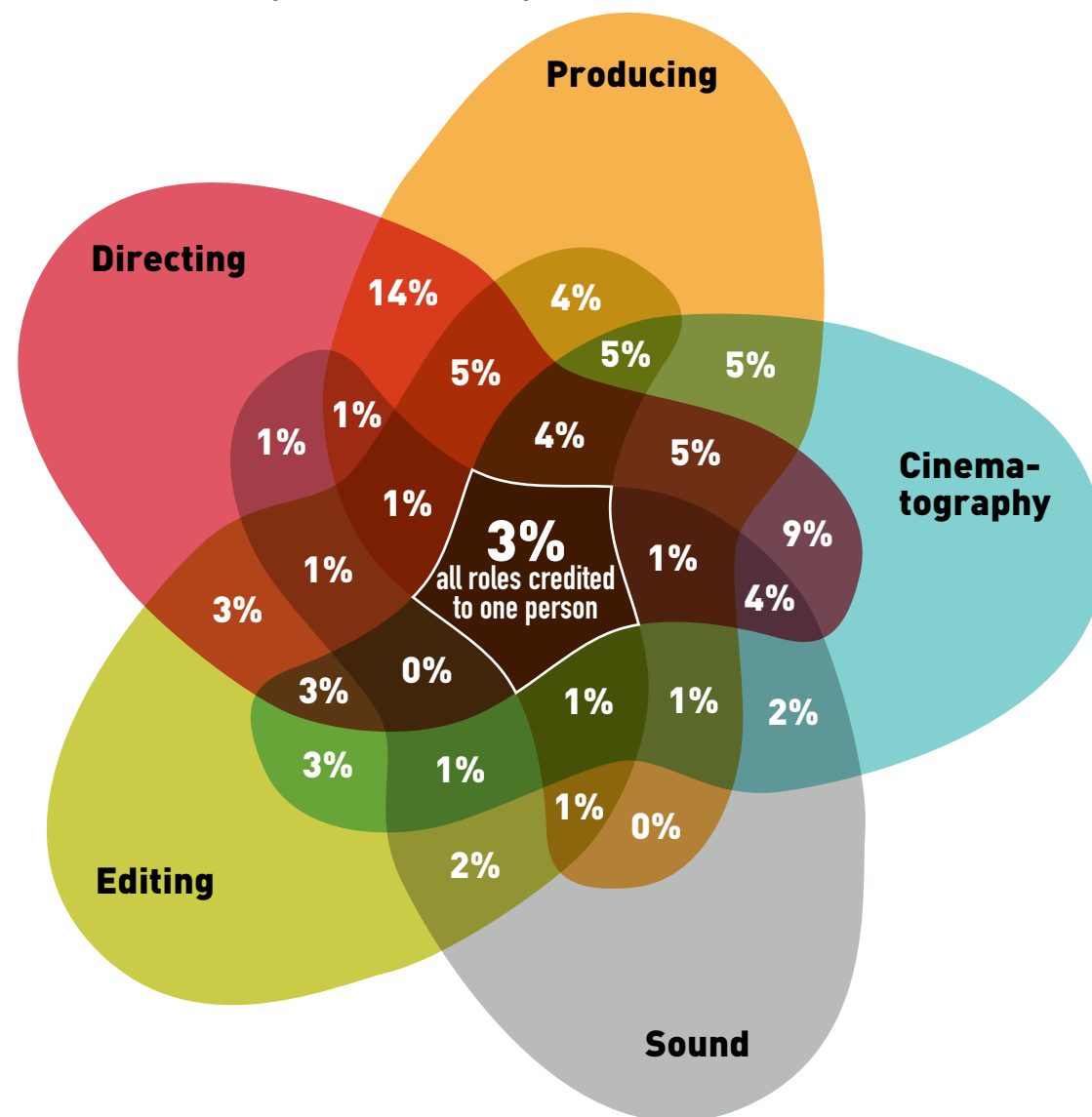
a specific nationality. In addition, funds that serve the entire region will also take nationality and heritage into account as they seek to increase diversity.

In terms of nationality, directors from Syria, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Egypt constitute the major nationalities behind the 149 (at least partially) financed films in the survey. This also applies to directors (regardless of their first or second nationalities) who live in France, Lebanon, Morocco, Germany, and Egypt.

Editing was the second most common crew role performed by a director. On 33.5 percent of films, directors were credited as editors, irrespective of whether a second editor was credited. The percentage also remains higher among male directors (38 percent) than among female directors (29 percent).

Film directors were least likely to do sound in the field (sound recording) – just under 13 percent of films had directors credited for the sound recording on their films.

Films with one person in multiple roles, 2014-2017



4%
of films had only one person credited, but had one or more uncredited role

35%
of films had full
division of labour
among key crew
members

31%
of films had no
credited sound
person

Based on all credited roles across 200 films, 2014-2017.

*Among "one person show" films, 8 had no credited sound person, and 1 had no credited editor.
Data visualization by Ahmad Barclay for Mapping Arab Documentary Landscape 2018 © DOX BOX



Filmmaker Amine Hattou from Bejaia Film Laboratoire in Algeria during the debate in Beirut Cinema Platform, March 2018 – photo © Amr Kokash

Director as producer

Producing was the number one additional role film directors performed next to directing. A staggering 56 percent of films were produced or co-produced by their authors and directors. Fifty-eight percent of male and fifty-five percent of female directors were also credited as producers or co-producers, which constituted an insignificant gender split.

These numbers do not reflect whether a director did all or part of the producing or later entered into a co-production deal where most or part of the producing was delegated to their co-producers.

In general, the gender split among surveyed producers is 43 percent female and 55 percent male, while the rest is unknown due to a lack of public information on their gender.

A practice of dividing the labour is most prevalent in Jordan where 86 percent of surveyed films were produced by someone other than the director, while only 14 percent of films were self-produced. This is followed by films shot in Algeria, where 73 percent were produced by a separate producer and only 27 percent were self-produced, and then Egypt with 68 percent of films with a separate producer and only 32 percent self-produced.

A Closer Look at Self-Producing

In almost 69.5 percent of the surveyed films, producers had previous producing experience, while 29 percent featured first-time producers (*the rest is unknown*).

A third of the surveyed films (30 percent or 59 films), however, were produced without a legal person or a film production company attached. In Europe, a producer must be attached to a legal entity (a production company), which is accountable for all legal and financial dealings relating to a film production. This is not the case in many Arab countries, where the profession of the producer is not bound by legal requirements.

Directors are credited as the lead or only producer on 100 percent of films from Mauritania, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Somalia, which may attest to an absence or shortage of producers due to their young or underdeveloped film sector and low levels of production.

In the case of the Morocco, Palestine, and the UAE, where a larger number of documentary films are produced, the high percentage of directors credited as producers is not easily explained. Directors credited also as producers constitute the majority of cases in these countries with 64 percent in

Morocco, 71 percent in UAE, and 75 percent in Palestine. The percentage of films shot in these countries with a division of labour between directors and producers ranges from 25 percent to 36 percent.

The situation is less extreme in Lebanon, Syria and Tunisia. Fifty-four percent of films shot in Lebanon were produced by a producer, other than the director, and 46 percent by the director of the film himself or

Testimonial

Filmmaker from Tunisia: Claire Belhassine

"It took me seven years to make my film (The Man Behind the Microphone), and that's partly because I was responsible for many aspects of the production. It was like being five people in one person. I'd want to focus on the direction or working on the edit but instead I'd be caught up in details and admin. Of course, it's important to have a great executive producer and mentors on board but you also need a key point person who is barrelling the whole thing along... and in this instance that was me"



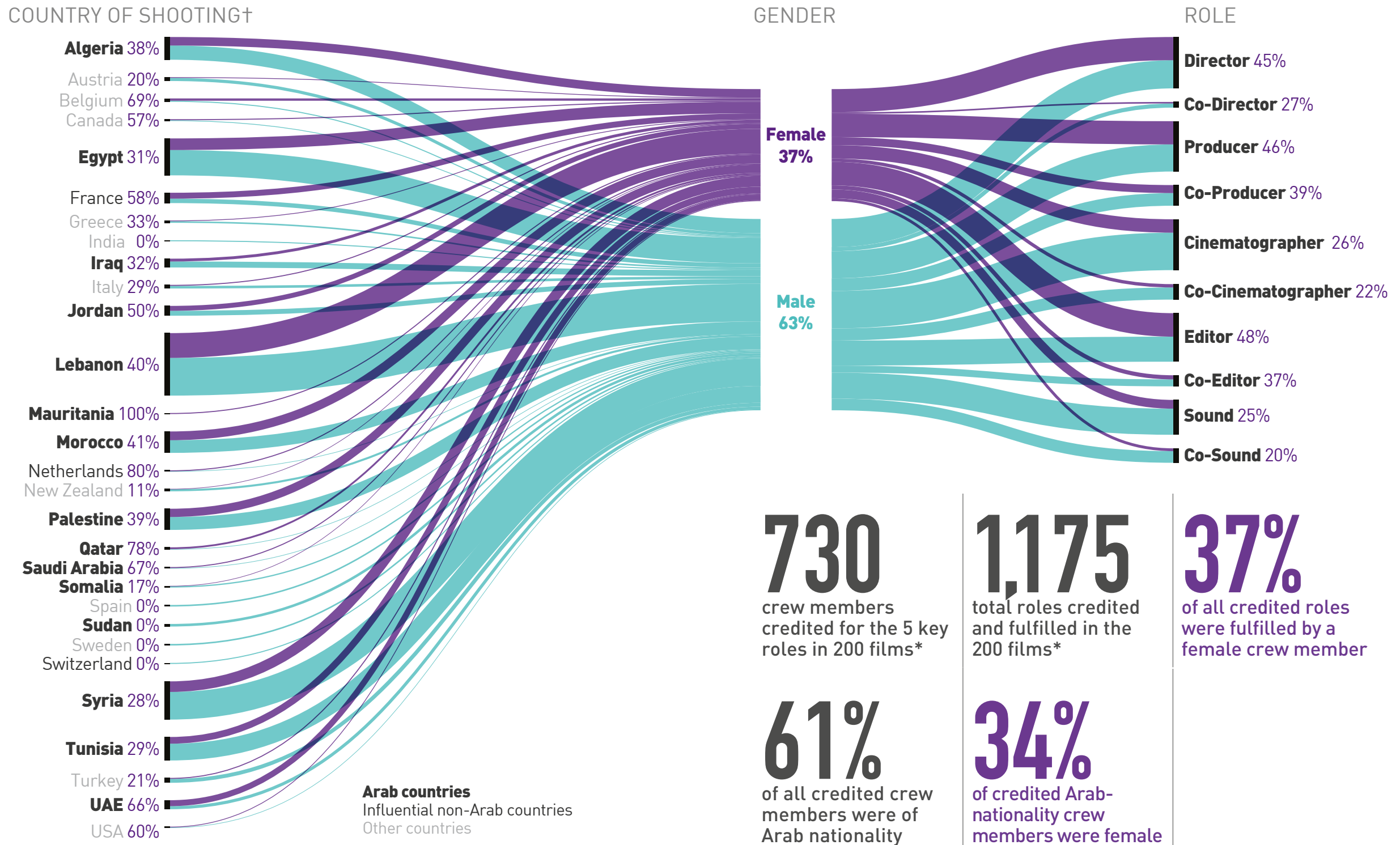
Photo © Rim Temimi

herself. For films shot in each of Syria and in Tunisia, 56 percent of the films were produced by the producer and 44 percent by the director.

Examining these 59 films which were produced without a legal person or a film production company attached, 41 had the director credited as producer, i.e. 69.5 percent of

A Close Look into Film Crews

Tracking credited crew members on 200 films



Based on 1,175 credited roles on 200 films, 2014-2017. *The study recorded up to 2 crew members for each of the key roles in directing, producing, cinematography, editing and sound recording/design. †According the main location of shooting.

Testimonial

Libyan filmmaker based in South Africa: Khalid Shamis

"I was happy by the end of the self-producing experience. I learnt a lot about the industry machine, things I would have never got the chance to learn from editing or directing. I am not referring here to how to build a story or how to be creative but to how market and money work in this industry. This is how you get to understand all aspects of filmmaking rather than just one side of it."

these films had no real division of labour between producing and directing. Lebanon-shot films accounted for 20 percent of such cases (*this included films by Syrian national directors*); Syria, at 12 percent (*all Syrian national directors*); Palestine at 10 percent; Egypt at 15 percent (*with a high percentage of Egyptian national directors*).

There is a strong correlation between the duration of the film and a division of labour between the role of directing and producing. Feature-length films were more likely to have a division of labour between the director and producer roles, while short films were more likely to be self-produced. Among films with separate directors and producers, 58 percent were feature-length,

31 percent were medium-length and 11 percent were short films.

In the case of self-produced films, feature-length films accounted for only 33 percent, medium-length for 22 percent, and short-films for 45 percent. In other words, short films were more likely to be self-produced.

In 60 percent of cases, producers of surveyed films resided outside the Arab countries. These included Arab and non-Arab nationals. In 40 percent of cases, producers resided within the Arab world and were all nationals of an Arab country.

Within the Arab world, Lebanon was the country with the highest percentage of producers (at 37.5 percent), followed by Egypt at 20 percent of all producers, Morocco at 12 percent, and Tunisia at 8 percent. Producers outside the Arab countries, mainly resided in France at 30 percent and followed by Germany at 13 percent.



Hicham Falah (left) director of Fida Doc in Morocco and Libyan-British filmmaker Khalid Shamis (center) during the debate in the Regional Conference for Arab Independent Cinema (RCAIC) in El Gouna -September 2018 – photo © Noor Abed

Cinematography

The pilot film survey revealed that 28 percent of Arab documentary films released in 2015 and 2016 were shot by female cinematographers. This figure is quite high compared with available data on the proportion of women cinematographers in other regions of the world. According to a 2017 survey of "Women and Hollywood", 96 percent of films had no female cinematographers. While also not specific to documentary film, a 2016 survey in the UK showed that less than seven percent of British feature films were shot by women.* The data, in the pilot phase, did not reveal whether this high percentage of female-lensed works in the Arab documentary was due to women directors who were doing the camera work on their own films, or whether the Arab

region boasts a high percentage of professional female cinematographers.

Therefore, the expanded survey spanning films released from 2014 to 2017 collected more detailed information on the persons credited as cinematographers. This revealed that cinematography was performed predominantly by male camera operators.

Not including directors and co-directors who also contributed to shooting their own films, we found that 75 percent of films had a male camera or co-camera operator (*all levels of experience*) as opposed to 25 percent of female camera and co-camera operators.

* Source: <https://www.screendaily.com/5111258.article>

Case Study

Nowhere to Hide: When your cameraman becomes the subject of your film

When Kurdish-Norwegian filmmaker Zaradasht Ahmed set about making his IDFA-winning documentary *Nowhere to Hide*, capturing life in the Central Iraqi town of Jalawla in the aftermath of the US army withdrawal in 2010, one of his key challenges was figuring out how to shoot everyday reality on the ground.

"I had to work out how to do it in a part of the world where a camera can be viewed as more dangerous than a Kalashnikov," he recounts.

The area of Diyala province where the town was situated was a "no-go zone" for international crew and it would also have been dangerous for local cameramen to operate there too. "They could have been taken for spies," says Zaradasht. The director was not keen either on embedding with any of the many local factions operating in the town.

"It would not have given me full access to all the civilians. There would also always have been one part of the population that was acceptable and another that was demonised," he said.

A solution presented itself in the shape of Hans Husum, a veteran Norwegian doctor specialised in working in war zones who wanted to build a video library documenting the different wounds that had arisen from the use of new types of weaponry in the conflict as a reference tool for medics worldwide. He enlisted Zaradasht to train local medical staff to shoot video of the conflict-related wounds they were treating. In return, Zaradasht hoped to potentially use these amateur cameramen, whose services were paid for by Husum's NGO body, to capture everyday reality too.

One participant, Nori Sharif, a nurse at Jalawla's hospital and happily-married father of four young children, stood out in particular for both his ability to shoot and desire to capture the hardships wreaked on his fellow civilians by the Iraqi War, such as a soldier in his 20s paralysed in an ambush and a once thriving private crane contractor, who lost both his business and a leg when he was targeted by a local faction. In the backdrop, Sharif also captured the rising violence in the region as rival factions vied for control – part observer, part participant in the unfolding events, which were further complicated by the arrival of Islamic State forces in the province in the summer of 2014.

As the security situation worsened, it became clear that Sharif would also be very subject of the film at the same time as shooting much of the footage but this posed new challenges.

"Once we started to say that Nouri is going to be the main character the funds from the NGO stopped... and I couldn't pay him a salary. Once he became the main character we could not pay him, for shooting himself. It would have been a bit kinky."

Zaradasht nonetheless found other ways of paying Sharif back, mainly by giving financial and medical support to some of his long-term patients, such as funding a year's worth of school for the two daughters of the former crane operator left destitute by his injuries.

In the longer term, Zaradasht says it was important for him that he left skills on the ground in the wake of shooting the film. Sharif, who is now living in a refugee camp in Iraq some two hours drive from his old home, has since worked on other NGO films while a local editor he helped train up still continues to use his skills too.



Photo © Thousand Images

In addition, out of all cinematography credited, professional directors of photography constituted a total of 23.8 percent, divided as 18.3 percent male and 5.5 percent female.

In 30 percent of all surveyed films, more than one person was credited as cinematographer. In 17 percent of these cases, the people credited were professional directors of photography, three percent were amateur camera-operators, and 80 percent had previous experience with camera work.

Editing

An editor was credited on 95 percent of the surveyed films. Forty-eight percent of accredited persons were female and 51 percent were male; the remaining one

Finally, the nationals most frequently credited for cinematography were Lebanese (21 percent), followed by Syrians (15 percent) and French (11 percent). This correlated to a high extent with the nationality of directors. The reason for this is that a large percentage (see above) of the directors and co-directors were also credited to having done the cinematography for their films in addition to directing.

percent are unknown due to an absence of publicly available information on the gender of persons.

Sound Recording

Directors Doing Sound Work

As previously noted, the least common secondary crew role performed by film directors was sound recording. Just under 13 percent of films credited the directors or co-directors for doing all or part of the sound recording.

The information available on sound, however, is scarce and filmmakers often fail to credit sound recording on field or in the

studio. In 34 percent of films, sound was not credited at all.

During some of the discussions at the industry presentations, directors confessed to doing the sound on field but not crediting themselves. No further information is available on the talents available and utilised in recording sound for documentary films in the Arab region.

Sound Recording vs. Sound Design

In 55 percent of films, sound was credited to a sound recordist or sound engineer (*i.e. sound on field*). In 12 percent of films, the only sound credit mentioned was for sound design in the post-production phase. In only one case, the director was credited as sound designer.

In terms of gender, 75 percent of crew members credited for sound work were male, and 25 percent were female.

Conclusion: Food for Thought

One of the most striking findings around directors and crews was that more than half, or 55 percent, of the directors and co-directors involved in the productions captured in the survey were officially residing outside the Arab world.

The study also revealed a low level of cooperation between directors hailing from the Arab world, whatever their official country of residence. In the films made by co-director teams, the directors either shared the same nationality, or the partnership was between an Arab director, and a European or North American director.

A slight trend toward younger crews was observed over the four surveyed years, with the average age of all key crew positions falling.

In 42 percent of surveyed films, Lebanese nationals were credited for sound, followed by French in 27 percent, Egyptians in 10 percent, and Moroccans in 9 percent.

Another salient finding of the data was the extent that directors often multi-task on their productions, carrying out multiple roles, from most commonly that of producer, to in some cases, cinematographer and sound-person.

In terms of female representation behind the camera, the percentage of women directors appeared to be higher in the Arab documentary scene than the rest of the world, although women seemed to take on fewer of the key crew roles than men.

Chapter 6

Concluding Remarks

This second round of research reveals an Arab documentary scene that has grown in sophistication and stature over the past decade but at the same time remains fragmented and under-resourced on many levels.

Given that this is one of the first and most ambitious attempts to date at a data-led mapping of the documentary production and distribution scene in the Arab world, the study's findings cannot be considered conclusive but a handful of key observations and recommendations – based on both the challenges of the research process and the findings – come to the fore.

Melanie Goodfellow presenting the project's interim output in Morocco, during Fida Doc in Agadir, in June 2018 © photo by Elise Ortiou Campion



Data is beautiful, but it is also elusive

One of the major outcomes of this second-round of research relates to the challenges of actually collecting data about Arab documentary production and distribution.

The research team spent more time than planned, for example, building the framework and contact lists for the in-depth quantitative and the qualitative study into programmes. Building a list of programmes to target was a relatively straightforward exercise, but it took time to figure out who was the best “go-to person” within each programme, who could source and then provide the data required.

In addition, a number of the targeted programmes did not consciously keep data. As a result, data existed but was not necessarily archived in an easily accessible format, making it a complicated and time-consuming process for respondents to fully answer the DOX BOX questions.

The question of whether an organisation or an initiative keeps data was interpreted differently by various interview respondents. The level of trust interviewers had in the validity of their own data also differed. Reasons for keeping data also varied in relation to the aims and reporting requirements of the targeted programmes. For many programmes, keeping data was not a priority.

This resulted in a number of bodies answering in approximate terms or backing out

completely because they felt they did not have the time or the resources to track down the data in their files to fully answer the questions.

In a handful of cases, some operators were reluctant to or uneasy about sharing their data, while others did not see the point of the exercise. A number of European bodies, with good databases and a history of issuing reports based on their data, also failed to respond. Going deeper into the numbers was also hard because many programmes did not keep track of details, such as the age or gender of the filmmakers, for either submitted projects or successful applications. It was also difficult to gather information on distribution or commercial outcomes, suggesting that few programmes put such considerations at the heart of their work.

These challenges prompted a number of internal discussions on why bodies did not retain, archive or make available data and what could be done to strengthen and simplify the data collection process to make it more effective in future rounds of research.

In the case of the European bodies that failed to engage with the study, the team asked itself whether it was because Arab documentary was not one of their priorities and they felt no need to monitor it, even in an era when many film support bodies are trying harder to embrace diversity.

On a positive note, the processes set in motion by this second round of research have kick-started a discussion in the Arab documentary scene over the value of collecting data and how it can be used as a tool to prompt change and improvement in the sector.

The presentations have also sown the seeds for future cooperation and information exchange in a number of key funding territories, inside and outside of the Arab region.

Tracking gender in the age of MeToo and Time's Up

Another surprising discovery to come out of the qualitative and quantitative programmes survey was how few organisations kept track of gender-related data.

Most operators saw themselves as being non-gender biased but did not keep a record of the gender of filmmakers applying for support or of those who were accepted, so could not back-up this assertion via data. This was also often the case for the key crew members. The available data suggested,

however, that there is a far smaller gender imbalance among filmmakers in the Arab world than in Europe. However, operators did not seem to have formal policies for such.

More work needs to be done encourage support programmes to keep better records of gender, for a more in-depth study into this issue. Such data would also be helpful as a resource for bodies keen to put gender equality policies and initiatives in place.

Tunisian filmmaker Moncef Taleb during the presentation and debate in Beirut Cinema Platform in March 2018 – photo © Amr Kokash



Next steps

In spite of the challenges and obstacles encountered in this second round of research, the researchers recommend that there is a third round of this study, building on the film and programme listings created in this phase of research.

The researchers also suggest this third study should include a more in-depth investigation into individual filmmakers, looking at aspects such as livelihoods as well as the circumstances around how film projects are financed and pulled together from their perspective.

As well as further deepening understanding of the Arab documentary landscape, especially around topics like finance, circulation and gender equality, the researchers believe continuing this research will also help foster links between bodies involved in documentary across the Arab region, in turn strengthening the regional eco-system for the genre.

On the basis of their experiences in the second round, the researchers recommend that more field work is done to pinpoint bodies which might potentially possess good data in each territory and then lobby them to get involved.

They also recommend that DOX BOX keeps on touring its *Data is Beautiful* findings to keep the discussion going on data collection

and analysis and encourage organisations to join the research project.

The team believes that the compiling of the data for this study and subsequent research will play a role in helping documentary professionals shape policies and programmes that can strengthen the Arab documentary scene in the future.

Acknowledgements

DOX BOX

DOX BOX is a non-for-profit association created to support the emergence of a prosperous and sustainable documentary film community, culture and practices among filmmakers living and hailing from the Arab World through a range of non-traditional support and professionalisation schemes including conducting studies and research.

The association was established by eight co-founders in Berlin during the summer of 2014, who announced the establishment of DOX BOX e.V. as a non-profit association aimed at building and empowering a documentary film community with focus on the Arab World.

DOX BOX now runs several activities and non-conventional schemes. These schemes and activities range from financial support, to artistic residencies, to online e-learning, to networking events, to industry panels & events, to industry-specific research and studies and finally an awarding scheme and the Documentary Convention in partnership with the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture, the Dok Leipzig Film Festival, IDFA Bertha Fund and Sundance Documentary Program.

Emily Dische-Becker during the first expert group workshop
in Beirut, in March 2018 © photo by Amr Kokash



Researchers and Writers

Diana El Jeiroudi

co-founded DOX BOX and held the position of general director of DOX BOX for the first years of existence until end of 2018. She is an award-winning documentary filmmaker. Her films have screened in festivals world-wide and broadcast internationally. She is the recipient of the European Documentary Network Award and the Katrin Cartlidge Award and has sat on the juries of numerous film festivals and funds, including the jury of the first year of the L'OEil d'or award, created in 2015. In addition to being a filmmaker, Diana has conducted & managed several researches and studies into the film and cultural sector, including the AFAC study on the Status of Arab Artists in Germany (2016), and *Mapping Arab Documentary Landscape* (2017).



photo © Diana El Jeiroudi

Melanie Goodfellow

is a Reuters-trained freelance writer and journalist specialising in the international film and TV industry. She works mainly for the international film trade magazine Screen International, covering France and the Middle East but has also collaborated on the publications of a number of festivals and film organisations around the world.



Photo © Elise Ortiou Campion



photo © Amr Kokash

Khaled Saghie is a Lebanese journalist. He began his career at the Lebanese daily As-Safir. He was the deputy Editor-in-Chief of

the daily Al-Akhbar until 2011. Between 2012 and 2015, Saghie worked as Editor-in-Chief of the news department at the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation International (LBCI). Saghie received his MA in Economics from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He is currently an instructor at the Media Studies program at the American University of Beirut.



photo © Amr Kokash

Emily Dische-Becker is a freelance writer, investigative researcher and filmmaker who lives in Berlin and Beirut. She has contributed

to German, US and Lebanese media. She co-produced *Street of Death* (2017), which was awarded the Audi Short Film Prize at the Berlinale. She is co-founder of Friendly Fire Films, and is currently directing her first feature documentary.

Guevara Namer is a Syrian photographer and documentary filmmaker based in Berlin. Her film *Morning Fears, Night Chants* premiered at IDFA (2012) and was broadcast on Al Arabiya



photo © Amr Kokash

and ARTE (2013). She is a co-founder of DOX BOX, and held the position of its academy manager and community moderator from 2014 to 2017. She worked as the production manager and line producer of several Syrian documentary films, such as *Return to Homs* (2013) and *Silvered Water, Syria Self-Portrait* (2014).

Second Unit Researchers

Claudia Jubeh is a German-Palestinian programmer and producer. After completing film studies, Arabic studies and philosophy at Gutenberg uni-



Photo © Malene Lauritsen

versity Mainz, she worked for several film production and distribution companies in Berlin. In 2015, she produced the short fiction film *Dry Hot Summers* (by S. Elbendary, 2015) and was an associate producer for the documentary *Egyptian Jeanne d'Arc* (by N. Kamel, 2016). She is a co-founder and the main programmer of the Arab Film Festival in Berlin ALFILM and currently works for a production company in Berlin.

Nihal Zaghloul recently finished her MBA from the Berlin University for Applied Sciences (HTW) majoring in lean management.



Photo © DOX BOX / Morgane Lincy Fercot

She worked on the first data gathering and initial analysis for the *"Data is Beautiful"* project in 2017. She is currently a research assistant and note-taker at DOX BOX where she assists in researching studies related to the Arab documentary industry.

Layla Nyrabia is a statistics student at the technical university of Dortmund. She works as an undergraduate research assistant at the department of applied social sciences at the University of Applied Sciences Dortmund and a tutor for statistics in social sciences at the department for language and communication at her university. Before leaving her native Syria for Germany in 2010, Layla worked as an assistant social worker for Help e.V., a German NGO operating in country at the time. In 2008, Layla started translating documentaries and assisting with the coordination of the DOX BOX International Documentary Film Festival in Syria. In 2010, she was a member of the film selection committee for DOX BOX. She currently works for Blicke, an independent film festival in Bochum, Germany.

Zeynep Disbudak pursues a Master's degree in Anthropology at Free University of Berlin, with a focus on visual and medical anthropology. She worked for non-profit associations for contemporary art as well as for international film festivals in Istanbul

and Berlin. Disbudak currently works as a project assistant at DOX BOX, where she assists in the coordination within the "*Data is Beautiful*" project and is responsible for reporting and note taking.

Credentials

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Diana El Jeiroudi

Qualitative Research – Operators Survey:

Diana El Jeiroudi
Emily Dische-Becker
Guevara Namer
Melanie Goodfellow

Quantitative Research – Film Survey:

Claudia Jubeh
Guevara Namer

Questionnaires & Statistics

Diana El Jeiroudi
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Raul Niño Zambrano: IDFA Senior Programmer, the Netherlands
Soumaya Bouallegui: Executive Director of Doc House, Tunisia

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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Notes

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