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Study into the artistic, economic and social impact of 6 ACP Festivals on ACP cultural industries

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FINAL REPORT

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Even though the 6 festivals under study are very different, and even though this study is based on data that also varies in relation to the capacity of the festival to supply it or the period chosen for the study, the importance and the diversity of the impact of these festivals are clearly apparent.

In a general way, all of the festivals studied (with the exception of DIFF) saw important growth in their audiences in the years reviewed for this study. The most spectacular growth is seen in festivals whose action is spread throughout the year and also involves audience 's building and education (Ile Courts and TTFF for example).

To achieve this success, the quality and the commitment of the festival teams are essential, as well as their capacity to ensure the sustainability of their actions within contexts that are sometimes difficult (economic recession, logistical difficulties...).

1. Social and societal impact

The festivals studied all had social and societal impact, corresponding to different themes among their activities:

- taking gender and the age groups of the audience into consideration (for example, activities for young people at MASA or as part of Ile courts),
- organising decentralised performances or screenings to reach an audience without means of transportation (all of the festivals studied do this),
- programming that takes local languages or issues into account.

In all of the cases studied, the social impact of the festivals is reflected in one central element: **strong participation by women.**

At MASA, a festival that is essentially run by men, women are in charge of the crafts stands and the bars, women sell the tickets, and women also perform, in particular in the field of music.

For Africa Fête and Ile Courts, both run by women, **minority representation through the use of non-dominant languages** is a defining feature: Mauritian Creole for Ile Courts, Mandinka, Balanta, Bambara, Diola, Fula, Soninke, "Maure" or Serer for AF. These two festivals are also characterised by the proximity and the accessibility that they offer their audiences through decentralisation.

A major festival is also a reference in the intangible heritage of a nation, an element of common belonging, a sign of recognition for an entire population, or an entire State. This special role appears clearly with MASA and with FestPac. MASA's return to a regular bi-annual rhythm is certainly a plus for all of the African artists, but it is also a sign of a return to normality and peace in Ivory Coast and for the population of the district of Abidjan. For the Solomon Islands, which hosted the FestPac in 2012, safety returned to the islands, along

with pride in demonstrating their capacity to organise such a gigantic event (10 000 visitors per day) under good conditions for everyone, both the population and the visitors.

2. Cultural and artistic impact

All of the festivals studied are events that facilitate and magnify the encounter between audience and artists. Above and beyond this occasional encounter, they encourage cultural or artistic practices among their audiences.

The impact of FestPac on the Solomon Islands is spectacular in this way: since hosting the event in 2012, an increase in artistic practices has been noted, along with institutional structuring of the cultural sector. Thanks to the enthusiasm of the local population and the authorities in charge, the Solomon Islands have been chosen to host the next meeting of the Melanesian Spearhead Group in 2018 and to participate in the ACP Cultures+ supported project *Enhancing the cultural industries in the Pacific: Fiji, Samoa and Solomon Islands*.

Ile Courts can also be considered a model in this area, because the festival is primarily focused on young audiences due to its field (short films). **Its audience education actions, such as training for schoolteachers, are exemplary** with a general ripple effect on “cultural consumption” that can be felt in Mauritius. Furthermore, the festival is present throughout the year with its programming and professional training, making it an important player in the emergence of a national film culture and industry.

Africa Fête, a music festival, reaches a very wide and “global” audience and its extraordinary reputation in Senegal shows that it has a loyal and satisfied public. It is also an extraordinary reference for artists, as explained by the young singer Marema “I always dreamed of Africa Fête”.

The audiences of the MASA festival have turned up in numbers for the artistic range on offer even during periods that remain difficult for Ivory Coast, because it must not be forgotten that the most recent MASA festival was held at the same time that the Gbagbo trial restarted. In fact, the MASA festival is made for its audience and chooses headline African and local artists to satisfy its demands. The MASA programme that focussed on young audiences was extraordinary in 2016 (4 000 children at the Palais de la Culture on March 9th). However, it could be a good idea to seek out a professional audience in a way that makes it even more suited to the chosen performances on offer, because MASA is first and foremost a MARKET and in this case, the multiplier effect of this part of the event is not widely felt.

Audience knowledge, the constant search for the best balance between the cultural offer and demand represent a major challenge for all of the festivals under consideration.

Their cultural and artistic offer transcends borders. **In all of the cases considered, the promotion and recognition of the works of ACP artists on the cultural and artistic scenes** are at the top of the bill:

- 33 African countries were represented at MASA 2016 versus 23 in 2014,
- Ile Courts opened up its Call for Films to all countries with shores that touch the Indian Ocean, organises meetings within the framework of the “Forum Film Bazar” and associations already exist between Mauritius and Madagascar thanks to the festival.
- With FAFI, Africa Fête launched a fertile dynamic of cooperation between 3 African countries and above all, collaboration between artists through its residency programmes.
- The 2012 FestPac in the Solomon Islands launched a regional dynamic for all those involved, both artists and authorities.
- The Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival is a unique window onto Caribbean creativity that allows local talents to emerge.
- **In the audio-visual field, it should be noted that in the very near future, the festivals may offer privileged public access to original, local work from non-dominant geographical areas due to the evolution of the global market.** While online distribution offers niche circuits, the direct access offered by the festivals remains a unique opportunity for local populations to discover cultural diversity.

3. Commercialisation and distribution of works, professional networking

The festivals under study bring exposure, and also create revenue for the artists because they receive fees (Ile Courts pays screening rights, even if they are relatively modest due to the general short film economy):

- **MASA purchases all the works it presents and because of this, the take-up rate for the works presented is 100%.** 20% of its budget (€554 000) is given over to artists’ fees and more than 50% of the performances on offer have already been sold to other events.
- **The figure for fees is more modest at AF (€25 000 in 2014) but it represents an almost equivalent percentage of the festival budget (18%).**

Furthermore, the reputation and the “friendly side” of the festival are such that renowned artists accept to perform for lower sums.

AF is a very important springboard for young African artists. It is part of its DNA and the legacy of Mamadou Konté, but for many of them it is also their first paid performance, their entry into professional life.

- **Ile Courts has several sales circuits for works that are perfectly adapted to the short film format (and it employs someone to monitor this aspect).** It also pays modest yet recurrent amounts each year to local filmmakers.
- TFFF, through its main sponsor, the VOD service FLOW, allows filmmakers selected to the festival to sell their work for online distribution and the presence of many other festival programmers from the Caribbean also offers opportunities, leading to payment of screening fees.

Above and beyond these commercial aspects, the 6 festivals under study are praised by all those interviewed as **unique networking opportunities**:

- It is the primary reason given by professional participants at MASA to justify their attendance. The launch in 2016 of dedicated activities such as “speed meetings” or the

showcases have already proven their suitability, with 3 of the 16 performances presented at the showcases sold, and 5 others in which producers have expressed interest

- Ile Courts gives local professionals access to internationally recognised professionals (such as Newton Aduaka, the patron of the 2015 festival or Nadia Ben Rachid, the Tunisian editor of TIMBUKTU)

- artistic and professional contacts formed during FAFI residencies lead to unexpected associations: Imothep, a DJ from the Marseille group IAM worked with the Senegalese rapper Fou Malade on some of the songs on his new album. Fou Malade also “discovered new styles such as that of “Tcheng” in Benin and “Bikutsi” in Cameroon”.

- For artists from the Solomon Islands who took part in FestPac, it was also a fruitful meeting ground and a way for local artists to be invited to the next FestPac which took place in Guam in May 2016.

At the end of the study, **the festivals with a market have demonstrated better sales and marketing capacity for the works** (more than 50% of performances presented at MASA 2016 have already been sold to other events and on average 30% of the film projects presented at the Durban FilmMart are produced). Progress is ongoing, as with the 2016 MASA at which new and specific activities were implemented (See annex 11).

However, **Ile Courts is the only festival that employs someone to keep track of artists and the sales and distribution of their works in a lasting way.**

4. Economic impact

Further to the study, it is clear that **performing arts festivals and local economic benefits go hand in hand.**

From their outreach activities, involving inviting artists, implementing marketing campaigns, hiring various technical equipment... the festivals under study bring non-negligible support to the hotel, restaurant, transport, technical rental and communications sectors.

Some figures:

- MASA 2016 devoted more than 20% of its total budget (€547 385 euro) to welcoming the artists and guests, filling 19 hotels in Abidjan, and 23% of its budget goes to local service providers (renting venues, equipment and infrastructures), making almost 50% of its total budget

- Africa Fête spends on average €80 000 or more than 50% of its budget per year on transport, hospitality and local service providers (in 3 African countries). The festival has even led to the creation of a travel agency in Dakar

- Local service providers (for example communications agencies) see a return of 51 to 53% of the Ile Courts budget each year

- There are no exact figures for FestPac in the Solomon Islands, but the festival led to the construction of permanent buildings (the auditorium and the national gallery) which undoubtedly employed many local workers and service providers.

Furthermore, the impact on the tourism industry, even if it is not currently very strong, is on the agenda:

- Ile Courts is now part of the packages offered by the “My Moris” company specialising in cultural tourism
- The number of visitors to the Solomon Islands increased notably during and since FestPac (See page 68)
- Since 2015 the tourist office in the province of Kwa Zulu natal in which Durban is located, organises an annual survey into the impact of DIFF
- The number of participants at the festival who took advantage of their trip to visit Tobago (representing 45 hotel nights in 2015) appears in the statistics of the Trinidad and Tobago festival.

5. Professional impact

The study clearly shows that to exist artistically and professionally and to make its mark on people’s minds, a festival must be held in a regular manner.

AF confirms its position as a genuine success story because it is the **only Senegalese festival that has been running for 15 consecutive years.**

The return of MASA, often seen as a challenge, turned out to be a success after the first two festivals held since its return to a bi-annual rhythm.

Despite the financial problems which prevented the festival being held in 2013, Ile Courts successfully maintained a presence during that difficult year and its enormous success (from 200 spectators in 2007 to more than 12 000 in 2015) is in large part thanks to its perseverance in gaining the public’s loyalty.

This study also shows in a definitive way **the central role played by festival directors** and the experience of their teams: MASA could never have come back to life without Professor Konate, the phenomenal success of Ile Courts owes a lot to Elise Mignot and the regularity of AF is linked to the charisma and professionalism of Daba Sarr.

The teams that are in place are equally crucial, and it is in this area that gaps appear. Apart from Ile Courts, none of the festivals organise training for their staff. It must be added that training in the field of festival management is not very common and the people trained may also leave the festivals. This is for example the case with TTFF, which sent 2 members of its team to training for film festival directors organised each year by the Deutsche Welle in Berlin.

Finally, in the area of infrastructure, **clear progress appears in most cases. The equipment is mostly rented locally,** and the association with artists who draw up technical files in the case of AF, or the purchase of material in the case of Ile Courts leads to strengthening of the technical performance for the benefit of the audiences and the artists.

6. Financial stability

The budgets of the festivals studied are quite diverse in nature: from €17 million for Festpac to around €140 000 for AF or Ile Courts. However, similarities do appear.

- There are always **budgetary problems** (except for the DIFF), along with cash flow problems caused by the late or non-arrival of grant funds despite confirmation. This has been the case for MASA, FestPac and AF.
- **Strong national support for a festival is related to the event's inclusion among the country's intangible heritage** as demonstrated by the examples of MASA, Festpac or AF.
- This national support is crucial for the festival economy, even if it somewhat limited in the case of AF. The support of an international organisation can also be decisive as is the case with FestPac.
- **Festival teams lack capacity in their search for alternative or innovative financing methods.** This is the conclusion of the report on Africa Fête, which shows that despite its advantages in notoriety and regularity, the festival does not have any sponsors. These technical gaps are sometimes very basic ones. MASA for example has no financing plan, and the director is aware of this but it is related to the nature of the staff.
- With the exception of MASA and FestPac which are public frameworks, the other festivals studied remain highly dependent on international funding.

This final result of the study also allows us to tackle another area: that of the “**ACP Cultures+ effect**”.

2 of the festivals studied in this report benefit from this support (Africa Fête and Ile Courts). **The effect of the grant on their finances can be clearly felt:** renewed confidence among other financial backers (AF even obtained a credit line from its bank thanks to this support), diversified funding models and the possibility of finding other sources of funding as in the case of Ile Courts.

However, **the most notable effect of this support is on the festivals' structures:** the opportunity to employ or stabilise staff, to develop monitoring tools for the audiences and the impact on the artists.

Finally, the study does not show a systematic relationship between the size of a festival and its impact.

If, for example, we take the case of the Senegalese artist Marema, who performed at MASA 2016 and at AF in 2014, it appears that being selected for Dakar was much more important for her career than her performance at MASA. Tapping into the quality of her performance at AF did allow her to become known and to win the prestigious RFI prize. Her appearance at MASA has had no impact for the moment...

Ile Courts is the smallest of the film festivals studied and yet the capacity of this small association to enliven the local cultural scene and almost replace the authorities in charge of film in Mauritius, in particular in the field of training, is really quite remarkable.

The only area in which the impact is proportional to the size of the festival is the impact upon the local economy: the richer the festival, the greater the number of artists and professionals it can invite. And it appears that the sectors that benefit the most from the festivals are accommodation, hospitality and local crafts.

Recommendations

The above conclusions inspired the following recommendations, aimed at strengthening the impact of the festivals.

1. Donors should **recognise the festivals as “cultural objects in their own right”**, which would allow support to be adapted to the special needs of a festival and subject to clear requests ;
2. **Concertation among donors that finance the festivals** would allow the financing to be better adapted to the artistic and operational needs of the festivals and exchanges between funders about their role at local, national and international level, as well as the circulation of best practices;
3. **Make festivals professional**: donors should help the festival teams to become more structured by emphasizing the need to have a well-built team in which there is a balance between artistic and managerial skills. Vocational training should also be encouraged, particularly in the area of seeking alternative sources of financing and following up on the sales / distribution of works;
4. **Implement tools to identify audiences** because this is fundamental to the analysis of the social and economic impact of festivals (impact on minorities, on youth), and also to convince funders or sponsors (size and kind of audience);
5. **Ongoing presence throughout the year** (workshops, performances, screenings...), because this will widen audiences for the event and also have a positive impact on employment;
6. **Organise training workshops** (whether for the general audience or for professionals) that allow the audience to become familiar with cultural practices and maybe train new generations of artists. The example of Ile Courts, present in the field of distribution as well as those of production and media literacy is undoubtedly the most remarkable of the study, but the impact of TTF's professional initiatives on film production in Trinidad and Tobago and raising consciousness in the Caribbean market about young talents is also notable;
7. **Specific programmes for young audiences**: they are an essential tool in the quest for new audiences as they allow teachers, schools and universities to be reached, along with parents, with a significant multiplier effect;
8. **Networking**: organising professional encounters or any type of activity that brings together relevant cultural operators during a festival is crucial for the promotion and sales of the works presented as well as for the professional development of all the participants. The participation of the festivals themselves in networks of festivals also leads to sharing of best practices and widens the base of potential buyers/distributors for the works that are presented.